



ST ALBANS STRATEGIC LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031 EXAMINATION

Procedural Note and Invitation to Attend the Initial Hearing Session on Issue 1: The Duty to Co-operate

1. My Note to the Council dated 22nd August 2016 sets out a number of concerns regarding legal compliance in relation to whether or not the duty to co-operate has been met and whether any co-operation that has been undertaken has been based on an appropriate assessment of issues that cross local boundaries, particularly but not exclusively with regard to overall housing provision. I stress that I have currently not reached a firm conclusion that the Strategic Local Plan (SLP) is not legally compliant and/or not sound.
2. An Initial Hearing Session will therefore be held, starting at 14.00 on Wednesday 26th October 2016, at which the Council's overall approach in relation to the duty to co-operate will be discussed. The meeting will address the questions set out in the attached 'Questions and Agenda'.
3. Over 40 representors stated that, in their opinion, the duty to co-operate has not been met and that they would wish to attend a hearing session. Although normally anyone who has made a representation must, if they request, be given the opportunity to attend a hearing, this relates to those 'seeking to change a published local plan'¹. I would describe the duty to co-operate primarily as a procedural requirement (although clearly there may be implications for the content of the Plan) and that those seeking to change the SLP would have the opportunity to discuss their detailed concerns, for example on housing or employment provision, at the relevant topic-focussed hearing session. I also consider that over 40 participants is too many to accommodate satisfactorily around the table.
4. On this basis therefore, together with the City and District Council, I am inviting (through this Note) representatives from the Councils of Central Bedfordshire, Dacorum, Hertsmere, Luton, North Hertfordshire, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield, together with Hertfordshire County Council, to sit at the table. They have all submitted representations and are important bodies on whom the requirement to co-operate falls. I am also inviting the Home Builders Federation representative (who made relevant observations in his response) because he may be able to provide a more strategic overview.
5. In the interests of fairness, towards the end of the session I shall be inviting brief comments from those sitting in the public gallery and allowing the City and District Council to respond if necessary.
6. The attached sheet includes a number of questions and I invite responses to those questions from the invitees. Any statements on these matters should be sent to the Programme Officer by midday on Friday 7th October. They will be placed on the Examination web-page as soon as possible. If you have any questions regarding the approach being taken, or any associated matters, please contact the Programme Officer, whose details are at the foot of the page.

David Hogger

Inspector

¹ Planning Practice Guidance Local Plans: para 023
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