

Belfast Local Development Plan
Draft Plan Strategy 2035
EXAMINATION OPENING NOTES

16th November 2020

Good morning and welcome to the opening of the public hearing sessions of the Independent Examination of the Belfast Local Development Plan – Draft Plan Strategy 2035. Can everyone hear me?

By way of introduction I am Commissioner Rosemary Daly and with me is Commissioner Julie de-Courcey. We are members of the PAC. Our Programme Officer James Bickerstaff will be present for the duration of the hearing. He will be available to assist with any queries relating to the examination and provide help with any technical issues.

The purpose of the examination is to determine whether the local development plan is legally compliant and sound in accordance with the tests of soundness as set out in the Development Plan Practice Note 6 Soundness.

The initial hearing programme was published on 23 October 2020 and the latest version 3 was published on 11 November 2020. The hearing programme sets out the topics and issues that we want to discuss with participants. Parties taking part in the public hearing sessions are expected to have read and be familiar with: -

- The Commissioners guidance notes for participants;
- the Commission's Procedures for Independent Examination of Local Development Plans; and
- the Remote Hearings Protocol for Belfast LDP Independent Examination Hearing Sessions.

All of these documents are available on the Commission's web-site.

The initial public hearing sessions will run from today for 2 weeks until Friday 27th November 2020. The public hearing sessions will then recommence on Monday 18th January 2020. The programme for those 2020 sessions will be published later this week.

For now the public hearings will normally comprise two daily sessions from 10.30 am – 12.00 pm and 2.00 – 3.30 pm. If participating, you should log in a minimum of 15 mins before the starting time of the hearing session. Further advice on joining or re-joining the hearing sessions is set on in the Commission’s Remote Hearings Protocol. We may facilitate some run over the indicative finish time if discussion of the issue can be completed. If necessary, we will also facilitate run over of unfinished discussion on the Friday of each of these initial two weeks.

A programme for any roll-over days will be published on the Commission’s web-site, in the Belfast City Council examination library and added to daily, if required. Please ensure that you check it on the Thursday late afternoon of each week as we may have altered the start time, duration and/or number of sessions in order to ensure that outstanding issues are dealt with the following day.

The remote hearing sessions will be conducted on the basis of the agenda in a “round table” manner. Normally the Council will be invited to make an opening comment, followed by any participants who wish to contribute. The Council will then be given the opportunity to make any follow-up remarks. When discussion on an issue is complete, time permitting, we will move onto the next one. If different participants are joining discussion of an issue, there will be a short break between topics and issues to allow them to do so.

Your devices should be on mute at all times until invited to speak by the Commissioner. If you need to communicate with other members of your team or take instruction, please do so in private via separate communication channels.

If you wish to respond to a question, please use the “raise hand” facility on Webex to indicate your desire to speak. Each of those who have raised their hands will be given an opportunity to have their say. If another speaker has covered the point that you want to make, please lower your hand. Repetition of points already made will be curtailed. When you are invited to speak, you should turn your camera on, unmute your microphone, introduce yourself and, if appropriate, your organisation and/or client. There are a lot of issues to consider so please make your response brief and focused and adhere to the agenda bearing in mind that the Commissioner has already read your written submission to the Council and the Council’s evidence on the issue. There will not be any cross examination, participant interruption or open discussion. Responses should always be directed to the Commissioner. Participants will normally only be asked to speak once on each question. If invited to make further contribution, please avoid repetition of points that either they or other parties have already made. When you have finished speaking, please say so. At that stage please turn off your camera and mute your microphone.

We will terminate the discussion on any particular issue when we have enough information.

You are reminded that recording of the proceedings is not authorised.

As a reminder all information relating to the examination can be accessed at any time on the Commission web site at www.pacni.gov.uk by clicking the link Independent Examination of Local Development Plans - Belfast City Council. Please check the web site regularly for updates. If you have any other queries please do not hesitate to contact James Bickerstaff (Programme Officer).

A copy of these Examination Opening Notes will be published on the Commission’s web-site in the Belfast City Council Examination Library.

Before we move onto discuss the first topic I want to check are all participants clear on the protocol or are there any questions that they need to raise?