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## Examination of the Watford Local Plan

**Inspector:** William Fieldhouse

**Programme Officer:** Louise St John Howe

**Tel:** 07789 486419

**Email:** [louise@poservices.co.uk](mailto:louise@poservices.co.uk)

**Address:** PO Box 10965, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 3BF

**Examination webpage:** <https://www.watfordlocalplan.co.uk>

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### INSPECTOR'S NOTE NO. 6

### HEARING SESSIONS: GUIDANCE FOR PARTICIPANTS

#### Introduction

As previously announced, hearing sessions will be held virtually using Zoom on the following dates:

- Week 1: Tuesday 18 January to Thursday 20 January 2022
- Week 2: Tuesday 25 January to Thursday 27 January 2022
- Week 3: Tuesday 8 February to Thursday 10 February 2022
- Tuesday 22 to Thursday 24 February are set aside as reserve days

Sessions will start promptly at 09.30 and 14.00, although participants will need to join via Zoom at 09.00 and 13.30 for morning and afternoon sessions respectively. Further information is set out below.

The matters to be discussed at each session will be as previously set out in ED28C Annex 3 Hearings Programme published on 2 November 2021. An agenda will be published a few days before each session confirming the issues to be discussed and participants.

#### Observing hearing sessions

All the hearing sessions will be broadcast live and can be viewed via the link which will be posted on the Hearings session page on the Examination pages of the Watford Borough Council website

<https://www.watfordlocalplan.co.uk/hearing-sessions>

## **Participating at hearing sessions**

The Programme Officer will email participants a separate invitation for each session; this will set out the steps that will need to be taken to join using Zoom.

Participants should join the session at 09.00 for morning sessions and 13.30 for afternoon sessions. They will first enter a virtual lobby from where they will be given access to the session by the Programme Officer before the scheduled start time. This will ensure that any technical issues can be addressed and all participants are able to participate from the start of the session.

Participants should ensure that their camera is positioned to provide a clear, front-on view of their face and avoid sitting silhouetted in front of a window or light. When invited to speak by the Inspector, the camera should be turned on. At other times, participants may turn their camera off if they do not want their image to be viewed.

Microphone should be on mute at all times other than when invited to speak by the Inspector. The Inspector or Programme Officer may turn participants microphones off if inadvertently left on. There must be no interrupting of other speakers.

The Inspector will start each session with some introductory comments. He will go through the list of expected participants and ask each to briefly confirm that they have joined. The Inspector will then start each agenda item with some questions to the Council, before opening up for contributions from other participants. Participants should use the raise hand icon to indicate that they wish to speak, and the Inspector will then bring them in at an appropriate time.

When asked to speak, participants should ensure their camera and microphone are turned on and say who they are and who they represent. Contributions should be short and directly relevant to the issue and Inspector's question. Generally, participants should not expect to contribute more than once on each issue. However, if as a result of points made by others or questions from the Inspector, a participant considers it essential to speak again they should use the raise hand icon.

The Inspector and all participants have access to written statements and all other documents in the examination library. Written statements will be taken as read. Documents will **not** be displayed on Zoom using the screen sharing function or by any other means. The Inspector may, however, refer to documents in the library, and participants may wish to ensure that they have access to documents relevant to their case.

The deadlines for submission of written statements have passed and no further written material should now be submitted unless specifically requested by the Inspector. The Zoom chat function will **not** be used.

## **Conduct**

Local plan examination hearing sessions are formal events, with appropriate conduct. All participants will be treated with fairness and respect by the Inspector and others. Participants should ensure that they are in an environment that will not cause disruption or undue distraction to other participants. Participants should attend the whole of the session, other than during adjournments arranged by the Inspector. Joining late, or coming and going during a session, is not respectful to the process, as it will mean that the views of others are not heard. It may also mean that the opportunity to contribute on a particular issue is lost.

## **Privacy**

Participants must ensure that no-one else appears on their camera and that their background is clear of personal information. Participants may use the Zoom facility to blur their background if they wish, but should not use any of the other backgrounds that are available on Zoom. Personal information must not be shared during the hearing sessions.

No recordings of sessions should be made.

The Planning Inspectorate's privacy notice (updated on 7 May 2021) is available online <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-inspectorate-privacy-notice>

## Adjournments

Depending on the length of the session, there is likely to be one or more comfort break each morning and afternoon. Rather than leaving the Zoom session during those breaks, participants should ensure that their camera and microphone are turned off. They should then be available to resume at the time stipulated by the Inspector.

## Technological problems

If there are technological problems, either with Zoom or the live streaming, the Inspector may need to delay the start or adjourn a hearing session. In which case, participants will be advised accordingly.

Participants are responsible for ensuring that they have the necessary technology and knowledge to participate effectively. However, if technological problems mean that an individual participant is having difficulties joining or during a hearing session they should inform the Programme Officer preferably by phone (contact details in the header to this note.).

Exceptionally, if a participant is unable to make their contribution during the session due to technological problems, arrangements will be made for them to exercise their right to be heard at another time if deemed necessary by the Inspector. In such circumstances, the participant may find it helpful to first watch the relevant session online via the link on the Council's website.

## Test event

The Council and Programme Officer will be running a test event on Zoom at **15.00 on Wednesday 12 January 2022**. This is check out the technology and to give the opportunity to participants to familiarise themselves with the Zoom platform and how the hearing sessions will be run. The Inspector will not be attending this session and there will be no discussion of the Local Plan. If any participant wishes to join, please

contact the Programme Officer no later than **midday on Monday 10 January 2022**.

### **Further information**

If anyone has any queries about the hearing sessions, please contact the Programme Officer.

*William Fieldhouse*

INSPECTOR  
4 January 2022