

Tewkesbury Borough Plan Hearings

Inspector's Introductory Remarks 16 February 2021

I am David Reed the inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to carry out an independent examination of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan 2011 to 2031, of which these hearing sessions form an important part. I shall probably refer to the document as 'The Plan' or the 'Local Plan' and TBP in the paperwork.

My qualifications are listed on the Council's examination website page.

I hope everyone has seen the 'Virtual Event on Zoom – Instructions for Participants' note, has done zoom events before or participated in the practice session at the end of last week.

It's important that everyone can hear and see the inspector and I would prefer if you all keep your cameras on but mute yourselves unless speaking to avoid disturbance to the hearing sessions. If you wish to speak or make a point please use the hands up facility and I will bring you in when convenient.

If there are any problems the note may help but otherwise Ian Kemp the programme officer should be able to assist, his email and mobile number has been included in his correspondence with you. Ian is responsible for all administrative matters relating to the examination and is your first point of contact if you have any queries about the hearing procedures or the examination generally.

In terms of timing we shall start at 10am each day with a convenience break mid-morning like a physical event. We shall break for lunch about 1pm each day for about an hour and hopefully finish mid-afternoon. If necessary we could have a further short break and press on until late afternoon but I am aware virtual events can be tiring and we may not wish to do so.

Importantly, the hearings are being live streamed on the examination website but not recorded. So you will need to watch in real time if you want to follow proceedings when not a participant. Please do not make your own recordings.

You can find all examination documents, including the hearing timetable and agendas on the examination website.

As you know hearings are currently planned Tuesday to Thursday this week and next week, then a week's gap before two more weeks. This week focuses on legal compliance, provision for gypsies & travellers and overall housing provision, followed next week by discussion of the individual housing allocations and settlement boundaries. In week three there will be discussion on Green Belt and employment issues and in week four general housing and other policies.

It is likely there will be some adjustment of the timing of some issues within the programme. Ian will endeavour to keep people informed of any changes but participants should ensure they keep in touch in case there are any changes.

My role in conducting the examination is to determine whether the plan satisfies the legal and procedural requirements under the legislation, including whether the Council has complied with the duty to co-operate, and also whether the plan meets the tests of soundness. To be sound the plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. In addition, in this case, the plan must be consistent with the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy adopted in December 2017. This contains the strategic policies for the area which the Tewkesbury Borough Plan as a subsidiary plan will complement but not supersede or revise. I cannot emphasise too strongly that I am not revisiting the Joint Core Strategy or its assumptions in any way.

The starting point for the examination is the plan submitted in May 2020 which is the same as the Pre-Submission Plan published in October 2019. The Council has also produced a 'Schedule of Changes to the Pre-Submission Plan' (Document CD011A) in response to representations. These do not form part of the plan at this stage but I will take them into account as suggested changes. Ultimately, if I find that modifications are required to make the plan sound or legally compliant, these will be main modifications to the submitted plan and will be subject to a round of public consultation and possibly further hearings. I understand the Council will be updating the 'Schedule of Changes' as the examination hearings progress.

Other than the statements already submitted, no further information or documentation should be submitted unless I specifically ask for it. There is no scope for the production of rebuttal statements.

I have familiarised myself with the written material submitted to date but I can't claim to have read every last background document so you will need to refer me to relevant sections in some cases.

In relation to site visits due to the extended lockdowns in recent weeks I have only been able to make one visit to the area so far when I was able to see many but not yet all of the main locations dealt with in the plan. This means regrettably we will be discussing some sites I have not yet seen. I hasten to add I will however be visiting all relevant sites before making any decisions. I will make clear whether I have seen each site and if not may need to ask some more basic questions to understand the context. I will make extensive visits as soon as possible after the hearings as soon as lockdown ends. Most will be unaccompanied but I anticipate the need for a few accompanied visits when specific arrangements will need to be made.

The hearing sessions will hopefully be informal and fairly relaxed discussions focussing on the matters in hand. I have produced agendas for each session based on the matters and questions and in the light of the statements received. This shows the ground I wish to cover and the order of business, some items are short or matters for clarification and others are substantive issues that will take some time. I also recognise there is some overlap between issues and the discussion will allow for this. My intention is to take the discussion steadily, giving participants the opportunity to contribute but also to keep the discussion moving. If you want to make a point or feel I am moving on before you have said all you want to please use the hands up facility, but there is no need for the repetition of points that other participants have made. I will probably be asking

the Council to respond first on most issues and will then bring in other participants as necessary. We may do introductions at the outset if numbers are manageable but if not could you please introduce yourself when you first speak.

In a minute I will ask the Council representatives to introduce themselves and cover any other housekeeping or procedural points. The Council will then make a short introductory statement before we commence on the agenda.