

Planning Applications

The COVID-19 pandemic has inevitable impacts on the day-to-day reality of the planning and development management system. Remote working, resourcing and social distancing have created challenges for processing applications. Drawing on our local knowledge, Lichfields can help identify opportunities, giving realistic advice on the best route for securing permission.



Lockdown challenges

- Limited site visits, face to face officer meetings or engagement events
- Varying approaches by local planning authorities to displaying site notices and consultation
- Delays in registration and validation of applications
- Uncertainty on the decision-making process
- Reduced number of planning staff
- Delays in receiving consultee feedback
- Delays to surveys and assessments

For more information please contact your local Lichfields Office

Getting ahead

For applicants, the COVID-19 crisis has raised a number of important questions. Will LPAs have significant validation and determination back logs? How will determination periods be affected? Will outline permissions lapse? How will viability be affected? What can be done to minimise delays due to restrictions on survey work?

Most authorities are being proactive and continue to offer their services as best as possible. A large majority are still willing to provide pre-app advice and host meetings online. Many have made provisions for 'virtual committees' or have widened the scope of delegation available to case officers.

LPAs will both want and need to be looking for solutions now to meet their future needs and address the land use implications of economic downturn. Creating a pipeline of sites to come forward post-crisis seems an essential tool in ensuring that the development sector can help support the restart of the economy.

How can Lichfields assist?

Lichfields can continue to prepare and coordinate application submissions during this time and are well versed in managing and submitting applications via remote measures. We are familiar with best practice on post-COVID-19 processing of planning applications and of the relevant law and guidance to maximise the prospects that LPAs take advantage of the powers and flexibilities available.

We can seek to ensure pre-apps, applications and appeals are accompanied by sufficient visual material to reduce the need for site visits. We can engage with LPAs via video/conference calls and ensure that applications are dealt with under delegated powers where appropriate, to avoid delays. Where delegated decisions are not possible, Lichfields is well resourced to represent clients at virtual meetings and committees.

Lichfields has also partnered with the Planning Advisory Service to monitor LPA functionality and we can use our knowledge and influence to increase the prospect that your project progresses as far as the LPA's processes will allow, well placed for progression.

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