

Basildon Council

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Mr Paul Griffiths
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Department Planning Policy Team
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By email only

Basildon Borough Revised Publication Local Plan 2014 – 2034: Air Quality

Dear Mr Griffiths,

Thank you for your email of the 5 July 2019 indicating that you are content to defer the Examination for a period of time in order to enable us to understand and deal with the implications of the Defra Direction regarding Air Quality compliance on the Basildon Borough Revised Publication Local Plan.

The Direction covers matters related to NO_x emissions, which modelling has shown do, and will continue to exceed EU Value Limits at two junctions on the A127 within Basildon Borough. The Direction seeks solutions to achieving compliance with the EU Value Limits in the shortest possible time, and seeks explicit consideration of a Charging Clean Air Zone. In making this Direction, Defra has currently rejected an Outline Business Case which focused mitigation on advances in sustainable travel and improvements to electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

A review of the Air Quality modelling that underpinned the Outline Business Case is currently underway, and the modelling of a Charging Clean Air Zone will be carried out imminently. The timescale for these pieces of work will not provide a detailed output until late November 2019.

In terms of the implications this has for sustainable development strategy in the Local Plan, these are being considered in parallel. There are significant concerns locally with regard to the implementation of a Charging Clean Air Zone, and the impacts this would have on the economic growth ambitions of the Council as a whole, and the economic growth strategy set out in the Local Plan. To this end, additional work has been programmed to seek to understand and better mitigate the implications of Local Plan growth on air quality. This includes:

- Additional transport modelling, and testing of the local plan growth and highway mitigation proposals in the Air Quality model. This is due for completion by early December 2019;
- A review of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed on securing sustainable and active travel improvements across the borough in order to promote modal shift. This is being underpinned by work on

'inter-urban connectivity' being undertaken jointly by Basildon Borough Council and Essex County Council as part of a pilot project for the National Infrastructure Commission. The next stage of work on this pilot is due to report in November 2019, and the IDP will be updated by early December to reflect this.

- The Association of South Essex Authorities (ASELA) are also working on a joint approach to key growth corridors across the area including the A127 corridor, and again outcomes from this work during the next three months will also feed into the IDP;
- A general review of the Local Plan's approach to air quality to ensure it is sufficiently robust, given the issues highlighted through the Direction. In particular, it will be necessary to review part 3 of draft policy T7 to give it greater emphasis, and ensure it delivers the change needed to ensure growth does not prevent compliance with the Air Quality Directive. The Council is appointing a specialist advisor for this purpose with the aim of this work being completed by the end of November 2019.

I trust this letter highlights to you the matters the Council is considering in relation to the implications of this Direction. The Council remains committed to the strategy for growth as set out in its Local Plan, and expects that the additional work underway will identify how this growth can be delivered in a way which also ensures compliance with Air Quality requirements. However, this evidence will not be available for consideration as part of the Examination until mid-December 2019.

If you require any further details in relation to any element of the work set out above, please do not hesitate to contact the Council again. In the meantime, we will continue to work on those matters set out above in accordance with the timescales stated.

Yours sincerely,

C

Christine Lyons
Head of Planning