

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET CORE STRATEGY**COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO INSPECTOR'S NOTE ID/32**

Dear Mr Emerson,

Thank you for your note ID32 in which you helpfully set out your concerns. We have considered it with care and have taken counsel's advice. We do not accept the analysis in that note and wish to be given the opportunity to address you in detail on it and what we consider to be the appropriate course of action in the light of all current circumstances.

Whilst we accept that, by virtue of the position of other authorities who have no current need to complete a Bristol HMA SHMAA, it has not been possible to produce an up to date SHMAA for a Bristol HMA, we do not accept this that means;

- (1) that we have failed to produce a proportionate and appropriate evidence base on which to proceed;
- (2) that our Core Strategy is non-compliant with the NPPF as a whole. The NPPF must as a matter of law and does as a matter of fact reflect the plan led system. It is no part of the logic of the NPPF (and it would be unlawful if it was) that B&NES can be prevented from pursuing the adoption of its LP because other authorities are not at this stage required to or interested in completion of a Bristol SHMA at this stage. B&NES has done all it can in the circumstances to evidence the full housing requirement;
- (3) that our approach is unsound. The Council is of the view that its Core Strategy meets the requirements of the NPPF in relation to housing market areas. The draft Core Strategy makes significant over-provision of total units (4,500) in order to meet Affordable Housing requirements. Around 2,700 units are provided in areas well related to Bristol. The Core Strategy meets the whole of the identified housing needs in both the Bath HMA and the B&NES part of the Bristol HMA. This is a significant contribution to future Bristol HMA need (when the full extent of that need is identified). It has review provisions to allow the future joint work between all authorities to be reflected in a combined approach in 2016;
- (4) that we have failed to do what the inspector asked us to do in ID28 or what we said we would do in our response. We have addressed the concerns with the previous methodology; have taken into account historic under-provision and have ensured total Affordable Housing need will be met.

We consider that it would cause major problems for delivery of appropriate sites if this Core Strategy were not to proceed and that the spatial strategy will be undermined by speculative opportunistic applications beyond the Green Belt to the south far removed from

the urban centres. There will be substantial delay in delivering appropriate sites and consequent Affordable Housing. We are in reality in a similar position to West Berks and other authorities which have found themselves in a position where they cannot at this stage do more than they have because, amongst other things, of the stage other authorities have reached in their Core Strategies. The challenge to the West Berks Core Strategy has been withdrawn.

The Council is therefore of the view that the Inspector has a good basis to find the Core Strategy sound and therefore continue with the examination. Bath & North East Somerset Council therefore welcomes your offer of a hearing on the main issue raised in your note with regard to the geographic coverage of the SHMAA/HMA. We will make detailed written submissions prior to any hearing as required. Adjoining authorities have indicated that they may also like to appear at the hearing to support the B&NES position.

The need to give 6 weeks' notice to all parties will mean that the hearing could not be held before 8th August which, being in the holiday period, will not find favour with local communities and participants. The earliest that we could hold the hearing, taking account of leave arrangements and the need to avoid the holiday period, is the week beginning the 9th September.

Yours Sincerely

David Trigwell

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