

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE STEVINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Wendy Burden BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Tricia Lennie
Clerk to Stevington Parish Council

Sonia Gallaher
Bedford Borough Council

Examination Ref:01/WB/SNP

28 August 2020

Dear Ms Lennie and Ms Gallaher

STEVINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/SNP) for examination, I would like to deal with some initial procedural matters and to seek clarification on some matters in the submitted SNP.

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that that I have received the submission of the Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement, the Consultation Statement and Consultation Responses, and the Regulation 16 representations, to enable me to undertake the examination.

Following my initial reading of the SNP it would be helpful to me if the following documents could also be submitted to me and published on the examination website:

Stevington Parish Council Local Green Space Submission 2016
Capacity Study: Urban Vision July 2018

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

2. Site Visit

I will aim to carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area in the week beginning 7 September, subject to the prevailing government COVID-19 advice at that time. 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 (and again further respecting the current COVID-19 threat).

3. Written Representations

Under paragraph 9(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) the general rule is that the examination should take the form of the consideration of written representations. At this stage I consider the examination can be conducted solely by means of the written representations, without the need for a hearing. Nevertheless, I will reserve the option to

convene a hearing should a matter or matters 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

From my initial consideration of the SNP, I have the following questions to raise with the Parish Council relating to the Local Green Space (LGS) proposals in the SNP as follows:

- i. Proposed LGS1 and 3: were these sites considered for LGS designation in the preparation of the Bedford Borough Local Plan (BBLP) 2020?
- ii. Having regard to the status of Stevington Windmill (LGS2) as a Listed Building and the protection conferred by that designation, would the allocation of its site as LGS provide any additional local benefit?
- iii. Proposed LGS4 includes trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Having regard to the protection conferred by the TPO would the allocation of the site as LGS provide any additional local benefit? With regard to the designation of the route of the Public Footpath within LGS4, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises at para 018 Ref ID 37-018-20140306 that there is no need to designate linear corridors in order to protect a public right of way since it is already protected under other legislation. Would the inclusion of the Public Footpath provide any additional local benefit?

I may have some further questions which seek clarification on other matters and which I will wish to put to Stevington Parish Council and/or Bedford Borough Council, once I have received the information requested above and carried out my site visit. If this is 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 6 weeks of submission of the Plan. However, in view of the additional information which I have requested I must provide the opportunity for you to reply, and I would therefore be grateful for your response by **10 September 2020**.

Consequentially, the examination timetable will need to be extended. Please be assured that I will seek to mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. At this juncture it should also be noted that there may be unavoidable delays as a result of the current COVID-19 threat, which we cannot yet predict. In any event, the IPE office team will endeavour 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 Council and Borough Council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

Wendy Burden

Examiner