

Councillors Briefing Note No. 131

Service : Economy and Enterprise

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Wiltshire Core Strategy Next Steps

The next steps for the Wiltshire Core Strategy have now been communicated by the Planning Inspector, Andrew Seaman BA (Hons) MA MRTPI.

Pre-hearing meeting

The Inspector has requested a pre-hearing meeting on the 28 February. This meeting will allow the Inspector to formally publish the matters to be debated at the forthcoming hearing sessions. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for procedural and administrative matters to be explained and discussed, together with the form and content of the hearings and the anticipated timetable. Prior to the meeting, the Inspectorate will write to all those who submitted representations on the Core strategy. The Inspector will take into account the representations submitted on the Core Strategy as far as they relate to soundness considerations and it is likely that a number of informal debates will take place on the principal matters identified by the Inspector, these are termed Hearing Sessions.

Examination in Public Hearing Sessions

The inspector has also proposed that the Hearing Sessions will commence in early May 2013 – duration and start date to be confirmed following the pre-hearing meeting, but likely to last five weeks with a break for half term.

The purpose of the Examination in Public (EiP) is to **consider if the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) complies with the legal requirements and is 'sound'**. The Inspector assesses the whole document for legal compliance and soundness – this means dealing with the main issues which go to the heart of the DPD, and not getting involved unnecessarily with the details of the plan.

Hearing sessions are based on the Inspector's definition of matters and issues, and are not driven by the representations. The sessions will be inquisitorial, with the Inspector probing the issues as opposed to an adversarial approach. Those who have sought changes to the DPD and signalled a wish to be heard must be invited to the hearings. If essential, additional parties who did not ask to attend, may be invited by the Inspector to contribute specialist expertise and knowledge.

Report

The Planning Inspectorate aim to submit a draft report to the Council in a timely manner after the close of the Sessions. Within 3 months seems reasonable estimate based on other cases, which would be end of September/Early October.

Final steps

If the Inspector recommends **modifications**, these will be subject to a period of consultation prior to the adoption period.

Should the Inspector find the plan sound then the Council can move to **adoption** which requires Full Council agreement. Once adopted, the Council is obliged to take decisions in accordance with the policies of the plan. On the current timetable, adoption is expected for end 2013