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26 October 2022

By email to matthew.giles@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Matthew,

Submission of the Wirral Local Plan 2021 – 2037 for Independent Examination

I am pleased to be writing to you today to formally submit the Wirral Local Plan 2021 – 2037 and its supporting documentation, to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for Independent Examination pursuant to Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, as amended.

The progression and timely adoption of the Wirral Local Plan 2021 - 2037 is a key corporate priority for the Council. Once adopted the Plan will provide for the regeneration of Birkenhead and delivery of the wider regeneration programme for the 'LeftBank' of the River Mersey stretching from New Brighton to Bromborough. This will ensure that the development and infrastructure needs of the Borough are met, whilst facilitating comprehensive regeneration through brownfield development. The plans for Birkenhead will be one of the largest and most ambitious regeneration programmes in the UK with the most significant spatial proposals for the area since the 2nd World War. Officers look forward to working proactively and constructively with the Inspectors appointed to carry out the Examination in order to ensure an effective and efficient process.

The Submission Draft Local Plan together with all supporting documentation is available via the Microsoft Teams channel provided to you previously.

A schedule of the supporting documents (including the evidence base) is appended to this letter, along with an Update Report (SD7) which accompanies the Submission of the Local Plan. The Update Report provides a summary of the latest position in relation to the ongoing work to support the progression and delivery of the Local Plan and is intended to assist the Inspector(s) appointed to undertake the Independent Examination (as well as participants). It provides an indication as to when any further supporting information, such as Statements of Common Ground, are likely to be finalised and available to support the Independent Examination process. These will be provided via the Programme Officer in due course.

The Council has considered the representations received under the Regulation 19 stage of Publication. Details are set out within the (Regulation 22) Consultation Statement (SD5.1). The Council is also submitting a schedule of proposed minor modifications to correct typos or minor errors to the Plan (SD6).

The Council has appointed an independent Programme Officer for the Independent Examination, whose contact details are:

Miss Kerry Trueman
Programme Officer Solutions Ltd
Pendragon House
1 Bertram Drive
Meols
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CH47 0LG
Mobile: 07582 310 364
Email: kerrytrueman@wirral.gov.uk

The Council intends to use Wallasey Town Hall to accommodate public hearing sessions as part of the Independent Examination process. Given the scope of the Plan and the representations received, I anticipate that public hearings are likely to last for at least nine days (three weeks). I envisage that hearings could commence early in 2023. My initial view is that the main issues for the Examination are likely to be:

- Duty to Cooperate
- Spatial strategy
- Local Housing Needs and the housing requirement
- Housing delivery
- Meeting employment needs
- Approach to Regeneration Areas
- Infrastructure and transport requirements
- Approach to placemaking and masterplanning
- Green and blue infrastructure
- Sustainability and climate change
- Waste management
- Detailed policies

I would like to formally request under Section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) that the Inspector(s) appointed to carry out the Independent Examination recommend any main modifications that may be required to make the plan sound and legally compliant.

I trust that the submission and all the information set out in the letter above is satisfactory. I will of course be happy to facilitate the provision of further information or documentation in hard copy to the appointed Planning Inspector(s) if required.

The main contact for the Council for the Independent Examination of the Local Plan will be Kath Lawless, Interim Service Lead for Development Management and Building Control at kathleenlawless@wirral.gov.uk. In the meantime, I look forward to being informed of the appointed Inspector(s) at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Keeley
Head of Regeneration Strategy