

KIRKLEES LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION HEARINGS

COUNCIL'S OPENING STATEMENT

Tuesday 10 October 2017

Thank you Inspector and good morning everyone.

On behalf of Kirklees Council I would like welcome the Inspector, Katie Child, and all those attending this public examination. In advance of stage 2 of the examination hearings we would also like to welcome our Minerals and Waste Inspector, Elizabeth Hill.

Before I comment on the Local Plan, the council would like to thank Yvonne Parker, the Programme Officer, for her management of the Examination process so far. An enormous amount of work goes into organising the examination hearings and this has also included other officers from the council.

National planning policy places Local Plans at the heart of the planning system and it is essential that they are in place and kept up to date. The Kirklees Unitary Development Plan was adopted in 1999 and it will be nearly 20 years since the council had an up-to-date development plan in place. It is vital that Kirklees has a new Local Plan in place as soon as possible.

It is needed to provide certainty for planning decisions, to provide an up-to-date policy framework for decision making, to accommodate planned, sustainable, growth to meet the growing needs of the district, to help us plan and fund infrastructure and also to protect our important open spaces and heritage and environmental assets.

The Local Plan set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design.

The Kirklees Local Plan is a key mechanism for the Council to deliver its priorities set out in its Health and Wellbeing Strategy to promote health and well-being and increase employment opportunities in accordance with its Economic Strategy.

Kirklees is a special place to live with a strong sense of place, and its size and geography means that it is also a diverse district and the Local Plan needs to be flexible enough to adapt to these differences.

The district also has increasing needs for jobs and homes – the Local Plan responds to this by positively seeking opportunities to meet the development needs of the district and plans to meet objectively assessed needs for homes, jobs and facilities, in a way compatible with the specific context and constraints of Kirklees.

The public examination of the Local Plan is the culmination of a process that has included extensive consultation and engagement over the last few years. The council would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the preparation of the Kirklees Local Plan, including those who responded to the various stages of consultation and engagement on the Plan. Their input is valued and has helped inform and improve the Plan.

The nature of planning means that the Local Plan cannot do what everyone wants and the Council will often be in the middle between those who think we are going too far and those who do not think we are going far enough. The Council considers that the Plan strikes an appropriate balance:

- between promoting sustainable growth and preserving what is valued in the district;
- between local and strategic matters; and
- between flexibility and certainty

Kirklees is not an island and our district sits in within the wider West Yorkshire conurbation and plays a key role within the Leeds City Region. The Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority have confirmed that they consider the Local Plan to be in general conformity with their strategies and objectives. We have also liaised with our neighbours and other key organisations in preparing the plan.

The Plan is supported by robust and proportionate evidence - on housing, employment, infrastructure and viability to name but a few. It has also undergone a sustainability appraisal to assess reasonable alternatives and consider the Plan's environmental, social and economic impacts.

The Council considers that the Local Plan provides a sound and positive strategy for achieving sustainable development and meeting Kirklees' identified needs.

Finally, the preparation of this plan has taken an enormous of work from a professional and dedicated team of council officers, many of whom live in the district and care about the districts future. Officers representing the council during the hearings are simply doing their job and the council expects its staff to be treated with respect in the same way the council respects all the different views which will be presented over the coming weeks/months.

We therefore welcome the examination in public and look forward to the constructive discussions ahead to assist the Inspectors.