

LPAS DECISION MAKING FUNCTIONS DURING COVID 19

Below are details of how LPAs in the Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Bristol regions are continuing to deliver their planning functions. We do have information on all the LPAs in the UK and should you require this detail please call **Anne Pawsey on 07771 572832**.

Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Bristol Region

| LPA | PRE-APP | VALIDATION OF APPLICATION | SITE VISITS/SITE NOTICES | COMMITTEE MEETINGS | IMPACT ON LOCAL PLAN |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| Cotswold District Council | Yes electronically. Can hold video conferences. | Yes only electronic. Payment by BACS only. | Site notices being displayed. Site assessments taking place remotely. Site visits taking place if essential and not to vulnerable premises. LPA will contact applicant by phone in the first instance and comply with social distancing requirements. | Currently suspended. Consideration is being given to virtual committees. | N/A LP adopted in August 2018. |
| Stroud District Council | Yes delays possible. | Yes only electronic. Payment by BACS only. | Applicants/agents to display site notices. No site visits being made. | Currently suspended. Consideration is being given to virtual committees. | Consultation on the submission version of the draft Local Plan is expected to commence in Autumn 2020. Draft Local Plan Review to be submitted in November 2020. No formal announcement has been made but there is a risk that timescales may slip. |
| Forest of Dean District Council | Yes – video conferencing where appropriate. | Service will continue as normal, using electronic methods. | Site assessments to be undertaken remotely wherever possible and Officers will seek an extension of time to determine applications. | All council meetings have been suspended so any applications which cannot be dealt with under the scheme of delegation will need an extension whilst alternative arrangements are being considered. | It is impossible to say what the final effects of the crisis will be but delay is inevitable. Much information gathering can continue but simple and necessary things like site visits are at present not able to be made. |
| Cheltenham Borough Council | Yes electronically/by telephone. Can hold video conferences. | Service will continue as normal, using electronic methods. | Site notices will be sent to applicants to put up and will not be put up by officers. Neighbour letters and media advertising will happen as normal. Site visits not being conducted; officers will rely on photos and web based images. | Planning Committees cancelled. A temporary process has been put in place to make decisions on those applications that would normally be considered at Planning Committee. On 23 March 2020 full council agreed that for the time being, all regulatory planning decisions will be delegated to officers. All planning committee members will be invited to comment on applications that would otherwise be presented to the planning committee prior to decisions being made. In practice, the council will be circulating consultations on officer recommendations to all committee members every other Friday. Members will have five days to comment from the date a consultation is issued. Decisions will then be made taking all information into account. | The Inspector's Report on the Examination of the Cheltenham Plan 2011-2031 was submitted to the Council on 17th March 2020. Following the Inspector's Report, the council will meet to decide whether to adopt the Plan. It was originally hoped to hold this meeting in April 2020 but due to the disruption and uncertainty surrounding coronavirus delays to this timetable are anticipated. |

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| Tewkesbury Borough Council | Pre-app advice service may not be running during the pandemic. Whilst not receiving new requests, old ones will be responded to. | Yes but there may be delays. | Site visits no longer taking place. | Currently all council meetings have been suspended but this will be reviewed regularly, and updates will be provided as to when the next meeting will be held. | To be confirmed. |
| Gloucester City Council | The pre-application service is continuing over the phone and by email, however, they are currently unable to offer a site visit service or face to face meeting. | Electronically as paper applications is likely to be delayed as visits to offices are infrequent. | Site notices will be sent to applicants to display (with instructions) and will not be displayed by officers. Avoiding visiting sites unless absolutely necessary (for example for urgent enforcement matters). Where possible officers will rely on photos and web based images to make decisions Where this is not possible, officers will speak to customers to seek more photos. If a site visit is still required, they will seek extensions of time for those applications as opposed to visiting sites. | Cancelled until further notice with virtual options being explored – next planning committee shown on meetings calendar 9th June 2020. | To be confirmed. |
| Bristol City | Offering to do via telecom / Zoom meetings or just provide written advice. All meetings will be replaced with conf calls or Zoom meetings or applicants can invite case officers to join Microsoft Team meetings but BCC staff don't have this version of Microsoft currently. | All tasks can be carried out from home via IDOX Uniform, however, this will not apply if paper applications are made and cheques are enclosed. | Current provider (BCC Transport) withdrew service due to health concerns of casual employees who do this work. Notices now being produced and displayed by a member of staff in Transport who has volunteered to do this work, although this is under review. No site visits are taking place, instead applicants are being asked to submit photographs or even short videos to assist remote assessment. | Virtual committees formally started from 22nd April. These committees will meet fortnightly until further notice. Not currently exploring extended officer delegated powers as assuming virtual committees can work through decisions. Public statements will be made available to all members of the virtual meeting, but members of the public will not be able to present their statements themselves. The Council is looking at options to further enhance public participation, including being able to ask questions via Zoom, and it is hoped this could be in place following next month's Full Council. | Unknown. |
| Oxford City Council | Electronic only. Responding using conference calling, emails, mobiles and virtual meetings. | Currently able to register applications remotely, however, there may be some delays. Can only accept electronic applications. Unable to accept payment for any planning applications or services via cash or cheque at the current time. Request either online payment, payment over the phone, or via BACS transfer. | Staff are notifying neighbours. Officers not making site visits, relying on information available, such as virtual site visits, photographs etc. Not holding meetings in person, but are doing so virtually through Microsoft Teams. | No committee meetings held during March and April 2020. Under review. Currently working on what measures will be set up to deal with committees during the restrictions. Website will be updated with further details on this when they are available. | Local Plan 2016- 2036: Timetable for Public Consultation (modifications) stage running through Spring/ Summer 2020 may be affected. Under review. Recommended to email queries. South Oxfordshire District Council intend to progress the new Local to examination. Intention is to have new Local Plan adopted by the end of the year. Unaffected by Coronavirus. |

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| South Oxfordshire District Council | Yes electronically. prioritised or actioned quickly in the current circumstances. | Yes electronically. Prioritised or actioned quickly in the current circumstances. | Site visits will be conducted on a risk-assessed basis. No physical face to face meetings at present but will engage via email, telephone or video conferencing. Unable to accept any paper copies of correspondence. | No committee meetings to be held during March and April 2020. Future meetings under review. | Local Plan Part 1 and 2 recently adopted. The new Local Plan is still being progressed under normal timeframe. 'Call for Sites' unaffected and submissions still being encouraged. |
| Cherwell District Council | Electronic versions only. | Continuing to register and validate applications providing they are electronic. Not accepting paper copies of plans or payments. Under regular review. | Site visits are minimised; photos requested. Face to face meetings will not go ahead but will try to be held via video or telephone where possible. | Planning committees going ahead virtually. Trial on 21st May 2020. | To be confirmed. |
| Vale of White Horse District Council | Electronic versions only. | Planning applications are being registered as normal, but as all planning teams are working from home, they are unable to accept any paper copies of applications, comments/representations or payments through the postal system. Not receiving any paper copies of applications, comments/representations or payments through the postal system. | Site visits will be conducted on a risk-assessed basis. No physical face to face meetings at present but will engage via email, telephone or video conferencing. | All meetings scheduled during and after April 2020 have been cancelled. | To be confirmed. |
| West Oxfordshire | Electronically. Virtual meetings only. | <p>Electronic applications and pre-application responses will continue to be processed. They can assess samples from photographs, manufacturers details and also hold video conferences.</p> <p>Their consultations will all be electronic to reduce paper handling as much as possible. Anyone wishing to make comments on applications should do so on line or by email.</p> | <p>Site Notices will be posted out for applicants to display. Officers will be using photographs, google earth and other media to undertake as much of the site assessment as possible remotely. If a site visit is required they will phone first to ensure you are happy for us to attend. They will not be entering properties and will require social distancing to be in place. They will not be attending site visits to vulnerable premises such as care homes. In circumstances where the lack of a site visit is preventing a proper assessment, they will seek an extension of time to determine the application. If no such extension is agreed it is advised that such applications can be refused.</p> | All council meetings have been suspended so any applications which cannot be dealt with under the scheme of delegation will need an extension whilst alternative arrangements are being considered. Full Council meeting is to take place on the 13th of May to discuss virtual meetings. The Government has amended the law to allow decision making to be made by virtual meetings. | Strategic planning not anticipating any major disruption to policy documentation work. |