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Examination of the Ashfield Local Plan

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22 July 2024

By Email:

Dear Ms. Wheelwright,

Initial questions for the Examination

As you will be aware, my colleague and I have been appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct the examination of the Ashfield Local Plan 2023-2040. We have commenced our initial preparation and request some further information as well as responses to some initial questions as set out below.

General

Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states at paragraph 230 regarding implementation that Plans that reach pre-submission publication before 19 March 2024 will be examined under the previous version of the Framework.

The Council's consultation statement indicates that the submitted Plan was subject to a period of pre-submission publication between 4 December 2023 and 29 January 2024.

Therefore, for the purposes of this examination, the Plan would be considered under the September 2023 version of the Framework.

Please could the Council confirm whether the submitted Plan intends to supersede all of the remaining saved policies from the adopted Ashfield Local Plan Review (2002)? If not, please could the Council identify any policies that it does not intend to supersede.

Housing shortfall

The Council's approach to identifying land for housing seeks to identify specific deliverable sites for the first 5 years of the plan, followed by developable sites for years 6-10 and some further years beyond. However, paragraph 3.63 of the plan indicates that allocations would only account for 13 years' worth of housing supply post adoption.

Table 2 of the submission Plan identifies a shortfall of approximately 963 dwellings over the full plan period. However, the Housing Background Paper (BP.02) identifies at Table 7 on page 18 that the net provision would result in a shortfall of 882 dwellings. Which is the correct figure? What is the reason for the difference?

Has the Sustainability Appraisal considered the implications arising from the under-allocation of sites over the full plan period? If so, what are they?

Green Belt

Thank you for providing us with a spreadsheet of sites proposed to be released from the Green Belt. To further assist us with our preparations, we would be grateful if you could provide us each with a set of accompanying maps showing the locations of any proposed amendments to the Green Belt. This should show the boundaries as 'existing' and as 'proposed to be modified' by the submitted Plan. Where relevant, please include within the maps any accompanying policy or allocation references as per the spreadsheet already supplied to us.

Have all the proposed changes to the Green Belt been considered as part of the Green Belt Assessment (SEV.07)?

Biodiversity

What effect has the proposed restriction on development within 400m of the Sherwood Forest Possible Potential Special Protection Area (ppSPA) in Policy EV4 had on the identification of the spatial strategy for the area?

Have the effects of this approach been considered by the Sustainability Appraisal?

Infrastructure

Is the total cost of the critical infrastructure necessary to deliver the Plan's spatial strategy identified overall or by location? What proportion of the critical infrastructure costs are envisaged to come from each potential source of funding?

Other

Which parts of the evidence base is the Council is relying upon to support the Plan's removal of land in use or formerly used as greenspace?

Next steps

In order that the examination continues to progress, we would be grateful if you could give the above your attention.

In the meantime, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us via the Programme Officer. We have asked the Programme Officer to upload this letter to the examination website, but we are not seeking representations from any participants on its content.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Mileham and Graham Wyatt

INSPECTORS