



# The Planning Inspectorate

## Guide to taking part in planning appeals proceeding by an inquiry - England



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

July 2009



# **Guide to taking part in planning appeals proceeding by an inquiry – England**

Please note – there are separate booklets for planning appeals that are proceeding by the written representations or hearing process. You can access all our booklets through the [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk) or you can contact us and we will send you a copy.

**If you need this guidance in large print, in audio format or in Braille, please contact our helpline on 0117 372 6372.**

## **The planning application and appeal process**

Planning applications are made to the local planning authority (LPA). Appeals may be made for a number of reasons, but most are made because the LPA have refused planning permission. Appeals are made to the Planning Inspectorate. Nearly all appeals are decided by our Inspectors, a very small percentage are decided by the Secretary of State - these tend to be for very large or contentious proposals.

Effective community involvement is a key element of planning during the planning appraisal process. During the planning application process local communities should have been given the opportunity to comment on the development proposals which are the subject of an appeal and members of the public would have been welcome to give their views. If you had an interest in an application, whether you were for or against it, you almost certainly will be interested in the outcome of any appeal. This guide explains how you can make your views known.

## **Who can appeal?**

Only the person who made the planning application has the right to appeal. We must receive all their appeal papers within six months of the LPA's decision notice, or within six months of the end of the decision period if the LPA have not made a decision.

## **How you find out about the appeal**

If you wrote to the LPA about the planning application: -

- they should write to tell you about the appeal within two weeks of us accepting it; and
- when the arrangements have been made for the inquiry they should let you know when and where it will take place.

The appellant must display details of the inquiry, including the time and place, on the site of the proposed development two weeks before the inquiry.

These are the minimum publicity requirements. Your LPA may give appeals more publicity. They may publish details of the inquiry in a local newspaper if they think it is necessary.

## **What you can do**

The LPA will send us copies of any letters of support or objection they received about the planning application while considering it. These will be fully considered by the Inspector who decides the appeal.

If you did not write at application stage, or you did write and now have something new to say, you can send us your comments.

You can submit your comments on line through the Planning Portal using the Planning Casework Service, [www.planningportal.gov.uk/pcs](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/pcs) or you can write or email to us. The LPA should have told you our Case Officer's contact details.

If you sent us your comments in a letter, if possible, please send us three copies of it. We will not acknowledge your letter unless you ask us to.

If you want to make written comments, you **must** make sure that we receive your comments within six weeks of the starting date for the appeal. The LPA should have told you the deadline.

We will send copies of your comments to the appellant, the LPA and the Inspector.

The time limit for sending comments to us is important, and everyone taking part in an appeal must follow it. **If you send us comments after the end of the time limit, we will not normally accept them. Instead we will return them to you. This means that the Inspector will not take them into account.** However you may attend and ask to speak at the inquiry- see the paragraph below called "What happens at the inquiry?".

If you would like a copy of the appeal decision you must ask us to send you one.

## **People with disabilities**

We want to hold all inquiries in buildings with proper facilities for people with disabilities. The LPA usually choose and provide the place. If you, or anyone you know, want to go to the inquiry and you have particular needs, please contact the LPA to confirm that they can make proper arrangements.

## **Before the inquiry**

Before going to the inquiry, if you want to see what the appellant and the LPA have written, you should be able to see copies of their appeal documents at the LPA's offices.

## **Taking part in the inquiry**

If you want to take part in an inquiry, you need to think about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Most people prefer to make, or read out, a brief statement giving their views. If there are several people with the same views, it is a good idea for one person to speak on behalf of the others. (The Inspector is likely to suggest this approach when opening the inquiry.) Repeating arguments at the inquiry does not help the Inspector, or make the point more relevant.

If you want to take a leading role in the inquiry and call your own witnesses, you should contact us at the earliest possible stage. If we agree to this, we may ask you to provide a statement of your case and details of any documents you will produce at the inquiry. If we ask for this information, and you provide it, we will arrange for copies of the appellant's and LPA's statements to be sent to you

### **What happens at the inquiry?**

Inquiries are usually held in LPA offices, village halls or community centres.

An inquiry is the most formal of the appeal procedures, because it usually involves larger or more complicated appeals. These are often cases where expert evidence is presented, and witnesses are cross-examined (questioned). An inquiry may last for several days, or even weeks. It is not a court of law, but the proceedings will often seem to be quite similar and the appellant and the LPA usually have legal representatives.

Inquiries are open to members of the public, and although you do not have a legal right to speak, the Inspector will normally allow you to do so. Local people are encouraged to take part in the inquiry process. Local knowledge and opinion can often be a valuable addition to the more formal evidence given by the appellant and the LPA.

If you want to speak at the inquiry, it is important that you are there when it opens because this is when the Inspector will tell everyone about the timetable.

At the inquiry opening, the Inspector will go through some routine matters, including asking who will be taking part in the inquiry. This is often called 'taking the appearances'. When the appellant and the LPA have given their details, the Inspector will ask if anyone else wants to speak. At this stage, you should only give your name and address, and say whether you are for or against the proposal.

The Inspector will then usually give an outline of what will happen at the inquiry. At a long inquiry, it is difficult to predict at what stage of the inquiry interested people will be given the chance to speak. If you cannot stay at the inquiry all the time, tell the Inspector at this stage. The Inspector will understand and will try to help by hearing your comments at a different stage of the inquiry, if that is possible. However, if you wish to ask one of the main parties questions you will probably need to arrange to be at the inquiry when they are giving their evidence.

The appellant will usually be asked to make a brief opening statement first, to set the scene and describe the nature of the proposal. The LPA will then make their opening statement. Their witnesses will then give their evidence and the appellant can cross-examine (question) them. After that the Inspector will normally ask if anyone who supports the proposal has any questions to put to the witness.

The appellant will then call their witnesses, and the LPA can cross-examine (question) them. After that the Inspector will normally ask if anyone who objects to the proposal has any questions to put to the witness.

You must make sure that your questions are relevant to the evidence the witnesses have given. You should not repeat questions that have already been asked. This is not the point when you give your views – that is later.

### **Giving your views at the inquiry**

When the cases for the main parties have been completed, at the Inspector's discretion anyone who is interested in the appeal usually has the chance to speak and present their own case.

The Inspector will usually ask if you are willing to answer questions about your evidence. You do not have to do this, though it is often helpful to do so and it may add weight to your evidence. Do not feel intimidated. The Inspector will not let anyone ask you hostile or unfair questions. If you object to the proposal, the appellant's representative may ask you questions. If you support it, the LPA's representative may ask you questions.

### **The end of the inquiry**

The inquiry ends with closing speeches by those who have spoken at the inquiry, followed by the LPA and finally the appellant. This is normally followed by the Inspector visiting the appeal site. Because the inquiry is over, there can be no further discussion about the case during that visit.

### **Recorded evidence**

At the discretion of the Inspector, video, audio cassette, CD/DVD or electronic media files may be played at the inquiry. If you intend to submit recorded evidence please let our Case Officer know. It will be your responsibility to find out from the LPA if there are suitable facilities at the venue or, if the LPA agree, whether you will have to provide your own. Any recorded evidence played at the inquiry must be able to be seen and/or heard by everyone at the inquiry. The recording will become part of the inquiry evidence and will be retained by the Inspector.

### **The decision**

We will send a copy of the decision to:

- the appellant;
- the LPA;
- anyone who attends the inquiry and indicates on the attendance sheet that they want a copy; and
- anyone else who asked us for a copy.

At the end of the inquiry the Inspector will give an indication of when the decision is likely to be issued.

## **Awarding appeal costs**

At the inquiry the Inspector will say that any application for costs should be made before the end of the proceedings. This can happen when one side claims it has been caused unnecessary expense in dealing with the proceedings, because of the other side's unreasonable behaviour.

This is unlikely to apply to you because if you choose to take part in an appeal you do so at your own expense. There is a booklet "Costs awards in planning appeals" that you may wish to read. You can access this guide through the [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk) or you can contact us and we will send you a copy.

## **Complaints**

If you have any complaints or questions about the decision, or the way we have handled the appeal, you can write to our Quality Assurance Unit.

The Planning Inspectorate  
Quality Assurance Unit  
4/11 Eagle Wing  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Temple Quay  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

Phone: 0117 372 8252  
Fax: 0117 372 8139  
E-mail: [complaints@pins.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@pins.gsi.gov.uk)

We will investigate your complaint and you can expect a full reply within three weeks. However, we cannot reconsider an appeal if a decision has already been given on it. This can only happen if the decision is successfully challenged in the High Court.

## **The High Court**

An appeal decision can only be challenged on legal grounds in the High Court. To be successful, you would have to show that:

- the Inspector, had gone beyond his or her powers; or
- we did not follow the proper procedures and so damaged your interests.

If your challenge is successful, the High Court will overturn the original decision and return the case to us, and we will look at it again. This does not necessarily mean that the original decision will be reversed.

If you decide to challenge the decision, you must apply to the High Court within six weeks of the date of the decision. If you ask for a copy of the decision when we send it to you we will enclose a leaflet explaining your right to challenge the decision.

## Timetable for the inquiry procedure

Timetable	You	Appellant	LPA
<b>Appeal made</b> (within the 6-month time limit)  <b>We set the start date</b>	(Does not apply)	Sends the appeal form and all supporting documents to us and the LPA	Receive the appeal documents
<b>Within 2 weeks from the start date</b>	Receive the LPA's letter about the appeal, telling you that you must send us any comments within 6 weeks from the start date	Receives a completed questionnaire and any supporting documents from the LPA	Send the appellant and us a completed questionnaire and supporting documents. They write to you about the appeal
<b>Within 6 weeks from the starting date</b>  (We will not normally accept late statements or comments)	Send your comments to us. If you want a copy of the Inspector's decision notice you must ask for one in writing	Sends us their inquiry statement and the statement of common ground that they have agreed with the LPA.	Send us their inquiry statement
<b>4 weeks before the inquiry</b>	Receive details from the LPA about the inquiry arrangements.	Sends us their proof of evidence.	Send us their proof of evidence. They may put a notice in a local paper about the inquiry
<b>At least 2 weeks before the inquiry</b>		Displays a notice on site giving details of the inquiry	

## What is considered?

Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations

The purpose of planning is to ensure that decisions about development take into account the public interest. It does not exist to protect the purely private interests of one person against the activities of another. Neither is it intended to deal with matters covered by other legislation eg. boundary disputes - which are covered by property law.

Planning issues can be wide-ranging, for example including the need to reduce travel by private car, promote the development of renewable energy resources, and take climate change impacts into account in the location and design of development. The LPA's reasons for refusing a planning application will usually set out the issues that apply.

The Inspector can only consider things that are relevant to planning, for example, the fact that a proposed new building may directly overlook someone's garden thereby harming the enjoyment of that personal space or it may need a new access in a dangerous location that would be to road safety.

You can only raise planning issues about the proposal.

If we consider your comments contain libellous, racist or abusive comments, we will send them back to you before the Inspector or anyone else sees it. If you take out the libellous, racist or abusive comments, you can send your comments back to us. But, you must send them back before the time limit ends.

### **Template for sending your comments**

We recommend that you use this layout when sending us your comments about an appeal. Unless your handwriting is very clear it would help if you are able to have your comments typed. Please use **black** ink.

1. Your name and address.
2. The Planning Inspectorate appeal reference number (this will start APP/...)
3. The address of the appeal site.
4. 'I am against the appeal proposals' or 'I support the appeal proposals'.
5. Your comments. If you are against, say whether it is for the same reasons as given by the LPA or, if not, explain your own reasons. Or, say why you support the appeal proposals.
6. Say if you would like us to send you a copy of the decision notice.

### **If you decide to submit documents to support your comments**

Documents in a sans serif font are easier to read. Please use a font such as Arial or Verdana in a size of 11 point or larger.

Please

- use **A4** paper wherever possible;
- number the pages of the documents;
- make sure **photocopied** documents are clear and legible;
- put any photographs (colour if possible), maps, plans, etc, in a **separate appendix** and cross-reference them within the main body of the document;
- bind documents so that they can be undone quickly without damaging the document. Do not use wire or plastic spiral binders;
- do not use cover sheets, sleeves or other bindings that do not add value or information;
- do not send original documents unless we specifically ask for them;
- do not include self adhesive notes or small attachments which might be dislodged easily or lost;

- print documents on both sides of a page. You should use paper of good enough quality that something printed on one side of the page does not show through to the other side;
- ensure that the scale, orientation and paper size of any maps and plans are shown clearly. This is especially important if you submit your comments electronically through the Planning Casework Service.

## **How we use your personal information**

In processing an appeal, the Planning Inspectorate may receive personal data from several parties including the appellant, the LPA and other statutory and interested parties, and may include information forwarded from the application stage. The type of personal information we receive includes names and contact details of those making representations.

You should only provide personal information about yourself – or indeed any comments - that you are happy to be placed in the public domain. You should only provide information about others, including family members, if you have their consent.

We will circulate copies of documents received to the appellant, the LPA and statutory appeal parties. The appeal papers will also be open for inspection at the LPA's office where anyone can view them. We will not normally refuse requests to inspect the appeal documents.

In addition, where the appeal is one which we make available on our Planning Casework Service (for further details see [www.planningportal.gov.uk/pcs](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/pcs)) copies of appeal documents may be made accessible over the internet during the appeal. This may include your name and address, but we will remove telephone numbers, email addresses and signatures. The Inspector's decision may contain some personal information, such as the name of the appellant or interested party, and will be made available on the internet or on request.

We do not accept anonymous representations, but you may ask for your name and address to be withheld. Your representation will be made available to parties (including the Inspector) with your name and address removed, and may be given less weight as a result.

We may also use your personal information to contact you and seek views on the service that you received. In doing so, we may provide your contact information to a third party for the sole purpose of conducting a survey on our behalf. Although the results of the survey may be published, information that you provide will be made anonymous unless you have otherwise been notified and provided your explicit consent.

## **Further information**

Further information about our privacy policy is available on our website at [www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk](http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk), or on request. If you have any queries about our policy, or wish to request your personal data, then please contact our Data Manager at the address below.

## **Contacting us**

The Planning Inspectorate  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Temple Quay  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

Helpline: 0117 372 6372

E-mail: [enquiries@planning-inspectorate.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@planning-inspectorate.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk](http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk)

## **Getting help**

If you would like help in taking part in a planning appeal, you can contact Planning Aid. Planning Aid provides free and independent professional advice on town and country planning issues to people and groups who cannot afford consultancy fees. You can contact:

National Planning Aid  
Royal Town Planning Institute  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Newwater House  
11 Newhall Street  
Birmingham  
B3 3NY

Phone or fax: 0121 693 1201

E-mail: [info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

Website: [www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)