

Press release: Rosewell Inquiry Review

– Update

The Planning Inspectorate is continuing to make good progress with taking forward the recommendations in the [Independent Review of Planning Appeal Inquiries](#) and have now begun increasing the number of inquiry appeals being placed into this new way of working. There are clear benefits in progressing with implementing some of the recommendations and we thought it would be helpful to all concerned to explain our reasons.

To begin with, there can be little doubt that the principal thrust of the Review – to significantly shorten the time between receipt of an inquiry appeal and its final decision – is a significant improvement. To this end, we have been able to appoint more Inspector resource to inquiry appeals, than was envisaged in March when we announced the “pilot”, which has enabled us to bring most of these appeals into the process.

Some parties to the appeals have questioned why we have imposed inquiry dates when informing them of the ‘Start’ of the appeal and the name of the appointed Inspector. These letters are sent to the appeal parties as soon as possible after receipt of an inquiry appeal and have generally set the inquiry date to be between 13-16 weeks of the ‘Start’ date. This has been a significant innovation of the new process and provides the parties with clarity as to timescales from the outset.

To implement the recommendations of the Rosewell Review we must move away from our “bespoke” arrangements which gave specific provision for the parties to agree an inquiry date after an appeal had been submitted. Instead, now we are taking the lead in setting an inquiry date at the earliest opportunity, and this has led some parties to ask if there could be a degree of flexibility after the date had been fixed, or whether they could be given time to negotiate a new date.

We appreciate that this new procedure, for affected appeals, is very different to the way inquiry appeals were managed previously, and that some of the recommendations may be challenging, for everyone involved in the appeal. But it would be difficult to deny the significant advantages that an early inquiry date – and thus an early decision date – will bring to all concerned with the process. We will of course consider whether wholly exceptional circumstances are demonstrated by the parties to explain the unreasonableness of the inquiry date that has been set, but at the same time momentum must be maintained if the Review is to pay the dividends it promises.

The inquiry dates that are now being set give confidence to expect that those appeals will be decided in accordance with the timescales set out in Recommendation 21 of the Rosewell Report.