
Examination of the Watford Local Plan

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INSPECTOR'S NOTE NO. 3: MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS, WRITTEN STATEMENTS, AND HEARINGS PROGRAMME

Introduction

This note sets out the matters, issues and questions that will help me to decide if the Plan is sound and legally compliant and, if not, how it could be modified to ensure that it is (**Annex 2**). It also includes advice on submitting written statements (**Annex 1**), and a programme for the hearings sessions which will start at 9.30 on Tuesday 18 January 2022 (**Annex 3**).

This note also sets the following deadlines:

- **midday on Wednesday 25 November 2021** - any representor that wishes to exercise their right to be heard needs to inform the Programme Office that they wish to participate and specify which hearing session(s).
- **midday on Thursday 2 December 2021** - written statements for matters 1 to 10 to be received by the Programme Officer.
- **midday on Thursday 9 December 2021** - written statements for matters 11 to 17 to be received by the Programme Officer.

The Council's response to my preliminary questions was published on 15 October 2021¹. A revised version of the response was published on 25 October; this included revised responses to PQ18 and PQ19 to correctly set out the five year housing land requirement². An updated schedule of the Council's proposed main modifications to the Plan was published on 25 October 2021³. That schedule includes all of the potential

¹ ED24.

² ED24A.

³ ED25.

modifications proposed in response to my preliminary questions and supersedes the schedule published on 13 September 2021⁴. The Council has also prepared a schedule of proposed changes to the Policies Map which was published on 25 October 2021⁵.

Where relevant, I refer to the Council's proposed main modifications, changes to the Policies Map, and other responses to my preliminary questions in my matters, issues and questions. I will take account of the Council's proposed main modifications, along with all of the published evidence, regulation 19 representations, and written statements in coming to my conclusions at the end of the examination. However, I can only recommend main modifications if I decide that they are essential to make the Plan sound or legally compliant. I cannot recommend a modification because it would "improve" the Plan, irrespective of the wishes of the Council or anyone else.

Hearing Sessions

The hearing sessions are due to take place on 9 days during the following periods:

- Week 1: Tuesday 18 January to Thursday 20 January 2022
- Week 2: Tuesday 25 January to Thursday 27 January 2022
- Week 3: Tuesday 8 February to Thursday 10 February 2022

Tuesday 22 to Thursday 24 February are set aside as reserve days.

Details of how the hearings will be conducted, either by physically attending, online, or a combination of the two will be determined in due course. Irrespective of that, all of the hearing sessions will be public event and details of how they can be observed will also be published nearer the time.

Only those who have made valid representations under regulation 20 (ie in response to the Plan published for consultation in January 2021) seeking to change the Plan have a right to be heard (ie participate at a hearing session). Written representations carry the same weight as those made orally at a hearing session. Participation at the hearings is therefore only likely to be beneficial if you have particular points to contribute in response to the specific questions set out in Annex 2.

Any representor that wishes to exercise their right to be heard must inform the Programme Officer by midday on Wednesday 25 November 2021. You must do this regardless of what you may have indicated in your representations to the Council. If you do not contact the

⁴ ED9.

⁵ ED26.

Programme Officer by that date, it will be assumed that you do not wish to be heard and you will not be listed as a participant.

Representors who do wish to participate should indicate in their response to the Programme Officer the relevant matter(s) and issue(s) as set out in Annex 2. Whilst no one has a right to be heard more than once, I will endeavour to allow participation in those matters and issues requested provided that there are relevant representations and it would not result in repetitive contributions to the discussions.

Representors who are not seeking changes to the Plan, including those who have made representations supporting it, do not have a right to take part in the hearings. However, I may invite additional participants if I decide that it would assist me in determining the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan.

Written statements

Written statements in response to my matters, issues and questions must be received by the Programme Officer by the following deadlines:

- **Midday on Thursday 2 December 2021** – statements for matters 1 to 10.
- **Midday on Thursday 9 December 2021** – statements for matters 11 to 17.

Information about the format, content and length of written statements is set out in **Annex 1**.

Matters and Issues

The matters, issues and questions that I will consider during the examination, and which any written statements should address, are set out in **Annex 2**.

William Fieldhouse

INSPECTOR

2 November 2021