

Mr Jeremy Youle
Professional Lead – Local Plans
The Planning Inspectorate

By email only

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Dear Mr Youle,

North Hertfordshire Local Plan examination

This month marks one year since the close of the second round of our Local Plan examination hearings in February 2021.

Our Plan was submitted for examination in June 2017, more than four and a half years ago. Consultation on proposed Further Main Modifications closed in July 2021. We were originally advised we could expect to receive our report in early Autumn 2021. This was revised to November 2021. We were then advised this deadline would not be met and no further updates on a potential timetable would be provided. The latest public correspondence from our appointed Inspector, Mr Simon Berkeley, is available to view on our website:

https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/ED234B%20%20%20Letter%20to%20NHDC%2014.11.21%20_0.pdf

In line with Mr Berkeley's letter, the Council has not sought any further update since November. However, a further three months have now passed and we were concerned when our Programme Officer, Ms. Louise St. John Howe, recently advised us that Mr Berkeley is still not able to give a timescale for when he is likely to finish his report or submit a draft to your internal quality assurance procedures.

Given the anniversary, on-going interest from residents, politicians and other parties and the age of our current plan / length of the examination to date, the Council would like to seek your assurance that Mr Berkeley is being given the time necessary to complete his

final report and that any workload from other examinations and responsibilities is being appropriately monitored and managed to allow this to happen in a timely fashion.

We recognise our examination deals with a number of complex issues including proposed Green Belt releases and accommodating unmet development needs from adjoining authorities. Local communities and representatives were grateful for the extent to which Mr Berkeley accommodated their submissions during the public hearing sessions.

However, in broader terms, we are also concerned with our declining 5-year land supply and costly appeals in the absence of an adopted and up-to-date Local Plan. There are reputational risks to the Council from this and the time being taken to resolve the examination in light of the Government's ambitions for a more responsive planning system.

We are keen to have the opportunity to adopt an up-to-date Local Plan that would allow for the delivery of much-needed new homes in the most appropriate locations and give protection to other areas of our District that may otherwise be vulnerable to hostile applications and appeals.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Ruth Brown
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning
North Hertfordshire District Council