

## **EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN**

### **EXAMINATION**

#### **EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO INTERIM FINDINGS BY THE INSPECTOR**

The Council propose below a timetable for each of the following areas of further work set out by the Inspector in the Interim Findings (Doc E.19) but will aim to complete sooner if possible:

**a. Substantial revision of the SA** The Council have begun work on the revisions to the Sustainability Appraisal and are aiming to begin a 6 week consultation in December. The revision to the SA will focus on the following:

- clarification on the 16 sustainability criteria identified at the scoping stage and 11 criteria for site selection and assessment
- the appraisal of the chosen 'hybrid' version of Options 2c and 2d
- the selection of sites from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for further appraisal
- appraisal of individual sites

Considering the number of representations on past sustainability appraisal documents we do not anticipate a high number of responses. Therefore any representations made on the revised SA and the Council response to these will be provided as part of the examination library as soon as possible following the end of the consultation.

The Council will carry out final public consultation on Main Modifications upon completion of the Hearings when a full schedule will be drawn up. The Sustainability Appraisal will be further revised at this time to ensure the modifications have been through the appraisal process and will be consulted upon alongside the Main Modifications.

**b. Further justification of the OAHN in respect of the conclusions of the ELR and SHMA.** The Council have begun work and this is expected to be complete mid January 2015. The Council consider this work to be required to further articulate and justify the approach taken. The work, by way of a note will support the housing and employment evidence base already prepared which forms part of the examination library. In addition, where necessary, the note will also include a response to issues in paragraphs 13 – 21 of Document E.19. Should this result in a higher objectively assessed housing need this would constitute a main modification for discussion in the hearings and subject to consultation post hearings.

The identification of further main modifications can be politically signed off via a development plan committee with delegated powers from Full Council making this process relatively quick.

On consideration at this point the Council do not consider it necessary to find additional housing sites following discussion in the first week of hearings where recent application consents were

discussed and this will be demonstrated under work described above under point b and below under point c.

**c. Clarification of the Site Selection Process and Housing Land Supply.** The Council have begun work on this and this is expected to be complete mid January 2015. This will involve a paper clearly setting out the evolution of the plan with regards to the site selection process. The second paper will revisit the housing land supply position at the point of adoption with particular respect to the housing trajectory.

**d. Additional Matters as listed in Note E.18.** The Council have already responded to many of the items listed under additional matters. All outstanding matters where further work is required is expected to be complete mid January 2015. Where there is potential for some matters to be addressed by the revisions to the SA this will be made clear in the way of a note as part of the consultation on the SA.

Should there be any slippage the Council will inform the Inspector as soon as possible. The Council are confident the work will be finalised in line with the above timelines and that the hearings will be able to recommence as soon as possible and subject to the Inspectors, programme officer and venue availability.

Bearing in mind the Inspectors availability in 2015 the Council intend to be in a position for the hearings to re-open in March 2015. This would give some time from the end of consultation on the Revised Sustainability Appraisal and publication of additional material. It is worth noting that on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015 elections, national, local and parish will be taking place in East Staffordshire which has consequences in terms of decision making and the publication of documents etc. The Borough Council will be in purdah from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015 and normal duties are anticipated to resume 8<sup>th</sup> May. Our preference therefore is to complete hearings prior to April. The Council officers will be in a position to receive documents during purdah which would give officers opportunity to fact check any reports. This is a good opportunity during this standstill period. No reports including any further notes for example received during purdah will be able to be publicly available.