

EXAMINATION OF THE SOUTHEND-ON-SEA DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT DPD

Tuesday 11 November

INSPECTOR'S NOTE

In attendance:

Mr D Smith – Inspector

Ms K Freeman – Programme Officer

Representing Southend-on-Sea Borough Council:

Mr M Sheppard – Senior Planning Policy Officer

Mr M Thomas – Team Leader, Strategic Planning

Ms A Roberts – Senior Planner, Strategic Planning

Ms D Skinner – Business Intelligence Officer

This is not a verbatim record of the hearing session but sets out the matters covered by the Inspector

The purpose of this session is to review the proposed amendments to the Plan that have occurred both before and during the course of the hearing and to consider how these are to be dealt with. Furthermore, it is also to give some indication of the next steps in the process and the likely timescales. However, none of this should be taken as pre-judging the contents of the final Report which will take into account all relevant matters and representations.

Some of the changes suggested prior to the hearing amount to Main Modifications as referred to in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. In order for Council to adopt the Plan in these circumstances I can only recommend Main Modifications if asked to do so by the local planning authority under section 20 (7C). If the Council wishes to make this request it should therefore be done before my report is finalised and I will indicate when I consider this to be appropriate.

The schedule produced by the Council needs to distinguish between Main and Additional Modifications. Additional Modifications are those that (taken together) do not materially affect the policies of the Plan. Main Modifications can therefore be taken to be those that do materially affect the policies. They will comprise any changes to the policies themselves or to the supporting text which has a significant bearing on the interpretation of that policy. My concern is solely with Main Modifications.

This schedule was considered in detail during the hearing.

The first step is for the Council to produce the additional information referred to and requested in relation to evidence regarding the retention of single storey dwellings for older people and details of permitted

development changes under Classes CA and IA. This should be provided by **Friday 21 November**.

Subsequently I shall consider that material; the further changes put forward today and the matters discussed. If there are any issues of soundness I wish to advise the Council of my findings at an early stage. This is intended to be helpful in order to give it an opportunity to consider what further modifications, if any, should be proposed. Where useful, and as requested by the Council, I may provide a suggested form of wording which would make the Plan sound. However, it is ultimately a matter for the Council as to whether or how they wish to modify the Plan and to review the alternatives that might be open to it.

I therefore aim to make my initial comments by **Friday 5 December**. My letter to the Council will be publicly available and published on the website in the normal way. The ball will then be in the Council's court. The contents of the letter may require internal assessment by the Council and a view taken as to how to proceed. The Council should also bear in mind the possible need for further Sustainability Appraisal and any necessary assessment under the Habitat Regulations. I do not expect there is likely to be a need for further hearing sessions.

The aim is, however, to produce a consolidated set of Main Modifications that can be consulted on in one go picking up on all matters raised previously as well as those that cropped today and those in my subsequent letter. I would like to have the opportunity to comment on a draft schedule before it is published to ensure that any detailed wording reflects my understanding of the discussion at the hearings and to avoid any obvious soundness issues arising from other matters. Representors may have a different opinion about the proposed changes but that is a matter for me to resolve.

In carrying out further consultation can I ask that the Council give consideration to providing some information in any communication about the policies and subject matter affected by the planned changes. It should also be made clear that comments should solely be addressed to the proposed changes and the implications arising from them. There is no need for Additional Modifications to be the subject of consultation. However, the Council may consider that this would help interested persons in terms of comprehension of the Plan as a whole.

The period of consultation should be for a minimum of 6 weeks. The Council hopes to commence this on **Friday 19 December** for a period of 8 weeks given the proximity of this date to the Christmas period. Could the Council please keep me informed of progress in this respect. I will then need to consider any responses received before finalising my report and recommendation. My preliminary view is that it should be possible to provide the Council with a report for fact checking within 6 weeks of the close of the consultation period (likely to be around mid-February) but PINS will provide a more detailed estimate nearer the time.

Before I close the hearing sessions can I personally thank Kerry Freeman for her work as Programme Officer and also Debee Skinner for her assistance to me on the day. I would also like to thank the officers at Southend for their responses to my written questions and for their oral contributions during the hearing.