

Pre-Application Consultation COVID-19 Lockdown



Well-informed approaches to consultation and engagement are important for securing community support for development. The COVID-19 lockdown presents challenges, but also drives us to consider how best to continue to engage with those who want to proactively shape their communities, support or otherwise new development and to enhance the social and environmental benefits of proposals.

Lockdown challenges

- Pre-application consultation events
- Ability to hold face-to-face meetings
- Encouraging communities to respond to engagement
- Stakeholder resources to respond to consultation

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New arrangements

In Scotland the Regulations requiring pre-application consultation on major and national developments to include at least one public event have been temporarily changed to remove this requirement during the “emergency period” (the “emergency period” is defined in section 12 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act). However, the Government is clear that these provisions do not reduce its commitment to early engagement in relation to such proposals. The expectation is that applicants will replace any face-to-face public event with an alternative, online version so that local people can still be engaged and have an opportunity to have an influence on proposals that affect them and their area.

How can Lichfields assist?

With the new need for online consultation to replace traditional face-to-face events, we can help you design an effective consultation and engagement strategy that is tailored to the needs of your projects while satisfying the requirements of local planning authorities. Our Smarter Engagement approach offers a clear strategy from the outset and provides flexibility to respond to the changing context that we find ourselves in.

While lockdown and social distancing continues, our teams can help you to:

- Update your engagement strategy to align with the new arrangements;
- Prepare and submit your Proposal of Application Notice;
- Agree your consultation event with the local planning authority;
- Prepare and submit your newspaper advert;
- Create online consultation event websites with interactive maps, videos, animations and infographics;
- Create online questionnaires to support your online consultation events and analyse the data and responses received;
- Co-ordinate (and host) online meetings with stakeholders and community representatives;
- Host online Q&As;
- Monitor (and if need be respond to) the social media activity of community groups; and
- Prepare your Pre-Application Consultation report.

There is a 12-week window from the submission of your proposal of application notice to the submission of your planning application. Being in a position to carry on with your pre-application consultation at this time of lockdown means that there need be no delay to your project in terms of this part of the planning process.

