

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Local Plan Examinations and CIL Examinations - Updated July 2021

Hearing sessions for Local Plan and CIL Examinations are currently still mostly taking place virtually, hosted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Virtual hearing sessions for around 50 examinations have now been successfully carried out and arrangements are in place for more local plan and CIL examination hearing sessions to progress in the same way over coming months.

Trial blended (part physical and part virtual) hearing sessions have also been successfully held for two local plan examinations, again hosted by the LPAs

We are very grateful for the support and commitment of LPAs in enabling local plan examination hearing sessions to take place.

Having now moved to Stage 4 in the Roadmap for the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions it will become more practical to once again hold predominantly face to face hearing sessions, albeit that arrangements will need to be put in place for participants unable to take part in person. More detailed guidance on this for LPAs who have recently submitted, or are about to submit, a plan for examination is currently in preparation. In the meantime queries should be directed to plans.admin@planninginspectorate.gov.uk (in relation to yet to be submitted plans) or the appointed Inspector via the Programme Officer (in connection with plans already in examination).

Once hearing sessions have been completed examinations will generally be able to be progressed to completion, and the issuing of the Inspector's report, broadly as usual. However, the Inspector may need to discuss arrangements for consultation on main modifications, or any additional evidence, with the LPA through the Programme Officer.

The Government expects everyone involved in the planning process to engage proactively. We request that Programme Officers, LPAs and all participants use their best endeavours to work with the Inspector to help progress examinations, collectively putting in place the practical measures needed to ensure fair participation. Ultimately, decisions about how to move examinations forward are at the discretion of the Inspector appointed to hold the independent examination.

Information about specific local plan examinations will be posted on the examination website of the relevant plan and any questions should be

addressed to the Programme Officer for the examination. This advice will be kept under review. Please also ensure that you check the relevant examination website regularly, if you are a participant in a particular examination. You can find the Government's advice here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>