

Examination of the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 (PSB2)

Inspector's Introductory Note

1. I have received the submitted Local Plan and supporting material. From this and without prejudice to the progress and outcome of the Examination, this Introductory Note sets out the parameters for the forthcoming Part 2 (PSB2) Examination as I currently see them.

Role of Part 2 of the Local Plan

2. Clearly it is not for me to re-examine issues that were covered in Part 1 of the Plan (PSB1). Rather, my task is to assess whether Part 2 (PSB2) ensures that the Part 1 strategic policies are effective so as to enable the delivery of the development provision for the Borough over the plan period. It must therefore be read in conjunction with Part 1. In this regard, I note that the **role of the Local Plan is to: "guide where new development will take place across the Borough area and ensure that new development meets local needs in line with national policy"** (PSB2 paragraph 1.1).
3. Paragraph 1.2 of the submitted PSB2 identifies a number of parts to the Plan which together comprise its role. These are:
 - a. The settlement boundaries for Stafford, Stone and the Key Service Villages
 - b. Boundaries for the Recognised Industrial Estates
 - c. Retail frontages
 - d. The need for Gypsy and Traveller allocations

Other development plan issues

4. A number of representations concentrate on other matters which were considered in the Part 1 Examination, such as objectively assessed housing **need (OAN) and the Borough's 5 year housing land supply calculation (5YHLSC)**. These are not matters which Part 2 addresses, and my Examination will confine itself to the role of Part 2 only. In this respect I wish to draw the attention of the parties to the recent Court of Appeal Judgment [Oxted Residential Limited v Tandridge District Council EWCA Civ 414; 29 April 2016], and the need for the Inspector to concentrate on the scope or purpose of the Local Plan Part 2 (paragraph 38 of the Judgment).
5. I note, however, that the LDS for Part 2 also makes reference to environmental policies, and it would be helpful to know why such policies have not been included in the Part 2 Plan.
6. It would also assist me, by way of background information, to have a brief explanation from the Council as to why the original proposal for a site

allocations document has been dropped from the Plan; my understanding of the PSB1 **Inspector's Report is that it** was his expectation that Part 2 would be a Site Allocations Plan (paragraph 57 for example).

7. I envisage that one of the key issues that I will explore will be the proposed settlement boundaries: in particular I aim to explore whether policy SB1 satisfactorily addresses the criteria for the proposed settlement boundaries, as set out in spatial principle 7, and the role of these boundaries in achieving the sustainable settlement hierarchy as set out in Part 1, including whether they are flexible enough to achieve this purpose.
8. The work the Council has already carried out in assessing G&T pitch requirements is helpful. It would like to have more detail on how the Council intends to plan for the remaining unmet needs, bearing in mind that national policy seeks a plan-led approach to meeting G&T need.
9. I will also be framing questions in relation to policy SB2 – protected social and community facilities; policy SB3 – protected employment areas; and the appropriateness of the retail boundaries in relation to the criteria set out in policy E8.
10. I should also point out that these do not necessarily represent the only concerns or questions that I may identify, and I reserve my position for the time being.
11. I will shortly prepare a Guidance Note for the Examination, which will introduce my role and the role of the Programme Officer, the timetable for the Examination Hearings, various procedural matters and a Discussion Note, which will set out the questions that I consider are relevant to the soundness of Part 2 of the Plan.
12. It would be helpful for the Council to respond to this letter, including any suggestions it may have regarding the way forward by Tuesday 31 May 2016.

Yours Sincerely,

Mike Fox

INSPECTOR