

NCC Interim Protocol for the use of VNG in the Planning Process

[April 2020]

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Prepared by Newcastle City Council (NCC), in collaboration with Northumbria University (NU), the following interim guidance provides further detail for the use of Virtual Newcastle Gateshead (VNG) in the planning process.
- 1.2 This guidance has been prepared in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, which has had a significant impact on conventional working arrangements and practices such as meetings and design workshops.

2.0 What is VNG?

- 2.1 Virtual NewcastleGateshead (VNG) is a 3D digital city model of the urban core areas of Newcastle and Gateshead, developed in partnership with the two local authorities.
- 2.2 Started in 2009 the project aims to streamline and increase the transparency of the planning process by providing a definitive, accurate, interactive city model, as an effective stakeholder communication and decision tool for a cost-effective way of understanding the wider implications of planning applications.

3.0 How is it used for Planning?

- 3.1 Since 2009, Northumbria University, Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council have collaborated to develop VNG to support the urban planning process for two local authorities, by creating an accurate 3D massing model with focus on regular model updates, interactive navigation and version control.
- 3.2 Newcastle City Council has consistently used VNG as an exploratory tool to better understand the impact of new development. It is important to recognise this facility is not a replacement for a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

4.0 Interim Protocol for using VNG

- 4.1 The use of VNG for major applications can continue to function remotely. This will assist NCC in dealing with major applications, where appropriate, providing further evidence contributing to good decision making and ensuring the planning system continues to function.
- 4.2 It is recommended that officers, developers, agents and professionals follow the 3 steps outlined below when looking to use VNG for a proposal in Newcastle upon Tyne:

Step.1 VNG Request

- 4.3 Initial inquires should send an email to vng@northumbria.ac.uk to agree terms of contract and fee for the VNG service with Northumbria University before engaging with the local authority. This is a separate charge to pre-app and planning applications fees with NCC.

- 4.4 Early pre-app is advised as the best starting point to engage with NCC to help consider the principle of development and understand the likely impact on the built environment.

Step.2 Internal Review

- 4.5 The applicant shares a 3d model of the scheme with NU to be inserted into the city model. This will allow for an NCC internal workshop to take place lasting up to 1 hour to better understand the scheme and its likely impact.
- 4.6 This workshop will help officers gain a greater understanding of the scheme and identify key views and potentially highlight areas concerns to discuss at pre-app. NU will setup and save the camera locations from this session to be used as a basis for Step.3.
- 4.7 Depending on the nature of the scheme sharing a series of options for early consideration is highly recommended.

Step.3 External Meeting

- 4.8 On request by the applicant a meeting can be setup by the case officer using Microsoft Teams inviting key officers, professional teams and Northumbria University.
- 4.9 A 1hour VNG session will be scheduled and based around the findings of Step.2, this will allow for further exploration and discussion.

Meetings

- 5.0 Further discussion can continue following a VNG session as part of pre-app. This should be requested in advance by the applicant to ensure adequate officer time is available. The meeting can continue without the need for Northumbria University to be present.

Key contacts:

For initial inquires please send an email to vng@northumbria.ac.uk

If you require further information please use the contact information below:

Northumbria University contact: James Charlton j.charlton@northumbria.ac.uk

NCC contact: Richard Charge Richard.charge@newcastle.gov.uk