

Lewes Joint Core Strategy Examination

Pre Hearing Meeting Notes

Friday 14th November 2014 at 09.30

The Chamber Suite, Pelham House Hotel, St Andrews Lane, Lewes, BN7 1UW.

1. Opening Announcements

The Inspector opened the meeting and advised that questions would be welcome from the floor as the meeting proceeded.

2. Introductions

Introductions were made as follows:

Nigel Payne – Planning Inspector, PINS
Claire Jones Hughes – Programme Officer
Edward Sheath – Head of Strategic Policy, LDC
Catherine Jack – Interim Head of Planning Policy, LDC
Robert King – Senior Planning Policy Officer, LDC
Natalie Carpenter – Senior Planning Policy Officer, LDC
Tal Kleiman - Planning Policy Officer, LDC
James Garside - Planning Policy Officer, LDC
Paul Dadswell – Graduate Planner, LDC
Amy Tyler-Jones – South Downs National Park Authority

Also introduced for LDC was Tondra Thom – Principal Planning Policy Officer, who was unable to attend the Pre-hearing meeting but will be involved in the Hearing sessions.

3. Purpose of the Meeting

The Inspector explained the purpose of the meeting was to discuss procedural and practical matters relating to the Local Plan Examination.

4. Scope of the Examination

The Inspector explained the scope of the Examination, the focus of which is the Local Plan and its soundness, rather than on examining every objection received.

5. The Programme Officer

The Inspector explained the role of the Programme Officer (P.O.); independent of the Council and the SDNPA, under the Inspector's direction, dealing with all procedural and administrative matters.

6. Inspector's Procedural Questions for the Council

The Inspector asked a number of questions of the Council¹ as to whether the Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with statutory procedures, which the Council confirmed as follows:

¹ The Inspector advised that when he made reference during the meeting to 'the Council', by implication this included South Downs National Park Authority as joint local planning authority for the Lewes District Local Plan Part 1.

Statutory Procedures – yes, the statutory procedures had been followed at all stages.

Duty to Cooperate – yes, officers considered that the Local Plan had been prepared in accordance with statutory requirements, as set out in the DTC Statement, with further Statements of Common Ground to be submitted.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) – yes, the Plan has been prepared in general conformity with the various iterations of the LDS.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – yes, officers consider that the Local Plan has been prepared in general conformity with both the LDC SCI and the SDNPA SCI.

SA/SEA/HRA – yes, an SA/SEA has been produced, plus a separate HRA.

The Council confirmed that there were no procedural shortcomings.

The Inspector advised that throughout the Hearings a list of proposed modifications will be maintained. If major modifications to the Plan are required, they would need to be consulted on. It is at the Council's discretion whether minor modifications are consulted upon but it is good practice to do so. Any major changes would also need to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA/SEA).

The Inspector asked whether the Council wished the Inspector to recommend any formal modifications to the Plan, should this be needed. The Council confirmed that it would invite the Inspector's recommendations.

7. Procedures Prior to the Hearings

The Inspector explained the right for representors to be heard, but that actual appearance at the hearings was not necessary to ensure that evidence was considered, as written submissions would be given equal weight in his deliberations. He might also invite certain representors to particular sessions to assist discussion of the issues. He also said that due to the limited number of places available there would be only one place at the table for each organisation, company or consultancy for each session, but that person could change at any time.

A draft programme will be prepared soon with a list of the participants. Any questions arising should be directed to the P. O. as soon as possible.

Attendees at the Hearings should prepare to engage in discussion and should confirm their attendance with the P. O. They should also give adequate notice of non attendance to the Programme Officer as it is impolite to just not turn up on the day and this might deny a place at the table to someone else. 20 participants is the maximum for each session.

Written Statements

The Inspector confirmed that these are not compulsory.

The deadline for submission of statements by representors is 5pm on Tuesday 6 January 2015 (for both electronic and paper copies). There will be no discretion to accept late submissions; the deadline must be met in all cases.

The Council is required to submit any response statements by 5pm on Tuesday 13 January 2015. The Council is expected to respond to each issue or question.

Statements should explain why the Plan is unsound and what precise change is sought. They should be succinct. Only the fundamental elements of the case being made are required. No new evidence can be brought to the Hearing sessions.

Word limit (3,000 words) is per question (rather than per issue).

A4 paper (unbound) please but with 2 holes punched to the left hand side and no other bindings.

Further technical appendices can be provided but with non-technical summaries attached.

No quotations from policy, guidance or Examination documents are necessary in the statements or through appendices. Cross references are sufficient.

No need for photographs to be included as Inspector will be doing site visits.

Three hard copies must be provided.

8. Questions on Matters before the Hearing Sessions

Mr Richard Booth, Ringer Parish Council

Q. What is the relationship between the Neighbourhood Plans and the Core Strategy, would it be useful to have a statement of common ground between Neighbourhood Plan steering groups and Lewes District Council regarding their respective plans?

A. Statements of common ground are often useful but it would need to be discussed between the Neighbourhood Plan steering groups and Lewes District Council.

Mr Mike Pickup, Town and Country Planning

Q. When will the main matters and questions will be produced?

A. They will be produced in the next couple of weeks, hopefully next week.

Mr Vick Yent, South Downs Society

Q. Why are there land allocations in the SHLAA (many of which are in the SDNP) that are not in the Core Strategy.

A. The SHLAA does not allocate sites it identifies and assesses potential sites which would usually be considered for allocation in the Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies. The Inspector clarified he is only dealing with the Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy in this examination, which only allocates strategic sites (those which could deliver over 100 homes and are deliverable early plan period), not the Local Plan Part 2 which is the document that would allocate non-strategic sites.

The SDNPA would also be producing their own separate Local Plan that could allocate further sites in the national park area.

The SDNPA confirmed they are currently preparing evidence for the park wide Local Plan but that they were not producing any allocations as yet, especially not strategic allocations. SDNPA is currently preparing its evidence for this, including a SHLAA.

Q. Mr Yent and Mr Patrick Collins, Wivelsfield resident, raised concerns that this could be confusing for to the public that work on the subsequent plans is going on before the Joint Core Strategy is adopted.

A. The Inspector is only here to assess the Joint Core Strategy but will try to help make things as clear as possible.

Councillor Tom Jones also commented pointing out that there is one strategic site in the Core Strategy that is within the SDNP, the North Street site in Lewes.

9. Examination Arrangements

Hearings are due to commence on Tuesday 20 January and will run over 2 consecutive weeks. Hearings will be held in the East Platinum Lounge at the Amex Stadium, Falmer, Brighton. Hearings on the first day will commence at 9.45am and after that, at 9.30am.

There will be a break mid-morning and mid-afternoon and an hour break for lunch around 1pm but this will be flexible i.e. some adjustments may be needed depending on length of the discussions but the aim is to finish by no later than 5.30pm each day.

The hearings will be run on a roundtable discussion basis. Professional advocates are not required but can be part of a participant's team.

There will be no cross examination (unless invited by the Inspector) but questions may be asked of parties by the Inspector.

The Council may be asked to make brief opening statements and usually people will be asked for brief closing statements before the end of the session.

10. Site Visits

The Inspector will undertake a number of site visits prior to, during and after the Hearings. Some of these may need to be accompanied, but most will not.

11. Examination Close

The Examination remains open until the Council receives the Inspector's Report but there will be no further correspondence entered into after the close of the hearings, unless the Inspector asks for it. Any other documents submitted will be returned by the PO.

12. Report Submission

The Inspector's Report should be with the Council by the spring of 2015, but this may be subject to change.

13. Examination Programme

Please advise the PO if you have any questions about the Hearings Programme. The final version will be issued on Friday 16 January 2015.

14. Questions from Attendees about the Hearing Sessions

Patrick Collins, resident

Q. Why can't there be more than 20 people around the table (could we get a bigger table)?

A. It is not practical to have more than 20 people around the table for the discussions as it makes it difficult to conduct the debate in a productive way. This is decided from previous experience and feedback from other Inspectors.

Q. Is the whole hearing just based upon the Inspector's opinion?

A. To a certain degree it is, but his opinion takes into account all of the representations made and comes to an informed decision.

Q. Does everyone have a fair hearing?

A. Everyone does and that is why the hearings are conducted in as informal a manner as possible, and would be based around informal discussion.

Mr Mike Pickup, Town and Country Planning

Q. Is there parking at the hearing venue, will there be enough spaces and will they be free?

A. Parking at the Amex stadium is free and there are plenty of spaces. The stadium is also accessible by other modes of transport including train and bus services.

Cllr Ian Eiloart, Lewes DC

Q. Has the Inspector undertaken a site visit to Newhaven yet and would he like a visit to be arranged?

A. It would not be appropriate to arrange a site visit with interested parties, unaccompanied sites visits are preferred as they are more impartial, however if there was a need for an accompanied visit he would arrange one.

Susie Mullins, Newhaven Town Council:

Q. Requested to accompany the Inspector on any site visit to Newhaven.

A. Replied that he would consider this at a later stage if he required an accompanied site visit.

Cllr Peter Gardiner, Lewes DC

Q. Are site visits of a nature where the Inspector could be influenced or not?

A. If an accompanied site visit was deemed necessary then the time and date would be made available for anyone to attend and witness the visit. He also said that he is content to hear from all present regarding the physical and locational features of the site on an accompanied site visit.

15. Inspector's Closing

Having confirmed there were no further matters to be discussed, the Inspector closed the meeting at approximately 10.30am.