

## Appendix 2 - Business Continuity Planning Protocol

The protocol that is set out below is in response to the emergency situation brought about by the Covid 19 virus. The Government has passed emergency legislation, The Coronavirus Act 2020 which was given Royal Assent on 25 March 2020. This Act allows for the Secretary of State to bring forward regulations in time that may allow for virtual meetings of committees. It may take some time to put these regulations and the resulting practical arrangements in place.

Planning Authorities have been asked to ensure that decisions on planning applications continue to be made, despite the restrictions caused by Covid-19, including the cancellation of all face-to-face meetings and the impact on staffing levels of the virus. This Protocol sets out how Oxford City Council will do that.

### PROTOCOL

1. All planning applications will now be determined by the Head of Planning under delegated powers.
2. From 31 March 2020 there will be no call-in process, either of applications to area planning committees, or of decisions by area planning committees to the Planning Review Committee.
3. For applications that would normally have been considered by one of the area planning committees, the Head of Planning will consult the members of the relevant planning committee with an information pack containing a report (normal committee report and presentation). Members will continue to be able to access all the normal documents and application plans.
4. Members of the relevant planning committee will be required to submit their views, if any, by email to the Head of Planning Services at [callin@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:callin@oxford.gov.uk)<sup>1</sup> by a strict deadline which will be clearly advertised.
5. The Head of Planning Services will then follow one of two processes, depending on the application to be decided:
  - a. For non-major applications, including non-major applications from staff or members or from the City Council or its companies, the Head of Planning Services will schedule a virtual or telephone discussion with the Chair of the relevant committee where the application and the responses from members to it will be reviewed.
  - b. For major applications (and any matters that had been called in to the planning review committee scheduled for 2 April 2020), including any major applications from staff, members or from the City Council or its companies, the Head of Planning Services will schedule a virtual or telephone discussion with the Chair and two other members (selected with the advice of the Chair) of the relevant committee where the application and the responses from members to it will be reviewed.
6. Whichever process is followed, a member of Member and Committee Services will make a written record of the points of discussion and issues raised during it.

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<sup>1</sup> This email address is monitored daily and is already widely used by elected members for planning matters including but not limited to the call in of planning applications.

7. Where a Chair of the relevant committee is not available the Head of Planning Services will schedule a discussion with the Vice Chair of the relevant Committee; if the Vice Chair is not available, the Head of Planning Services will invite one of the chairs or vice chairs of the other planning committees.
8. This process will be conducted on the normal monthly schedule of committee dates that are already set but depending on the number of cases the necessary flexibility will be available to move to a two weekly cycle. Additional dates would be agreed in advance with the relevant chairs.
9. Following the process outlined in 5 above, the Head of Planning Services will subsequently and separately use his delegated powers to make his determination of the application.
10. The decision will be published in the normal way.