

## Responses to webinar questions from Careers as a Band 2 or Band 3 Planning Inspector.

Following the webinar, we invited participants to submit questions. Below are the questions and our responses.

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**Question:**

How many years of experience are you looking for a Band 2 Planning Inspector?

**Answer:**

We don't specify a minimum number of years of experience but that you demonstrate through a relevant professional membership how you have acquired the skills and professional decision-making experience appropriate for the role.

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**Question:**

For both Local Plans and Infrastructure Inspector posts, how often and for how long are inspectors typically required to travel or be away from home? Such as on site or carry out hearings in person monthly / annually?

**Answer:**

It is difficult to provide a specific answer to this question as local plan examinations can vary greatly in terms of length and complexity. Most hearing sessions can last anything between 3 and 6 weeks. There may well be scope to provide breaks between the sitting dates and times to allow an element of flexibility.

Infrastructure examinations typically take place over a 6-month timeframe during which there are usually several site visits, hearing and meetings. It is typical for infrastructure inspectors to be away from home for several days concurrently during the peaks of examination. However, examining inspectors do have control in agreeing and setting the timetable for examination so there is opportunity to manage events with sufficient flexibility. There are periods either side of that of between 3 and 4 months of preparing for the examination and completing the recommendation when you may travel occasionally for site visits and panel meetings but that is likely to be for no more than 1 or 2 week equivalents over those periods.

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**Question:**

Typically, what duration would someone be away from home, how many days/nights?

**Answer:**

It is difficult to provide an answer as cases vary in duration. Your location along with transport links will impact on whether you can visit a site in one day or need to stay overnight. Most local plan hearing sessions can last anything between 3 and 6 weeks. There may well be scope to provide breaks between the sitting dates and times to allow an element of flexibility.

It is typical for infrastructure inspectors to be away from home for several days concurrently during the peaks of examination and those can be in more remote locations of both England and Wales. However, examining inspectors do have control in agreeing and setting the timetable for examination so there is opportunity to manage events with sufficient flexibility. Either side of examinations a few days away on an initial site visit and / or panel meetings is usual but again this can usually be agreed within the team – any unbreakable commitments such as life events can be shared before appointment to a panel so that they can be factored into the appointment process for the Examining Authority.

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**Question:**

Are there separate interviews for Band 2 and Band posts if someone was to apply for both posts?

**Answer:**

Yes – if you apply for both posts and successfully pass both sifts you would be invited to two interviews.

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**Question:**

What line manager responsibilities does a Band 3 Planning Inspector have if any?

**Answer:**

For Local Plans the posts advertised do not come with any line management responsibilities. However, you may have leadership responsibilities.

Band 3 infrastructure inspector posts do not come with line management responsibilities. However, you will likely become panel leads over time, with sufficient training and support, at which point you will lead and support examining inspectors throughout the duration of the examination so project leadership and skills around mentoring and motivating are important.

There is a periodic internal appointment exercise for Inspector Managers roles as they come up and these do include line management responsibilities for other Inspectors.

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**Question:**

In preparing for an upcoming hearing, is it common to have to work additional hours outside of the normal working day?

**Answer:**

This is unlikely although with any position which is a Senior Inspector Role, it would be down to the individual to manage their time as appropriate. Travel may take place outside of standard office hours, but we aim to minimise any time commitments on weekends and bank holidays.

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**Question:**

Please could you confirm the minimum period of employment before being able to benefit from enhanced maternity/parental leave?

**Answer:**

Having worked continuously for the Civil Service for at least 26 weeks and continuing into the 'qualifying week', the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

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**Question:**

I understand the position is remote and can be based anywhere in the UK. I'm based in Northern Ireland and was wondering whether this would be considered equally alongside candidates based in mainland UK, particularly as I understand travel for me would always involve flights rather than car journeys, given the projects are in England and Wales.

**Answer:**

You would need to cover your travel costs and time to and from Northern Ireland, all Travel and Subsistence would be covered once you are in England or Wales.

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**Question:**

I acknowledge that the references to educational institutions and anything that could identify a candidate is to be excluded - but presumably this does not extend to the CV element and Personal Statement in the application in terms of referencing ones current and previous employers and potentially clients worked for to provide examples of your experience (unless that client is not already in the public domain).

**Answer:**

Yes, that is correct.

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**Question:**

do you require the applicant to hold chartered membership with a professional body or is full membership sufficient?

**Answer:**

You need to have Full Chartered or Fellowship membership with a relevant professional body.

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**Question:**

If working from home is not possible, due to building works or space restrictions, would it be possible to work from a privately rented office space?

**Answer:**

Planning inspectors are subject to 'home working' contracts, if there are specific constraints for individuals that restrict this from happening then they would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Relevant considerations would likely include suitability and security.

Any home working or other remote location must be suitable in both personal health and safety terms and with sufficient privacy and quiet for work which will include Teams and telephone calls and access to virtual and blend events.

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**Question:**

It seems that Band 3 Inspectors are expected to 'hit the ground running' more than Band 2. Could you clarify how essential a broader planning background is at Band 3, and whether transferable leadership and analytical experience from adjacent disciplines (e.g. heritage, environmental planning) would be considered suitable?

**Answer:**

Transferable leadership and analytical experience from adjacent disciplines as described will be considered and assessed against the same essential criteria.

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**Question:**

What does the leadership and mentoring aspect of the Band 3 role typically involve? Is it primarily technical oversight (technical or specialism), people management, or more of a 'critical friend' role within panels?

**Answer:**

Band 3 infrastructure inspectors, following appropriate training and support, are typically required to lead examinations often with multiple inspectors as part of a panel. In this role it is common for the lead examiner to support panel members with technical oversight and to provide wider leadership and mentoring support. There is a category of Band 3 roles of Inspector Manager who undertake line management roles, and a panel lead member will also liaise with them as necessary for the welfare and performance of panel members.

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**Question:**

Is there an expectation that Inspectors may be asked to pick up appeals or other casework during quieter periods? If so, what training or support is available for those without a generalist planning background?

**Answer:**

For Local Plans there is an expectation that Inspectors would be asked to pick up appeals casework during quieter periods and this is set out in the candidate pack. A bespoke training package will be delivered to all the new Inspectors which will cover a broad range of competencies.

For Infrastructure because of the peaks and troughs of work Inspectors may be asked to undertake work outside their normal area. Where this is required, Inspectors will be provided relevant training and support to ensure they are appropriately equipped to deliver the required standard.

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**Question:**

Will an Affiliate membership of the Royal Institute of British Architect (RIBA) be acceptable, if an individual is bound to the following: I undertake to adhere to the RIBA Code of Professional Conduct, Regulations, and Charter & Bylaws throughout the membership of the RIBA? Along with being an experienced professional for several years, who maintains skills, knowledge and competency through the RIBA CPD academy program?

**Answer:**

No, you are required to have Full Chartered or Fellowship membership to a relevant professional body.

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**Question:**

I currently have a vehicle through salary sacrifice with my LPA employer so I was wondering if the inspectorate has a similar scheme that a band 2 inspector would be able to use?

**Answer:**

We do not have a salary sacrifice scheme covering cars, however if you require a vehicle for work purposes you are able to rent a car via our internal travel systems.

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