

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

FURTHER NOTE from the INSPECTOR to the COUNCIL

In RESPONSE to Council Doc F.10

[Council Response to Doc E.1]

I note all the responses to Q1-18 and have the following immediate comments:

Q6 – Programme

I will aim to commence hearings in September and provisionally suggest Tuesday 16 September for up to four days to consider strategic issues. However that will depend on other matters below and documentation still awaited, including responses to Q19-45 of Doc E.1, and whether Pre Hearing Meeting (PHM) proves necessary (*see below*).

Q7d – Initial Requests

The index to Doc A.2 is still not in an appropriate form – **this has already been raised with the PO.**

Q8a - Further Requests

It is worth mentioning that the map of allocations with site names and post codes is exactly what I need and much appreciated – thanks to whoever is responsible!

Q8b – Further Requests [see also Q15-16 below]

There are yet no cross-references in the Library List between updates and previous versions of documents. **Can these please be provided?**

If it is no longer expected that the GBSLEP housing study will become publicly available, how will the Council provide an update after its release?

Q9 – Relationship of the ESLP for Examination to the recent consultation on the Housing Choice SPD.

I am confused and concerned by the Council's response.

First, **what is meant by 'the proposed modifications to the housing policies in the Plan'? Does this refer to the provisions of the submitted ESLP itself, as modifying current policy, or modifications proposed to the Plan as submitted?**

Second, and more important, I must reaffirm that the Housing Choice SPD consultation is not a matter for this Examination, save as background information. The degree to which the ESLP relies on later SPD (and Neighbourhood Plans) could one of the issues of soundness for this Examination. Meanwhile, where there are issues of housing requirement, supply and choice affecting the soundness of the ESLP, these can only be addressed in the light of representations duly made during the its formal pre-submission consultation. The separate SPD consultation is not a proper basis for making or accepting representations on the submitted ESLP. In the event that the SPD consultation has given rise to a need for further Main Modifications to ensure the soundness of the ESLP, these must be considered and discussed as necessary during this Examination and made subject to further public consultation before my Report is finalised. In the extreme that a radical alteration is required, further consultation might be necessary before the Hearings. **Does the Council understand and accept this position?**

Q11- Late Representations

Please make clear in due course which versions of the XL Index and Docs A.2, A.3 and A.26 should be consulted to retrieve the late representations.

Q15-16 – Topic Papers and Evidence Base Updates [see also Q8b above]

There is an ongoing stream of late evidence, most due by the end of July but some with no submission date. I have already highlighted the negative implications of late evidence for the progress of the Examination. I strongly suggest that the Council avoid late submissions beyond the end of July unless an unforeseen material change of planning circumstances makes it essential. 'In a nutshell', we have to draw a line somewhere! Already it will be necessary carefully to list post consultation evidence and updates in my guidance note and allow representation upon them – hopefully within Position Statements for the Hearings. The result could be that Representors will have to be allowed extra time to prepare Position Statements. **Does the Council understand and accept this position?**

Pre-Hearing Meeting

In view of the foregoing, I am considering whether it would be advisable to hold a PHM. This would have to take place a minimum of six weeks before the Hearings and be subject to at least four weeks notice to all Representors. **My decision on whether to hold a PHM will depend on the Council's further responses, including to this note.**

B J Sims

20 June 2014