

## **Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 Examination**

### **Inspectors' Guidance Notes for Participants in Virtual Hearings 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

#### **1.0 Introductions**

- 1.1** The hearings for the Westminster City Plan Examination will proceed 'virtually', by means of Microsoft Teams, thus overcoming the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. These guidance notes focus specifically on participation in the virtual hearings by means of Microsoft Teams and should be read alongside the Inspector Guidance Notes issued on 4 May 2020 (INSP4) which provide more general advice on the operation of the hearings.
- 1.2** Some people will be more familiar with Microsoft Teams than others, and we will have to adapt, make allowances and learn from the experience as we go along. However, we 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 virtual hearings will be conducted.
- 1.3** Charlotte Glancy is the Programme Officer for the examination, working under our direction independently from the Council. She is responsible for organising the administration of the examination, maintaining the document library, ensuring that all documents received are distributed, and acting as the channel of communication between ourselves, the Council and those taking part in the examination. She is the first point of contact for those with queries about the process and participation in the virtual hearings.

The Programme Officer's contact details are:

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#### **2.0 Joining the virtual hearings as a participant**

- 2.1** If you are intending to join the virtual hearings 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 Microsoft Teams.

- 2.2** The Programme Officer will email participants with an invitation to join the hearing. 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. There will be separate invitations sent out for the morning and afternoon hearing sessions.

### **3.0 Watching the virtual hearing**

- 3.1** The sessions will be available for non-participants and the public to watch on the internet. Each hearing will be recorded and published on the Council's website within 24 hours of the session closing. A link will be available on the examination web pages at <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/cityplan2040>. This will enable people to watch the hearings as they would with a physical hearing and will also allow those in the same organisation or team as their participating colleagues to keep up with the proceedings.

### **4.0 Participating in the Virtual Hearings**

- 4.1** 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.
- 4.2** At the start of each hearing session we will take appearances in the usual way. We 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 Microsoft Teams to indicate your desire to speak.
- 4.3** We will give each of you who have raised their hands an opportunity to have their say. Although all participants may be able to see each other only one participant may speak at a time. We ask that all participants have their video turned off and they are on mute until invited to speak. When you are invited to speak unmute your microphone, and state your name and, if any, your organisation if it is your first time speaking during the session.
- 4.4** Please make your response is brief and focused and adhere to the agenda. You won't need to repeat your full case, or give any formal presentation, as we will have read all your representations. We 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 us. We will invite participants to speak in turn, so please be patient, and say what you need to say.

- 4.5** 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 Microsoft Teams. Please ensure that anything you say here is new, important and relevant. Simply repeating what you or others have already said, or to register that you don't agree with another participant, is not necessary.
- 4.6** We will ask the Council for their comments on the main points raised and we will terminate the discussion on any topic when we have enough information. At the end of each hearing, we will end the session and ask all participants to log out of Microsoft Teams.
- 4.7** If you experience electronic interference during a 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 Wi-Fi, or move closer to the router.
- 4.8** If you are unable to join, or lose connection during a hearing, try again to join using the link provided in your 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 Wi-Fi to mobile data or making a Wi-Fi hotspot using a mobile phone are other contingencies that you may wish to use. If none of these resolve the issue contact the Programme Officer for assistance.
- 4.9** **The Council will be running a test event on 21 September 2020 at 14.30 for all participants, if you are interested in joining this please email the Programme Officer and she will send you an invitation.** We will not be attending the test event; it is intended only to ensure participants are comfortable participating in the virtual hearings using Microsoft Teams.
- 5.0 Conduct, Documents, evidence and presentation**
- 5.1** 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.
- 5.2** 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 along with a [Privacy Policy](#). You must join the hearing on Microsoft Teams at least 20 minutes before the time indicated on the agenda. The Programme Officer is responsible for admitting participants into the hearing session, you must wait to be admitted. 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.
- 5.3** 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.

- 5.4** 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.
- 5.5** 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 Inspector announcements.
- 5.6** 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.
- 5.7** The chat facility in Microsoft Teams must not be used under any circumstances. It does not form part of the formal hearing procedure. Any attempt to post anything will not be considered.  
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.
- 5.8** 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 Microsoft Teams. Nor should you hold any document in front of your camera.
- 5.9** New documents should only be submitted during the hearings at our invitation. If we 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 us and put it in on the examination website.
- 6.0 Privacy**
- 6.1** The hearings will be conducted in line with the Council's data protection policies and processes as set out here: [www.westminster.gov.uk/data-protection](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/data-protection)
- 6.2** Please have regard to the attached privacy notice. You can turn your camera off if you don't want your image to be viewed.
- 6.3** 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 Microsoft Teams. You must also not share any personal information during the hearing, either yours, or anyone else's.

*Luke Fleming and Kevin Ward*  
INSPECTORS