

Examination of Coventry Local Plan

Inspectors: Simon Dean MA MRTPI and William Fieldhouse BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

Programme Officer: Helen Wilson

Tel: 07879 443035 01432 639547

Email: helen@programmeofficers.co.uk

Examination website: [Coventry Local Plan Review | Helen Wilson Consultancy Limited](#)

IN1: Inspectors' Guidance Notes

Introduction

The Coventry Local Plan ("the Plan") was submitted for examination on 9 September 2025.

We were appointed by the Secretary of State on 6 October 2025 to conduct the examination under section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This note provides initial guidance on the procedural and administrative arrangements for the examination.

Further general information about the local plan examination process can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations and other documents at [Local Plans: the examination process - GOV.UK](#).

Programme Officer

Helen Wilson is the Programme Officer ("PO") for the examination. She is working under our direction and is independent of the Council. Her contact details are given above.

The main tasks of the PO are to act as the channel of communication between us, the Council and all the other participants; to liaise with all parties to ensure the smooth running of the examination; to organise the programme of hearing sessions; and to oversee the publication of documents and news updates on the examination website.

Any procedural questions or other queries about the examination should be directed to the PO.

Examination website

The examination website [Coventry Local Plan Review | Helen Wilson Consultancy Limited](#) is independent of the Council, and its content is controlled by us and the PO. All of the documents submitted by the Council (including the Plan, Policies Map, submission

and supporting documents, and representations) are available on it and any documents that we publish, ask for, or accept will be added in due course.

If any representor does not have access to the internet, they should contact the PO who will endeavour to make alternative arrangements for accessing documents and receiving information about the examination.

Role of the Inspectors

Our task is to consider whether the submitted Plan complies with the relevant legislation and is sound. The NPPF states that local plans are sound if they are:

- **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development.
- **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence.
- **Effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground.
- **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF’s policies and other statements of national policy, where relevant.

There are three possible outcomes to the examination:

- The submitted Plan is sound and legally compliant.
- The submitted Plan is not sound and/or legally compliant, but could be made so by main modifications based on limited additional work¹.
- The submitted Plan is not sound due to fundamental issues that could not be addressed by limited additional work. In those circumstances, we would be likely to recommend that the Council withdraws the Plan. The same would apply if there is a failure of legal compliance which cannot be remedied.

At the end of the examination, we will prepare a report for the Council setting out our conclusions and recommendations. Our report will deal with the main issues of soundness and legal compliance, taking into account the representations made but without responding to each of them.

Changes to the Plan

¹ Minister’s letter to The Planning Inspectorate dated 30 July 2024 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-plan-examinations-letter-to-the-chief-executive-of-the-planning-inspectorate-july-2024> advised that any pauses to undertake additional work during an examination should usually take no more than six months overall.

The starting point for the examination is that the Council has submitted a Plan which it thinks is ready for examination². Now that the Plan has been submitted there are only two means by which changes can be made to it:

- as main modifications recommended by us; or
- as additional (minor) modifications made by the Council.

We can only recommend main modifications if they are necessary to make the submitted Plan sound and/or legally compliant. We cannot recommend changes to “improve” the Plan.

Any potential main modifications that we do decide are necessary will be subject to public consultation before we recommend them in our report. Main modifications are also likely to require further sustainability appraisal and habitat regulations assessment.

Additional modifications (sometimes also referred to as “minor modifications”) are changes which do not materially affect the policies in the Plan. They may be made by the Council on adoption and do not fall within the scope of the examination.

Representations made about the Plan

The Council has prepared a Regulation 22 Consultation Statement³. This includes details of the consultation that has taken place on the Plan, a summary of the main issues raised in the representations, and the Council’s responses to those issues.

A total of 402 representations were made about the Plan by 75 representors under regulation 20 (ie during the consultation held from 20 January until 3 March 2025)⁴. They are all available to view on the examination website. We will take these representations into account in our consideration of legal compliance and soundness. We will not consider representations made to the Council at earlier stages of the draft Plan (under regulation 18).

Preliminary Questions to the Council

Following our initial assessment of the Plan, evidence and representations, it is likely that we will publish some Preliminary Questions for the Council to respond to in writing. This will be to provide clarity and potentially narrow down the focus of the examination. If, following consideration of our Preliminary Questions, the Council think that main modifications are required to make the Plan legally compliant and/or sound, they should make that clear and propose modified wording for our consideration. The Council’s written responses to our Preliminary Questions will be published.

Matters, Issues and Questions

² Section 20(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

³ SUB10.

⁴ SUB10 page 12.

Following our consideration of all of the evidence and representations, and the Council's responses to any Preliminary Questions, we will publish the Matters, Issues and Questions that will be the focus of the examination.

Written statements

When we publish our Matters, Issues and Questions we will ask the Council to provide written statements responding to all of the questions. As with our Preliminary Questions, if in responding the Council thinks that main modifications are required, they should set those out for our consideration.

Representors will also be able to submit written statements responding to questions relevant to the issues raised in their regulation 20 representations.

Deadlines will be set for the receipt of statements by the PO, and there may be different deadlines for different Matters. Late statements will not be accepted. Further information about the format and content of written statements will be published alongside our Matters, Issues and Questions.

Duty to Cooperate

A Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statement⁵ describes how the Council has worked with neighbouring local planning authorities and prescribed bodies on strategic matters during the preparation of the Plan. The Council's submission letter dated 9 September 2025 describes some work that is still ongoing, including in relation to the duty to cooperate and evidence. We may seek clarification about that from the Council in due course and advise accordingly.

Other written material

Unless specifically requested by us, no further representations, evidence or other written material should be submitted to the examination by the Council or anyone else.

Examination hearings

An important part of the examination will be the hearings that we will hold to help us determine if the Plan is legally compliant and sound and, if not, how it could be modified to ensure that it is. The hearings will allow us to focus on particular parts of the Plan and relevant evidence that we need to ask questions about. Not all parts of the Plan will be discussed at the hearings as for some we will have all of the information that we need in writing.

The hearings will be public events and are likely to be held at One Friargate, Station Square, Coventry, CV1 2FL.

⁵ SUB9.

As well as representatives for the Council, some representors may also participate. However, only those individuals and organisations who have made representations under regulation 20 seeking to change the Plan have a right to participate.

When we publish our Matters, Issues and Questions, the PO will ask representors if they wish to participate in the hearings and, if so, for which Issues. All representors who do wish to participate must respond at that time, irrespective of what they indicated in their regulation 20 representations. If representors do not respond to the PO by the deadline set, we will assume that they do not wish to participate.

We will have read the representations and any written statements before the relevant hearing session. Participation is therefore only likely to be necessary if a representor thinks that they will want to respond to questions that we ask or to points that others may make during the hearing. Representors will normally only take part in the hearing session that is relevant to the main issue or issues that they raised in their regulation 20 representations.

Representors who are not seeking changes to the Plan, including those who have made representations supporting it, do not have a right to take part in the hearings. However, we may invite additional participants if we think that would assist us in determining the soundness or legal compliance of the Plan.

Dates of the hearings, along with detailed information about how to participate or observe, will be published on the examination website nearer the time. Representors will be informed at least six weeks in advance of the date of the opening hearing session⁶.

Omission sites

Some representations are concerned with what are known as “omission sites”. These are sites which have not been allocated in the Plan for development. However, our role is to examine the soundness of the submitted Plan, rather than omission sites. We are unlikely, therefore, to ask any written questions about omission sites or discuss any at the hearing sessions.

Site visits

We will carry out site visits before, during, or after the hearings as necessary to inform our assessment of the soundness of the Plan. All site visits will be unaccompanied, unless we need to go onto private land, in which case we will make the necessary arrangements via the PO.

Close of the examination

The examination will close when our report is submitted to the Council.

Provisional examination programme 2025 / 2026

⁶ Regulation 24 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

Oct / Nov / Dec 2025	Inspectors' initial assessment of Plan, evidence and representations. Inspectors' Preliminary Questions to the Council.
Jan / Feb 2026	Inspectors' Matters, Issues and Questions. Representors asked if they wish to participate at hearings.
Feb / Mar	Deadlines for written statements from the Council and representors in response to Matters, Issues and Questions.
Mar / Apr	Hearing sessions.

This provisional programme is indicative only at this stage and could change. A more detailed programme, with specific dates, will be published in due course.

Further information

Published information about the preparation and examination of local plans is available as follows:

[Local plans: guidance and information from the Planning Inspectorate - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans-guidance-and-information-from-the-planning-inspectorate)

- Local Plans: the examination process
- Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations
- Local Plans: taking part in examinations (short guide)

[National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework)

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Planning Practice Guidance

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)
- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

Any queries about this note should be taken up with the PO.

Simon Dean William Fieldhouse

9 October 2025
