

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE SANDRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Andrew Freeman BSc (Hons) DipTP DipEM FRTPI

Councillor John Hale
Sandridge Parish Council

Daley Wilson
Spatial Planning Officer
St Albans City & District Council

Examination Ref: 01/AF/SNP

10 November 2020

Dear Councillor Hale and Mr Wilson

SANDRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

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

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I have received the submission Plan and accompanying documentation¹, 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 23 November 2020, 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

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.

¹ Subject to responses to questions 2,3 and 5 in the Annex to this letter.

4. Further Clarification

I have a number of initial questions seeking further clarification from the Parish Council and the City and District Council, set out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if written responses could be provided within **two weeks** of receipt of this 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. 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. The IPe office team will keep you updated on the 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 the City and District Council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

Andrew Freeman

Examiner

Annex

From my initial reading of the Sandridge Neighbourhood Plan and the supporting evidence, I have some questions for the Parish Council and the City and District Council. I have requested the submission of responses within **two weeks** of receipt of this letter.

Questions for the City and District Council

1. What is the latest position on withdrawal or otherwise of the emerging Local Plan 2020-2036? My understanding is that the proposal to withdraw the Local Plan will be presented to a cabinet meeting, scheduled for 19 November 2020.
2. Please provide a link to the Parish Council's application for designation as a neighbourhood area and the approval decision.
3. Please provide a link to the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Habitats Regulations Assessment including the response from Natural England.
4. Are the plans identifying Local Green Spaces and Non-Designated Green Spaces (Figures 15 to 17) adequate for development management purposes?
5. Please provide a link to the 2016 technical report on green spaces prepared by the City and District Council.

Questions for the Parish Council

6. Please provide a response to the points made in the letter dated 30 October 2020 from the City and District Council including the matters set out in Appendix 1 to that letter.
7. In the light of changes to the Use Classes Order, what revisions to the Plan would the Parish Council wish to make?
8. In the event that the emerging Local Plan is withdrawn, does the Parish Council have a view on the necessity or otherwise to review the Neighbourhood Plan after (if) it is "made"?
9. Policy D1 – "providing that such development meets...": Meets what?
10. Policy D1: Should impact on heritage assets (other than the Conservation Area) be included as a relevant criterion?
11. Policy D2 Paragraph 3 (also in Policy D3): Would 'social homes' be included within the definition of affordable housing (National Planning Policy Framework Glossary) or is this a reference to some other form of accommodation?
12. Policy D6 – Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Guidance and Public Health England's Spatial Planning for Health: Are there particular recommendations (what are they?) with which designs should comply - or is the paragraph just acknowledging that 'ensuring health and wellbeing' is a topic recommended in these documents?
13. Policy C5: For the guidance of applicants, where are the 'purposes' of Heartwood Forest set out/to be found?
14. Local Green Spaces and Non-Designated Green Spaces: Has the identification of these spaces been discussed with/notified to the landowners? Have any objections been recorded?

- 15.** Should Oaklands be identified as a heritage asset?
- 16.** Policy E1: Should the policy be altered to make it clearer and more effective (representation of Herts Middx Wildlife Trust)?
- 17.** Please comment on the representation of Mrs Cohen (SNP26)?