

## **Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan Examination**

### **Background and Update at 6/5/09**

The Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan (RNOTP) was submitted on 11 January 2008.

A Pre-Hearings Meeting was held on 26 June 2008.

After this, officers prepared a number of Examination Statements, which were submitted to the Planning Inspector on 26 August 2008.

The Examination Hearings took place from 7-17 October 2008.

Soon after these Hearings, on 31 October, the Planning Inspector wrote to the Council requiring some further work be carried out on the RNOTP.

Public consultation took place on this work for 6 weeks until 27 March 2009.

On 14 April 2009, Planning Policy Committee received a report for information of the representations and key issues raised.

ENC sent the Planning Inspector a copy of all representations and factual updates.

The Planning Inspector held further Hearings on 29, 30 April and 1 May 2009 to consider those issues, which he wished to test further.

These issues in brief were:

#### **Day 1            Affordable Housing**

The Inspector considered further technical work carried out for ENC by consultants EDAW to provide an affordable housing viability testing model. The Planning Inspectorate appointed consultants Atisreal to check EDAW's model. The Inspector highlighted that this is the first time that the Planning Inspectorate have tested such work nationally. The Inspector requested that EDAW carry out some additional sensitivity testing, such as factoring in the cost of applying the Code for Sustainable Homes to development. This additional information has been submitted by EDAW to the Inspector for his further consideration.

#### **Conclusion:**

No indication can therefore be given at this stage, as to what, if any, changes the Inspector might wish to make to the affordable housing policy, however the need for viability testing of individual planning applications seems quite likely.

## **Day 2 Oundle Site Allocations**

The Inspector considered the issue of site allocations relating in particular to Oundle and the further technical work undertaken for ENC by consultants Roger Tym & Partners. The Agents attending Day 2 all agreed that the Tyms' work was a robust method and could be used by the Inspector as an evidence base, should he feel the need to allocate any further sites. The Inspector requested an update of the housing trajectory (which ENC supplied) and it was noted that as the Creed Road application had now been received by ENC, the proposed requirement for a Masterplan had therefore been potentially superseded. Just before the lunchtime recess, the Inspector also requested clarification regarding details of 2 Oundle sites: Land between Benefield Rd/Warren Bridge site and land adjacent to Cemetery (One query related to the Tyms' work and the other to the ENC Schedule of Proposed Changes). During the break, this information was checked by ENC and when the session resumed this was clarified to the Inspector's satisfaction. The Inspector also requested detailed PPG17 study information on the Oundle School Playing Field Site and if feasible a further response about this from Sport England, to assist him in assessing the acceptability/deliverability/suitability of allocating this site (this is to be provided to the Inspector by Friday 8 May by both parties).

### **Conclusion:**

All those present supported the method used by Tyms, which is very positive. The Inspector will be checking that he is happy with the site allocations, which result from that method.

## **Day 3 Settlement Boundaries**

The Inspector highlighted that he was making an exception in hearing evidence on a participants' site-specific matter. This is because the new Planning System requires that he only test the overall "soundness" of policies and the methodology used to prepare them, rather than looking at detailed site-specific maps. He advised that his Final Report will therefore consider the "soundness" of this subject based on that requirement, however he may refer to specific individuals' sites to exemplify points. Again he highlighted that this was not normal practice under the new Planning System requirements and if he did so, this would be as an exception. This session was short - ending at 11.00am.

### **Conclusion:**

The Inspector will now prepare his Final Report, in the light of the comments above. The Inspector posed no significant queries to ENC about the approach to settlement boundaries.

## **Finally**

The Planning Inspector advised that he will be considering all issues and submit his final report to ENC by 13<sup>th</sup> July 2009.