

PMC Planning
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The Street
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13th August 2014

Epping Forest District Council, Planning Department
High Street
Epping
Essex
CM16 4BZ
For the attention of Shanaz Zaman

Dear Shanaz,

Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan

Please find attached my report dated 13th August 2014 in relation to the above.

In order to understand the clarity of evidence an Examiner is likely to require when assessing a Neighbourhood Plan I would commend the Independent Examiner's Report into the Slaughham Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan dated 17th January 2014. This may be accessed via the Mid Sussex District Council website.

Section 3 of the Report sets out clearly the issues about which an examiner will need to be satisfied before recommending that a Neighbourhood Plan goes forward to referendum. In addition paragraph 6.4 refers to the need for the qualifying body to consult with certain organisations, the "Consultation Bodies". This requirement comes from Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations. I think it would be helpful if the Parish Council could provide a list of how each one of the organisations listed in Schedule 1 of the 2012 Regulations was considered in relation to whether to consult it or not.

Paragraph 7.17 of the Report deals with the need for the Local Planning Authority to issue a screening opinion as to whether Strategic Environmental Assessment is required. Subsequent paragraphs deal with what follows from an SEA. The Report covers the need for a non-technical summary (para 7.29); the need for consultation (para 7.31) and most importantly the need for a 'clear audit trail' (para 7.31). I commend this approach to both the Local Planning Authority and the qualifying body in this case.

The DCLG Planning Practice Guidance, under the heading 'Does a neighbourhood plan require a Strategic Environmental Assessment?' and 'How do you know if a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects?' (para 028, reference ID: 11-028-20140306) states:

"The local planning authority should put in place a process to provide a screening opinion to the qualifying body on whether the proposed neighbourhood plan will require a strategic environmental assessment. The qualifying body should work with the local planning authority to be sure that the authority has the information it needs in order to provide a screening opinion."

This places an obligation on the two organisations to work together to put the necessary audit trail in place. I recommend this approach and I suggest that at any future examination the examiner will be wishing to see documentary evidence that such an audit trail is in place.

Kind regards,

Paul McCreery