

Examination of Core Strategy Focused Review (CSFR)

Briefing Note

The Inspector

Mrs Gregory is a Senior Planning Inspector for the Planning Inspectorate. She is a Chartered Town Planner and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography and is a Bachelor of Town Planning. She is also a member of the Chartered Management Institute.

The Inspector's role

The inspector's role, as defined in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 s20(5)(a), is to examine the CSFR and, firstly, check that it complies with legislation. Secondly, the inspector has to determine whether it is "sound". To be sound, the CSR should be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Advice on Local Plan examinations can be obtained via the Planning Portal; <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans> It should be noted that some of the guidance on the Planning Portal has been overtaken by policy and legislative changes.

Hearings will enable the inspector to investigate legal compliance and soundness with those who have made representations on the CSFR, with the Council and with other persons and parties whom she may invite to attend.

After the Hearings, the inspector will prepare a report for the Council with her conclusions. She can only recommend changes where she has been invited to by the Council in order to address any issues in respect of legal compliance or soundness and any changes must be necessary to achieve soundness. Her report will be binding on the Council which should proceed to adopt the CSFR including any necessary changes to it.

The inspector will announce at the last hearing session the expected date that the report will be sent to the Council. The Council will be given a period of 2 weeks to highlight any factual errors or to seek any clarification of any reasoning before her final report is issued. It will be for the Council to make arrangements for the publication of her report. In her report she will deal only with broad issues that she has identified and will not comment on individual representations.

The Programme Officer

Annette Feeney is the Programme Officer for this Examination. She acts as an impartial officer of the Examination under the Inspector's direction, even though she is based in the Council's offices.

Her main tasks will be to liaise with all parties to ensure the smooth running of Hearings, to supervise the programme for Hearings, ensure

that all written and electronic material is recorded and circulated appropriately, and to oversee the Examination library. Items in the Examination library will be available to the interested public for reference purposes by arrangement with Mrs Feeney.

All procedural questions should be directed to Mrs Feeney, and not to the Inspector. Mrs Feeney is employed on a part time basis but can be contacted at the Council Offices, by e-mail on annette.feeney@midsuffolk.gov.uk or by telephone on 07748 624 953.

The Council's website will also provide information about the Hearings and any changes to the timetable and can be found at www.midsuffolk.gov.uk

The Examination Library

Mrs Feeney has already set up the library which contains many of the legislative, strategic and local documents which form the evidence base for the CSFR. The principle is that all documentation referred to in the Examination should be available for other interested persons to read. The library is likely to grow as the Hearings proceed. Any additions to it should be given to Mrs Feeney, preferably with an electronic copy or details of web links, so that she can record and number them.

Representations on the CSFR

The publication CSFR January 2012, Sustainability Appraisal Note December 2011 and supporting documents were available for public consultation from 11 January 2012 to 22 February 2012. At the end of this period, the Council were in receipt of 56 duly made representations from 20 separate respondents. 10 of the respondents have indicated that they wish to give evidence orally at the Hearings. 7 of these respondents have the right to be heard. 3 of the respondents are supporters of the plan. The Inspector is considering where to will be helpful for the examination to allow these parties to place in the hearings sessions. This will be determined when the programme is finalised.

That means that 10 respondents are content for their representations to be made in writing. ***Whether made in writing or orally, representations carry equal weight.*** This means that in examining the CSFR, the inspector will have full regard to all written representations. All those who have submitted duly made representations will be given an opportunity to submit additional written material in answer to the questions which the Inspector has raised under specific issues.

If any person or organisation that has made representations as to the soundness of the CSFR wishes to speak at hearings and has not already informed the programme officer, they should contact her now as a matter of urgency by Friday 18 May 2012 at the latest.

Hearing sessions

Hearing sessions for the public examination will be on Wednesday 27 and Thursday 28 June starting at 10.00 am. The location of the Hearings will be the Lecture Theatre at the Council Offices Needham Market, unless otherwise advised.

There has been a separate consultation exercise carried out in respect of the implications of the National Planning Policy Framework, model planning policy (presumption in favour of sustainable development) and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. On receipt of any representations in those regards the Inspector will consider whether there is a need for additional hearing sessions.

The Hearing sessions will be the occasion to discuss the merits of the CSFR and the issues raised in representations. A list of main issues, and questions arising under each of those matters is attached. If there are any queries these should be brought to the attention of the Programme Officer.

The Hearings will use an “inquisitorial” rather than an “adversarial” approach. This means that legal representation should be unnecessary, although it is recognised that representors may wish to be professionally represented and this is acceptable. The hearings will proceed by way of an informal, but structured, round-the-table exchange of opinion. Everyone taking part will have a chance to express their views and participate in the discussions. The Hearings should enable them to ‘have their say’ and enable the Inspector, to understand better whether the submitted CSFR is sound. Where there is evidence that the CSFR is unsound, the Inspector will expect to hear discussion of any changes which might be considered to make it sound.

Participants in the Hearings should direct their contributions to the main issues and questions, focusing on the soundness or otherwise of the CSFR and on any means of removing unsound elements/ securing soundness.

The Inspector has identified the main issues to be discussed at each hearing. The draft hearing timetable along with lists of respondents who wish to appear in respect of the main issues is attached. The hearing sessions are open to all to attend, but only those who have indicated that they want to participate at a hearing will be around the table and allowed to speak.

The programme for the Hearings is susceptible to change, and all participants should keep in touch with the Programme Officer and the website, to ensure that they do not miss their allotted day and time for attendance.

Changes to the CSFR

The starting point for the Examination is the assumption that the local authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. **The**

Inspector will seek confirmation at the opening that the Proposed Submission Document, January 2012, along with the list of proposed minor changes from the proposed submission (dated March 2012) is the starting point for the Examination.

Any changes which are put forward to that document should only be put forward to make it sound. Minor changes are now a matter for the Council. If substantial changes are proposed to achieve soundness, the requirements for public consultation and SA will have to be considered before the changes are progressed. Additional public consultation or SA can delay the process of examination.

Potential changes should be specified at the earliest possible stage and discussed with the relevant parties, notably the Council. This approach should mean that in some cases, appropriate changes come forward with agreement among the parties. A process of early negotiation can save time at the Hearings. The Inspector can only recommend changes that the Council ask me to make.

Further Written Statements

The Inspector invites the Council and representors to submit statements which relate to the main issues and questions. At the end, the statements should specify any changes to the CSFR which are considered necessary to make it sound. These statements should be submitted to the Programme Officer by **Thursday 14 June**.

Where possible emailed electronic versions of all statements should be sent to the programme officer in word or PDF version. The statements should be as short and sharp as possible. Experience suggests that there is no need for them to exceed 3,000 words.

All statements should be clearly marked with the representor's name and the reference number should be shown on the top right hand corner of each page. It should be clear to which matter the statement relates. A4 paper size should be used throughout and statements should be stapled not bound. If references to external documents which are not contained in the Examination Library are made, the source should be clear to the reader and short extracts only should be attached as appendices to the statement.

Site Visits

The Inspector will be carrying out site visits the day after the hearing sessions. These will be partly accompanied as it will be necessary to go on private land. Arrangements for accompanied visits will be made through the Programme Officer.