

## **Update to Agents and Developers October 2021**

### **Communication with Customers/Workloads/Staffing**

We continue to monitor the numbers of planning applications and enquiries that are received by the Development Management Service. Despite recent increase in workloads, we continue to promote customer care objectives and aim to communicate with customers in the best way possible. We maintain a focus with staff in respect of the need to and the importance and benefits of communicating regularly and responding within appropriate timescales. In this respect we have requested that all staff take time every day to review emails, voicemails and messages and provide acknowledgements of receipt of information or update responses on actions taken, within 72 hours of receipt. We would appreciate your co-operation and understanding in this respect and allow staff time to undertake these tasks. Our service standards set out in our Development Management Customer Charter. Development Management Customer Charter 2021 ([aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk))

### **Aberdeenshire Council Planning Service Customer Survey– 2020-2021**

The Service has finished reviewing the feedback received from the Customer Survey and further communication will be published shortly on the Planning Performance and Development Management- customer charter and feedback sections of the Aberdeenshire Council website based on these results, outlining any associated actions that have or will be carried out by the Service. Any specific matters raised or updates from the Service can also be discussed at a future Agents Forum in November.

### **Masterplan Project Update**

Work has continued and a draft Planning Advice note has been prepared. The Service recently engaged with agents who have submitted a Major application, PoAN or Masterplan since the current LDP was adopted.

We are keen to further engage with a wider spectrum of agents via the Agents Forum on 4 November and would be keen to hear your views on the matter. This will feed into further discussions with Elected Members which is planned for next month.

### **Planning Pre-application Advice Update**

As part of the ongoing review of the Householder and Local Pre-application Advice process, the Service has now commenced a wider engagement review, which involves seeking feedback from users of the pre-app enquiry process. As part of this review, we have issued a survey to agents seeking your feedback and comments on your experiences to date as part of this review. **The closing date for this survey is Friday 15 October 2021.**

We would appreciate if you can take the time to complete the survey, the feedback that we receive will help the working group to evaluate how the pre-application process for householder and local development proposals is working and to identify aspects that

may require to be revisited and reviewed. Any specific updates or changes made to the Pre-application Advice process following this review will be covered in future briefings and there will be an opportunity to discuss at the Agents Forum on 4 November 2021.

At this stage, work on the Major Development Pre-application Advice process has been paused, however it is anticipated that a separate survey will be issued to agents to seek feedback before the end of 2021.

### **Prior Notifications**

As you may be aware from general correspondence and our previous briefings the Service has been preparing guidance covering the submission of Agricultural and Forestry Prior Notifications including the conversion of these buildings to commercial and residential use which is now finished and will shortly be available on our website on the following page [Apply for planning permission - Aberdeenshire Council](#).

### **Planning and Building Standards Portals – Electronic Submission of Documents**

We would like to re-emphasise the importance and benefits of using the portals. Not only has it enabled business continuity, but it has also been very successful in terms of reducing processing times and minimising unnecessary delays in getting new applications through to the validation, allocation and assessment stages.

We continue to be aware of the issues surrounding the loading of supporting documents, whether at the initial application stage or when providing revised drawings or additional information thereafter and will provide an update when and if these matters are resolved.

### **Agents Forum**

We will be holding a further Planning and Building Standards Agents Forum where we can update Agents on matters of interest and offer the opportunity to receive feedback on aspects of Service delivery. In this regard a date of **4 November 2021 at 2pm** has been set and you should receive email confirmation of the meeting shortly. A reminder that if there are any additional working practices or questions that you would like us to include for discussion at the Forum, we would be grateful if you could please email us by **Tuesday 26 October 2021** to allow us to factor into the discussion. If you haven't received an invitation by email, please [contact us](#).

### **Planning Permissions and Listed Building Consents – Further Extensions**

Following previous extensions made the Coronavirus Regulations further allowances have been made under the 'The Town and Country Planning (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2021' and associated Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Act 2021 which extend the 'emergency period' and 'extension period' for the expiry of planning permissions and Listed Building Consent (LBC).

For Planning Permissions which would have expired between 07 April 2020 and the 31 March 2022 these permissions will now expire on the 30 September 2022.

For Listed Building Consent which would have expired between 27 May 2020 and the 31 March 2022 these consents will now expire on the 30 September 2022.

You do not need to contact us or take any further action as the extension periods are set out in legislation.

### **Pre-application Consultation (National and Major Developments) (PAC)**

Previous briefing notes highlighted some important changes to Pre Application Consultation which are fully set out in the briefing note dated [16 July](#). The coming into force of the legislative package, which collectively amend the regulatory requirements for Proposal of Application Notices (POAN) and subsequent Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) that had been scheduled to come into force from 1 October 2021 has now been postponed until 1 April 2022. The current requirements will remain in place until that time.

Virtual events will also be permissible until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 for PAC events but we would encourage applicants to consider the incoming legislation and make provision for in person events in addition where it is safe to do so and also provide opportunities for feedback on the consultation carried out.

### **Validation Standards for Planning Applications**

As you may recall from previous bulletins, we are keen to ensure consistency of validation across all parts of Aberdeenshire and ensure a greater number of submissions are validated on submission. Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) had earlier issued guidance on the matter. We intend to adopt the majority of the validations requirements set out in the HoPS Guidance by the end of November this year and provide additional guidance on our website ([Apply for planning permission - Aberdeenshire Council](#)) by the 1<sup>st</sup> November to clarify what we require for the validation of planning applications. An update to agents will also be provided at the Agents Forum.

Paul Macari