

Lewes Neighbourhood Development Plan (South Downs National Park)

Examination Arrangements

Purpose of this Note

This Note sets out the basis on which the examination will be undertaken. Its ambitions are two-fold:

- to comply with the CLG/NPIERS procedural guidance (April 2018); and
- to provide guidance for the Town Council on the key stages through which the examination will progress.

The examination route map

Different examinations raise their own issues. Nevertheless, the following are the key components that will be applied to this examination:

Stage 1: Background Reading

This involves reading the submitted Plan and its supporting documents. I will also read the various representations and take them into account during the examination.

This task is now largely complete.

Stage 2: Visit to the neighbourhood area

This provides me with an opportunity to visit the neighbourhood area and look at specific issues and sites. Plainly not every aspect of the Plan needs to be viewed on the visit. However, I will focus my time on looking at the issues that have arisen either from the background reading and/or which are fundamental to the Plan.

The visit will be unaccompanied. I will not meet with either the Town Council or with any parties who have commented on the Plan. To do so would have the potential to affect the independence of the examination.

The visit will take place during the w/b 17 September 2018. I will advise later when the date is confirmed.

Stage 3: Decision about the need for a hearing

The combination of the background reading and the unaccompanied visit will allow me to come to a view about the need or otherwise for a hearing. It is anticipated that the vast majority of examinations can proceed by way of written representations and without a hearing.

If a hearing is required I will make separate arrangements with the National Park Authority and the Town Council. I will traditionally leave at least 10 working days between deciding on the need for a hearing and holding the hearing. Any hearing will be held in the neighbourhood area wherever it is practicable to do so.

Stage 4: Clarification Note

Once the visit has taken place I will usually issue a clarification note. It will raise a series of questions. The answers to these questions will help me to understand the Plan better and, where appropriate, recommend modifications to the Plan to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.

The clarification note will suggest a timescale for responses (based on the issues it addresses). However, this is a matter which I am happy should proceed at your pace, recognising that neighbourhood plans are traditionally prepared by town or parish councils and individuals on a voluntary basis.

In the case of the Lewes Plan I will send two clarification notes. The first will be based on general issues that have arisen from my background reading. The second (if required) will follow immediately after my visit to the neighbourhood area.

Stage 5: The Examination Report

My report will be prepared throughout the examination period. Its general parts can be written early in the process. The elements of the report that overlap with the Clarification Note will not be produced until the responses to that Note are received.

I will prepare a fact check report before the final report. This gives an opportunity for the District Council and the Town Council to comment on any factual inaccuracies and/or omissions. It will not present an opportunity for the examination to enter another phase.

Other related matters

The length of the examination

Plainly different plans cover different issues. Neighbourhood plan examinations are inevitably linear and are directly affected by the number of policies and the number and complexity of the representations received.

However, on average an examination of a small neighbourhood plan for a rural village (with approximately 15 policies) would take between 4-8 days. Larger plans may take between 6 - 15 days. These working days will be spread over several weeks. This takes account of the examination route map set out above.

In the case of the Lewes NDP I am anticipating being able to send the fact check report towards the end of October 2018.

Documents

I will ask the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) to display all examination documents and correspondence on its website.

Contact arrangements

My principal contact will be Alma Howell at the SDNPA. In some cases, information and updates may be sent both to that Authority and to the Town Council.

Andrew Ashcroft

Independent Examiner

Lewes Neighbourhood Development Plan

29 August 2018