

EALING BOROUGH COUNCIL**Examination of the Ealing Local Plan 2024-2039**

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INSPECTORS GUIDANCE NOTES –BLOCK 2 VIRTUAL HEARINGS**Purpose**

1. This note provides guidance for anyone registered to participate in, or wishing to observe, the Block 2 Hearings that are part of the examination of the Ealing Local Plan 2024-2039 (the Plan). It gives information about the timing of the hearings and specific advice on the virtual hearing format. It should be read in conjunction with the Inspectors Guidance Notes [examination library reference EX15]¹ issued on 8 April 2025.
2. Paige Gaughan is the Programme Officer. Her role is to act as an impartial officer supporting the examination process. Paige should be used as the first point of contact for queries. Her contact details are at the top of this note.

Block 2 Virtual Hearings Timing

3. Following the conclusion of the Block 1 Hearings in June 2025 and the publication of our initial findings [EX18], we agreed a three month pause in the examination to allow the council to carry out further work [EX21]. This led to the rescheduling of the Block 2 Hearings to December 2025.
4. An updated Indicative Running Order for the Block 2 Hearing Sessions has been made available at the same time as this note. Anyone who has pre-arranged to take part (participate) in the Block 2 Hearings will automatically be entitled to do so in December without the need for further notification.

¹ All documents are available on the examination library [here](#).

5. On Tuesday 2 December we have programmed a session on Matter 4 (Housing). This is to allow the completion of the agenda from Block 1 and, as necessary, consider the council's further work. All registered participants from the Block 1, Matter 4 session will be invited to attend. However, there will be no opportunity to revisit other unrelated agenda items covered in the Block 1 session or to repeat points already made.

Virtual Hearing Format

6. As set out in our previous Guidance Notes [EX15], the Block 2 Hearings will use a virtual online format, as opposed to being in person.
7. The applicable procedure for anyone wanting to engage with the Block 2 Hearings will depend on whether you have pre-registered to take part (participants) or would just like to watch the hearings or have not pre-registered as a participant (observers).
8. **For what follows in this note:**
 - **Paragraphs 8 to 35 will apply only to participants.**
 - **Paragraph 36 to 38 will apply if you are an observer.**

For participants only

9. All parties participating in the Block 2 Hearings will have already registered to do so following the procedure in our previous Guidance Notes. If you are unsure whether you have registered, or not, please contact the Programme Officer for confirmation. If you have registered but are no longer wishing/able to participate, please also notify the Programme Officer. Simply not turning up when you have registered to take part is discourteous to others organising and involved in the hearings.

Format

10. The Block 2 Hearings will take place virtually on Microsoft Teams. We appreciate that some will be more familiar with this technology than others. As such, in addition to us providing advice in this note, the Programme Officer will run a support session to answer any questions you have about using Microsoft Teams. Details of how to register for this session will be sent out by the Programme Officer to all those register to take part in the virtual hearing sessions shortly. As the session will only take place if there is a registered interest in it, there will be no facility to 'drop in' on the day.

Joining the Hearings and equipment

11. For those that are joining as a participant, to join a Hearing via Teams you will need to click the link that will be provided in an invitation from the Programme Officer sent to the email address you have already provided. Please notify the Programme Officer if your email address has changed or would like confirmation on your registered email address.
12. The meeting link will be specific to the session on the Hearing Programme. If you have registered to take part in multiple sessions, you will have different links relevant to each session. Please join the hearing on Teams 20 minutes before the time indicated on the agenda and you will be held in a waiting lobby until you are admitted into the hearing by the Programme Officer.
13. If you are intending to join using a PC, Apple Mac, iPhone or Android, you may wish to download and install the Microsoft Teams application. If this is not possible, you can join using a browser on your desktop 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, please contact your corporate systems administrator.
14. You are 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 think you may need support, either with joining or taking part in the hearings, please contact the Programme Officer as soon as possible to register for the support session.
15. If you experience technical difficulties on the day of the Hearings that you cannot resolve you may try, as a last resort, contacting the Programme Officer. However, please note that the Programme Officer may not be immediately available on the day and then only be able to offer very limited support.
16. If you are unable to join, or lose connection during the hearing, please re-join using the link provided in your calendar invitation. The hearing will continue in your absence. As a backup you can re-join by telephone, using the number in the invitation.
17. The hearing sessions will not be paused to allow technical or connection difficulties experienced by individuals to be resolved, unless they are clearly attributable to the Council's technology or other participants are having the same issues. Persistent technical problems (including drops in personal wi-fi signal) can disrupt the hearing sessions and may lead to participants being asked to cease taking part until they are able to resolve the problem.

18. Please make 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 mobile phones are switched off or set to silent.

Microsoft Teams Controls

19. The main controls you will need to participate during a hearing session are:
- Camera on/off
 - Microphone on/off
 - The raised hand to show that you wish to speak; and
 - The red telephone to disconnect at the end of the hearing session or at the point you wish to leave the discussion.
20. Only participants of the meeting are able to use these functions, observers will not. If you are unfamiliar with any of these controls, or would like a refresher, please consider signing up for the Programme Officer run support session.

The Procedure for Virtual Hearings

21. Our aim is to make the virtual hearings as similar as possible to in person hearings. Keep in mind that the main purpose of the is for us to gain the information we need to examine the soundness of the Plan. The hearings are focused sessions structured around specific matters with limited time. We want to hear what participants have to say. However, there will be no opportunity to present detailed evidence or repeat things at length that have already been put to us in writing that will, in any event, be considered as part of reaching our final conclusions.
22. As with in person hearings, each session will start with opening remarks from us. We will then take introductions from other parties. After that, we will lead each topic following an agenda that will be circulated in advance. A typical agenda item will start with questions from us to the Council before asking other participants to make any points of relevance to the issue under discussion.
23. When not speaking, all participants other than the Inspectors and the Council will be asked to keep their cameras off. If during an item you wish to make a comment, you can indicate using the 'raise hand' facility in Teams. We will then bring you in at the relevant time. When it is your turn to speak, simply turn your camera and microphone on and begin. When you have finished, turn the camera off and put the microphone back on mute.

24. Participants will be heard one at a time and asked to make contributions brief and focused. There will be no opportunity to question (cross examine) any other party and points should be addressed to us.
25. Due to timing pressures, you should not expect to speak more than once on any agenda item unless invited to do so. We may ask questions about aspects of your verbal or written submissions, which is purely to ensure we understand them.
26. We will curtail the repetition of points already made or contributions that stray from the central matter under consideration and move through the agenda as needed, paying regard to the time available, the need to get through all the items within a reasonable time, and the fact that hearing sessions (particularly virtual ones) can become tiring for all involved.
27. Comments must be made verbally. The Microsoft Teams 'chat' and 'comment' facilities must not be used under any circumstances. Nor is the use of virtual expressions such as 'thumbs up' or 'clapping hands' permitted.
28. The Council will have a final right of reply on all comments made.

Breaks

29. Virtual sessions can quickly become tiring. Where a session is scheduled to last the whole day, we will usually take at least 3 breaks (mid morning, lunch, and mid afternoon). During breaks participants should not log out and should ensure they turn cameras and microphones off. At the end of each hearing session, all participants should log out.

Documents, Evidence and Presentation

30. The examination website contains all the relevant examination documents. The hearings will not use the document sharing facility available on Teams. Nor should you hold any document in front of your camera.
31. 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 directly to the Programme Officer.

Conduct

32. All participants, and their views, will be treated with fairness and consideration. Regardless of whether someone is appearing in a professional capacity, or not, all will be treated with courtesy and

respect (including Inspectors and Council Officers). Anyone who is unable to stick to this basic requirement will be asked to cease their participation.

Privacy

33. Please have regard to the privacy notice on the hearing sessions page of the Council's [examination website](#). You can turn your camera off if you do not want your image to be viewed.
34. Do not make your own recording or transcript of the hearings without permission and respect the rights of others (including Inspectors, Council Officers, and other participants) to be aware of how, and in what context, their image and words are going to be used.
35. 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.
36. You must not share any personal information during a hearing session, either yours, or anyone else's.

Observers only

37. If you have not registered to participate in the Block 2 Hearings you will still be able to watch them online. The links allowing you to register to do that will be available via the [examination webpage](#) one week before the start of the Block 2 Hearings. Each hearing will have its own unique link.
38. Once you have registered, you will receive an email confirmation (please remember to also check your junk email) this email will contain your joining link, it may also automatically add the meeting to your calendar. We strongly recommend registering to observe the sessions ahead the hearing date to ensure you are able to join the session at the desired time.
39. If you have any questions about watching the hearings, please contact the Programme Officer using the details at the top of this note.

Darren McCreery and Carole Dillon

INSPECTORS