

14 September 2010

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Inspector Mike Fox BA (Hons) DIPTP MRTPI
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Dear Inspectors

Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk

I am writing in response to the email dated 7 September 2010 from Mr Richard Williams. I have responded to Mr Williams previously on the points he raised but the programme officer thought it would be helpful to clarify these in a formal response to yourselves.

The first point of Mr Williams' correspondence relates to his concern that the inspectors were not aware of the way in which the consultation was being undertaken and suggests the process undertaken was inadequate. As confirmed to Mr Williams, by the Programme Officer, the timing of the consultation on the Statement of Focussed Changes has been dictated by the timetable for the examination, agreed with the inspectors. It was not possible to avoid the holiday period without significant disruption to the timetable so additional notifications were made to ensure those following the process were aware of the forthcoming consultation ahead of the holidays.

In a letter to the Inspectors dated 8 June, sent via the Programme Officer, the GNDP set out the intention to undertake consultation on a Schedule of Changes to the Joint Core Strategy submission document from 19 July to 30 August 2010. The letter also set out how the results of the consultation and other associated work will be reported to the GNDP Policy Group on 23 September and will then be presented to Full Councils of the individual District Councils.

In a further letter dated 6 August, EIP 36, the GNDP provided an update of work underway under the six headings from the Exploratory Meeting and an update setting out the GNDP timetable in place to carry out the consultation on the Focussed

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Changes and the formal sign-off dates for full Council, these dates were also published in the 'Statement of Focussed Changes'.

Mr Williams' statement that notices only appeared in the press after the consultation commenced is inaccurate. A range of communications (exceeding the guidance offered by the Planning Inspectorate and the Government Office East) was used to publicise the 'Statement of Focussed Changes': a list of press notices, adverts, letters etc. as below.

Notices and adverts

Quarter page adverts advising of the forthcoming consultation were published in the EDP and the Evening News on Friday 2 July 2010. Further adverts were in the following weekly publications on Friday 9 July 2010.

Weeklies:

Great Yarmouth Mercury
Beccles Mercury
North Norfolk News
Norwich Advertiser
Wymondham Mercury
Diss Express

Following this early notification, quarter page adverts were placed in the same 8 papers in the week commencing 19 July 2010 announcing the start of the consultation. These adverts appeared in the EDP and Evening News on Monday 19 July but as the weeklies are circulated on a Friday the publication date for the other papers was Friday 23 July.

Following this, another advert appeared in the week commencing 9 August as a reminder.

Letters

The GNDP wrote to approx 520 contacts, including all Parish Councils, on 5 July to give advance notice, and followed this up with a letter on 16 July (these were people who had responded to the Regulation 27 consultation and people who had asked to be kept informed) - it was thought that advance notice was important to notify people well in advance of the summer break.

The press release that Mr. Williams refers to was taken up by the Eastern Daily Press as a result of the GNDP Communications Team sending the EDP a press release to coincide with the adverts and notices to add to public awareness. The EDP published the article in their on-line edition on 20 July - this is the newspaper's decision on timing and coverage, not the GNDP's. We try to use the newspapers wherever possible to highlight this type of event but as we can't guarantee they will be published we do not rely on them, they are over and above the statutory requirements.

Broadland District Council also wrote to all residents on 24 June to announce that its public exhibitions relating to its site allocations document and the growth triangle SPD were cancelled. This letter also advised residents that the Joint Core Strategy Focussed Changes consultation would be taking place from 19 July to 30 August 2010 - this correspondence was over and above the formal requirements.

All the documents associated with the Statement of Focussed Changes were published on www.gndp.org.uk on 16 July and links to this site were accessible from each authority's web-site from the 19 July when the consultation opened.

Mr Williams also suggests that if responses were not submitted as an e-response they were likely to be edited by the GNDP. I can assure you that during the 4 years the Joint Core Strategy has been undertaken the team have collected, presented and entered all the correspondence received whether it is sent electronically or as a paper copy, the correspondence is not edited. The difficulty we always face is if respondents do not reply clearly to the individual questions formally we have no alternative but to enter their comments on their behalf and do our best to cut and paste the points they have raised. In line with the formal planning procedures all correspondence is recorded in full, scanned and paper copies are held on file. A paper copy of all the responses has been submitted to the inspectors, untouched by the GNDP office.

Mr Williams questions the format used for the GNDP website. His reference to the metadata was picked up and the web host company that designed and set up the GNDP site admitted that this was an oversight and the metadata has been changed accordingly. The content on the web-site adequately reflects the relevance of this consultation as dealing with focussed changes to the submitted JCS.

Mr Williams also refers to additional activities carried out by Broadland District Council. These were carried out independently of the GNDP. Broadland's mobile information service was used to visit a number of key locations in Broadland in an attempt engage Broadland residents in having a say on the proposed changes to the Joint Core Strategy. It included an opportunity for residents to talk to local planning officers at Rackheath Fun Day, Sprowston parish council, The Brick Kilns (Little Plumstead) and Salhouse Jubilee Hall about the focussed changes. The activities planned by Broadland were in addition to the formal process and intended to highlight to local residents their opportunity to comment on the focussed changes.

In recognition that the closing day for the consultation was a bank holiday the GNDP decided to extend the consultation by 24 hours; each office posted notices on their letter boxes to let respondents know that, as the offices were closed if a paper response that was too large for the letterbox was delivered it would be received the next day.

This decision was not made at the last minute, it was a conscious decision to try and help people who may be trying to deliver a large package. In the event, no responses were submitted outside of the original advertised timeframe.

However, it is important to note, that we have received comments that are outside of the focussed questions and as always, all comments received have been recorded.

Mr Williams' final comment that the focussed changes only refer to subjects which the Councils want to refer to yourselves demonstrates that this stage of the examination is quite complicated. As you know the requirement is for the GNDP to request comments on the proposed Focussed Changes only, not the whole strategy. Consultation on the full strategy has been carried out at the earlier stages and all submitted comments relating to these stages remain relevant to the Examination in Public so do not need to be repeated.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Eastaugh
Greater Norwich Development Partnership Manager