



Sevenoaks Local Plan: Examination in Public - the Inspector's hearings start on 24 September

Thank you to all who wrote to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) during the consultations on the Local Plan. It was largely due to you that MX52/53 were removed from the Local Plan submitted to the Government's Planning Inspectorate. However, if the Government's Inspector, Karen Baker, finds SDC's Local Plan unsound (possibly because of the large shortfall in meeting its housing target) she may ask SDC to consider additional sites. **If this happens, it is likely that MX52/53 in Fawkham and Hartley and MX61 in Ash would be reconsidered.**

The Inspector's hearing sessions will take place in Sevenoaks, from **Tuesday 24 September**. Anyone can sit in the audience to hear the proceedings but only those who expressed an interest in participating (during the Reg 19 consultation earlier this year) and have been asked by the Inspector to attend can participate in the discussions.

The hearings during the first two weeks focus on key policies in the Local Plan (e.g. Strategy for Growth, Green Belt and Housing Supply). There is then a four-week break, when the Inspector will consider the findings before starting the hearings on individual sites in the Local Plan, together with those policies not previously discussed. The dates currently set (these may change) for local sites are:

- 6 November
 - The Manor House, North Ash Road, New Ash Green
- 7 November
 - Fawkham Business Park, Fawkham Road, Fawkham
 - Grange Park Farm, Manor Lane, Fawkham

Full details of times and locations can be found on SDC's website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/434/examination_documents.

All other documents can be found at

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069131/local_plan_examination/454/examination_library.

The Inspector will not publish notes of the hearings. However, **No Hartley Expansion (NHE) will attend key sessions and feedback via their website and Facebook page.**

During the Reg 19 consultation on the Local Plan, NHE and the Parish Councils for Hartley, Fawkham and Ash-cum-Ridley all asked for SDC's policy on Green Belt to be strengthened and suggested alternative wording about infrastructure provision.

NHE and Hartley and Fawkham Parish Councils subsequently met with senior members of SDC's Planning Policy team to discuss the suggested re-wording. Sadly, however, SDC has not included our recommended changes.

NHE believes that this modification to the Local Plan could be crucial in preventing large scale development on Green Belt within Sevenoaks District, where the promise of significant infrastructure improvements could provide an additional justification for Green Belt releases.

NHE and the three Parish Councils will be participating in the hearings to reinforce their comments on the policies in the Local Plan and some of the local sites which have been allocated for development.

Major developers (including those who were promoting sites in Fawkham, Hartley, Ash and New Ash Green) will also be participating in the Examination in Public because they have said that the Local Plan is not sound as the Government's full identified housing need has not been met and that additional site allocations are therefore necessary.

Sites **not** allocated in the submitted Plan will not normally be discussed at the hearing sessions. The timetable does not therefore include any discussion on MX52/53 or MX61 or other sites which were not included. However, because the provision of housing in the Plan falls below the area's identified housing need, such a discussion may take place to assist the Inspector in determining whether or not additional housing land is available and suitable for allocation. **Strengthening SDC's policy on Green Belt would help to prevent these sites from being reinstated in the Local Plan.**

The role of the Inspector is to examine whether SDC's Local Plan is sound and legally compliant and, if not, to recommend any major modifications which would make it sound. If it is not possible to make it sound and legally compliant by making main modifications to it, the Inspector must recommend non-adoption of the Local Plan. SDC would then have to draw up a new Plan.

Any major modifications to the Local Plan recommended by the Inspector would be subject to further public consultation. The Inspector would then consider the representations (including those on any additional sites) and, if necessary, hold further hearing sessions to discuss them. She will then prepare her report. The timescale for this is unknown.

We will provide updates as and when these are available so please keep visiting nohartleyexpansion.com.