

Planning Inspectorate Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update 21 January 2022

News story

Coronavirus: Latest position on casework arrangements for the Planning Inspectorate



Following the government announcement that [England will fully return to Plan A on Thursday 27 January](#), we have [updated our guidance](#) to reflect these changes.

Graham Stallwood (Director of Operations) has [written to chief planning officers at local planning authorities \(LPAs\)](#) to remind them that they need to prepare to host events reflective of the restriction changes.

From 13 September 2021, [LPAs resumed the pre-pandemic practice of facilitating face-to-face casework events](#) while also providing a virtual option in case pandemic restrictions change. In December, with Plan B being put in place, [we wrote to LPAs advising them that they needed to have preparations in place to run events virtually](#).

Now that restrictions are being lifted, we expect that events will be able to run as they did in the autumn, whilst continuing to ensure the safety of staff and participants.

Our latest position on casework arrangements is:

- site visits will continue and inspectors will adhere to government guidance on the use of face coverings
- hearings and inquiries are being arranged by local planning authorities and order making authorities (except for national infrastructure where the applicant is the organiser)
- hearings and inquiries are entirely in person, entirely virtual or a mix of the two
- where participants (including the Inspector) need to present their evidence or participate virtually this will need to be facilitated by

the local planning authority, order making authority or national infrastructure applicant arranging the hearing or inquiry

- where in-person events or elements are planned, the local planning authority, order making authority or national infrastructure applicant arranging the event must be prepared for the hearing or inquiry to be held fully virtually at short notice and without postponement
- it is the responsibility of the local planning authority to ensure there are adequate safety measures in place as per government guidance

We want to continue to ensure that casework can keep moving while keeping our staff and customers safe. To help us, customers are requested to:

- inform us as soon as possible if they are unable to attend, or feel that it is unsafe for an inspector to attend, a site visit for any reason
- use the appeals casework portal for new appeals
- use the appeals casework portal for making comments on appeals
- email/ ring their case officer directly
- avoid posting written correspondence to Temple Quay House if possible – this delays the process

We are continuing work on developing a new operating model for events. Our goal is to build a sustainable model for the future that:

- is accessible for all parties involved and offers opportunities to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in our events
- ensures we maintain our values of fairness, openness, impartiality and customer focus
- meets our public sector equality duty responsibilities
- meets our environmental policy requirements

We expect to share our new operating model in spring 2022.

Published 21 January 2022