

Wigan Local Development Framework
Core Strategy Development Plan Document
Public Examination

LDF Programme Officer

Wigan Town Hall

Library Street

Wigan WN1 1YN

Tel: 01942 487321

Date: 24 May 2012

Dear Mr Worden,

Wigan Core Strategy Examination: Suspension

Please see the below update from the Inspector:

'I can now confirm my decision on the way forward for the Examination following the additional hearing session held on 18th April 2012 and having taken account of comments received on the implications of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for the Core Strategy.

You will be aware that as it stands I consider the submitted Core Strategy to be unsound in that it fails to demonstrate an adequate and realistically deliverable supply of housing land. I do not currently have the basis to recommend modifications to rectify this situation.

I have made it clear that I have serious reservations about whether it is appropriate to undertake the work necessary at this late stage in the process and also whether the modifications which may be necessary would result in a plan substantially different to that submitted.

However, I am conscious that the Council considers that modifications could be made without fundamentally altering the plan and its spatial strategy and that additional work and consultation at this stage would be appropriate. I have taken account of the Council's strongly held view that the Core Strategy should not be withdrawn and that it favours a suspension of the Examination. I have also taken account of the benefits of having an up to date plan in place as soon as possible.

I have therefore decided to suspend the Examination for a period of approximately 6 months from today. The purpose of the suspension is to allow the Council the opportunity to carry out additional work and public consultation in respect of the issue of ensuring an adequate and deliverable supply of housing land. Following this, further hearing sessions will be arranged.

As explained at the additional hearing session I have significant doubts regarding a number of the assumptions made by the Council in attempting to demonstrate an adequate supply of deliverable housing land. I am also concerned with a lack of flexibility and the absence of an allowance for cleared dwellings.

Taking a 15 year plan period of 2011-2026 I consider that there should be provision for at least 16,500 dwellings (gross). In my view there is a shortfall of at least 2,500 dwellings in terms of realistically deliverable supply within that period. The NPPF makes it clear that identified housing requirements should be fully met and that a rolling five year supply of specific deliverable sites should be identified with a buffer of 5% or 20% where there has been

persistent under delivery. Taking account of past performance in relation to housing requirements I consider that a buffer of 20% is required in the case of Wigan. There is therefore also a specific need to demonstrate a deliverable five year supply of at least 6,000 dwellings from the likely adoption of the plan i.e. 2013/14. This provides the basis for the work necessary during the suspension.

It is a matter for the Council to consider how the shortfall in housing land supply could be addressed. It is important however that all realistic options or combinations of options are considered and objectively assessed. It is also important that appropriate public consultation and sustainability appraisal arrangements are in place.

I understand that some work is already underway for instance in terms of an update to the SHLAA and you have provided me with a detailed breakdown of the intended work/consultation and timetable. I have attached this for information with one minor amendment. Realistically, given the need to make arrangements and allow for written statements I would anticipate that hearing sessions would be more likely to take place in January 2013.

You have confirmed via the Programme Officer that the Council is committed to demonstrating a realistically deliverable supply of at least 16,500 dwellings between 2011-2026 (therefore an additional supply of at least 2,500 dwellings) and a five year supply of at least 6,000 dwellings from 2013/14. You have also confirmed that the Council is confident that the additional supply can be identified and that the necessary work and consultation can be carried out and completed according to the timetable set out.

I understand that following an assessment of evidence, sustainability appraisal and public consultation, it is the Council's intention to come to a clear position on the preferred option for addressing the shortfall in housing land supply and to present this to me prior to the hearing sessions.

I must stress the importance of adhering to the timetable for the suspension. If it becomes apparent that any significant delays occur I would expect to be informed as soon as possible. In any case I would appreciate updates at key stages during the suspension. I would suggest in early July when evidence gathering should be complete and public consultation has commenced and in October when the report to Cabinet has been completed. I would need to be provided with copies of the representations received as soon as possible following the close of the consultation exercise.

In seeking a suspension of the Examination, the Council is aware of the inevitable delay and the additional costs involved. I have also made it clear that a suspension does not guarantee that I will ultimately conclude that the submitted plan can be modified to overcome issues of housing land supply.

There are clearly a number of other issues of potential unsoundness with different aspects of the submitted plan. I am temporarily setting aside my consideration of these other matters for the duration of the suspension, not least because of the potential impact of modifications regarding housing land supply on the spatial strategy and other specific policies. It would also be inappropriate to publish a partial report or consult on some modifications without taking account of the wider context.'

Yours Sincerely,

Kevin Ward

INSPECTOR

Timetable for suspension provided by Council

Tasks	Date
Complete draft SHLAA 2012 update report and commence a 4-week stakeholder consultation	31 May
Complete draft Sustainability Appraisal report subject to final evidence	15 June
Complete draft Infrastructure Assessment report subject to final evidence	15 June
Complete the draft Transport Modelling report	15 June
Finalise proposals for consultations on options	15 June
Hold a meeting of the Developers Forum, specifically on the 2012 SHLAA update	18 June
Conclude report to Cabinet for approval of the consultations on the options to meet the housing shortfall	21 June
Conclude the stakeholder consultation on the SHLAA 2012 update	28 June
Complete the Transport Modelling report	29 June
Finalise the SHLAA 2012 update report	4 July
Finalise the Sustainability Appraisal report	4 July
Finalise the Infrastructure Assessment report	4 July
Complete the Consultation Report	4 July
Cabinet decision	5 July
Commence consultations for 6 weeks on the site options to meet the housing shortfall	12 July
Conclude the consultations on the site options to meet the housing shortfall	23 August
Process, analyse and report on representations	14 September
Consider changes to the Core Strategy to meet the housing shortfall and conclude the report to Cabinet	11 October
Cabinet resolution	25 October
Council decision	7 November
Re-open hearing sessions	January 2013

Yours sincerely

R. Derbyshire

Rachel Derbyshire
Programme Officer
Direct line: 01942 487321
Email: programmeofficer@wigan.gov.uk