

## Guide to using the Hertsmere Borough Council's Planning Policy Consultation Portal (July 2017)

The Online [Consultation Portal](#) is used to host all current and past Planning Policy consultation documents.

**If this is your first time using the Consultation Portal, the [Site Tour](#) provides a detailed introduction on how to use the Portal.**

The Online Portal has been chosen for all Planning Policy consultation activity providing the following benefits:

- Consultees / Agents have access to a secure account and can manage their details and communication preferences through the 'My Account' area;
- A record of all past submissions can be viewed at any time or exported to PDF format from the 'My Account' area;
- Consultation transparency through the plan-making process is encouraged through the publishing of submissions;
- Submitting comments through the Portal helps to reduce paper use and also reduces the time taken to complete / verify / respond to submissions;
- Progress on submissions can be saved and accessed later for completion from the 'My Account' area; and
- Submitting online allows for the storing of all comments for reporting and analysis in one secure, easy to access location – this provides consistency, increases the efficiency of the overall plan-making process and caters for process compliance.

## Registration

### Existing users:

1. If you are already registered on the Portal, please do not re-register. You can use the 'forgotten username / password' links if you have forgotten your details. Alternatively, contact us at [local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk).

### New users

1. Click on the register / login link at the top right of the screen.
2. Choose whether you are a Consultee (mostly private individuals and organisations responding on their own behalf) / Agent (making submissions on behalf of someone else).
3. Enter your details as part of the first stage of registration, use the 'username check' to ensure that you have chosen a unique username. Any question with a 'red star' are mandatory and must be filled in.
4. Choose a memorable password.
5. Once you click OK, for verification purposes, you will receive an Activation email to the email address provided. **You must click on the Activation link in the email to activate your account. You will not be able to log in and make comments until your account is activated.**

6. Clicking on the activation link will take to the Portal to complete the final stage of registration. Enter you address details here along with your communication preferences.
7. Once completed, you will now be able to log into the Portal using your chosen username and password and respond to any live consultations.

## Accessing Consultation Content

1. Due to the nature of the formal consultation process, consultees and agents will be required to log into the Portal prior to making any submissions. This allows for their details to be submitted along with their comments therefore authenticating the submissions as verified.
2. You can read saved consultation documents without having to sign in.
3. If the consultation period is 'Open', you can make comments which will be sent directly to us.
4. Consultation documents can be accessed by clicking on the Event title from the consultation list. If you have been sent an email regarding a particular document, the link provided will usually take you directly to that document.
5. Clicking on 'read and comment' / 'start survey' will take you to the consultation content.
6. The consultation content can be navigated via the table of contents on left of the screen or the next/previous page links at the top and bottom of the screen.

## Making comments

1. Comments can be made by clicking the 'add comment' links wherever a commentable item has been stipulated in the document
2. When a comment link is clicked, the questions associated with that point will appear. Fill the questions in as part of your submission
3. Once complete, click 'submit' to submit your comment. Once submitted, you cannot edit the comment any further. If you would like to save and complete at a later date, you can click 'save as draft'. Saved drafts can be accessed from the 'My Account' area once logged in
4. If your account has a valid email address associated with it and you have chosen to, you will receive an confirmation email when your comment is submitted
5. All past submissions can be viewed from the 'My Account' area

## Viewing comments

Depending on the specific consultation, comment content may be published during the course of the consultation period or alternatively after the consultation is closed. If your account has a valid email address associated with it and you have chosen to, you will receive an email notification when your comment is published. Comments made by other consultees can be seen online by:

- The 'All Comments' tab on the main event page
- Clicking on 'View Comments' tabs positioned throughout the document against each commentable point

- Use the 'Who Said What' feature to use various search criteria to look for comments

If the consultation is 'closed', you can still view the document content and also what other consultees have said.

## Additional Information

### I've registered but I cannot login

1. Have you clicked on the activation link in the registration email to activate your account?
2. Are you using the correct details?
3. Use the forgotten password / username feature if you cannot remember your login details
4. Contact us at [local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk) if you are still having difficulties

## Submitting Comments

### I am receiving an error when trying to submit my comment

1. Check that you have answered any mandatory questions
2. Check that any character limits for text based questions have been adhered to
3. Check that the right number of options have been ranked for any ranking question types
4. Contact us at [local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk) if you are still having difficulties

### Large submissions

- If you are working on a large submission, it is recommended to save your comment as a draft regularly to avoid any browser / network timeout issues leading to loss of connectivity to the servers

### How will my registration information be used?

Your registration information is collected to help us ensure that we consult with a representative group of people in our community. Your information is kept in a secure database, and is only available to authorised Data Controllers, whose levels of access are controlled. When you register, we invite you to be notified of any consultations or research. We will ask about specific topics that you may be interested in and for some voluntary information about yourself. This helps us to target some of our consultations according to the topics you are interested in.

### If I comment will my details be made public?

In all cases your contact details will be kept private and confidential, but for most consultation events your name and comments will be publicly viewable either during or at the end of the consultation period.

### Can I change my registration information?

When you register, you will choose a username and password. You can use this to update the following information. You can change your registration information online at any time within the 'My Account' area.

- Your contact information and some personal details

- Your areas of interest and preferred methods of contact
- Whether or not you wish to be contacted for further research or consultation

### Can I remove my details from the Consultation Portal?

If you no longer wish to be registered with the Consultation Portal, contact us at [local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk) and request removal from the database. We will then no longer contact you about forthcoming consultations. Responses to consultations and research that you have already made will however need to be kept for the purposes of the Plan process.