

We see the Inspector has not asked a specific question about PLP1. In our view, PLP 1 is not effective. NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development has been systematically hijacked by the speculative development industry to secure planning permissions that are contrary to the policies of a Local Plan. Recent case law has determined that when relevant policies are out of date at the time of a decision, they are still relevant, though they may not carry full weight. This is crucial to the soundness of any Local Plan, because if one or more policies happen to be out of date at the time of a decision, that decision could itself further undermine the relevance of the plan – for example if a substantial development took place that was not consistent with the settlement hierarchy.

To address this problem, we seek an additional clause in PLP1 to state:

“the degree to which out-of-date policies should carry appropriate weight as material considerations in order to maintain the integrity of the Local Plan as a whole”.

Question (a)

We emphasise our point made in representations and in earlier hearings, that masterplans and implementation plans are essential for larger sites and would often be beneficial for smaller schemes too. We consider that these should be given greater strength by specifying those sites (on a site-by-site basis in the plan) for which planning permissions would be expected to be conditional on an agreed masterplan. Further, the phasing and delivery rates for those sites can then be locked into the plan itself as part of those masterplans. The practical result is that the plan would indicate the planning conditions that would be expected to apply to permissions on each site, which would speed up applications that conformed to those conditions.

Questions (b) and (c)

If the plan is to be considered sound then it must be assumed that all site allocations are in sustainable locations. We have objected to those site allocations that we believe fail this test. On non-allocated sites, there may be exceptional situations in which re-use of a previously developed site would justify a less sustainable location, but nevertheless the presumption should be that only sites in locations that are sustainable or can be made sustainable should be developed, whether or not they have been previously developed. Crucially, it may be that addressing sustainability constraints of some sites is dependent on infrastructure investment, so those sites could only be considered suitable for development if there is a reasonable prospect of that investment taking place.

Question (d)

We have dealt with density issues at length previously. Our view is that, in general, net densities below 45dpha are unsustainable, and sites not considered suitable for at least that density should not be allocated.