



Councillor Beecher
Via email

Please reply to:

Contact: Daniel Mouawad
Chief Executive
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Fax: 01784 446333
E-mail: Dcm.cex@spelthorne.gov.uk
Our ref: DCM/dr
Your ref:
Date: 22 May 2023

Dear Councillor Beecher

Spelthorne Local Plan Examination

I write in response to your email of 19 May 2023 sent on behalf of the Leaders of the Green, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent Groups to the Programme Officer for the examination, Ms Glancy, which has been passed to me.

The email sets out the wish of the four groups to pause the local plan hearing sessions which are due to commence tomorrow. The Local Plan was submitted for examination on the basis it was sound and in accordance with formal decisions of the Council. The hearing sessions represent only part of the examination, which has already commenced with the inspector having had matters put before him very fully in writing for his consideration. In addition, all parties appearing at the examination have been preparing for the hearing sessions. A full exchange of hearing statements has taken place. A substantial number of parties intend to appear at the hearing sessions that have been arranged across the three weeks of hearings.

The examination library provides online access to all the key documents informing the process: <https://spelthornelocalplan.info/>. As you know the examination process itself will be led by the inspector who will suggest changes to the Local Plan only where he considers they are required in order to make the plan sound. If the examination proceeds, any such changes will be subject to public consultation in due course. Any decision to adopt the Local Plan following that process is for all members to take, with the benefit of officer advice, in public meeting. Officers of the Council are confident that new members can be provided with appropriate training and advice about the nature of the Local Plan, as necessary, alongside the current process being led by the inspector.

The Local Plan is one centrepiece of the Council's policy, and will represent the starting point for planning decisions if adopted. As I say, the plan was necessarily submitted on the basis that the Council considered it a sound document, striking a balance across the borough between the

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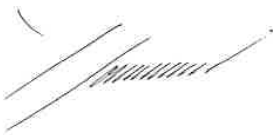
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various well-known constraints that Spelthorne faces and the needs of its residents, in a way that complies with Government policy. Members have been advised on numerous occasions that it is vital to have a Local Plan in place as soon as possible in order to benefit from its policy provisions and protections, including the Staines Development Framework that is intended to be adopted alongside it. It is open to members to reconsider the position, but the view of officers is that this must be done in the normal way through the established governance procedures at a full meeting of the Council, with the benefit of detailed officer advice.

Until any such proper reconsideration of the matter, the operative decisions of the Council stand, and officers will continue to assist the inspector with his examination through the hearing sessions.

I look forward to discussing this issue with you further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniel Mouawad', written in a cursive style.

Daniel Mouawad
Chief Executive