

Warrington Local Plan Examination

ID01

**Inspectors' Guidance Notes
23 June 2022**

1.0 Introductions

- 1.1 We are Andrea Mageean BA (Hons) BPI PhD MRTPI and Kevin Ward BA (Hons) MRTPI, the Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State under Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to carry out the independent examination of the Warrington Local Plan. We shall refer to the document as the Local Plan during the examination.
- 1.2 Kerry Trueman is the Programme Officer for the examination, working under our direction independently from the Council. She is responsible for organising the administration of the examination, maintaining the document library, ensuring that all documents received are distributed, and acting as the channel of communication between ourselves, the Council and those taking part in the examination. She is the first point of contact for those with queries about the process.

The Programme Officer's contact details are:

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2.0 The scope and purpose of the examination

- 2.1 The purpose of the examination of the Local Plan is to determine whether it satisfies legal requirements under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated regulations, whether the Council has complied with the duty to co-operate and whether the Local Plan is sound. To be sound the Local Plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The starting point is the assumption that the Council has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan.
- 2.2 The basis for the examination is the submitted Local Plan. This is the Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan document dated September 2021. Any main modifications which we subsequently recommend will be modifications to the submitted Local Plan.
- 2.3 We will take account of any potential main modifications suggested by the Council or others during the examination. Ultimately, if we conclude that main modifications are

necessary for soundness or legal compliance, we will include them as recommendations in our report to the Council.

- 2.4 The Council would be able to make any other “additional modifications” to the submitted Local Plan prior to adoption, provided these do not materially alter the policies i.e. they are of a minor nature dealing with factual updates or typographical errors for example. This would be a matter entirely for the Council, we will not be considering such additional modifications during the examination, and they will not form part of our report.
- 2.5 We will consider all of the representations made on the Local Plan (Updated Proposed Submission Version) insofar as they relate to legal requirements or matters of soundness. We are not required to report on every point made, however. In some cases, the issues we have identified may not have been previously raised in representations. Nevertheless, anyone who has made a valid representation seeking a change to the Local Plan (an objection) has a right to make their case in person at the hearing sessions, if they have indicated their wish to do so. It is important to stress however that written representations carry as much weight as evidence given at the hearing sessions.
- 2.6 Those who have made representations supporting the Local Plan do not have a right to participate at the hearing sessions. The Council has submitted the Local Plan for examination, and we expect it to be able to set out and justify its own position. We do not consider it necessary for those who support the Local Plan to participate in hearing sessions.
- 2.7 The examination will close when our report is submitted to the Council. The potential outcomes of the examination are that:
 - a) We consider that the Council has complied with the duty to co-operate, the Local Plan satisfies legal requirements and it is sound – We would recommend that the Local Plan is adopted and give reasons for this.
 - b) We consider that the Council has not complied with one or more of the above requirements – We would recommend that the Local Plan is not adopted and give reasons for this.
 - c) We consider that the Council has complied with the duty to co-operate but that the Local Plan does not satisfy legal requirements and/or is not sound and the Council has asked us to recommend main modifications to address matters of legal compliance and/or soundness – we would make such recommendations.
- 2.8 It is important to stress that we would not be able to rectify non-compliance with the duty to co-operate. The Council has asked us to recommend main modifications to address matters of legal compliance and/or soundness.
- 2.9 Those main modifications recommended by us would be subject to public consultation and sustainability appraisal prior to our report being finalised.

3.0 Matters, Issues and Questions and hearing sessions

- 3.1 We have identified a number of matters and issues which we consider need to be explored during the examination. These are set out in the Matters, Issues and Questions document published alongside these guidance notes. This sets out a number of specific questions that will need to be addressed.
- 3.2 The hearing sessions will allow us to explore these matters and issues further with the Council and other participants, taking into account relevant representations made and any additional statements which we request. We will lead a discussion asking questions of the Council and allowing other participants to contribute as the session continues. Those participants indicating a desire to speak will be given full opportunity to do so. An agenda for each hearing session will be circulated to participants in advance.
- 3.3 It is proposed to conduct the hearings with a mix of face to face and virtual sessions. Those in weeks 1, 2 and 3 are intended to be face to face sessions with the Inspector(s), Council representatives and all invited participants physically present. The sessions in weeks 1 and 2 will be held in the Halliwell Jones Stadium and those in week 3 will be held in the Council Chamber at Warrington Town Hall. The sessions in week 4 will be virtual sessions with all concerned using video conferencing technology. The detailed arrangements for the virtual sessions will be set out in due course and those participating in them will be contacted by the Programme Officer directly.
- 3.4 It is intended to enable the hearing sessions to be viewed online where possible. The face to face sessions will be open to the public to observe. Only those invited participants will be able to speak however. Those wishing to observe the hearing sessions should contact the programme officer in advance to discuss arrangements.
- 3.5 The hearing sessions will commence at

9.30 AM on Tuesday 6 September 2022

**In the
Warrington Conference Centre,
Halliwell Jones Stadium
Mike Gregory Way
Warrington
WA2 7NE**

- 3.6 The hearings programme published alongside these guidance notes sets out the proposed times and dates for sessions dealing with each of the matters we have identified. The detailed programme may be subject to change nearer the time and participants should ensure that they check for any updates. Should circumstances change and it is not possible or appropriate to have face to face sessions, we have retained the option of conducting all of the sessions virtually.
- 3.7 The participants for each session will be those who made relevant and valid representations seeking a change (an objection) to the Updated Proposed Submission

Version Local Plan and have subsequently confirmed to the Programme Officer that they wish to speak.

- 3.8 A number of representations on the Updated Proposed Submission Version of the Local Plan seek the inclusion of alternative or additional site allocations. These are often referred to as “omission sites”. Whilst we will take account of all representations made on the Local Plan and subject to the right to be heard (see paragraph 2.5 above) we intend to deal with the overall approach towards site selection primarily as part of the hearing session on the Spatial Strategy (Matter 3). It is not the intention to discuss the merits of individual omission sites, the focus will be on the soundness and legal compliance of the submitted Local Plan.
- 3.9 All those who wish to speak (participate) at the hearing sessions should confirm this in writing with the Programme Officer by **5pm on Friday 8 July 2022**, stating which session or sessions they wish to speak at (referring to the matter number and quoting their respondent ref. no.). This includes those who had previously indicated a desire to attend the examination hearings when submitting representations. If you do not contact the Programme Officer by this date, it will be assumed that you do not wish to speak at the hearings. The finalised timetable and list of participants will be confirmed before the hearing sessions commence. Only those who indicate their wish to speak in advance of the hearing sessions and make prior arrangements with the Programme Officer will be able to do so.

4.0 The examination library

- 4.1 A library of all documents associated with the examination is being maintained and will be updated to include any additional documents produced during the course of the examination. An up to date list of documents with their reference numbers is available from the Programme Officer. All documents are available via the Examination pages of the Council’s website and this will be kept up to date.

5.0 The submission of statements and further material

- 5.1 The Council should produce an individual written statement for each of the matters identified; addressing all of the issues and specific questions set out in the Matters, Issues and Questions document. They should include specific references to supporting evidence where appropriate. The Council is asked to address key points raised in relevant representations when answering the questions.
- 5.2 Other participants may, if they wish, submit written statements addressing the issues and questions set out for the sessions they are attending which are relevant to their particular representations. There is no need to repeat points already made in representations however and participants may wish to rely on these earlier representations. Others who have made relevant representations but are not participating in the hearing sessions may also submit statements addressing the issues and questions. Although again, there is no need to repeat points already made.
- 5.3 Statements for the hearing sessions should be succinct, concentrating on responding to the particular questions raised. There is no need to include extracts

from the Local Plan, other examination documents or those in the public domain such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), clear cross referencing will suffice.

- 5.4 The statements should be sent to the Programme Officer. For both the Council and other participants, the strict deadline for receipt of written statements for **Matters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6a-6f is 5pm on Friday 22 July 2022**. For the remaining Matters the strict deadline is **5pm on Friday 5 August 2022**. Statements must be submitted by these deadlines at the latest to enable us and others involved to fully digest them and prepare for the hearing sessions. Statements received after these deadlines will not be accepted. Statements should be sent electronically, there is no need to provide paper copies. For those without access to email, paper copies of statements can be sent to the Programme Officer at the address set out in paragraph 1.2 above.
- 5.5 Separate statements should be submitted for each matter. It should be made clear who is submitting the statement (quoting the respondent ref. no.) and which matter it relates to. Separate documents (files/attachments etc.) should be provided if you are intending to respond to more than one matter. Statements should be no more than 3,000 words long. A flexible approach will be taken to the length of the Council's statements where the matters relate to a large number of policies.
- 5.6 Other than the statements referred to above, **no further information or documentation should be submitted to the examination unless specifically asked for**. We will consider requests from the Council to produce and submit additional Topic Papers, technical notes or statements of common ground which would assist the examination however. There is no scope to produce rebuttal statements and additional statements or information should not be presented at the hearing sessions.
- 6.0 Site visits**
- 6.1 We will visit the Borough and key locations including the Main Development Areas and site allocations during the examination. We anticipate that this will be done on an unaccompanied basis. If there is a need for us to be accompanied on any site visits, arrangements will be made via the Programme Officer.

Summary/ key points

- The Matters, Issues and Questions document sets out the key questions which we will be considering.
- The Hearings programme sets out the proposed detailed timetable for hearing sessions. This may be subject to change.
- All of those wishing to participate (speak) at the hearings must confirm this in writing with the Programme Officer by **5pm on Friday 8 July 2022**.
- Participants at the hearings will be confirmed in due course.
- Statements for the hearing sessions should be based on the Matters, Issues and Questions document and must be submitted to the Programme Officer by **5pm on Friday 22 July for Matters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6a-6f** and by **5pm on Friday 5 August for all of the remaining Matters**.
- All documentation relevant to the examination is available on the Council's website and this will be updated.
- Any queries should be directed to the **Programme Officer – Kerry Trueman**

Andrea Mageean and Kevin Ward
INSPECTORS