

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE RINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: David Hogger BA MSc MRTPI MCIHT

Jo Hurd
Deputy Town Clerk
Ringwood Town Council

Andrew Herring
Planning Policy Officer
New Forest District Council

Examination Ref: 01/DH/RNP

Via email

4 December 2023

Dear Ms Hurd and Mr Herring

THE RINGWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (RNP) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have a number of preliminary questions for Ringwood Town Council (RTC) as Qualifying Body and a smaller number for New Forest District Council (NFDC) as the other main participatory body. These are attached as an Annex to this letter. I recognise that we are now approaching the Christmas/New Year break, so I suggest you aim to respond to me by **Monday 15 January 2024** (albeit an earlier response would be welcome, if feasible).

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I have received a complete submission of the Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement (June 2023); the Consultation Statement (July 2023); the Screening Statements from both NFDC and the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) on the determination of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment (December 2022); and the Regulation 16 representations (including a helpful Summary Sheet prepared by NFDC). I have also read on-line: Appendices A (Strategic Masterplan), B (Design Guidance and Codes), C (Local Distinctiveness Supplementary Planning Document) and D (Local Heritage Assets). I am satisfied that I have enough relevant evidence to enable me to commence the examination.

Subject to my detailed assessment of the RNP, I have not identified any very significant flaws that might lead me to advise that the examination should not proceed.

2. Site Visit

I intend to undertake a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area in the week commencing 11 December 2023. This will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The site 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.

I may have some additional questions, following my site visit, which I will set out in writing should I require any further clarification.

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

I have a number of initial questions seeking further information and clarification from RTC and NFDC. I have set these questions out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if a written response could be provided by **Monday 15 January 2024**.

5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is to examine the RNP (including conduct of the site visit) with a view to providing a draft report (for 'fact checking') within around 6-8 weeks of submission of the draft Plan. However, I have raised a number of questions to which I must provide the opportunity for the preparation of a full and considered response (and I must bear in mind the restrictions posed by the Christmas/New Year break). Consequently, the examination timetable will be extended but please be assured that I will 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 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 a copy of this letter and any subsequent responses, are placed on the websites of the Town Council and the District Council (as the other main participatory body).

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

David Hogger

Examiner

ANNEX

From my initial reading of the submission draft of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (RNP) and the supporting evidence, I have 1 question to which I require a joint response from both NFDC and RTC; 2 questions for the District Council; and 20 questions for the Town Council. I have requested the submission of a response by **Monday 15 January 2024**. All the points set out below flow from the requirement to satisfy the Basic Conditions.

Question for both New Forest District Council and Ringwood Town Council (1)

I would prefer a joint response to this question but if that cannot be successfully achieved then independent responses should be submitted by the two Councils. I would be grateful if the District Council (as a main participatory body) could collaborate with the New Forest National Park Authority and pass on any comments that the latter may wish to make on this matter.

1. Concerns have been expressed (e.g. in Representations 1 and 7)¹ regarding transport infrastructure and management (including parking, cycling and pedestrian safety). Are the Councils satisfied that the issues are adequately addressed in other planning documentation such as the NFDC Local Plan Part 1 and the NFNPA Local Plan? [see also Question 14]

Questions for New Forest District Council (2)

2. Paragraph 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that neighbourhood plans 'should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies'. Is the District Council satisfied that this advice has been followed?

3. Section 3 of Appendix C of the RNP is the 'Ringwood Local List'. This is a very extensive list of local heritage assets. Is the District Council satisfied that all the identified assets are justified?

Questions for Ringwood Town Council (20)

4. Objective 4 (page 16) seeks to ensure that Ringwood does not become a dormitory town. How will the policies in the RNP achieve that objective?

5. In clause A of policy R1 (page 18), what is meant by 'gentle densification'? The term is not included in the glossary.

6. In clause D of policy R1 (page 18), what 'other means of moving about the town' are envisaged? Is it just walking and cycling measures?

7. What is the evidence that 'brownfield land will become available later in the Plan period', as referred to in paragraph 5.5 (page 18)?

8. NFNPA (Representation 8) suggests that the term 'small dwellings' in policy R5 (page 26) should be clarified and also that it should be made clearer whether or not the policy applies to all new housing in the Parish. It is also questioned how policy R5 aligns with the adopted Local Plan policy. I am not clear as to what constitutes a 'high proportion'. Could the Town Council provide a response to all these issues?

9. What is meant by 'major development' in policy R8 on page 30? (Representation 8)

¹ As set out in Table 2 of the Summary of Regulation 16 consultation process document.

- 10.** NFNPA suggests (Representation 8) that policy R9 (page 31) should include details of the criteria used in the identification of non-designated heritage assets. Does RTC agree that this would provide appropriate clarification and if so, could some appropriate wording be suggested?
- 11.** What is the justification for stipulating in policy R9 (page 31) that ‘new development will proceed within a year of the loss’? (My underlining) How will this be achieved?
- 12.** Could the Town Council confirm (with regard to paragraph 5.50 on page 31) what responses were submitted by the owners of the heritage assets and what conclusions were drawn by the Town Council in response?
- 13.** Is the requirement of policy R11 (page 34) for all new development (i.e. all development that requires planning permission) to be ‘zero carbon ready’, reasonable and justified and is this approach compatible with that of NFDC and NFNPA? Will there be any implications in terms of the viability of development that should be addressed in this part of the RNP?
- 14.** Are the contents of policy R12: Encouraging Active and Healthy Travel (page 38), compatible with the approach taken by Hampshire County Council, NFDC and the NFNPA?
- 15.** Is there any reason why the change to policy R6 regarding affordable housing (page 27), as suggested by Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land (Representation 9), should not be supported?
- 16.** The Environment Agency (Representation 10) refers to opportunity areas A and G. These areas are described in the Ringwood Strategic Masterplan but I could find no reference to flood risk – for example, it does not appear to be a measure set out under either the Long List or the Short List under ‘Opportunity Sites’. The issue of flood risk is of relevance in Ringwood. Could the Town Council explain its approach regarding policies on flood risk and would it agree that some appropriate wording on the matter should be included in the RNP? If it so agrees, could suitable wording be provided?
- 17.** The representation from Gladman Developments Ltd (Representation 11) suggests that the use of greenfield land may be necessary to ensure that development needs are met. How does the Town Council respond to this assertion?
- 18.** Gladman Developments Ltd suggest that it should be made clear that Blashford falls outside the Neighbourhood Plan boundary and that the Policy Map should be amended accordingly (Representation 11). Does the Town Council agree?
- 19.** Concerns are expressed (Representation 12) regarding the implementation of the RNP. Is the Town Council satisfied that the policies put forward are justified and achievable?
- 20.** Benchmark Development Planning (Representation 15) object to the omission of any reference to rural exception sites. They request that their client’s site (New Road, Ringwood) is identified as a rural exception site. What is the Town Council’s response?
- 21.** Hampshire County Council (Representation 16) suggests a number of modifications in Annexes 1 and 2 of its representation. How does the Town Council respond to all the comments made?
- 22.** NFDC makes a number of suggested amendments (Representation 17), including to:
- policy R2 clause C(iv);
 - policy R2 paragraphs 5.11 and 5.13;
 - policy R4 part (c); and
 - policy R6 paragraph 5.39.

How does the Town Council respond to all the comments made?

23. I consider that some of the maps and plans in the document (in both the printed and electronic versions) lack sufficient clarity. Can the Town Council (possibly in conjunction with the District Council as likely holder of the necessary Ordnance Survey licence), please take appropriate measures to review and improve the legibility of the maps and plans, and provide a replacement set that I may consider as a modification to the draft Plan?