Bentley Parish Modified Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2040

Introductory Notes

Prepared by

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1. I am delighted to have been appointed as the examiner to the modifications to the Bentley Parish Neighbourhood Plan and I look forward to working with East Hampshire District Council's officers and the Bentley Parish Council team on this examination.

2. My first task, after reading the documentation, is to make a visit to the parish, which will be unaccompanied. I plan to make my visit in the early part of next week and this will enable me to re-familiarise myself with the village and the surrounding countryside.

3. On my return, I will prepare what I describe as the Initial Comments document. In most cases, I can confirm at that stage whether I will need to call a public hearing. In relatively few cases, I do have to delay that decision until I have received the responses to my questions raised in this Initial Comments document. Most examinations proceed based on the written material only. I normally allow each party three weeks to respond to my questions.

4. My default position is always to ask that any documents issued, whether prepared by myself as examiner or as a response, should be placed on the relevant neighbourhood plan website. This will allow interested parties and the public to be able to follow the progress of the examination. There may be some e-mail exchanges, which I initiate, where I am merely seeking to clarify matters or make logistical arrangements, which are not necessary to be placed in the public domain.

5. It is important that any examination proceeds in an open, transparent and even-handed way. My normal practise is to copy in both the district council and the parish council into any correspondence. Similarly, I will ask that in responding to me, each party copies in the other, so that everyone knows what has been submitted. The only areas where I will not be copying the parish council, relates to the contractual matters regarding my appointment which will be directly between myself and EHDC.

6. I have been provided with copies of the Regulation 16 consultation responses. Please be assured that I intend to offer the parish council the opportunity to comment on these Regulation 16 submissions, when I issue my Initial Comments document.

7. In the unlikely event, that I do need to call for a public hearing, I will contact Emma Hooper at East Hants by telephone and will ask her to liaise with the parish clerk, to find a suitable date and venue, hopefully in the parish. If a hearing is required, I will set out the arrangements and the matters to be discussed in a Notice of Public Hearing document.

8. Once I will receive responses to the Initial Comments, I will proceed to prepare my report, but if I find that I need to seek further clarification or an elaboration on specific responses, I will set that out in an Additional Comments note.

9. Just before Christmas, the Government issued a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 239 deals with its Implementation and it confirms that only those neighbourhood plans which are submitted after 12th March 2025, will the policies in the new version of the NPPF apply for the purpose of examination and I can confirm that I will be examining this neighbourhood plan in the context of the previous version of the Framework issued in December 2023.

10. Upon completion of my draft report, I will send it to both the parish council and EHDC for fact checking. A fact check is not an opportunity for either party to challenge my recommendations or conclusions but to point out any factual errors. It also helps to identify "typos". I normally allow a week for fact checking and I will then issue my final report which is sent to both parties although it is formally submitted to East Hampshire District Council as local planning authority.

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Independent Examiner to the Bentley Parish Modified Neighbourhood Plan