

Brighton and Hove City Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Temporary Addendum 2020

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1. What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the ways in which partners, stakeholders and the community can be involved in the council's planning processes. This covers both the production of planning policy and decisions relating to planning applications. The council's current SCI was adopted in 2015 and can be viewed [here](#).

2. Why do we need to temporarily amend the Statement of Community Involvement?

- 2.1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Brighton & Hove City Council's Customer Service Centres and some libraries are currently closed or offering reduced services. As such it is not possible to meet the requirements of the SCI regarding the availability of hard copies of policy documents in public buildings and the council's libraries.
- 2.2 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was updated on 13 May 2020 and states that where any of the policies in a SCI cannot be complied with due to current guidance to help combat the spread of COVID-19, the local planning authority is encouraged to undertake an immediate review and update the policies where necessary. . As a result, this addendum sets out temporary changes the council is making to the requirements set out in the adopted SCI whilst COVID-19 restrictions are in place so that plan-making can continue and to reflect changes to the development management process The addendum should be read alongside the adopted SCI 2015.

3. Temporary changes required which are relevant to planning policy matters

a) Availability of our documents

- 3.1 Arrangements set out in the SCI require hard copies of consultation documents to be made available for inspection at the Customer Service Centres (Hove Town Hall, Hove and Bartholemew's House, Brighton) and libraries. Currently, Customer Service Centres remain closed. As of October 2020 most libraries in the city have reopened with the exception of Mile Oak and Hollingbury Old Boat Corner where libraries are in shared buildings. Patcham and Westdene Library, are remaining closed whilst refurbishment work is undertaken.

i) **Temporary Solution:**

- The council will make its consultation documents available online via specific consultation pages on the council website.
- The council will be able to provide a hard copy of consultation documents for consultees who have difficulty accessing documents online on request. This should be requested by emailing planningpolicy@brighton-hove.gov.uk or calling the policy team using the number provided during the consultation period.
- For consultations on a pre-submission neighbourhood plan (regulation 14), customers should contact the parish council /forum directly to obtain a copy of the consultation document.
- For consultations on a submission neighbourhood plan (regulation 16), customers should contact the council via planningpolicy@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- When it is safe to do so, documents will be placed in Customer Service Centres and libraries for public inspection. This will be communicated in consultation material. These documents will need to be accessed in a manner which accords with the council's wider policies and procedures for ensuring the safety of visitors to the council offices and other relevant premises.
- For the latest information on libraries re-opening and use of the library computers please visit: <https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/libraries-leisure-and-arts/libraries/library-services-available-duringcovid-19>

b) **How to respond to consultations**

3.2 The council's preference is that customers respond to consultations online in the first instance, where they can. Paper response forms are accepted but will not be made available in libraries whilst restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic remain.

i) **Temporary Solution:**

- The council will continue to run consultations online, using council's consultation portal <https://consultations.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>
- Responses by email are also accepted.
- If customers would like to receive a paper consultation form, they should request this via planningpolicy@brighton-hove.gov.uk or call the policy team using the number provided during the consultation period.
- Forms can then be returned to the council offices via post.
- Consultation periods may be extended where appropriate to provide time for accessing documents and responding.

c) **Meetings, workshops and focus groups**

3.3 The council values the views of consultees, residents, interest groups and other stakeholders when developing planning policies. Due to the government restrictions associated with preventing the spread of COVID-19, the council cannot hold face-to-face meetings, workshops, focus groups or exhibitions. This is to protect the health of our communities and staff.

i) **Temporary Solution:**

- For consultations the council recommend that engagement measures recommended within the government's Planning Practice Guidance are used. These include holding virtual displays, digital consultations and video conferencing in order to avoid social gatherings using software such as MS Teams and Zoom. If these methods are successful, the council consider utilising these methods in the future.
- Where online software is not suitable or cannot be used by specific groups, the council will use other approaches including telephone calls to engage with stakeholders.

d) **Neighbourhood Planning and Referendums**

3.4 The council will continue to support the progression of neighbourhood plans in the city, in a manner which seeks to facilitate their continued progression, while according with the government requirements for preventing the spread of COVID-19. There are two compulsory consultation stages for neighbourhood plans and the council will continue to advise neighbourhood plan groups on suitable approaches to consultation through their lead officer:

- Regulation 14 consultations require community engagement and encourage feedback and exchange of views with the public. This is conducted by the Neighbourhood Forum / Parish Council.
- Regulation 16 consultations seek views on the final draft plan and are less geared towards engagement. This is conducted by the Local Planning Authority.

i) **Temporary Solution:**

3.5 For Regulation 14 consultations, among other mechanisms to support neighbourhood planning, the council will:

- Work with the Neighbourhood Forum / Parish Council as the qualifying body to ensure the pre-submission consultation is publicised appropriately including on the Forum/ Parish council website.
- Work with Neighbourhood Forums/ Parish Council to ensure documents and consultation forms are available to a wide range of interested parties including those who do not have internet access.
- Advise Neighbourhood Forums/ Parish Council on appropriate methods of engagement considering Covid-19 and its implications for consultation exercises.
- Advise the Neighbourhood Forum / Parish Council to consider extending consultation periods to provide time for accessing documents and responding, if relevant.

3.6 For Regulation 16 consultations among other mechanisms to support neighbourhood planning, the council will:

- Publish the consultation and documents available online via specific consultation pages on the council website.
- Allow consultation responses to be sent via email
- Facilitate the use of paper consultation forms to be requested via planningpolicy@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- Allow forms to be returned to the council offices via post.
- Consider consultation periods being extended where appropriate to provide time for accessing documents and responding.

3.7 Examinations into submitted neighbourhood plans

- The council will continue to support this process.
- If social distancing measures have an impact on parts of the Examination, such as site visits, the council will work with the Examiner and Neighbourhood Plan groups accordingly.

3.8 Neighbourhood plan referendums

- These have been postponed until 6th May 2021, in line with the Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 7th April 2020.

4. Temporary changes required which are relevant to the Development Management process

a) Planning Performance Agreements and Pre application Advice

4.1 Our pre-application service is continuing, using online conferencing and email. This will help all applicants to continue to get the best advice from the outset and to proceed through the application process as swiftly as possible during the current pandemic. Carrying out pre-application meetings on site is considered to conflict with COVID-19 restrictions as it involves meeting people, sometimes in an enclosed space.

Temporary Solution:

- Online video conferencing will be used instead of meeting in person, and instead of site visits, photographs will be sought from applicants, and used alongside aerial photographs and streetview.

b) Pre-application consultation

4.2 Applicants or developers are expected to consult with the local community before submitting planning applications which are likely to generate public interest. Such consultations should be accessible and clear to the whole community. Holding face to face / public meetings could be considered to conflict with COVID-19 related restrictions by encouraging large public gatherings.

i) Temporary solution:

- For pre-application consultations run by applicants or agents, the council recommend that engagement measures recommended within the government's Planning Practice Guidance are used. These include holding virtual displays, digital consultations and video conferencing in order to avoid social gatherings.

c) Site Visits

4.3 Due to government guidance on social distancing, site visits may put officers at risk, particularly where the inspection of a building needs to be undertaken and/ or an applicant or agent or occupant is on site.

i) Temporary solution:

- Officers have been asked to minimise face to face meetings and will be using alternatives including conference calls, online meetings, photographs provided by the applicant, and aerial photographs/streetview.
- Non-essential site visits will stop. Essential site visits will be undertaken following a risk assessment being completed. Officers have been advised to minimise contact with people on site, and entry into buildings.

d) Planning Committee

4.4 Councillors are to be physically present to decide applications

i) Temporary solution:

- At its meeting on 19 March 2020, the Policy and Resources Committee approved the arrangements that the council is putting in place to continue decision-making.
- All planning committee meetings are now being held virtually and can be accessed through the webcast link below.
- Any members of the public who wish to address the committee about an application being debated should contact planning.committee@brighton-hove.gov.uk. The committee clerk can arrange for you to either speak to the members via Skype or to have your written statement read out at the meeting.
- Visits to sites by Planning Committee members have been restricted to those which are considered essential to make the decision and will then be subject to risk assessments to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Additional committees were scheduled in September to ensure that all applications that may be Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable were determined in good time.
- All decisions that do not require members' decision will be made in the normal delegated way.

e) Site notices

4.5 The council will continue to place site notices in locations close to proposed developments if it is safe and appropriate to do so. This approach will continue to be

used unless legislation or guidance from government is released which requires the council to use other methods of publicising a site notice.

5. Review of the SCI

5.1 The amendments made to the SCI in this addendum are temporary, to take account of issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications this has for community engagement while government restrictions are in place.

5.2 In the event of changes by government to the requirements for preventing the spread of COVID-19, this addendum will be reviewed and either updated or suspended, as appropriate. If you have any questions on any of the changes outlined in this addendum please contact the planning policy team via email on: planningpolicy@brighton-hove.gov.uk