

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON
& CHELSEA'S CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

GENERAL APPROACH TO THE HEARINGS PHASE

The general approach to the hearings phase of the Examination is set down in the Planning Inspectorate's "Examining Development Plan Documents: Procedural Guidance", 2nd Edition. In particular, it states that:

"The examination will be structured around the issues identified by the Inspector as critical to the soundness of the document..whilst the subject matter of the representations will be taken into account, it will not dictate the structure of the examination..The inspector will not spend time at the hearings (subject to the right to be heard) considering things which will not help a decision as to whether the document is sound."

The Inspector's remit is to test whether a Development Plan Document is sound. There is no authority for the Inspector to "improve" plans and so my recommendations will be restricted to those that are clearly essential to make the plan sound. For these reasons the discussion at the hearings will be focussed on the issues I have identified as going to the heart of soundness. Other issues raised in representations which do not go to the heart of soundness may be raised at the end of sessions if the representor wishes to be heard: advance notice of such requests should be made through the Programme Officer. I will, however, use my discretion to turn away unsolicited material that is not relevant to soundness.

My approach to recommendations will be to work with everyone in a consensual way in the expectation that, where there is clear evidence to show that a particular aspect of the Plan is potentially unsound, agreement can be reached with the Council for appropriate amendments to achieve soundness. Where possible, agreement between representors and the Council should be sought outside of the hearings. In this respect Statements of Common Ground can be useful and could include agreed wording of a suggested change to a policy criterion, agreed factual information or areas or points of disagreement.

The coalition Government's emphasis is on the concept of localism and my starting point is that the plan being examined is what the local authority wishes to see happen: in other words it is the Borough Council's Core Strategy, expressing its vision and objectives for the area. As I have already indicated it is not my role to re-write the document and I would not expect to make recommendations which would lead to a significantly different document to the 'as submitted' document.

The Council may wish compile a schedule of minor changes, such as typographical or grammatical corrections and clarifications, to improve the document but which do not affect the soundness of the Plan. In order to comply with legislation and allow the Council to incorporate them into the Plan these will be appended to my report.