



President:  
*Lord Lieutenant of Essex*  
Chairman:  
*David Knight*  
Vice Chairman:  
*Tricia Moxey*

RCCE House  
Threshelfords Park  
Inworth Road, Feering  
Colchester CO5 9SE  
Tel: 01376 572023  
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Dear Sirs

### **Planning & democracy during Covid 19**

Following the introduction of regulations allowing Council meetings to take place virtually during the coronavirus lockdown (through to April 2021), we note that the Government has said it is up to each local authority to decide how they conduct meetings, how voting procedures work and how to ensure that the public has access.

CPRE Essex would expect that:

- All planning decisions that would normally come to a planning committee should continue to do so (and not be delegated to officers) - including major applications, but also those where Parish and officer disagree or where local councillors call for it to do so.
  
- Members of the public should have the right to address the committee for the normal permitted length of time.
  
- There should be facility for members of the public to listen in to (and preferably view) the planning committee discussions and decision-making.
  
- If possible, a recording (audio or audio-visual) should subsequently be made available via the Council website.

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The Campaign to Protect Rural Essex, CPREssex, is the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. CPREssex, registered charity no.1094178, is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England, no.4536412, which exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural Essex by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

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- Other than for genuinely urgent applications, for example directly related to tackling Covid 19, these systems should be in place prior to any Planning Committee taking place. If necessary, committee meetings should be delayed to ensure there is no gap in the transparent operation of a democratic planning system.

We would be very grateful if you could confirm in due course what arrangements you are putting in place to meet the requirements of the regulations, so that we can help communicate this to our members and the public. If we can help in any way, please do let us know.

We appreciate that these are very difficult times and Council staff and resources are under enormous pressure. We thank you for the good work you are doing and hope that you and colleagues remain safe and well.

Yours sincerely

**David N Knight**

**Chairman CPRE-Essex**

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