

THE BRECKLAND DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN (2011-2036) (THE PLAN)

EXAMINATION GUIDANCE NOTE

Purpose of the guidance note

1. This note provides guidance to participants on the procedural and administrative arrangements for the examination.

Dates for the hearing sessions

2. The hearing sessions (which are part of the examination) will start on Tuesday 17 April 2018 and are anticipated to last for **12 days**. They will be held at: Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE.

3. Two documents are available with this note:

Matters and Issues for the examination. These will form the basis of the discussions at the hearing sessions.

Draft Hearing Programme – this sets out the matters and issues to be discussed at each hearing session. Please note details may change, so please check the website regularly.

The Inspector's role in the examination

4. The examination began on 30 November 2017 when the Council submitted the Plan and the other submission documents. I (**Jonathan Manning** BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI) have been appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to examine the soundness of the Plan and whether it meets the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and associated regulations.
5. I am treating the submission Plan as examination document LP_S_1. The Council have also proposed some additional modifications (LP_S_24), which I am not treating as part of the submission Plan, but these will be discussed at the hearing sessions.
6. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG, March 2012) <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/policy/> sets out the criteria for determining soundness; namely that the plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. There are three possible outcomes to the examination:
 - the submitted Plan is sound
 - the submitted Plan is not sound but could be made sound by changes (known as *main modifications*), if necessary following additional work
 - the submitted Plan is not sound and could not be made sound by changes
7. Following the close of the hearing sessions, I will prepare a report to the Council with my conclusions. The Council may formally request that I recommend any *main modifications* necessary to make the Plan sound.
8. I will deal with broad issues in my report rather than specifically with each individual representation.

Changes to the plan

9. The starting point is that the Council has submitted a Plan that they consider is sound and ready for examination. At this stage there are only two means by which changes can be made to the submitted Plan:
 - (1) *main modifications* recommended by the Inspector
 - (2) *additional modifications* made by the Council on adoption.
10. However, I can only recommend *main modifications* if they are necessary to resolve problems that would otherwise make the submitted Plan unsound or not legally compliant.¹ *Main modifications* are changes which, either alone or in combination with others, would materially alter the Plan or its policies. Any potential *main modifications* must be subject to consultation and in some cases further sustainability appraisal might also be needed.
11. '*Additional modifications*' are those changes which do not materially affect the policies in the Plan.² They are made by the Council on adoption and are also sometimes referred to as 'minor modifications.'³ The Council is accountable for any such changes and they do not fall within the scope of the examination.⁴

The programme officer

12. The Programme Officer (the PO) for the examination is Charlotte Brennan. Charlotte is working under my direction and is independent of the Council. She can be contacted as follows:

Charlotte Brennan
Examination Office
Elizabeth House
Walpole Loke
Dereham
Norfolk
NR19 1EE
programme.officer@breckland.gov.uk
Direct dial: 01362 656296

13. The main tasks of the PO is to act as a channel of communication between all parties and myself, to liaise with the parties to ensure the smooth running of the examination, to ensure that all documents received are recorded and distributed and to run the Examination Library.
14. Copies of examination documents can be found on the examination web site:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/localplanexamination>
15. Any participant who does not have access to the internet should contact the PO so that alternative arrangements can be put in place.

¹ Under section 20(7B) & (7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

² S23(3)(b) of the PCPA 2004 "... if the additional modifications (taken together) do not materially affect the policies ..."

³ For example in *Examining Local Plans Procedural Practice*

⁴ 2.4 & 4.7 of *Examining Local Plans Procedural Practice*

16. Any procedural questions or other matters that you wish to raise with me prior to the hearing sessions should be made through the PO.

Progressing your representations on the plan

17. Only those seeking to change the plan have a right to participate in the hearing sessions.⁵ However, the hearing sessions are open for anyone to observe.
18. The list of ***Matters and Issues*** accompanying this note will form the basis of the discussions at the hearing sessions. If you have any comments on this list (for example, because you feel there may be a significant omission), you should contact the PO by the end of **19 February 2018**.
19. The draft ***Hearing Programme*** accompanying this note shows the anticipated timetable for the discussion of the *Matters and Issues* at the hearing sessions. Should you wish to participate in any of the hearing sessions identified in the hearing programme, you must inform the PO of your intention to do so by **26 March 2018**. Please make clear to the PO under which *Matters and Issues* you wish to appear.
20. For those who may be unsure whether they should attend the hearing sessions and give oral evidence, I shall give equal weight to both oral evidence and written representations already provided or submitted within a written statement replying to the *Matters and Issues*. Attendance at a hearing session will only be useful and helpful to me if you wish to participate in the discussion. You will all be there to help me, so you may be asked to comment on things that are not directly related to your own written submissions. Where several people or organisations wish to speak on the same issue, you should consider appointing a single spokesperson or persons. Please discuss this with the PO. Those who have previously indicated that they wish to appear, but who no longer wish to participate in the hearing sessions should also tell the PO by the end of **26 March 2018**. I may also specifically invite participants to particular sessions if I think that would assist the examination.
21. A final version of the *Hearing Programme*, with participants listed for each session will be published on the examination website around a week before the start of the hearing sessions. It will be for individual participants to check the progress of the hearing sessions, either on the website or with the PO, and to ensure that they are present at the right time. Please note that the hearing programme may be subject to change.

Approach to omission sites

22. Several representors have objected to the omission of sites that they have been promoting for inclusion in the Plan. However, the purpose of the examination is to consider whether the Plan as it has been submitted for examination is sound. Therefore, I have not included in the programme any discussion on omission sites. Instead, the focus will be on whether or not the process followed by the Council in selecting the Plan's strategy and allocated sites is sound. This will involve looking at the overall strategy, the Council's site selection process and the soundness of the allocated sites. I have included such matters within my *Matters and Issues*

⁵ S20(6) of the PCPA 2004

that accompany this note.

Late representations

23. I have been made aware of a number of late or unduly made representations. These are set out in examination document LP/S/26. The Council has provided a response to each representation (LP/S/27) and do not object to me taking into account the late (i.e. shortly after the end of the consultation period) or unduly made representations. On this basis, I am accepting all the late or unduly made representations and have considered them as part of my preparation. However, please note no further representations will be considered, other than through the formal stages of the examination. Any unwarranted representations will be returned by the PO.

The approach to 'saved' policies in the Plan

24. The Plan contains several embedded 'Saved' policies from the Breckland Site Specific Policies and Proposals Development Plan Document (2012) and the Thetford Area Action Plan (2012). These include:
- Saved Policy D5 – Land at Dereham Business Park
 - Saved Policy SW2 – Land to the North of the Eco-Tech Centre
 - Saved Policy SW3 – Land to the West of the Eco-Tech Employment Area
 - Saved Policy TH30 – New Employment Land
25. These policies have been subject to examination as part of the above documents and therefore they do not form part of this examination. However, included in my matters and issues are questions that relate to the deliverability of these sites and in relation to the reliance on these as part of the overall strategy for employment land.

Hearing sessions

26. Each *Matter* will be the subject of a separate session. The hearing sessions will take the form of an informal roundtable discussion which I shall lead. They will not involve the formal presentation of cases by participants or cross-examination. There will be a lot to cover and all contributions should be concise and focused.
27. The hearing sessions will normally run between 09:30 and 13:00 and 14:00 and 17:00 each day. A short break will usually be taken mid-morning and mid-afternoon. No new session (*Matter*) will begin before its stated start time set out in the final *Hearing Programme*, but a later start may be unavoidable if a previous session (*Matter*) has overrun. Included in the *Hearing Programme* are three reserve sessions in case the discussions for a session(s) cannot be completed in the set time. All participants should ensure that they are able to attend the next reserve session that follows the hearing session which they are attending, in case it over runs.
28. Please let the PO know as soon as possible if you have any specific needs in relation to attendance and participation at the hearing sessions.

Hearing statements

29. The Council should produce a hearing statement for each of the *Matters*. In doing

so, they should answer each of the individual questions set out in the list of *Issues*. Those who made representations at the pre-submission stage may also submit written statements on the *Matters and Issues*. However, the preparation of a written statement is not a requirement.

30. Hearing statements from those who made representations should be a maximum of 3000 words for each *Matter*. Within this limit, they should be kept as short as possible. Appendices should only be included where directly relevant and necessary and should also be as succinct as possible. Statements should be stapled rather than bound. In addition, they should:
 - only answer the specific questions which are of relevance to the original representation
 - clearly identify the number(s) of the question(s) being answered.
 - indicate whether any changes are needed to make the plan sound (providing detailed suggested wording for the change and if appropriate, any changes sought to the policies map)
31. The Council should produce statements which are focused and succinct. However, because they have to answer every question there may be some occasions where it is necessary to go over the 3000 word limit.
32. Where several people or organisations wish to speak on the same issue, representors should consider producing a single joint paper. Please contact the PO to discuss.
33. Two paper copies and an electronic version of each hearing statement **must** be submitted to the PO by the end of **26 March 2018**. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, late submissions will not be accepted.
34. Hearing statements will be posted on the Examination webpage, so that they are available to all participants and anyone else who wishes to read them. Because they will be available in this way, they will not be circulated directly to participants. However, anyone who is unable to access them on the webpage may request copies from the PO.
35. Aside from these written statements no other written evidence will be accepted, unless I specifically request it. The hearing sessions should not be used to introduce new evidence or arguments.

Statements of common ground

36. Statements of common ground are welcome where these would be helpful in identifying points not in dispute, thereby assisting the hearings to concentrate on the key issues that truly need public discussion. They could for example include: agreed wording of a suggested change to a policy, agreed factual information or areas or points of disagreement. Work on such statements should commence now with the aim of completing them in time to influence relevant hearing statements.

The examination library

37. The Council has prepared an online Examination Library which can be found on the Examination Website at:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/localplanexaminationlibrary>

38. This contains the Council's evidence and documents which have been produced during the Examination. If you have difficulties accessing the Library please contact the PO. It is not necessary to attach extracts of these documents to written statements as they are already Examination documents.

Site visits and close of the examination

39. Insofar as I consider it necessary to my assessment of the soundness of the Plan, I shall visit sites referred to in the representations before, during, or after the hearing sessions. I will do these on an unaccompanied basis, unless I find that I need to go onto private land.
40. The examination will remain open until my report has been submitted to the Council. However, I will not accept any further representations or evidence after the hearing sessions have ended unless I specifically request it. Late or unsolicited material will be returned by the PO.

Further information

41. Further information about the preparation and examination of Local Plans can be found in the national *Planning Practice Guidance* <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/> and the Planning Inspectorate's *Examining Local Plans Documents: Procedural Practice - December 2013 (3rd Edition v.1)* http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/pins/dpd_procedure_guide.pdf

Jonathan Manning

INSPECTOR