

Updated: 25/05/21

Covid-19 FAQs including planning updates:

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, although visits are currently being undertaken subject to our site visit protocol.

Once an application has been validated the planning agent will be sent a 'Checklist and Initial Site Visit Risk Assessment' which will enhance communication between parties to ensure site visits can be undertaken safely.

If a site visit cannot be undertaken Case Officers will contact the applicant regarding the submission of photographs or videos to assist us. If submissions are not useful to ensure a fair assessment of the application, we may seek alternative arrangements to ensure a site visit can take place safely with full agreement of all parties to prevent the delay in 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 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?

As it stands all site visits can take place.

All planning agents are sent a 'Checklist and Initial Site Visit Risk Assessment' once an application is validated to assist Officers.

Will you be prioritising applications?

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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?

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 software 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.

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

All Planning Committees were as of 7 May 2021 being conducted via video conferencing. Unfortunately the required Government legislation has not been extended at the current time meaning all Planning Committees after 7 May 2021 are to be held in-house until further notice.

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.

The Planning Committee page can be viewed here: [Council meetings \(threerivers.gov.uk\)](https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/council-meetings)

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, please there may be delays on low priority cases. We are currently prioritising sites to visit but will attend where reports are received relating to works to listed buildings 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.

The Business and Planning Act which provided extensions to time limits has now expired.

If you have any queries regarding your planning permission you should write to the LPA via enquiries@threerivers.gov.uk.

Can I extend the construction hours relating to my works?

On 25 May 2021, 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. In some cases for areas without residential properties even greater relaxation should be considered, including allowing 24-hour working, where justification is provided.

The guidance states that this flexibility in relation to construction hours is ONLY applicable to the planning system (and not other regulatory regimes) so it is important to note that this ONLY applies if your planning permission is subject to a condition which specifies the times during construction activities may be carried out or relates to a document relating to the carrying out of the development whereby the document specifies the times during which construction activities may be carried out (i.e. a Construction Management Plan).

For all those wanting to extend their construction hours you must apply formally to the Council via the Non-Material Amendment route ([section 96A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#)).

Requests for documents relating to planning applications

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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](#).