

LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATIONS CAMBRIDGE CITY and SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

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Sara Saunders
Cambridge City Council
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Caroline Hunt
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambourne
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Dear Sara and Caroline

Local Plan Examinations – Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District

The Inspector has asked I pass on the following to the Councils in response to their letter of 22nd August 2014.

Thank you for your letter dated 22 August. I can understand the desire of both Councils to make good progress through the Examinations, particularly bearing in mind the importance of having an up-to-date plan in place (paragraph 12 of the Framework). I am currently working, with Mr Wood's assistance, towards identifying the Matters and Issues for the Examinations. However, the submission Plans are both over 200 pages, excluding appendices, and as you will be aware, the documentation for the Examinations amounted to some 26 large boxes. 15 of these boxes contained the representations made to the Plans. In the case of Cambridge City the representations fill some 65 lever arch files and for South Cambridgeshire there are 38 lever arch files. I am well aware, from experience at previous Examinations, that representors expect the Inspector to read their representations in full. Thus, whilst the Council's summary may be a useful starting point and aide memoir, it is not a substitute for reading the representations at first hand, which has been a time-consuming task, in addition to studying the Plans and the critical elements of the evidence base. The indicative timescales for Examinations set out in the Inspectorate's Procedural Guidance are based on the former LDF model, where a number of plans made up the development plan (see paragraph 1.5). It is unrealistic to expect that a similar timescale can be achieved for a full Local Plan, let alone the situation where two plans are being examined concurrently.

My approach to drawing up the Programme for the hearings is to have an initial block of hearings covering the strategic matters which can be dealt with at joint hearings. These matters are reflected in the draft Matters and Issues you have already received. These hearings will take place over a two to three week period, after which there will be a break of about two weeks which will enable me to identify any serious soundness issues that may indicate that the Examination(s) should be suspended. In the event that no fundamental problems are identified, the programme is likely to continue with a second tranche of hearings relating to my site-specific and or detailed issues relating to the Cambridge City Plan; followed by a third tranche of hearings relating to the South Cambridgeshire Plan.

A considerable stumbling block to confirming dates in a programme for the hearings appears to be the lack of availability of suitable accommodation. I have tentatively suggested that the hearings could start in week commencing 3 November, but I am advised that there is very limited availability of accommodation at both Council offices. In response to an email from the Appeals Team at South Cambridgeshire DC, I have been asked by colleagues in Bristol to ensure that the Local Plan Examination does not compromise the dates that have been fixed for holding the Highfield Wind Farm Inquiry. It is the Councils' responsibility to provide suitable accommodation for the Examination hearings and I urge you to make arrangements, in conjunction with Ms Alexander, as soon as possible.

I am not clear what you mean when you refer to 'interim preliminary findings'. The relevant Regulations and Guidance do not provide for the delivery of an interim report. After the hearings, I would normally expect to advise the Councils of any soundness issues I had identified and invite you to draft modifications to resolve those issues, but such preliminary conclusions would be without prejudice to my final report which could not be completed until the modifications process, if necessary, has run its course.

Turning finally to the CIL examinations, the charging schedule must be based on an up-to-date Plan and there is therefore no scope for undertaking the CIL Examinations in advance of the Local Plan examinations, although it may be possible to commence the CIL Examination whilst consultation etc. is being undertaken on any Main Modifications.

Given the numerous uncertainties involved, I am not able to provide you with any precise dates at the present time. When you have organised suitable accommodation for the hearings I may be able to progress matters further.

Laura Graham

Inspector

Yours sincerely,

Gloria Alexander

Gloria Alexander
Programme Officer