



Basingstoke and Deane

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c/o Local Plan Programme Officer
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Our ref: JF/MR/PS/Exam/2/8

14 January 2015

Dear Mr Fox,

Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Examination: Note of the Exploratory Meeting and possible next steps

Thank you for your letter of 19th December 2014 and note of the Exploratory Meeting which has been posted on the Local Plan Examination Website.

The Council are keen to respond to your concerns as quickly as possible. To that end, a report has been prepared to be considered by the Council's Economic, Planning and Housing (EPH) Committee on 15 January and Cabinet on 27 January 2015. This report outlines the issues on which you have asked for information, statements or updates, reconsiders the Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) for the borough, and establishes a potential job target range. It recommends the use of 850 dwellings per annum as a 'policy off' housing figure for the basis for further work on the Plan.

I note your comment that the plan is not in formal suspension and that the need to avoid consultation in the period after the pre-General Election 'cut-off' date means that some delay is likely and I am grateful that your diary would be able to accommodate most dates we may wish to programme the Examination, avoiding August.

The committee report referred to above also sets out an indicative timetable to enable public consultation to take place on any major changes to the plan, including potential additional housing allocations, following the May General and Local Elections. Work to test the impact of a higher housing figure on the borough's environment and infrastructure is already underway, with the intention of having agreed material for public consultation by the end of March 2015.

A timetable, which the council believes is suitable for taking the Plan forward in light of the concerns that you have raised is outlined below. Although this timetable is tight, the Council's current intention is for the examination to be held in September 2015.



January	Housing and Jobs Report to EPH Committee and Cabinet
March	Reports on updated housing strategy and other proposed major changes to the plan (as necessary) to be considered by EPH, Cabinet and Council and agreed as the basis for public consultation
May- June	Six week period of public consultation
June/July	Collation of results of public consultation
End July	Pre-Hearing Meeting
Aug/Sept	Prepare Examination Statements
Sept/October	Examination Hearings

I set out below the Council's response to the points you raise in your letter

	Issue	Council's response
(i)	A revised OAHN for the Borough, based on the considerations that are already set out in this letter.	Report to EPH and Cabinet in January proposing 850 as the basis for further work. Any updated figure, and the resulting updates to the Plan's housing strategy, will be subject to public consultation between May and June 2015.
(ii)	Sustainability Appraisal (SA) – Addendum to demonstrate clearly the sustainability implications for both option 3 and option 4, and the soundness implications of the east/west housing balance in the Local Plan.	Work currently underway and any updated material will be made available as background information for Council decision-making, public consultation and examination.
(iii)	An assessment whether the provision of around 850 dpa would be acceptable environmentally in relation to potential pollution on the Rivers Loddon and Test.	Work underway in association with the Environment Agency to be made available as background information for Council decision-making, public consultation and examination.
(iv)	An assessment on whether any of the changes to accord with the Inspector's concerns would require major new SA/HRA work, an SA/HRA addendum, or no new	Work currently underway and additional SA/HRA work may be required. Any updated material will be made available as background information for Council decision-

	SA/HRA work at this stage.	making, public consultation and examination..
(v)	An assessment as to whether the existing and proposed infrastructure would be able to satisfactorily accommodate the proposed growth to the south-west of Basingstoke.	Work currently underway to review the relevant evidence base including the Transport Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan as suitable. Updated evidence will be made available as background information for Council decision-making, public consultation and examination. The Council will prepare additional Topic Papers as background for the examination.
(vi)	Inclusion of the model policy on sustainable development in the Local Plan.	Agreed and to be included in updates to be provided prior to examination.
(vii)	Inclusion of the housing trajectory in the Local Plan.	Agreed and to be included in updates to be provided prior to examination.
(viii)	Inclusion of an employment target or range in the Local Plan.	Report to EPH and Cabinet in January setting out the starting principles for an employment target range.
(ix)	Strengthen the Local Plan policy on gypsies and travellers in line with Government policy, possibly along one of the three options discussed at the Exploratory Meeting.	Work is underway to commission an update to the current Gypsies and Travellers Accommodation Assessment which will identify needs over the whole Local Plan period. An updated policy will be included in updates to be provided prior to examination.
(x)	Detail for Strategic Sites, i.e. the major housing sites and Basing View – all that is needed at this stage is a commitment to provide insets and the appropriate level of detail, which can be discussed at an informal session at the Hearings.	Commitment to provide insets is agreed, with detail to be discussed at informal session at the Hearings as suggested. It is intended that initial work will be completed with relevant parties to inform discussions at the informal session.
(xi)	Affordable housing re-let information for the last 5 years.	Work currently underway and will be available as background information for the public consultation and examination. This information will be available in the coming weeks and can be made available to the Inspector as required.

(xii)	An update of the viability of policy SS10 for the development of a new station at Chineham, including the LEP's commitment and likely phasing.	Discussions with the relevant parties, including the LEP, are currently underway and any updates will be presented in a Transport Topic Paper which is to be produced to inform the examination.
(xiii)	Information on relevant housing market signals, as required by the PPG.	Work currently underway and will be available as background information for the public consultation and examination. This information will be available in the coming weeks and can be made available to the Inspector as required.

I hope this letter provides the clarity you require in how the Council is responding to your concerns and sets out a time table for taking forward the Local Plan examination.

If you require further information please contact my officers by email Jill.Fisher@basingstoke.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Ruffell

Councillor Mark Ruffell,
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure