

An AI(artificial intelligence) \* analysis of the transcript created at the session:  
Minutes: Matter 5 – Administrative Discussion (Thursday 17th July)

## 1. Meeting details

- Purpose: Final administrative session at the end of Stage 1 hearings to review action points and outline a broad roadmap and timetable towards potential Stage 2 hearings.
- Chair: Inspector (leading the examination).
- Attendees: Inspector, Programme Officer (Annette), Council representatives, other participants present in the hearing room.
- Recording: Inspector confirmed the session was being recorded at the outset.

## 2. Overview of items covered

- Review and prioritisation of outstanding action points from Stage 1 hearings.
- Indications of timescales for the Council to complete key actions (particularly those affecting transition to Stage 2).
- Discussion of likely timetable and structure for Stage 2 hearings (timing, format, location, duration).
- Note on potential need for further technical work (e.g. possible update to ARUP 2014/2016 IMP study) to be addressed via a post-hearings letter.
- Thanks, from the Inspector to the Council, venue and Programme Officer, and explanation of next steps (post-hearings letter, possible main modifications or further work).

## 3. Key statements and decisions

### 3.1 Prioritised action points

The Inspector highlighted several action points as higher priority for early attention by the Council:

1. **Action Point 2 – Coastal Mitigation Strategy timeframe**
  - Need for clarity on the timeframe for the coastal mitigation strategy.
  - Inspector views this as important to inform the transition to Stage 2.
2. **Action Points 7 and 8 – Site capacity and Sustainability Appraisal**
  - Action 7: Further understanding of site capacity work for sites within the main urban area (how the Council assessed and looked at these sites).
  - Action 8: Sustainability Appraisal work, including the treatment of sites filtered out at Regulation 18; any necessary “tidying up” to ensure the work is consistent before Stage 2.
3. **Action Point 12 – Threshold work with National Highways**
  - Ongoing work on thresholds with National Highways; Mr Finch had earlier indicated that they were actively progressing this and that a reasonably positive timeframe was expected for reporting back to the Council.
4. **Action Point 14 – Compensatory improvements and Policy SP7**
  - The Council had offered to look again at compensatory improvements and how these might be incorporated, for example as additional content within Policy SP7.

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#### 5. Action Point 16 – Wording for site G3

- Further work required on agreed wording for site G3.
- Inspector noted that parties were “within touching distance” of agreed wording but acknowledged this required more time and attention.
- A Council representative suggested it might be appropriate to separate G3 out from SP7 and give it its own policy number (similar to SP8) to allow more detailed, finer-grain requirements.
- Inspector responded that this sounded like a sensible way forward and left the matter with the Council.

The Inspector stated that other action points exist for the Council but are considered less urgent at this stage.

### 3.2 ARUP 2014/2016 IMP study

- There had been submissions on whether the ARUP 2014 or 2016 study related to the Infrastructure/IMP needs to be updated.
- The Inspector is still reflecting on this and is not currently asking the Council to undertake that work.
- The Inspector will clarify in a post-hearings letter whether an update is required and whether it amounts to further work or main modifications.

## 4. Timetable and programme discussion

### 4.1 Council’s indicative timescales

- The Council indicated that work on SP7A would start the following week.
- The wider team process was expected to start from 28th of the month, with an aim to provide material back to the Inspector (via the Programme Officer) **in the week commencing 18th August** (corrected from initial reference to 15th August, which is a Friday).
- This indicative date is to be treated as guidance only, recognising it may need to change.

### 4.2 Inspector’s planning assumptions for Stage 2

- The Inspector noted the need to be realistic about timescales given the period (July–September) and the impact of holidays on officer and participant availability.
- Working back from the Council’s August timescale, the Inspector’s view was that the earliest feasible timing for Stage 2 hearings would likely be:
  - End of October, or
  - Alternatively, end of November.
- End of November was tentatively favoured as it provides more flexibility for preparation of statements and reflection on material, while still remaining ahead of the Council’s Local Development Scheme timetable.

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- A Council representative noted that:
  - The Inspector is also involved in the St. Albans (phonetic “St. Orin’s”) Local Plan, so there is potential for diary clashes that are not yet fixed.
  - October half-term in the last week of October may reduce public and officer availability if hearings were scheduled then.

#### 4.3 Format and location of Stage 2 hearings

- For **site-specific matters**, the Inspector prefers in-person hearings **in South Tyneside**, in community locations, so people directly affected feel listened to and the process is rooted in their area.
- The Inspector would also want to re-visit some strands of Matter 1 and other important development management policies in person within the Borough where appropriate.
- For **development management policies** with fewer representations or less significant soundness issues, the Inspector is content to use remote hearings (e.g. via Teams/online platforms).
- The Inspector therefore anticipates a blend of in-person and virtual sessions to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- The Council confirmed it has access to a suitable online platform (Teams/Zoom etc.).

#### 5. Actions and responsibilities

Action / Output	Responsible person/body	Priority / Timing
Provide clarity on the timeframe for the coastal mitigation strategy (Action 2)	Council	High priority; needed to support transition to Stage 2.
Provide further explanation of site capacity work in the main urban area (Action 7)	Council	High priority; before Stage 2.
Review and, if necessary, tidy and ensure consistency of Sustainability Appraisal work, particularly for sites filtered out at Regulation 18 (Action 8)	Council	High priority; before Stage 2.
Continue threshold work with National Highways and report outcomes (Action 12)	Council with National Highways	Ongoing; positive timeframe expected.
Re-examine compensatory improvements and how these can be incorporated into Policy SP7 (Action 14)	Council	High priority policy refinement.
Develop agreed wording for site G3 (Action 16)	Council (with other relevant parties)	High priority; currently close but requires further work.

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Consider whether to separate site G3 from SP7 and give it a standalone policy (similar to SP8)	Council	For Council’s decision; noted as a potentially sensible approach.
Inform Programme Officer if any action items are likely to take significantly longer than expected	Council	Ongoing; as soon as issues are identified.
Prepare post-hearings letter summarising issues, indicating potential main modifications and any further work (including whether ARUP IMP study update is needed)	Inspector	Within weeks rather than months after hearings.
Reflect on material submitted by the Council (August returns) and set detailed Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) for Stage 2	Inspector	After receiving Council’s August submissions.
Coordinate practical arrangements and communications for Stage 2 hearings (including mix of in-person and virtual)	Programme Officer (Annette) with Inspector and Council	Ahead of Stage 2 date confirmation.

## 6. Topics of disagreement, tension or potential conflict

Explicit disagreements in this session were limited, as it was mainly administrative. However, a few underlying areas of potential contention or sensitivity can be inferred:

- **Need to update ARUP 2014/2016 IMP study**
  - Several submissions had argued for an update; the Inspector has not yet decided and will confirm in a later letter.
  - This represents a potential point of disagreement between representors and the Council if the study is not updated, or a resource/timing issue if it is.
- **Timing of Stage 2 hearings**
  - The Inspector initially floated end of October as a possible earliest date, but concerns were raised about half-term and potential diary clashes with another local plan.
  - This creates some tension between maintaining momentum and managing practical constraints on participants and the Inspector’s availability.
- **Policy treatment of site G3**
  - While not framed as a dispute, the need for further work on wording and the consideration of giving G3 its own policy indicates an area where detail and approach still need to be resolved, and where different parties’ expectations may diverge.

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## **7. Risks, concerns and blockers identified**

### **1. Holiday periods and officer/public availability**

- The Inspector noted many references to people already being on holiday and highlighted that July–September includes key holiday periods.
- Risk: Slower progress on actions and reduced availability of officers and public, potentially delaying preparatory work and Stage 2 hearings.

### **2. October half-term**

- October half-term (last week of October) could affect public attendance and officer availability if hearings are scheduled then.
- Risk: Reduced engagement and practical difficulties, suggesting end-October hearings may be problematic.

### **3. Inspector's overlapping commitments**

- The Inspector is also involved in another local plan (St. Albans/St. "Orin's"), with possible diary clashes.
- Risk: Constraints on dates for Stage 2 and potential need to avoid certain weeks.

### **4. Uncertainty about ARUP IMP study update**

- The Inspector's decision on whether the ARUP 2014/2016 study requires updating is pending.
- Risk: If an update is required, this may create additional work and time pressure for the Council and potentially affect the timing of Stage 2.

### **5. Completion and quality of priority actions (2, 7, 8, 12, 14, 16)**

- These actions are important inputs to Stage 2; incomplete or delayed work could slow the examination.
- Risk: Inadequate or inconsistent evidence (e.g. site capacity, Sustainability Appraisal, highway thresholds, compensatory improvements, G3 wording) might lead to further questions, modifications or delays.

### **6. Logistical and cost efficiency of Stage 2**

- The Inspector stressed the need to blend in-person and online sessions for efficiency and cost reasons while maintaining accessibility.
- Risk: If the blend is not managed well, either costs may rise or engagement and perceived fairness could be affected.

### **7. Clear communication on timescales**

- The Inspector asked that any actions likely to take significant time be flagged promptly to the Programme Officer.
- Risk: If delays are not transparently communicated, they could disrupt scheduling and undermine momentum.

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## **8. Closing remarks and next steps**

- The Inspector thanked the Council for organising the hearings and the venue, noting that holding hearings within accessible communities has worked well.
- The Inspector also thanked the Programme Officer, emphasising the importance of her professional role and unseen work engaging with participants.
- Over the next two weeks, the Inspector will reflect on the hearings and prepare a post-hearings letter identifying where issues appear to be heading, where main modifications may be needed, and whether any additional work (including a possible ARUP update) is required.
- The Inspector expects this letter to be issued within weeks rather than months, subject to internal clearance processes.
- The Inspector formally concluded the Stage 1 hearing sessions.

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