



# The Planning Inspectorate

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Mr A Cunningham  
Associate Director of Economy and  
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Wiltshire Council  
County Hall  
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BA14 8JN

Our Ref: PINS/Y3940/429/9

Your Ref: AC/PT

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014

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Dear Mr Cunningham,

## Wiltshire Core Strategy (CS)

Further to my letter of 4<sup>th</sup> February, I write to acknowledge receipt of the latest Examination documents recently submitted (electronically 3<sup>rd</sup> March) in support of the Core Strategy (CS). They are informative and clearly have implications for the plan as originally submitted.

Whilst I am continuing to consider their content and the resulting implications, I consider that it would be sensible to programme the necessary public consultation upon their content. For reasons of transparency, fairness and engagement, this should include all of the Council's proposed modifications to the Core Strategy that have arisen since the last public consultation. I understand from the Programme Officer that the earliest opportunity for the consultation to commence would be 7<sup>th</sup> April. I suggest that this be pursued subject to the matters below.

Such a consultation should be in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement and extend for a minimum of 6 weeks. I would wish to receive the outcome of the consultation as soon as possible thereafter which should include copies of all representations made and a spreadsheet of the comments relevant to the CS content/policies and incorporating Council Officer comments. I understand this may take up to three weeks depending on the level of responses received. If practical and only where warranted, there may be scope to amend the previous Statements of Common Ground to acknowledge the schedule of proposed changes, for example Natural England, the Environment Agency and other prescribed bodies.

It would be prudent to make available a tracked changed version of the Core Strategy which will enable all interested parties to see the nature of the



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changes proposed against the originally submitted plan. Indeed, for my own reference and as previously requested, I would appreciate sight of such a document at the earliest opportunity. I also understand from the Programme Officer that the Council are currently working upon revised wording for Core Policy 2; clearly if this remains the case then any arising modification should be clarified prior to the public consultation and forwarded to me as a matter of urgency. For the purposes of the consultation, it may be considered helpful to identify three versions of the CS: the submitted CS, the track changes shown in EXAM/34A and a version showing the most recent suggested modification (March/April 2014). The update to the LDS should be flagged for all concerned.

The update to the HRA contains a number of matters where further information is awaited, for example from utility suppliers, before a conclusion can be reached as to the extent to which the proposed revisions may affect biodiversity interests. As currently drafted, the update raises important issues as to the implications of the proposed changes to the CS. It would seem that such additional information may be available shortly. If this is the case, then it would avoid unnecessary confusion and comment if a 'final' HRA update was available prior to the commencement of the consultation. Your clarification on this point and the timing of any update would be appreciated.

You will be aware that the Planning Practice Guidance has now been formally issued, replacing a raft of previous documentation. I would be grateful if the Council could prepare a short document identifying the extent to which it considers the Guidance may affect the content of the CS. With this in mind, the public consultation should also afford an opportunity to comment upon the implications of the Guidance for the CS. However, it should be made clear that the Guidance does not change existing Government Policy as iterated in the Framework.

You may appreciate, that prior to the consultation outcome it would be potentially premature for me to seek to finalise any potential main modifications I may wish to recommend with regards to matters affected by the recent evidence and the Council's own schedule of changes. Indeed, the Council's proposed changes have now caused me to reconsider matters that originally raised concerns as to the soundness of the CS approach. The need to clarify the HRA and Core Policy 2 also impinges upon my consideration.

To avoid delay and scope for confusion, this is a matter that may most appropriately be dealt with separately. By so doing, a clear distinction would be made between those modifications recommended unilaterally by myself and those arising from the deliberation of the Council and its partners. I do not currently anticipate that such matters in themselves would be unduly extensive. Nevertheless, I am currently able to clarify the need for a main modification to the supporting text to Core Policy 42. If you think this would be helpful to incorporate within the next consultation then please let me know and I will provide further details.

I look forward to receiving an update as soon as possible, and before the end of March, on the way in which the positive progress on this Examination can be maintained with a view to an expeditious closure. At this stage, I anticipate that following the outcome of the public consultation, I will need to determine the need for any further hearing sessions. Provided that I can rely on the written submissions, I will be in a position to finalise my report with any main modifications. Any such modifications will likely require public

consultation and potentially updates to the SA/HRA. Following which, the final report will be issued and the Council can determine whether or not it would wish to adopt the CS.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

*Andrew Seaman*

Senior Housing and Planning Inspector