

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE RETFORD TOWN CENTRE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EXAMINER: Jill Kingaby BSc (Econ) MSc MRTPI

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Via email

Examination Ref:02/JK/RTCNP

26 March 2024

Dear Mr Brand and Ms Fukunaga

Having now reviewed all the documentation submitted with the Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan (RTCNP) and conducted the site visit, I have a number of questions for Retford Town Centre Neighbourhood Planning Group (RTCNPG/the Group) which seek clarification on some of the matters within the RTCNP.

In order to progress the examination, I would be grateful for responses to my questions to be provided by **Wednesday 10 April 2024**, if possible. All the points set out below flow from the requirement to satisfy the Basic Conditions.

1. Page 13 and Section 9. The text regarding “Engaging with the community” could usefully explain to readers that public engagement should take place at two stages of planning ie. (i) when plans, including a Neighbourhood Plan, are being prepared and made/adopted, and (ii) when planning decisions are taken. The National Planning Policy Framework, paragraphs 15 and 16, state that local people, organisations, businesses etc. should be engaged in plan-making so that they can help “shape their surroundings”. I consider that text could be added to section 9 of the RTCNP, to explain that plan-making, as well as decision-taking on planning applications, should be informed by good public consultation. Could the RTCNPG provide text which addresses this point?
2. Page 15, Section 11, informs the reader that the listed and positive buildings illustrated in Map 2 have been identified by Bassetlaw District Council ‘s (BDC) conservation team. Map 2 appears to replicate Map 37 of the Retford Conservation Area Appraisal May 2012. Is that the most recent depiction of listed and positive buildings and, if so, should a reference to the Appraisal be included in a footnote, for the benefit of readers and users of the RTCNP?
3. Pages 18 and 19 refer to Character Areas in the Town Centre. Paragraph 56 implies that there are 7, whereas Figure A shows 6. Could this be clarified?
4. Page 10, paragraph 22, and the heading to Figure A(4) on Page 23 refer to “Canon Square”, whereas the map on Figure A(4), paragraph 66 on Page 27, and Policy 4b on page 31, refer to “Canon Square”. To avoid confusion for readers of the RTCNP, could the RTCNPG confirm the correct spelling.

5. Criterion I) of Policy 2 “Achieving Well Designed Places”, on Page 27, seems to me to be missing some text. Should it be re-written along the lines: “provide safe access to places where off street parking and servicing arrangements have been provided”?
6. There are policies in the RTCNP which arguably include justification text. In the 2 cases below, I consider that some of the text in the policies should be moved to the supporting/explanatory justification sections as follows:

Policy 3 – Move criterion 1 to paragraphs 65-67, and modify criterion 2 to begin “Development proposals are required to demonstrate these significant views shown on Map 3 insofar as ...”

Policy 8 – Criterion 1 should be included in paragraphs 130-133 which describe the character of Significant Green Areas, and criterion 2 should be reworded to state “In the Significant Green Areas as shown on Map 9... development will be limited” or similar.

Does the RTCNPG have any comments?

7. The first sentence of paragraph 117, on page 43, requires amendment so that the approach to net gain in trees is explained clearly. Paragraph 128 also requires some re-wording. Having read paragraph 8.6.22 of the emerging (advanced) Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038¹, rewording of paragraph 128 on these lines could be made: “Development should demonstrate a 10% net biodiversity gain on site. In exceptional circumstances, compensatory off-site contributions could be appropriate. It is expected that layout and landscaping schemes will take every opportunity” Does the RTCNPG have any comments?
8. I consider that criterion 3 of Policy 7: Improving the Canal and River Corridors should be modified along these lines, to clarify more precisely where the policy should be applied: “Major development and minor development expected to increase pedestrian or cycling footfall alongside the River Idle and/or Chesterfield Canal, should contribute to the delivery of a waterside walkway which affords a continuous walking/cycling route along the Canal and River through the Plan area. Where appropriate, for example where development increases footfall, this could be secured via developer contributions.” Does the RTCNPG have any comments?
9. Housing in the Town Centre, page 59 onwards, refers to “NA”. Although this is the abbreviation for “Neighbourhood Plan Area” used in the Housing Needs Assessment document, I consider that its use on pages 59, 61 and 63 of the Neighbourhood Plan could cause confusion for readers. Should NA be replaced with RTCNPA, an abbreviation which is explained in the Foreword on Page 5 of the Neighbourhood Plan?
10. Paragraph 171 regarding housing for older people and wheelchair users refers to the Building Regulations, Part M4(2) and “M34(3)”. Should the latter be amended to “M4(3)”, notably so that it accords with the Building Regulations and with the Neighbourhood Plan’s Policy 10a, criterion 4?
11. In the interests of ensuring clarity, the first sentence of Policy 10a Housing Mix could be modified to read: “As appropriate to their scale,up to date Housing Needs Assessment which is currently ...”. Policy 10c includes some explanatory text, and I consider that the phrase “given its topography and the proximity of everyday services” should be deleted as the information has already been given in paragraphs 175 & 176. Does the RTCNPG agree?

¹ [Inspectors Report | Bassetlaw District Council](#)

12. Would the last sentence in paragraph 179 benefit from amendment to clarify that it refers to the emerging Bassetlaw Local Plan 2020-2038, “which” requires the optional target to be met? Also, should criterion 1 of Policy 11 include “where appropriate” so that it is not overly restrictive of any new development.?

Regulation 16 Consultation Responses

1. BDC questioned the need to include percentages of housing mix in Policy 10a, given that most of the housing schemes likely to come forward will be flat conversions. What is the Group’s response to this?
2. BDC also pointed out that Policy 10b: Housing Tenure should be modified to address problems regarding viability and the provision of affordable housing. Should the wording of the policy be changed as proposed by the District Council?
3. BDC also suggested that the word “Council” should be deleted from paragraph 239 (Monitoring and Review). What is the Group’s view?
4. Is there any written evidence to support Map 10b Assessment of Safety of Roads in the Plan Area? Nottinghamshire County Council questioned whether it should be considered as a definitive review of highway safety. Should additional text be included to explain the status of the map more precisely?
5. On paragraphs 146-151, Nottinghamshire County Council commented that a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan has been adopted which sets out the County Council’s aims and strategy, and a strategic cycling network. Also, paragraph 149 incorrectly refers to Arlington Way as a trunk road. The County Council further commented on a proposed north/south route through the town centre and the cycling ban on Carolgate. Should the RTCNP be amended to take account of the County Council’s comments?
6. On Transport and Travel Services, the County Council proposed that the RTCNP should add a statement or policy to ensure that any new development maintains or improves penetration for bus services including access to the bus station and bus stops. The need for future strategic transport infrastructure requirements is referenced in the emerging Bassetlaw Local Plan Transport Study and Retford Transport Assessment, and could be mentioned in the RTCNP. The County Council commented further on paragraphs 2.7, 3.22, community transport and taxi services. Should the Plan be modified to expand the coverage of travel and transport issues and address the points made by the County Council?

In the interests of transparency, may I prevail upon you to ensure that a copy of this letter is placed on both the Town Council and Bassetlaw District Council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Jill Kingaby

Examiner