

# Greater Norwich Local Plan Examination

## Virtual Hearings Note for participants and observers

### Introduction

This note is to be read alongside the Inspectors Guidance Notes (Document Ref D5.2, published 15 December 2021) which sets out the general parameters for the examination. This note provides specific advice on participating at the virtual hearings, and for members of the public who wish to observe.

The technology available is allowing us to proceed with the Greater Norwich Local Plan Examination hearing sessions 'virtually', by means of Teams, thus overcoming any restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some people will be more familiar with this video-conferencing technology than others, but the Inspectors want everyone to be assured that the hearings will be conducted in a fair, open and impartial manner and that he will ensure that everyone who is participating can be heard. Please read this note carefully as it sets out the procedures and rules for how the virtual hearings will be conducted.

### Joining the hearing as a participant

These notes are for Windows/PC users. If you are using a tablet (IOS or Android) or a Mac, the steps and controls may vary. They are intended as an informal guide to help you join and use Teams during the hearing process.

Participants should join their session by using the electronic link in their invitation sent in an email by Annette Feeney, the Programme Officer. This will be via the e-mail address you have already provided to the examination. Only those expected to attend will be admitted into the meeting. Please speak to the Programme Officer if you do not receive an invite.

1. **IMPORTANT:** If you are speaking on more than one Matter, make sure you open the email/appointment that refers to the relevant session (See Hearings Programme)
2. Click on the link (URL) in the email to join the meeting
3. Select 'Join meeting'

Participants without access to the internet can dial-in to the virtual hearing by telephone. The telephone number, ID number and participant number will be provided in the invitation.

Please join between **15 and 30 minutes before** the event is due to open (i.e. between 09:00 and 09:15 for a 9:30am start) to allow time to check

your details. Whether using video or telephone access, you will be held in a virtual 'lobby' until you are let into the hearing. If you experience any problems joining the event on the day, please immediately call or email the Programme Officer for assistance (07775 771026 or by email at [Annette.feeney2@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Annette.feeney2@norfolk.gov.uk) )

### **Observing the hearing**

The sessions will be available for non-participants and the public to watch live on the internet. The link to the YouTube channel is below. This will enable people to watch the hearings as they would a physical hearing. It will also enable those in the same organisation or team as participating colleagues to keep up with proceedings in real time. The link to the YouTube webpage is: [Norfolk County Council - YouTube](#)

### **How the hearing will work for invited participants**

The aim is to make the virtual hearings as similar as possible to physical hearings in the way that they are run and the way you participate. The purpose of the hearings is for the Inspector to gain the information needed to examine the soundness of the Plan.

At the start of each hearing session, the Inspector will remind participants that the event is being livestreamed and recorded and that this is not discretionary. If you do not want to be seen on livestream or recording you can participate via audio only. However, if you do not wish to be livestreamed or recorded at all, your only option would be to leave the event and rely upon your previous written evidence which will be attributed equal weight. The Inspector will lead the discussion, introduce each topic, and ask specific questions.

#### *Raising your hand*

If you wish to respond to a question, please use the 'raise hand' facility to indicate your desire to speak. The Inspector will give each of you who have raised their hands an opportunity to have their say at the appropriate time. Although all participants will be able to see and hear each other only one participant may speak at a time.

To raise your hand, you will need to:

- click on 'participants' this will bring up a panel to the side of the screen
- click the 'raise hand' icon
- the hand icon will appear next to your name in the participants list

#### *How to speak*

Only one participant will be invited to speak at a time. When the Inspector invites you to speak, you must switch your microphone on. The Inspector will try and bring you into the discussion as soon as possible. The Inspector can see the order in which participants are queuing to speak. However, the Inspector will invite participants to speak

in an order which is considered to best assist the discussion, so please be patient, and say what you need to say when given the opportunity.

***When it is your turn to speak, please state your name and, if any, your organisation or who you represent.***

As with physical hearings, please make your contributions brief and focused and relevant to the point on the agenda. You won't need to repeat your full case, or give any formal presentation, as the Inspector will have read all your representations. The Inspector 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 the Inspectors.

The Inspector will curtail the repetition of points already made during the hearings or within representations or hearing statements. 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 or necessary. The Inspectors will normally ask the Council for their comments on points raised.

Participants should aim to speak only once on each question asked by the Inspector. If, exceptionally, you have already spoken on a particular question but believe that you could help further on the subject, you can raise your hand again. However, please use this facility sparingly and only when you have important and relevant evidence.

***When you have finished speaking you should mute your microphone.***

At breaks during sessions, the Inspector will remind participants not to log out but ensure that they turn their cameras and microphones off. At the end of each hearing session the Inspector will ask all participants to log out.

The examination website contains all the relevant examination documents. These are available to all participants, stakeholders and the public. Participants are encouraged to read the relevant Hearing Statements and other key evidence in the examination library prior to the event. All these are highlighted under the latest news section.

The hearing will not use the document sharing facility in Teams. Nor should you hold a document in front of your camera.

Please note that new documents will NOT be accepted at the hearings, unless it is something that the Inspector specifically requests.

## **Conduct**

Local Plan examinations are a formal event. All participants, their views and evidence are treated with fairness and consideration. Participants must not interrupt each other, and contributions should be made respectfully.

To make the best use of the hearing time and to avoid disruption, the virtual hearings will start at the time indicated on the hearings programme. Please note some sessions may over run. Times during the day are APPROXIMATE.

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.

Lunch and comfort breaks between hearing sessions are built into the programme.

Please familiarise yourself with Teams before joining the event. Those who use Teams 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 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 Inspectors 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.

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.

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

If you experience internet connectivity issues during the event, try switching off other devices or moving closer to the router. If you lose connection during the event, please try to re-join using the electronic link in your email. The hearing may continue in your absence. As a back-up you can re-join by telephone using the number in your invitation. Transferring from wifi to mobile data or making a wifi hotspot are other contingencies you may wish to consider. If you experience electronic interference during the session, try moving your mobile phone away from your computer. If you are having on-going problems, please alert the Programme Officer.

If you are using a mobile phone to access the event please ensure it is fully charged/ plugged in, so you do not get cut-off.

### **Privacy**

Please have regard to the privacy notices on the Greater Norwich Local Plan examination website. 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. If you wish to hide your telephone number from being seen by participants at the meeting, prefix your number by 141 or whatever alternative number your network uses to hide your number. Hiding your number will mean that if you want to speak, you will have to identify yourself on every occasion you wish to speak.

As set out above the hearings will be livestreamed or 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.

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