

Planning Inspectorate Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update 09 December 2021

News story

Coronavirus Plan B: Latest position on casework arrangements for the Planning Inspectorate



Following the government enacting its “Plan B” to combat the Omicron strand of the coronavirus, we have [updated our guidance to reflect new measures in place](#).

Graham Stallwood (Director of Operations) has today [written to chief planning officers at local planning authorities \(LPAs\)](#) to remind them that they need to be ready to host virtual-only hearings and inquiries.

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.

With the new coronavirus variant emerging and positive cases rising, it is increasingly likely that participants may need to take part virtually either to protect other participants or to protect vulnerable people in their own families.

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, order making authorities and others
- as previously advised, local planning authorities need to be ready to host all events virtually
- there may be a small number of cases where the Inspector considers the event can only proceed following a face-to-face element. They will make a case-by-case decision as to how to proceed in those cases. 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 ensure that casework can keep moving wherever possible 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
- do not post written correspondence to Temple Quay House if possible – this delays the process

In November, Professional Lead for Appeals, [Rebecca Phillips wrote about a project to establish 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 early 2022.

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