

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME AND STOKE-ON-TRENT CORE SPATIAL STRATEGY EXAMINATION

HEARINGS OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT

1. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is 10 o'clock and time for me to open the hearings part of this Examination of the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy which forms part of the Local Development Framework for these two Councils.
2. Can everyone hear me? Can I remind you all please to switch off your mobile phone. My name is Jean Jones. I am a Chartered Town Planner and a Senior Planning Inspector for the Planning Inspectorate. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State under Section 20(4) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to hold this examination into the soundness of the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy
3. Before I continue with my opening announcements I would like to cover what action should be taken in the event of fire or other emergencies. The fire exits are marked and you should proceed
4. The Programme Officer is Gloria Dix. She is here to assist me as an independent officer for the Examination. She can advise you about the Hearings Programme and she will be able to direct you to copies of all the representations made, the Core Documents, responses to my Matters and Issues Paper and questions, the further written representations of respondents' and the schedule of the Councils' suggested changes. All of this information is also on the Councils' websites. If you have anything that needs to be communicated to me please speak to Gloria.
5. I would like to express my appreciation to Gloria and to Jenny Hough who covered the Programme Officer post while Gloria was away. They have both combined efficiency with an aptitude for dealing with people that has very much assisted the Examination and I am grateful for their help. Jenny will be taking notes for me at several sessions. These will not be a formal record but merely there to assist my memory.
6. I held a Pre Examination meeting on 3 March 2009 and representors should have received notes of that. The notes set out in detail the purpose of and the arrangements for the hearings part of this Examination. Amongst other things, they explain that the process of examining Development Plan Documents produced under the new Local Development Framework system is quite different from the previous process of considering objections to a Local Plan. The starting point for the examination is the assumption that the local authorities have submitted what they consider to be a sound plan.
7. In examining soundness under the new system, I have to consider the representations made to the submitted Core Strategy only insofar as they relate to the tests set out in PPS12. Unlike the old system, I am not required to consider each and every point made in each objection, nor to report on them, but to use the representations as the starting point in considering whether the plan is sound.
8. Turning now to my role, I will be producing a report of my conclusions and recommendations on the actions or changes needed as regards the

soundness of the Core Strategy and my report will be binding on the Councils. The Examination began on submission and I hope that you all feel that the last few months have been part of the process of testing – it does not all happen at the hearing sessions. There are a number of potential outcomes in what I may be able to recommend in my report. The most serious would be a finding of unsoundness in relation to a critically important part of the CS, leading to a recommendation that it should be withdrawn. However, less serious outcomes may be that:

- (a) additional work needs to be undertaken before the examination can be completed;
 - (b) part of the CS should be excluded or changed (having regard to the implications in terms of community involvement and sustainability appraisal requirements);
 - (c) part of the CS should be excluded and subsequently brought forward in a revised form in a fresh DPD and the remainder adopted.
9. I may only make a change if that change is itself sound, in accordance with all of the tests, and if it does not undermine the sustainability appraisal and public consultation already carried out. Thus the extent of the changes that I may make, if necessary, to make the CS sound is limited.
10. In response to representations and in the light of questions raised in my Matters and Issues papers the Councils have suggested a number of minor editorial changes and also some changes for discussion at the hearings which are in the Councils' hearing documents referenced CHD1 etc. A running schedule of changes and a tracked changes version of the Core Strategy will be kept from now on with updates highlighted on the website. The tracked changes document is merely to be used as a tool to make it easier to see where changes are proposed and it does not represent a further draft stage of the Core Strategy. Hard copies of both will be available at the hearing sessions and they are on the website. Representors should note that they will be updated from time to time and they should keep an eye on the website.
11. My examination of the soundness of the CS is based on the submitted version, but I shall consider whether any of the changes proposed by the Councils or representors are necessary to make the plan sound, provided that those changes themselves meet the tests of soundness. Other changes may come out of the discussions at the hearings. Any changes that I recommend will be added as an Annex to my binding report.
12. It may be that some of the proposed changes will need to be the subject of further public consultation and I would be happy for this to be carried out following the end of the hearings, once the schedule of changes has been finalised. There will be a deadline of one week after the end of the hearings for the receipt of any written comments on anything that has arisen during the hearings. This will also give the Councils time to ensure that any knock on word changes have been included in the schedule for consistency.
13. I would expect public consultation to take the form of circulating representors to draw their attention to the schedule of changes which will be posted on the website and available in the Examination library. If necessary, a period of up to six weeks could be allowed and notification could be

provided in a local newspaper. I would like the Councils to bear in mind that there is the opportunity to carry out further public consultation when it considers the desirability of proposing changes. This might result in a small delay to the six month timetable that the Inspectorate aims to achieve but this would not be significant.

14. All examination hearing sessions will be heard in this room. Lunch will be roughly from 1 to 2 pm with the afternoon finishing by 5pm and there will be short breaks mid-morning and mid-afternoon where appropriate. Some sessions may well take less than the time than has been allocated for them. There is inevitably some overlap between the various topics but I will endeavour to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to discuss points of relevance to their representations, even if it means repeating some discussions at later sessions.
15. In particular the session in the morning of Wednesday 29 April on Matter 12, that is Delivery, Implementation and Monitoring, may pick up some important points from Matters 2, 3 and 4. If any participants wish to attend that session they would be welcome and should let Gloria know. I have placed that session before the end of the hearings so that anything that needs further discussion can be dealt with in the wrap up session on the morning of 1 May. That session is also intended to allow me to obtain feedback about the Examination process to pass on to the Inspectorate. Again any participants are welcome to join in that session and should let Gloria know if they intend to do so.
16. Now just a few words about the form that the hearing sessions will take. They will be structured discussions, which I shall lead, following the agendas that have been circulated and Gloria has extra hard copies. I will not be inviting you to repeat what you have already told me very comprehensively in your written material but instead will be probing particular areas at issue. Some items on the agenda may have been adequately covered already in writing and might not need additional discussion.
17. I shall invite people to speak at particular times, but if you have something to contribute at a particular point please turn your name plate on end to attract my attention, and return it to its horizontal position when you have finished speaking.
18. When these short opening formalities have been completed, we will continue with Matter 1 then there will be a short break before Matter 2 begins and the remainder of today is available for Matter 2.
19. The Examination Library is here and can be consulted but copying facilities are limited and it is not expected that new documents will be produced during the hearings. If, exceptionally, it would be desirable to have some typed up copies of word changes that need discussing then it would assist me if enough hard copies for all the participants could be brought to the session. People who wish to observe will be welcome to do so, since this and all the other Examination hearing sessions are open to the public.
20. Are there any questions before I invite the Councils to make their opening announcements regarding the soundness of the Core Strategy. Please will the Councils provide a written version of this introduction so that it can be attached to my opening announcements and be included in the Examination library.

Appendix 1

LDF Stoke and Newcastle Core Spatial Strategy – Public Hearing

Tuesday, 21 April 2009 at 10:00am

Councils' Opening Remarks

1. Introductions

1.1 Good Morning.

1.2 I am Brian Davies, Head of Planning at Stoke-on-Trent City Council. I hold a masters degree in town planning and have been a chartered town planner for over thirty years working in both local government and the development industry. I am also a qualified mining engineer. On behalf of the City Council I have been responsible for preparation of the Core Spatial Strategy from commencement to submission. Throughout the Hearing I will lead presentation of the City Council's contribution. As the Hearing agenda unfolds I will be supported by various experts from the City Council. They will be introduced as and when they attend.

1.3 Today may I introduce Christine Ide who has a degree in town and country planning and has been a chartered town planner for nearly twenty years working in local government.

1.4 Our plan making partners will be adopting a similar approach. Today they are led by Helen Beech supported by Trevor Carter

1.5 I am Helen Beech, Planning Policy Manager at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. I am a chartered town planner with over 29 years experience in local government. As the Planning Policy Manager I have been responsible for the overall coordination of the Core Spatial Strategy on behalf of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

1.6 I will also be calling upon our head of service, in relation to housing matters. He is Trevor Carter, chartered town planner, with over thirty years experience in local government.

1.7 I will also be calling upon the Transport Strategy Manager within the Integrated Transport and Planning Unit at Staffordshire County Council, in relation to transport matters. She is Annabel Chell, chartered town planner, with over 15 years experience in the field of transport planning.

1.8 Other members of my team include:

- Sean Walsh - Senior Planning Officer and chartered town planner
- Alex Cresswell - Trainee Planner
- Alison Earnshaw - Information and Monitoring Assistant
- Abid Razaq – Housing Strategy Officer, MCIH.

2. Format

- 2.1 Subject to the Inspector's guidance, we propose to briefly respond to the agenda item as they unfold pointing to those parts of the Councils' submissions where the case is laid out in full.
- 2.2 Depending upon the item, sometimes the City Council will lead on behalf of the plan making partnership at other times it will be the Borough Council.

3. Preparation of the Core Spatial Strategy

- 3.1 North Staffordshire is a microcosm of the West Midlands comprising the multi centred North Staffordshire Major Urban Area at its heart and surrounded by North Staffordshire countryside.
- 3.2 Although some communities have a heritage extending back hundreds of years, the area blossomed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial revolution when its prosperity was based on pits, pots and pans. For most of the twentieth century the area's economy was in a state of progressive decline and the sub region was left to largely fend for itself with little the way of special government support. By the beginning of the twenty first century parts of the plan area were in a state of crisis with a spiral of economic decline leading to the designation of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and failure of the housing market leading to designation of the RENEW North Staffordshire Housing Market Pathfinder Initiative. Government recognised that special intervention was needed if decline was to be staunched and the areas prospects turned around. There is a collective appreciation in North Staffordshire that concerted, planned, managed intervention is necessary and the special measures needed to be put in place to bring about transformational change over the next ten years or so. Critical to the development and delivery of the transformational agenda was the establishment of the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership, the driver for bringing about change in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent.
- 3.3 National and regional spatial policy and regeneration programmes are supportive of the transformational agenda. However, local planning policy, much of it quite dated, needs to be modernised to address the challenges facing the plan area and to provide a flexible planning framework to guide the spatial development of North Staffordshire through to 2026. The Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy is the keystone to charting a way forward in this brave new world.
- 3.4 In developing the Core Strategy over a number of years we have learned a number of key lessons:
 - Firstly, this is a new style of planning where the old traditional and familiar types of planning policies have no place. Our job is to set out a clear spatial strategy for the future development of the area. It is not required to provide for exceptions within policy. If material circumstances require us to depart from adopted policy, then that will be justified based on case specific circumstances at the time.
 - Secondly, the LDF system is intended to be a portfolio of development plan documents comprising the Core Strategy and daughter DPDS and SPDs. The Core Strategy is not intended to provide all the answers, if it did it would be a local plan.

- Thirdly, it is perhaps fair to say that guidance on what constitutes a sound LDF document has rapidly evolved to meet the challenges of the new system and that is why, in our case we have had to go through two rounds of options appraisal before we have settled on a strategy which suits our circumstances and has some measure of government office support. Furthermore,
 - we have sought the involvement of the community at all stages in the generation of the plan;
 - the strategy has been generally been supported throughout the extensive consultation stages and reflects the priorities and issues of our respective Community Strategies;
 - we put forward a range of relevant spatial options providing reasonable alternatives as to how the strategy might be delivered;
 - we have produced a clear and coherent strategy backed up by a sustainability appraisal which specifically addresses the most important challenges facing the area to deliver the national and regional guidance locally and provide the benchmark for future DPDs
 - that our plan is a spatial plan which fully encompasses the views and strategies of key regeneration agencies and organisations such as the NSRP, Renew etc and as such is a key tool to drive forward the regeneration agenda of transformational change;
 - it is able to deal with changing circumstances and have made it clear throughout the document how strategy will be delivered, and
 - we have responded positively to requests for clarification but the changes we are seeking are not substantial and do not impact on soundness

- Fourthly, as plan production has taken place over the last three years or more, the goalposts provided by regional spatial strategy have changed and look set to continue to change. The Core Strategy sets out to deliver on the RSS Phase 2 Preferred Option. If that strategic context changes, and it is by no means certain by how much and when, then the Core Strategy will be reviewed, probably by 2015.

- Finally, in addition to strategic planning work considerable effort has gone into detailed planning with Newcastle and Stoke to prepare the way for statutory site allocation plans; supplementary planning documents and masterplans. To give these documents weight we need to have an adopted strategic planning framework in place on which they can hang. The last few years have all been about visions and strategies. The next few years are about detail and delivery.

3.5 The Councils are firmly of the view that we have produced a Core Spatial Strategy that can be trusted to provide a solid basis upon which to plan the detailed future of our Borough and City together with the communities and stakeholders who have an interest in seeing the area prosper; its quality of life improve and increasingly be more in harmony with the environment in which we live.

3.6 The existing adopted planning policies are not fit to deliver the transformational agenda the plan area requires and failure to adopt a sound strategic planning framework would have severe implications for the sustained regeneration of the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme and the City of Stoke-on-Trent.