

Stroud District Local Plan Review Examination

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Ms Kathy O'Leary

Chief Executive
Stroud District Council

Sent by email

5 February 2024

Dear Ms O'Leary

Stroud District Local Plan Review Examination

1. Thank you for your letter dated 19 January 2024 and for responding to the queries raised in our letter dated 18 December 2023.
2. Since August last year we have been considering the request from Stroud District Council (SDC) to grant a pause in the Local Plan Examination. The purpose of this request is to allow SDC to undertake further work to address the concerns that we set out in our letter dated 4 August 2023 (id-010) specifically relating to the strategic highway network. Since then, we have exchanged several letters with SDC requesting and receiving clarification on the work to be carried out. We have also considered the responses from Highways England, Gloucestershire County Council and South Gloucestershire District Council on this matter.
3. In light of the information now received, we can confirm that we agree to pause the Examination for the works to be undertaken. As requested in SDC's most recent letter the pause will be for a duration of ten months. This comprises seven months to complete the work set out in the Joint Action Plan (JAP), as dated November 2023, and three months to undertake a period of public consultation. The pause shall begin on the date of this letter. The Examination shall therefore resume on 5 December 2024.

4. To clarify, we expect the following to be carried out and all outcomes to be submitted to the Programme Officer by 5 December 2024:
- I. The workstreams identified in the JAP should be completed.
These should specifically include agreed designs and costings for the M5 J12 and J14 improvements; agreed impact assessments and costings; an agreed cost apportionment exercise; an agreed delivery programme to include the timings of when the junction improvement schemes will be needed; and updated statements of common ground to reflect the work undertaken (as set out in the JAP).
 - II. Any additional modelling requested or referred to in the exchange of letters since August 2023 (in particular the technical queries outlined in our letter dated 18 December 2023) should also be undertaken and completed. Agreement between the relevant parties should be sought throughout the process.
 - III. External sources of funding to ensure that the junction improvements can be delivered at the right time during the Plan period should be clearly identified. The information should include the source of funding, the amount of funding that will be provided, the date the funding will be available and whether the funding has been committed and secured.
 - IV. Additional Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) work deemed necessary to support the work undertaken should be carried out.
 - V. Consultation on the outcomes from the JAP workstreams, any additional modelling and SA/HRA work, and funding reports should take place for a period of 6 weeks. All parties who submitted duly made representations at the Regulation 19 consultation stage of the Plan should be invited to respond. The Council will make it clear that only comments about the specific documents and new evidence being consulted on will be accepted. Any other responses about other aspects of the Plan should not be accepted.
 - VI. At the end of the consultation period a summary of representations received should be produced and submitted. This document should identify the individual or organisation responding, identify the exact report/assessment on which the comment relates specifying the relevant paragraph/page/section of each document and provide a summary of each response.

5. We wish to emphasise that we are keen to continue to work proactively with SDC throughout the duration of this Examination. However, we would also like to state, at this stage, that whilst we have agreed to a pause of the Examination and will continue to adopt a pragmatic approach on its resumption, this of course, cannot guarantee that the Plan will ultimately be found sound.
6. We would be grateful if the Council could confirm to us that the dates set out in this letter for the duration of the pause in the Examination are acceptable.
7. Once again, we would like to inform all other interested parties that we are not inviting or accepting any other comments on this matter, including during the pause of the Examination. Such responses will be immediately returned to the sender by the Programme Officer.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Lucas and Yvonne Wright

Inspectors appointed to examine the Stroud District Local Plan Review