

# Inspectors' Matters, Issues and Questions – 3 August 2022

## Matter 1: Plan Period and Clarity

**Issue (i): Is the Plan consistent with national policy<sup>1</sup> in terms of its plan period and does it include effective monitoring arrangements?**

**Q1. Are suggested amendments to the plan period by way of proposed MMs justified and would they provide an effective basis for the housing supply aspects of the Plan?**

### Council response:

- 1.1 Yes, suggested amendments to the Plan by way of proposed Main Modifications are justified and would provide an effective basis for the housing supply aspects of the Plan.
- 1.2 As already stated in the [council's response to question 54b of the Inspectors Preliminary Matters \(Document LBM01\)](#), for clarity relating to Stage 2 we would like to request the inspectors to recommend Main Modifications to the Local Plan in accordance with the procedure outlined in S20(7C) of the 2004 Act.
- 1.3 The Plan is consistent with national policy. NPPF para 17 states: *The development plan must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority's priorities for the development and use of land in its area.* In accordance with NPPF para 17, the Plan (with modifications) contains several strategic policies including Policy H11.1 and Policy 11.2 which (including modifications) sets out how the Plan will address the council's priority of delivering additional homes for the Plan period of 2021/22 to 2036/37.
- 1.4 NPPF para 20 states:  
*Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for:*  
  
*(a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;*

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<sup>1</sup> In particular, paragraphs 17 to 23 of the Framework.

In accordance with NPPF para 20, Policy H11.1 and Policy 11.2 of the Plan (including modifications) set out the overall housing strategy for the plan period and make sufficient provision for housing including affordable housing.

- 1.5 NPPF para 21 states: *Plans should make explicit which policies are strategic policies<sup>14</sup>. These should be limited to those necessary to address the strategic priorities of the area (and any relevant cross-boundary issues), to provide a clear starting point for any non-strategic policies that are needed.* In accordance with NPPF para 21 the Plan (including proposed modifications) makes explicit which policies are strategic.
- 1.6 NPPF para 22 states: *Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption<sup>15</sup>, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities, such as those arising from major improvements in infrastructure.* In accordance with NPPF para 22 the Plan (including modifications) strategic policies such as Policy H11.1 and Policy H11.2 look ahead over a 15 year minimum period.
- 1.7 As set out in Matter 3 and in the Plan's Chapter 11 on housing (including proposed modifications), the council proposes that the Plan period runs at least 15 years to 2036/37 and that the housing supply period starts prior to adoption in 2021/22, which is when Regulation 19 public engagement took place and was the basis for housing supply calculations. This approach is robust and an effective basis for the supply of housing aspects of the Plan. It is also the same approach as taken by the London Plan 2021 ([Document 0D32](#)), which was adopted in March 2021 but whose housing supply starts from 2019 onwards.

#### Proposed Main Modification

To comply with NPPF paragraph 22 and to ensure an effective and positively prepared plan we propose Main Modifications MM1.1 to ensure that the Local Plan period runs for at least 16 years to 2036/37, (thus meeting the minimum 15 year requirement of NPPF para 22) and is consistently reflected throughout all relevant sections of the Plan e.g., Figure 4.2.1 of the Plan.

Please note that the Plan period start date of 2021/22 remains unchanged from that set out in [0D1Merton's Local Plan Stage 3 Reg 19 - July 2021](#) .

### **Effective Monitoring**

**Q2. Are the amended suggested monitoring indicators appropriate in light of the further work the Council has undertaken?**

Council response:

- 1.8 The council is proposing Main Modifications to the monitoring indicators in light of changes to further work by the council and action taken as part of Q3 below. Details on these modifications can be found in response to Q3.

**Q3. Does the monitoring framework include remedial actions and triggers for those actions?**

Council response:

- 1.9 Yes, the council has reviewed Chapter 19 *Monitoring* and is proposing MM which set out the remedial actions and triggers for either a partial or full review of the Local Plan.
- 1.10 Please refer to the Main Modifications Table, Chapter 19 for the proposed amendments.

**Issue (ii): Is the Plan succinct, does it avoid unnecessary duplication of policies, and is it clearly written and unambiguous so that it is evident how a decision-maker should react to development proposals?**

**Q1. Can the Council provide an update on their further consideration of the clarity and legibility of the Plan following the discussions and actions arising from prior to and at, the Stage 1 Hearings?**

Council response:

- 1.11 Paragraphs 4-10 of [Document INSP02](#) (Inspectors' second preliminary letter) set out matters that the Inspectors wanted the council to consider regarding the Plan's length, structure and presentation.
- 1.12 [Document LBM02](#) sets out how the council proposed to respond to these matters and subsequent local plan documents (e.g. [Document 0D4ii](#) Merton's Local Plan incorporating proposed modifications dated 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022, which adds paragraph numbers to the first chapter) amended the Plan to improve its clarity and legibility.
- 1.13 While the examination has been progressing, the council has also prepared a digital version of Merton's Local Plan policies map. The council feels that having a digital version of the Policies Map will significantly improve the usability and clarity for residents, landowners and others in using the council's Local Plan. The link to the Regulation 19 version of Merton's Local Plan policies map can be found under the "Policies Map" chapter on the website; here is a direct link - [Interactive Regulation 19 policies map](#). The weblink is currently labelled as "this is under development so may change" and more information is contained on the introduction page to direct users to the 2014 adopted policies map for current planning applications.
- 1.14 Should Merton's Local Plan be adopted then Merton's interactive digital policies map would be updated with the adopted policies map.
- 1.15 The council has continued to proofread the plan and correct spelling, grammar and factual errors. These include:

- Adding section or paragraph numbers to Chapter 1 and to all site allocations and early chapters to ensure ease of reference should the Local Plan be adopted.
- Adding distinctive boxes to highlight policies from supporting text.
- Checking issues identified in Stage 1 of the hearings (e.g. use of the phrase “town centres”) to ensure the plan is both unambiguous but also not unnecessarily technical in its use of planning terminology.

1.16 So as to allow continuity throughout the Local Plan process, it is proposed to leave significant re-formatting issues to the end of the examination process. This will include:

- Adding Chapter 8 and renumbering all subsequent chapters (currently chapters 9 to 19) and all associated paragraph numbers.
- Updating the digital Policies Map to reflect any Main Modifications arising from the examination process.

1.17 The council also proposes to continue to display the Local Plan by chapter and as a whole document, to make it easier to navigate online. This is in accordance with NPPF para 16(e), which states “*Plans should be accessible through the use of digital tools...*”