

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE THURLEIGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Wendy Burden BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Mandy Wilson
Clerk to Thurleigh Parish Council

Sonia Gallaher
Bedford Borough Council

Examination Ref: 01/WB/TNP

25 June 2020

Dear Ms Wilson and Ms Gallaher

THURLEIGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

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

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received a complete submission of the Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement, the Consultation Statement 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

I will aim to carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area in the week beginning 6 July, 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

I note that some of those who have submitted representations have asked to present their case at a hearing. 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

Before I proceed further in the Examination, I do require some assistance from Thurleigh Parish Council (TPC) and, where appropriate, Bedford Borough Council (BBC). To enable me to properly examine the BNP and assess its compliance with the basic conditions under paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), I would request TPC and BBC to respond, where relevant, to the questions set out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful for your response(s) by **10 July 2020**.

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. 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 TPC and BBC websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

Wendy Burden

Examiner

Annex

From my initial reading of the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan and the supporting evidence, I have some questions for TPC and for BBC. I have requested the submission of a response by **10 July 2020**.

1. Reference is made in paragraph 4.3 to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012. This was first replaced in 2018, and then in 2019 by an updated NPPF. Please confirm that the NPPF paragraph references in the TNP are from the 2019 version.

2. Thurleigh has a settlement policy area (SPA). Reference is made in paragraph 4.10 to “village envelope”. Please confirm this is the SPA.

3. The reason given for allocating land for 30 new homes is “to help sustain local services” (paragraph 4.12). Are there any other reasons, and what local services are to be sustained?

4. In bullet point 4 paragraph 4.15, please clarify what high quality is being sought.

5. Policy HS1b) – e) identifies housing types for the new developments.

- Is there evidence to support the presumption in favour of these housing types?
- Has consideration been given to other types of housing?

6. Are the two sites identified for allocation capable of being delivered within the Plan period?

7. Policy HS2 The Beeches:

- This site is located within the village. NPPF paragraph 123 seeks to optimize the use of such sites. The site assessment indicates that it could accommodate 18 dwellings. Why is the allocation limited to 10 dwellings?
- How can the requirement for on street visitor parking in d) be justified and subsequently enforced?

8. Policy HS3 Hayle Field:

- In the site assessment study, Site 444 has the same RAG score as Hayle Field but scores Amber. Can this apparent inconsistency be explained?
- Would adequate provision be made for safe pedestrian access to the school both within and from the site?
- The site forms part of a larger area which could accommodate up to 90 houses. Are there any natural boundaries which would define the area proposed for 20 new homes? Can a plan be supplied to identify the area proposed to be developed which is larger in scale than the Policies Map at Appendix A?
- How can the requirement for on street visitor parking in d) be justified and subsequently enforced?

9. Policy HS4:

- In a) the sixth criteria at line 2: should “remains” be “retains” or “reflects”?
- In b) does this correctly reflect NPPF paragraph 185c)?
- Is there justification for the additional requirement in f)?

10. Policy HS5

- Is the reference to “exception sites” intended to reflect the provision made in Policy 67 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan (BBLP)?
- The provisions of Policy 67 are explained in BBLP paragraph 10.66. Is it necessary for the TNP to include Policy HS5 if it largely replicates the provisions of Policy 67?

11. Policy GS1: The protection of Green Space is secured through the existing development plan policies as cited within GS1. Is it necessary for the TNP to include GS1?

12. In the footnote to Policy RYS1 there are two references to NPPF paragraph 91. Should the second one be paragraph 92?

13. Policy LPA3: would an addition to the policy “and demonstrate suitable connectivity to enable safe walking and cycling to the school” be justified and capable of being delivered?

14. Policies Map page 41: it would add to the clarity of the TNP if the sites allocated for new housing in the TNP are shown as designations on the policies map.

In addition:

- is it possible to provide a larger version of the Map under paragraph 5.1 prior to 6 July, to assist with my site visit?
- Can a more legible and larger version of Map 2 be provided for inclusion in the TNP?

I may have some further questions which seek clarification on other matters and which I will wish to put to TPC and/or BBC, 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.