

Harborough Local Plan (March 2025) Examination

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Examination Webpage: [Local Plan Examination | Harborough District Council](#)

21 September 2026

Panel Note 9

Examination Hearings: Panel's Guidance Notes

Introduction

1. Stage 1 hearings which took place in early August 2026 concluded that the Proposed Submission Draft Harborough Local Plan (March 2025) [S-NLP1] (the Plan) should be examined against the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
2. The examination will move on to the Stage 2 hearings. Those will relate to whether the Proposed Submission Draft Harborough Local Plan (March 2025) [S-NLP1] (the Plan) is sound. Those will take place during the weeks of the 9, 23 and 30 November 2026, as previously publicised. A reserve week has been set aside from the week beginning 7 December. However, we do not expect that this will be necessary.
3. Panel Note 5 provides general guidance to representors and participants on the procedural and administrative arrangements for the examination of the Plan. Most of that is still relevant to the stage 2 hearings.
4. All those interested in the examination should familiarise themselves with Panel Note 5, paragraphs 5 to 18 and 27 to 39 (excluding paragraph 34), particularly those who wish to submit hearing statements and/or take part in the hearing sessions.

The Hearings Programme

5. The focussed Matters, Issues and Questions which are appended to this note will form the basis of the discussion at the Stage 2 hearing sessions.
6. A draft timetable for the Stage 2 hearings has been produced and circulated with this Panel Note. It may be that the detailed timetable will change closer to the start of hearing sessions. Whilst the Programme Officer will endeavour to keep people informed, it is the participants' responsibility to keep in contact and ensure that they attend the appropriate sessions. Those who have already made relevant representations relating to the specific matters raised by the Panel will be able to attend the hearing sessions. They, including those who had previously indicated a desire to attend the examination on this matter, should confirm their attendance in writing with the Programme Officer by **5.00 pm on Monday 5 October 2026**, quoting their respondent reference number and **citing which Matter(s) and Issues participation in the hearings is sought**.
7. If you do not contact the Programme Officer by this date, it will be assumed that you do not wish to speak at the Stage 2 hearings. The finalised timetable and list of participants will be confirmed before the hearing sessions commence. Only those who indicate their wish to speak in advance of the hearing sessions and make prior arrangements with the Programme Officer will be able to do so.
8. A final version of the hearing timetable will be published on the examination website around two weeks before the focussed hearing session. It will be for individual participants to check the progress of the hearings, either on the website or with the Programme Officer, and to ensure that they are present at the right time.
9. The hearing will consist of a structured discussion, led by the Inspectors' Panel. It will be based on our matters, issues, and questions. We will invite particular participants to begin the discussion on each question, and others will then have a chance to contribute.
10. There is no need for formal presentation of evidence, as we will have read all the relevant representations and hearing statements beforehand, and will expect the other participants to have done so as well. Nor will there be any cross-examination unless we consider it necessary to deal with a particular issue or questions. Barristers or solicitors if present will be treated as part of the respective teams.
11. The hearing sessions will begin at 10:00 am in the morning and 2.00 pm in the afternoon. Short breaks will be taken at convenient points in the mid-morning

and mid-afternoon, and there will be a lunch break at about 1.00 pm. Sessions are likely to finish no later than 5:00 pm.

12. If anybody has any specific needs in relation to attending a particular session it is important that you let the Programme Officer know in advance.

Hearing Statements

13. One paper copy and an electronic version of each hearing statement should be submitted to the Programme Officer by **5.00 pm on Friday 16 October 2026**. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, it is likely that late submissions will not be accepted and will be returned.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

14. The Panel understands that AI can be used to support submissions, and that this can be done positively when it is properly and transparently used.
15. However, if you do use AI in preparing your submissions/statements you must adhere to the Planning Inspectorate's guidance which explains what you should tell the Panel when AI has been used to create or substantially change any part of your statement/submissions.
16. This ensures that the Panel understands the source and handling of the material they are assessing. This helps them make fair, transparent and well reasoned decisions. The requirements are designed to be simple and not burdensome.
17. You do not need to tell us about routine tools such as spellchecking, grammar suggestions, formatting tools, or accessibility functions.
18. A 'golden rule' for any use of AI is that you must use AI responsibly. It is your responsibility to ensure that the information generated is accurate and appropriate.
19. The Planning Inspectorate's AI guidance can be found here. [Use of artificial intelligence in casework evidence - GOV.UK](#).

Summary/Key Points

20. The Matters and Issues provided by the Panel prior to hearings will set out the key questions which we will be considering at any hearing session.
21. The hearing sessions will start on **Tuesday 10 November 2026 at 10.00 am**.
 - A draft timetable for the hearing sessions will be published.
 - Participants at the hearings will be confirmed in due course.

- All of those, who have previously submitted a relevant representation to the Plan, wishing to participate (speak) at the Stage 2 hearings must confirm this in writing with the Programme Officer by **5.00 pm on Monday 5 October 2026**.
- Statements for the Stage 2 hearing sessions should be based on the Matters and Issues Paper and must be submitted to the Programme Officer by **5.00 pm on Friday 16 October 2026**.
- All documentation relevant to the examination is available on the Council's website. Participants are strongly urged to refer to this regularly as the programme for the examination may change and new documents may be posted on the website.
- Any queries should be directed to the Programme Officer Mr Kemp.

Next steps

22. Following the hearing sessions, once we have considered what we have heard and read, we will write to the Council setting out the next steps.

R Barrett, L Nurser and W Cooper

INSPECTORS