



# The Planning Inspectorate

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The Chief Executive  
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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: PINS/N4205/539/3  
Date:

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Dear Sir

## **THE BOLTON UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO OBJECTIONS**

1. The above Inquiry took place in the Town Hall between 27 November 2001 and 19 December 2002. Site visits were also undertaken before, during and after the Inquiry. Most were unaccompanied. I conducted a Pre - Inquiry Meeting on 4 September 2001.
2. Before turning to my Report, let me thank the following. Firstly, the Inquiry Programme Officer - Ms Eryl Prytherch - for her efficiency and also her rapport with objectors, many of whom were not conversant with Inquiry procedures. Secondly, the Council's advocate and officers at all times endeavoured to assist me. Thirdly, objectors who appeared before me - as well as those who based their case on written representations - sought to meet Inquiry timescales and took a positive approach to Inquiry proceedings. As a result of all these efforts, the Inquiry proceeded in an efficient manner. Finally, I must record the contribution made to the Inquiry by the Albert Halls staff. The accommodation made available was invariably of a high quality, entirely suitable for Inquiry/Hearing sessions. It was always laid out well in advance of a session, with a member of the Albert Halls staff available to me to deal with any difficulties. There were none, and I would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to your staff concerned.
3. Turning to my Report, I received 2 Skeleton Reports (SRs) from the Council. Both required substantial amendment by me delaying the submission of the Report. On a point of detail, it was clear that a large number of objectors/supporters signed the appropriate objection form in an illegible manner, as I found when I went through them. The Council and the Programme Office have endeavoured to resolve these difficulties but, inevitably, there may be inaccuracies in appellations and names.
4. The Report is in plan order, reflecting the SRs. The paragraph numbers I refer to are those of the paragraph numbered version of the Second Deposit plan (CD B1A). Objectors are listed in a table at the beginning of each chapter policy. Here, the policy number is that at Second Deposit. In a number of cases that has changed from First Deposit. There, the Second Deposit number is followed by that at First Deposit within brackets - as, for example, A19 (A22). Within the table listing the objections,

those in **bold** and *italics* are counter-objections to the Council's Proposed Changes. A summary of the objections then follows. They are summaries. I have taken into account all the submissions. There, then, follows my reasoning and conclusions on them. The policy then concludes with my recommendations.

5. On the latter, you will see from my Report that I make a substantial number of advisory recommendations to the Council. They generally relate to the specific wording of policies. These have not, generally, been the subject of specific objection - my role at the Inquiry being to consider objections. Nonetheless, they represent good development plan practice and would, not least, assist the development control process. The Council should seriously consider them. Further, on a limited number of policies, I have added my further remarks - as at Chapter 5, Policy N5. Here, I am concerned at the approach and content of those policies.
6. Appropriate appendices are attached to the Report. As far as Appendix 1 is concerned, the listing of objectors generally reflects the SR. In a limited number of cases, following my assessment of objections, I have concluded that they should be dealt with elsewhere - as an omission for example. The right hand column of the appendix has been suitably annotated.
7. As to the Council's presentation of its plan at Second Deposit, a degree of confusion has arisen from the way in which the Council has dealt with headings to policies. Some, refer to a number of policies that follow, others to the specific policy. As an example, the heading above N7 (N8) is "Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows". The policy specifically addresses, however, the Red Rose Forest. In my opinion, policy headings should relate to the policy that immediately follows - and each policy should have one. The Second Deposit version of the plan would benefit, therefore, from a rigorous editing in order to improve presentation and remove textual failings - a number of which I have included in my Report, for example, paragraph numbering that is not consecutive and a reference to a superseded PPG.
8. During the course of the Inquiry, a revised version of PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation was issued - while Regional Planning Guidance was finalized after I closed the Inquiry. Both have been taken into account in my Report.
9. Now, a final count when I closed the Inquiry agreed some 640 objections to be dealt with. There were, also, a substantial number of written representation of support for the UDP. Although they do not appear in my Report, they have all been carefully considered.
10. As to the plan itself, I have concluded that, overall, it reflects the government's sustainability agenda by attempting to concentrate development within urban areas. A major exception relates to the provision of land for housing. Here, the Council's evidence that the RPG requirement could largely be met by windfalls was less than convincing. That evidence was, overall, outweighed by the evidence of objectors - persuading me that allocations are necessary in the plan. As indicated in my Report, the Council needs to revisit Chapter 10 of the plan. This should include the Other Protected Open Land defined - as I am in no doubt that Green Belt boundaries established in the adopted plan and carried forward into the UDP should be maintained. Further, the Council has not justified its policy on affordable housing, while Minerals Areas of Search should be defined in the UDP. Otherwise, "fine tuning" of the plan is generally required.

11. I would expect that all my recommendations are clear to Council and objector alike. The Council will need to consider them. It should move the plan to adoption as soon as possible.
12. My Report is appended.
13. A copy of this letter has been sent to GO-NW and the ODPM.

Yours faithfully

Peter F Davies BSc(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

Inspector