

Examination of the South Worcestershire Development Plan

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NOTES OF THE STAGE 2 PRE-HEARING MEETING

Held at the Worcester University Arena, Hylton Road, Worcester WR2 5JN

On Tuesday 13 January 2015 at 11.00am

1. **Opening and introductions:**

The Inspector introduced himself and the Programme Officer. The Council members and officers who were present introduced themselves.

2. **Purpose of the meeting**

The inspector explained that the purpose of the meeting was to bring those present up to date on the examination process so far, and to outline the arrangements for the Stage 2 hearings.

3. **The examination process so far**

The Inspector outlined the key points from his *Explanatory Note on the Examination Process* (previously circulated).

4. **Points from the Inspector's Stage 2 Guidance Note:**

The Inspector outlined the key points from his *Guidance Note* for Stage 2 of the examination (previously circulated).

5. **Question and answer session**

Question: What are the benefits of and arrangements for coordinating participation at the examination with like-minded respondents?

Answer: The Inspector said that, where large numbers of people have made similar representations, it would be helpful if one or two people who were well-prepared were to represent others at the relevant hearings. The Programme Officer explained that due to data protection constraints she was unable to circulate the names and addresses of respondents. However she was willing to contact relevant respondents if a potential spokesperson could be identified.

Question: What would happen to the SWDP, if after the 7 May the political make up of Malvern Hills changed and support for the SWDP withdrawn?

Answer: The Inspector said that this would be a matter for the Councils. They are legally entitled to withdraw the Plan if they so decide, but unless and until the Plan was formally withdrawn he would continue his examination of it.

Question: How would respondents know whether they should participate at Stage 2a, 2b or 2c?

Answer: The Inspector referred to the overall timetable for Stage 2 (previously circulated) which includes three blocks of hearing sessions – Stage 2a, Stage 2b and Stage 2c. He explained that those invited to participate in each block of hearings would be sent a copy of the relevant timetable, together with the Matters, Issues and Questions, at least six weeks beforehand.

The blocks of hearings will cover the following matters:

Stage 2a – Policies SWDP 1 to 7 inclusive (excluding matters resolved at Stage 1), and site allocation policies SWDP 45 & 56

Stage 2b – Policies SWDP 8 to 42 inclusive, 62 & 63

Stage 2c – Site allocation policies SWDP 43, 44, 46-55 inclusive and 57-61 inclusive.

Proposed Modifications and Annexes to the Plan will be dealt with at the same time as the policies to which they are relevant.

Question: Would the Inspector be producing a statement prior to the hearings, explaining the criteria he would use to decide whether the tests of soundness had been met?

Answer: The Inspector explained that the Matters, Issues and Questions that he would produce for each hearing session, would set out the information needed by him to determine whether the Plan is sound. Participants should address these questions in their statements and/or at the hearings. However, if participants had additional matters which were relevant to the soundness of the Plan, these could also be raised at the hearings.

Question: If an allocated site, whether large or small were found to be unsound, what would the process be for identifying a replacement site?

Answer: The Inspector explained that in this situation he would look to the Councils in the first instance to assess and identify any necessary replacement provision. Whilst he was reluctant to speculate further, the possibility of further consultation on main modifications to the Plan could not be ruled out. The significance of any further proposed modification to the Plan would determine whether or not additional public consultation was needed.

Question: Is a draft timetable for Stage 2c available?

Answer: The timetable for Stage 2b will be issued on Monday 9 March 2015, at the same time as the Matters, Issues and Questions for 2c. A draft timetable will not be issued.

Question: What is the deadline for Statements of Common Ground (SoCG)?

Answer: The Inspector confirmed that the deadline is the same as that for hearings statements. However if the SoCG was not finalised at that point, then the latest available draft should be submitted.

Question: When would the Inspector carry out his site visits?

Answer: The Inspector explained that he would carry out some preliminary unaccompanied site visits before the hearings. He would then consider the need for further site visits on a case by case basis, once the site had been the subject of a hearing. The Inspector intended to carry out all his site visits on an unaccompanied basis, unless a site was not visible from public vantage points.

6. **Close**

The Inspector thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting at 11.45am.