

Mrs Rolfe (871648)

Ian Kemp
Programme Officer
16 Cross Furlong
Wychbold
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WR9 7TA

17/07/15

Dear Mr Kemp

Re: Vale of the White Horse Local Plan Examination 22/09/15 - 01/10/15

I write to give my comments in relation to the Local Plan Examination.

Matter 1 – Duty to Co-operate and other Legal Requirements

I believe that the Local Plan has not been compliant with the Vale of White Horse's Statement of Community Involvement. I have searched the Vale's website for their Statement and could find one document dated December 2009 (<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/SCI%20ADOPTED%20DEC%2009%20FINAL.pdf>). The formal public consultation process that was implemented by the council for the public to give their feedback on the Local Plan is in direct conflict with the points made in this statement.

Having had to use the system adopted by the council to give feedback I wish to highlight to the Local Plan Examination that it was unnecessarily complex and difficult to understand and complete. I believe that it was so complex and inaccessible, it discriminated against anyone with any form of special needs. I have a Masters of Science degree and so consider myself to have an average level of intelligence but was unable to navigate the online system that ran alongside the Local Plan. I found the form that they used difficult to relate to the sections of the Local Plan and the language used in the guidance unnecessarily complex and the whole process difficult to understand. As such I proceeded to give my feedback in a free text letter. I believe many people simply gave up. I feel that the process the council adopted discriminated against people with special needs and those without internet access or with limited ability to navigate websites.

The feedback form was made available in the local council offices, but the only way I knew this was from their website. Hence if you did not have internet access it would not have been possible to find this out. It was not made clear if different formats for the form were available for people with visual or other impairments or in different languages.

The sections of the Statement of Community Involvement that I believe the Local Plan has not complied with are (full quoted sections included in appendix):

4.2 Recognising the needs of different groups in the community

5.8 & 5.9 Helping the Community to Comment

Since giving my comments on the Local Plan (by the designated deadline) I received an automated email acknowledging receipt of the comments. However I know many people who also provided feedback on line who did not receive this automated email. I have also never been informed on how my comments will be considered nor when to expect any kind of response to them. This is conflict with the Statement of Community Involvement under section 5.10 How the Council will respond to representations made.

Thank you for taking my comments into account in the Local Plan Examination.

Yours Sincerely



Jenny Rolfe (Msc)

Appendix:

Vale of White Horse District Council Statement of Community Involvement : Adopted December 2009

4.2 Recognising the needs of different groups in the community

The council acknowledges that opportunities for involving the community should be communicated in ways that are relevant and accessible to all sections of the community who have an interest so that those groups who wish to be involved in the planning process can contribute effectively. Following this principle should help the council to engage with 'hard to reach' groups.

Providing clear opportunities for involvement: The council acknowledges that the time and resources available to local groups and organisations can be limited. It will aim to provide clear, up to date and early information on the consultation processes for the preparation of local development documents to ensure that community groups and organisations have the maximum opportunity to respond.

Ease of access to information: The council will seek to maximise the use of the internet in its consultation procedures. It recognises however that many sectors of the community do not have access to the internet. All documents and communications will therefore be made widely available in a variety of traditional and electronic formats.

Effective feedback on consultation: The council considers it important that the community has access to clear and timely feedback on consultation. It will therefore make publicly available information on the progress of proposals, and on how consultation responses have been taken into account.

Helping the community to comment

5.8 Consultation will last for six weeks for development plan documents and four to six weeks for Supplementary Planning Documents. During the consultation period the public will be able to make comments and representations. The Council will wherever practicable produce standard forms to help members of the public make their representations and comments. Where practicable the Council will attempt to avoid public holidays and the summer vacation period when holding public consultation exercises.

5.9 The council will accept written representations via its electronic consultation system, by post, e-mail or fax, either on a standard form produced for the purpose or by letter (including written reports). Those making representations will be encouraged to use the standard forms although all written comments, however received, will be registered and taken into account. Representations made by telephone cannot be registered as formal representations. People unable to communicate in writing or in English may be able to make their comments to the Council by interview with officers of the council

5.10 How the council will respond to representations received:

The council will acknowledge in writing all representations received. After each consultation stage all comments and representations will be reported to and considered by the appropriate committee of the council. The report will summarise the comments received and how they have been taken into account.