

Statement from Fairford Town Council.

Following the recent independent examination hearing on the Neighbourhood Plan, Fairford Town Council was very disappointed to hear that, whilst the examiner broadly approved eighteen of its policies (with some recommended modifications), he rejected four key policies and could not therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum, which would be the normal next step.

The examiner concluded that, although the submitted Plan met the basic conditions in relation to national policy, he was not satisfied that it 'contributed to sustainable development' and therefore that it was fully compatible with EU obligations (both key requirements). The main reasons for this relate to the level of supporting evidence that apparently now needs to be included, especially with the number of heritage/environmental designations in Fairford and the community benefits claimed. On the positive side, the examiner noted that the Plan "sets out a genuine series of policies and proposals to promote development that is fit and appropriate for the Plan area". He also recognised that the Plan has been prepared in challenging circumstances, due to it being developed in parallel with the emerging Cotswold District Local Plan, and because of differing approaches to the choice of potential locations for further housing – the Neighbourhood Plan placing more emphasis on infrastructure and social factors.

Fairford Town Council and the FNP Steering Group believe that by taking the examiner's recommendations into account, and through further discussions with the District Council, landowners and other relevant organisations, a successful revised Plan can be developed. This will require some further work, which will take time and require further consultation through the same stages as the original Plan. The Inspector in the current Cotswold District Local Plan examination is supportive of this approach. Fairford Town Council will be applying for new grants to cover the costs of undertaking this work, and is also keen to ensure that the steering group has the support and expertise to complete the task successfully.