

Development Management during Covid-19

The Government has recognised the importance of allowing the planning system to continue to operate so that it can support the local economy. It has been advised that planning authorities continue to provide the best service possible and to take an innovative approach using all options to continue the service.

On this basis the development management function at Mansfield District Council will operate as follows:

All planning officers, as advised by the Government, are working from home and therefore should you wish to contact a case officer please use their e mail address and not their telephone number. If you have a general enquiry which is not related to a specific case please e mail pbcc@mansfield.gov.uk

Applications are continuing to be validated and processed using the following procedures:

Validation

Please only submit applications via the Planning Portal or electronically as this will allow your application to be processed quickly. If this is not possible please e mail pbcc@mansfield.gov.uk to ascertain whether there is an alternative option.

During this period you may be asked for more documents than the normal validation requirements eg photographs of the site. The reason for this is to try and reduce the number of site visits that officers have to undertake.

Please ensure that key dimensions are put on your plans along with a scale bar. This will allow for officers and the public to see the key distances.

Please ensure that you put an e mail address on the application form as currently this is the only method of communication that will be used by the case officer.

Due to reduced staff in the offices it may not always be possible to meet the validation timescale deadlines; however we will endeavour to validate applications as soon as we can.

Neighbour consultation process

The neighbour consultation process remains relatively unchanged. The Council will continue to send out neighbour notification letters, erect site notices and place adverts in the press, where appropriate.

Anyone wishing to comment on a current planning application should do so online via e mail to pbcc@mansfield.gov.uk or via the online planning system <https://planning.mansfield.gov.uk/online-applications> . It is not recommended to send your objection in via post at this time, the reason for this is that mail should be reduced where possible and due to the limited attendance at the office (in accordance with government requirements with officers working from home).

If you need to use the postal service, please ensure that your letter is sent in as early as possible within the 21 days to ensure that it is taken into account.

The Council offices are closed to the public and therefore if you want to view the plans in respect of an application you will need to do so online using the online planning system <https://planning.mansfield.gov.uk/online-applications> . You can also of course contact the case officer via e mail; however if possible please send your final comments to pbcmansfield.gov.uk so that they can be logged on the system accordingly.

Please use electronic methods to send in your comments on planning applications where possible

Meetings

Officers are not currently having virtual meetings with applicants or neighbours, although this will be reviewed periodically.

If an officer needs to contact you it will be via e mail only.

Site visits

Officers will be assessing applications based on what is submitted using a variety of methods and records that are accessible to them; as stated in the validation section the submission of photographs of your site is welcomed. However in certain situations a site visit will be required. If this is deemed necessary the following protocol will be used:

- The case officer will contact you, via e mail beforehand to advise you that a site visit is needed and will arrange a day and a time slot for the visit
- They will advise you that they do not need to have any contact with you, they simply need to see the exterior of the property for an assessment to be made
- If the application is for a rear extension please leave your gates open before the officer gets to the site.
- The officer will be wearing their Mansfield District Council identification badge
- Please do not approach the officer.

Amendments to Planning Applications and additional Neighbour Consultation

Whilst under normal circumstances we do engage in additional neighbour consultation following the submission of amendments (although this is not a statutory requirement) this will be reduced during this time period due to staff resource issues. Additional consultation will be undertaken at the discretion of the case officer and will only be undertaken when the amendments are significant.

You are advised to register on our online planning service
<https://planning.mansfield.gov.uk/online-applications/registrationWizard.do?action=start>

You will then be able to track the application and in this way if an amended plan is submitted you will be notified by email when it has been uploaded onto the website and you can view it from there.

Decision Making

There are 3 main processes for decision making on planning applications at Mansfield District Council:

Delegation to officers – this process remains unchanged.

Weekly Chairman Meetings – this process is now being undertaken electronically with dialogue between the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Chairman of Planning Committee.

Planning Committee – Following a temporary change in legislation planning committees will be held in a virtual forum. Further details will follow once the final logistics of this have been put into place.

The Government has advised that planning authorities should be pragmatic when it comes to decision making on planning applications. At present the above processes continue to operate but they may be subject to change depending on logistics and staff resources.

Section 106 Agreement

Section 106 Agreements will continue to be progressed and arrangements are in place to allow for signatures. There may be a slight delay in signing as documents for signing will be batched together. The case officer will keep you informed of individual progress.

Enforcement

The enforcement process continues to operate and the Council still has a duty to investigate enforcement complaints and will register and log complaints when they are received. However during this period the following will apply:

- Please only use the following e mail address to send in your enforcement concerns – pbcc@mansfield.gov.uk
- Please submit as much detail as possible in respect of the breach eg photographs, time logs etc
- Your complaint will be investigated initially via a desk top based analysis.
- As under normal circumstances enforcement action is discretionary
- As advised by the Government, a pragmatic approach will be taken to enforcement breaches relating to the restriction on food operations and deliveries at this time
- The Government has relaxed planning laws in respect of cafes operating take away facilities

Please be aware that there may be a delay in investigating enforcement complaints at this point in time. Complainants will be advised accordingly.

Planning Appeals

The Planning Inspectorate has produced its own guidance in respect fo planning appeals which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-inspectorate-guidance>