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Mr Derek Myers
Chief Executive and Town Clerk
Royal Borough of Kensington and
Chelsea
The Town Hall, Hornton Street
KENSINGTON
W8 7NX

Our Ref: PINS/K5600/429/4

Date: 20 October 2010

Dear Mr Myers

The Core Strategy for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea with a Focus on North Kensington Development Plan Document.

As you know, I was appointed by the Secretary of State to carry out an independent examination of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which was submitted on 19th March 2010, pursuant to section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act).

I held a pre-hearing meeting on 9th June 2010 and conducted the examination itself by way of written exchanges, and hearing sessions held between 19th and 29th July 2010.

The purpose of the independent examination is set out in section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and falls into two parts. The first is whether the submitted DPD has been prepared in accordance with certain statutory requirements under the Act and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (the 2004 Regulations).

The second part is whether the DPD is sound. In making an assessment of soundness I have applied the 3 tests set out in paragraphs 4.51 and 4.52 of Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Spatial Planning (PPS 12).

With this letter is the report containing my conclusions and recommendations with the reasons why I have come to those conclusions, as required by section 20(7) of the 2004 Act. My overall conclusion is that, with the changes recommended in my report, the Core Strategy is sound. None of the changes are critical to the overall vision for the Borough, nor do they undermine the sustainability appraisal and participatory processes undertaken.

I also endorse the Council's corrections to the original text and the proposed minor text changes/points of clarification put forward. This is subject to any



alterations and additions of my own in response to representations received and arising from the debates at the examination hearings to ensure clarity and consistency throughout the document.

In arriving at these judgements on the soundness of the DPD I have had regard to all the representations which were made in the 6 weeks following submission in accordance with regulation 29 of the 2004 Regulations, along with subsequent written submissions and oral contributions made at the hearing sessions. However, as the purpose of the examination is to consider whether the submitted DPD is sound, rather than to consider "objections", I do not list or refer directly to individual representations in the report.

In order to ensure that the proposed changes would not prejudice the interests of any party without them having a fair opportunity to comment the Council undertook a consultation on its Schedule of Proposed Changes drawn up following the hearing stage of my Examination, providing an opportunity for comment. This consultation ended on 31st August 2010 and I have taken into consideration those comments received.

The Core Strategy is unusual in a number of respects. It is substantially larger, and seeks to provide a more comprehensive suite of policies and proposals than most equivalent core strategies. This, necessarily, results in a complex document with the attendant difficulties of comprehension. However, it provides a uniquely local policy framework which focuses on the special characteristics of the Royal Borough and – as its title suggests – the problems it faces, most notably in the northern part of the area. The adopted strategy carries risks, as your Council is well aware. Most importantly there is a significant risk that the Crossrail station proposed for Kensal will not be delivered, creating difficulties for achieving the level of development required to deliver the strategy. I was impressed by the planning team's careful approach to addressing my questions on this aspect of the strategy and I was convinced by their evidence that contingency plans would be effective in the event of Crossrail not being delivered.

The Council's planning team, headed by Penelope Tollitt and Jonathan Wade, are to be congratulated for the manner in which they embraced the approach I took to the conduct of the hearings. They showed a willingness to listen to representors, some of whom were critical of aspects of the Strategy, and to respond in a positive manner to those criticisms without giving way on the overall vision towards which the Strategy is directed. The team also responded to requests for information and to suggestions for changes with an enthusiasm and dedication which helped to ensure an efficient and inclusive Examination process. Their contribution is perhaps best summed up by a closing tribute from a major contributor to the hearings: "*The Kensington Society strongly supports and has a strong sense of ownership of much of what is in the Core Strategy*".

I would like to thank all of those appearing at the hearings for similarly embracing the process. The Royal Borough is diverse and the issues facing its residents and the commercial and business interests are wide ranging and occasionally in conflict. Nevertheless the hearings were conducted in a spirit of co-operation and I hope each contributor went away feeling that they had been

listened to, and their problems and concerns understood even though, inevitably, some will be disappointed that I have not fully supported their individual cases.

It has become a tradition for Inspectors to thank their Programme Officers. On this occasion I would like to record my particular thanks to Chris Banks, the Programme Officer appointed by the Council. He brought a special, personal and highly effective approach to achieving an efficient and friendly hearing process which is best characterised by a 'can-do' attitude – whether it be ensuring everyone knew what was expected of them, efficient circulation of papers, providing PA equipment or simply supporting those unfamiliar with the procedure. His dedication to the task was exceptional, absorbing early starts and late finishes with equanimity. This was not all, and Chris could usually be found making representors feel welcome and part of the process while exchanging pleasantries. He also kept me entertained during breaks whilst at the same time ensuring my papers were available and in order.

Yours faithfully,

Patrick Whitehead

Inspector