

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE BYFLEET
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024-2029**
EXAMINER: DEREK STEBBING BA (Hons) DipEP MRTPI

Examination Ref: 01/DAS/BNP

Andrew Weiss
Chair Byfleet Residents' Neighbourhood Forum

Daniel Ashe
Woking Borough Council

6 November 2025

Dear Mr Weiss and Mr Ashe

Following the submission of the Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have five questions for the Byfleet Residents' Neighbourhood Forum (the Qualifying Body) and Woking Borough Council (the Council), to which I would like to receive a written response(s) by **Friday 12 December 2025**, if possible.

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received the draft Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement; the Consultation Statement; the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Opinion; and the Regulation 16 representations, to enable me to undertake the examination.

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

2. Site Visit

I will aim to carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area during the week beginning 1 December 2025. The site visit will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The visit will be undertaken unaccompanied. It is very important that I am not approached to discuss any aspects of the Plan or the neighbourhood area, as this may be perceived to prejudice my independence and risk compromising the fairness of the examination process.

I may have some additional questions, following my site visit, which I will set out in writing should I require any further clarification.

3. 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 a matter(s) come to light where I consider that a hearing is necessary to ensure the adequate examination of an issue, or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put a case.

4. Further Clarification

From my initial assessment of the Plan and supporting documents, I have identified several matters where I require some additional information from the Qualifying Body and the Council.

I have five questions seeking further clarification, which I have set out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if you can seek to provide a written response(s) by **Friday 12 December 2025**.

5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is to examine the 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, as I have raised five questions, I must provide you with sufficient opportunity to reply. Consequentially, dependent on the timing of your replies, the examination timetable may be extended. Should it arise, please be assured that I will aim to mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. The IPe office team will seek to keep you updated on the anticipated 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 that a copy of this letter is placed on the Neighbourhood Forum and Borough Council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Derek Stebbing

Examiner

ANNEX

From my initial reading of the Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan 2024-2029 (Submission Version dated July 2025), the supporting evidence and the representations that have been made to the Plan, I have the following five questions for the Neighbourhood Forum (the Qualifying Body) and Woking Borough Council (the Council). Where appropriate, the Qualifying Body and the Council may wish to work together in providing any response(s).

I have requested the submission of responses **by Friday 12 December 2025**, although an earlier response would be much appreciated. All of the points set out below flow from the requirement to satisfy the Basic Conditions. The

Please note that the Page numbers in the copy of the draft Plan that I have received contain errors. Pages 1-40 are followed by Pages 33-54. Pages 33-40 are therefore duplicated. The Table of Contents contains similar errors. In the Questions below, the Page numbers are corrected where necessary.

Question 1: Re. Policy 2 – Renewable Energy and Sustainability (Page 32)

On my initial assessment of the draft Plan, I consider that this Policy needs rather more justification and clarification, both within the Policy itself and in its supporting text.

More specifically, it requires a fuller explanation of “*energy generating infrastructure*” in the context of renewable energy. By way of example, many domestic installations such as solar panels and ground-source heat pumps do not require planning approval, and are within the categories of Permitted Development.

Can the **Qualifying Body** please provide me with a Note describing what types of “*energy generating infrastructure*” is this Policy specifically addressing, and set out the draft terms of proposed amendments to the Policy and its supporting text that will provide the necessary clarity for future users of the Plan?

Question 2: Re. Policy 6 – Flood Management and Figure 49 – Byfleet areas at risk of flooding (Pages 35 and 36, but should be Pages 43 and 44)

It will be important that the draft Plan reflects the latest available data on those parts of the Neighbourhood Area that are at risk of flooding.

I note that the Policy makes reference to the Woking BC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2009, whilst the References at the foot of Page 35 refer to the Woking BC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2015.

Can the **Council** please confirm the current status of these two documents, including whether they have been superseded by a more recent Strategic Flood Risk Assessment?

Figure 49 contains Flood Risk mapping from the Environment Agency dated 2023. It is likely that more recent mapping has been published. If so, can the **Qualifying Body** please provide me with an updated copy of Figure 49 that I may consider as a potential modification to the draft Plan.

The **Qualifying Body** should also take account of the representations regarding this Policy and its supporting text that have been made by Surrey County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority, the Environment Agency and by Thames Water. Some amendments will be necessary, and I therefore invite the **Qualifying Body** to provide me with a Note setting out draft amendments to the Plan, principally on Page 35, that I may consider as a potential modification to the draft Plan.

Question 3: Re. Policy 7 - Infrastructure (Page 37, but should be Page 45)

Thames Water has raised some representations regarding this Policy and its failure to address wastewater/sewerage and water supply infrastructure in the Plan area. I share that concern.

Can the Qualifying Body therefore please provide me with a Note setting out draft amendments to the Policy and to its supporting text to address the matters that have been raised by Thames Water, that I may consider as a potential modification to the draft Plan?

Question 4: Re. Policy 8 – Local Green Spaces (Page 38, but should be Page 46)

Surrey County Council has objected to the proposed designation of St. Mary's Primary School Playing Fields (Site S19) as a Local Green Space.

I have studied the accompanying Local Green Space Assessment (June 2025). Can the **Qualifying Body** please advise me whether this site is used on a regular basis for any other local events and recreational purposes, other than for its principal function as playing fields for the pupils of St. Mary's Primary School.

I confirm that I shall visit the site during the course of my site visit.

Question 5: Re. Woking Local Plan 2027-2044

Can the **Council** please confirm that the next stages in the preparation of the new Woking Local Plan 2027-2044 are expected to proceed in accordance with the timetable set out at Table 2 of the Council's latest Local Development Scheme (LDS) dated December 2024? (I note that there was some slippage to the planned publication of the Regulation 18 Consultation Plan from May 2025 to September 2025).

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