

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Local Plan Examination Hearings – 17 March 2020

This updated guidance follows on from the [Government guidance](#) on 16 March advising on social distancing measures.

In implementing this advice we have sought to consider the welfare of both our staff and customers.

The two local plan examinations which were due to take place this week have both been postponed and local plan hearings cannot currently take place. At this stage we do not know when they may be able to resume, but it is unlikely to be soon.

We will consider whether there are any technological solutions that might allow for some hearings to go ahead as a video conference. However, given the number of participants, the legal right to be heard, and that local plan hearings are conducted as a structured conversation, we think this might only be an option in a limited number of cases.

In all cases decisions about how to proceed are at the discretion of the Inspector appointed to hold the independent examination. Our examiners will discuss any options for progressing the hearing stage of the examination with the Local Planning Authority, through the Programme Officer.

Information about local plan examinations will be posted on the examination website and any questions should be addressed to the Programme Officer. However, please be aware that they may currently be receiving a high volume of requests for information.

Inspectors will continue, where possible, to progress the pre and post-hearing stages of the examination, depending on the stage reached. However, it is inevitable that the progress of some examinations will be delayed.

This advice will be kept under review and could change at short notice to reflect Government's wider advice. Please ensure that you check the examination website regularly.

You can find the Government's advice on social distancing here: [Public Health England](#)