

Note from the Inspector

Student Housing

As you will know, on Friday 22 January, I did not feel able to properly lead the discussion on whether purpose built student housing can and should count as part of the housing supply in Bath, having not seen the Parliamentary Question and Answer on this specific matter or the advice on the CLG website and in the light of the Council's comment that it considers that it can now count purpose built flats as part of the supply, which is a potential significant change to the evidence underpinning the plan. I indicated that I would deal with the matter via a further written exchange along with other matters arising from the hearings. I would invite comment on this matter from the parties as the Universities session on the 22nd and those parties who commented on housing supply under Issue 1.

As a preliminary, I seek clarification/confirmation from the Council regarding its intentions and the background to it, so as to better inform the subsequent comments by others.

1. Is the Council intending to count the post 2006 purpose built-student blocks at Twerton as part of the housing supply and if so to how many units do they contribute?
2. Are there any other units already built which the Council intends to count?
3. Does the Council intend to count in the future only purpose built accommodation off campus or also on campus?
4. When/why has this change of approach been triggered?
5. Is any intention to count student housing as part of the supply in this way consistent with Council's calculation of the housing requirement?

I note that the Council also agreed on Friday to consider, in discussion with Bath Spa University, whether the future role of the Place making Plan in possibly reviewing the MED designation should be referred to in the Core Strategy in the light of the comment introduced by No 7 in CD6/E2.1.

Progressing matters after these hearings

The Council has agreed to produce further responses on a number of matters arising from the discussion. Where these introduce additional reasoning and suggest potentially significant changes my intention is to invite relevant parties to comment on them.

I would provide about 2 weeks for such comments and the process would be coordinated by the Programme Officer. This process is unlikely to commence until immediately after this round of hearings, so that I can first consider whether I need to invite comment on any particular questions. I would want all the material to be circulated at the same time. Accordingly, there is no pressure from me for the Council to produce responses at the beginning of this week as I am unlikely to have time in the next few days to consider them further. I see this process as a completion of the discussion of these matters at the hearings. I would emphasise that it is distinct from the more formal opportunity that would arise for all parties to comment on any proposed additional changes necessary for soundness. That process will occur sometime later. The Council may therefore need to indicate at this stage whether suggested changes are officer views only and/or made on a without prejudice basis to the Council's consideration of any unsoundness that I might identify.

Simon Emerson
Inspector
23rd January 2012