



Date: Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020

To: All Babergh & Mid Suffolk Parish Councils

Dear All,

## **CORONAVIRUS & CONTINUITY OF PLANNING SERVICES**

COVID-19: TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS: PARISH CONSULTATION & PUBLICITY**

As you may now be aware a new Statutory Instrument has been made which enables Parishes to conduct meetings in different ways to suit the present emergency:

[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/392/regulation/5/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/392/regulation/5/made)

This enables District or Parish Council meetings to take place in more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet sites, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

These regulations also provide for the member to be in remote attendance if they are able at that time:

(a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance,

(b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and

(c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

**For “live” Parish consultations, at the present time, where we have not received a response we will be issuing a revised consultation letter by email this week which will include a further 21 day consultation period. We expect that this will enable Parishes to make appropriate arrangements to provide a formal response. If you have already responded but would like extra time to meet “virtually” and confirm your response please contact the planning case officer.**



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**Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils**  
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## TEMPORARY WORKING ARRANGEMENTS:

### DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT, HERITAGE & ENFORCEMENT

In line with the advice of the Chief Planning Officer at CLG my team will be expecting to safeguard the delivery of a continued and effective planning service at this difficult time. My team will focus on providing practical and pragmatic advice, guidance and consideration with the intention to support our recovery and our local economy.

We have understandably received a number of queries and requests for clarity about:

- Application validation
- Publicity and consultation
- Processing and consideration including site visits and committee arrangements
- Decision making and delegated powers
- Day to day dialogue and pre-application advice.

The Councils' staff are now working remotely from home. In order to manage pressure on IT facilities used by ourselves, Suffolk County Council and other users we are working more flexibly including outside of normal office hours. Staff are also helping to cover other community support activities. We remain committed to providing business as usual as far as we possibly can in the present circumstances and to keeping you informed as things progress.

Our phone lines are open and staff are taking phone calls during normal office hours. Email responses may be sent outside of usual working hours as our staff are working flexibly.

- Application Validation & Post handling

We are continuing to validate Applications in the usual way and undertaking appropriate consultation and publicity. We do need to strongly advise everyone to use digital means to engage with us in order to reduce the extent of physical handling and continue to work in a timely manner. Our post room arrangements are presently limited and delays in post handling are being experienced.

- Publicity and consultation

We have for the time being ceased installing site notices for most applications.

We believe that this is consistent with the present expectation to avoid public congregation and promote staying at home. Where site notices are obligatory for statutory reasons (such as environmental impact assessments, external works to listed buildings etc.), we will take a case by case view as to the best means to satisfy those requirements.

We are thus expecting to suspend parts of our Statement of Community Involvement in relation to these aspects to reflect the appropriate working adjustments we are making.





If it is reasonably practicable and consistent with government health advice to install a site notice without avoidable travel we may ask applicants to post the notice and return a digital photograph of it back to us both at the outset **and** the end of the publicity period. In all other cases we will ask the applicant to agree to extend processing time to allow for our need to display an obligatory notice.

In the current circumstances, whilst we are suspending the displaying of site notices we will be undertaking publicity by neighbour notification letter and website publication only, as an interim measure, in order to continue to safeguard public transparency. We expect to continue to publicise applications in the East Anglian Daily Times and on our website in the usual way.

- Processing and consideration including site visits and committee arrangements

For site inspection purposes we are taking a case by case approach and may ask applicants to provide digital photographs from agreed viewpoints to assist our consideration. Committee site visits are for the time being not being conducted.

The Councils are exploring arrangements for virtual planning committee meetings that can be broadcast to the internet and updates on this will be advised separately by the Council's Governance team.

- Decision making and delegated powers

We are looking to prioritise decision making using innovative approaches as need be where this will support the local economy. This is consistent with the advice of The Chief Planner at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

We are, therefore, reviewing all applications expected to be reported to Committee and considering whether any items might be taken into delegation for a decision under the present circumstances including dialogue with Ward Members where appropriate. Consideration is being given to the local interest and the extent to which an application may be controversial together with any relevant planning history.

Yours sincerely,

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