Independent Examination of Walthamstow Town Centre Area Action Plan

GUIDANCE NOTE
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Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Guidance Note is to explain procedural and administrative matters relating to the examination of the Walthamstow Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP). This document has been produced by Waltham Forest as part of its planning policy coverage for the Borough.

1.2 A hearing session on matters relating to the Plan will take place on **Tuesday 17th December 2013**. An initial outline of the hearing schedule is attached to these notes. This is subject to change and a more detailed programme will be issued shortly. **A pre-hearing meeting is not being held.** Participants are advised to make use of the examination page on the Council’s website where further information including relevant documents can be found.

Inspector and Programme Officer

2.1 Paul Crysell BSc MSc MRTPI has been appointed to consider the soundness of the AAP. His role is to consider whether or not the Plan is sound and if the requirements of the relevant legislation and regulations have been met. The Inspector will focus on the soundness criteria set out in paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), i.e. whether the Plan has been positively prepared and is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The Council will rely on the evidence it has collected while preparing the Plan to demonstrate its soundness. Those seeking changes to the Plan have to demonstrate why the document is not sound and how the suggested changes would overcome this. The Council has submitted a schedule of changes to the Plan and the Inspector will take these into account as part of the examination.

2.2 The Programme Officer for the examination is Andrea Copsey whose contact details can be found in Appendix A. She is independent of the Council and works under the direction of the Inspector. Her responsibilities include organising the programme for the examination, maintaining the examination library and ensuring that all documents and papers are recorded and distributed. All material connected with the examination process should be forwarded to her. Any procedural questions, suggestions or difficulties should be raised with the Programme Officer and, if necessary, she will take them up with the Inspector. The normal method of communication will be by e-mail and all documentation will be available electronically, accessed via the Council’s website at: http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/aap-walthamstow.aspx

The Examination Process

3.1 The starting point for the examination is that the local authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. The examination will focus on the Matters and Issues identified by the Inspector who will have regard to individual representations insofar as they relate to soundness matters.
3.2 Those who have made representations should have already decided whether their views can be dealt with in written form or if they need to present them orally at a hearing session. Both methods carry equal weight.

3.3 Respondents who have not indicated a preference will have their representations treated in written form unless the Programme Officer is informed by Friday 29th November that they now wish to participate in hearing sessions. Anyone who has already indicated they wish to take part in the hearings should also confirm their continued participation in the process with the Programme Officer by the same date so that a final schedule of hearings and participants can be drawn up.

3.4 It is open to the Council and any representor to submit further statements in advance of the hearings. However this is not a requirement and you may rely on your original representations if you wish. If further statements are submitted these should focus on the Matters and Issues the Inspector identifies. Any such statements should be sent to the Programme Officer for receipt by 5pm on Friday 6th December 2013. The requirements for each statement are as follows:

- Statements should be limited to not more than 3,000 words and should relate to the matters identified by the Inspector. Generally there should be no need for appendices and no need to duplicate the content of documents already included as part of the Examination Library.

- Four copies of each statement at A4 size are required with paragraph and page numbers included. Any plans should be folded so as not to exceed that size. An electronic version of the statement is also required in Word format with all documents being submitted to the Programme Officer. Statements should include, at the top of the front page, the appropriate Matter and Issue number, representor reference number and name of representor.

3.5 The need for succinct submissions is emphasised. Unnecessary detail and repetition should be avoided. It is the quality of the reasoning that carries weight, not the bulk of the documents. Nonetheless, it is vital that the fundamental elements of cases are set out clearly and succinctly – the hearings are not the place for surprises!

3.6 Further discussion between the Council and representors is strongly encouraged – ideally leading to statements of common ground. Please keep the Programme Officer informed about progress with preparation of such statements.

3.7 Representors who wish to proceed by written means do not need to take any further action; they can rely on what they have already submitted in writing. However, if any party wishes to submit further written evidence in support of their position, this should be focused on the Matters and Issues and submitted within the same timescale.

3.8 Before the start of the hearing sessions the Inspector may raise questions directly with the Council on any points that are relevant to the examination. Any such exchanges of correspondence are placed on the website as examination documents.

**Hearing Arrangements and Procedure**
4.1 The hearing sessions will commence at **10.00am. on Tuesday 17th December 2013**. It is currently anticipated that all matters in relation to this Plan can be dealt with in one day although a further day is available (Friday 20th December) should this be necessary. The hearing programme will be circulated in due course although it may still be necessary to alter the programme before the start of the sessions.

4.2 The sessions will be held in Council Chamber, Waltham Forest Town Hall, Forest Road, London, E17 4JF. A short break will be taken mid-morning and mid-afternoon, with a lunch break at about 1.00 pm. The afternoon session will begin at 2.00pm.

4.3 The hearing is open to the public and interested persons to attend, even if they are not taking part. Any changes to the arrangements will be advised to participants who should also keep in touch with the Programme Officer and check the examination website.

4.4 The hearing will take the form of round table sessions, providing an informal setting for dealing with issues by way of a discussion led by the Inspector. There will be no formal presentation of evidence or cross-examination. Please keep the Programme Officer informed about who will be speaking at the sessions.

4.5 The Inspector is required to run the examination hearings as efficiently as possible, minimising repetitious debate but allowing adequate time for discussions on key issues. The aim is for a series of focused hearings leading to the production of a short, focused report.

**Site Visit Arrangements**

5.1 The Inspector will make site inspections normally before and after the hearings. These site visits will be unaccompanied and unannounced unless the Inspector intends to enter private land or buildings. Requests for accompanied site inspections should be submitted to the Programme Officer. Both a Council representative and the representor will be present on all accompanied visits but these will not provide an opportunity to discuss the merits of individual sites or issues.

**Close of the Examination and the Inspector’s Report**

6.1 After completion of the hearings the Inspector will submit his report to the Council with his conclusions and recommendations on any actions or changes needed. He will aim to produce his report within 12 weeks from the close of the hearing sessions.

6.2 The examination remains open until the report is submitted to the Council. However, once the hearing sessions are completed the Inspector can receive no further information from any party unless it is a matter on which further comments have been requested. Any unsolicited items will be returned to the sender. The Inspector will announce the likely date of the report’s submission at the end of the final hearing session.

6.3 If changes to the plan are recommended it is hoped that many, if not all, will be based on proposals put forward by the Council in response to points
raised and suggestions discussed during the examination. The Inspector will consider suggested changes from the Council in the same way as he will consider changes put forward by other parties.

**Examination Library**

7.1 Throughout the examination process, the Programme Officer will maintain an examination library of Core Documents. The List of Core Documents will be updated as required during the process and will be posted on the examination website. Paper copies of the latest list may be requested from the Programme Officer.

7.2 Library documents will be made available for downloading on the examination website at: [http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/aap-walthamstow.aspx](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/aap-walthamstow.aspx)

7.3 The library will include:

- Development Plan Documents
- any background and topic papers
- supporting core documents
- Council’s evidence base documents
- representations made at submission stage
- position statements submitted by the Council
- statements submitted by respondents

7.4 The library will be available for inspection at Sycamore House, Waltham Forest Town Hall Complex, Forest Road, London, E17 4JF from Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm. Prior to this date appointments to view the library should be made with the Programme Officer. (See Appendix A).

7.5 Additional guidance produced by the Planning Inspectorate can be found at: [http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans)
APPENDIX A

How to contact the Programme Officer

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Telephone: 07842 643988

E-mail: andrea.copsey@walthamforest.gov.uk

Opening hours for the Examination Office:

The Programme Officer works on a part-time basis. Her usual working days (excluding weeks when hearings are being held) are Mondays (morning only), Tuesdays and Thursdays.

As the Programme Officer is not based at the Council Offices, please make an appointment in advance if you wish to visit the office or view the library.