



Hermitage NDP

November 2023 Update

Following the appointment by West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) of Intelligent Plans and Examinations Ltd to undertake the Independent Examination of Hermitage Neighbourhood Plan, the nominated Examiner Andrew Meade quickly set to work. He made an unannounced and unaccompanied site inspection of Hermitage on 18 October 2023 to familiarise himself with the Parish and visited relevant locations referenced in the Plan and associated evidential documents.

On 9 November Steering Group received his final report which can be found on the West Berkshire website (scroll down to the last part of Independent Examination) at - [Hermitage Neighbourhood Plan - West Berkshire Council](#)

Apart from a recommendation to modify one Policy to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements, he has recommended that the Plan, once modified, should proceed to referendum.

In his conclusion, the Independent Examiner commented,

“Hermitage Parish Council, the Steering Group and other voluntary contributors are to be commended for their efforts in producing a concise but comprehensive Plan. The Plan is logical, very informative and well-illustrated. I enjoyed examining it, visiting the area and reading about the history ... Subject to the recommended modification, the HNP will make a positive contribution to the Development Plan for the area and should enable the attractive character and appearance of Hermitage to be maintained whilst enabling sustainable development to proceed.”

On 14 November, Steering Group received an updated timetable from WBDC outlining the next steps, namely for the Plan to be amended in November as required, before proceeding to Public Referendum which WBDC will run. They are suggesting it be run in 6 months' time, on Thursday 2 May 2024, to coincide with the Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

At Referendum, the following question will be asked:

“Do you want West Berkshire District Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Hermitage to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”

Please pencil this date in your diary and **remember to cast your vote!**

Reassuringly, WBDC have pointed out that now that the Hermitage Neighbourhood Plan has been through Independent Examination, because it has been confirmed that the NDP is legally compliant and meets the Basic Conditions, it carries considerable weight in the planning decision making process

Rosie Healy,
NDP Steering Group