



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Addendum: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), September 2020.

Temporary changes to the publicity of planning policy documents and planning applications during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out Epsom and Ewell's approach to ensure that communities and stakeholders are involved in planning matters. The SCI aims to enable efficient engagement on all planning matters including planning applications, new planning policy documents and Neighbourhood Plans.
- 1.2 As a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council are making some temporary amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement (2019). The temporary changes outlined are being made to protect the health of Epsom and Ewell's communities, residents and staff in response to the Government's advice and primarily in relation to public meetings and events. The UK's COVID-19 alert level has been at level three since the 19th June which means that the virus is still considered to be in general circulation. Whilst the government continues to ease restrictions in England, government guidance remains in place for people to stay safe and local lockdowns in various parts of the UK have taken place where there have been local outbreaks. Measures including social distancing and limitations on businesses continue to remain to reduce the spread of the virus.
- 1.3 The National Planning Practice Guidance has been updated following the pandemic and it advises that Local planning authorities review their SCI and update it in line with government guidelines around social distancing and staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Epsom and Ewell's *Community Involvement 2019* document was adopted in November 2019.

- 1.4 Epsom and Ewell will retain most of the engagement and publicity methods outlined in the SCI therefore this addendum should be read in conjunction with Epsom and Ewell's SCI *Community Involvement 2019* document. The addendum addresses the specific paragraphs within the SCI which are impacted by Covid-19 restrictions and safety guidance and as such does not seek to amend every individual section or paragraph within the SCI.
- 1.5 The following headings outline the amendments to the approaches set out in the [Community Involvement 2019 document \(SCI\)](#). The following headings outline the sections within the SCI which will be temporarily amended to comply with government safety guidance to keep people safe by reducing the spread of Covid-19. The addendum will need to be used flexibly to respond to the changes in restrictions which may evolve quickly and in line with the national and local changes in legislation. The Community Involvement 2019 document (SCI) is available to read in full on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's website or by clicking [here](#).

2 Proposed temporary amendments to Statement of Community involvement, *Community Involvement 2019*:

- 2.1 The proposed changes are set out under the relevant headings of the SCI Community Involvement 2019.

Section 2: Planning Policy Documents: 2.3 Local Plans and 2.4 Supplementary Planning Documents.

- 2.2 Where Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have set out the stages involved in preparing a new development plan document and Supplementary Planning Documents, outlining the opportunities for stakeholder engagement, we will seek to retain the process in line with the existing flow chart within Figure 2¹ and Figure 3, with the exception that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will not be able to provide hard copies of documents for inspection at libraries across the borough where these locations are closed to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions. When it is safe for these locations to reopen and in line with government safety guidance, documents will be placed back in these locations.
*Information will continue to be made available online via our website and we encourage people to access information this way.

Section 2: Planning Policy Documents; 2.5 Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders

- 2.3 Where consultation is being carried out by the borough council referred to in point 2.5.6 and further detailed in figure 4¹ of Epsom and Ewell's Community Involvement 2019 document, we will seek to retain the majority of this approach except that Epsom and Ewell council will not be able to provide hard copies of documents for inspection at the town hall or at libraries across the borough where these locations are closed to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions. When it is safe for these locations to reopen and in line with government safety guidance, documents will be placed back in these locations. Information will continue to be made available online via our website and we encourage people to access information this way.

Section 2: Planning Policy Documents; 2.6 Other documents: Community Infrastructure Levy

- 2.4 Our approach to CIL will remain in line with points 2.6.1 and 2.6.2 and further sections regarding CIL as detailed within the Community Involvement 2019 document. Epsom and Ewell adopted CIL in 2014. Where reference is made within figure 5² to copies of the draft charging schedule being made available in libraries, our approach to making consultation material referenced within the process (Figure 5) will remain as detailed. However Epsom and Ewell council will not be able to provide hard copies of documents for inspection at the town hall or at libraries across the borough where these locations are closed to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions. When it is safe for these locations to reopen and subject to government safety guidance and government legislation, documents will be placed back in these locations. Documents will continue to be made available online on the Council's website and microsite; and we encourage people to access documents electronically to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Section 2: Planning Policy Documents; 2.8 How will we consult in plan-making? Para 2.8.3 Face-to-face engagement

- 2.5 Epsom and Ewell values the contribution that the community and stakeholders provide in developing planning policy. Government restrictions associated with preventing the spread of COVID-19 however will affect the ability of the Local Authority to hold face to face meetings, workshops, focus groups and exhibitions safely. Our approach to face to face engagements as set out within our *Community Involvement 2019* document (see-para 2.8.3) will be considered at the appropriate time and will reflect proportional engagement that follow safety measures relating to Covid-19.

¹ *Note - Figure 2, 3 and 4 are detailed in full within the [Community involvement 2019](#) document

² *Note - Figure 5 is detailed in full within the [Community involvement 2019](#) document

- 2.6 In order to protect the health of our communities and staff, Epsom and Ewell will seek to engage with communities and interested groups virtually via online platforms or exhibitions as an alternative to face to face meetings. Where online methods cannot be accessed by individuals, alternative approaches will be used such as phone calls where appropriate.

Section 2: Planning Policy Documents; 2.8 How will we consult in plan-making? Para 2.8.4-5 Written notifications

- 2.7 Our approach to written notifications will remain as detailed in paragraph 2.8.4 although Epsom and Ewell will seek to communicate by email in the first instance due to Covid-19.

Section 2: Planning Policy Documents; 2.8 How will we consult in plan-making? Para 2.8.8 Making consultation material available

- 2.8 Our approach to making consultation material available will remain as detailed 2.8.8 except that Epsom and Ewell council will not be able to provide hard copies of documents for inspection at the town hall or at libraries across the borough where these locations are closed to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions. When it is safe for these locations to reopen and subject to government safety guidance and government legislation, documents will be placed back in these locations. Documents and consultation material will continue to be made available online and we encourage people to access documents electronically to reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Section 3: Planning Applications; 3.2 Pre-application Advice.

- 2.9 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council continues to welcome and encourage virtual discussions with applicants before planning applications are submitted. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, face to face meetings have not been available. Meetings have taken place virtually via digital platforms but physical meetings will resume in person when it is safe to do so and in line with government safety guidance. If meetings are not taking place this will be indicated on the pre-application section of Epsom and Ewell borough Council's website. The Householder service has continued to be offered as written advice only.

Section 3: Planning Applications; 3.4 How is a Planning Application determined?

- 2.10 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council continue to undertake Planning Committee meetings detailed in points 3.4.5 and 3.4.6. These have been held utilising virtual platforms and if necessary over the telephone in line with government safety guidance.