



# The Planning Inspectorate

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Councillor Janette Williamson  
Leader of the Council  
Wirral Council  
PO Box 290  
Brighton Street  
Wallasey  
CH24 9FQ

Your Ref:

Our Ref: APP/W4325/W/22/3313726

Date: 28 April 2023

[janwilliamson@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:janwilliamson@wirral.gov.uk)

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Dear Councillor Williamson

Thank you for your letter of 23 March 2023 in which you requested a delay to the Leverhulme Planning Appeals, until such time as the Local Plan Examination has been concluded.

I apologise for the delay in replying.

The Planning Inspectorate administers both planning appeals and the Local Plan process and it is not uncommon for appeals to come forward as Local Plans are emerging.

That situation has arisen here with the appellant exercising their statutory right of appeal for the eight Leverhulme applications that were refused by Wirral Council. Given the complexity of the situation I thought it was worth rehearsing in detail the reasons behind the current situation.

The appeals were received on 22 December 2022 and an inquiry date, of 16 May 2023 was confirmed on 31 January 2023. At that time Wirral Council was informally working towards Local Plan hearing sessions in mid-April and May however no dates had been confirmed with the Council's response to the Local Plan Inspectors' preliminary questions still awaited.

Once the appeal inquiry had been confirmed, Wirral Council officers informed us that the Local Plan hearings and the Leverhulme Inquiry could not be held at the same time, due to resource implications for staffing and accommodation. However, it was made clear that the Local Plan hearings should commence. The Local Plan Inspectors subsequently agreed with the Council that the Local Plan Hearing sessions should sit for 3 weeks in April and early May and then resume in September. The Local Plan hearings could not resume in July because of the availability of the Council's barrister and school holidays. Therefore, the earliest that they could resume was Tuesday 12 September, which is now the agreed date.

We have done what we can to maintain momentum and continue with the Local Plan hearings. The hearing sessions have now started and the Inspectors heard your own opening statement on behalf of the Council on the first day.

There is no pause in the examination. Although hearing sessions might not be being held between mid-May and September, the Inspectors are very much continuing with the examination of the Plan. The Council and representators will also be preparing for the second block of hearing sessions. The breaking up of hearing sessions into different blocks is quite common in Local Plan examinations.

With regard to your specific request to delay the Leverhulme appeals, until such time as the Local Plan Examination has been concluded, there would be no basis to do so, as the appeals have been validly made and the appellant's expectation is that they be handled within the relevant timescales. In addition, there is no absolute certainty as to when the Local Plan Examination will conclude so any delay could be open ended.

I am sure you will appreciate that we often have to make difficult decisions such as this but that overall we are doing all we can to progress both the Local Plan Hearings and appeals as swiftly as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Morrison', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Morrison