

Examination of the Part 2 Local Plan for Corby

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30 November 2020

Dear Mr Begley,

Post Hearing Advice - Part 2 Local Plan for Corby (P2LP)

Introduction

1. The purpose of this note is to provide advice on some key issues and my views on the further Main Modifications (MMs) that are likely to be required to make the Part 2 Local Plan for Corby (P2LP) sound following the hearing sessions. The MMs are in addition to the potential MMs prepared by the Council in advance of the hearing sessions following consultation on the publication version of the plan and those put forward by the Council following the hearing sessions.
2. I would also advise that I have given full consideration to all the representations made about the P2LP including the oral contributions made at the hearings. My final conclusions regarding soundness and procedural compliance will be set out in the report to be produced following consultation on the proposed MMs. Nevertheless, having regard to the criteria for soundness and to assist at this stage, I shall provide brief explanations for my advice so far.
3. My findings may alter in light of further evidence that emerges including the consultation process. My views are therefore given here without prejudice to the conclusion in my final report. I do not comment on every issue in the advice. My final report will cover other main issues that arose during the examination.

Further potential main modifications

Policy 10 Non-Employment Uses

4. The Council will recall that the issue of whether a 2-year marketing period was justified for small scale starter units was discussed at the hearing. I have noted the Council's post hearing suggested main modifications to paragraph 6.18. However, this amendment to require marketing for a 'sustained period of time' is ineffective. The explanatory text should be amended to require marketing at a realistic price for a continuous period of 2 years or for an alternative period first agreed with the local planning authority to reflect the existing use, size and conditions of the land or premises.

Policy 12 Custom and Self Build

5. This policy seeks to deliver serviced custom and self-build plots. It sets a threshold of 20-unit schemes or above where such provision would be sought. The evidence does not justify this threshold, though I acknowledge that the policy does not require a fixed percentage of self-build or custom plots, the aim being to apply the policy flexibly taking account of need and scheme viability.
6. The Plan does not set out the period of marketing required rather it refers to the preparation of an SPD to provide further explanation. However, in practical terms, if the period of marketing were to be too long, applying the policy to small sites of 20 units or just above, would be likely to result in a house builder having to return to the site to build out an unsold plot. This would be likely to incur cost and impact on viability.
7. For the effectiveness of the plan, the threshold should be increased to 50 units and the explanatory text amended to require a marketing period of 6 months. This would maintain an appropriate level of flexibility to meet the borough's needs but take account of completion rates on small sites and viability.

Policy 14 Gypsies and Travellers

8. I note the Council's suggested post hearing main modification. In the interests of effectiveness, specific reference should be made to the proposed preparation of a Development Plan Document (DPD) to allocate sites to meet the identified need.

Policy 17 Settlement Boundaries

9. The purpose of the settlement boundaries is set out in paragraph 8.4 of the explanatory text. However, in the interests of effectiveness, the policy wording should set out that settlement boundaries are to support the application of Policies 11 and 13 of the Joint Core Strategy.

Policy 20 Change of use of shops outside defined centres

10. This policy considers small scale retail uses serving everyday needs. It refers to use Class A1. However, the recent changes to the Use Classes Order, have introduced Use Class F2, for shops no more than 280 square metres in floor area. I suggest that in the interests of effectiveness, the reference to the Use Class ie. 'A1' be removed, so that the policy simply refers to retail.
11. Following discussions at the hearing, the Council has suggested an amendment to paragraph 9.15 of the explanatory text with regard to the required marketing period. However, the suggested alteration lacks clarity and is ineffective. Having reflected on this matter further, I do not consider that any modification is necessary in the interests of soundness.

Next steps

12. The Council should now prepare the further modifications I have outlined. These should be incorporated into a consolidated schedule of all the potential MMs. The Council should also consider any consequential changes to the P2LP that might arise.
13. The final version of the MM schedule should be provided to me for comment before being made available for public consultation. For clarity and to avoid excessive MMs, I suggest that changes to a single policy together with any changes to the explanatory text be considered as one MM.
14. The Council should ensure that they have met the requirements for sustainability appraisal by producing an addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal of the submitted plan in relation to the potential MMs, as appropriate. I would like to see a draft of the addendum and may have comments on it. The addendum should be published as part of the future MM consultation. The Council should also prepare any necessary update to the Habitats Regulation Assessment and again this should be published as part of the MM consultation.
15. The Council has also prepared a list of additional modifications (AMs). Apart from those I consider should be defined as MMs, the AMs are a matter solely for the Council. If the Council intends to publicise or consult on these it should be clear that such changes are not a matter for me to consider.
16. In line with the Examining Local Plans Procedural Practice document, the MM consultation should be undertaken for a minimum of 6 weeks. It should be made clear that the consultation relates solely to the proposed main modifications. The MMs are put forward without prejudice to my final report. It is my expectation that issues raised in the consultation of the

draft MMs will be considered through written representations. Further hearing sessions will only be scheduled exceptionally.

17.I would request the Council provide a response to this letter by Friday 11 December 2020. The response should include a timetable for the work required and the potential dates for the MM consultation and the collation of responses.

18.This letter should be published on the Council's website as soon as possible together with the Council's subsequent response.

19.No representations on this letter or the Council's response are invited at this stage. Representations will be invited on MMs once these are published.

20.Should the Council have any queries please contact me via the Programme Officer.

Yours Sincerely,

Helen Hockenfull

INSPECTOR