

DELIVERING PLANNING SERVICES IN BARROW BOROUGH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC;

JANUARY 2021 UPDATE

Current Govt Guidance

This is updated daily and we will adhere to the guidance. We are now in Lockdown under Tier 4. The current national situation is that Planning Authorities are advised that they should continue to provide the best services that their resources allow during these challenging times and prioritise decision making.

Delivering the service in Barrow Borough

The Town Hall remains closed to the public and all officers remain working remotely using laptops, mobile phones and email. We are restricting site visits to essential ones only. These will be arranged via prior appointment beforehand to ensure that safety measures are in place. Where matters need urgent face to face discussion, and social distancing permits, some site meetings may take place. We ask applicants and agents for your assistance and understanding.

Viewing Applications

This can only take place online at present. If you have any enquiries please email them to <mailto:consultplanning@barrowbc.gov.uk> clearly stating 'application enquiry' and the reference number.

DECISION MAKING

Current Applications

Where feasible and in line with the Councils Constitution, we will progress most applications through officer and Planning Panel delegation. This will apply to simple applications where there are no objections recorded and the proposal meets with Local Plan policies. The Planning Committee is now being conducted as a virtual meeting and broadcast on YouTube. Registered speakers will be able to dial in to address the meeting through a pre-arranged appointment system. Further details, including times and dates, are found on our website.

New Applications

All new applications should be submitted and paid for electronically. Postal applications will be subject to delays as officers are not able to manually check them at present. It is important that agents double check submissions for errors and omissions. Please familiarise yourselves with the validation criteria and ensure that you pay the correct fee.

Pre-application Advice

There will be delays in dealing with pre-application enquiries as we prioritise planning and associated applications. Please note that new residential enquiries for extensions and alterations on domestic premises are now temporarily suspended.

Validation

Officers have limited access to resources, but are remotely checking applications received via electronic means for completeness. Where possible we will endeavour to work with applicants/agents to correct any errors using email, but delays will occur. Site notices will be utilised for new applications and following legislative changes we will advertise applications on our web site instead of in the local press. We recognise that, despite some easing of the lockdown, some applicants will have limited access to specialist advice. When appropriate we will consider relaxing our validation criteria. This refers to the submission of survey information such as ecology, ground contamination, trees, protected species, sustainable drainage and heritage, but others will be considered on their merit. The list is not exhaustive and will be subject to review.

IMPORTANT; it should be stressed that no determination of an application affected will take place until the information has been submitted retrospectively and assessed. In these circumstances we will ask you to agree an appropriate Extension of Time in writing at the time of submitting the application. Without this agreement we will insist that you defer to the full validation criteria and the application will not be registered.

Planning Investigations

The enforcement service has recommenced. Complaints will be logged and prioritised as resources and circumstances permit.

CONTACTING US

Please use the Consult Planning Inbox; <mailto:consultplanning@barrowbc.gov.uk> but expect some delays as it is not constantly monitored. We ask for your understanding in this matter.

Planning Enquiries

Please be aware that officers are currently not available to deal with telephone enquiries as our Duty Officer Rota is suspended whilst we prioritise a backlog of registered applications. Our support staff will log your details and a planning officer will attend to your enquiry when time and workload allows. Alternatively if you are considering a project then use this link to check whether or not planning consent is required;

https://www.planningportal.co.uk/?pagename=guide&ppaction=location_uri&select_location=w0910 ;

or make an application for a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) providing suitable details and paying the correct fee. Follow this link;

<https://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/residents/planning/development-control/planningforms-and-guidance/>

If you are enquiring about a current application that you are interested in please make our support staff aware of this so that they can forward the query to the relevant case officer.