

Examination of the Rugby Local Plan Examination Guidance Note

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Guidance Note outlines the procedural and administrative arrangements for the examination of the Rugby Local Plan (Local Plan), submitted for examination on 27 April 2026 by Rugby Borough Council.
- 1.2 Participants should familiarise themselves with the contents of this note, particularly those who wish to submit hearing statements and/ or take part in the hearing sessions.
- 1.3 Further information about the preparation and examination of Local Plans can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's 'Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations' which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans>.

2. Role of the Programme Officer

- 2.1 Ian Kemp is the Programme Officer for the Examination, working under our direction independently of the Council. The main tasks of the Programme Officer are to:
 - act as the channel of communication between the Inspectors, the Council and other participants
 - liaise with all parties to ensure the efficient administration of the Examination
 - organise the Hearing Programme; and
 - oversee the publication of documents on the Examination Webpage.
- 2.2 The Programme Officer should be the first point of contact for any queries relating to the examination process.

Contact details:

Ian Kemp
PO Box 241
Droitwich
Worcestershire
WR9 1DW

Telephone: 07723 009166
Email: ian@localplanservices.co.uk

3. The Scope and Purpose of the Examination

- 3.1 We have been appointed by the Secretary of State under Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to carry out the independent examination of the Local Plan.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Examination is to determine whether it satisfies legal requirements under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated regulations and whether the Local Plan is sound.
- 3.3 In particular, we will need to determine whether or not;
- The Local Plan has been informed by an adequate Sustainability Appraisal.
 - The Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement.
 - The requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 have been complied with, having regard to relevant national policy and guidance, and if an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out where necessary.
 - Relevant publicity and procedural requirements have been met.
- 3.4 To be sound the Local Plan must be:
- Positively prepared: providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreement 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 statements of common ground.
 - Consistent with national policy: enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

4. Representations Made on the Plan

- 4.1 The Council has prepared a Consultation Statement (Document Refs: CD7, CD8 and CD9) which include details of the consultation that has taken place on the Plan, and a summary of the main issues raised in the representations. The Council has also prepared a response to the representations made.
- 4.2 We will consider all of the representations made on the Regulation 19 Local Plan by interested parties insofar as they relate to legal requirements or matters of soundness. Anyone who has made a valid representation seeking a change to the Local Plan (an objection) has a right to make their case in person at the hearing sessions, if they have indicated their wish to do so. It is important to

stress though that written representations carry as much weight as evidence given at the hearing sessions.

- 4.3 Those who have made representations supporting the Local Plan do not have a right to participate at the hearing sessions. The Council has submitted the Local Plan for examination, and it is expected that they will be able to set out and justify their own position. It is not necessary for those who support the Local Plan to participate in the hearing sessions.

5. Representations Proposing Alternative Site Allocations (Omission Sites)

- 5.1 A number of representations propose the allocation of sites that are not included in the submitted Local Plan. These are commonly referred to as “omission sites”.
- 5.2 Our role is to examine the soundness of the submitted Plan, rather than assess the merits of sites that have not been allocated. Consequently, omission sites will not form part of the hearing discussions. Participants should therefore focus on explaining why the submitted Plan is unsound.
- 5.3 If we conclude that additional sites should be allocated to meet development needs, we will first invite the Council to address the issue. Depending on the circumstances, this may result in additional or alternative site allocations being proposed. Any such proposals would be subject to consultation, and any representations received would be considered before conclusions are reached.

6. Changes to the Local Plan

- 6.1 The basis for the Examination is the submitted Local Plan. This is the Rugby Local Plan 2025-2042, dated January 2026. Any main modifications that we subsequently recommend will be modifications to the submitted Local Plan.
- 6.2 The starting point is the assumption that the Council has submitted what it considers to be a sound Plan. Once submitted for examination the Plan can only be changed in 2 ways:
- Main Modifications: Changes that are necessary to make the Plan legally compliant and/ or sound. Any Main Modifications would be subject to public consultation. Where necessary, they may also require Sustainability Appraisal.
 - Additional Modifications: Minor changes proposed by the Council that do not materially affect the Plan’s policies such as factual updates, corrections or typographical amendments. These are matters for the Council and will not form part of the Examination or our report.
- 6.3 The Council has produced a schedule of proposed modifications (Document Ref. CD20). We will review this list and any that are deemed Main Modifications

will be considered in the hearing sessions. However, it is important to recognise that the basis of the Examination is the submitted version of the Plan. We will only recommend changes to the submitted Plan that amount to Main Modifications if they are required to ensure the soundness and/ or legal compliance of the submitted Plan. If the Plan is already sound, it is not the purpose of the Examination to improve it.

7. Matters, Issues and Questions

- 7.1 Following our initial assessment of the Plan, we have identified a number of Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) that require further examination. These are set out in a separate document published alongside this Guidance Note. The MIQs will form the basis of both the hearing discussion and any hearing statements submitted by participants.

8. Hearing Sessions

- 8.1 The hearing sessions will be based on the Matters, Issues and Questions that we have identified, following agendas that we will circulate to participants in advance. The hearings will take the form of Inspector led discussions. We will also seek to identify and discuss any potential Main Modifications, where appropriate. There will be no formal presentation of cases or cross-examination of participants permitted.
- 8.2 The Hearing sessions will take place in 2 blocks as follows:
Block 1: week commencing 16 November 2026
Block 2: weeks commencing 7 December and 14 December 2026
- 8.3 Block 1 Hearings will take place in person at Rugby College, Technology Drive, Rugby CV21 1AR. Block 2 Hearings will be a virtual format using Microsoft Teams. A separate guidance note for taking part in virtual hearings has been issued alongside this Note.
- 8.4 The draft Hearing Programme has been published alongside the Matters, Issues and Questions and sets out the proposed times and dates for sessions dealing with each of the matters that have been identified. The detailed programme may be subject to change nearer the time and participants should ensure they check for any updates.
- 8.5 The participants for each session will be those who made relevant and valid representations seeking a change (an objection) to the Draft Submission Local Plan document published in January 2026 and have subsequently confirmed to the Programme Officer that they wish to speak.
- 8.6 Participants may choose to be represented by someone else at the hearing sessions, for example a professional expert. To ensure that there is sufficient space, organisations (including community groups) will normally be allocated one seat at the table, with members of their team “hot seating” as necessary.

Where several representors or organisations wishing to take part have similar points, it will help us if they can arrange to be represented by no more than 2 spokespeople.

- 8.7 All those who wish to speak (participate) at the hearing sessions should confirm this in writing with the Programme Officer by **12:00 midday on Tuesday 1 September 2026** stating which session or sessions they wish to speak at (referring to the matter number and quoting their respondent reference number). This includes those who had previously indicated a desire to attend the examination hearings when submitting representations. If you do not contact the Programme Officer by this date, it will be assumed that you do not wish to speak at the hearings.
- 8.8 The finalised timetable and list of participants will be confirmed before the hearing sessions commence. Only those who indicate their wish to speak in advance of the hearing sessions and make prior arrangements with the Programme Officer will be able to do so.

9. The Submission of Statements and Further Material

- 9.1 The Council should produce an individual written statement for each of the matters identified; addressing all the issues and specific questions set out in the Matters, Issues and Questions document. They should include specific references to supporting evidence where appropriate. The Council is asked to address key points raised in relevant representations when answering the questions.
- 9.2 Other participants may, if they wish, submit written statements addressing the issues and questions set out for the sessions they are attending which are relevant to their representations. However, there is no need to repeat points already made in representations. Participants may wish to rely on their earlier representations. Others who have made relevant representations but are not participating in the hearing sessions may also submit statements addressing the issues and questions. Again though, there is no need to repeat points already made.
- 9.3 Statements for the hearing sessions should be succinct, concentrating on responding to the questions raised. There is no need to include extracts from the Local Plan, other examination documents or those in the public domain such as the NPPF. Clear cross referencing will be sufficient.
- 9.4 Responses must be specific, answer the questions, and draw on key points raised in the relevant evidence. Single word responses to questions such as “yes” or “no” will not be appropriate.
- 9.5 The deadline for the submission of hearing statements by both the Council and all other participants is **12:00 midday on Tuesday 1 September 2026**. Statements must be submitted by this deadline at the latest to enable us and others involved to fully digest them and prepare for the hearing sessions.

Statements received after this deadline will not be accepted. Statements should be submitted electronically only; paper copies are not required.

- 9.6 It should be made clear who is submitting the statement (quoting the respondent reference number) and which matter it relates to. Statements should be no more than 3,000 words long. A flexible approach will be taken to the length of the Council's statements where the matters relate to a large number of policies. Separate statements must be submitted for each matter.
- 9.7 All Hearing Statements will be posted on the Examination Webpage after the submission date. They will not be circulated directly to participants. Anyone who is unable to access them on the webpage should contact the Programme Officer.
- 9.8 Other than the hearing statements referred to above, no further evidence or documentation should be submitted to the Examination unless specifically requested by the Inspectors. In the interest of fairness, hearing sessions must not be used to introduce new evidence. Additional unsolicited statements or written notes submitted at, or immediately before a hearing session will not be accepted.

10. Council Evidence Post Submission

- 10.1 Since submission of the Plan, we have invited the Council to provide further documents to the Examination, including a response to our Initial Questions (Document Refs. ID1, RBC1 and RBC2) and missing Statements of Common Ground (Document Ref. RBC3). These can be viewed on the Examination Documents page of the Examination Website. Representors who have previously made representations relating to those matters may wish to refer to these additional documents when responding to the Matters, Issues and Questions.

11. The Examination Library

- 11.1 The Examination Library is located within the [Examination Webpage](#). The content of this website is controlled by us and the Programme Officer. All documents produced by us or accepted to the Examination, including the evidence base and the procedural material, are published on the website.
- 11.2 If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Programme Officer so that alternative arrangements can be put in place.

12. Site Visits

- 12.1 We will decide which sites and parts of the Plan area we will visit to help us reach our conclusions. We may carry out these visits before, during and after the Hearings. They will be unaccompanied unless it is necessary to go on to

private land; in which case we will make the necessary arrangements through the Programme Officer.

13. Post Hearings

- 13.1 After the hearings have concluded, we will write to the Council to confirm whether the Examination is able to progress to the Main Modifications stage. If the Examination is not able to progress, we will set out why and the options that are available to the Council for them to consider further.
- 13.2 Once the Examination progresses to the Main Modifications stage the Council will draft Main Modifications and agree them with us. They will then be made available for public consultation by the Council. We will consider any representations about them before reaching our final conclusions.
- 13.3 We will then prepare a report for the Council setting out our conclusions and recommendations on any Main Modifications that are needed. Our report will deal with the main issues of soundness and any procedural and legal issues. Whilst we will consider all the points made during the course of the Examination, we will not report on every issue, question or representation.

14. Closing the Examination

- 14.1 The Examination will close when our report is submitted to the Council, who should publish it as soon as they reasonably can after receipt. Once the report has been issued our involvement in the Plan is over. It will then be for the Council to decide whether to formally adopt the Plan, or not. However, the Council may only adopt the Local Plan if it incorporates any Main Modifications that we recommend as necessary to make the Plan sound.

Summary/ Key Points

- The Matters, Issues and Questions document sets out the key questions that we will be considering.
- The Hearings Programme sets out the proposed detailed timetable for the hearing sessions. The content may be subject to change.
- All those wishing to participate (speak) at the hearings must confirm this in writing with the Programme Officer by 12:00 midday on Tuesday 1 September 2026.
- Participants at the hearing sessions will be confirmed in due course.
- Statements for the hearing sessions should be based on the Matters, Issues and Questions document and must be submitted to the Programme Officer by 12:00 midday on Tuesday 1 September 2026.
- All documentation relevant to the Examination is available on the website and this will be kept up to date.
- Any queries regarding the hearing sessions or Examination generally should be directed to the Programme Officer – Ian Kemp.

C Dillon, K Ford and J Glasin

INSPECTORS

Dated 15 July 2026