

EXAMINATION GUIDANCE NOTE FROM THE INSPECTOR

Purpose of the Guidance Note

1. This note provides guidance to participants involved in the Examination into the Blackpool Local Plan Core Strategy on how the overall Examination will be conducted, the list of *Matters and Questions* for the Examination, the programme for the hearing sessions, the form the hearing sessions will take and the requirements concerning the submission of further written evidence - ie hearing statements.
2. All participants should familiarise themselves with the contents of the note, in particular those who wish to submit hearing statements and/or take part in the hearing sessions.

Dates for Hearing Sessions

3. The hearing sessions (which are part of the overall Examination) will open on:

Monday 11 May 2015 at: 10.00

Venue: Solaris Centre, South Promenade, Blackpool, FY4 1RW

4. The hearing sessions will continue on 12, 13, 14 May and, if required, 15 May. There will be a morning and afternoon session on each day. A draft programme indicating the matters to be discussed at each hearing session is attached to this note although you should be aware that it may change. Details concerning the finalised programme are set out in paragraph 20 below.

The Inspector's role in the Examination

5. My task is **to consider the legal compliance and soundness of the plan**, ie the ***Blackpool Local Plan, Part 1: Core Strategy – Proposed Submission (June 2014)*** document. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG, March 2012) sets out the criteria for determining soundness; namely that the plan is **Positively Prepared; Justified, Effective and Consistent with National Policy**. Appendix A contains a list of useful publications and websites for advice.
6. I aim to work collaboratively with the Council and the Examination participants in a proactive, pragmatic and solution-orientated manner to deliver a positive social, economic and environmental outcome for Blackpool. However, this does not necessarily mean that the plan will be found to be sound.
7. Following the close of the hearings I shall prepare a report to the Council with my conclusions. The Council has formally requested me to recommend any main modifications which are necessary to make the plan sound, if it is feasible that such modifications could make it sound. I will deal with broad issues in my report, and not with each individual representation.

Any main modifications are likely to need to be the subject of formal consultation and potentially considered as part of a revised Sustainability Appraisal. Should this be necessary more information will be provided at the time. In submitting the plan

for Examination the Council has proposed a list of minor modifications (Document SD003 – *Schedule of Proposed Minor Modifications*). I shall consider whether any of the proposed modifications are necessary to the soundness of the plan and should thus be main modifications.

The Programme Officer

8. The Programme Officer (the PO) for the Examination is Tony Blackburn, who works independently of the Council under my direction in connection with the Examination. Tony can be contacted as follows:

Tony Blackburn
15 Ottawa Close
Blackburn
BB2 7EB

Tel: 01254 260286

Email: tony.blackburn@blackpool.gov.uk

9. The main tasks of the PO are 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 keep the Examination Library. Copies of the Examination documents are on the Council's web site (see below). Any participant who does not have access to the internet should contact Tony in order that alternative arrangements can be put in hand.
10. Any procedural questions or other matters that you wish to raise with me prior to the hearing sessions should be made through Tony and please let him know if you have any specific needs in relation to attendance/participation at the hearing sessions.

Progressing your representations on the plan

11. At the time of making representations representors indicated whether their views should be dealt with in a written form or whether they feel that they need to come and discuss them orally at a hearing session. **Both methods will carry the same weight and I shall have equal regard to views put at a hearing or in writing.** Attendance at a hearing session will only be useful and helpful to me if you wish and need to participate in a debate.
12. Accompanying this note is a list of *Matters and Questions* for the Examination. I have identified nine Matters on which the legal compliance and soundness of the plan depends and for each Matter there are a number of specific questions. These questions are likely to form the basis of the discussion at the hearing sessions and should also be the basis on which written hearing statements, to be submitted in advance of the hearings, are prepared. The hearings are open to all to observe, but only those who have previously made representations relevant to the matters being considered, and have indicated that they want to participate, will be allowed to speak. The list of *Matters and Questions* includes a draft list of participants at the hearing session for each Matter, based on previously-indicated wishes. Representors who wish to participate in a hearing session who are not identified as a participant in the list of *Matters and Questions* for a particular Matter should contact the PO as soon as possible, as should any listed participant who no longer wishes to participate in the hearings.

The hearing sessions and hearing statements

13. Each Matter will be the subject of separate discussion, although the discussion on some Matters may take place over several hearing sessions and at other sessions several Matters will be discussed consecutively. The hearings will take the form of a roundtable discussion which I shall lead. They will not involve the formal presentation of cases by participants or cross-examination. I shall take account of all written representations already submitted and it is not the purpose of the hearings for these to be repeated. The list of Matters and Questions will form the agenda for each session.
14. The hearings will be inquisitorial, rather than adversarial. I shall endeavour to progress them in an effective and efficient manner. As part of that process, it is my aim to minimise the amount of material necessary to come to informed conclusions on the issues of soundness. In that way I will conduct a short, focussed series of hearings and, in turn, produce a short, focussed report.
15. The Council is required to produce a hearing statement for each of the nine Matters in which it should seek to answer each of the individual questions set out in the list of *Matters and Questions*. Other representors may also submit hearing statements on the Matters/Questions of relevance to their original representation, although it is not a requirement.
16. Hearing statements should be a maximum of 3000 words for each Matter and I anticipate that many will not need to be as long as this. The word limit does not include Appendices but these should only be included where directly relevant and necessary and should also be as succinct as possible. Statements should be simply stapled rather than bound.
17. In preparing statements you should only answer the specific questions of relevance to your original representation whilst clearly identifying the number(s) of the question(s) you are seeking to answer. In addition to answering the relevant question(s) where a representor is seeking a specific change to the plan in order to make it sound it would be helpful for suggested wording for the change to be set out in the hearing statement. However, this is only likely to be possible/appropriate for representors seeking a limited and focussed change to the plan. In answering the questions representors should have regard to the evidence submitted to the Examination by the Council in support of the plan. This is available on the Examination website (details below). In particular you should have regard to Document SD003 – *Schedule of Proposed Minor Modifications*.
18. Four paper copies and an electronic version of each hearing statement should be submitted to the PO by **17:00 on Wednesday 22 April 2015**. Unless there are exceptional circumstances it is unlikely that late submissions will be accepted. Aside from these hearing statements no other written evidence will be accepted unless I specifically request it. 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.

The hearings programme

19. An initial programme for the hearings is attached. A final version of the programme will be published on the Examination web site around two weeks prior to the start of the hearings. It will be for individual participants to check the progress of the hearings, either on the web site or with the PO, and to ensure that they are present at the right time.
20. The hearings sessions will normally run between 10:00 and 13:00 and 14:00 and 17:00 each day. A short break will usually be taken mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

The Examination Library

21. The Council has prepared an online Examination Library accessible from the Examination web site:

www.blackpool.gov.uk/corestrategy/examination

22. This contains Core Documents, 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 hearing statements as they are already Examination documents.

Site visits

23. Insofar as I consider it necessary to my assessment of the soundness of the plan I shall visit sites and areas referred to in the representations before, during, or after the hearings. I will do these on an unaccompanied basis unless I find that I need to go onto private land.

Finally ...

24. I emphasise:
 - I shall have equal regard to views put orally or in writing;
 - the need for succinctness; please respect the letter and spirit of the 3,000 word limit in hearing statements with only limited and directly relevant appendices;
 - that you must meet the 22 April 2015 deadline for the submission of hearing statement(s).
 - that your hearing statement(s) should focus on answering the questions I have posed in the *List of Matters and Questions*.

Malcolm Rivett

INSPECTOR

February 2015

Appendix A - List of relevant guidance and evidence

A. Government Policy and Guidance

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Planning Practice Guidance

B. Guidance from the Planning Inspectorate

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans>

Examining Local Plans Documents: Procedural Practice, The Planning Inspectorate
December 2013 (3rd Edition v.1)

C. Examination and Evidence Base Documents

The Examination web site can be found at:

www.blackpool.gov.uk/corestrategy/examination