

Guide to Neighbourhood Plan examinations

1 Once a draft neighbourhood plan is prepared it is submitted to us as the Local Planning Authority for examination.

2 The documents submitted should include:

- a map or statement identifying the plan area
- a consultation statement setting out who was consulted together with a summary of the comments received and how they have been considered and where relevant taken into account
- the proposed plan
- a note setting out how the plan meets the basic conditions required by relevant legislation including:
 - a) the plan's compliance with national policy and advice in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
 - b) how the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
 - c) the general conformity of the plan with the local strategic policy
 - d) the compatibility of the plan with EU obligations.
- Any relevant environmental assessments (where appropriate).

3 We must appoint an appropriately qualified and independent examiner. We must also publicise both the proposed neighbourhood plan and details of how to make representations. At the end of the publication period we will send all representations received at this stage to the examiner.

4 A neighbourhood plan examination is very different to a local plan examination which you may have experienced before. The examiner is only testing whether the plan meets the basic conditions and other relevant legal requirements set out above. They are not testing the soundness of the plan or looking at other material considerations.

5 Generally it is expected that examinations will be held without a public hearing i.e. by way of written representations. However, the examiner may call a public hearing to examine a key issue in more depth and/or ensure a person has a fair chance to put a case. If there is a public hearing, the examiner will decide things like how questions are to be posed to others and the time allowed for questioning.

6 After the examination the examiner will send his report to us and the town council. The report will set out whether the draft plan meets the basic conditions and what modifications (if any) are needed to ensure it does. The examiner has three options, he can recommend that:

- the plan proceeds to referendum as submitted
- the plan is modified by us to meet basic conditions and then the modified plan proceeds to referendum; or
- the plan/ does not proceed to referendum

Making representations on the Proposed Plan

In making comments on the proposed plan you may comment on any of the information submitted by the town council. You should consider in particular whether the plan meets the basic conditions set out in paragraph 2 above. The basic conditions statement submitted with the proposed plan may help you understand what these are. It sets out how the town council considers they have met these requirements but you may disagree.

National policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> Although there is a specific section on neighbourhood plans, the neighbourhood plan should be in compliance with this and any other relevant paragraph in the document.

Local Strategic Policy is set out in the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/december-cabinet-and-council-papers> there is a specific section for Thame but the neighbourhood plan should be in general conformity with all policies in the core strategy.