

Independent Review of Planning Appeal Inquiries

Call for Evidence



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Improving the planning appeal inquiries process – call for evidence

What is the problem?

The number of planning appeal inquiries is comparatively small. In the last 5 years there have been around 300 per year (2% of all planning appeals). But many important development schemes are granted planning permission through these inquiries, including a significant number of major housing schemes.

Schemes that are subject to an inquiry may be large scale, involve multiple parties, are complex in terms of their potential impacts and/or controversial. The appeal process must be rigorous and fair to ensure robust decisions are made. However, in 2017-18 the inquiry process took on average 44 weeks from the receipt of a complete and valid appeal to a decision being made. The lengthy process involves many stages and can generate a substantial volume of evidence, which is highly technical and specialist in nature.

Given the importance of the schemes, both for the appellants and local communities, and the length of time and complexity involved in the current planning appeal inquiry process, the Government has commissioned an independent review¹, led by Bridget Rosewell. The Review will examine how the current process is working from end to end and to identify what improvements can be made, in particular, how to speed up the process without harming the quality of decisions.

Of particular concern to the Government is the potential harmful consequences of unnecessary delays in appeal decisions for major housing proposals and the review will focus on such schemes. However, as the process is the same for all types of development, the review presents an opportunity to look at the planning appeal inquiries process holistically and to consider improvements to the process to ensure that it meets the purpose it was designed for.

The full Terms of Reference of the Review can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-appeal-inquiries-review-terms-of-reference>. The geographical scope of the Review is England.

How will the review be undertaken?

It is an independent review. Bridget Rosewell will be supported by a small team based in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Review will collect and evaluate both qualitative and quantitative evidence and will report its findings to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government by the end of 2018.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chair-appointed-to-lead-independent-review-into-planning-appeal-inquiries>

There is a wealth of information about planning appeals, including the inquiry process², already published by the Planning Inspectorate. The **Technical Annex** which has been published alongside this call for evidence identifies some headline statistics and includes a narrative description of some of the causes of delay in the current process. We intend to undertake a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of available evidence over the summer to further inform the review.

Equally important is our engagement with those who are, or have recently been involved, in the inquiry process. We want to draw on people's first hand experience and knowledge and encourage users of the process to identify ways it can be improved. And we are very keen to talk to parties across the spectrum of interests of those involved in the process, from appellant to third party.

There will be 3 main forms of engagement: this call for evidence, a series of one-to-one meetings with a range of stakeholders and, later in the year, a small number of regional stakeholder events. In addition, there is an expert panel, drawn from a range of sectors, who will act as a sounding board to support Bridget's work.

What evidence and ideas are we looking for?

We want to hear about what works well in the current process and what does not. If there are areas that don't work well, we would welcome suggestions about how the process can be improved.

All comments about the planning appeal inquiries process are welcome. We are particularly keen to hear from those who have direct experience in any role.

To assist respondents provide evidence and suggestions and to help our analysis we have created a **Call for evidence questionnaire**, which can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RV5CTV8>, which we would be most grateful if respondents could use.

The questions are not designed to be exhaustive. If there is other relevant information, please include it in the response. It will be most helpful for information to be provided to the Review at the earliest opportunity, so that it can be analysed and used to inform further discussions before the Review reports.

Next steps

The Call for Evidence will close on 18 September. All responses will be carefully considered. The emerging findings will be used to inform the regional stakeholder events. A final report, with recommendations, will be made to the Secretary of State by the end of 2018.

If you have any other queries, please contact us at InquiriesReview@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-appeals-procedural-guide>