

**SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE CORE STRATEGY
PRE-HEARING MEETING (PHM)
17 APRIL 2012 (2pm)**

NOTES OF MEETING

1. Introduction

The meeting was opened by Paul Crysell, who introduced Kath Thorne, the Programme Officer. He intended to issue notes of the meeting together with questions and a final hearing programme no later than 27th April. He stressed that those who had made representations to the Council's Core Strategy and wanted to participate at hearing sessions should confirm this by contacting the Programme Officer no later than Friday 20th April. Those who did not do so may not be included in the final programme.

2. The role the Inspector and Programme Officer

The Inspectors' role is to consider the soundness of the CS. He will have regard to all representations made to the Plan and any other matters, irrespective of whether representations have been made, which could indicate the plan is unsound. Following the close of the Examination he will report to the Council with his conclusions. His report will **not** review the content of individual representations but will concentrate on the main issues they raise.

The introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 means the Inspector is limited in the actions available to him. He is allowed to recommend changes (main modifications) to the Plan in order to make the document sound if he concludes that this is possible and the Council requests that does so. South Gloucestershire Council made such a request in a letter to the Inspector on 13th April 2012.

The Council can also make 'additional modifications' to its Plan when adopting it. These are intended to be minor and include the correction of factual errors or changes which do not alter the nature of a policy or any part of the strategy.

The Programme Officer is the main point of contact between the Inspector, the Representors (i.e. those who have made representations on the submitted CS), and the Council. She will maintain the Examination Library and is responsible for circulating documents. If participants wish to view hard copies of any documents they are welcomed to do so by making an appointment with Mrs Thorne.

The Programme Officer's contact details are: Tel: 01454 863742

Email: Programme.Officer@southglos.gov.uk

3. Council's Introductions

The Council's lead officer for hearing sessions will be Patrick Conroy, the Strategic Planning Policy and Specialist Advice Team Manager. He will be supported by Miss Suzanne Ornsby QC and a number of other officers and specialist consultations. A list of participants will be made available by the Council shortly.

4. Procedural Questions for the Council

The Council replied to a number of questions on procedural matters and its response is available in the Examination Library (documents SG16 and SG17). Among other things the Inspector said he intended to hold a short discussion on the Regional Strategy and would need to have regard to the recently released National Planning Policy Framework (the Planning Framework).

The Council outlined its position in relation to the 'Duty to Cooperate' and said it would produce a topic paper on this matter covering both the legal position and actions it had undertaken to date. The Inspector said that development plans submitted prior to the introduction of this duty in the Localism Act (15th November 2011) were not meant to be subject to this part of the Act. However, the Planning Framework required local planning authorities to cooperate with public bodies on cross-boundary planning issues and he would have regard to this as part of the examination.

5. The Examination Process

The examination process is intended to assess whether the Council's Plan is sound. Those seeking changes must demonstrate why the CS is unsound by reference to one or more of the tests of soundness i.e. whether it has been **POSITIVELY PREPARED, JUSTIFIED, EFFECTIVE and CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY** and say what they think should be done to make it sound.

The Matters and Issues (M&I) which the Inspector wishes to discuss are included with this paper. These provide the basis for further discussion during the hearings. Representors can, if they wish, submit **further statements** focusing on questions of particular relevance to them. They do not need to do so and can rely on their original representations and their oral contributions at the hearings.

Those submitting further statements should restrict them to no more than 3,000 words on any single matter. More detail on the format for these submissions is included in the Appendix to this paper.

For hearing sessions in **weeks 1 and 2** further statements should be sent to the PO by **Thursday 24th May** (slightly more time has been allowed than indicated in the Guidance Notes to reflect the delay in sending the M&I to representors). Further statements for hearing sessions in **week 3** should be sent to the PO by **Thursday 7th June**.

Copies of these statements will be placed on the Council's website. Those who do not intend to participate in the hearing sessions may also submit further statements by the same deadlines if they wish to do so. The views of representors who intend to rely on written submissions rather than participating at hearing sessions **have equal weight**. If representors change their mind about their preferred method of pursuing their representations they should contact the Programme Officer as soon as possible.

The Council should prepare **Statements of Common Ground** if agreement can be reached with other parties or where it might prove possible to narrow areas of disagreement. This will avoid wasting time at the hearing sessions. Any statements of common ground should be submitted to the PO as soon as possible and no later than the commencement of hearing sessions.

6. The Hearing Sessions

The Examination Hearings will commence at 10.00am on 19 June and will take place in the Council offices at Kingswood Civic Centre, High Street, Kingswood BS15 9TR. The morning hearings sessions will start at 10.00am and the afternoon sessions at 2.00pm. A short break will be taken mid morning and mid afternoon. Lunch will be taken about 1.00pm.

The Hearing sessions will be based on the Inspector's questions and the responses received rather than by listening to the parties putting competing cases. Representations made to date to the Plan will be taken as read. The sessions are intended to be structured, but relatively informal, so that each representor has the opportunity to put over their point of view.

At the start of the hearing session the Inspector will make brief comments on the questions to be covered and will then invite individuals to make their contribution in response. People will be drawn into the discussion to enable matters to be clarified and to assist the Inspector in reaching conclusions.

If anyone has any concerns other than the soundness of the CS which you wish to explore with the Council, the Examination Hearings are **not** the place to do this.

The number of participants for each hearing session has now been determined. The programme has been modified slightly and the number of sitting days reduced. It is now anticipated hearings will take place on 11 days over three weeks although further days (commencing 17th July) are available should it be necessary to continue discussions on outstanding matters.

It is not an efficient use of hearing time if participants repeat points or introduce matters not relevant to the proceedings. It would be extremely helpful where there are a number of representors holding similar views, for instance, to appoint a spokesperson to act on their behalf.

7. Site visits

The Inspector has already visited most parts of South Gloucestershire and will carry out further visits if necessary. Normally, these will be unaccompanied but if there are areas of private land which representors consider he should see the Programme Officer should be informed so suitable arrangements can be made.

8. Close of the Examination and submission of Inspector's Report

The Examination opened when the Core Strategy was submitted (31st March 2011) and will not formally be closed until the Inspector has completed his report to the Council. The fact that the examination remains open during this period allows him to obtain any further information he considers to be necessary.

9. Questions

Q1. Councillor Andy Perkins – Leader of the Labour Group – South Gloucestershire Council

Asked for clarification regarding the format of the round table discussions at the hearing sessions. He was concerned that local groups and individuals could be intimidated by the process and the professional planners and lawyers who might be present.

The Inspector said the process was intended to allow discussion on matters where he was keen to test the views of the Council and other parties as to the validity of their arguments/proposals. Individuals would not be prevented from making their views known providing they were relevant to the matter in hand. The process would be unfamiliar to many but the process was meant to be informal and adversarial exchanges would not be permitted.

Q2. Mr J Jackson - South and West Transport Action Group

Wanted to know the relationship between the NPPF (Planning Framework) and Energy Guidance (EN1 – EN6) and the consequences of recent announcements that companies involved with new nuclear power station provision at Oldbury and on Anglesey were withdrawing from the process?.

The Inspector replied that EN1 – 6 were national planning policy statements covering different types of energy generation. He would have regard to the NPPF and needed to be satisfied that the Council's policy for Oldbury provided clarity and certainty as to the Council's approach to dealing with such schemes.

Q3 Mr J Jackson.

Asked about the situation with regard to Filton Airfield and the view that this should remain open.

The Inspector said this was a matter which he wanted to explore further during the hearings.

Q4. Ian Jewson – ATA Estates

Do the Council intend to provide any further information or evidence before the examination?

The Council intends to produce an update to the Affordable Housing viability evidence as well as a paper on the 'duty to cooperate'..

Q5 Graham Lanfear

Wanted to know whether the Council's response to a question asked by the Inspector earlier meant there would be no further discussion about Strategic Flood Risk matters?

The Inspector said this was not the case and that further discussion on this could arise.

Q6 Dan Templeton – Bristol Alliance

Wanted to know the author of the Council's statement on the 'Duty to Cooperate'?

Miss Ornsby QC confirmed she had drafted this statement on behalf of the Council

Q7 Jeff Richards – WYG Planning

Wanted to know how wide ranging the sessions for Yate and Thornbury (amongst others) might be?

The Inspector felt it would be a more efficient use of hearing time if detailed matters of more relevance to specific areas were dealt with during the appropriate session for the location in question. This would enable him to focus on more general points when considering the evidence base, vision and objectives in the opening sessions.

Q8 Cllr Bill Bowrey – South Gloucestershire Council

Asked the Inspector to undertake site visits during peak periods to fully appreciate the levels of congestion affecting South Gloucestershire, especially the North Fringe area.

The Inspector said he was well aware of the congestion affecting parts of Bristol, including those in South Gloucestershire. He had undertaken site visits at various times and was satisfied he appreciated the problems..

Q9 *Jacqueline Mulliner*

Wanted the Council to confirm if joint working on the draft Regional Strategy was seen as part of the 'duty to cooperate'.

The Council said it would cover this point in its proposed paper on this matter.

Q10 *Ian Crawford – Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance*

Wanted to know whether the Council had carried out detailed discussions on transport planning with their counterparts in Bristol?

The Inspector said this was a matter for the hearing sessions and said he would expect the Council to respond to this at that time.

Paul Crysell
Inspector
23/4/12

Appendix

Format for Further Statements in relation to the Inspector's Matters and Issues

Statements should not exceed 3,000 words on any Matter. This limit applies irrespective of whether one or more questions for the particular Matter are addressed. Appendices should not be used to exceed the word limit although these can be used to attach relevant plans/diagrams or key statistics.

Document Copies and Referencing

The following format should be adopted:

- Statements to be A4 portrait format
- An electronic copy of the document in 'Word' format to be sent to the PO for inclusion on the Council's website
- Three paper copies of each statement to be sent to the PO
- Statements to be punched with 2 holes and no wire or comb bindings;
- no more than 3,000 words per Matter;
- each statement to include in the top RH corner the:
 - Matter No / Session title & date
 - personal ID No
 - Representation No
 - Name of respondent

Participants will be expected to print (if required) their own copies of other statements. Those unable to do so should contact the Programme Officer.