

# INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE UPPER MARSHWOOD VALE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

Charles Somers  
Upper Marshwood Vale Neighbourhood Plan Group Chairman

Debbie Turner  
Dorset Council

Examination Ref: 01/AM/UMVNP

7 November 2019

Dear Mr Somers and Ms Turner

## UPPER MARSHWOOD VALE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Upper Marshwood Vale Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have a number of preliminary questions for the Qualifying Body and Dorset Council.

### 1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received a complete submission of the draft Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement, the Consultation Statement and the Regulation 16 representations, to enable me to undertake the examination.

Subject to my detailed assessment of the draft Plan, I have not at this initial stage identified any very significant and obvious flaws in the Plan that might lead me to advise that the examination should not proceed.

### 2. Site Visit

I intend to undertake a site visit to the Plan area in the week commencing 11 November 2019. This will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The site 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.

### 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

I have a number of initial 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 within **2 weeks** from the date of this letter.

## 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 4-6 weeks of submission of the draft Plan.

As I have raised a number of questions, and may have others after my site visit, I must provide you with sufficient opportunity to reply. Consequentially, the examination timetable will 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 a copy of this letter and any respective responses to my questions, are placed on the Upper Marshwood Vale Group and local authority's websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

*Andy Mead*

Examiner

## Annex

From my initial reading of the Upper Marshwood Vale Neighbourhood Plan and the supporting evidence, I have the following preliminary questions for the Qualifying Body and Dorset Council (the Council). I have requested the submission of a response within **two weeks** of receipt of this letter.

The Plan allocates two sites for development at Marshwood.

### Policy UMV5.

The Colmer Stud Farm site, Marshwood, has an allocation within which there would be a new village shop and community hub, car parking to serve the church and the primary school and up to four dwellings.

The West Dorset, Portland and Weymouth Local Plan, adopted in 2015, does not include Marshwood as a settlement with a defined settlement boundary. Policy SUS2 states that outside defined development boundaries, development will be strictly controlled, having particular regard to the need for the protection of the countryside and environmental constraints, and be restricted to a series of typical rural buildings and uses specified under bullet points such as for agriculture, forestry or horticulture or related enterprises. The specified forms of development which would be acceptable do not include shops or open market housing. However, the final two bullet points are:

- “• *local facilities appropriate to a rural area or close to an existing settlement; and*
- *specific allocations in a development plan document and associated landscape and infrastructure requirements.*”

**1. Question to Dorset Council.** Given that a small village shop and community hub would each be a local facility appropriate to a rural area close to an existing settlement, and that the four houses would be a specific allocation in a document (i.e. the Neighbourhood Plan) that forms part of the Development Plan, please could the Council confirm whether Policy UMV5 is in general conformity with the Local Plan for the area?

### **2. Questions to the Qualifying Body.**

2.1 A new shop and community hub are proposed. I would be grateful for an explanation of how this would work, for example, would they occupy the same building? In my experience, small village shops in very rural areas lack profitability and cease trading; and community hubs are mostly in obsolete shops.

2.2 Paragraph 3.12 of the Plan states that the shop/community hub will be separately funded. I would appreciate information on the source of the funds and evidence to demonstrate the viability of a “new build” shop and community centre.

2.3 Could I be provided with the evidence to justify the provision of 30 car park spaces and also why that specific number has been chosen?

### Policy UMV6.

**3. Question for Dorset Council and the Qualifying Body.** The Three Counties Nurseries, Marshwood is allocated for up to five live-work units.

Policy ECON1 of the Local Plan states that proposals for live-work developments will be supported in locations considered suitable for open market residential development. Local Plan Policy SUS2 states that open market housing is restricted to the re-use of existing

buildings. Therefore, on what basis does the Council and the Qualifying Body consider that the allocation in Policy UMV6 generally conforms with the policies of the Local Plan?