

# **Eastleigh Borough Council Local Plan Examination**

## **Virtual Hearings**

### **Inspector's Notes for Participants**

#### **Introduction**

I am unable to hold this additional hearing physically in Eastleigh due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, the Council has the technology to allow the hearing to proceed virtually and we will proceed on this basis, using Microsoft Teams.

Some people will be more familiar with this technology than others, and we will have to adapt, make allowances and learn from the experience as we go along. However, as previously, the hearing will be conducted in a fair, open and impartial manner. If you are to participate in any of the virtual Hearings then please read this note very carefully, as it sets out the procedures and rules for how these hearing will be conducted.

#### **Joining the hearing as a participant**

Participants should join their session using the electronic link in their invitation. Participants without access to the internet can dial-in to the virtual hearing by telephone. The telephone number will be provided within the invitation. Only one participant will be allowed for each representor who has asked to be represented at the Hearings and there will be no substitution within the sessions.

#### **Watching the hearing**

The session will be recorded and available for non-participants and the public to watch when the stream will be uploaded by the Council on the Eastleigh Local Plan examination webpage within 24 hours for anyone to view.

#### **The hearing format**

The aim is to make the virtual hearing as similar as possible to a physical hearing in the way that it is run and the way that you participate.

As this hearing is concerned with one policy only, please bear in mind that the purpose of the hearings is for me to gain the information that I need to examine the policy's soundness.

I will introduce the policy 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. I will give each of the participants who have raised their hands an opportunity to speak. 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, if any, the person(s) or organisation(s) that you represent. Please make your response brief, focus on the point made and adhere to the agenda. You won't need to repeat your full case in detail or give any sort of formal presentation. I may ask questions about aspects of your verbal or written submissions. As a result, all those participating should ensure that they

are able to give comprehensive responses to any particular points raised, there will not be the opportunity to consider the point and report back after the event. When I have heard from you your microphone should be muted and the camera turned off.

There will not be any cross examination or participant interruption, and responses should always be directed to me. Unless a discussion is appropriate I will normally invite participants (other than the Council) to speak only once on each separate matter that is on the agenda, so please be patient until it is your turn, and say what you need to say about the matter in question when you have the opportunity.

If you have already spoken on a particular matter 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 new, important and relevant evidence which will help me gain the information that I need to consider the policy's soundness. Raising your hand to repeat what you or others have already said, or to register that you don't agree with another participant, is not appropriate. I will terminate the discussion when I have enough information. At the end of the hearing, I will end the session and ask all participants to log out.

## **Documents and Evidence**

The examination website contains all of the relevant examination documents. These are available to all participants, stakeholders and the public. The hearing will not therefore use the document sharing facility available in Teams. Nor should you hold any document in front of your camera. No new documents will be permitted during or after the hearing unless I specifically request them. The chat facility in Teams must not be used under any circumstances nor should the reaction facility.

## **Conduct**

Local plan examination hearings are a formal event, that require appropriate conduct from participants. The views and evidence of all participants are treated with fairness and consideration, and participants do not interrupt each other.

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. It is a good idea to have a jug and glass of water or a soft drink with you during the hearing session, but eating, snacking and drinking out of bottles is not appropriate. Coffee and comfort breaks will be built into the programme.

Those who use Teams will 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 that you attend the hearing session to which you are invited from start to finish. Leaving the screen midway through a session, coming and going, and leaving early, are not respectful to the hearing, and you may miss the opportunity to speak or to come back on a particular point that is of concern to you.

To make the best use of hearing time and to avoid disruption, the virtual hearing will start strictly at the time indicated on the agenda. You will receive an invitation from the Programme Officer to the relevant session. You must join the hearing on Teams at least 20 minutes before the time indicated on the agenda. You will then 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 is not appropriate and you may not be admitted. When adjournments are announced, please make a careful note of the resumption time and be back at your screen before that time.

### **Privacy**

Please have regard to the privacy notices of the Council and the Planning Inspectorate. Copies will be posted on the Examination webpage. 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. You can turn off your camera if you don't want your image to be viewed. Please inform the Programme Officer before the hearing if you wish to do this. Please do not make your own recording of a hearing. You must ensure that no-one else appears on your camera 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.

Please do familiarise yourself with Teams before joining the hearings. You will be responsible for making sure that all of 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 electronic interference during the session, try switching off your mobile phone or other electronic devices nearby, if you have not already done so. If you experience internet connectivity issues, try switching off some other devices which share your Wi-Fi, or move closer to the router. If you are unable to join, or lose connection during the hearing, try to join again 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.

The Programme Officer has arranged with the Council a test event for anyone who is taking part in the hearing session. You are advised to attend to ensure that the hearing can run as smoothly as possible. Finally, I should like to thank in advance all those who are participating, the Council, and also to Louise St John Howe, the Programme Officer. As always, she will also be pleased to help you with any administrative or procedural queries that you may have during the examination.

*Christa Masters*

Inspector

31 November 2020