

Band 1 Planning Inspector careers webinar: Questions and responses

This document contains responses to questions raised during the webinar held on 6 March 2026.

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Application	Can you say whether the behaviours and success profiles need to be worked into the 500 word personal statement alongside the list of essential criteria? Its lot to fit!	The personal statement should focus on demonstrating how you meet the essential criteria, as this is what will be assessed at sift stage. You do not need to separately address Success Profiles behaviours unless they are explicitly listed as part of the essential criteria. The 500 word limit is intended to give you space to expand on the evidence in your CV and show your suitability for the role, so concentrate on providing strong, relevant examples that clearly meet the essential criteria outlined in the candidate pack.
Application	Online it states that the personal statement is 500 word max. Please could you confirm if it is 1,000 or 500 words	The personal statement is limited to 500 words.
Application	Can you pick the interview day?	Interview days are allocated on a first come, first served basis, so while you will be able to choose from the available slots, the earlier you book, the more options you'll have. Once slots begin to fill, only the remaining times and dates will be offered.
Application	Is there a word limit on the CV?	There is no word limit for CVs.
Application	Does the sift aspect of the application require a single 250 word statement to cover the criterion as a whole or 3 250 word statements to cover each of the main aspects i.e.. Ability to analyse, to interpret and apply policies and to draw out the main issues?	The personal statement is limited to 500 words, apologies for any confusion with the slides which may have suggested otherwise.
Application	Regarding the interview please, would it be possible to conduct it via video call if there are special circumstances that prevent the applicant from attending in person (for example, I will	Interviews for this campaign are intended to be held in person, and this is the expected format for all candidates. We can only consider an alternative format, such as a video interview, in situations involving reasonable adjustments or truly exceptional circumstances. It is also important to note that the written assessment is invigilated, meaning candidates need to complete it under supervised conditions. This

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	be abroad during the interview period)?	<p>requirement limits our ability to offer remote alternatives, except where a reasonable adjustment is appropriate.</p> <p>Being abroad during the interview period would not normally be considered an exceptional circumstance. However, if a candidate has a disability related need or a significant, unavoidable situation, they should contact us as early as possible so we can review their case individually.</p>
Job vacancy details	How many hours is full time considered?	Typically 37 hours per week.
Job vacancy details	Do you know when the next round of Band 1 recruitment will be? Is it on a yearly basis?	The Planning Inspectorate has historically recruited on an annual basis, but future recruitment cannot be confirmed with certainty as it depends on business need. As Claire Searson put it: "it's an answer but a non-answer" — while regular recruitment has been the pattern historically, there is no guarantee that this will continue on a fixed annual cycle.
Job vacancy details	Will there be alternative start dates other than September (i.e. those with 6 month notice periods)?	The expected start date for this campaign is September 2026, though this might change depending on circumstances. This is intended to allow sufficient time for onboarding checks and preparation for the three-week induction. If we recruit more than 12 Inspectors, there may be a second intake a couple of months after September. If you have a long notice period, we would encourage you to contact the recruitment team to discuss your individual circumstances, as we would not want a notice period to be a barrier to a strong candidate applying.
Job vacancy details	How many Inspectors are you looking for?	There are currently 12 vacancies available.
Job vacancy details	Does Wales recruit separately?	Wales is separate from PINS and subject to their own recruitment practices.
Job vacancy details – Band 2 and 3 career development	Are there pay bands within Bands 1, 2 and 3 or is it a fixed salary?	As a band 1 inspector you would begin on an initial training salary of £48,775. There is then a mid-training pay rise once you have met the first training milestone. On successful completion of the training you would move onto the base salary of the Band 1 pay scale which is currently £57,893. This means band 1 has a structured progression during training, while bands 1–3 all operate with one defined range per band, with movement based on the Inspectorate's pay progression arrangements.
Job vacancy details – Band 2 and 3 career development	Can you go straight in at Band 2 if it is advertised?	The current recruitment is for B1 posts, sometimes we do advertise at B2 and B3.

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Job vacancy details – Band 2 and 3 career development	Is there a minimum timeframe to serve as Band 1 before moving to Band 2?	There is no specified minimum timeframe. Progression to Band 2 is subject to Band 2 vacancies being advertised and the individual being able to demonstrate the requisite competencies and meet the essential criteria for those posts. There's no sort of specified minimum before jumping to Band 2.
Job vacancy details – Band 2 and 3 career development	Can you stay as a band 1/2 Inspector or are you expected to continue through to band 3 to do public inquiries etc?	Yes you can. Inquiries are undertaken at B2 and B3 level. Recruitment to these posts is dependent on business need. Some inspectors do choose to stay at B1 level.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	How long does it typically take for a new Inspector to become fully independent in decision making?	Training typically takes 12–18 months, after which Inspectors issue their own decisions. Ongoing CPD and support continues after graduation.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	Are Inspectors expected to cover all areas, or can they choose a preferred region? I'm based in South Wales as a Principal Enforcement Officer.	Inspectors are not assigned a fixed geographic area. Appeal work can arise anywhere in England, and inspectors are expected to travel to where the work is. In practice, work is concentrated in larger cities and particularly in London and the South East. That said, the role offers significant flexibility. Inspectors typically receive around three to four weeks' notice of where they will be working, allowing time to plan travel and personal arrangements. Inspectors based further from common appeal areas, such as Wales or the North, have successfully managed the role by working on a fortnightly programme that typically involves one or two overnight stays. Note that appeals in Wales are handled separately.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	Are you required to complete site visits every week? And is there flexibility in the location of your appeal sites? I have childcare responsibilities and my partner works an irregular shift pattern. I therefore need some flexibility in when I could travel long-distance and potentially need to stay away from home (as I live in Devon)?	Site visits are typically once a week or once a fortnight depending on personal preference. Most inspectors opt for a fortnightly programme. The Planning Inspectorate pays for hotels and hire cars. Inspectors receive 3–4 weeks' notice of their programme. Rachel Gravett (based in the north) shared she travels up to three hours and stays away one night per fortnight. Flexibility exists but travel is a non-negotiable aspect of the role.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	With regards caseload if you are from a specialist background say heritage/ecology, would your caseload primarily be on cases related to that discipline or would you work a general caseload covering everything, or something in between like a % split?	Training would be with all types of casework and then after training, you would pick up specialist cases alongside the more general cases - it depends on what we might have at the time. Note that heritage is a specialism within PINS and you would need further training to undertake more advanced heritage casework, including appeals against refusal of listed building consent.

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Band 1 inspector caseload and location	You said that Inspectors have the opportunity to specialise after the first year qualification. Can you say a bit more about that. For example could a specialism be Green Belt policy?	Green Belt is covered in the second phase of training and all inspectors are expected to handle Green Belt casework. Specialisms (e.g. heritage, enforcement, local plans, NSIP) are available post-graduation via an expression of interest process.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	Please could you confirm the number of cases per week for a Band 1 Inspector, and how this is affected by the complexity of the cases including HAS.	For a full-time inspector, the standard caseload is 3 cases per week, or 6 cases per fortnight. This is before taking account of any exceptional travel or reasonable adjustments. At the start of training, new inspectors begin on a lower caseload of 2 cases per week, rising to 3 per week after a period of time, in order to allow new starters to settle in and prioritise quality over speed.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	How many years' experience do Band 1 Planning Inspectorates typically have in their field, specifically in the planning profession?	There is no fixed requirement. Inspectors range widely in age and experience — from their 20s through to their 60s. Claire Searson noted she joined relatively young. Rob Parker confirmed it is a broad spread across ages and backgrounds.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	How long do you get to deal with a case?	Inspectors will typically know their programme 3 to 4 weeks in advance of the site visit, and that gives them time to prepare. For most written representations cases, preparation takes less than a day per case and often much less. To ensure timeliness, inspectors work to targets and these are to issue a decision (or submit a decision for reading in the case of an inspector in training) no more than 10 or 15 working days from the site visit, depending on the type of case. Hearings and inquiries are targeted differently.
Band 1 inspector caseload and location	Are Inspectors given areas?	No fixed areas are assigned. Inspectors travel to where appeal work is located across England, with work concentrated in major cities and the South East. During training, inspectors must travel to wherever the required casework types are available.
Travel	I am based in Northern Ireland and would be very happy to travel across the water (at my own expense) can the car hire be taken from an airport? or is it from certain locations?	We have a number of existing inspectors who live in Northern Ireland and they undertake casework successfully by flying into England and hiring cars from the airport.
Travel	We are a one car family so wondered if expenses would potentially cover the hiring of a car in addition other normal expenses. What about wear and tear on cars?	The Planning Inspectorate provides hire cars through Enterprise. Inspectors would normally book hire cars through Enterprise for their site visits. A personal vehicle is not required, although inspectors do have the option to use their own vehicles. They are paid a mileage allowance if they do to cover normal expenses for wear and tear. However, inspectors are expected to use hire cars where this is the most cost effective option for the business.

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Inspector training and development	I currently work in planning enforcement for a local authority, and while we do work remotely and manage our caseload really independently one benefit to my current role is having the enforcement team to bounce ideas off & generally have a nice working environment through engagement with them. I'm just wondering what the experience has been for the new Inspectors in terms of interacting and forging relationships within the wider Inspectorate, as I imagine the role to be a bit more remote than work for LA's?	The role is more remote than local authority work, but the Inspectorate is conscious of this. New inspectors have regular one-to-ones with inspector trainers, weekly cohort catch-ups, feedback from the reading process, and post-graduation inspector management group meetings. Neil Armstrong noted the support was strong and the pool of contacts wider than expected in the webinar.
Flexible working	As the role allows part-time or job-share arrangements, I wanted to ask how the Planning Inspectorate approaches potential conflicts of interest for Inspectors who may also have professional practices, for example in architectural consultancy assisting with planning applications. Would those roles normally need to be discontinued, or are there arrangements in place to manage conflicts through declarations and case allocation?	<p>The Planning Inspectorate does allow part-time and job-share arrangements, but strict rules apply around conflicts of interest, including those arising from private professional practice such as architectural or planning consultancy work.</p> <p>All employees and contractors must avoid situations where private interests could conflict - or be perceived to conflict - with their Inspectorate duties. Anyone working for, or on behalf of, the Inspectorate must declare any potential conflicts at the earliest opportunity and the organisation will then decide how these need to be managed. This can include agreeing management measures or prohibiting the activity if necessary.</p> <p>Casework is allocated with declared conflicts in mind to protect openness, fairness and impartiality.</p> <p>This is detailed in the Planning Inspectorate's Conflict of Interest Policy: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conflict-of-interest-policy/conflict-of-interest-policy</p>
Flexible working	Are part time workers able to flexibly spread their hours across the week to suit their requirements?	Yes. Flexible working patterns are accommodated, including compressed hours, term-time working, and shorter days (e.g. to facilitate the school run). Claire Searson noted she worked 90% with no fixed day of during the webinar. A flexible working request can be submitted at any point.
Flexible working	Would there be an option to do the first year full-time and reduce hours after	Yes, this is an option. You are entitled to put in a flexible working request, so you could work full time

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	graduating? or is it part time from the outset?	during your first year of training and then apply to reduce your hours after graduating.
Flexible working	Is time factored in for CPD as part of the job/day to day work or is the focus on individuals to maintain this?	CPD is actively supported at the Planning Inspectorate. Once professional membership fees are covered by PINS, ongoing development is encouraged through a range of formal and informal routes, including an annual professional practice conference, topic-based update webinars, team meetings, and an Inspector Training Manual. The planning environment is constantly evolving . For example, updates to the NPPF and PINS invests in keeping inspectors up to date. CPD is therefore embedded in the role rather than left solely to individuals.
Previous experience and body membership	My recent experience has been abroad - does this mean you would feel that I would be less suited to the role, or would you welcome experience from a different planning system?	The Planning Inspectorate values a wide range of professional backgrounds and experiences. While the role requires inspectors to apply English planning law and policy, the core skills we are looking for — analytical thinking, clear written communication, evidence-based decision making, and professional judgement, are transferable from other planning systems. Experience abroad would not automatically disadvantage your application. We would encourage you to apply if you meet the essential criteria, and to use your personal statement to demonstrate how your experience is relevant to the skills and competencies required.
Previous experience and body membership	Do you need to be a member prior to making an application as there are some expecting to get full membership end of this month after the deadline?	You don't need to hold chartered membership at the point of application. However, chartered membership is required before you can take up the role, so you must be able to obtain it before your potential start date. If you're expecting to achieve full membership shortly after the application deadline, please make sure to highlight this clearly in your application. If your full RTPI membership is confirmed after the application deadline of 15 March, you would not be eligible for this campaign. We would encourage you to apply in a future recruitment round once you have achieved full membership. If cost has been a barrier to chartership, it is worth contacting the RTPI directly, as many professional bodies have hardship mechanisms or support available.
Previous experience and body membership	I'm currently working as an architect at associate level and considering applying for the Band 1 Inspector role. For candidates coming from built-environment professions such as architecture, what tends to distinguish the strongest applications at sift stage?	The Inspectorate recruits from a wide range of backgrounds including architects, engineers, lawyers and ecologists. Strong applications provide clear, evidence-based examples of career challenges, achievements and reflections, linked directly to the essential criteria. The STAR technique is recommended.

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Previous experience and body membership	Regarding the requirement for Full or Chartered Membership of a professional body: I note that this can be a barrier for many Local Authority planners, as unlike some private-sector employers, councils often do not provide financial support for chartership fees. How will the Planning Inspectorate ensure that this requirement does not disadvantage experienced Local Authority planners who may be highly competent but unable to obtain chartered status due to funding constraints?	Full or chartered membership of a relevant professional body is an essential requirement and cannot be waived for planning Inspector roles. Claire Searson noted that most professional bodies have hardship mechanisms and encouraged candidates to contact their institute directly. Planning Inspectorate covers professional membership fees once in post.
Previous experience and body membership	You mention accepting applications from lawyers - do they need to have experience in land law/planning?	Land law or planning experience is advantageous but not essential. Other legal experience, for example in the environmental sector, is also relevant. Candidates with broader legal backgrounds were encouraged to apply.
Previous experience and body membership	I am ARB registered but not RIBA is this ok ?	The requirement is for full or chartered membership of a professional body relevant to land use planning or the built or natural environment. ARB (Architects Registration Board) registration is a statutory register rather than a professional membership body in the same sense. We would recommend checking the candidate pack, which contains a comprehensive (though non-exhaustive) list of eligible professional bodies, and contacting the recruitment team directly if you are unsure whether your registration meets the essential criterion.
Previous experience and body membership	In case of a high volume of applications, will applicants with RTPI membership be given preference over applications from other professional bodies?	No. The Planning Inspectorate recruits from a wide range of professional backgrounds. While many inspectors come from a planning background and hold RTPI membership, the organisation actively seeks professionals from other disciplines, including architects, engineers, ecologists, lawyers, and heritage specialists. All applications are assessed against the essential criteria, and membership of any eligible professional body listed in the candidate pack is treated equally.
Previous experience and body membership	I am currently in an academic role and haven't practiced (as such) for 20 years. How important is current professional/industry experience as opposed to wider skills/behaviours/knowledge?	There is no fixed requirement for a minimum number of years of recent practice. The Planning Inspectorate recruits from a diverse range of backgrounds and career paths. What matters most is that you can demonstrate, through your CV and personal statement, how your experience — however recent or historical — meets the essential criteria. Academic roles can provide highly relevant skills, including

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		analytical rigour, evidence evaluation, and written communication. We would encourage you to apply and to focus on providing strong, specific examples that show how your background equips you for the inspector role.
Inspector training and development	Is there opportunity or procedure to utilise knowledge from other Inspectors when dealing with appeals that are problematic or technical?	Yes, you may seek advice from the inspector trainers during the training phase and your inspector manager once you have graduated. The Planning Inspectorate also has a comprehensive Inspector Training Manual and a knowledge team to provide advice.
Inspector training and development	Are reports checked by a senior prior to the decision being issued?	Inspectors are expected to issue their own decisions once they have completed training. However, during the training phase decisions are read and feedback provided by other inspectors. This is partly a quality assurance process but it is also an integral part of training, whereby new inspectors learn from feedback and then use that feedback to improve subsequent decisions. Once graduated, inspectors can ask for a decision to be read if they feel it is necessary (for example on a novel matter they have not tackled before).
Inspector training and development	Could you say a bit more about what that training focuses on in practice, particularly how it prepares new Inspectors?	The initial training programme lasts approximately three weeks and combines online learning with in-person sessions held in cities such as Bristol, Birmingham, and London. New inspectors train together as a cohort, which builds peer support and shared learning. Training covers the full range of topics relevant to written representations casework, from fundamental planning matters (e.g. conditions, character and appearance, highway safety) through to more technical subjects such as planning obligations. A second block of training approximately six months in covers more advanced topics including Green Belt, prior approvals and appeals against conditions. Each new inspector is mentored by an inspector trainer and receives continuous written feedback on their decisions throughout the 12–18 month training period. The aim is to ensure all inspectors reach the same consistent standard before graduating.
Inspector training and development	In regard to the continual assessment, are there people that fail training? If so on average what percentage?	The Planning Inspectorate does not want anyone to fail and provides extensive support. During the webinar, Luke Perkins noted that most people complete training, though it may take longer for some. There may be certain instances where it becomes clear that the role is not suited to the skills of the individual but this is no different to starting any new job and is only relevant to a small minority of cases.
Inspector training and development	Can you give more details on the training to be received? You mentioned a 3 week	Initial training spans three weeks with a blend of online and in-person sessions. In-person blocks have been held in Bristol, Birmingham and London (typically Tuesday–Thursday including travel on

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	induction course. Is this and other training done remotely?	Monday and Friday). Most technical training is in person. A second training block (typically lasting 3 days, Tuesday to Thursday, with travel on Monday and Friday) occurs around six months in, covering more complex topics such as Green Belt, prior approvals and appeals against condition. All work-related hotel stays are paid for by the Inspectorate.
Inspector training and development	Is the salary increase post training guaranteed? What factors influence how long training takes?	Inspectors move onto the base of the Band 1 pay scale once they have completed training successfully. This pay rise is guaranteed, subject to you having met the training requirements in terms of the quality and timeliness of your decisions. Although the vast majority of new Inspectors complete training successfully, they all progress at different rates. An inspector in training would typically graduate between 12 and 18 months after starting, but it can take longer if you are part time. There are various other factors influencing how quickly you complete training. Some of them outside of your control, for example the nature of the casework you are allocated. However, it also depends upon the individual and how quickly they pick up the skills and behaviours required to be an Inspector. Ultimately, it is not a race and you should view the initial training phase as an investment in what will hopefully be a long career at Planning Inspectorate.
Inspector training and development	Are there formal assessment stages during the first year of training before new Inspectors begin determining cases independently?	Yes. Training involves continuous assessment through a reading process in which experienced inspectors review and provide feedback on all your written decisions. There are specific milestones that must be met, including a mid-training milestone that triggers a pay increase, before progressing. There are also requirements around the types and volume of casework you must have completed before graduating. The process is designed to be supportive rather than pass/fail, and the training team will work with you throughout. Training typically takes 12 to 18 months, and most people successfully complete it, though the pace varies by individual.