

**BOROUGH OF WELLINGBOROUGH
TOWN CENTRE AREA ACTION PLAN DPD
INDEPENDENT PUBLIC EXAMINATION**

NOTES OF THE PRE-HEARING MEETING

**The Tithe Barn, Tithe Barn Road, Wellingborough NN8 1AH
Wednesday 22nd October 2008**

1. The Inspector introduced himself as Eric T Searle DipTP FRTPI FBEEng MCMI appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Wellingborough Town Centre Area Action Plan and to submit a binding report on his findings to the Council. The Borough Council representatives, Brian Stewart (Solicitor), Michael Haybyrne (Planning Policy Manager) and Roy Pulling (Spatial Planning Adviser) introduced themselves to those present.
2. The Inspector explained that the purpose of the Pre Hearing Meeting was not to deal with administrative and procedural matters in any detail as these had already been covered in the notes "A Guide to the Pre-Hearing Meeting and the Examination Process" which had been circulated to representors in September 2008.
3. He briefly stated that under the present system the examination of the Area Action Plan started when the document was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, and will end once the Inspector's report is issued.
4. The role of the Programme Officers was explained and Nick Leigh (until 31 December 2008) and Fiona Waye were introduced. Those present were advised that if there were any questions related to the organisation of the programme, the examination library or circulation of documents, these should be directed to the Programme Officers.
5. The Borough Council confirmed that to the best of its knowledge all procedural matters relating to the submission of the Area Action Plan had been complied with.
6. The Inspector reiterated that he is only concerned that the Plan is sound under advice in PPS12, and that apart from its legal compliance, that the Plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. He said that from his examination so far he had found no inherent deficiency in the Area Action Plan and saw no reason for an exploratory meeting with the Council or the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM).
7. The Inspector ran through those matters which he will be considering further at public examination and these are shown in the Preliminary Programme which will be circulated with this note. He will be investigating certain aspects of transport and road proposals; retailing, including the future of the Swansgate Centre; the delivery of the development within the Plan period; the relationship between the town centre, the Sustainable Urban Extension and the surrounding area; and whether there is sufficient flexibility in the Area Action Plan in the event that some schemes do not come forward as envisaged by the Local Planning Authority.

8. The examination hearing sessions considering these matters will be informal, in the form of either small hearings or round table sessions.
9. A list of preliminary questions related to the session headings has been prepared by the Inspector and these will also be circulated with this note. Once final representations have been received, these questions may be modified to relate them more closely to the submitted evidence and those outstanding matters to be considered at the hearings.
10. The Inspector further explained that although it is generally anticipated under the present legislation that the Area Action Plan submitted to the Secretary of State will represent the final word of the Local Planning Authority, some changes to the document are inevitable.
11. He identified 4 types of change. The first comprises points of clarification, factual and grammatical corrections which are supported by the Local Planning Authority. The second type also involves minor changes, but relating to those points of clarification arising from representations and to which the LPA is not normally opposed.
12. The third type of change is that necessary to meet changing legislation or government policy to ensure that the document is up to date when adopted.
13. The fourth type of change is more fundamental. It is a change in wording proposed by a representor which raises an issue of soundness. It is a change which, in most cases but not always, is opposed by the Local Planning Authority. In such cases the Inspector will assess the merit of the arguments on soundness to determine whether any change should, or can, be made.
14. The Inspector requested that the Local Planning Authority maintains a running schedule of such changes up to the end of the examination, and it will then be used as an appendix to his report.
15. Attention was drawn to the key dates schedule included in the Guidance Notes and showing deadlines for the submission of statements. The examination hearing sessions are to start on the 27 January 2009.
16. It was explained that the Examination Library will be maintained at the offices of the Borough Council in Wellingborough and will be updated and maintained by the Programme Officers during the examination. The library will contain background material, examination documents, and representations submitted by the Council and respondents during the examination period. Where possible electronic copies of library documents will also be available via the examination website (www.wellingborough.gov.uk).
17. It will be necessary for the Inspector to carry out a number of site visits during the examination. It is expected that these will be unaccompanied. If it is considered necessary to visit enclosed private land the Programme Officer will arrange an accompanied visit.
18. At the end of the hearing sessions the Inspector will assess the volume of work involved to finalise his report and will indicate when the report will be submitted to the Borough Council.

The meeting closed at 2.25pm