

CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

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our ref:
your ref:
date: 09 January 2013
respondent ID:

Inspector: Simon Berkeley BA MA MRTPI
Programme Officer: Michelle Haworth

Examination Office
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Council Offices
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Dear Mr Hirst,

Examination of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy

Thank you for your letter dated 11 December 2012.

Further to your request, and in the interest of positively progressing matters, I agree to effectively suspend the examination until the end of June. In effect, the examination will now resume on Monday 1 July. In the meantime, unless I recommence the examination earlier at your request, no further evidence from any party will be accepted.

I welcome the steps the Council has taken to bolster the staff resource focussed on the Core Strategy. It is likely that this will be an important factor influencing the timely completion of the work to be done which you have set out.

On this point, notwithstanding the additional resources provided, I do still have reservations. On the face of it, six months appears an ambitious timescale for completing the significant level of work involved, and is likely to prove challenging to say the least. To help clarify matters in this regard, I would be grateful if you would set out in a note to me the steps to be taken in some detail, and the period needed for each. A copy of a project plan or chart would be very useful in this respect. I would also ask that you keep me appraised of progress on at least a monthly basis, and let me know when key milestones are met.

You ask about the process relating to main modifications and consultation. It is clearly probable that the revised evidence will lead to the need for modifications to the plan, so that the Core Strategy reflects the evidence underpinning it. Where this is so, I will not be able to recommend the 'main modifications' necessary to make the plan sound unless the Council makes a specific written request to me under section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). In order for me to make these changes, and any other main modifications identified as being necessary through the Examination process, you will need to formally notify me in writing that the Council is requesting me to make such modifications under section 20(7C).

Assuming that you are going to make such a request, on the resumption of the examination I will need a schedule of the main modifications you would wish me to consider. It is important to remember that the document I am examining is that originally submitted, and any modifications you consider necessary to address soundness issues are subject to consideration through the examination process.

My main concern at this time is that of cumulative change – that is, that the Core Strategy might in total end up being substantially different from the submitted version (the one I am examining). You will recall that this is among the issues I referred to in my earlier letter. In that case it may not be possible for me to recommend the necessary main modifications needed to make it sound, despite the intention of section 20(7C) of the 2004 Act. Therefore, you should bear in mind the potential implications of seeking changes.

Turning to the issue of involvement, I should stress that all main modifications should be the subject of proper consultation. It is highly likely that main modifications identified as being necessary as a result of the update to the evidence base will need to be consulted on before hearings can commence. I will give a clear steer on all of this at the appropriate time, once I have seen the updated evidence and the main modifications proposed.

Please find enclosed a guidance note I have prepared. It is intended to offer some additional advice on some of the issues covered in this letter.

I trust that you find both this letter and the guidance note helpful, and in the spirit of assistance I am happy to answer any questions you may have in relation to procedural issues. I will do all I can to help the Council in relation to the way forward, although you will appreciate the restricted nature of my role in this regard and that any advice given is without prejudice.

Please ensure that your letter of 11 December, and this letter and attachment, are placed on the Examination web site.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Berkeley

Inspector