

Inspectors: Simon Berkeley BA MA MRTPI and Andrew McCormack BSc (Hons) MRTPI
Programme Officer: Carole Crookes

Neil Ferris
Corporate Director of Economy and Place
City of York Council

By email only

3 March 2021

Dear Mr Ferris

Examination of the City of York Local Plan

Thank you for your letters dated 25 February and 26 February 2021 responding to our concerns regarding the progress the York Local Plan Examination, particularly relating to the submission of updated Green Belt evidence. We confirm that we have received the Green Belt Topic Paper Addendum [EX/CYC/50] along with Annex 1 [EX/CYC/50a] and Annex 2 [EX/CYC/52]. We also acknowledge the Council's confirmation that these documents now supersede the first TP1 Addendum documents [EX/CYC/18] and EX/CYC/18a-f].

With regard to the documents which will need to be subject to further consultation, we note the first table provided in your letter dated 25 February. At this time, we confirm that the documents listed in that table for consultation are correct. However, we also confirm that the additional documents identified within the second table of that letter - and which we are yet to receive - will also need to be subject to consultation. This will also include the updated comprehensive schedule of main modifications we have requested.

In relation to the nature of the further consultation, we confirm that the format should effectively repeat that followed for the Regulation 19 stage. However, representations should focus only on matters pertaining to those main modifications and documents being consulted upon.

As you are aware, we wrote to the Council on 29 January seeking confirmation of when the Green Belt Annexes would be submitted to us. In response, we note the submission dates for the remaining annexes 3 to 7 indicated by the Council in your letter of 25 February which culminates in the date of 30 April 2021. As we have said previously, we fully acknowledge the difficulties the Council has faced over the last 12 -15 months. In that spirit, we welcome the Council's clarification provided regarding submission dates. Whilst it would be preferable to have all of the remaining evidence submitted at one time, given the apparent volume of work involved, we accept that a phased submission of the evidence may be the most expedient way forward for the Council and the examination. Therefore, providing that

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the 30 April date remains, we are content for the evidence to be submitted as the Council has set out.

Notwithstanding this, we reiterate our previous comments that the examination cannot be delayed indefinitely by the lengthy time taken for the Council to produce and submit the Green Belt Annexes. Accordingly, we are now treating the submission dates now set by the Council to be definite and final. On that basis it will not be necessary for us to formally suspend the examination.

As ever, we remain ready to do all we can to progress this examination as expediently and efficiently as possible. We acknowledge the Council's commitment to ensuring the evidence supporting the Plan remains relevant and up to date. However, the Council should be aware that the concerns we previously raised about any further delays to the examination remain, particularly those about the increased risk of other evidence supporting the Plan becoming out of date. If further delays beyond the timetable you have put forward do occur, we will need to review our position on whether there is a reasonable chance that the examination could progress to a positive outcome, or whether the plan should be withdrawn.

We note that the Council is now exploring with the Programme Officer the possibility of holding virtual examination hearings using a video conferencing application and we wholeheartedly welcome this. You mention both the MS Teams and Zoom platforms. Both have been used successfully to hold other local plan examinations elsewhere. To assist, we enclose with this letter a guidance note produced by the Planning Inspectorate. We ask that you let us know as soon as you have a suggested way forward on this. At that point, we will put you in touch with staff at the Planning Inspectorate who can help in relation to IT, data protection and other related technical issues.

We hope that this letter is helpful and clarifies matters you have raised in your recent letters to us. Please ensure that a copy of it is placed on the examination webpage.

Yours sincerely

Simon Berkeley and *Andrew McCormack*

Inspectors