

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE HERMITAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

Rosie Healy and Ruth Cottingham
Hermitage Parish Council

Laila Bassett
Principal Planning Officer
West Berkshire Council

Via email

Examination Ref:01/AM/HNP

16 October 2023

Dear Ms Healy, Ms Cottingham and Ms Bassett

HERMITAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Hermitage Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/HNP) for examination, I would like to clarify some initial procedural matters.

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received a complete submission of the Plan, including the Basic Conditions Statement; the Consultation Statement; the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report; and the Regulation 16 representations, to enable me to undertake the examination.

Subject to my detailed assessment of the Plan, I have not at this initial stage identified any very significant and obvious flaws in it that might lead me to advise that the examination should not proceed.

2. Site Visit

My intention is to carry out a site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area this week. The site visit will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The visit will be undertaken unaccompanied. It is very important that I am not approached to discuss any aspects of the Plan or the neighbourhood area, as this may be perceived to prejudice my independence and risk compromising the fairness of the examination process.

3. Written Representations

At this stage, I consider the examination can be conducted solely by the written representations procedure, without the need for a hearing. However, I will reserve the option to convene a hearing should a matter(s) come to light where I consider that a hearing is necessary to ensure the adequate examination of an issue, or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put a case.

4. Further Clarification

Following my site visit, I am likely to have a number of questions which seek clarification on matters within the HNP and which I will wish to put to Hermitage Parish Council and/or West Berkshire Council. Assuming this will be necessary, the questions will be set out in a further letter.

5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is normally to conduct the examination (including the site visit) with a view to providing a draft report (for 'fact checking') within around 6-8 weeks of submission of the Plan. However, in the likely event that I have some questions seeking clarification as a result of my site visit, I must provide the opportunity for you to reply. This would mean that the examination timetable would be extended. Please be assured that I would seek to mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. The IPE office team will seek to keep you updated on the anticipated delivery date of the draft report.

If you have any process questions related to the conduct of the examination which you would like me to address, please do not hesitate to contact the office team in the first instance.

In the interests of transparency, may I prevail upon you to ensure that a copy of this letter is placed on both the Parish and West Berkshire Council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Andy Mead

Examiner