

Dated: 24/06/20

Covid-19 FAQs

First and foremost the planning department is currently running as normal, albeit certain processes have changed to ensure applications can be determined. Please be aware that Officers may be required to assist with other departments or services run locally so we will strive to do our best to deal with any outstanding matters.

Are your offices open?

Our offices are closed. Planning will not be offering any face to face services at this time.

I have already submitted my application, what will happen now?

We will continue to work on your application, however COVID-19 has impacted our ability to visit your property to make an assessment on the impact of the development. This could therefore lead to delays in determining your application. However, Case Officers will be contacting the applicant regarding the submission of photographs or videos to assist us and to hopefully prevent any delay in determining your application.

What about site notices?

From 26th March 2020 all applicants will be sent a covering letter and a site notice(s) by post. As Case Officers can no longer visit sites they cannot erect site notices. As a result the onus has been placed on applicants to erect notices on behalf of the Council. Guidance regarding this process is set out fully within the covering letter. This progress will be regularly reviewed.

Is a site visit required before my application can be determined, if so will these be taking place?

We will not be conducting any site visits until further notice, although we are currently reviewing our site visit protocol. We will be in touch with individual applicants to make alternative arrangements where possible.

Will you be prioritising applications?

We will be working to determine all applications, this will be subject to the guidance received from the Secretary of State that Major or large scale applications will take priority over householder applications in order to help support the economy.

I have already submitted my planning application and have now decided not to proceed, will I get a refund?

If we have not processed your application and it has not been allocated to a Planning Officer then we can cancel the application and a refund will be processed. If your planning application has been passed to an Officer then your application will need to be withdrawn, we are not able to refund fees in this circumstance, though you will be able to reapply for an application within 12 months of when we received your original application, this is known as a free go, any addition fee above the original amount will need to be paid. If the application you are withdrawing is already a free go you will not be eligible for another free go, please contact Development Management or your Case Officer for further information.

Will you be offering pre-app meetings?

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We will be offering video meetings via our existing system 8x8. Please contact the Case Officer to arrange a meeting time and a link will be sent to you via email with joining instructions (no new application is required to be downloaded). Face to face meetings in the office or onsite have been suspended until further notice.

Will new applications be accepted?

New applications are still being registered and allocated to Planning Officers, site notices will be posted to applicant to help prevent any additional delay to applications being determined.

Will other agencies used for consultations still be providing a service and will this impact on the decision time for my application?

We are currently working with our statutory consultees to establish their position, some agencies have indicated they are expecting an increase in response times to our consultations. Any applications that require traffic surveys are likely to be delayed at this time due to regular traffic flow being reduced by the impact of the virus.

Will committee meetings go ahead, if they can't will my decision be delayed?

All Planning Committee are being conducted via video conferencing. If the meetings cannot go ahead as planned this will delay your application until a time they can take place. If your application has been called into the Planning Committee you will be notified of the process. All those that have commented on applications called in will also be notified in advance of the committee process.

I need to deliver materials to your office, what should I do?

No deliveries of materials can be made to our offices, any materials required for consideration for your application will either need to be photographed and sent directly to the Planning Officer dealing with your application.

Will Planning Enforcement be investigating breaches of planning control?

Yes, however this service will be restricted. We will only be attending reports of breaches relating to works to listed building or works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders or trees in a conservation area. We would request that any reporting a breach of planning control supply's as much detail and as many photos as possible (if appropriate to do so) when submitting the request to aid our officers to prioritise visits once we are able to conduct them.

Reports can be made [here](#) using the "report it" function on the website.

How long do I have to start work before my granted permission expires?

Planning permissions are valid for 3 years from the date of issuing the decision notice. Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

For planning permissions which are due to expire over the coming months there is no legislation currently in place which will allow the department to alter the timescale. The Government have recently advised that planning permissions that have an expiry date between the start of lockdown and the end of this year will now see their consent extended to 1st April 2021. However, the Council is still waiting for specific details about this change which

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was first reported by the Government on 22nd June. More information on the potential change can be found [here](#).

Can I extend the construction hours relating to my works?

On 13 May 2020, the government published a [written ministerial statement](#) on planning and construction working hours. This statement expects local planning authorities to approve requests to extend construction working hours temporarily to ensure safe working in line with social distancing guidelines until 9pm, Monday to Saturday, unless there are very compelling reasons against this.

Whilst the guidance states that this flexibility is in relation to control imposed by the planning system only, the Council has set up a process which can also be used by developers where there is no planning condition. In these instances, the Council's Environmental Health department will assess your application under the legislation available via the Control of Pollution Act and will grant or refuse your application accordingly.

As a result there will be three different options available to developers. Please note that Options 1 and 2 apply to only those who have construction hours restricted by planning condition (i.e. Construction Management Plan etc.).

Option 1: Planning restrictions

Apply for a Non Material Amendment via Planning Portal but only if changes requested are significant. A planning fee is required. Officers will attempt to assess in 10 working days; however the normal statutory process is 28 days.

Option 2: Planning restrictions

Apply for an informal planning Non Material Amendment agreement via the Three Rivers website if changes are considered minor. No fee required. Officers will look to issue decision in 10 working days.

Option 3: No planning restrictions

Apply for an informal EH agreement via the Three Rivers website. No fee required. Officers will look to issue decision in 10 working days.

To submit your application via Option 2 or 3 please visit the relevant part of the website [here](#).

Requests for documents relating to planning applications

Any requests for copies of historic documents will be logged as normal in our system via the Customer Service Centre (01923 776611 Or enquiries@threerivers.gov.uk). Please note that these will be treated as low priority at this time so could take longer than usual to respond to.

General planning enquiries

In respect of the department's Duty Planning Service, this will now ONLY operate by phone between the hours of 10am-1pm Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Officers will be on hand to take phone calls during these hours and may ask that you submit information to them electronically.

For more information on the Householder Duty Planning service please visit our website [here](#).