

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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24 September 2019

Mr Simon Berkeley

c/o Ms. Louise St John Howe

By email only

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Dear Mr Berkeley,

Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Thank you for your letter dated 9 August 2019. This outlined a number of further questions and queries in addition to the five issues raised in your previous letter of 9 July 2019.

As requested, I am writing to advise of the Council's timetable to address these questions. The Council presently intends to respond in full to all of the queries raised across both of your letters by **Friday 29 November 2019** at the latest.

The Council acknowledges that this is some time from the date of your original letter. You will equally appreciate that your two letters ask for the Council's views on a wide range of issues that have necessitated a significant amount of additional work.

This includes a request for an 'appropriate and robust' review of Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) in light of the 2016-based population projections. This work has been commissioned from external consultants and is currently ongoing.

Work on the remaining issues and queries is generally well progressed. This involves on-going liaison with other parties as required including, but not necessarily limited to, Hertfordshire County Council in their role as education authority.

We anticipate having provisional answers to each of the individual queries during October. However, it will then be necessary to review these holistically to inform the Council's position in the round. This will include taking advice from Counsel to the extent considered appropriate.

Political control of the Council changed in May 2019 and we have a new joint administration between the Labour & Co-operative and Liberal Democratic parties. This followed a long-period of Conservative control of the Council throughout the Local Plan examination / process to that point.

We remain in something of a transitional period where it has been necessary to bring Members who did not have direct or in-depth involvement in earlier stages of the Plan rapidly 'up to speed'. They are determined to gain a full understanding of the issues and timetables associated with key projects they have inherited from the previous administration and to ensure they address the priorities they have identified as best they can.

It is therefore necessary to allow sufficient time for appropriate briefing on and consideration of the provisional answers identified above. In turn this will assist with obtaining the political clearance that is required for any response to be submitted for your consideration.

Finally we have allowed for a small margin of flexibility. In particular this allows for the fact that wider (political) events may impact upon the availability of the Council's senior leadership and / or key officers to consider these matters during October and November 2019.

In the context above we have sought to identify a realistic but pragmatic deadline for responding. We are acutely aware that to provide you with a target date and then miss it could adversely impact your programming of this and other examinations in which you are involved.

I would like to assure you that this work is viewed corporately as a high priority. If the Council is in a position to submit its full response ahead of the date above it will make every effort to do so.

Equally, the outcomes of this additional work remain unknown at this stage. We will update you at the earliest opportunity if:

- i. the work necessitated by your various requests raises any issues that require further consideration prior to submitting a response; and / or
- ii. there are any other currently unforeseen circumstances or delays that would substantively affect the timetable above.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Paul Clark
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Planning & Transport
North Hertfordshire District Council