

**Examination of the Remitted Part of the Salt Cross Village Area Action Plan (AAP)**

Inspector Helen Hockenhull BA (Hons) B.PI MRTPI

Chris Hargraves
Planning Policy Manager
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OX28 1NB

7 January 2025

By Email

Dear Mr Hargraves,

Examination of the Remitted Part of the Salt Cross Village Area Action Plan (AAP)

1. Thank you for your letter of 19 November 2024 setting out the Council's current position and requesting a pause in the examination of the remitted Plan.
2. Your letter clearly explains the work your consultants have been undertaking following my initial letter to you on 22 April 2024. As you are aware the starting point for the examination is Policy 2 as originally submitted in 2020. My task is to examine the remitted Policy 2 in light of the successful legal challenge, the Government's Written Ministerial Statement on Local Energy Efficiency Standards (Dec 2023) (WMS) and also the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
3. Your letter sets out that the Council was considering putting forward two policy options for consideration during the reopened examination. The Council's preference would be for a more robust net zero carbon approach based on the use of energy metrics rather than the use of Building Regulation Metrics as referred to in the WMS. As you recognise in your letter, this would have raised the question of whether this approach would be consistent with relevant national planning policies. At this point in the examination and following the successful challenge, the Council should submit any suggested changes to Policy 2 which it considers are necessary for soundness having regard to the WMS and the NPPF, rather than putting forward two policy options for me to consider.
4. I am sure you are aware of the change to the Procedure Guide for Local Plans in August 2024 following Minister Pennycook's letter of 30 July 2024 to the Planning Inspectorate. The Minister's letter sets out the Government's expectations for 'pragmatism' during local plan examinations, including that any pauses to undertake additional work should usually take no more than six months overall.
5. This examination reopened in April 2024. Initially the Council advised that it would take around 3 months to prepare the necessary evidence to support a revised policy. This meant a submission in late August/ early September 2024. However,

for various reasons, this target date was put back a number of times as your consultant team continued to progress their work.

6. It is now January 2025. Effectively there has already been a pause of more than six months and the revised policy and supporting evidence still has not been submitted.
7. As you know, the Minister's letter gives Inspectors discretion to allow an extension to the six month pause where they are confident that the local authority can complete any outstanding work within an agreed timeframe. An indefinite or undetermined pause would not be acceptable.
8. In this context, in order for me to consider your request for a pause, it would be very helpful if you could set out a clear timeframe for completing each element of the outstanding work and any other associated activities and the consequent overall length of the pause sought. Anything the Council wish to add to lend confidence that the timeframe proposed can be met would also assist.
9. I look forward to your response in a timely manner. If the Council has any queries or questions, please contact me via the Programme Officer.
10. A copy of this letter should be placed on the examination web page for the information of all those following the progress of the examination. I am not seeking responses from any other interested party to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR