Dear Mr Lewis

EXAMINATION OF THE SHEPWAY CORE STRATEGY (CS)

Thank you for your letter dated 8 June 2012, stating the Council’s wish to suspend the Examination in the light of my Interim Conclusions.

Given the need for additional consultation and SA testing, the time period that you have suggested appears challenging. Without seeing more detail about the full scope of the changes that you are envisaging, it is difficult to comment on whether the overall timetable is realistic.

Nevertheless, I confirm that I will delay the preparation of my report for the time being. I would request that you keep me informed of progress (via the PO), and that relevant documentation is sent to me and placed on the website at appropriate times.

I would also ask that you alert me to any significant matters occurring during the suspension period that may bear upon the Examination.

I note that the Council’s schedule of potential changes has also been updated. I have not been able to review this in detail, but would make the following initial comments:

a) For ease of use, the schedule should be re-ordered to follow the order of the Core Strategy document, rather than the hearing sessions.

b) Where changes are proposed to maps or figures, the revised version of the map/figure should be appended as part of the schedule (for example as an appendix).
c) The relationship between this schedule and the previous changes schedules is confusing. Changes should relate to the July 2011 version of the Core Strategy: as such, ‘changes’ such as H5 (‘revert to July 2011 wording’) are unnecessary. It would be clearer if a single, consolidated set of changes was prepared – although it may not be necessary to do this until the consultation period that you envisage for October/November 2012.

d) During the discussion on flood risk at session 5, you commented that the Council would consider whether further policy clarification was required in respect of the sequential assessment of housing development in excess of that required to maintain the sustainability of the local community – with particular reference to the Romney Marsh Character Area. This matter does not appear to be addressed in the schedule of changes and I would be grateful if you could confirm whether the Council intends to suggest any modifications in respect of this matter.

e) While I note the Council’s view that the model policy in respect of the National Planning Policy Framework should be combined with CS policy CD10, the prominence afforded to this matter in the Framework suggests (without prejudice to my report) that a ‘stand-alone’ policy – located at an earlier point in the document – might more appropriately meet the test of consistency with national policy.

If further advice or clarification is required then please contact me (via the PO). In the event that I am unavailable, the relevant contact point at Temple Quay House is Steve Carnaby on 0117 372 8468.

Yours sincerely

M J Hetherington

INSPECTOR