

**Dinnington Parish Neighbourhood Plan Examination**

**4<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

Dear Dinnington Parish Council

**Clarification Note from the Examiner to the Qualifying Body**

Following my initial review of the submitted Dinnington Parish Neighbourhood Plan and supporting information, I am contacting Dinnington Parish Council (as Qualifying Body) in respect of the matters set out below in respect of my initial comments, areas of clarification and Submission stage representations.

**The Submitted Dinnington Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

I am pleased to note that the Dinnington Parish Neighbourhood Plan (referred to below as the Neighbourhood Plan) is clearly presented, with policies distinctive from informative supporting text; and that the Neighbourhood Plan sets out a distinctive vision to meet defined aspirations and is supported by comprehensive background information and relevant evidence.

The Neighbourhood Plan is clearly the result of considerable and well-organised work by many people and as such, it comprises a document that appears to the significant credit of its authors. I am especially mindful that the production of the Neighbourhood Plan has required a sustained effort over a long period of time and that the final document is testament to the commitment and dedication of the plan-makers.

**Public Hearing**

Public hearings as part of neighbourhood plan examinations are the exception rather than the rule. In the case of the Dinnington Parish Neighbourhood Plan, I am satisfied that all parties who wish to do so have had the opportunity to state their case; and I am satisfied that I have sufficient information before me to proceed with examination without the need for a public hearing.

Dinnington Parish Council – Opportunity to Comment on Representations Made

Neighbourhood Planning Independent Referral Service (NPIERS) Guidance<sup>1</sup>  
Paragraph 1.11.4 states that:

*“The Qualifying Body will normally be given the opportunity to comment on the representations made by other parties...The opportunity for the Qualifying Body to comment on representations could be incorporated within an independent examiner’s clarification note...”*

I would therefore like to invite Dinnington Parish Council to respond to any of the representations made during the Regulation 16 (the Submission stage) consultation. This is not a requirement and I am mindful that only small number of representations were made at Submission stage, but it does provide a chance for Dinnington Parish Council to respond to any comments made, should it wish to do so - and I will take any responses provided into account as part of the examination.

Matters of Clarification

Having considered all of the submitted information, I have identified a small number of areas where it would be helpful to receive some further clarification. In this regard, I would be very grateful for any assistance that Dinnington Parish Council can provide in respect of providing a brief written response to the questions set out below.

Please note that a request for clarification on various points is a normal part of the examination process. In this regard, I am keen to emphasise that my questions are simply to provide me with further information and clarity and that they do not infer criticism of the Neighbourhood Plan.

I will ask Newcastle City Council to publish Dinnington Parish Council’s responses to this letter alongside the previously submitted information provided on the relevant page of the City Council’s website.

Noting the time and logistics involved in respect of Dinnington Parish Council needing to arrange to consider and respond to the questions set out, I am not imposing a strict deadline for a written response, albeit receipt within a reasonably short timeframe will help to ensure the timely completion of the examination the Neighbourhood Plan.

---

<sup>1</sup> NPIERS “Guidance to Service Users and Examiners.”

Please note that examination protocol continues to require all communications between the Dinnington Parish Council as Qualifying Body and myself as Examiner to be carried out via Newcastle City Council.

Finally, you will be aware that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in December 2024. This revision took place during the Submission Consultation period and consequently, prior to the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.

I confirm that, in respect of national planning policy, the Neighbourhood Plan will be examined against the NPPF as published in December 2024. Please be assured that at this stage, I do not foresee this resulting in any new or significant impacts in respect of the Dinnington Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this Clarification Note.

Kind regards

*Nigel McGurk*

**Nigel McGurk BSc (Hons) MCD MBA MRTPI  
Independent Examiner,  
Dinnington Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

### **Matters of Clarification**

#### **Policies Maps and Local Green Space**

The designation of Local Green Space comprises an important part of the Neighbourhood Plan. As I will note in my Report, Local Green Space comprises a restrictive and significant policy designation.

The individual Local Green Space plans provided in the Neighbourhood Plan are clear and well-presented. They show the precise boundaries of each proposed Local Green Space designation.

However, taking into account the overall number of proposed designations and the subsequent implications for Dinnington village as a whole, I am concerned that the absence of a single small-scale plan (or if necessary, more than one plan) identifying the location of each Local Green Space in relation to the village as a whole, runs the risk of detracting, unnecessarily, from the clarity of Policy DNP1 and from the Neighbourhood Plan which, in other respects, is exemplary in terms of its presentation.

Therefore, please accept this comment as advanced-notice that, in taking account of the significance and importance of Local Green Space, I will be recommending in the Examiner's Report that a small-scale village-wide plan identifying the location of each area of Local Green Space be provided within the Policy DNP1 section of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Policy DNP2**

I have three queries:

- 1) As worded, the Policy could be read as seeking to prevent the physical loss of the identified proposed Valued Village Assets. Is it the intention of the Policy to prevent physical loss and/or to prevent the change of use of the identified assets ?
- 2) Eight of the nine identified assets are in active use in a manner easily associated with the name of the proposed Valued Village Asset. However, the (former) Bay Horse is in use as a restaurant. Can Dinnington Parish Council confirm (and if possible provide some background information) that it is satisfied that the name of the proposed designation VVA8 is appropriate ?
- 3) On what basis might a decision maker determine whether or not there is any need or demand for a VVA ? This appears as a vague requirement and as set out, appears to run the risk of the loss of a community asset because it is not clear how a decision-maker might judge need or demand.

In a similar vein, it may be relatively straightforward to demonstrate that St Matthew's Church, for example, is not economically viable. As worded, the Policy would support the loss of the Church for this reason. Clearly that is not the intention of the Policy. Are you able to provide me with any further background in respect of the overall intentions of Policy DNP2 and any concerns that you may have with the Policies implementation ?

Please note that, in respect of the above comments and questions, I am mindful that the overall purpose of Policy DNP2 has regard to Paragraphs 88 (d) and 98 (a) of the National Planning Policy Framework and my queries are framed around the overall aims of Dinnington Parish Council and the detailed wording of the Policy.

Thank you for your consideration of all of the above.

As referred to above, it is normal for Examiners to seek clarification during the early stage of examination and the above questions are set out to further understanding and ultimately to help to support the Neighbourhood Plan's positive examination against the basic conditions.

***Thank you.***

---