INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE CHART SUTTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2024-2038

EXAMINER: DEREK STEBBING BA(Hons) DipEP MRTPI

Examination Ref: 01/DAS/CSNP

Steve Hill
Clerk to Chart Sutton Parish Council

Tom Gilbert
Maidstone Borough Council

Via email

15 October 2026

Dear Mr Hill and Mr Gilbert

Re: Procedural Matters and Questions

Following the submission of the Chart Sutton Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2038 (the Plan) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have five questions for Chart Sutton Parish Council (the Qualifying Body) and Maidstone Borough Council (the Borough Council), to which I would like to receive a written response(s) by **Friday 13 November 2026** if possible.

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received a complete submission comprising the draft Submission Plan (dated July 2026); the Basic Conditions Statement (dated July 2026); the Consultation Statement (dated July 2026); the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (dated July 2026); the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Assessment Report (dated February 2026); and the representations that were received during the Regulation 16 consultation period (from 10 August 2026 to 21 September 2026).

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. Accessibility of Documents

I have seen an email from Messrs. Parker Dann to the Borough Council dated 21 September 2026 stating that the Borough Council's website link to the Consultation Statement was inoperative and took users to the Basic Conditions Statement.

I have investigated this issue with the Borough Council and have been able to establish that the website links to the Basic Conditions Statement and to the Consultation Statement were merely transposed, i.e. the link to the Basic Conditions Statement took users to the Consultation Statement, and vice versa. That position has now been rectified.

I do not concur with the suggestion by Messrs. Parker Dann that their efforts to make comments on the Consultation Statement were rendered '*impossible*' by the transposed website links. The consultation required the investigation of just 3 links, so minimal investigation would have revealed the Consultation Statement was available. I note that no other representors have raised this issue. Accordingly, I am satisfied that no substantive prejudice is likely to have arisen as a result of the transposed links and that users were able to reasonably access the Consultation Statement throughout the Regulation 16 consultation period.

3. Site Visit

I will aim to carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area during the week beginning 8 November 2026. 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.

4. Written Representations

At this stage, I presently consider that 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 any 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.

5. Further Clarification

From my initial assessment of the Plan and supporting documents, and the representations submitted at the Regulation 16 consultation, I have identified five matters where I require some additional information from the Borough Council and the Qualifying Body.

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 13 November 2026**.

6. 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, the examination timetable may be extended. Please be assured that, should it arise, 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 and any subsequent response are placed on the Parish Council and Borough Council's websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Derek Stebbing

Examiner

ANNEX

From my initial reading of the Chart Sutton Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2038 (Submission Version dated July 2026), the supporting evidence and the representations that have been made to the Plan, I have the following five questions for the Qualifying Body and the Borough Council. I have requested the submission of responses **by Friday 13 November 2026**, though an earlier response would be much appreciated. The points set out below flow from the requirement to satisfy the Basic Conditions.

1: Re. Policy CS2 (Land South of Amber Lane) (Pages 19-21)

Can the **Borough Council** please advise me whether the contents of Policy CS2 and the Site Principles set out at Paragraphs 5.9-5.15 in the draft Plan correctly reflect the Borough Council's policy criteria for the development of this site for approximately 35 dwellings, as set out at Policy LPRS8 and other relevant policies of the adopted Maidstone Local Plan Review (2024)?

Question 2: Re. Proposed Identification of Garage Workshop and adjacent setting, Chart Corner as a Non-designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) – Policy CS4 and Appendix C (Pages 29, 88 and 89)

Allcars Chart Sutton Ltd. have submitted a representation with extensive supporting material seeking the deletion of the above premises as a proposed NDHA.

I invite the **Qualifying Body** to review this representation and the supporting material and provide me with a Note setting out any points that it may wish to make in response to the matters that are raised by the Representor.

Question 3: Re. Representations by DMH Stallard LLP on behalf of B. Yond Homes Ltd. re. Land South of Warmlake Road

The representations submitted by DMH Stallard LLP on behalf of B. Yond Homes Ltd. indicate that a planning application (Ref. 26/500848/OUT) has been submitted for the development of this site.

Can the **Borough Council** please provide me with a Note setting out the details of this application, and whether it has yet been determined.

Question 4: Re. Policy CS9 (Horticulture) (Pages 48 and 49)

I am concerned at the significant length of this Policy. Part B of the policy contains 14 criteria which any development proposals will need to satisfy.

In my assessment, and although the policy is specific to horticultural developments, it is my view that Part B of the policy can be drafted much more concisely if it refers to development proposals needing to take account of other relevant policies in the Plan, particularly Policies CS3 (Part A), CS4 (Part B), CS5 and CS7, rather than effectively repeating elements of those policies within this policy.

Can the **Qualifying Body** please review Part B of this Policy and advise me whether it wishes to suggest any amendments to the text of the Policy, to take account of my concerns at its length, which I may consider as a potential modification to the Submission Plan?

Question 5: Re. Policy CS11 (Important Community Facilities) (Page 55)

The Borough Council considers that this Policy is incompatible with Policy LPRINF2 (Community Facilities) in the adopted Maidstone Local Plan Review.

Can the **Qualifying Body** please review the Borough Council's representation, and provide me with a Note setting out their response and, if appropriate, amendments to the text of the Policy to take account of the Borough Council's points of concern which I may consider as a potential modification to the Submission Plan