

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE STONNALL NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:
Christopher Collison BA (Hons) MBA MRTPI MIED IHBC

To Lichfield District Council and Shenstone Parish Council

By email to Matthew Pullan, Senior Policy and Strategy Officer (Planning), Lichfield District Council; and Shirley O'Mara, Parish Clerk, Shenstone Parish Council

Dated 2 October 2025

Dear Shirley and Matthew

Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review Independent Examination – Examiner Initial Letter

Shenstone Parish Council has prepared a Stonnall Neighbourhood Development Plan Review intended to replace the Stonnall Neighbourhood Plan made (adopted) in April 2016. I have been appointed by Lichfield District Council, with the consent of Shenstone Parish Council, to undertake the Independent Examination of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Review.

1. Modification process

The Parish and District Councils have both expressed opinions, with reasons, that the Neighbourhood Plan Review includes material modifications which do not change the nature of the made plan. I have considered those opinions, and the Regulation 16 representations insofar as they are relevant to the decision I must make. In total the Made Neighbourhood Plan contains 23 policies, and the Submission Neighbourhood Plan Review contains 18 policies. The Neighbourhood Plan Review:

- retains 8 original Policies T1; LSH1; HC1; CF3 (renumbered as CF2); HB3 (renumbered as HB2); HB4 (renumbered as HB3); LE3 (renumbered as LE2); and LE5 (renumbered as LE4);
- retains 8 original policies H1; H2; H3; LSH2; CF1; CF5 (renumbered as CF3); HB2 (renumbered as HB1); and LE4 (renumbered as LE3), with modifications of the policy, (some of which include material modifications) to update changed circumstances including in relation to national and local planning policy and good practice; improve clarity; strengthen criteria or principles; or change the scope. These modifications do not change the nature of the plan;
- deletes 7 original Policies H4; COM1; CF2; CF4; HB1; LE1; LE2; that are no longer considered to be relevant, necessary, or appropriate; or are addressed through a new Neighbourhood Plan policy or through national policy. These deletions do not change the nature of the plan; and
- introduces 2 new policies, D1 (relating to design and character); and LE1 (relating to wildlife friendly development) to address additional issues raised as of importance to the community, without introducing new land allocations for housing or other forms of built development. These additions do not change the nature of the plan.

I have found the modification of policies, some of which are material modifications; the deletion of policies; and the addition of new policies do not change the nature of the plan. For these reasons I have determined under Paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that the modifications contained in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Review do not change the nature of the development plan which the modification proposal would modify. On this basis the Neighbourhood Plan Review will require independent examination but not a referendum.

I now clarify how I will conduct the examination which will formally commence today.

2. Communications

It is essential that the examination process is open and transparent to all interested parties. I would be grateful if the District Council could publish this email on their website. I will address all future communications to both the District and Parish Councils. It would be helpful if, when writing to me, the District and Parish Councils could send a copy to each other. Any advisors to the Parish Council or the District Council should channel any communication through the relevant Council.

3. National and Strategic Planning Policy

The most recent National Planning Policy Framework published on 12 December 2024, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Paragraph 239 of this latest version states "For neighbourhood plans, the policies in this Framework will apply for the purpose of preparing neighbourhood plans from 12 March 2025." The Neighbourhood Plan was submitted by the Parish Council to the District Council on 29 June 2025. The transitional arrangements will not apply in the case of this Independent Examination. As a point of clarification, I confirm I will undertake the Independent Examination in the context of the most recent National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, as well as Written Ministerial Statements.

The District Council has advised me what comprises the Development Plan, and what are regarded by the District Council as the strategic policies of the Development Plan applying in the Neighbourhood Area.

4. Examination documents

The District Council has provided me with either a hard copy or access to the made Neighbourhood Plan; the submission Neighbourhood Plan Review; and the other submission documents. Additional information is available on the District and Parish Council websites.

All documents sent to me throughout the Independent Examination, should be made available for inspection by interested parties. This is best achieved through publication on the District Council website.

I have looked at the submission Neighbourhood Plan Review documents. Subject to my later detailed assessment, I have not identified any obvious fundamental flaws in the submission documents that would lead me to advise the examination should not proceed. If I find that there are significant issues which may prevent the Neighbourhood Plan Review meeting the Basic Conditions and other requirements, that cannot be addressed through modifications, I will notify you during the examination.

The District Council has publicised the Neighbourhood Plan Review in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and published on its website all the representations that the District Council has decided were duly made during the publicity period. This includes a representation of the District Council.

I am providing the Parish Council with an opportunity to comment on the duly made Regulation 16 representations of all other parties, including those of the District Council. There is no obligation on the Parish Council to offer any comments but this opportunity can prove particularly helpful where representations of other parties include matters that have not been raised earlier in the plan preparation process. I request the Parish Council should submit any comments to the District Council, no later than noon on Friday 17 October 2025. The Parish Council may, at an earlier date, submit its comments, or confirm it does not intend to submit any comments on the representations. The District Council should forward any Parish Council comments to me, and any comments should be published on the District Council website. Any Parish Council comments must not include new evidence.

5. Independence

From my initial review of the submission Neighbourhood Plan Review documents, there are no conflicts of interest that would call into question my independent status. I will keep that matter under review throughout the examination.

6. Site visits in the Neighbourhood Plan area

I have visited the Neighbourhood Area. Any necessary additional visits to view parts of the plan area will be undertaken by me on an unaccompanied basis as it is important that there should be no perception that I have heard additional representations.

7. Clarification procedure

I may at any time during the Independent Examination seek written clarification of any matters that I consider necessary. I will direct any request for clarification to both the District and Parish Councils. I will request, if possible, any response is agreed as a joint response of the District and Parish Councils. Any request for clarification and any response should be published on the District Council website.

I am proceeding on the basis that the examination can be concluded without the need for a hearing. At any time before I issue my final report, I may call a hearing if I consider this is necessary to ensure adequate examination of any issue, or to allow a person a fair chance to put a case.

8. Examination timetable

The main determinants of how long an Independent Examination will take are: the number and complexity of the Neighbourhood Plan Review policies; the clarity of supporting evidence; and the number and nature of representations.

Assuming a hearing will not be necessary, and that the need for me to request clarification of any matters will not cause undue delay, I anticipate that by November 2025 I will be able to send a confidential draft of my report to the District and Parish Councils to allow an opportunity to check whether there are any factual errors. That will not be an opportunity for any further representations to be made. This intended timetable should be regarded as indicative only.

I should be grateful if both the District and Parish Councils could confirm in writing that they are willing to participate in the fact check of my emerging draft report on the terms indicated.

9. Procedural questions

A guide to Independent Examinations can be found [here](#) I would be pleased to address any questions relating to the examination process that the District Council or the Parish Council may have.

I should be grateful if both the District and Parish Councils could acknowledge receipt of this email.

Best regards

Chris Collison
Independent Examiner
Planning and Management Ltd