

## **COUNCIL'S NOTE 33 – REQUESTING AN EXTENSION TO THE PAUSE**

### **IN THE LOCAL PLAN PROCESS**

1. On 17 February 2023, ([Examination Document 57](#)), the Inspector suggested the Council might like to invite the Inspector to pause the Examination “until there is greater certainty around future Government policy.”
2. On 22 February 2023, ([Examination Document 58](#)), the Council requested that the Inspector pause the examination and suggested a pause until 25 May 2023.
3. On 27 February 2023, ([Examination Document 60](#)), the Inspector agreed to pause the Examination until 25 May 2023.
4. The date of 25 May was chosen because:
  - a) The national Chief Planner had said the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) changes would take effect “in the spring” and 25 May was the date of the parliamentary recess, when many policy announcements are often made:
  - b) The Local Plan Main Modifications consultation would not run concurrently with the local council election campaign period, which finished on 4 May.
5. However, in Examination Document 58, the Council stated that “should the NPPF revisions be delayed in any way, the Council may seek an extension to the pause beyond 25 May.” The Council also stressed it was “keen to progress the Local Plan and, like the Inspector, does not wish the Examination to become protracted.”
6. Unfortunately, the Council will be unable to progress the Local Plan from 25 May as hoped because it appears the NPPF changes will not be ready “in the spring” after all. At the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee hearing on 24 April, the Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities said she could not set a date for a revised NPPF to take effect. Indeed neither the Minister of State nor her permanent secretary were able to indicate when analysis of the consultation responses might be completed.
7. It therefore appears highly likely that there will be a regrettable delay in the NPPF publication, and the Council would like to propose that the Inspector pauses the Local Plan examination until there is clarity as to the delivery of the revised NPPF.
8. This would mean the Mole Valley Local Plan examination pause would correspond to the pause currently in place for the Solihull Local Plan examination (see [6 March letter from Inspector](#) and [15 March letter from Solihull Borough Council](#)), which is at the exact same point in the examination process.
9. The Council is aware that this is not the news the Inspector wishes to hear and the Council would ideally like a swift adoption of its plan in accordance with the unequivocal direction of policy change announced by the Government in December 2022. However, as it appears that the Government’s timetable is slipping, the Council must act in the best interests of the District by waiting for the promised revisions to the NPPF or alternatively news of a policy U-turn by the Government.