

## Examination of the City of York Local Plan

Inspectors: Simon Berkeley BA MA MRTPI and Andrew McCormack BSc (Hons) MRTPI  
Programme Officer: Carole Crookes

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Neil Ferris  
Corporate Director of Economy and Place  
City of York Council

By email only

25 February 2021

Dear Mr Ferris

### Examination of the City of York Local Plan

The Council wrote to us on 15 January about, amongst other things, the Green Belt Annexes that have yet to be submitted. You will appreciate that the Annexes are critical to our understanding of the application and outcomes of the Council's revised approach to defining Green Belt boundaries, set out in the updated topic paper [EX/CYC/50]. That letter says "*We anticipate completing the drafting of the final elements of the Annexes within the coming weeks*". Over a month has passed since that letter, and we still have not received the Annexes.

We wrote to the Council on 29 January seeking confirmation of when the Annexes will be submitted to us. This is a simple request attempting to do no more than establish a timeframe for the progress of the examination. But, as of today, we are yet to receive any indication from the Council about the likely timescale for the submission of the Green Belt Annexes.

This situation cannot continue. Continual dialogue between the Inspector(s) and the Council is an essential ingredient for an expedient and efficient examination. If the Council is not willing and/or able to communicate with us about the time needed for the production of the further work necessary then it is difficult to see how this examination can proceed in the properly ordered and clearly programmed manner expected.

Moreover, you will appreciate that the examination cannot be delayed indefinitely by the need for the Council to produce the Green Belt Annexes. Indeed, if a significant period of further time is likely to be needed then the Council's reply to our 29 January letter should acknowledge that position and formally request a suspension of the examination for a clearly defined period.

We should point out that any further delay to the examination will lead to a significantly increased risk of other evidence supporting the Plan becoming out of date. The

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Programme Officer: Carole Crookes  
Independent Programme Officer Solutions, 9 Chestnut Walk, Silcoates Park, Wakefield WF2 0TX  
[carole.ipos@gmail.com](mailto:carole.ipos@gmail.com)  
Mobile: 07397 909822

economic/employment forecasting work is perhaps the most notable area of risk in this regard, which is particularly fundamental given its influence on the objectively assessed need for housing identified by the Council. It would also raise very serious questions about whether it is feasible for the examination to continue, or whether the plan should be withdrawn.

We remain ready to do all we can to progress this examination to a positive outcome. That said, we should give warning that if we conclude that this is not possible or is not the most expedient route to the adoption of a sound Local Plan for York – that is, if withdrawing the Plan and resubmitting it with an updated evidence base would be more efficient – then we will halt the examination and proceed to submitting our report to the Council on the basis of the evidence that has currently been submitted.

We hope that this letter is helpful and sets out some clear parameters for progress. Please ensure that a copy of it is placed on the examination webpage as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

*Simon Berkeley and Andrew McCormack*

Inspectors