

Dear Mr Clews

North Essex

The North Essex Authorities (**NEAs**) have been considering the arrangements for the forthcoming examination sessions for the Section 1 Local Plan.

In line with your Explanatory Note which accompanied the technical consultation, the NEAs anticipate that the further hearing sessions will focus mainly on those aspects of the Section 1 Local Plan and its evidence base which you identified as requiring further work (para 13).

The NEAs are mindful of the local interest in the garden community proposals and anticipate that the examination sessions will be well-attended by members of the public. Given the detailed nature of some of that further evidence base work, the NEAs have been considering how best to ensure that members of the public are fully engaged in the proceedings at the forthcoming hearings. With that in mind the NEAs wish to make some suggestions about the format of those hearings.

Matters, issues and questions

The NEAs are anticipating that you will issue a list of matters, issues and questions to focus discussion at the hearings. The NEAs are of the view that an iterative approach may assist proceedings and be helpful both to you and the participating parties. We suggest that:

- First, the NEAs are required to respond to the matters and questions within a prescribed timeframe (for example 2 weeks). We expect this to take the usual form of Hearing Statements.
- Following the submission and publication of the NEA's Hearing Statements, the participants would have the same timeframe in which to respond to the Inspector's matters and questions. The participants would also have the opportunity in those statements to and address points raised in the NEAs' Hearing Statements.
- Finally, the NEAs are given the opportunity to respond in writing prior to the Examination to the participant's Hearing Statements.

The NEAs are of the view that this would assist in making clear the respective positions of the participating parties, relative to that of the NEAs and help focus the subsequent hearing sessions.

Structure of the hearing sessions

Given the substance of the consultation documents, the NEAs suggest that hearing sessions be programmed on a thematic basis. Our suggested themes are:

1. Delivery, including:
 - a. Build out rates
 - b. Viability
 - c. Delivery mechanisms
 - d. State Aid
2. Infrastructure, including:
 - a. Road improvements

- b. Rapid transit
 - c. Rail
 - d. Modal share strategy
- 3. Employment
- 4. Sustainability Appraisal
- 5. Habitats Regulation Assessment

This structure would reflect the scope of the further evidence base and also the approach that CAUSE had taken to the preparation of their evidence.

Hearing sessions

Understandably there will be members of public attending the hearings sessions who will not have had advance sight of the various hearing statements. To ensure that those in attendance understand the issues being discussed it might be helpful if the NEAs could, at the start of each themed session, be given the opportunity to address you, and the wider audience, setting out their position on the key issues. This would also be an opportunity for the NEAs to direct members of the public to the relevant evidence base documents.

After those introductory comments, the participants would be given the opportunity to respond and address you. The NEAs should then have an opportunity to respond to the points raised in the usual fashion.

We consider that without the NEAs position first being articulated, it may be difficult for members of the public to understand the backdrop against which the participants are responding. The NEAs consider that this approach would provide greater context for attendees and enable a greater understanding of the issues involved.

Promoters

It might be useful to provide a formal opportunity in each themed session for the promoters of development within the identified garden community sites to make their position on the issue clear. As their submissions make clear they should be able to help the examination on issues such as viability and deliverability.

Summary

The NEAs are keen to welcome the Inspector's thoughts on the suggestions raised in this letter, and any thoughts on how the hearing sessions can be made more accessible to attendees.