

Local Plan Inspector careers webinar questions and responses

This document contains responses to questions raised during the webinar "Local Plan Inspector careers webinar" held on 3 February 2026.

Category	Question	Response
Application Process	If we applied for Band 3 but were not successful would we be automatically considered for Band 2?	No you would not be automatically considered for Band 2. You can apply for both Band 2 and Band 3 positions. If you are shortlisted for interview for both, you will be able to attend both interviews. We recommend applying for both if you feel you meet the criteria, particularly if you're on the cusp of demonstrating Band 3 requirements.
Application Process	I've worked as an Architect for several years. All of the interviews I've had in architecture have been an open discussion about my portfolio and I expect an interview for PINS / civil service will be more structured with set questions. What support and allowance would you make for someone with my interview experience?	Civil Service interviews are structured and use questions assessed against published criteria. The interview includes behaviour questions, experience questions on planning and evidence analysis, a short presentation, and a written assessment. Prepare examples using the STAR approach for each behaviour listed in the advert. The interview is conducted via Microsoft Teams. All candidates are assessed fairly and consistently regardless of professional background. We recommend preparing accordingly.
Application Process	Are you and/or how are you planning to use AI in your processes?	We are testing and developing new tools including AI in our processes at the planning inspectorate. We don't use AI to assess job applications. Here is our guidance on AI usage which is included on the advert on CS Jobs: "Artificial intelligence can be a useful tool to support your application, however, all examples and statements provided must be truthful, factually accurate and taken directly from your own experience. Where

		plagiarism has been identified (presenting the ideas and experiences of others, or generated by artificial intelligence, as your own) applications may be withdrawn and internal candidates may be subject to disciplinary action."
Application Process	Is there a requirement for current LPA officers to avoid doing work on appeals or examinations during the recruitment process?	No there is no restriction
Application Process	Will you be able to apply for both jobs?	Yes you can apply and be considered for both. If you are shortlisted for interview for both, you will be able to attend both interviews. We recommend applying for both if you feel you meet the criteria, particularly if you're on the cusp of demonstrating Band 3 requirements.
Application Process	Can you apply for both job positions and if short listed for interview will you be able to attend both interviews?	Yes you can apply and be considered for both. If you are shortlisted for interview for both, you will be able to attend both interviews. We recommend applying for both if you feel you meet the criteria, particularly if you're on the cusp of demonstrating Band 3 requirements.
Application Process	Will you be penalised if you use examples from your written application in your interview?	No, some of the questions will refer to examples from your written application that we may be looking for you to expand on in your interview.
Career Development	Is there an opportunity to specialise, for example within Planning Viability and Affordable Housing?	Local plan examination work covers a wide range of planning matters including viability and affordable housing. Your specialist expertise will be valuable and utilised. While you'll examine plans covering all planning matters, your professional background and

		expertise will inform your approach and be an asset to the team.
Career Development	Will you have opportunities for band 1 at some point?	Yes we have a planned Band 1 campaign going live in March, this is not for local plans service specifically. We recommend registering for job notifications for planning inspector positions on civil service jobs to ensure you are notified when these and future relevant roles are advertised.
Career Development	If appointed, would Inspectors be able to move between disciplines (i.e. NSIPs or Appeals)	The roles are in local plans, with an expectation that you will join and remain in the group for a period of time. Opportunities to move to other parts of the business are currently handled as part of a managed move process.
Career Development	If successful, are Inspector's able to take part in NSIPs, not just local plans?	The roles are in local plans, with an expectation that you will join and remain in the group for a period of time. Opportunities to move to other parts of the business are currently handled as part of a managed move process.
Eligibility/Qualifications	I feel confused/excluded at the moment: I'm not a current chartered member (I have a junior membership), but I am eligible and experienced enough to qualify. Is there scope to anticipate chartered membership to be achieved alongside the application?	You would need to be a member of a recognised professional body before being appointed as an inspector. However, if you are eligible and working towards chartered membership, you may still apply. We recommend contacting PINS.Recruitment@planninginspectorate.gov.uk to discuss your specific circumstances. PINS covers professional membership fees once appointed.
Eligibility/Qualifications	Would an experienced professional currently working towards an accreditation be considered for this role at all?	You would need to be a member of a recognised body before being able to be appointed as an inspector

Eligibility/Qualifications	PINS obviously invests a lot in each Inspector. I'm 60 this year. Is that going to count against me?	No, your age will not count against you. We follow the Civil Service Recruitment Principles, which mean everyone is assessed fairly, openly and on merit. What matters is your ability to demonstrate you meet the essential criteria and can perform the role effectively.
Eligibility/Qualifications	Is the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists one of your recognised professional bodies?	The list we have published in the candidate pack isn't exhaustive and we would recognise the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
Eligibility/Qualifications	Would even the Band 1 post require RTPI chartered membership?	We do require inspectors to hold membership of a recognised body however, this doesn't specify RTPI. Other professional bodies including RIBA, RICS, the Law Society, CIHT and others are recognised.
Eligibility/Qualifications	I'm not currently a professional member (it's not a current role requirement and it's not funded), but I'm eligible to be (RTPI). Can that be accommodated?	Yes. PINS also covers professional fees.
Job Security	Will these roles still be required once the first 'rush' on new plans have been examined?	Yes - we are expecting significant demand over coming years and also the emergence of Spatial Development Strategies will add to our workload. We also have 4 other services that have casework demands. The new plan making system includes a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce a new plan every five years which will ensure a regular pipeline of examination demand.
New Plan-Making System	Could you say more about the new plan making system and how gateways would work, and engaging over a longer process with the same plan?	We are drafting a new Local Plans Procedure Guide to provide advice to everyone involved in examinations. This includes advice for local authorities and Inspectors about how the new gateways process will operate. This will be published once the new Regulations come into force. The new gateway system involves Gateway 2 and Gateway 3 checkpoints (undertaken by PINS) prior to examination, creating more touch points with local authorities throughout the plan-making process.

New Plan-Making System	How is PINS preparing for the gateways?	We are drafting a new Local Plans Procedure Guide to provide advice to everyone involved in examinations. This includes advice for local authorities and Inspectors about gateways. This will be published once the new Regulations come into force.
Pay/Terms	Is there scope to appoint above the minimum starting salary given the demand for Inspectors and if successful candidates are currently on a slightly higher salary?	We aim to appoint everyone fairly at the starting salary which is part of our strategy to address any demographic pay gaps forming over time.
Pay/Terms	I am a civil servant already on the min for Band 3 - can I apply for Band 2 and transfer across on my current salary? I don't feel brave enough to apply for Band 3	Yes we can facilitate a transfer, civil service pay rules will apply.
Pay/Terms	How do bands 2 and 3 compare to Civil Service grades 6 and 7? Could there be a level transfer from a Grade 6 job to a Band 2 with PINS?	There are similarities between Bands 2 and 3 and Grades 6 and 7, there wouldn't be a level transfer specifically but if you are a civil servant there are transfer and pay rules we would follow.
Pay/Terms	Do PINS cover annual fees for professional membership costs?	Yes
Pay/Terms	Are the salaries presented within a band, or is that the salary?	The advertised salary is the starting basic salary we can offer if you are successful. This increases over time as part of salary reviews and as you progress at the Planning Inspectorate.
Pay/Terms	Can a grade 6 civil servant join PINS at band 2 on current salary?	There are similarities between Bands 2 and 3 and Grades 6 and 7. There wouldn't be a level transfer specifically, but if you are a civil servant, there are transfer rules we would follow. Contact PINS.Recruitment@planninginspectorate.gov.uk for specific guidance on civil service transfers.

Pay/Terms	What is the range of salary in band 3?	The starting salary is £77,741 as advertised. This increases over time as part of salary reviews and as you progress at the Planning Inspectorate.
Pay/Terms	Do PINS cover travel and accommodation costs from home to Bristol for training and working from the office, when required, post-training?	Yes, any travel and accommodation costs for work to visit sites, training or conferences/events are covered by the Planning Inspectorate.
Recruitment Overview	How many Inspectors are you looking to appoint?	24 in total across Band 2 and Band 3 roles in the Local Plans service
Recruitment Timeline	How long is the recruitment process? When do you expect the cohort to start (acknowledging that with the scope of backgrounds - many people will have differing notice periods). When would be a realistic 'start date' for successful candidates?	Applications close 22 February 2026. Shortlisting results released by 2 March. Interviews take place 9-27 March 2026. The cohort is expected to start in early September 2026 after schools return. This allows time for onboarding, security clearance, and ensures everyone can start together for coherent training. Delayed starts can be accommodated for longer notice periods.
Recruitment Timeline	I see the cohort start is September. So there's no opportunity to start before then?	The planned start date is early September 2026. This timing allows for proper onboarding, security clearance, and ensures the cohort can train together effectively. The structured cohort approach is important for training delivery and peer support.
Recruitment Timeline	What about if our current role has a 6 month notice period? Would this be an issue?	We have planned the timelines so most people joining can start at the same time, we can facilitate delayed starts if notice periods would prevent a person to join in the September planned start date.
Role/Responsibilities	Can you say more about the role of the programme officer and how they interact with inspector work?	Programme Officers are appointed by the local planning authority at the start of each examination. They are independent of the LPA and work with the inspector to ensure the examination is well-organised. They act as the first point of contact for everyone involved in the examination and are the sole point of

		contact between the LPA, participants and the inspector (except in hearings themselves).
Role/Responsibilities	When you say panel - just to check do you mean a group of inspectors examining a plan?	Yes. Usually up to 2 Inspectors.
Role/Responsibilities	Will Inspectors potentially be looking for Inspectors who can run CIL and Local Plans examinations together?	Local Plans inspectors focus primarily on local plan examinations. CIL examinations are a related area of work. If you have relevant experience, this would be valuable. The primary focus of this recruitment is local plan examination work, but there may be opportunities to contribute to related casework.
Role/Responsibilities	I currently work in consultancy where I like solving problems. Would I be able to use problem solving skills as an Inspector or would I be frustrated?	Problem solving is a key part of the job.
Role/Responsibilities	Can you explain the main differences between Band 2 and Band 3 inspectors and is it ok to apply for both?	Yes fine to apply for both. Key differences - Band 3 do most complicated strategic work and act as lead Inspectors. Band 3 is the highest inspector grade, with expectations to lead the most complex examinations, organise projects, and mentor other inspectors on examination panels.
Start Date/Flexibility	I am due to go off on maternity leave shortly - but this opportunity is of huge interest - would this prevent me from applying. Or would a delayed start date potentially be possible?	We have planned the timelines so most people joining can start at the same time, but we can facilitate delayed starts if circumstances would prevent you from joining at the planned September start date. We encourage you to apply and discuss your specific situation with the recruitment team.
Support/Resources	What sort of legal support is available?	You'll need to build knowledge of law and legal principles. However, for more complex issues there is access to legal support within the organisation.

Support/Resources	After training what support, access to discussion/advice etc is put in place when an Inspector would like to get a second opinion?	Inspectors receive ongoing support throughout their careers. You'll be part of an inspector group managed by an experienced inspector manager. Peer-to-peer support between inspectors is strong at PINS. For your first examination, you'll be paired with an experienced inspector. There are also topic-based updates and networking events where inspectors come together to share knowledge and discuss issues.
Support/Resources	What IT systems do you use?	We use Microsoft technology, and our digital and data team develop our own internal tools
Support/Resources	Although autonomous, presumably PINS has legal support to support Inspector's decisions	Yes. You'll need to build a knowledge of the law and legal principles. However, for more complex issues there is access to legal support.
Support/Resources	Do Inspectors have research support eg a profile of the LPA eg social profile etc when an LP is submitted	The impetus is on the LPA and others to submit all the necessary information. It won't usually be necessary (or desirable) for Inspectors to do more in depth personal research.
Support/Resources	Could you outline what support the Planning Inspectorate provides for inspectors with neurodiverse needs for example, adjustments in written casework, use of assistive technologies, or flexibility in how evidence and reports are reviewed?	We have a commitment to fairness, wellbeing, and accessibility across our work. This means inspectors with neurodivergent needs can expect individualised adjustments, assistive technology, and flexibility in how their work is organised, all grounded in national equality legislation and standardised government guidance.
Training	After training do new inspectors need to pass any technical tests or assessments or benchmarks?	Training includes structured development with support from experienced inspectors. New inspectors undertake an extended period of training and development to build capability and confidence. For your first examination, you'll work alongside an experienced inspector. who will act as a mentor to

		support you and monitor progress. As with all new roles candidates will also be subject to a 12 month probationary process. This is a requirement for anyone joining the Civil Service. The probationary process will include a 'readiness assessment' focussed on the key skills developed through the formal training. Ongoing support to all new Inspectors is provided throughout that period.
Training	When are the training weeks scheduled to be?	Specific training week dates will be communicated to successful candidates well in advance. Training includes a comprehensive induction of 2-3 weeks with your cohort at the beginning, with a portion likely to be in person. For part-time workers, attendance at training weeks on a full-time basis is expected as missing content significantly impacts learning. We expect the first training sessions to commence during September 2026.
Training	On average how much training is required before an Inspector leads a local plan examination?	Training includes a comprehensive induction of 2-3 weeks with your cohort, followed by an extended period of training and development. The first year involves intensive learning whilst being paid. For your first examination, you'll work alongside an experienced inspector who mentors you through the process. The aim is to get you up to speed as quickly as possible while building capability and confidence.
Travel/Working Arrangements	Will you avoid allocating plans which are 'close to home' geographically noting that the issues raised in Planning can be contentious and people can be targeted for making decisions?	There is a process for raising potential conflicts, which can be personal or geographical. As 'close to home' can feel different to different people, the Inspector's own judgement on whether they feel (or there might be perception of) conflict is also important.
Travel/Working Arrangements	How much time at enquiry vs prep time typically? Are you away from home most weeks or does it tend to be a week home a week away?	Local plan inspectors typically spend 20-30 nights away per year, spread in blocks around hearings, site visits and training rather than weekly travel. The role is home-based with most work (reading submissions, analysing evidence, writing reports) is done from home.

		Hearing sessions can be organised flexibly - you might do 2-3 weeks consecutively or spread them out with gaps. You have a degree of control over scheduling hearings to suit your preferences.
Travel/Working Arrangements	How long are Local Plan Inspectors typically away for at a time and how frequently?	This depends on factors such as how many hearing days you need, how as the examining Inspector you choose to organise them, and how far from your home the local authority area is. Typically 20-30 nights per year in blocks around hearings, site visits and training. You have flexibility in how you schedule hearing sessions.
Travel/Working Arrangements	How much travelling is required in reality?	This depends on factors such as how many hearing days you need, how as the examining Inspector you choose to organise them, and how far from your home the local authority area is. Typically 20-30 nights per year.
Travel/Working Arrangements	Do you try to allocate work reasonably close to people's homes to minimise travel?	The roles are home-based, with travel for hearing sessions, site visits and training. There is a process for raising potential conflicts, which can include geographical considerations. However, you may be allocated plans across England. Travel and accommodation costs are covered by the Planning Inspectorate.
Travel/Working Arrangements	Have you any inspectors who travel from Northern Ireland?	Yes we have inspectors living in Northern Ireland, but we currently only cover travel costs from the point of entry into England or Wales, we don't cover travel expenses in Scotland or Northern Ireland.
Webinar/Admin	Apologies if this was mentioned already - but could this PowerPoint be circulated after the session?	The webinar was recorded and will be made available to attendees. Presentation materials and the recording can be accessed via the Planning Inspectorate careers page.

Workforce/Organisation	What's the average turnover of the 450 Inspectors?	The Planning Inspectorate values long-term career development. Inspector turnover varies, but many inspectors build long careers with the organisation. Specific turnover data can be provided on request to the recruitment team at PINS.Recruitment@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
Workload/Time Management	Typically how much preparation time does examining a Local Plan take?	The amount of preparation time varies depending on the complexity of the plan. Local plan examinations currently typically take around a year to a year and a half from start to end. The new plan making system will lead to shorter examinations timelines. Preparation involves reviewing the submitted plan, evidence base, and consultation responses before determining the main issues and preparing for hearing sessions.
Workload/Time Management	Is there any 'down time' during an examination? If so, what work would a Local Plans Inspector do during these weeks?	The priority is doing local plans work. During gaps in examinations you'll be doing other work relevant to local plans. You're also likely to be trained in appeals casework, meaning you'll be able to undertake that too.
Workload/Time Management	Do Inspectors deal with one or multiple examinations at a time?	Many do examine more than one plan at a time - this is likely to become more common in the new system where examinations are expected to be shorter. You'll start with one plan.
Workload/Time Management	How many local plan examinations does an inspector lead on per year?	It varies. Many do examine more than one plan at a time - this is likely to become more common in the new system where examinations are expected to be shorter. Depending on the demands of the examinations and how many are being examined in parallel - maybe two or three per year.