

Mr P Lewis and Mr S Dean
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
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24 September 2024

Dear Mr Lewis and Mr Dean

Examination of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review

Thank you for your letter dated 12 September 2024.

Please can our letter dated 11 September 2024 and accompanying update, which pre-dated your own letter, be published on the examination website. You will be pleased to hear that we are on track to provide the updated evidence referred to in that letter by 25 September.

We very much welcome your decision to enable the Councils to submit the updated evidence base in relation to the Transport Modelling, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, viability evidence and signed statements of common ground with Worcestershire County Council and National Highways by 31 December 2024 and all other updated evidence by 31 October 2024. We are on track to do this.

You will of course be aware that the Councils are dependent upon Worcestershire County Council and National Highways, as the relevant highway authorities, to undertake the transport modelling work and advise on the proposed mitigation necessary and appropriate to deliver the homes in the plan. We are working closely with the officers of these bodies as well as their senior management and political leaders to impress upon them the need to undertake the necessary work effectively and efficiently to ensure the deadlines we have set out are met and there is no further slippage.

We remain firmly committed to ensuring that the deadlines are met and are confident that the plan will be found sound. You will of course be aware that the plan makes provision for 26,360 dwellings, including the strategically significant Worcestershire Parkway development which the government has already identified as a site for accelerated housing delivery. We consider that the most efficient and effective method of ensuring that these homes are allocated and built at the earliest opportunity is by continuing with the examination of this plan rather than by its withdrawal and the creation of a new plan which is likely to delay rather than expedite the delivery of new homes.

Whilst we welcome your letter we are concerned that in paragraph 10 you appear to be suggesting that if at the hearings, which you intend to take place in March 2025, it becomes apparent that additional work would be necessary to make the plan sound you would recommend to the Council that the plan is withdrawn as it is unlikely that a further pause would be found acceptable by you.

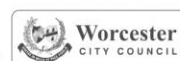
Clearly any decision to make such a recommendation would need to be made at the time based on the circumstances that may give rise to the need for delay, how long it would be for, the public

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benefit of continuing with a plan which could deliver homes more quickly as against starting a new plan from scratch.

You will of course be well aware that all plans are the subject of some main modifications which need to be consulted on and the subject of an updated Strategic Environmental Assessment, prior to the final report containing your recommended main modifications. This process inevitably gives rise to the need for a delay of some sort. Moreover, circumstances that simply cannot be foreseen now could arise which would render a pause in the examination process both the sensible and reasonable response.

In our view it would be inappropriate (and unlawful) for you to either fetter or prejudice or predetermine what action you would take in the future faced with the need for a further delay unless and until the circumstances that may give rise to the need for a delay are known. We trust that you did not intend to give any impression that any delay howsoever caused would automatically result in a recommendation that the plan be withdrawn but rather that the matter would need to be judged at the time in the light of all the circumstance which would of course include any ministerial guidance that may then exist. Please let us know if we have misunderstood this.

We would like to emphasise both our continued commitment to the plan process and to meet the deadlines set. We will start to liaise with Ian Kemp about potential hearings in March 2025 so that venues, staff and counsel are available to service the efficient running of the examination.

Yours sincerely,


Ian Macleod

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Malvern Hills and Wychavon District
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