

ROCHFORD CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

NOTES OF PRE-HEARING MEETING

24 MARCH 2010

1. INTRODUCTION OF INSPECTOR AND PROGRAMME OFFICER

Miss Laura Graham welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself as the Inspector appointed to conduct the examination into the soundness of the Rochford Core Strategy. She also introduced Lissa Higby, the Programme Officer (PO). A colleague Inspector was also present, simply to observe the meeting.

The Inspector explained that the purpose of the meeting was to explain the process of the examination hearings. There would be no discussion of the merits of the Core Strategy or of the representations made. She asked that every speaker should give their name and any organisation which they were representing.

2. INTRODUCTION OF ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

The Lead Officer from Rochford District Council (RDC) introduced the representatives from the Council as follows:

Shaun Scrutton - Head of Planning and Transportation
Cllr. Keith Hudson – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation
Samuel Hollingworth - Planning Policy Team Leader
Jody Owens-Hughes - Senior Planner
Natalie Hayward - Assistant Planner
Velda Wong – Assistant Planner (although not present at the meeting)

3. PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

The Council's responses to procedural questions were circulated and are attached to these notes.

4. QUESTIONS ON THE INSPECTOR'S GUIDANCE NOTES

Sections 1-4

Russell Ford – West Rochford Action Group

Q – When will the notes of this meeting be available?

A - Within the next week.

Section 5

The Inspector emphasised that written and oral representations would be given equal consideration.

Section 6

The examination hearings will consist of a series of structured discussions, led by the Inspector. In response to a comment received following the meeting, the Inspector would like to stress that the hearings will not be an opportunity for making statements or presenting evidence which does not accord with the Inspector's agenda.

Stuart Slatter – Planning Potential

Q – Procedure notes mention hearing dates being dependent on the date of the General Election. Is there any update on that?

A – The date of the Election has still not been announced. Any change to hearing dates will be advised as soon as possible.

Section 8

All core documents are available on the Council's website and a list is being prepared so that they can be referred to by reference.

Section 9

The deadline for the receipt of further written statements and supporting material will be **20 April 2010** (with the exception of affordable housing).

The Inspector has raised concerns relating to affordable housing, and has invited RDC to prepare a programme of work for the preparation of an affordable housing viability study, which will be placed on the website. In the circumstances, it is likely that the submission date for further statements will need to be delayed and a new date for examination of that section will be fixed, with a deadline approximately three weeks in advance for receipt of further written material. All those with relevant representations will be contacted and information will be placed on the website.

R. Ford – West Rochford Action Group

Q – Is there any guidance on "Statements of Common Ground" as referred to in paragraph 9.7?

A – Please contact Sam Hollingworth at RDC.

David Churchill – Icen

Q – When is the programme of work on affordable housing likely to be available?

A – RDC hopes to have it available within the next week or so, and will advise the PO and place it on the website.

Mr. Churchill made the point that he had submitted Counsel's opinion to the Inspector, who is treating it as a request for suspension of the core strategy and will respond next week when she has received a response from RDC.

Sections 10-13

Paul Sealey

Q – When will the outcome of the examination be published?

A – The Inspector's report will be published by the Council soon after it is received. It will not be a response to each representation but will deal with the matters and issues and the overall soundness of the Core Strategy.

5. SCHEDULE OF MATTERS AND ISSUES

A schedule of matters and issues was circulated at the meeting. Any questions relating to them should be put to the PO by noon on 31 March 2010.

Any amendments to the matters and issues will be placed on the website, although the current list should be an adequate starting point for the preparation of material for hearings.

Alan James – Hawkwell Residents Association

Q – Which page of the website will the schedule be on?

A – Under the heading of the Core Strategy submission document. Any problems should be directed to the PO. Anyone requiring information in paper form or by email should also contact the PO.

Alan Stone – Rawreth Resident

Q – How long are the examination hearings likely to take?

A - A draft timetable has been circulated showing hearings from 11-21 May, although the session dealing with affordable housing is likely to be at a later date.

Q – What happens if that overlaps with holiday?

A – If representations are made which are scheduled to be heard on different days, it is unlikely that it would be necessary to attend every day. Written statements will be given equal consideration to verbal ones.

6. DRAFT HEARINGS PROGRAMME

A draft hearings programme was circulated at the meeting, and the Inspector stressed that this is still a work in progress, being an initial attempt to allocate time to specific topics. Any queries relating to the programme should be directed to the PO.

The chapter dealing with location and supply of new homes will probably take two days.

Myra Weir – Hawkwell Parish Council

Q – The Parish Council does not appear on the list.

A – The PO will investigate.

Similar queries were raised by:-

Alister Matthews/Rita Coombs, Rawreth Parish Council
Cllr. John Mason
Bryan Guyett, Hockley Residents' Association
Pam Watson-Jones, Bull Lane Development Group
Tim Gleadell, Hockley Parish Plan Group
Eddie Short, Resident of Hawkwell
Gordon Wyatt, Natural England
Michael Hoy, Hullbridge Parish Council
Roger Lambourn, Rayleigh landowner
Mr. Maugham, Rayleigh landowner

The PO will investigate all queries.

Pam Watson-Jones – Bull Lane Development Group

Q – Why can't the hearings be held in larger premises?

A - It is difficult to manage larger sessions and understand the points being made. Representors can attend sessions other than those they have been invited to, but will not be able to take part.

Roger Lambourn – Rayleigh landowner

Q – What would happen if a representation had been missed or was not made on the Core Strategy Publication Document?

A – If a representation has not been made to the Publication Document, it is now too late to do so. One option would be to see if there are any other representations on the same issue and offer to support them. The regulations are quite clear that all representations must be made by the deadline stated and this has now passed. If a representor did not tick the box to say they wished to appear at the examination, that would not necessarily preclude an appearance. If no representation has been made at the appropriate time then there can be no participation, either in writing or orally, in the examination.

Cllr. John Mason

Some data could have been lost – he had included the wits to appear in the text of his representation. However, every representation received was given a number and there should be little difficulty in identifying them.

The Inspector indicated that all the queries raised would be investigated.

5. **ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS**

Miss G. Yeadell, Resident of Hockley

Q – There seem to be several deadlines, 20 April, 31 March and 30 March, please can you clarify.

A - 20 April is the deadline for submitting any additional material for hearings, 31 March is the deadline for any questions/comments on matters and issues and 30 April relates to two separate consultations not connected with the Core Strategy.

Alan James – Hawkwell Residents' Association

Q – What will be the times of the hearing sessions?

A – The usual timings will be 10a.m.-1p.m. and 2-5p.m. each day.

Stuart Slatter – Planning Potential

Q – What additional material could be submitted?

A - Section 9 of the Guidance notes gives guidance. – no new representations can be included at this stage. Any unrelated or over-lengthy papers will be returned.

The Inspector thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

PHM Procedural Questions – RDC response

Has the Development Plan Document (the DPD) been prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme?

The Core Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Core Strategy's scope and content are set out in the most recent LDS to have been approved by GO East – the 2006 version. The milestones have slipped from those set out in the 2006 LDS, but are in line with the 2009 LDS. The 2009 LDS Local Development Scheme is not yet approved by Government Office, but is publicly available on the Council's website.

Has the DPD been prepared in compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement (public consultation)?

The Core Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement. The approach is set out in detail in the Consultation Statement submitted alongside the Core Strategy.

Has the DPD had regard to any Sustainable Community Strategy for the area?

Paragraph 1.20 of the Core Strategy sets out in detail how the Core Strategy will deliver the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy

Has the DPD been subjected to Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal has played an important role in the production of the Core Strategy. The Sustainability Appraisal has been submitted alongside the Core Strategy.

Is the DPD in compliance with the Regional Spatial Strategy?

EERA has written to the Council to confirm that the Core Strategy submission document is in general conformity with the East of England Plan.

Has the CS been prepared in accordance with the Habitat Directive?

The requirements of the Habitats Directive have been met, as set out in the Habitats Regulation Assessment which accompanies the Core Strategy.

Have all the procedural requirements for publicity been met?

The time, venue and name of person appointed to carry out the examination are advertised on the Council's website. Notice of the Pre-Hearing Meeting was displayed in local paper and notice of commencement of hearings will be advertised in the local press in the week beginning 22nd March.