

Christa Masters MA (Hons) MRTPI
Eastleigh Local Plan Inspector
c/o Mrs Louise St John Howe
Programme Officer

Strategy – Strategic Planning

Our Ref:
Your Ref:
Contact: Graham Tuck
Direct Dial: 023 8068 3842
Email: graham.tuck@eastleigh.gov.uk

29 March 2019

Dear Ms Masters

Examination of the Eastleigh Local Plan

Thank you for your very helpful letter dated 20 March 2019 seeking some points of clarification. My response includes the latest timescales, which I hope assists with your programming for the examination.

The Council considers it has submitted a sound and legally compliant Plan, including in relation to all of the following issues. The following relate to potential modifications, or updates to existing evidence to give further detail and perspective, should you consider them to be necessary. They reflect the Council's intention to respond positively to the representations made from others.

Duty to Co-operate (DtC)

Following on-going discussions with my colleagues at Winchester City Council (WCC), including following receipt of your letter, I can confirm that we are seeking to agree a statement of common ground (SOCG) to cover the issues set out in your letter.

WCC have advised that their 'sign off' of a SOCG will be a Cabinet decision. To facilitate final technical discussions, and WCC's internal lead in time for a Cabinet decision, the SOCG will go to their Cabinet on 17 July 2019. If you have any further advice with respect to this timescale please let us know.

HRA

The Local Plan already refers to a wide range of mitigation measures, for example in policies S5 and S6 (relating to the SGO and link road), policy DM11 (nature conservation), and the supporting text to these policies. (The New Forest measures are referred to in policy DM11 criterion a. and paragraph 5.57).

The Council considers that the questions you raise in this section of your letter can be addressed by modifications should you consider this to be necessary. I include a

section below with some questions regarding the timing and process for modifications.

With regard to your question on the timing of the New Forest visitor survey work, this is being undertaken by consultants on behalf of a wider partnership which includes Natural England, the New Forest National Park Authority and relevant nearby Councils. The survey work is on-going over a number of seasons. (We are making enquiries as to when the surveys can be released). This survey work will enable the detailed level of mitigation to be identified and a proportionate sharing of costs to be agreed between the appropriate Councils. However, I consider that if a modification to the plan were to be necessary this could set out the types of mitigation more explicitly without having to wait for this survey information.

Highways

The evidence submitted with the Local Plan includes an M3 junction 12 report (in three parts, TRA006 a to c). This report is based on a 'bespoke' transport model for the junction, and establishes a set of highway improvements around junction 12 to ensure the safe operation of the junction and to minimise congestion.

The Council anticipates the outstanding work to refine this report to respond to Highways England's representations will be completed by 14 June 2019.

With respect specifically to highways / transport evidence, the list in the table covers everything which is outstanding. The Council will continue to discuss the potential for a transport / highways SOCG with the relevant highway authorities, should you find this helpful.

I reproduce the table below with the latest anticipated specific date for completion. We will send to the Programme Officer on that date for publication on the examination website:

Work identified	Anticipated completion date
Setting out the scope of a future public transport and cycling strategy for the SGO	17 May 2019
An update to the SGO background paper part 1 comparison of SGOs: Delays – in addition to total delays, compare delays at junctions with "severe" congestion South Downs – in addition to the AM peak, compare the increase in traffic flows across the 12 hour period	To be confirmed
M3 junction 12 revised transport modelling and bridge strength assessment	14 June 2019
Broad cost estimate of widening the existing Allbrook Way by one lane	14 June 2019
Allbrook rail bridge – Hampshire County Council 'approval in principle' template and potentially associated updates	14 June 2019*
Transport assessment based on a phased approach to the completion of the SGO and link road	5th April 2019

*From Eastleigh Borough Council's perspective this will be approval in principle proportionate to the Local Plan.

Modifications

We will welcome your advice on the timing for modifications – would you prefer to receive the latest proposals relatively soon or wait until we have sought a final agreement with the statutory environmental and transport organisations? With regard to the transport evidence above, we fully understand, and appreciate, your comment at the top of the third page of your letter that this “evidence has not, thus far at least, influenced the submitted Plan”. However, the submitted Plan was supported by evidence on each of the overall topic areas listed above¹, and the updates are simply providing more detail and / or perspective. Nonetheless, we recognise the possibility that you may consider this updated evidence may lead to the need for modifications, and will be happy to draft them if the need arises.

In this regard, you suggest that main modifications might “need to be the subject of consultation ahead of any hearing sessions”.

We fully accept the need to consult on proposed modifications. However, it seems to us that the timing of such consultation will very much depend on how the examination evolves.

It may be that consultation on main modifications is required before the hearing sessions commence; but it may be that main modifications can simply be published in advance of the hearing sessions (and updated as the examination progresses). The latter approach would enable them to be discussed at, and to evolve through, the hearing sessions; and we would then undertake a sustainability appraisal and public consultation on one set of main modifications at one time at the end of the main hearing sessions.

I would, accordingly, welcome further guidance from you regarding the appropriate process as we move forward.

Viability work and the Strategic Growth Option (SGO)

In terms of the viability of the SGO, I consider there are three other relevant studies on the submitted core documents list. The first two are the Infrastructure Delivery Plan published in June 2018 (DEL001) and the update of October 2018 (DEL002). Specifically these include a section on the SGO. DEL002 provides the most up to date version, and the SGO section runs from pages 50 – 57. The third is SGO013: Delivering a new community North of Bishopstoke and Fair Oak (October 2018), which sets out as background evidence the Council's recent track record in assisting the viability / deliverability of key sites, and potential actions in relation to the SGO. Otherwise the list is correct with respect to the submitted evidence.

¹ With the exception of the Allbrook Way widening, although this relates to the submitted M3 junction 12 study.

DEL002 (pages 50 – 57) concludes at paragraph 8.27 that the scenarios and supporting evidence continues to indicate in accordance with the tests in the National Planning Policy Framework that the SGO and its supporting infrastructure can be delivered.

To respond positively to representations, the Council intends to undertake a final run of the viability study for the Plan and further consider the actions that could be taken to help pro-actively deliver the SGO if needed, with a view to seeking to narrow outstanding technical differences between the Council and others. I anticipate this final update will be available by 21 June.

You cite paragraphs 5 and 8 of DEL006 (completed May 2018). You will appreciate that DEL006 was being prepared in parallel with other emerging Plan evidence, including environmental evidence and the SGO master plan, and the quotes you cite simply reflect outstanding uncertainties at that time; and a recognition from the consultants that there are many variables involved at the plan making stage of a development scheme.

The Council is satisfied that the viability work is based on development quantum which fully reflect the environmental evidence.

Other Matters

In accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), site notices were correctly displayed for the Strategic Growth Option and for a range of other sites, for example all new housing sites which were not the subject of a planning application or permission at that time. Local Plan site notices were not displayed for some other sites, for example those which at the time of the formal consultation in June – August 2018 were already subject to planning applications or permissions, and which had therefore benefited from planning application site notices. Nevertheless upon review the Council will now display Local Plan site notices for all other sites. The Council has met or exceeded all other aspects of the SCI. I will provide specific dates for the 6 week period over which the site notices will be displayed as soon as possible. This will enable any further representations to be made on the Plan in relation to policies that relate to those sites only. We will make subsequent representations available as soon as possible; the timescale will simply depend on the number of representations and any associated logistics in arranging this. Following this the Council will also prepare a response to these additional representations.

Next Steps

I hope this response is helpful and enables you to make further progress in preparation for the examination of the Plan and have placed a copy of your letter on the examination website as requested, together with a copy of this response. I will, of course, be very happy to answer any further questions you may have.

Yours sincerely

Graham Tuck
PLANNING POLICY – SENIOR SPECIALIST