

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE CHAPEL AND HILL  
CHORLTON, MAER AND ASTON, AND WHITMORE  
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:**  
Christopher Collison BA(Hons) MBA MRTPI MIED MCMi IHBC

To Debra Powell Parish Clerk Whitmore Parish Council (Lead Parish Council) and  
Peter Hamilton Neighbourhood Planning Officer Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough  
Council

(copy to Mark Kirk Planning Policy Officer Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council)

By email dated 2 July 2019

Dear All

**Chapel and Hill Chorlton, Maer and Aston, and Whitmore Neighbourhood  
Development Plan Independent Examination - Examiner Initial Letter**

Further to my appointment to undertake the Independent Examination of the Chapel and Hill Chorlton, Maer and Aston, and Whitmore Neighbourhood Development Plan I am writing to clarify how I will conduct the examination which will formally commence on Monday 15 July 2019.

1. Communications

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

I will assume the Lead Parish Council will inform and liaise with the other involved Parish Councils throughout the examination. I am willing to copy-in the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and/or the Parish Clerks of the other involved Parish Councils when sending future emails if that helps the Parish Clerk of Whitmore Parish Council.

2. National Planning Policy Framework

The most recent National Planning Policy Framework, that includes minor clarifications in respect of the July 2018 version, was published on 19

February 2019. Paragraph 214 of the most recent Framework states *“The policies in the Framework published in March 2012 will apply for the purpose of examining plans, where those plans were submitted on or before 24 January 2019”*. The Neighbourhood Plan website confirms the Chapel and Hill Chorlton, Maer and Aston, and Whitmore Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to the Borough Council on 25 January 2019. As a point of clarification, I confirm I will undertake the Independent Examination in the context of the most recent National Planning Policy Framework published on 19 February 2019.

### 3. Examination documents

The Borough Council has provided me with copies of the main submission Neighbourhood Plan documents (including a Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement and a Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement); and each of the Regulation 16 representations received during the publicity period (including a copy of the Borough Council representations). I have access to supporting documents, additional to the main Plan documents provided to me, on the Borough Council website and on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

All documents that have been sent to me, and any documents that will be sent to me throughout the Independent Examination should be available for inspection by interested parties. This is best achieved through publication on the Borough Council website.

I have looked at the main submission 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.

I have asked the Borough Council to advise me what are regarded by the Local Planning Authority as the strategic policies of the Development Plan applying in the Chapel and Hill Chorlton, Maer and Aston, and Whitmore Neighbourhood Area.

I am providing an opportunity for the Lead Parish Council (also acting on behalf of the other involved Parish Councils) to comment on the representations of other parties. There is no obligation on the Lead Parish Council to offer any comments but this opportunity can prove particularly helpful where representations of other parties include matters that have not been raised earlier in the plan preparation process. The Lead Parish Council should submit any comments to me, via the Borough Council, no later than 12.00 noon on Tuesday 16 July 2019. The Lead Parish Council may, at an earlier date, submit its comments, or confirm it does not intend to submit any comments on the representations. Any Lead Parish Council comments

should be published on the Borough Council website. Lead 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, representations, and any comments of the Lead 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 Borough Council, copying in the Lead Parish Council. I will request any response is agreed as a joint response of the Lead Parish and Borough Councils. Any request for clarification, and any response, should be published on the Borough 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 firstly 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 I receive timely and satisfactory responses to any requests for clarification, I anticipate that during August 2019 I will be able to send a confidential draft of my report to the Borough Council and the Lead 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

I would be pleased to address any questions relating to the examination process that the Borough Council or the Lead Parish Council may have.

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

Best regards

Chris Collison  
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