

**Maldon District Local Development Plan
Inspector: Simon Berkeley BA MA MRTPI**

Mr Nick Fenwick
Director of Planning & Regulatory Services
Maldon District Council

Programme Officer:

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Dear Mr Fenwick

Examination of the Maldon District Local Development Plan

I am writing to raise a few matters with you.

2014-based household projections

As you will be aware, on 12 July the Government published 2014-based household projections (2014 to 2039). I ask that the Council prepares a concise paper comparing the new ONS 2014 sub-national population projections and the Government's household projections against the basis on which the objectively assessed need for housing in Maldon has been identified. The paper should set out the Council's view as to whether any difference in projections has any significant implications for the objective assessment of housing need. This paper will be the subject of public consultation in due course – I give further details below.

Sustainability Appraisal

You will recall that in my letter of 9 June I indicated that the main modifications proposed by the Council will need to be consulted on before further hearings can take place. It is clear to me that some of these main modifications will require Sustainability Appraisal (SA) – for example, the proposed deletion of the Reserve Sites from the plan. As I now understand it, no such SA has thus far been produced. This work must be undertaken and published alongside the main modifications.

In addition, I draw your attention to the Extra Work Tasks document drawn up by the previous Inspector. Under Matter 1, he identified the need for a 'correcting addition' to the SA dealing with the Reserve Sites (because their inclusion in the plan had not been considered through SA) and reasonable and

unreasonable alternative sites. From my understanding, the latter relates to all sites promoted for allocation/identification in the plan but which were rejected by the Council. Again, I am given to understand that this SA work has also not as yet been undertaken.

I note that the previous Inspector had asked that this be produced for the final hearing session, not before. But we are now in a wholly different position to any he may have envisaged at that time. In the present circumstances, given the role of SA in plan formulation and to enable the examination to progress in the way I have previously indicated, it is necessary that this SA work also be undertaken now and published before hearings take place. While I recognise that further main modifications may be identified during the examination process and that this may mean further SA work and consultation again later, so be it – that is not an unusual necessity in Local Plan examinations.

Next steps and timescales

I am aiming to produce my ‘matters and issues’ for the examination, and subsequently to hold further hearing sessions, as soon as possible. However, I am not able to do this until I have full certainty about the main modifications proposed by the Council, the conclusions of the SA work discussed above and the comments of others on both the main modifications and the SAs.

You will recall that in my letter of 9 May I said that Mrs Copsey would liaise with Mr Tofts to establish when hearings might be held. I have received no indication from the Council on this point. You will appreciate that it is important for my work programming that I have well in advance at least some general idea of when hearings might be. To begin to establish this and to focus minds going forward, I set out below the broad steps involved along with an estimate of the likely timescales for each.

1	Prepare a paper comparing the 2014-based household projections with the basis for the objectively assessed need for housing, as described above	By 12 August
2	Undertake SA of: Reserve Sites; alternative sites; and the main modifications put forward by the Council thus far, where relevant	By 12 August
3	In the light of the SA work, re-consider the main modifications proposed (to ensure that main modifications are informed by SA) and produce a brief paper explaining this	By 12 August
4	Publish the main modifications proposed by the Council for general public consultation (rather than a focussed consultation) and simultaneously publish all of the new SA work and the paper about the 2014-based household projections for information and comment	Six week consultation 15 August to 23 September

5	Inspector to consider representations and publish matters and issues paper with four weeks for statements	Four week period from 3 October to 28 October
6	Hearings re-open	8 November

I would be grateful to know your thoughts about the steps and timetable set out above, and whether the timeframe can be achieved. Indeed, I would be happy to consider any suggestions you may have about how the timetable could be shortened.

I trust that you find this letter helpful. Please place a copy of it on the examination web-page as soon as possible. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me through Mrs Copsey.

Yours sincerely

Simon Berkeley

Inspector

Cc Mr Adrian Tofts, Strategic Planning Policy Manager, Maldon District Council
(by email only)