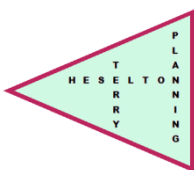


# **Independent Examination of the Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Examination Procedure Note**

**Terry Raymond Heselton BA (Hons), Dip TP, MRTPI**

**Independent Examiner**



**Terry Heselton Planning**

**16 March 2020**

I have been appointed by Northumberland County Council, with the consent of Lesbury Parish Council, to undertake the independent examination of the Lesbury Neighbourhood Development Plan.

My role is to determine whether the Plan meets the 'basic conditions' and other legal requirements, and to recommend whether or not the Plan should proceed to referendum, with or without modifications.

The independent examination formally commences on Monday 23 March 2020, and is being undertaken in accordance with the guidance to service users and examiners published by NPIERS<sup>1</sup>.

## **1 Examination Documents**

I have received hard copies of the following Submission documents

- Lesbury Neighbourhood Development Plan Submission Draft (November 2019)
- Submission Policies Map and Lesbury Settlement Inset (November 2019)
- Basic Conditions Statement (November 2019)
- Consultation Statement (November 2019)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report (October 2019)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (December 2019)

I also have access to extant development plan documents covering the Neighbourhood Area (including the Policies Maps), and the Publication draft Northumberland Local Plan which is currently undergoing examination.

Should I require hard copies of other evidence documents which I cannot access electronically, I will notify Northumberland County Council during the course of the examination.

## **2 Representations**

The Regulation 16 Publicity period closed at 5.00 pm on Monday 10 February 2020. Northumberland County Council have subsequently provided me with a copy of all valid representations received during the Publicity period and in the interests of openness and transparency I have requested that these are published on the County Council's website.

In line with NPIERS guidance I am also providing Lesbury Parish Council the opportunity to comment on any representations submitted by other parties at the Regulation 16 Publicity stage, provided such comments do not include new evidence. However I emphasise that there is no obligation on them to make any comments should they not wish to do so.

If I do not receive any comments from the Parish Council (forwarded to me via

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<sup>1</sup> Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service.

Northumberland County Council) within 10 working days following the commencement of the Examination I will assume the Parish Council do not wish to offer any comments. Any comments submitted by the Parish Council should be published on the County Council's website.

### **3 The Need for a Hearing**

The default position is for examination of the issues to be undertaken through consideration of written representations, unless the examiner considers that a public hearing is necessary to ensure adequate examination of an issue (or issues) or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put a case.

Based on an initial high-level assessment of the relevant documentation, including the Regulation 16 responses, I will provide a preliminary opinion as to whether the examination is to be solely by way of written representations or whether a hearing will be required.

However if I decide to proceed with the examination by way of written representations I will keep the need for a hearing under review as the examination progresses and advise you further should it be necessary to arrange a hearing.

### **4 Visit to the Plan Area**

I intend as part of the examination to visit the neighbourhood plan area in order to better understand the nature of the Plan and the Plan area, including issues raised through representations. This will be undertaken unaccompanied to ensure impartiality unless I require access to private land in which case I will contact the County Council in advance to arrange an accompanied visit.

### **5 Communication during the Examination**

During the course of the examination I will direct any questions or points of clarification which arise to my single point of contact at Northumberland County Council, Sarah Brannigan, who may in certain circumstances need to consult Lesbury Town Council in order to provide a fully considered written response. It would be helpful if all communication/responses from the Parish Council could be directed to me via the County Council. In the interests of impartiality I would request that no other party attempts to contact me direct.

### **6 'Fact Checking' stage**

On completion of the examination I will send a confidential draft of my report to Northumberland County Council to check whether there are any factual errors such as dates, sequence of events, names and so on.

The fact check should be undertaken in consultation with Lesbury Parish Council, and I emphasise that this is not an opportunity to make further representations.

I would request the County Council to provide a co-ordinated response. Ten working days are normally considered sufficient for this process.

I will endeavour to issue my final report within 5 working days of the receipt of any identified factual errors.

## **7 Openness and Transparency**

It is important that the examination process is open and transparent to all interested parties, and that relevant documentation and correspondence is placed in the public domain. I therefore request that this note and future correspondence between myself and Northumberland County Council concerning the examination, including any requests for clarification on specific points and the Council's response, should be published on the County Council's website.

If further clarification is required about the examination process I would be pleased to address questions raised by any of the parties with a direct interest in the examination.

Terry Heselton BA(Hons), Dip TP, MTRPI  
Independent Examiner  
16 March 2020