

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE STEEPLE BUMPSTEAD

## NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2033

EXAMINER: DEREK STEBBING BA (Hons) DipEP MRTPI

Philip Whittome  
Secretary Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Carolyn Johnson  
Braintree District Council

Examination Ref: 01/DAS/SBNP

22 July 2024

Dear Mr Whittome and Mrs Johnson

Following the submission of the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have a number of questions for the Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council (the Qualifying Body) and Braintree District Council (the District Council), to which I would like to receive a written response(s) by **Friday 16 August 2024** if possible.

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received the draft Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement; the Consultation Statement; the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report; the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report; 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 during the week beginning 5 August 2024. 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.

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

From my initial assessment of the Plan and supporting documents, I have identified a number of matters where I require some additional information from the District Council and the Parish Council.

I have three questions seeking further clarification, which I have set out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if you can seek to provide a written response(s) by **Friday 16 August 2024**.

### 5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is to examine the Plan (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, as I have raised some questions, I must provide you with sufficient opportunity to reply. Consequentially, the examination timetable may be extended. Please be assured that I will aim to mitigate any potential for 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 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 the Parish Council and District Council's websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

*Derek Stebbing*

Examiner

## ANNEX

From my initial reading of the Steeple Bumpstead Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2033 (Submission Version dated March 2024), the supporting evidence, and the representations that have been made to the Plan, I have the following three questions for the Qualifying Body and the District Council. I have requested the submission of responses **by Friday 16 August 2024**, although an earlier response would be much appreciated. All of the points set out below flow from the requirement to satisfy the Basic Conditions.

### **Question 1: Re. Planning Appeal Decision – 6 September 2017 (Pages 9 and 14)**

Can the **District Council** please provide me with a copy of the Planning Inspector's decision letter dated 6 September 2017, concerning residential development proposals beyond the village Development Boundary, as referenced in the draft Plan at Pages 9 and 14, in order that I can more fully understand the Inspector's reasons for dismissing that particular appeal.

### **Question 2: Re. Land at 42. North Street, Steeple Bumpstead**

A number of representations make specific reference to this previously developed site, which was formerly in commercial use as a motor vehicle workshop. I understand that Outline Planning Permission was granted in June 2007 for five residential properties at the site, but that planning permission has now lapsed. In the context of the material set out at paragraphs 5.4.9-5.4.12 in the draft Plan, I wish to understand the current planning position with regard to this site.

The site is referenced as STEB 395 in Section 2 of the adopted Braintree District Local Plan 2033 (adopted July 2022).

Can the **District Council** please provide me with a Note setting out the current planning status of the site, and whether any residential development proposals are currently being progressed at the site?

### **Question 3: Re. Blois Business Park, Blois Road, Steeple Bumpstead**

With reference to the Representations (Ref. SBNP23) submitted to the draft Plan on behalf of Messrs. Argent, the owners of the Blois Business Park, which seek an extension of the Business Park site allocation that is identified on Map 5 in the draft Plan, I wish to further understand the position of the **District Council** and the **Qualifying Body** with regard to the land that is the subject of these representations, which I note is in the ownership of Messrs. Argent. I further note that there is no identified extension to the Business Park in Section 2 of the adopted Braintree District Local Plan 2033, and I wish to understand to what extent that was considered during the preparation of the Local Plan.

Can the **District Council** and the **Qualifying Body** each please provide me with a Note setting out their assessment of the land's potential for an extension to the existing Business Park.

I confirm that I shall visit the Business Park during the course of my site visit.

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