Bath and North East Somerset Core Strategy Examination

Inspector’s Note to All Representors – 24 June 2013

I resumed work on this Examination at the beginning of June.

In a note to the Council of 7 June 2013 (now ID32 in the documents list on the Examination page of Council’s website) I highlighted what I regarded as serious concerns about the scope of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which called into question the continuation of the Examination.

The Council has responded in a short note (BNES/41) and seeks a hearing on this matter, to which I have agreed. This hearing will take place on Tuesday 17 September starting at 10am. The venue will be confirmed later. It will focus on the scope of the SHMA and its potential implications, but not cover matters such as the detailed household projections. Participants at this hearing will certainly include those who made specific comments on the scope of the SHMA and who want to be heard. There may be other participants depending on the scope of the questions to be discussed. Participants will be confirmed in due course by the Programme Officer (PO), but if you know that you come within the first category and want to appear please let the PO know.

By mid July I will issue a list of questions to explore at this hearing and on which statements can be submitted in advance of the hearing (to a deadline which I will set).

As the continuation of the Examination to a full set of hearings is uncertain, I am seeking to minimise the further work that is required by other parties. Accordingly, hearings on other matters (including the details of the SHMA/housing requirement and proposals for development in various parts of the Green Belt) will be timetabled for a date well after the hearing on 17th September so that they could be cancelled and no pre-hearing statements submitted if I were to finally conclude that the scope of the SHMA is fatally flawed. I need to give more thought to such timetabling.

In the meantime, I have prepared a further note of questions to the Council (ID/33) seeking to clarify various matters concerning the detailed content of the SHMA and the calculation of the housing requirement. I have also asked the Council to arrange a technical seminar for those who have made comments on the contents of the SHMA, so that a better understanding can be gained of its background methodology. Whilst these matters would be for a later hearing, it would save time if such a seminar could take place over the summer, putting relevant parties in a position to prepare a statement of common ground, as indicated in that note. I would not be involved in arranging or conducting such a seminar.

Simon Emerson
Inspector