

## **North West Leicestershire Local Plan Partial Review Examination**

### **Virtual Hearings - Inspector's note for participants**

#### **Introduction**

The technology is available to allow us to proceed with the North West Leicestershire Partial Review Examination 'virtually', by means of Microsoft Teams, thus overcoming the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 epidemic.

Some people will be more familiar with this technology than others, and we will have to adapt, make allowances and learn from the experience as we go along. However, I want to emphasise that all our hearings will be conducted in a fair, open and impartial manner.

Please read this note carefully as it sets out the procedures and rules for how the hearings will be conducted.

#### **Joining the hearing as a participant**

Participants should join their session using the electronic link in their invitation. If you prefer to join by Telephone or are unable to use the video option, simply dial the telephone number provided and when asked, type your conference ID followed by the # key. The telephone number to ring will be provided within the invitation.

#### **Watching the hearing**

The sessions will be available for non-participants and the public to watch live on the internet. Each hearing will be livestreamed via the Council's website. A link will be available on the North West Leicestershire Local Plan Partial Review examination web page ([https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/partial\\_review\\_examination](https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/pages/partial_review_examination)). This will enable people to watch the hearings as they would with a physical hearing. It will also allow those in the same organisation or team as their participating colleagues to keep up with the proceedings in real time.

#### **The hearing format**

The aim is to make the virtual hearings as similar as possible to physical hearings in the way they run and the way you participate.

Please bear in mind that the purpose of the hearings is for me to gain the information I need to examine the plan's soundness. At the start of each hearing session I will take appearances in the usual way.

At the start of each hearing session I will take appearances in the usual way. I will lead the hearing, introduce each topic and ask specific questions about the topic.

If you wish to respond to a question, please use the 'raise hand' facility in Teams to indicate your desire to speak. I will give each of you who have raised their hands an opportunity to have their say. Although all participants will be able to see each other only one participant may speak at a time. When you are invited to speak for the first time unmute your microphone, and state your name and, if any, your organisation.

There are a number of issues to consider, so please make your response brief and focused and adhere to the agenda. You won't need to repeat your full case, or give any formal presentation, as I will have read all your representations. I may ask questions about aspects of your verbal or written

submissions. The format will be a structured discussion, there will not be any cross examination and responses should always be directed to me. I will invite participants to speak in turn, so please be patient, and say what you need to say.

If you have already spoken on a particular topic but believe that you can help further on the subject, raise your hand using the facility in Teams. Please ensure that anything you say here is new, important and relevant which will help me get the information I need, as I will curtail the repetition of points already made.

Raising your hand simply to repeat what you or others have already said, or to register that you don't agree with another participant, is not acceptable.

I will ask the Council for their comments on points raised. I will terminate the discussion on any topic when I have enough information.

At the end of each hearing, I will end the session and ask all participants to log out.

### **Documents, evidence and presentation**

The examination website contains all the relevant examination documents. These are available to all participants, stakeholders and the public. The hearing will not use the document sharing facility available on Teams. Nor should you hold any document in front of your camera.

New documents should only be submitted during the hearings at my invitation. If I request a new document from any party, for example a statement of common ground, it should be emailed straight to the Programme Officer so that she can pass it to me and put in on the examination website.

### **Conduct**

Local Plan examinations are a formal event, with appropriate conduct. All participants, their views and evidence are treated with fairness and consideration, and participants do not interrupt each other.

You should dress in a manner that respects the important nature of the hearings and make your contribution respectfully. You should not use first names and the Inspector is addressed in the usual way as 'Madam'.

To make the best use of the hearing time and to avoid disruption, the virtual hearings will start strictly at the time indicated on the agenda. You will receive an invitation from the Programme Officer to the relevant session or sessions.

You must join the hearing on Teams at least 40 minutes before the time indicated on the agenda and you will be held in a waiting lobby until you are admitted into the hearing by the Programme Officer. Attempting to join the hearing after the time indicated on the agenda will not be acceptable and you may not be admitted.

You should have made appropriate arrangements to ensure that your working environment is quiet, and that the hearing (and your ability to concentrate on it) is not disrupted by external noise and unnecessary distractions.

Please ensure that your camera is positioned to provide a clear, front-on view of your face and avoid sitting where you are silhouetted in front of a window or light.

It is a good idea to have a jug and a glass of water or a soft drink with you during the hearing session but eating and drinking out of bottles is not appropriate. Coffee and comfort breaks will be built into the programme.

Those who use Teams and Zoom may have grown used to the idea that people can come and go during virtual meetings. However, that does not apply to examination hearings. You must make sure that you attend the hearing you are invited to from start to finish. Leaving midway through a session, coming and going are not respectful to the hearing, and you may miss the opportunity to speak, hear other people's contributions, and listen to the Inspector's announcements.

When adjournments are announced, please make a careful note of the resumption time and be back at your screen before that time. If you need to leave early for any reason, please inform the Programme Officer as soon as possible.

The Chat facility in Teams must not be used under any circumstances.

You should consider whether you are likely to need to confer with another person (Agent, Legal Representative etc) during the event. If so, agree how you intend to achieve this e.g. SMS, Email, WhatsApp etc before the event.

### **Privacy**

Please have regard to the attached privacy notice. You can turn your camera off if you don't want your image to be viewed. If you are dialling into the meeting using a telephone, you can keep your number private, further details on this will be provided before the start of the Hearings.

The hearings will be recorded for reference. Please do not make your own recording of the hearing.

You must ensure that no-one else appears on your camera unless it has been otherwise agreed, and you should clear your background of personal information. If you prefer, Microsoft Teams allows you to blur your background, but please do not use any of the other backgrounds that are available on Teams.

You must not share any personal information during the hearing, either yours, or anyone else's.

### **Use of Microsoft Teams**

To join the live video conference via Teams, you will need to click on the link provided in the invitation. If you are intending to join using a PC, Apple Mac, iPhone or Android, you should download and install the Microsoft Teams application. If this is not possible, you can join using a Chrome browser on your desk top computer (not on your mobile phone).

Some people with older devices or who use corporate devices which prevent downloads being installed could experience problems. In this case, either use an alternative or contact your corporate systems administrator. Please do familiarise yourself with Microsoft Teams before joining the hearings.

You will be responsible for making sure your kit is functional and that you have everything in place and working to enable you to join the hearing via Teams.

If you experience electronic interference during the session, try moving your mobile phone away from your computer. If you experience other connectivity issues, try switching off some other devices which share your wifi, or move closer to the router.

If you are unable to join, or lose connection during the hearing, try again to join using the link provided in your calendar invitation. The hearing may continue in your absence. As a backup you can re-join by telephone, using the number in the invitation. Transferring from wifi to mobile data or making a wifi hotspot using a mobile phone are other contingencies that you may wish to use.

**The Council will be running a test event on 9 September 2020 at 10.00 for all participants, if you are interested in joining this please email the Programme Officer and she will send you an invitation.**

**Finally**

I should like to extend my thanks in advance to all those who are participating, to the Council and Carmel Edwards, the Programme Officer. As you will know, all the examination documents are on the website; if you need assistance the Programme Officer is there to help. She will also be pleased to help you with any administrative or procedural queries you may have during the examination.

*Louise Gibbons*

*Inspector*