

City of York Core Strategy Examination

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Inspector: David Vickery DipT&CP MRTPI

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Dear Martin

City of York Core Strategy Examination: Exploratory Meeting

As you know, the Inspector has identified some significant concerns regarding the potential soundness and legal compliance of the Core Strategy. He wishes to discuss these with the Council and others at an Exploratory Meeting at 14.00 hours (2pm) on Monday 23 April 2012 at the Friends Meeting House, Lower Friargate, York YO1 9RL.

The key purpose of the Exploratory Meeting is to determine how best to proceed with the Examination in the light of these concerns. The Council will be asked to speak to each of the Inspector's concerns and indicate if and how they could be overcome. Some may be capable of quick resolution by drawing the Inspector's attention to items in the evidence base that he has missed, or by quickly bringing together a simple and short paper, e.g. on the 'duty to co-operate'. The Inspector is not looking for long and detailed rebuttals on all the concerns at the meeting. In those cases where the Council needs time to consider its reply, all that the Inspector is looking for is an indication of the period of time it requires.

The Exploratory Meeting is not designed to replace later hearing sessions should the Examination proceed to that stage, and it will not involve detailed testing of evidence. It will, however, be an opportunity for the Council to provide clarification and to suggest how the Inspector's concerns may potentially be addressed through changes to the submitted Core Strategy and/or additional work being undertaken.

The Council will be asked to confirm how it wishes the Examination to proceed. Although an indication of the Council's position will be sought at the meeting, the Inspector will not expect a formal decision there and then. The Council will be given time to consider its position, if necessary.

There are four potential outcomes of the Exploratory Meeting:

- 1) There is a temporary suspension to allow modifications to be formulated (and possibly consulted upon) or additional work to be undertaken.
- 2) The concerns are resolved and the Examination will proceed.
- 3) The concerns remain unresolved but the Examination continues with the risk that ultimately the Core Strategy may be found unsound.
- 4) The Council decides to withdraw the Core Strategy.

It will be up to the Council to determine how it wishes to proceed in the light of discussion at the meeting. Whilst there is potential to suggest modifications to address the Inspector's concerns, it must be remembered that such modification should not fundamentally alter the overall strategy or result in a Plan that is substantially different to that submitted.

Part of the aim of the Exploratory Meeting is to avoid the additional time and expense of proceeding with hearing sessions if the Core Strategy is likely to be found unsound or not legally compliant. A note setting out the Inspector's significant concerns is attached (Annex 1) along with an agenda (Annex 2) for the Exploratory Meeting. The meeting will be open to the public and those who have made representations are being notified. A copy of the letter sent to representors about this is also attached.

The Inspector would appreciate a note from the Council in advance of the meeting (at least two weeks beforehand) setting out its response to the concerns raised and, if possible, giving an indication of if and how they could be addressed, without prejudice to its formal position. If extra work is required, a timetable should be included showing what works stages are involved and the dates when they would be produced. This is in case the Examination needs to be suspended to allow time for this (the Inspectorate's advice is for a maximum of 6 months suspension).

All of the above will help to focus discussion on the day. In the meantime the Inspector is happy to provide clarification on the nature of his concerns or on the format of the Exploratory Meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Lancaster