

Telford & Wrekin Local Plan Review

Inspectors: Mike Worden and Catherine Carpenter

Programme Officer: Kerry Trueman

programmeofficer@telford.gov.uk

EXAMINATION GUIDANCE NOTE

1. This note provides guidance to participants on the procedural and administrative arrangements for the hearing sessions as part of the examination of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan Review. Examination documents can be found in the Examination Library on the Examination website: [Telford and Wrekin Local Plan Examination](#)
2. Where we have referred to examination documents in this note, we have referenced the document number in square brackets (e.g.[ID03]).

Dates of the hearing sessions

3. The examination hearing sessions will take place at Meeting Point House, Southwater Square, Telford TF3 4HS.
4. The examination hearing sessions will be held in two blocks. Block 1 will commence at 10am on Tuesday 24 February 2026 and is anticipated to be completed by Thursday 5 March. Block 2 will commence at 10am on Tuesday 17 March 2026 and is anticipated to be completed by Thursday 19 March. Reserve days have been added at the end of each week but will only be used if necessary and at the Inspectors' discretion. In addition, participants may wish to keep 24 and 25 March free as possible additional reserve days.
5. Two documents are available with this note:
 - An indicative skeleton programme for the examination hearing sessions which set out the matters to be discussed on each day. The programme is in draft and may be subject to change.
 - Inspectors' Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs).
6. Kerry Trueman is the Programme Officer and is responsible for the administration of the examination. She is working under our direction, is impartial and is independent of the Council. The role of the Programme Officer is to provide an effective channel of communication between all parties and ourselves, liaise with parties to ensure the smooth running of

the examination, to ensure that all examination documents received are appropriately managed and added to the examination Library on the examination webpages and to act as the main point of contact for all procedural and administrative matters.

7. All programming queries, practical and procedural points should be addressed to the Programme Officer. This includes any access or special requirements related to attendance.
8. Copies of all examination documents are available to view on the examination website. Any participant who does not have access to the internet should contact the Programme Officer so that alternative arrangements can be made for viewing documents. There is publicly accessible unsecured WiFi in the room where the hearings will be held.

Scope of the Examination and the Inspectors' role

Inspectors' role

9. Our role is to assess whether the Plan has been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements and assess whether it is sound. The purpose of the hearings is to focus on the main issues for discussion, to enable us to obtain the information we need so that we can draw the necessary conclusion on the Plan.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that in order to be sound, a Local Plan must be:
 - **be positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
 - **justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
 - **effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matter that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
 - **consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

11. It is not part of our role to make improvements to the Plan, provided that it is sound and legally compliant.

12. There are three possible outcomes to the examination:

- The submitted Plan is sound
- The submitted Plan is not sound but could be made sound by making changes (main modifications 'MMs'), if necessary following additional work; or,
- The submitted Plan is not sound and could not be made sound by any changes.

13. Following the close of the final hearing sessions we will prepare a report to the Council with our conclusions. The Council has formally requested that we recommend any main modifications necessary to make the Plan sound.

Omission Sites

14. Our starting point for the examination is that the Council has submitted a Plan which it considers is sound and legally compliant. We will therefore be considering whether the policies and site allocations within the Plan comply with the requirements.

15. We will not be considering the merits of any alternative or omission sites. If during the examination there appears to be a need for additional development sites to be allocated, it will be a matter for us to raise this with the Council to decide what it would propose in order to meet such a need.

16. Those seeking changes need to demonstrate why the submitted Plan is not sound, rather than highlight an alternative or omission site.

Changes to the Plan

17. There are two ways in which changes can be made to the Plan:

- Main modifications ('MMs') are changes which alone, or in combination with others, would materially alter the Plan or policies and must be subject to consultation. We can only recommend main modifications if they are necessary to make the submitted Plan sound or legally compliant.
- Additional modifications (sometimes referred to as 'minor modifications', 'AMs')) are those changes which do not materially affect the policies in the Plan. The Council is accountable for these changes and they do not fall within the scope of the Examination.

The hearing sessions

18. The hearing sessions will normally run between 9:30 and 11:00, 11:30 and 13:00 and between 14:00 and 15:30 and 16:00 and 17:00, unless

otherwise stated during the hearing sessions. If any of the sessions are held remotely, additional breaks may be required during each day due to the need for participants to take some time away from the screen. On the first day of Block 1 (24 February) and Block 2 (17 March), the opening session will begin at 10am.

19. The hearing sessions will be in the form of structured round table discussions which we will lead. The MIQs for a given topic will form the agenda for a given day but we may supplement that with additional detail for some sessions.
20. There will be no formal presentation of evidence and no cross-examination. Barristers and solicitors, if present, will be treated as part of the respective organisation or team. We will make a few brief introductory comments and then invite individuals to respond to specific questions. In most cases we will start with asking the Council some questions and then extend the discussion. We will have read all the relevant representations and statements beforehand. The hearings are not an opportunity to repeat a case already set out in written representations.
21. The discussion will focus on the issues in the programme and agendas with any additional points or supplementary questions we wish to ask arising from any further written statements.
22. The Council will need to keep a list of actions arising from each day and liaise with the Programme Officer to ensure that it is accurate. In addition, the Council will need to keep a list of potential MMs and AMs which emerge during the examination. The Inspectors will seek updates or clarification on these lists at the start of, or end of hearing sessions.
23. Participants are advised to make themselves familiar with the Planning Inspectorate Customer Charter, the link to which is at the end of this guidance note. We will not tolerate any abusive language or behaviour being directed at us or the Programme Officer, or any abusive references made in hearing statements.

Representations on the Plan

24. Only those who have made representations within the prescribed time periods and seek changes to the Plan have a right to be invited to and participate in, relevant hearing sessions. However, anyone is free to observe any session.
25. If you wish to participate at the hearings, and you have made relevant representations, please contact the Programme Officer as soon as possible and by 15 December 2025 at the latest to confirm this. You must do this regardless of what you may have indicated in your original representation(s). Please clarify which matters and issues are relevant to your representations, and on which questions you wish to speak. Please

note that if you do not contact the Programme Officer by that date, it will be assumed that you do not wish to appear and be heard, and you will not be listed as a participant.

- 26.If you wish to observe the hearing sessions, please notify the Programme Officer by 15 December 2025.
- 27.Where several people or organisations wish to speak on the same issue and/or wish to make the same point, you should consider appointing a single spokesperson or persons, as we will not be allowing points to be repeated during the hearing sessions. This will ensure that effective use is made of available time in the sessions. The Programme Officer will assist you with such arrangements.
- 28.A final version of the hearing programme will be published on the examination website around two weeks before the start of the hearings. It will be for individual participants to check progress on this, either on the website or with the Programme Officer, to ensure that you attend the right sessions and at the right time. If anybody is unsure about which session their representations relate to, please contact the Programme Officer.
- 29.We will give equal regard to views put at the hearing sessions and those in writing. Participating in a hearing session will only be useful and helpful to us if you can engage in a debate and focus on our MIQs.
- 30.Aside from representations adhering to the advice below we are likely to return unsolicited correspondence unread. The examination of any local plan is lengthy and complex. All relevant views and evidence will be considered at the appropriate opportunity, but we cannot respond individually to unsolicited correspondence in most instances.
31. We would encourage representors to attempt to reach agreement with the Council on factual matters and evidence before hearings start. We would also encourage dialogue between representors and the Council in advance of the hearings. Statements of common ground to clarify areas of dispute and areas of commonality are especially welcome.

Further written statements

- 32.Our list of MIQs will form the basis for discussion at the hearing sessions. As participants should already have set out their full cases within their existing representations, there should ordinarily be no need to produce further written statements in response to the MIQs. Representors may therefore choose to rely upon their original response.
- 33.However, if participants do wish to produce further written hearing statements to supplement their original representations, these should be

limited to the issues and questions set out in the MIQs and be relevant to their original representation. Statements must not repeat what is in previous representations as these will be taken into account. Cross-reference to earlier representations may be made.

34. The examination documents are available on the website so participants should not attach extracts to statements. However, it would be useful where statements make reference to examination documents, that the relevant document and page numbers are stated.
35. To assist the conduct of the hearings, any additional statements produced by participants must accord with the following:
- Only respond to the specific questions in the MIQs which are relevant to the original representation
 - Respond to each relevant main issue (identified in the MIQs) in separate statements
 - Indicate very clearly and succinctly exactly what changes are advocated as necessary to make the Plan sound or legally compliant and make it very clear the precise wording changes required.
 - Keep the statements focussed, to the point and no longer than 3000 words for each main issue. It is the quality of the reasoning which carries weight, not the length of the documents. Include the word count at the end of each statement.
 - Do not include appendices
 - Submit two A4 sized paper copies along with the electronic version to the Programme Officer. Paper copies should be stapled and not bound with any A3 tables or diagrams folded to A4 size.
36. Statements that are of excessive length or contain irrelevant or repetitious material may be returned.
37. In preparing the Statements reference should be made to our Initial Questions [ID01], the Council's responses [TW01], and our Further Initial Questions [ID02], all of which are in the Examination Library. The Council's responses to [ID02] will be available as soon as possible after Friday 9 January 2026.
38. Unlike other participants, the Council is required to respond to each question and therefore the 3000 word limit does not apply to it. However, any statements must be succinct, and reference can be made to responses to Initial Questions and to documents in the examination library.
39. All statements must be submitted to the Programme Officer by email by **5pm on Friday 23 January 2026**. This is an absolute deadline. Paper copies will be required to be despatched to the Programme Officer that day.

Site Visits

40. We have already visited some of the proposed allocations and the general area. In so far as we determine it to be necessary for our consideration of soundness of the Plan, we shall visit other relevant sites and areas before, during or after the hearing sessions. We will do these unaccompanied by any parties to the Examination, unless access to private land is necessary.

Close of the Examination

41. Following the hearing sessions, the examination will remain open until our report is submitted to the Council. However, we will not accept any further representations or evidence from any party during this time, unless we have specifically requested it.

42. Further information about the preparation and examination of Local Plans can be found using the following links:

- [National Planning Policy Framework December 2024](#)
- [National Planning Practice Guidance on Plan-making](#)
- Planning Inspectorate [Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations](#) (updated September 2025)
- [Planning Inspectorate Customer Charter](#)

Mike Worden and Catherine Carpenter

INSPECTORS