



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**

**Christopher Dale
Head of Planning**

Date: 5 August 2021

Melvyn Middleton
Planning Inspectorate
c/o Programme Officer
louise@poservices.co.uk

Dear Sir

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Examination

I am writing in response to your latest letter to the Council and specifically your request for a timetable setting out the Local Plan programme to adoption.

Regrettably it will not be possible to meet your deadline of 17th September 2021 for the Council to submit its conclusions on additional sites. As you are aware the release of so much land from the Green Belt is controversial. The Council has a number of new Councillors who have no previous experience and knowledge of the Local Plan all of whom will need to be fully briefed if a consensus is to be arrived at. In order to meet the timetable this would require papers to be published at the end of August for Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel (CPPP) for it to take place in the first week of September, Cabinet in the second week before Full Council on 16th September. All of the technical analysis would therefore need to be completed by mid-August and member briefings by the end of August if this programme is to be met. This is proving to be impossible given the number of people on leave and the amount of work that needs to be completed. Our Sustainability Appraisal consultants were advised that we were expecting your reports and would need some further work but it was not until we received your reports in July that the scope of the work was clear. Because of other work commitments and leave they advised that the final draft of the update to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) required to address additional sites and additional distribution options will not be available until the end of the month. The transparent comparative assessment addressing the site selection and distribution issues identified in your report is being carried out by officers and needs to take on board the updates to the SA. Whilst underway will not be completed until next month.

The next scheduled meeting of Full Council is 17th November. This would allow for the necessary member briefings and for the completion of the technical work in September to feed into CPPP on 14th October and Cabinet on 3rd November. The Council is prepared to arrange a Special Full Council on 4th November so that the 6 week consultation on Main Modifications can commence the following week and be complete before Christmas. The papers for Full Council and Cabinet would be published in the last week of October. The Council consider this timetable provides it with the best possible chance of delivering a sound plan.

I have attached a chart which sets out the intended programme. This allows for your confirmation of the Main Modifications, Sustainability Appraisal of the Main Modifications, and the production of a summary of the key issues and a Council response. Our consultants have advised that we should allow 3 weeks for the Sustainability Appraisal of the Main Modifications. This will need to be available to accompany the consultation on the Main Modifications.

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The Council will recruit additional resources to assist with the processing and summarising of representations and will endeavour to summarise the key issues and provide a response by mid – February. This is of course dependent on the number of responses received.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Tiley', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Sue Tiley
Planning Policy and Implementation Manager