Overview of the nationally significant infrastructure planning process for members of the public and others

Advice Note 8.3: Influencing how an application is Examined: the Preliminary Meeting

This Annex is aimed at people or organisations interested in participating in the Examination of an application. The Preliminary Meeting is an opportunity to influence how the application will be Examined.

1. Start of the Examination and Preliminary Meeting

1.1 After the close of the Relevant Representation period the Examining Authority will invite interested parties to attend an initial Meeting, known as the “Preliminary Meeting”. The invitation is emailed or posted to interested parties at least 21 days before the Preliminary Meeting is held.

1.2 The purpose of the Preliminary Meeting is to consider how the application will be Examined. Each Examination is unique and is designed to reflect the particular circumstances of each case. At the Preliminary Meeting, the parties will be able to comment on a draft Examination Timetable, issued by the Examining Authority before the Meeting. Before the Meeting, the Examining Authority will also inform parties of its initial assessment of principal issues.

1.3 The Examination starts the day after the Preliminary Meeting and can last up to 6 months.

2. Should I attend the Preliminary Meeting?

2.1 The Preliminary Meeting is a procedural meeting that helps inform how the application will be Examined. It is not an opportunity for interested parties to put forward their views about what they like or don’t like about the application. That will happen later, once the Examination begins. The Examining Authority will have read the views made in the Relevant Representations.

2.2 At the Meeting, invited people and organisations will be invited to make comments on the draft Examination Timetable and arrangements for future Examination events, before the Examining Authority finalises the timetable.

2.3 For example;

- There may be local public or other events that are expected to happen at the same time as a proposed deadline or hearing or;
- There may be places suitable for holding hearings that are convenient for the local community but which the Examining Authority may not be aware of or;
● There may be groups of people who would benefit from a different approach to help them engage with the Examination, for example, people whose working patterns and travel needs should be considered when considering locations and times for hearings.

3. Agenda and arrangements

3.1 A list of the matters that the Examining Authority would like to discuss at the Preliminary Meeting will be included in the letter inviting interested parties to the Meeting, known as the “Rule 6 letter”. Please follow the agenda set by the Examining Authority in the Rule 6 letter.

3.2 This invitation letter will be sent to everyone who registered as an interested party and certain other people and organisations that are automatically interested parties such as relevant local authorities and prescribed statutory consultees. It will also be published on the relevant project page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

3.3 The Rule 6 letter will include a draft Examination Timetable, which will be a focus for discussions at the Meeting. The draft Examination Timetable will include provisional hearing types and dates. It will also include proposed deadlines such as for the receipt of written representations from interested parties. The deadlines in the draft Examination Timetable are not fixed at this point.

3.4 If you wish to attend and speak at the Preliminary Meeting, it would be helpful if you could let the Planning Inspectorate know in advance, by the deadline in the Rule 6 letter. The letter will also contain details about how to contact the Planning Inspectorate case team.

3.5 When contacting the case team, it is important to state your unique reference number which is given in the email or on the letter and, if you wish to speak, outline the points you wish to raise at that Meeting.

4. On the day of the Meeting

4.1 If you previously advised us you would like to speak in the Meeting, please give your name to a member of the Planning Inspectorate, in order to confirm to the Examining Authority that you are attending the Meeting. There is usually an information desk staffed by Inspectorate staff near the entrance to the venue.

4.2 If you would like to speak and we are not expecting you, you may be asked what you would like to speak about and whether or not you are an interested party. If you are not an interested party, it may still be possible to speak but this will be at the discretion of the Examining Authority.
5. Layout of the Preliminary Meeting room

5.1 The room where the Preliminary Meeting is held will usually be prepared in a theatre-style layout, with rows of seats.

5.2 The Examining Authority sits at a table at the front of the room, and those attending the Meeting will be seated facing them. There will be a table with a microphone provided facing the Examination Authority. The Examining Authority will invite each interested party who has requested to speak to come forward and sit at this table and speak directly to them. A hand-held, roving microphone will normally be available if people are not able to or do not want to come forward to the table.

5.3 Sometimes, there will be tables provided at the front of the room for some parties who are likely to have many documents to refer to; particularly the local authority, the applicant, or a local action group. This is only for convenience and their status is the same as every other interested party. If you think you are likely to have a lot of paper documents at the Meeting, you may request a table when you contact the Planning Inspectorate to let us know you would like to attend the Meeting. However, it may not be possible to accommodate all such requests.

5.4 Sometimes there is also a table to the side of the Examining Authority’s table for a member of the Planning Inspectorate staff to take a note of the Preliminary Meeting.

5.5 Another table may be provided at the back of the room for members of the press.

6. The note of the Preliminary Meeting

6.1 A note of the Preliminary Meeting will be taken and will be published on the relevant project page of the National Infrastructure Planning website as soon as practicable after the Meeting. The note taken at The Preliminary Meeting is a summary of the points made and not a transcript.
7. The audio recording of the Preliminary Meeting

7.1 As soon as practicable after the close of the Meeting, an audio recording will be published on the relevant project page of the National Infrastructure Planning website. This is also normal practice following Examination hearings.

7.2 It is important that you advise the Planning Inspectorate before the start of the Preliminary Meeting if you would like to make your own audio/video recording of the Meeting, such as recoding the proceedings on a mobile phone. The Examining Authority will ask at the beginning of the Preliminary Meeting whether anyone has any objections to this and then decide whether or not to allow this. If permitted by the Examining Authority, recording must be done considerately and without intimidating members of the public who want to speak. The Examining Authority is in control of the Preliminary Meeting and may ask anyone to stop recording at any time.

8. Public or political statements, campaigning, and media

8.1 Although we understand that the Preliminary Meeting may be the first formal assembly of people interested in a particular application, it is not an opportunity to make politically motivated statements or enter into debate about the merits of the application. All comments will be directed to the Examining Authority and people disrupting the purpose of the Meeting may be requested to leave. If your submission deviates from the purpose of the Meeting, the Examining Authority may interrupt you and ask you to return to the agenda item being discussed. Elected representatives are asked to assist their constituents by setting an example.

8.2 It is not appropriate to address the other people present or direct your comments to an associate with a camera instead of the Examining Authority. The applicant will not be permitted to set up promotional stands or similar at the venue, and campaign groups and others may not do this either. Anyone carrying campaign banners will be asked to leave them in a designated area for safekeeping before entering the room.

9. After the Meeting

9.1 After the Preliminary Meeting the Examining Authority will send a letter to everyone who was invited to the Meeting. This letter is called the Rule 8 letter and sets out the decisions the Examining Authority has made about how the application will be Examined. This will contain the Timetable for the Examination.

9.2 The Examining Authority may amend this Timetable during the Examination, but it is otherwise considered final and must be followed.
Overview of the NSIP process
Advice Note 8.3 Influencing how an application is Examined: the Preliminary Meeting

The purpose of the Preliminary Meeting is to consider how the application will be Examined. It is not about the merits of the application.

Parties who have registered to participate will be invited to attend the Meeting.

The invitation to the Meeting will include a draft Timetable for the Examination, which will be considered at the Meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the Meeting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please write to us if you would like to speak at the Meeting and explain what you would like to speak about.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read the invitation and letter, draft Timetable, and be clear about what you would like to comment on.</td>
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<td>Please let us know if you have any special needs or requests.</td>
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<tr>
<th>At the Meeting</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you have requested to speak let someone from the Planning Inspectorate know that you have arrived.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you would like to film or record let someone from the Planning Inspectorate know.</td>
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<td>Pay attention to the agenda.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wait to be asked to speak, or indicate that you would like to respond to questions from the Examining Authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you are invited to speak or respond, you can either come forward to the table at the front, or use a hand-held, roving microphone.</td>
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**Remember**

The Meeting is procedural; it is about how the application will be Examined. It is not an opportunity for invited parties to put forward their views about the application.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A note and an audio recording will be published on the National Infrastructure Planning website.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Examining Authority will write to everyone who was all invited to the Meeting with the final Timetable for the Examination.</td>
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<td>The Examination period will start the day after the Preliminary Meeting for a maximum of six months.</td>
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Advice Note 8 series

The Planning Inspectorate has produced a series of non-statutory Advice Notes about a range of process matters. These are available to download on the legislation and guidance / advice notes page of the National Infrastructure planning website.

The Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Note 8 series explains how to get involved in the National Infrastructure planning process. It includes 5 annexes, as follows:

Advice Note 8  Overview of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning process for members of the public and others
Annex 8.1  Responding to the developer’s pre-application consultation
Annex 8.2  How to register to participate in an Examination
Annex 8.3  Influencing how an application is Examined: the Preliminary Meeting
Annex 8.4  The Examination
Annex 8.5  The Examination – Hearings and Site Visits

If you would like to order copies or you require further information about any of these issues, please contact the Planning Inspectorate:

The Planning Inspectorate, Major Casework Directorate, Temple Quay House, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN

Email: Nlenquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone: 0303 444 5000
Web: http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Alternatively, for independent planning advice, you may wish to contact Planning Aid:

Planning Aid England Advice Line 0330 123 9244
Email: advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
General enquiries: 020 3206 1880
Email: info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Planning Aid for London: 020 7247 4900
Email: info@planningaidforlondon.org.uk
Planning Aid England Wales: 02920 625 000
Web: www.planningaidwales.org.uk