

DECISION NOTICE

Notice is given that the following decision has been taken under the Provisions set out in the Council's Constitution

Decision maker: Portfolio Holder for Finance.

Date: 3 December 2014

Decision in the matter of: Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Examination Suspension

Decision:

1. That Inspector Stephen Pratt be requested to suspend the Local Plan Strategy Examination to enable further supporting work to be undertaken to address the concerns he expressed in his Interim Views.
2. That, in accordance with section 20(7C) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Inspector be asked to recommend any Main Modifications to the Local Plan Strategy which he considers to be appropriate.
3. That the precise timing of the requests be delegated to the Head of Strategic & Economic Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, so as to take proper account of the clarification which has been sought from the Inspector.

Background: In the light of the Inspectors interim views on the Local Plan Strategy the Council now has a choice of either suspending the Examination or withdrawing the Plan.

The Council published its Local Plan Strategy in March 2014 and the Examination Hearings opened in September. The Hearings were adjourned on 4 October to allow for the consideration of material linked to strategic sites and the Inspector has used the period of adjournment to provide his interim views on matters considered in the first three weeks of hearings.

Whilst there are areas he considers to be satisfactory the Inspector has raised concerns in respect of four areas, these being the Councils objective assessment of housing needs, justification of the spatial distribution of development, the need to review the LPS to ensure the economic strategy within it is realistic, and the need for further work on the Councils approach to the Green Belt.

As is common in such situations the Council has been given three options i.e. to carry on, with the clear implication that the Plan would subsequently be found to be unsound; to suspend the examination and undertake further work; or to withdraw the Plan. Of these the first has already been rejected. Each of the remaining options has different risks and implications, the details of which are in the full report. Suspension is the preferred option, and six months is the usual period of time, meaning there is a lot to do and only a limited time in which to do it.

The Council is currently seeking clarification from the Inspector on the programme of work needed and on certain aspects of his interim views and, once a response on these matters has been received, it is suggested that a request to suspend should be made.

Background Documents: The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report author.

Approved:

Signed
Councillor Peter Raynes (Cabinet Member for Finance)

Date: 3 December 2014

Advising Officer:

Signed
Adrian Fisher (Head of Strategic and Economic Planning)