

Independent Examination of Wycombe Delivery and Site Allocations Plan

GUIDANCE NOTE

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Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Guidance Note is to explain procedural and administrative matters relating to the examination of the Wycombe Delivery and Site Allocations Plan (DSA)
- 1.2 Hearing sessions into the Plan will commence on **Tuesday 18 December 2012**. An initial outline of the schedule is attached to these notes. This may be subject to change and, if necessary, a further programme will be issued. A pre-hearing meeting is not being held. Participants are advised to make use of the examination page on the Council's website where further information including relevant documents can be found.

Inspector and Programme Officer

- 2.1 Paul Crysell BSc MSc MRTPI has been appointed to consider the soundness of the Plan. His role is to consider whether or not the Plan is sound and if the requirements of the relevant legislation and regulations have been met. The Inspector will focus on the soundness criteria set out in paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), i.e. whether the Plan has been positively prepared, is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The Council will rely on the evidence it has collected in preparing its Plan to demonstrate its soundness. Those seeking changes to the Plan have to demonstrate why it is not sound and how the suggested changes would make it sound. The Council has submitted some Pre-Examination Changes to the Plan and further changes in response to representations. The Inspector will take these into account as part of the examination.
- 2.2 The Programme Officer for the examinations is Lynette Duncan whose contact details can be found in Appendix A. She is independent of the Council and works under the direction of the Inspector. Her responsibilities include organising the programme for the examinations, maintaining the examination library and ensuring that all documents are recorded and distributed. Documents connected with the examination process should be forwarded to her. Any procedural questions, suggestions or difficulties should be raised with the Programme Officer and, if necessary, she will take them up with the Inspector. The normal method of communication will be by e-mail and all documentation will be available electronically, accessed via the Council's web site at:

<http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/council-services/planning-and-buildings/planning-consultations/delivery-and-site-allocations-plan.aspx>

The Examination Process

- 3.1 The starting point for the examination is that the local authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. The examination will focus on the Matters and Issues identified by the Inspector who will have regard to individual representations insofar as they relate to matters of soundness.
- 3.2 Those who have made representations should have already decided whether their views can be dealt with in written form or if they need to present them orally at a hearing session. Both methods carry equal weight.

- 3.3 Respondents who have not indicated a preference will have their representations treated in written form unless the Programme Officer is informed by **Friday 16th November** that they now wish to participate in hearing sessions. Anyone who has already indicated they want to take part in the hearings should also confirm their continued participation in the process with the Programme Officer by the same date so that a final schedule of hearings and participants can be drawn up.
- 3.4 It is open to the Council and any representor to submit further statements in advance of the hearings. However this is not a requirement and you may rely on your original representations if you wish. If further statements are submitted these should focus on the Matters and Issues the Inspector identifies. Any such statements should be sent to the Programme Officer for receipt by **5pm on Friday 30th November 2012**. The requirements for each statement are as follows:
- Statements should be limited to not more than 3,000 words and should relate to the matters identified by the Inspector. Generally there should be no need for appendices and no need to duplicate the content of documents already included as part of the Examination Library.
 - Three hard copies of each statement at A4 size are required with paragraph and page numbers included. Any plans should be folded so as not to exceed that size. An electronic version of the statement is also required in Word format with all documents being submitted to the Programme Officer. **Statements should include, at the top of the front page, the appropriate Matter and Issue number, representor reference number and name of representor.**
- 3.5 The need for succinct submissions is emphasised. Unnecessary detail and repetition should be avoided. It is the quality of the reasoning that carries weight, not the bulk of the documents. Nonetheless, it is vital that the fundamental elements of cases are set out clearly and succinctly – the hearings are not the place for surprises!
- 3.6 Further discussion between the Council and representors is strongly encouraged – ideally leading to statements of common ground. Please keep the Programme Officer informed about progress with preparation of such statements.
- 3.7 Representors who wish to proceed by written means do not need to take any further action; they can rely on what they have already submitted in writing. However, if any party wishes to submit further written evidence in support of their position, this should be focussed on the Matters and Issues and submitted within the above timescale.
- 3.8 Before the start of the hearing sessions the Inspector may raise questions directly with the Council on any points that are relevant to the examination. Any such exchanges of correspondence are placed on the website as examination documents.

Hearing Arrangements and Procedure

- 4.1 The hearing sessions will commence at **10.00am on Tuesday 18 December 2012**. The sessions will be held at the Council Offices at Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe. A short break will normally be taken mid-morning and mid-afternoon, with a lunch break at about 1.00 pm. Afternoon sessions will normally begin at 2.00pm.
- 4.2 The hearings are open to the public and interested persons to attend, even if they are not taking part. Any changes to the arrangements will be advised to participants who should also keep in touch with the Programme Officer and check the examination website.
- 4.3 The hearings will generally take the form of round table sessions, providing an informal setting for dealing with issues by way of a discussion led by the Inspector. There will be no formal presentation of evidence or cross-examination. Please keep the Programme Officer informed about who will be speaking at the sessions.
- 4.4 The Inspector is required to run the examination hearings as efficiently as possible, minimising repetitious debate but allowing adequate time for discussions on key issues. The aim is for a series of focused hearings leading to the production of a short, focused report.

Site Visit Arrangements

- 5.1 The Inspector will make site inspections before and after the hearings. Normally these site visits will be unaccompanied and unannounced unless the Inspector intends to enter private land or buildings. Requests for accompanied site inspections should be submitted to the Programme Officer. Both a Council representative and the representor will be present on all accompanied visits but these will not provide an opportunity to discuss the merits of individual sites or issues.

Close of the Examination and the Inspector's Report

- 6.1 After completion of the hearings the Inspector will submit his report to the Council with his conclusions and recommendations on any actions or changes needed. He will aim to produce his report as quickly as possible after the close of the hearing sessions.
- 6.2 The examination remains open until the report is submitted to the Council. However, once the hearing sessions are completed the Inspector can receive no further information from any party, unless it is a matter on which further comments have been requested. Any unsolicited items will be returned to the sender. The Inspector will announce the likely date of the report's submission at the end of the final hearing session.
- 6.3 If changes to the plans are recommended it is hoped that many, if not all, will be based on proposals put forward by the Council in response to points raised and suggestions discussed during the examination. The Inspector will consider suggested changes from the Council in the same way as he will consider changes put forward by other parties.

Examination Library

- 7.1 Throughout the examination process, the Programme Officer will maintain an examination library of Core Documents. The List of Core Documents will be updated as required during the process and will be posted on the

examination website. Paper copies of the latest list may be requested from the Programme Officer

- 7.2 Library documents will be made available for downloading on the examination website at the Wycombe District Council on the above link.
- 7.3 The library will include:
- Development plan documents
 - Background and topic papers
 - Supporting core documents
 - Council's evidence base documents
 - Representations made at submission stage
 - Position statements submitted by the Council
 - Statements submitted by respondents
- 7.4 The library will be available for inspection at the Programme Officer's Office at Wycombe District Council Offices. Prior to this date appointments to view the library should be made with the Programme Officer (See Appendix A).
- 7.5 Additional information can be found on the Planning Portal at:
- <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans>]

Paul Crysell
Inspector
22 October 2012

APPENDIX A

Contact details for the Programme Officer

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