Advice note six: Preparation and submission of application documents

The Planning Inspectorate and nationally significant infrastructure projects

The planning process for dealing with proposals for nationally significant infrastructure projects, or ‘NSIPs’, was established by the Planning Act 2008 (‘the 2008 Act’). The 2008 Act process, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, involves an examination of major proposals relating to energy, transport, water, waste and waste water, and includes opportunities for people to have their say before a decision is made by the relevant Secretary of State.

The Planning Inspectorate carries out certain functions related to national infrastructure planning on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Status of this Advice Note

Experience to date has shown that developers and others welcome detailed advice on a number of aspects of the 2008 Act process. This Advice Note forms part of a suite of such advice provided by the Planning Inspectorate.

It has no statutory status.

This version of this Advice Note supersedes all previous versions.

Please note: This advice note refers to documents which can be viewed at:
http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/advice-notes
Introduction

The purpose of this advice note is to provide detailed advice on how application documents should be prepared, organised and submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. Applications that are poorly organised and presented could be at greater risk of not being accepted for examination.

Applicants should also refer to the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and other relevant Planning Inspectorate advice notes, all of which are available on the National infrastructure portal: www.planningportal.gov.uk/infrastructure

Applicants are strongly encouraged to hold pre-application discussions with the Planning Inspectorate about how their application information should be prepared and submitted well in advance of formal submission.

Once an application has been submitted and accepted, the opportunity to submit any additional or amended information will be constrained within examination procedures. In particular, there is little scope for the acceptance of any revisions to a scheme which might be considered material, during the examination of the application. Therefore, applicants need to ensure that their proposals are sufficiently developed and consulted upon prior to formal submission to the Secretary of State, taking account of the relevant legislation and guidance.

Standard application form

The ‘development consent application form’ is a prescribed form. The application form can be found on the National Infrastructure portal in the ‘Application Process’ section ‘Submitting an Application’ page. The form includes guidance as an interactive feature and should be completed in full, electronically. If photocopied after completion, at least one original printed and signed form should be clearly identified and submitted along with the required number of copies.

Detailed guidance has been published by DCLG to accompany the prescribed form. The DCLG guidance refers specifically to each section of the development consent application form and can be viewed as ‘help text’ on each section of the electronic form. It is also available as a single document via the National Infrastructure Portal and DCLG websites.

Copies of the application

The applicant is required to submit its full application in both electronic and hard copy format. Whilst the Planning Inspectorate encourages electronic working, the submission of hard copy documents and plans is required in order to ensure the smooth running of the examination process.

To make an application for an order granting development consent for a nationally significant infrastructure project, three paper copies of the full application submission are required along with six electronic (e.g. DVD, memory stick) copies. Following acceptance of an application, further paper and/or electronic copies of the application may be requested, depending on the number of Inspectors, assessors or legal advisors that are appointed to the case. The applicant may also be requested to provide further copies of the entire application or copies of particular individual documents at any point throughout the pre-examination and examination processes.

1 Whilst applicants are strongly recommended to follow the advice contained within this advice note, it does not represent formal guidance under s37 or s50 of the Act.
Completed applications should be made to the following address, within the working hours of 9am - 5pm, Mondays to Fridays, excluding UK public holidays:

Planning Inspectorate, National Infrastructure Directorate, Temple Quay House, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN.

Each paper copy of the application should be provided as an individual package with the documents organised in the order set out in Appendix 1 of this advice. It is essential that the electronic copies are provided in accordance with the procedure set out in this advice, to ensure consistency and compatibility with the Planning Inspectorate’s electronic system.

Applicants are reminded that they are required to make the full application including all documents and information accompanying the application available to each person notified of the accepted application. Applicants should also be aware of the additional publicity, consultation and certification requirements for accepted applications involving an Environmental Impact Assessment\(^2\). At least one public inspection copy should also be made available at a location or locations in the vicinity of the proposed development. The Planning Inspectorate also strongly advises applicants to send a public inspection copy of their submission to the local authority(s) within whose area(s) the project is located.

**Order of application documents**

The order, indexing and filing of submitted application documents is important to ensure that large volumes of application information can be easily navigated and retrieved. An index and file structure for documents is set out in tabulated form in Appendix 1 of this advice note which should be applied to electronic copies and can also be applied to hard copies. If any prescribed document type is included within another document, please make clear in which document it is located, including the relevant reference, page, paragraph, and/or appendix numbers.

**Organisation of electronic information and file indexing**

As outlined above, electronic copies of the application documents need to be structured to ensure compliance with the Planning Inspectorate’s electronic system, enabling efficient upload onto the Planning Inspectorate’s systems and the National Infrastructure Portal.

Prior to the submission of an application, applicants will be provided, on request, with a structured electronic application index for arranging the application documents. The application index should identify all documents submitted with the application. That information will assist both the quantitative and qualitative check of the submission.

A copy of this index will also serve as a reference document. Therefore, the paper copies of an application should be organised in the same order as the electronic version. Please contact the Planning Inspectorate for a copy of the index.

Electronic copies should be optimised for web viewing and should not exceed 50MB per document.

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\(^2\) Regulations 13 and 14 of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2009
Size of documents and summaries

The documents for each application will vary greatly in volume depending on the complexity of the scheme and the particular issues arising from the proposals. Some documents, such as application forms, are only a few pages, whilst others, such as the environmental statement, are likely to be particularly large documents.

Applicants are encouraged to think carefully about the size of documents submitted. Duplication and superfluous content should be avoided. Each document submitted to us should include a summary of the key issues contained within the document. A summary should be no longer than 1,500 words, or 10% of the original document size.

Summaries should clearly and accurately highlight the main points, and direct the reader to the evidence on which they are based. They should not introduce any new or different information to that which is included in the main document, or go beyond the scope of the text they summarise. Good summaries of complex information will help make the salient points clearer to all interested parties.

Applicants should remember that electronic copies will be uploaded to the National Infrastructure Portal, so file sizes should be kept to a maximum of 50MB each.

Referencing and heading of plans, documents and photographs

File referencing for each plan or document submitted with the application should include:

- The scheme name
- A document or plan title
- A plan or document reference number
- The appropriate regulation 5(2) paragraph number to which the document relates
- The date of production of the plan or document
- The author(s)
- A chronological note of any revisions made to the plan or document including the revised plan or document number

Any photographs should be correctly labelled, annotated and dated. The location at which photographs have been taken should be identified on a map. The type of lens used must also be specified (e.g. wide angle etc).

Format of documents

In preparing application documents, applicants should follow the advice set out below, allowing for consistency and efficiency in the way that applications are presented. This will also aid the identification and navigation of material and will be of benefit to all parties throughout the application process.

- Each application document must be paginated and paragraphs must be numbered. The paragraphs within appendices should also be numbered.
- Written documents should, as far as possible, be printed on both sides of each page in order to reduce the overall bulk of the application and resources used.
- Electronic documents should have a maximum file size of 50MB each and wherever possible should be in PDF format.

3 The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
• The document should also contain a table of contents setting out chapter or topic headings, unless it comprises a short statement of no more than two A4 pages.

• Where the document provided comprises a plan or plans, these must also be clearly labelled in the bottom right hand corner with 'title page' information; a list of revisions should be produced so at any stage it is easy to identify the latest version of the plan or document.

• A glossary should be included for each written document in order to provide clarification of meaning for all readers (including the general public). Larger documents such as the environmental statement should include a clearly referenced bibliography.

• The main body of text in reports should have a minimum font size of 12 pt using a recognisable and clear font such as Arial or Verdana (for further information refer to RNIB’s clear print design guidelines).

• Any links made to relevant documents (e.g. an NPS, development plan or other document which are to be relied on) should be made to the specific passage, policy or relevant part of the document. Links to entire documents are usually unhelpful, and the need for clarification may cause delays in the process.

• In all but exceptional cases, video or audio information should not be submitted as it will not be certain that all interested parties involved will have the appropriate equipment to view the information. Applicants are strongly recommended to consult with the Planning Inspectorate before the submission of such information.

Scale of plans and drawings

Any plans, drawings or sections should be no larger than A0 size (with the exception of some marine charts which may be larger) and should be drawn to an identified scale (not smaller than 1:2500). Plans should show the direction of North.

The scale used for each plan, drawing or section should ensure that each clearly and accurately portrays the proposals. A scale bar should also be included on each plan in order to prevent any ambiguity when dimensions or distances are measured on any copies of the plans or electronically. Applicants should notate key dimensions and measurements on each plan, drawing or section (e.g. showing proposed distances from a proposed building to the boundary of the site or the heights of key buildings within a scheme).

Linear schemes may require a sequence of drawings to show the full extent of the proposals. Where sequenced drawings are provided a key plan and sequence notation should also be provided.

It is recognised that the most appropriate scale will depend on the particular form of the proposed scheme and applicants are therefore encouraged to discuss this with the Planning Inspectorate in advance of the submission of the final application documents.

Appendices

Appendices are useful in setting out in an ordered and readily identifiable form factual, technical and other material upon which the main body of information is based. Applicants should ensure that appendices are of direct relevance to the application proposals.
Appendices should be referenced and indexed and may be separately bound where appropriate. Section dividers should be used to enable quick and easy retrieval of information. It is important that the relevance of appendices is clearly explained in the document to which they relate.

**Data protection and privacy**

As application documents will be published the developer should be mindful of the inclusion of any personal data relating to individuals in the documents they submit in particular the Consultation Report. The Planning Inspectorate must ensure that it complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 when handling personal information and must redact personal details prior to publication. We follow protocols set down by the Information Commissioners Office, further details of which can be found at www.ico.gov.uk. Please contact the Case Leader for further information and advice on this matter.

**Applications in Wales**

In accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Planning Inspectorate has a Welsh Language Scheme which has been approved by the Welsh Language Board. For proposals affecting Wales, we strongly urge applicants to provide appropriate application documents in English and Welsh. Applicants are encouraged to liaise with the relevant local authority about which particular application documents should be made available in the Welsh language. Providing translations of application documents where appropriate is the responsibility of the applicant.

**Application acceptance checklist**

To help decision-making on whether or not to accept applications for examination, the Planning Inspectorate has produced an Acceptance of Applications checklist based upon the criteria set out on s55 of the Planning Act 2008. A copy of this checklist has been included in Appendix 2 of this Advice Note. Applicants may find it helpful to refer to the checklist in preparing their applications for submission. Please note that the completion of this checklist by the applicant should not be seen as a guarantee that the application will be accepted as this is a matter for the Secretary of State.

**GIS shapefile**

In order to assist in reviewing the adequacy of pre-application consultation including the identification of prescribed consultees, applicants are requested to provide the Planning Inspectorate with a GIS shapefile of the land over which authorisation is sought within the application. It would be helpful if this shapefile could be sent to the Planning Inspectorate at least a week in advance of the formal submission of the application. It should comply with the following requirements:

- The shapefile should be of Polygon geometry type, and consist of one or more polygon features representing the site boundary.
- For each area of land a single, valid, ESRI shapefile, consisting of one of each of the following files: *.prj, *.dbf, *.shp, *.shx. Please note that the four files in bold are mandatory. No other files should be contained within the *.zip file.
- The shapefile submitted should be in the British National Grid (OSGB1936) format.
- Any shapefile Attribute Table data should be deleted as this is not required to generate the shapefile and will minimise upload time to our GIS system.
- The shapefile should be provided as a *.zip file using the default WinZip settings (i.e. no encryption, normal compression etc.). No other files should be contained within the *.zip file.
Paying the application fee

A fee of £4,500 must be paid at the same time the application is made and further fees are charged at different stages in an application’s consideration. Full details of all the fees payable are set out in The Infrastructure Planning (Fees) Regulations 2010 (No.106 1st March 2010). The Planning Inspectorate encourages the payment of fees via electronic transfer rather than by individual cheque payment where possible. Electronic payment of application fees should be made electronically to the Planning Inspectorate’s bank account. A payment sheet containing the details is available on request.

Remittance notes and payable orders should be sent to:

Planning Inspectorate, Finance Room 4/03, Temple Quay House, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN

Further information on fees and their payment can be obtained by contacting the Planning Inspectorate.

Draft application documents - Assistance from the Planning Inspectorate and input from other parties

The applicant is encouraged to ensure that there is a dialogue with the Planning Inspectorate through the allocated Case Leader to ensure that application information is prepared and presented effectively. This will help applications to be assessed as efficiently as possible and make information clearly available to interested parties.

To help prepare the application documentation, we encourage applicants to submit a draft application and supporting documents to the Planning Inspectorate whilst the applicant carries out its consultation and works up detailed proposals in order that quality issues can be identified before the application is submitted. The Planning Inspectorate will be able to provide applicants with non-binding feedback as to whether the documents are likely to cover sufficient material and have been prepared to the necessary standards.

When submitting documentation to the Planning Inspectorate applicants should also submit it to the local authority and other parties with whom consultation is ongoing. This will ensure that those bodies are aware of the nature of the exercise that is being undertaken and so they may provide suggestions to the applicant should they wish to do so.

We also encourage applicants to arrange a meeting with the Planning Inspectorate in advance of the formal submission of the application. This meeting will provide an opportunity for applicants to talk through their proposed application documentation. Please note, however, that any advice given will be without prejudice to the formal decision of the Secretary of State on the acceptance of an application under s55 of the Act.

If you are unsure as to who your appointed contact is please telephone 0303 444 5000 for further information.

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4 As amended by The Localism Act 2011 (Infrastructure Planning)(Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012 No. 635)
What happens next?

On receipt of an application for development consent, the Secretary of State has a period of 28 days, starting on the day after it receives the application, to decide whether or not to accept the application for examination. The applicant will be notified of the decision to accept the application or, where the application has not been accepted, the applicant will be given reasons why it has not been accepted.

5 The Secretary of State decides whether or not to accept an application in accordance with s55 of the Planning Act 2008. Acceptance means that an application proceeds to be considered at examination. It does not make any decision on the outcome of the development consent order at this stage.
## Appendix 1: Suggested order of information submitted with application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Document type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application form</td>
<td>• Completed and signed form</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Copies of newspaper notices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plans/Drawings/Sections</td>
<td>• Location plan(s) (o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Land plan(s) (i) (including plans showing land proposed to be</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>compulsorily acquired, over which rights are proposed to be</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extinguished and special category land)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Works plan (j)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Access/Rights of way plan (k)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Site layout plan(s) (o)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Elevation drawings (o)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Floor plans (o)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Access/Parking/Landscaping (o)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drainage/Surface water management (o)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Other detailed plans/sections (o)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plan(s) of statutory/non-statutory sites or features (nature</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conservation, habitats, marine conservation zones, water</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bodies etc) (l)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plan(s) showing statutory or non-statutory historic or</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scheduled monument sites (m)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Plan showing any Crown land (n)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Charts for marine schemes (o)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft development consent</td>
<td>• Draft proposed order (b)</td>
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<tr>
<td>order information</td>
<td>• Explanatory memorandum to draft proposed order (c)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compulsory Acquisition</td>
<td>• Statement of reasons (h)</td>
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<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td>• Funding statement (h)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Book of reference (parts 1 to 5) (d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reports/Statements</td>
<td>• Consultation report</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Flood risk assessment (e)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment of nature conservation effects (l)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assessment of historic environment effects (m)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Environmental protection information (f)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• European site appropriate assessment report (g)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Details of other consents and licences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Details of associated development (with references to documents)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental impact assessment &amp;</td>
<td>• Environmental statement (ES) (a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>habitat regulations information</td>
<td>• ES technical appendices (a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Non technical summary (a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Screening opinion (if applicable) (a)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Scoping opinion (if applicable) (a)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Publicity requirements (a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 An indexed electronic table will be provided on request to applicants to assist in this process.
7 Regulations 5, 6 and 7 of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 set out the statutory requirements for what must accompany a development consent application. Where applicable, the letters in brackets following each document type refer to the particular document requirement within regulation 5(2).
### Category | Document type
---|---
Photographs | • Photographs and photomontages (q)  
| | • Plan identifying locations and directions of photographs (q)  
| | • Index of photographs (q)
Other media | • Model information (q)  
| | • Any other media information (q)
**Additional information for specific types of infrastructure** | **Offshore generating station (p):**  
| | • Details of proposed route for offshore cables  
| | • Safety zone statement
| **Non offshore generating station (p):** | • Statement of responsibility for designing and building the connection
| **Highway or railway development (p):** | • Levels/depths/heights of proposed works  
| | • Cross sections  
| | • Drainage outfall details
| **Harbour facilities (p):** | • Statement(s) on why DCO is necessary
| **Pipelines (p):** | • Name and owner  
| | • Measurements of pipeline  
| | • What will be conveyed by the pipeline  
| | • Any grant of rights in land or consents that are required
| **Hazardous waste facility (p):** | • Statement of purpose and annual capacity/final disposal/recovery
| **Dam or reservoir (p):** | • Recreational amenities
**Other documents** | • Any other document not listed above which the applicant chooses to support the application (q) (e.g. documents to meet the requirements of a National Policy Statement, planning statement, design and access statement, sustainability appraisal, health impact assessment, travel plan, code of construction practice, carbon economy report)

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8 This may include information that the applicant would normally want to submit for the development proposal or that which has been suggested or asked for by respondents to pre-application consultation and publicity and which the applicant wishes to include

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### Further information
The Planning Inspectorate, National Infrastructure Directorate, Temple Quay House, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN

Email: enquiries@infrastructure.gsi.gov.uk  
Telephone: 0303 444 5000  
Web: http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk

This advice note was republished in March 2012 with changes to reflect the IPC being abolished and the work of the IPC transferring to the Planning Inspectorate under the Localism Act 2011.