

Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031

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Mr Steve Baker
Planning Manager
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By email only

10 December 2018

Dear Mr Baker

Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031

Thank you for your letter dated 30 November. You raise a concern regarding the procedure I have adopted in relation to involving representors. From my reading, it appears that your concern stems from a misinterpretation of my intentions.

As you rightly say, I have promised throughout that representors would be given the opportunity to respond to the new written evidence produced by the Council during the examination, including but not limited to the 'homework'. That is precisely the opportunity I will be giving in December. I have decided to invite comments on this evidence alongside the draft main modifications put forward by the Council so that the Council's full plan-making response to the new evidence is clear. In short, people will have the 'full picture' in relation to the Council's evidence and position, and will therefore be in the best possible position to respond in full.

You also say, again rightly, that I have reviewed the 'homework' and draft main modifications put forward by the Council without the benefit of any written statement from representors. The purpose of reviewing those documents was to ensure that they covered all of the many points I expected them to, and to make sure I could understand them without the need for further clarifications. Similarly, I reviewed the draft main modifications to check that all of those indicated by the Council at the hearing sessions were included, to ascertain the reason for any omissions and to explore and remedy any apparent shortcomings in the proposed draft main modification wording.

It is only once the consultation on the new written evidence and the draft main modifications has been completed, and once I have had the opportunity to fully consider the representations, will I be able to decide the way forward for this examination. On this point I do not agree that my letter of 16 November [ED162] implies that I will not be seeking any further work or changes before I prepare my report to the Council. Indeed, I am in no position to decide that presently, and will not be until I have read and digested the representations made in response to the consultation.

For the avoidance of any doubt, following the consultation period, I will decide the way forward in the light of all the evidence and representations. There are numerous possibilities, including both that I could require further work or changes to the Plan, and that I could advance directly to

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preparing my report to the Council. Clearly, much will depend on the representations I receive and the conclusions I reach as a result.

Whatever I decide, I am of the firm view that the process I am following is a fair one. As I have already said, I have adopted this procedure so that people wishing to engage can do so 'fully sighted' of the Council's stance in relation to the Plan's soundness and the main modifications needed to remedy soundness problems.

I hope this clarifies matters. However, if you do have any questions then please do not hesitate to ask, as always via Mrs St John Howe. I shall ask the Council to place a copy of your letter, and this reply, on the examination web page.

Yours sincerely

Simon Berkeley

Inspector

cc. Mr Nigel Smith, Strategic Planning Manager, NHDC