

# Over Hulton Neighbourhood Plan Examination

on behalf of Bolton Council



## Examiner's clarifying questions to Over Hulton Neighbourhood Forum and Bolton Council

### Question 1 (EQ1)

The parties will recall that I was appointed to examine the Over Hulton Neighbourhood Plan on 1 May 2024. At the time of writing, I have not seen the results of the Regulation 16 process (which I understand closed on 5 January), but I have recently revisited the Plan document and the information about it available online in preparation for the examination.

When preparing my proposal to conduct the examination, I had noted that the Plan contained a reference (in paragraph 2.6) to a planning application for a major development involving the creation of a championship golf course, over 1000 new homes and a hotel and range of other commercial facilities. It explains that the application, originally made in 2017, was conditionally approved by the Secretary of State. However, the last sentence of the paragraph then says that "Following submission of proposed revisions to the scheme it has since been rejected by Bolton Council". There is no further comment on the implications of this, and the paragraph is the only reference to these significant proposals in the whole of the Plan document.

In carrying out online searches recently to guide my understanding of the planning context for my examination, I learned that the Council's refusal of that planning application was by no means the end of the matter, since the decision was overturned on appeal in October 2022. In granting permission on its own terms, the Inspector also gave the approval of the earlier scheme (in July 2020, following a "call-in") substantial weight, especially since the appellants had made it clear that they would implement it were their appeal to be dismissed.

The submitted version of the neighbourhood plan is dated July 2022, and therefore does not take into account the implications of the appeal decision. This seems to me a very significant issue, and I would go so far as to question whether it is in anyone's interests for its examination to proceed without any acknowledgement of the radically changed planning context. Any reader of the document would be puzzled by the absence of any reference to planning permission having been granted for such a large development covering the majority of the neighbourhood plan area.

I would be grateful for the parties' response as soon as possible to my concerns before I consider the next steps.

I should add that I consider it appropriate for this query and the parties' replies to be published on the Bolton Council and Over Hulton Neighbourhood Plan websites, and I therefore ask that this be done at the earliest opportunity.

David Kaiserman  
Independent Examiner  
29 May 2024