

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE EMBLETON NEIGHBOURHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:

Christopher Collison BA(Hons) MBA MRTPI MIED MCFI IHBC

To Northumberland County Council - by email to David English (copy to Sarah Brannigan)  
and Embleton Parish Council – by email to Melissa Gilroy Clerk to Embleton Parish Council

Dated 3 February 2020

Dear Melissa and David

**Embleton Neighbourhood Development Plan Independent Examination –  
Examiner Initial Letter**

Further to my appointment to undertake the Independent Examination of the Embleton Neighbourhood Development Plan I am writing to clarify how I will conduct the examination which will formally commence on Monday 17 February 2020.

1. Communications

It is essential that the examination process is open and transparent to all interested parties. I would be grateful if the County Council could publish this email on their website. I will address all future communication to the County Council and send a copy to the Parish Council. It would be helpful if the Parish Council could channel all communication to me through the County Council, and that, when writing to me, the County Council sends a copy to the Parish Council.

2. National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

The most recent National Planning Policy Framework was published on 19 June 2019. The Planning Practice Guidance was most recently updated on 1 November 2019 (although the Government website states 1 October 2019). Both the Framework and Guidance could be further revised or updated during the Independent Examination. As a point of clarification, I confirm it is my intention to undertake the Independent Examination in the context of the most recent National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

The County Council has informed me the Neighbourhood Plan was submitted on 31 October 2019. I am providing an opportunity for any interested party, including the County and Parish Councils, to submit comments relating to changes to the Planning Practice Guidance following submission of the Plan, in so far as they are relevant to my consideration whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other requirements. Any comments in this respect should be sent to the County Council no later than noon on Monday 17 February 2020. I request the County Council should

forward any such comments to me and to the Parish Council, and ensure they are published on the County Council website.

### 3. Examination documents

The County Council has provided me with copies of the submission Neighbourhood Plan documents, and each of the Regulation 16 representations submitted during the publicity period. Regulation 16 representations have been submitted by the County Council and 8 other parties.

Those documents, and any other documents that may be sent to me throughout the Independent Examination, should be available for inspection by interested parties. This is best achieved through publication on the County Council website.

I have access to, and will take into consideration, background documents available on the Parish Council and County Council websites.

I have looked at the submission Neighbourhood Plan documents. Subject to my later detailed assessment I have not identified any obvious fundamental flaws in the submission documents that would lead me to advise the examination should not proceed. If I find that there are significant issues which may prevent the Neighbourhood Plan meeting the Basic Conditions and other requirements, that cannot be addressed through modifications, I will notify you during the examination.

The County Council have advised me what are regarded as the strategic policies of the Development Plan applying in the Neighbourhood Area.

I am providing the Parish Council with an opportunity to comment on each of the 9 Regulation 16 representations. There is no obligation on the Parish Council to offer any comments but this opportunity can prove helpful, especially where representations include matters that have not been raised earlier in the plan preparation process. I request the Parish Council should submit any comments in this respect to the County Council, no later than noon on Monday 17 February 2020. The Parish Council may, at an earlier date, submit its comments, or confirm it does not intend to submit any comments on the representations. The County Council should forward any Parish Council comments to me, and any comments should be published on the County Council website. Parish Council comments must not include new evidence.

### 4. Independence

From my initial review of the Neighbourhood Plan documents it would appear that there are no conflicts of interest that would call into question my independent status. I will keep that matter under review throughout the examination.



## 5. Visit to the Neighbourhood Plan area

After I have thoroughly reviewed the Neighbourhood Plan documents, Regulation 16 representations, and any comments of the Parish Council, I intend to visit the plan area as this will assist me in understanding the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan and points made in representations or comments, and help me decide if there are any issues to be clarified. I will undertake this visit on an unaccompanied basis as it is important that there should be no perception that I have heard additional representations.

## 6. Clarification procedure

I may at any time during the Independent Examination seek written clarification of any matters that I consider necessary. I will direct any request for clarification to the County Council and send a copy to the Parish Council. I will request any response is agreed as a joint response of the County Council and the Parish Council if at all possible. Any request for clarification and any response should be published on the County Council website.

I am proceeding on the basis that the examination can be concluded without the need for a hearing. At any time before I issue my final report, I may call a hearing if I consider this is necessary to ensure adequate examination of any issue, or to allow a person a fair chance to put a case.

## 7. Examination timetable

The main determinants of how long the examination will take are: the number and complexity of the Neighbourhood Plan policies; the clarity of supporting evidence; and the number and nature of representations. Assuming a hearing will not be necessary, and that the need for me to request clarification of any matters will not cause undue delay, I anticipate that no later than 30 April 2020 I will be able to send a confidential draft of my report to the County Council and the Parish Council to allow an opportunity to check whether there are any factual errors. This will not be an opportunity for any further representations to be made.

## 8. Procedural questions

A guide to Independent Examinations can be found at <https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/regulation/drs/drs-services/npiers-planning-guidance-to-service-users-and-examiners-rics.pdf> I would be pleased to address any questions relating to the examination process that the County Council or the Parish Council may have.

I should be grateful if the County Council and the Parish Council could acknowledge receipt of this email.

Best regards



Chris Collison  
Independent Examiner  
Planning and Management Ltd

