

## **Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Local Plan Examinations and CIL Examinations – January 2021**

Hearing sessions for most Local Plan and CIL Examinations are taking place virtually, hosted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Virtual hearing sessions for around 30 examinations were carried out in the second half of 2020 and arrangements are in place for most other local plan and CIL examination hearings 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 hearings to take place.

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. It is also important for everyone to appreciate that things may not always go smoothly and that progress may sometimes be delayed, despite collective best efforts.

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. However, please be aware that they may currently be receiving a high volume of requests for information.

This advice will be kept under review and could change at short notice to reflect Government's wider advice. 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>