

ED30

**Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036 (the Local Plan/the Plan) Examination
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IHBC**

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Inspector Note 6

Inspector’s Guidance Notes for Participants and observers in virtual hearings

Introductions

The hearings for the Dartmoor Local 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 and observation of the virtual hearings by means of Microsoft Teams and should be read alongside the Inspector Guidance Notes issued on 12 January 2021 (Inspector Note 4) which provide more general advice on the operation of the hearings.

Some people will be more familiar with conference call technology than others, but I want to emphasise that all the hearings will be conducted in a fair, open and impartial manner and I will ensure that everyone with a right to be heard can participate. Please read this note carefully as it sets out the procedures and rules for how the virtual hearings will be conducted.

Joining the virtual hearings as a participant

Participants will be issued with an invitation to attend each session by the Programme Officer. This will be via the email address that you have already provided to the examination. Please note that if you are participating in more than one hearing session, then you will receive a separate invitation for each session. If you would prefer to join by telephone or are unable to use the video option, please contact the Programme Officer and specific details will be provided. Participants should aim to join each session around 20 minutes before the event is due to open. Whether using video or telephone access, you will be held in a virtual ‘lobby’ until you are let into the hearing. Attempting to join the hearing after the time indicated on the agenda will not be acceptable and you may not be admitted.

Watching the virtual hearing

The Authority is intending sessions to be live streamed for observers to follow online. The Programme Officer will provide further details in due course.

The procedure for virtual 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.

I will lead each hearing, introduce each topic and ask specific questions. If you wish to respond to a question, please use the 'raise hand' facility in Teams to indicate your desire to speak. Although all participants will be able to see and hear each other, only one participant may speak at a time. When you are invited to speak, you should turn your camera on, unmute your microphone and state your name and who you represent, if applicable. Once you have spoken, please turn your microphone off again (if you are a telephone participant you can mute by using *6).

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. If you have already spoken on a particular topic but believe that you can help further on the subject, please use the 'raise hand' facility. Please use this facility sparingly and only when you have new, important and relevant points to make. Raising your hand simply to repeat what you or others have already said is not necessary.

Breaks will be taken during the sessions. At mid-session breaks participants should not log out, but please ensure that cameras and microphones are turned off. At the end of each hearing session I will 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 were to request a new document from any party, for example a statement of common ground, it should be emailed directly to the Programme Officer.

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.

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.

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, as far as possible, that you attend the hearing you are invited to from start to finish. Leaving midway through may mean that you miss the opportunity to speak, hear other people's contributions and or the Inspector's announcements. If you need to leave early for any reason, please inform the Programme Officer. The Chat facility in Teams **must not** be used under any circumstances.

Privacy

Please have regard to the privacy notices which will be available on the examination web page. If participants do not want their image to be viewed, or for telephone participants want their phone number to remain private, please contact the Programme Officer.

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.

Use of Microsoft Teams

Please do familiarise yourself with Microsoft Teams before joining the hearings. You will be responsible for making sure that your kit is functional and that you have everything in place and working to enable you to join the hearing via Teams. If you are unable to join, or lose connection during the hearing, try again to join using the link provided in your invitation. The hearing may continue in your absence. As 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. Should participants have any technical queries regarding the use of Microsoft Teams or attending sessions virtually, please contact the Programme Officer.

Test event

The Authority will be running a test event for participants. The programme Officer will send each participant an invitation. You are encouraged to join, even if only for a short time, to ensure familiarity with the virtual environment and the technology.

R Barrett
INSPECTOR

11 February 2021