

Bristol City Council: Planning Customer Charter 2026

Introduction

Our Development Management, Planning Enforcement and Planning Policy functions play an important role in delivering sustainable growth in our area.

All customers to the service are affected by the decisions we make.

Our customers are varied and include in the main:

- the general public
- developers and landowners
- agents and planning consultants
- elected councillors and Members of Parliament
- neighbourhood planning groups
- community groups
- charities and registered providers
- business communities
- infrastructure providers
- other local authorities and government organisations (consultees).

Our customers have differing interests:

- some directly use our services.
- some would like us to take a particular action on a planning issue.
- some seek to influence the decisions we make.
- some seek information, support, and advice.
- some work in partnership with us.

We make the commitment to our customers to:

- Be **honest** - we will act with honesty and integrity and will treat our customers fairly, objectively and respectfully.
- Be **accessible** - we will make the planning process as clear and easy to access as possible noting that the planning system has a high degree of complexity which at times may limit how far this can be facilitated in practice.
- Be **transparent** - we will publish all relevant information, policies, planning applications and decisions on our website.

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- Be **responsive** - we will reply to relevant queries in a timely manner¹.
- Be **effective** - we will ensure quality and sustainable development which is aligned to the strategic aims of the Council.

In return we expect all our customers to:

- Respect the legal and procedural constraints of our role.
- Make accurate and well-informed representations and planning applications.
- Let us know when something has gone wrong, or where you think we could make improvements.
- Let us know what we are doing well.
- Help us use our time effectively by only contacting us with queries once the advice generally available and on our website has been utilised and used to narrow down any specific points in question.
- Allow time for us to respond in line with our timescales.

For planning applications, we will:

- Aim to assess the validity of applications within 5 working days.
- Publish details of planning applications on [Planning Online](#) [insert link] where you can also keep abreast of representations and progress on applications. Representations should be submitted via the Planning Portal which ensures that these are uploaded swiftly and efficiently.
- Involve consultees on relevant planning applications.
- Notify interested parties on relevant planning applications where required by legislation and/or our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) [insert link] by letter, site notice or press advertisement (as appropriate)
- Take into consideration comments received when considering the application.
- Anyone interested, including our councillors [insert link], [neighbourhood](#) planning groups and other interested parties, can sign up on the portal to receive an alert of applications made in an area that they are particularly interested in or for a weekly update of all planning applications. You can find a step-by-step guide to setting up such alerts [here](#).
- Determine planning applications promptly and within the required timescales whenever possible.

¹ Due to resource constraints, we can only engage in essential communication and cannot provide updates or answer queries on Planning applications to third parties. Officers will correspond with the named agent (or applicant) within reason and proportionately to the resource envelope set by the application fee.

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When you contact us regarding a planning application:

- Where an agent or planning consultant is acting on behalf of an applicant, we will communicate with that agent unless asked to take a different approach
- We will initiate contact with the agent or applicant if, and when we consider amendments or further information could address issues arising within a reasonable timescale.. This will be at the Planning Authority's discretion and amendments or further information must not be provided unless requested by the planning officer or otherwise agreed eg via a planning performance agreement.
- We will not respond individually to comments, objections or questions from third parties. However, the planning officer will take these into account when assessing the application. If you require professional guidance, we advise you to consult a local planning consultant or the [Planning Aid England](#).
- Comments about Planning Applications must be made via [Planning Online](#) [insert link] otherwise we cannot guarantee that these get connected to the relevant case in a timely manner. Representations made via Planning Online receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your comments.

For planning enforcement, we will:

- Investigate all reported suspected breaches of planning control in line with our [Local Enforcement Plan](#).
- Suspected Planning Breaches should be [reported via the webform](#) otherwise we cannot guarantee that these get noticed and acted upon in a timely manner. Breaches reported via the webform receive an acknowledgement of receipt .

When you contact us regarding an ongoing enforcement matter:

- We will confirm if the case is pending investigation or not; however, we will not provide any further information about the case or actions, if any, we intend to take, so that the robustness of the investigation is not compromised. If the investigation results in a retrospective planning application we will, however, inform the original complainant of this to allow them the opportunity to make a representation via [Planning Online](#) should they wish to do so.

For planning appeals, we will:

- Notify anyone who was notified about or commented on the relevant application when an appeal is lodged.
- Report details of appeals lodged to [Planning Committees](#) and provide a verbal update when an appeal is lodged against a decision they have made.

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When you contact us regarding a planning appeal:

- Comments on planning appeals cannot be made to the Council, and need to be made directly to the [Planning Inspectorate](#). For guidance on how to get involved in the planning appeal please see the Inspectorate's website.

For planning policy, we will:

- Publish [planning policy documents](#) on our website including monitoring information (e.g. housing and employment supply, planning obligations (section 106), the Annual Monitoring Report) and neighbourhood plans.
- Provide advice on preparing neighbourhood plans.
- Publish the timetable for preparing the new local plan.
- Meet relevant requirements for community involvement in planning policy as set out in the [Statement of Community Involvement](#).

We welcome feedback! Please let us know if you think we have:

- Behaved unfairly or impolitely
- Not carried out a service to an agreed standard
- Done something particularly well
- You have an idea how our service could be improved.

[Complaints and feedback](#) help us to improve the way we do things. You can tell us about a complaint; provide positive and constructive feedback or make comments using our online form - this will immediately log your complaint or comment onto our system. You will receive confirmation and a unique reference number.

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