

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE UPDATED WESTCOTT
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

EXAMINER: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

Examination Ref: 01/AM/WNP

Tim Way
Chair - Westcott Village Forum

Duncan Clarke
Mole Valley District Council

9 February 2026

Via email

Dear Mr Way and Mr Clarke

Following the submission for examination of the Updated Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan), I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters.

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received a complete submission of the update of the Plan, including the draft Plan (as proposed to be updated); the Basic Conditions and Consultation Statements; the Regulation 16 representations; and the statements from both Westcott Village Forum (WVF/the Forum) and Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) in relation to whether the modifications contained in the draft Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the draft Plan would replace, giving reasons why.

This has provided sufficient information to undertake my initial determination under paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

Subject to my further detailed assessment of the draft Plan, I have not at this initial stage identified any significant and obvious flaws that might lead me to advise that the examination should not proceed.

2. Determination under Paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2

I am required to determine to whether the modifications contained in the draft Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the neighbourhood development plan which the draft Plan would replace. The purpose of this determination is to establish the appropriate examination process for the draft Plan which will, amongst other things, affect whether or not the draft Plan will need to be the subject of a referendum if it is to be made.

The Westcott Village Forum state in their Modifications Statement within the Plan (page 8) that the Plan period has been extended to 2039; updates to existing policies have been made to reflect updated evidence or policy or to add further detail to improve the policies; a new policy is included setting out how housing will be delivered over the Plan period; and new policies are added to cover sustainability, biodiversity, landscape and heritage assets. Policy WNDP2 has been amended to provide further detail and to influence windfall development. The Modification Statement states

that “these are considered material changes modifications which do change the nature of the Plan, requiring an examination and referendum.”

Mole Valley District Council has compared the policies in the made Plan and also noted the inclusion of four new policies. The Council considers that the changes go beyond material modifications and the nature of the Plan is more extensive in scope. Notwithstanding that the Council states that it does not agree with the Modification Statement in the Plan, the Council also considers that the Plan does require a referendum.

Having assessed all the written documents submitted, including the representations and relevant statements, I believe that the modifications proposed in the draft Plan are both material and change the nature of the made Plan. Therefore, I confirm that the draft Plan will be required to be examined under the ‘standard’ examination procedure set out in Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). As such, it should be noted that a referendum will be part of the neighbourhood plan process should the draft Plan proceed successfully following an examination.

Based on the assessments undertaken by both the Forum and District Council, this outcome should not be unexpected. Notwithstanding this, the relevant legislation does nonetheless require me to formally confirm with the Forum whether it is content for me to proceed in these circumstances on the basis of the standard examination procedure (as opposed to that for a modification proposal set out in Schedule A2). Accordingly, I would appreciate formal confirmation as soon as practicable from the Forum that it wishes me to proceed with the examination under Schedule 4B, in order to avoid any undesired delay.

3. Site Visit

Subject to receiving the Forum’s confirmation to proceed, I will aim to carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan during week commencing 9 February 2026 which will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

I anticipate I may have some questions whilst drafting the report, which I will set out in writing should I require any further clarification.

4. Written Representations

At this stage, I consider the examination can be conducted solely by the written representations procedure, without the need for a hearing. However, I will reserve the option to convene a hearing should I consider there are exceptional reasons for doing so.

5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is to examine the draft Plan (including conduct of the site visit) with a view to providing a draft report (for ‘fact checking’) within 6-8 weeks of submission of the draft Plan.

However, in the likely event that I have a number of questions seeking clarification as a result of my site visit, I must provide the opportunity for you to reply. This would mean that the examination timetable would be extended. Please be assured that I would seek to mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. The IPe office team will keep you updated on the examination and, in due course, the delivery date of the draft report.

If you have any process questions related to the conduct of the examination, which you would like me to address, please do not hesitate to contact the office team in the first instance.

In the interests of transparency, may I prevail upon you to ensure a copy of this letter is placed on the Westcott Village Forum and Mole Valley District Council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Andy Mead

Examiner