

# INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE KNIGHTSFORD

## NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXAMINER: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

Sandy Tubby  
Chair Knightsford NP Steering Group

Nick Cardnell  
Senior Planning Policy Officer  
Economic Growth and Infrastructure  
Dorset Council

Via email

Examination Ref: 01/AM/KNP

3 February 2025

Dear Mrs Tubby and Mr Cardnell

Following the submission of the Knightsford Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have a number of questions for Knightsford Parish Council (KPC) and Dorset Council (DC), to which I would like to receive a written response(s) by **Monday 17 February 2025** 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 Report; the Habitats Regulations Assessment Report; and the Regulation 16 representations, to enable me to undertake the examination.

### 2. Site Visit

I will aim to carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area during this week (i.e. commencing 3 February 2025). 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 DC and KPC.

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 **Monday 17 February 2025**.

#### 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 weeks of submission of the draft Plan. However, as I have raised a number of 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 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 KPC and DC websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

*Andy Mead*

Examiner

## ANNEX

From my initial reading of the Knightsford Neighbourhood Development Plan, the supporting evidence and the representations that have been made to the Plan, I have the following three questions for KPC and DC. I have requested the submission of responses **by Monday 17 February 2025**, although an earlier response would be much appreciated. All of the points set out below flow from the requirement to satisfy the Basic Conditions.

### 1. Date of submission to DC

**Question to KPC and DC.** I note from the Regulation 16 representation from DC that the Plan was submitted on 10 October 2024 and updated on 18 November 2024. Given that the Plan cover indicates that it is the October 2024 submission draft, what was the update (noting that the expectation is I am examining the Plan as submitted at Regulation 15 and consulted on at Regulation 16)?

### 2. Policy 12

**Question to KPC and DC.** The Regulation 16 representation from Nexus Planning on behalf of Woodsford Farms suggests, with reasons, the deletion of the phrase “... *and would have been* ...” from Policy 12.

I would be grateful to have comments from the Councils on these submissions.

### 3. Design Guidance

**Question to KPC and DC.** DC refers to various policies in the Plan having regard to the Knightsford Area-wide design guidelines and codes document (Design Code), developed by AECOM, and notes that there is no specific reference to the Design Code in the policy text. Potential issues may arise in introducing a specific policy seeking adherence to the Design Code, at this stage in the process, given the absence of relevant consultation in the Regulation 14 and 16 procedures.

Notwithstanding this, I agree that the Design Code deserves greater recognition in the Plan and a pragmatic approach, in the circumstance, might be achieved through an additional final sentence to the text of paragraph 4.3.3; for example: “*It is expected that proposals for development will have regard to the design guidance advice contained in the “Knightsford Area-wide design guidance and codes: April 2023”.*”

I would be grateful for the comments from both Councils on the suggestion.

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