17th August 2011

Dear Mr Phillips,

The Inspector has commenced his examination of the Core Strategy (CS). He has some initial administrative queries and would be grateful for the Council's response to them.

Firstly, he seeks confirmation that the submission CS dated August 2011 is the same as that on which consultation took place in February-April 2011 (incorporating the errata changes concerning Policy WCS6 and the Heathfield map on the Key Diagram) except in so far as it now includes the minor changes shown separately in the changes schedule document A1b. If that is the case then the Inspector would intend to take as his starting point for the examination the August 2011 document that includes the minor changes.

Secondly the Inspector asks for clarification as to the role of the South Downs National Park Authority (NPA) in the CS. On 1st April 2011 the NPA became the statutory planning authority for the National Park and therefore responsible for planning policy within its area. The minor change to the submitted CS indicates that it is a Joint Core Strategy and the logo of the NPA is included on its front cover (and on some of the other submission documents). The letter accompanying the Council's submission documents was co-signed by the NPA. However, the CS does not indicate which of the policies apply to the NPA area. On the face of it therefore the NPA can be taken as supporting the whole of the document.

The Inspector has seen no indication of an agreement to produce a joint development document as required in s28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Is there a memorandum of understanding between the two planning authorities? If so, the Inspector would like a copy of it. Legal compliance includes the requirement for the CS to be included in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and consultation to have taken place in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The Inspector has not seen copies of these from the NPA. However, this could be addressed if there was an indication from the NPA that it endorsed the Council's LDS (but see the final query, below), SCI and consultation process in this regard. Furthermore, does the NPA...
endorse all the other submission documents and the evidence base? The Inspector will require a written response from the NPA on these matters.

If it is confirmed that this is a Joint Core Strategy then is it the case that the Council would continue to be the first point of contact for the Programme Officer with the Council being responsible for joint working with the NPA? Would the NPA be represented at all the hearing sessions or would the Council be acting as its agent in this regard? Could it be confirmed that the Inspector's report will be to both the Council and the NPA and that the CS will need to be adopted by both authorities.

Finally, The Council’s LDS of March 2010 identifies the CS as being submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2011 with adoption in November 2011. This has not been achieved. However, as you will be aware it is a legal requirement that any proposed DPDs and their timetable for submission should be included in the LDS. The Inspector therefore asks the Council to consider this and indicate to him whether you intend to amend the LDS in this regard.

The Inspector has only begun to examine the evidence base and apologises if the answers to his queries are in documents that he has not yet read. However, he would like these matters to be clarified and resolved at the earliest opportunity.

Yours faithfully,

Lynette Benton

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