



## CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI) ADDENDUM, July 2020

### **TEMPORARY CHANGES IN RESPECT OF PUBLICITY OF PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

As a result of the current COVID-19 outbreak we are making some temporary amendments to our Statement of Community Involvement (July 2016) related to how we publicise planning policy documents and planning applications. The temporary changes outlined have been made to protect the health of our communities, residents and staff and respond to the Government's social distancing advice and amended Coronavirus regulations<sup>1</sup> and guidance<sup>2</sup> brought into force on 14 May 2020.

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the engagement and publicity arrangements for the preparation of planning policy documents and the processing of planning applications. May 2020 government guidance encourages local planning authorities to undertake an immediate review and update the policies where necessary so that plan-making can continue.<sup>3</sup>

The Council is maintaining most of the publicity and engagement measures in the Statement of Community Involvement. The purpose of this addendum is to reflect latest government advice and make public reasonable steps to help the involvement of those in our community who may experience difficulties getting involved in the planning process through the internet.

Currently we are unable to place documents in all our normal deposit locations (Bodicote House, Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington Link Points, Bicester and Banbury Town Councils and libraries) due to restricted public access or temporary closure.

***We will keep the situation under review and will resume the use of our specified deposit locations as and when they are available and social distancing measures can be ensured. This will be made clear at the time of publication of each document.***

Public notice about this addendum is being made as follows:

- on the Council's website
- in local newspapers
- by contacting all people and organisations registered on the Council's planning policy database

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<sup>1</sup> [The Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters#covid19>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making#covid19>

## **Temporary measures addressing COVID-19 restrictions**

### **1. Planning Policy Documents**

The locations in which we would usually deposit documents are listed at Appendix 4 of the Statement of Community Involvement (2016)<sup>4</sup>. While our normal deposit locations are unavailable for the public inspection of documents, we are making alternative arrangements as follows:

#### *Availability of our documents*

1. **Planning Policy documents will continue to be available online via our website [www.cherwell.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/planningpolicy).** This includes prescribed documents for the preparation of Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents.
2. We will **notify all interested parties on our consultation database** explaining where the documents can be inspected online and will include contact details to help any person who may have difficulty in doing so. Notifications will be sent by email and also by letter to anyone who has not provided an email address previously.
3. **Public notices will continue to be published in local newspapers, both online and in hard copy in so far as they are circulating in the district.** For documents only affecting Cherwell District, these are the Banbury Guardian, the Bicester Advertiser and the Oxford Mail. Contact details will be provided to help any person who may have difficulty in accessing the documents online.
4. As we are currently unable to place hard copy documents for viewing at our normal deposit locations **we will post public notices at the deposit locations**, explaining where the relevant documents can be accessed online and with contact details for those who may have difficulty in doing so.
5. Where access to documents online cannot be achieved, the Planning Policy team can be contacted in order to request **a hard copy of the relevant document by post.**
6. There will be **no changes to the posting of documents to Town/Parish Councils/Meetings.** Key planning policy documents that could affect an area will generally be sent in hard copy to the relevant Town/Parish Councils/Meetings. Copies of adopted Development Plan Documents will be sent to all Town/Parish Councils/Meetings within the district as a matter of course.
7. We will raise awareness of the publication of documents and/or consultation **via a press release placed on the Council's website and this will be sent to local media. We will also utilise the Council's social media channels.**

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<sup>4</sup> [Cherwell Statement of Community Involvement \(SCI\), 2016](#)

*How to respond*

8. Anyone can respond to any Planning Policy, Conservation and Design consultations **by email and post as previously.**
9. Where representation forms accompany a consultation, paper representation forms will not be provided at our normal deposit locations while they remain unavailable but can be forwarded on request. The representation forms will also be made available on the Council's website. **Public notices will provide contact details to help those unable to access the representation form online.**
10. **We will explore the use of online consultation facilities such as Survey Monkey for submitting comments directly.**

*Meetings, workshops, exhibitions and focus groups*

11. We will need to engage and consult when we develop new planning policies. However, whilst social distancing measures are in place we are unable to hold face-to-face meetings, workshops, exhibitions or focus groups. **We will use online engagement and virtual meeting systems to ensure that engagement and consultation takes place.**

## **2. Planning applications**

New temporary regulations and guidance came into force on 14 May 2020 providing some flexibilities on the publicity and consultation of planning applications. These regulations cease to have effect on the 31 December 2020<sup>5</sup>. They provide greater flexibility regarding the normal publicity requirements for reasons connected to the effects of coronavirus, including restrictions on movement.

In summary, the new regulations:

- require councils, in certain circumstances, to take reasonable steps to inform anyone who is likely to have an interest in a planning or listed building consent application and to publish the requisite notice on a council website. The reasonable steps may include the use of social media and communication by other electronic means e.g. email.
- increase the period of time for representations to be made once notice is given of a planning application by publication in a newspaper or website from 14 to 21 days
- require the Planning Register to be accessible online if it is not possible to make it available for physical inspection.
- remove the requirement for applicants to ensure a hard copy of the environmental statement is placed at a given address, if it is not reasonably practicable to do so, but require that it be publicised through electronic means.

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<sup>5</sup> [The Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2020](#)

During any period when COVID-19 restrictions apply and access to Bodicote House is restricted, the Council will:

1. continue to publicise planning and listed building consent applications via **site notices, neighbour notifications and newspaper adverts** as we have done prior to the pandemic. We will indicate where the relevant documents can be accessed online and will include contact details to help any person who may have difficulty in accessing the documents online.
2. continue to **provide 21 days for representations** to be made once notice is given.
3. continue to receive and process comments e-mailed and posted to us. However, **we recommend that until we return to normal working conditions comments on planning and listed building consent applications are submitted online** using the online planning register <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/> or sent via email to [planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk).
4. continue to make **Environmental Statements available online** alongside the planning application documents.
5. continue to make Cherwell's Planning Register available online on the Council's website <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/>

We will make the register available for inspection at the Council's main office at Bodicote House when restrictions are sufficiently relaxed and provided arrangements can be made to ensure social distancing for physical inspections can be met.

### **3. Council public meetings including Planning Committee**

The Government has given councils new powers to hold public meetings virtually using video or telephone-conferencing technology.

Meetings, agendas and minutes continue to be available in the Council's website <http://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

### **4. Further advice**

For advice on planning applications, telephone 01295 227006 or email [plannng@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:plannng@cherwell-dc.gov.uk).

For local plans, policy and conservation, telephone 01295 227985 or email [planning.policy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) or [design.conservation@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:design.conservation@cherwell-dc.gov.uk).

For public meetings, telephone 01295 221589 or e-mail [democracy@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk)