

Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire Joint Core Strategy Development Plan Document

Inspector: David Vickery DipT&CP MRTPI

Programme Officer: Louise St John Howe

PO Services,
P.O. Box 10965,
Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 7BF
Tel: 07789-486419

Email: lstjohnhowe@hotmail.co.uk

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Dear Sir/Madam,

The Inspector has undertaken a preliminary assessment of the Core Strategy and other submitted material and he has identified a number of significant concerns relating to the soundness of the document. Therefore, in order to inform the way forward for the Examination, the Inspector has called an Exploratory Meeting (EM).

This will be held on Wednesday 18 May 2011 at:

Central Bedfordshire Council Offices, High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1LF.

The meeting will start promptly at 14.00hrs. The Inspector's main concerns are set out in the attached note (Annex 1), to which he has invited the Joint Technical Unit (JTU) to reply. An agenda is attached as Annex 2.

At the meeting the Inspector will not take any formal evidence in respect of the Core Strategy itself, nor consider in detail its policies, as these would be matters for discussion at hearing sessions if the Examination were to proceed. This means that there will be no consideration or discussion at the meeting of the merits of the various housing and employment sites, either those allocated or of any alternative sites.

Please either telephone or email me by Wednesday 11th May to let me know if you will be attending the EM so that I can ensure adequate seating is provided.

Part of the aim of the EM is to avoid the wasted time, effort and expense of all parties in continuing with the Examination as planned if it is likely that the Core Strategy would subsequently be found unsound. More details about the purpose of an EM and the possible outcomes from such a meeting are explained in section 9 on page 32 of the Planning Inspectorate's publication "*Examining Development Plan Documents: Procedure Guidance*" of August 2009. This can be found at:

http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/pins/dpd_procedure_guide.pdf

No further representations are required since views on the soundness of the plan have already been submitted in response to the original public consultation. Some planning policy changes were announced in the 2011 Budget and, assuming that the Examination proceeds, the Inspector will be asking all respondents for their views on these later.

The Inspector has queried whether some of suggested Minor Changes might actually be significant changes. The JTU's reply to the Inspector's queries on this and their associated map of North Houghton are available on the Core Strategy's web site (see below). This matter will be considered at the EM (see agenda).

The Inspector has asked the JTU about the land East of London Luton Airport, and the paper containing the Inspector's queries on this and the JTU's reply is available on the Core Strategy's web site (see below).

The Inspector has received a letter dated 12 April 2011 from JB Planning Associates (who are promoting a housing site at West of Luton) which was accompanied by a Legal Opinion from Peter Village QC. The letter and Legal Opinion allege some procedural concerns and request that an EM be held. They can be seen on the Core Strategy's web site (see below)

If you would like paper copies of any of the documents mentioned above can you please contact me and I will arrange to send them to you. The Inspector is continuing to read the papers and any other concerns he identifies, or replies from the JTU on his concerns, will be published on the Core Strategy web site:

<http://www.shapeyourfuture.org.uk/corestrategy.html>

The Exploratory Meeting is open to the public to attend, observe, and comment, but the Inspector will primarily be looking to the representatives of the JTU to address him on the matters of concern. It may be that some particular decisions of principle will have to wait until after the EM so that the two Councils' Joint Committee can decide them. A note of the meeting will be published soon afterwards on the Core Strategy web site. I will contact you again when it is known if and when the Examination will progress, but this will probably not be known until some time after the meeting.

The Council offices in Dunstable are accessible to the disabled and a hearing loop is included in the room to be used. A map showing their location is viewable via the web link below:

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/images/CBC%20Dunstable_tcm5-26113.pdf

The offices are close to main bus routes and car parking is available nearby in Westfield Road and slightly further away in Brewers Hill. If you have any mobility problems or require assistance of any kind, please let me know.

If you have any queries at this stage please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,
Louise St John Howe
Programme Officer