

Date: 30 November 2012
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Dear Mr Hogger,

Examination of the Dacorum Core Strategy – Inspector’s Preliminary Findings on Matters Relating to Housing Provision and the Green Belt

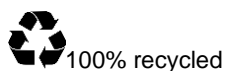
Thank you for the note of your preliminary findings relating to the Core Strategy examination, which the Council received on 19th November 2012.

You have advised the Council that you have a concern about the soundness of the plan with regard to the issue of housing numbers and the lack of a comprehensive Green Belt review.

We believe for the reasons set out below that the Council has provided a reasonable justification for the conclusions reached, but accept the need to work together to ensure the Core Strategy can proceed to adoption as quickly as possible.

With regard to housing numbers, the Council remains of the view that it has followed the requirements of the NPPF. Paragraph 47 requires that full objectively assessed needs are considered. It does not require them necessarily to be met. As stated in the Council’s evidence, we do not consider that objectively assessed needs and projections are one and the same thing. Furthermore, the NPPF does not state that this full objectively assessed need equates to the most recent CLG household projections: other projections are also available and should be taken into account.

With regard to assessing the role of the Green Belt, a comprehensive sieving exercise was carried out for land at Hemel Hempstead as part of the ‘Assessment of Alternative Growth Scenarios for Hemel Hempstead (April 2009) (Examination Document HG10). It is accepted that this did not explicitly consider each site against the Green Belt objectives set out in PPG2: Green Belts (Examination Document REG20) and more recently, paragraph 80 of the NPPF. This evaluation was carried out as part of the ‘Assessment of Potential Strategic Sites and Local Allocations – Final Assessment (June 2012) (Examination Document HG15).



We have considered the four options you have put forward to enable us to move forward:

- commit to an early partial review;
- request a suspension of the Examination in order to undertake further work;
- withdrawal of the Core Strategy; and
- request the completion of the Examination on the basis of the submitted Core Strategy.

Given the views expressed in your note of preliminary findings, the Council does not consider it prudent to continue the Examination process on the basis of its submitted strategy. I can therefore advise that our preference is to commit to an early partial review of the Core Strategy, by way of an appropriate main modification.

This recommendation will be considered by Cabinet on 11th December and I will confirm our formal decision after this meeting. I should be able to send you some draft wording next week, although this will obviously be on a without prejudice basis.

Provided the above approach is agreed, the Council expects to be in a position to consult on the main modifications in mid January, following a Sustainability Appraisal being carried out on the main modifications.

When preparing any early review, we will have particular regard to paragraphs 4 and 10 of your preliminary note which state that *'It may be that the Council would have reached similar conclusions [regarding whether or not full need for market and affordable housing could be met] ... but without a more thorough analysis I cannot be certain that this would have been the case';* and *'I consider the Council should have attached greater weight to the role that this area [i.e. land East of Hemel Hempstead in St Albans City and District] could play in meeting the Borough's housing needs more fully.'* You will be aware that this Council remains willing to co-operate on planning the east side of Hemel Hempstead.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the inclusive manner in which you conducted the recent hearings and for the helpful responses you have provided to the Council's questions during this Examination process.

Yours sincerely,



Laura Wood
Team Leader (Strategic Planning)
Strategic Planning and Regeneration