

Planning & Development

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Mr. C. Tearle
Clerk to Bethersden Parish Council
(by e-mail only)



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Our Ref: BNP/Exam/07/20
Your Ref:
Date: 28th July 2020

Dear Colin,

Bethersden Neighbourhood Plan Examination

I write in connection with the above and further to my exchange of correspondence with the Examiner in February 2020 published on the Council's website.

As you will recall, I advised the Examiner of the Parish Council's decision to undertake an updated Housing Needs survey of the parish given that the housing need information that had been underpinning the draft Neighbourhood Plan had become out-of-date due the length of time it had taken for the Plan to proceed to its current stage. On receipt of the updated housing survey work, I would then consider the position with respect to the current Examination.

I note this work has now been completed and I thank you for providing me with a copy of the new Housing Needs Survey for Bethersden. Inevitably, the results look further ahead than the previous survey from 2012 and consequently consider different levels and types of new housing is required to serve the needs identified. It appears to be a robust and thorough piece of work.

However, given the current advanced stage of the Neighbourhood Plan, I do not consider it to be feasible to introduce this new evidence at this point in the Examination and to lawfully continue with the existing process. As previously discussed, I believe it is accepted that the evidence base for housing need, upon which the current draft Plan is based, is no longer fit for purpose. For both these reasons, I am writing to the Examiner to advise him of the Borough Council's decision to end the Examination. I shall, of course, copy you into this correspondence.



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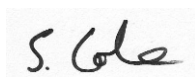


In order for the Parish Council to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan based on the updated housing needs survey outcomes, then I consider there are two options available.

The Parish Council could choose to scrap the current Neighbourhood Plan and effectively seek to start again, save for acquiring Neighbourhood Area status. Alternatively, it could revert the existing Plan to its Regulation 14 stage with the necessary re-consultation of relevant parties on an updated evidence base that takes account of the new housing needs survey. In either scenario, I would advise discussions with officers here to establish what elements of the overall evidence base need to be updated to ensure proper process is achieved and that policies in the Neighbourhood Plan remain consistent with adopted strategic Local Plan policies and the 2019 NPPF. I would be happy to meet you and any other members of the Parish Council to discuss the options for moving forward.

I understand that the Parish Council is due to next meet in September and I would be grateful if you could advise me subsequently of the preferred course of action.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Cole
Spatial Planning Manager

cc. Cllr A. Pickering; Cllr J. Blanford (ABC Ward Members for Weald Central)

