The Planning Inspectorate

The Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031 Partial Update Examination

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https://www.hwa.uk.com/projects/stevenage-local-plan-partial-update

Inspector's Post Hearing Note

16 December 2025

Dear Mr Claridge

1. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in May 2019 (the adopted Plan) (CD1). Stevenage Borough Council (the Council) undertook a formal review of the adopted Plan, as required by Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (the Regulations) and concluded that only parts of the adopted Plan required updating at that time and thus only a partial update to the adopted Plan was required. The Council's process for reaching this decision is summarised in a briefing note available on the Examination Website (CD16).

1. The Examination is therefore limited to consideration of the changes proposed and consulted on under regulation 19 of the Regulations (the partial update Plan). Any part of the adopted Plan which are not being changed as a result of the partial update Plan are outside the scope of my Examination.

2. My comments below are based on all that I have read, heard and seen to date. However, I emphasise that the Examination is not yet concluded, with consultation on proposed main modifications (MMs) still to take place. Therefore, the comments in this note are without prejudice to my final conclusions on the partial update Plan, which will be set out in my report to be published following consultation on the proposed MMs and taking account of any representations on them.

3. As indicated at the close of the hearing on 9 December 2025, I am now writing to set out the next steps for the Examination of the partial update Plan.

4. Before and during the hearing sessions, I requested the Council submit a number of notes/evidence documents on relevant matters. These have all now been completed and are available on the Examination Website under the heading “Post Submission Documents”.

5. Having considered all the representations and all evidence before me, I am now satisfied that the Plan is likely to be capable of being made sound and legally compliant through MMs. I do not list all the changes required in this letter, however, the substantive changes required are:

    - MMs to ensure the new Climate Change Policies are effective, justified by the evidence base and are sufficiently flexible to ensure they do not prejudice the delivery of development in the Borough.
    - MMs to the partial updates to the housing elements of the adopted Plan to make clear that the housing requirement remains unchanged as a result of the partial update.
    - MMs to replace the proposed requirement for M4(3)(2)(b) wheelchair accessible dwellings with the requirement for M4(3) wheelchair user dwellings. This is because the specific requirement for M4(3)(2)(b) dwellings is not justified.
    - Other MMs to ensure the updated policies and new policies are consistent with national policy, justified and effective.

6. I now invite the Council to prepare a schedule containing the proposed wording for all the MMs discussed as necessary for soundness and legal compliance reasons so far. Once I have agreed the wording of the MMs with the Council, I will invite the Council to publish the final schedule of proposed MMs for a period of public consultation. The nature and duration of the consultation should reflect that of the consultation held at the regulation 19 stage, where appropriate. This means it should last at least six weeks.

7. The MMs will also need to be the subject of Sustainability Appraisal, Equality Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment, insofar as necessary. These documents will need to be published alongside the proposed MMs when they are consulted upon. The MMs documents should also make it clear that interested parties can comment on the additional documents that have been submitted to the Examination after the close of the regulation 19 consultation insofar as they relate to the proposed MMs and the soundness of the partial update Plan.

8. Any consequential Submission Policies Map Changes and any Additional Modifications being proposed by the Council should be set out in separate

schedules and published alongside the MMs for completeness, although these are outside of the scope of my Examination.

9. Please can the Council publish this note on the Examination Website, as soon as possible. This note is solely intended to keep interested parties up to date while the Council progresses the necessary work at my request, I am not inviting any responses to it. Any unsolicited material will be returned.

L Fleming

INSPECTOR