

Dear Mr Roberts

Arun Local Plan examination - Inspector's response to the Council's proposed suspension timetable

Thank you for your letter of 10 September informing me of the Full Council's decision in response to the conclusions set out in my letter of 28 July 2015, following the Procedural Meeting.

I note the timetable of work set out in your Appendix A, beginning with the steps necessary to enable me to reach a conclusion early in 2016 on the soundness of the revised Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN). Achievement of this milestone will depend upon my receiving the representations made upon the issue in good time. If these can be accompanied by a brief response from the Council commenting upon the main points raised this would enable me to fix a date for the hearing and issue an agenda for it.

Your timetable then outlines the subsequent stages to be followed in order to achieve the submission of the Council's proposals for Main Modifications, together with representations made upon them by March 2017.

I agree to the outlines of the timetable set out in Appendix A and on that basis would expect to formally suspend the examination process for about 15 months (from approx. Jan 2016 to March 2017). It remains to be seen how far it will be practicable for hearings to resume as early as April, as suggested in your timetable. However, it is desirable that they do so as soon as commensurate with the time that may prove to be necessary to digest the newly submitted material and representations and prepare agendas for the hearings.

I recognise that the proposed timetable is only in outline, but note that it makes no specific reference to the necessary new work on sustainability appraisal of the type referred to in appendix 1 to my letter of 28 July (paras 6-12). Such work will clearly need to be included under the umbrella heading 'further work/ updated and additional studies'.

I also consider it important to reiterate the point in paras 11-12 & 22 of my letter of 28 July (and para 12 of the appendix) – that the Council needs to be able to demonstrate that the issue of identifying 'the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives' (NPPF para 182) has been approached in an open-minded way. Reasonable alternatives for meeting the requirement which emerges from the forthcoming consultation need to be identified without risk of endangering the process by (a) any appearance of pre-determination or (b) over-reliance on the contents of the SA accompanying the submitted plan.

Roy Foster, Inspector

16 September 2015