

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE MIDDLEWICH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Patrick Whitehead DipTP (Nott) MRTPI

Bernice Walmsley  
Chair Middlewich Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Tom Evans  
Cheshire East Council

Examination Ref: 01/PW/MNP

Via email

7 December 2018

Dear Ms Walmsley and Mr Evans

### MIDDLEWICH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

Following the submission of the Middlewich Neighbourhood Plan ('the draft Plan') for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters.

#### 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 the submission of a Policies Map as indicated in Question 1 of the Annex to this letter.

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 will undertake a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area during the week commencing Monday 10 December 2018. 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 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 set out in the Annex to this letter some initial questions seeking further clarification from Middlewich Town Council and from Cheshire East Council. I would be grateful if written responses can be provided within two weeks of receipt of this letter. It is possible that I may have further questions, following my site visit.

#### 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. However, as I have raised some questions, and may have others following my site visit, I must provide the opportunity to reply. Consequently, the examination timetable will be extended. Please be assured that I will seek 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 the Town Council or Local Planning Authority has 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 is placed on both the Town Council and the Cheshire East Council websites?

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

*Patrick Whitehead*

Examiner

## ANNEX

From my initial reading of the Middlewich Neighbourhood Plan and the supporting evidence, I have the following preliminary questions for Middlewich Town Council and for Cheshire East Council.

1. There does not appear to be a Policies Map to accompany the Plan – only a Plan showing the Designated Area. Is the absence an omission from the documentation?
2. Policies TC1 – TC4 relate to development within the town centre. Policy TC1 makes specific reference to an adopted Town Centre Boundary, whilst Policy TC3 refers to the relationship between the town centre and the Conservation Area. Policy DH3 makes specific provisions for development in conservation areas. Will the Policies Map identify the Town Centre Boundary and Conservation Area boundaries for the purposes of applying the relevant policies?
3. The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 184) indicates that the neighbourhood plan should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area, and that it should not promote less development than set out in the local plan. Could clarification be provided regarding the accommodation of 1,950 new homes over the Plan period? Appendix A to the Cheshire East Local Plan identifies 525 dwellings to be provided by development of Glebe Farm, Middlewich. However, most of the Glebe Farm allocation appears to be outside the Parish boundary of Middlewich. The Appendix also indicates 347 dwellings resulting from allocations but neither the Local Plan, nor the Neighbourhood Plan identifies allocations. Can further information be provided please?
4. In the context of question 3, above, Policy H1 refers to new housing developments but does not identify a settlement or development boundary within which such developments would be supported. Is the intention that the Parish boundary, and therefore the Designated Neighbourhood Area, should form the settlement boundary for this purpose?