

Note for Scrutiny Committee 9<sup>th</sup> September 2002

### **Update on Local Plan progress**

Since last reporting to Scrutiny Committee in April (following the end of the public consultation period on the First Deposit Draft of the plan) staff have been busy negotiating away as many objections as possible. This has meant writing to those whose objection is based upon a misunderstanding and to those where an explanation will satisfy them that the policy as worded covers their concerns. Where this is successful it has resulted in the unconditional withdrawal of the objection. On other occasions suggested amended wording has been discussed and objections 'conditionally' withdrawn.

We have been conscious of guidance published by the ODPM that acknowledges that objections from the local community lobbying against allocations and from the commercial sector promoting alternative sites are likely to be very difficult to resolve by negotiation and to reach a compromise impossible and time consuming. The advice is that local authorities should devote least effort to these sorts of issues at this stage.

We are currently in the process of appointing a Programme Officer and Counsel and will be having an advisory visit from an Inspector on 18<sup>th</sup> September.

The provisional programme is to have seminars for Members in the latter half of September on the main issues resulting from the consultation and then to produce a report to Committee (probably a special one) sometime in October. It should then be possible to commence the six weeks consultation on the Second Deposit Draft by the end of October. (The target in the approved programme is to go out on Second Deposit no later than six months from the end of the consultation period on the First Deposit Draft so we will only miss that target by a couple of weeks.)

We anticipate the Public Inquiry to start towards the end of May 2003 and last for 20 weeks. (Unfortunately a member of staff leaves on September 13<sup>th</sup> and whilst we are recruiting a replacement will not be able to start straight away and how quickly they can get up to speed will depend upon their experience. We hope that this will not cause a delay in the programme). Discussions with the Inspector during his advisory visit should ascertain whether or not our programme is realistic so that we can get formal approval of it from Committee when we report in October.

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(05.09.02)