

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
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25th September 2020

By email
Stephen Davies
Operations Manager - Local Plans, Inquiries and Costs

Dear Mr Berkeley,

Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Thank you for your letter of 24 September 2020.

I am writing to confirm that a requisition to call an extraordinary meeting of North Hertfordshire District Council was made on the evening of 22 September 2020 by ten Liberal Democrat members to consider the following motion:

The council notes that the projected housing need for North Hertfordshire has reduced as a result of the latest predictions by the Office for National Statistics.

The council believes that the proposed allocation of housing sites in the Local Plan should be reduced to reflect this reduction in projected need and instructs officers to convey this to the Inspector as soon as possible and carry out any review work requested by the Inspector as a result.

As you may recall, political control of the Council changed in May 2019 and we presently have a joint administration between the Labour & Co-operative and Liberal Democrat parties. With regard to the timeframe for consideration of this motion, (which at this stage is a request for an issue to be considered by this Council -not a decision) an Extraordinary Meeting of the Full Council is scheduled for 8 October 2020 at 7.30pm. Officers are preparing a report to inform the members' consideration of the motion, which has to be published five clear working days before the meeting.

Unfortunately, the Council's constitutional arrangements do not allow a meeting to be held to consider the motion prior to the commencement of the scheduled hearings on 28 September 2020 so this motion will not be determined by that time. In any event time needs to be spent by officers in preparing a comprehensive report and QC's advice explaining the implications of the proposed motion for Members and those interested need to be given a reasonable opportunity to consider that report before the motion is debated.

However, in light of the fact that the motion cannot be determined before 28 September, and being fully aware of all the potential implications of the motion for the topics to be discussed at those hearings and potentially for the content of the plan, the Council considers that the sensible way forward is for the oral hearings to be adjourned to 12 October 2020.

The Council is of the view that the overall timetable of the hearings need not be affected. As currently we have two days unallocated together with a day and a half also held in reserve within the period 12 October to 23 October 2020. The Council would hope that the three Matters that were due to be heard in the week commencing 28 September (Matters 21; 22 and 24) could be reprogrammed into those two remaining weeks at the start and that all the oral hearings into the additional Matters (Matters 23; 25 to 29) could still take place within that currently scheduled two week period.

You may feel that in an abundance of caution it would be prudent to earmark two days following 23 October 2020 as over spill days.

This would allow for the oral hearings to re-commence in an efficient manner if the motion to Full Council is not approved with no effect on the overall timetable. If the motion is approved, then I will write to you again with a suggested way forward.

The Council therefore requests that you adjourn the hearings until 12 October 2020.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Fullstone
Director Regulatory Services