



25 July 2024

Dear Mrs Parkinson

Over Hulton Neighbourhood Plan examination

Thank you for your letter of 23 July.

You tell me that your group intends to prepare “a table of suggested modifications to the NDP indicating how and where changes could be made to discuss at the meeting”.

My letter of 16 July explained the very limited agenda for any meeting that might be thought necessary, which is that it would simply allow the parties to understand fully why I have the concerns about the Plan that I do. As I said, a meeting “would not involve consideration of any substantive matters which would be within the scope of an examination itself”: such matters would clearly include any modifications to the Plan that you might be thinking of making at some point in the future. As I have previously indicated, it would be inappropriate for me as examiner to take part in a discussion about the nature and scale of any suggested modifications in the way you appear to be expecting.

So far, I have hesitated to give you my candid view of the position the Forum finds itself in, but I think it would be in everyone's interests if I offered it to you now. I imagine you will want to seek guidance from your planning consultants – but I think it important for you to be clear about the situation as I see it.

As I strongly suggested in my letter of 12 June, if I were asked to complete my examination of the Plan now, I would not be able to recommend that it proceed to referendum in its current form. I have also made it clear that the scale and nature of modifications needed to satisfy the basic conditions are radical and that the Plan cannot simply be “tinkered with” at this very late stage of its formal progress. It is unfortunate that the opportunity was not taken earlier to consider the impact either of the October 2022 planning permission or of draft Policy JP Strat8 in the Greater Manchester spatial plan, but I cannot see that it is feasible to try make up for that omission now in the way that you seem to be hoping.

As I see it, there are realistically only two options: either that you decide to put the Plan on hold until you have undertaken a fundamental rethink of what it should cover (without any further input from me) in the light of the radically changed planning context and the associated need for re-consultation; or that you decide to abandon it.

I remain willing to host a discussion on the basis set out above if you think this is necessary. However, I will not begin to make any arrangements until I have had your response.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr Chalmers at Bolton Council.

Yours sincerely

David Kaiserman MRTPI
Independent Examiner