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Your Ref
IWC Ref COVID19

Contact Ollie Boulter
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The impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the Local Planning Authority #3

Dear all,

Following the recent statements and updates to Government guidance, I am able to provide an update on the steps that we, in Planning and Building Control, are taking to support the development sector and keeping our staff safe.

- Flexibility over planning conditions restricting working times
- How we advertise planning applications
- Planning Committee
- Site visits
- Pre-application advice service
- Incoming post

Flexibility over planning conditions restricting working times

The Government expects local planning authorities to [approve requests to extend construction working hours](#), where they are controlled by a planning condition, temporarily to ensure safe working in line with social distancing guidelines until 9pm, Monday to Saturday, unless there are very compelling reasons against this.

I would expect applicants to request this flexibility by contacting the case officer to establish whether they are modest or short-term changes and can therefore be dealt with informally, or whether a formal application to vary the condition would be required. I would anticipate any requests will be dealt with informally wherever possible.

How we advertise planning applications

[The Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#) are a temporary measure that recently came into effect.

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Amongst other things, the regulations allow for Environmental Statements to be made available for inspection online, rather than in the office.

We will be restarting advertising applications for major development with site notices and an advert in the local press. This will mean that any majors we've held back from public consultation are likely to be included in the Press List of Friday 12 June.

Planning Committee

We will be holding a virtual Planning Committee on 2 June, which will cover the items from the cancelled meetings in March and May. We will then revert back to the [programmed cycle of meetings](#), which for the foreseeable future will be held virtually.

Site visits and Inspections

We have, as of 1 June, recommenced site visits, where they are necessary and safe for Planning Officers and Building Control Surveyors. My staff will contact the site owner to arrange the visit and discuss measures in place. They will complete a risk assessment for the site visit, and should they not be satisfied that appropriate measures in line with Government guidance are not in place I have instructed them to leave the site and not undertake the site visit. Should this situation arise we will then be in touch to establish whether a site visit can be undertaken safely.

Please note that in relation to planning applications a site visit may not be necessary, as an assessment of the likely impacts can be made using existing knowledge and photographs, submitted information and online images. The default position remains that site visits will be undertaken virtually, unless this is not possible.

Pre-application advice service

We continue to provide our pre-application advice service, although we have adjusted the gold service offer. An officer will still undertake a site visit, if it is assessed as being safe to do so which will be unaccompanied, with the meeting element being held virtually following the officer's site visit. Please do draw the officer's attention to any specific elements you would want them to think about whilst on site, and this will assist in the virtual meeting.

Incoming post

I would continue to ask that all correspondence is undertaken electronically wherever possible. Please be aware that if you send paper correspondence to Seaclose Office, there will still be a delay in processing as staff continue to primarily work from home.

I hope that the steps outlined above are positive and will help us return to maybe not business as usual, but at the very least business in unusual times.

Yours sincerely



Ollie Boulter
Strategic Manager for Planning and Infrastructure Delivery

This information is available in Braille, large print, tape and community languages from the above offices and Typetalk calls are welcome