

PLANNING DURING THE LOCKDOWN

We are all seeing massive changes in our daily lives and adapting and coping as best we can. Life during the lockdown has to an extent become more simplified. In the future it would be good if these lessons can be incorporated into the Planning process. Too often our existing system is over complicated and long winded.

Changes are being implemented by many Council's such as home working and virtual Planning Committees as well as virtual Local Plan Inquiries. People are quickly getting used to this virtual working. The Planning Industry is moving forward and as people within the Industry adapt to the changes the pipeline for permissions and development continues.

We all know the NHS who are leading the way on the front line dealing with this terrible health threat. However private sector shops and vital supplies also play an important role. Collaboration between private and public sector represent the collective response to the crisis. It demonstrates just how much can be achieved when working in partnership.

On the 9 April 2020 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Coronavirus) (England) (Amendment) Order 2020 have come into force. This enables local authorities and health service bodies to:

Anticipated soon will be the Government announcement to the extension of Planning permissions due to expire during this lockdown period.

This is eminently sensible as development granted permission cannot be built out at the same pace under lock down conditions. It would be a waste of resources to have to re-apply for permission during this period. Extending the lifetime of planning permissions directly translates to housing delivery.

The new ways of working have also forced people to rethink necessary journeys. What is essential travel and what can be done from home. There will be environmental benefits to fewer car journeys, and this too has a relevance to the planning system.



“undertake development for the purposes of preventing an emergency;

reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of an emergency; or taking other action in connection with an emergency.”



COVID-19 EFFECTS TO SUSTAINABILITY

London Authorities have permitted car free schemes for some time given the highly sustainable locations. However, some outer London Councils have still been reluctant to permit, totally car free schemes. In the future the increase on reliance and use of technology may allay fears regarding car ownership and parking problems.

“HOW WILL TECHNOLOGY CHANGE US AFTER COVID-19?”

Looking ahead at the way we have embraced technology may further reduce the need for Office and Retail floor space. This existing floorspace could be re-purposed for housing and the Planning system should provide flexibility for these changes.

Building for an aging population is a phrase we hear a lot. In these Covid 19 dominated times the over 70s isolation and care have been at the forefront of news headlines. As a society we are rediscovering our community spirit.

Making good places with community at the heart encourages communication with neighbours and allows elderly people to stay in their homes and remain independent is as important today as has ever been. The sense of community and the desire to talk to people face to face and see and hear them even though you can't touch them is so important right now. While many elderly people have got to grips with the various forms of social media many have not and are reliant on the TV and telephone as main contact with the outside world.

In these circumstance green spaces, gardens, balconies any small outdoor area provide a brief respite from the humdrum.

As Planners we all have a duty to ensure the provision of decent homes for all ages and not exclude any demographic. We must be mindful of the needs of the elderly in terms of detailed design but more importantly be ever mindful of the social need to connect to others.

What the future holds for the Planning system remains to be seen. We can be certain that things will never be the same again and we will not take for granted the handshakes, high fives and hugs when planning permission is achieved.



“VIRTUAL PLANNING COMMITTEE”



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COVID 19 has highlighted several problems with our care setting. There is a lot of guidance on how to cope in existing buildings, but how will this affect our future design? In coming weeks we will explore arrangements informed by government guidance and our isolation lessons.

