



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

EXAM 12:

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Dear Pam,

ECO-TOWNS PPS AND WEST MIDLANDS RSS

Following the discussion on eco-towns at the first EiP preliminary meeting I am now able to offer some clarification on timing and the inter-relationship between the two processes.

As you may be aware the timing of the consultation on the eco-towns PPS has been delayed and CLG recently announced that it will be extended to 30 April. This takes account of the Secretary of State's undertaking to the court in relation to the judicial review sought by BARD (who are concerned with the MQ scheme) that a further 6 weeks consultation would be allowed following the outcome of the court proceedings. This means that it is very unlikely that the final PPS will be available before conclusion of the EiP for the West Midlands RSS.

However we would not wish this change of timing to hold back consideration of the locational issues in the EiP. As you will be aware the main purpose of the eco-towns programme is to bring forward a limited number of exemplar schemes. Government shortlisted 15 locations and has carried out a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment of the shortlisted locations and reasonable alternatives to them; these, along with the draft PPS are subject to the ongoing public consultation.

The final PPS will list locations which are considered to have potential to be eco-towns. It will then be necessary for schemes that come forward to be delivered through the planning process. Paragraph 2.2 of the draft PPS provides:

"Eco-towns are one of a range of options regions should consider when determining the overall level and distribution of housing in future RSS reviews (see paragraph 37, PPS3). They will be particularly useful in areas experiencing high levels of need and demand for housing. Regions should consider how eco-towns can help deliver housing within the region and in particular housing market areas. Where an eco-town has already been identified in the eco-towns Programme or in a development plan document or where a planning application for an eco-town has been approved, Regions should consider the location or the longer-term growth options for the eco-town."

In the case of Middle Quinton the RSS EiP provides the opportunity to consider whether a new settlement in the broad location of the Middle Quinton proposal would be consistent with the Spatial Strategy.

We would therefore ask the Panel to focus their discussions at the EiP on the planning issues relating to a new settlement rather than the details of a specific proposal. We appreciate in the particular circumstances this will be a challenge as there are clearly inter-relationships, especially in terms of delivery, between the strategic and specific issues. However, the draft PPS, the SA on the eco-towns Policy and programme as well as other local studies provide some context and the Government's emerging thinking on requirements for an eco-town.

Following publication of the PPS and receipt of the Panel Report the SoS will then need to consider whether the new settlement should be identified in the RSS. This means that a decision in the PPS on the potential of the site does not preclude discussion on Middle Quinton in the RSS – it is an option for the RSS review to consider.

I hope that makes the position clear for the Panel and other stakeholders.

Yours sincerely



Ian Smith
Acting Head of Planning

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