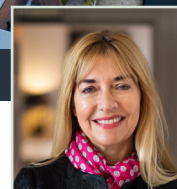
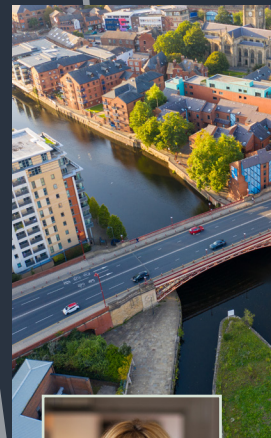


Roundtable on Planning Appeals

with Rebecca Phillips, Professional Lead for Planning Appeals at the Planning Inspectorate

Online via zoom



Rebecca Phillips

Introduction

The PLG held a roundtable meeting featuring insights from Rebecca Phillips, the Professional Lead for Planning Appeals at the Planning Inspectorate. The session, attended by various stakeholders, delved into critical issues such as the impact of recent government changes on the appeals process, challenges faced by local authorities, and strategies for improving planning outcomes. Key points included the Planning Inspectorate's role in supporting sustainable development, addressing high court challenges, and modernising digital processes to enhance efficiency. The discussion underscored the need for collaborative efforts among developers, local authorities, and the Inspectorate to streamline planning procedures and address the increasing demand for housing.



Key Takeaways

- The Planning Inspectorate, with over a century of history, plays a crucial role in ensuring that development projects meet the required standards and are built in appropriate locations. Their focus is on maintaining the quality and addressing future housing needs within the planning system. The meeting alleviated misconceptions about the Inspectorate being bureaucratic and emphasised their commitment to facilitating sustainable development.
- The Planning Inspectorate is preparing for potential new legislation and reforms, which may arise from changes in government policies. They are readying themselves to handle large-scale projects and new policies, emphasising the need for additional resources and support to effectively implement these changes and meet new government objectives.
- The discussion centred on how recent changes in government policy are affecting the planning appeals process. Local authorities are urged to provide timely and detailed reasons for refusal to prevent unnecessary appeals. This proactive approach is essential for streamlining the decision-making process and ensuring that appeals are based on clear, substantiated grounds.
- Resource constraints are significantly slowing the progress of local plans. Despite these challenges, the Planning Inspectorate is making efforts to close old cases and open new ones to keep the planning system moving. Deploying more inspectors to support local plans, although necessary, is both expensive and resource-intensive.
- The Planning Inspectorate is experiencing a substantial increase in workload, dealing with 18,000 to 21,000 planning appeals each year. There has been a particular increase in appeals related to solar energy projects, necessitating specialised training for inspectors to handle these specific cases effectively.
- The Planning Inspectorate is advancing towards a more digitally modernised and customer-focused system. Efforts include updating their processes to be more efficient and transparent, as well as recruiting and training inspectors to handle new types of development issues. This modernisation is crucial for keeping up with the increasing workload and ensuring timely decisions.
- Delays caused by statutory consultees were identified as a recurring issue that hampers the efficiency of the planning and appeals process. These delays can derail the timeline of projects, making it essential to address and streamline the involvement of statutory consultees to improve overall efficiency.

Issues raised

- Local authorities need to provide timely and clear reasons for refusals to prevent unnecessary appeals and ensure a streamlined decision-making process.
- There is a need for increased resources to support local authorities in progressing local plans and managing infrastructure development. This includes funding and staffing to avoid delays and ensure efficiency.
- Enhanced collaboration and communication among developers, local authorities, and the Planning Inspectorate are essential to address the complexities of the planning process and improve outcomes.
- Securing additional funding and financial support is critical for the Planning Inspectorate to manage the growing number of appeals, implement new government policies, and support local authorities adequately.

We would like to thank the members of our Advisory Board for their contributions and continuing support.



To get involved, please contact
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