

# **Development Management in Birmingham Plan Examination**

## **Virtual Hearings Note for Participants**

### **Introduction**

The technology is available to enable the Development Management in Birmingham Plan examination to proceed 'virtually' through Microsoft Teams, thereby overcoming the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Some people will be more familiar with this technology than others. There will be a need to adapt, make allowances and learn from experience as we go along. However, I want to emphasise that all the 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 Hearings 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 within your invitation and when asked, type your conference ID followed by the # key.

### **Watching the Hearings**

The sessions will be livestreamed for non-participants and the public to watch on the internet. A link will be available on the examination web page.

### **Format of the Hearings**

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 remember that the purpose of the Hearings is for me to gain the information I need to examine the soundness of the Plan. I will lead the Hearings, 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 wish to speak. I will give everyone who has raised their hand the opportunity to have their say. Whilst 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 applicable, the organisation you represent.

There are a number of issues to consider and so please make your contribution brief and focused and adhere to the agenda. You will not need to repeat your full case or give any formal presentation as I will have read 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.

If you have already spoken on a particular topic but believe you can assist further on the subject, raise your hand using the facility in Teams. Please ensure that anything you say is new and not a repetition of what has already been said, that it is important and that it is relevant in helping me get the information I need.

Raising your hand simply to repeat what you or others have already said, or to register that you do not agree with another participant is not acceptable. I will ask the Council for their comments on the points raised. I will end the discussion on a topic when I have enough information.

At the end of each Hearing I will close 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 Hearings will not therefore use the document sharing facility available on Teams and you should not 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 it should be emailed to the Programme Officer so that he can pass it to me and make arrangements to put it on the examination website.

### **Conduct**

Local Plan examinations are formal events, with appropriate conduct. All participants, their views and evidence should be treated with fairness and consideration, and participants should not interrupt each other. You should make your contribution respectfully. You should not use first names and the Inspector should be addressed as 'Inspector'.

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 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) 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.

Coffee and comfort breaks will be built into the programme. Those who use Teams and Zoom may have become accustomed to people coming and going during virtual meetings. However, this does not apply to examination Hearings. You must make sure as far as possible that you attend the Hearing you are invited to from start to finish. Leaving midway may mean you miss the opportunity to speak, hear other people's contributions and listen to the Inspector's announcements. If you need to leave early for any reason, please inform the Programme Officer as soon as possible.

When adjournments are announced, please make a careful note of the resumption time and be back at your screen before that time.

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.

## **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 back up 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.

## **Finally**

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

*Kelly Ford*

INSPECTOR