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Code of practice for consultations

This document sets out the principles that ARB follows when conducting consultation exercises. Consulting with our stakeholders provides an opportunity for them to participate in formulating strong, robust strategies and policies to help us discharge our statutory duties under the Architects Act 1997.

Introduction

The Architects Registration Board – ARB - was established by Parliament in 1997 to regulate the architects' profession in the UK. We are an independent public interest body, and our work in regulating architects ensures that good standards within the profession are consistently maintained for the benefit of the public and architects alike.

As a statutory regulator, ARB's duties and responsibilities and the way in which we deliver them may potentially impact upon a range of stakeholders, including architects, members of the public, schools and institutions of architecture and their students. It is therefore essential for us to engage with our stakeholders and seek their views when we have important or significant decisions to make.

ARB is committed to a culture of openness and transparency. We value the knowledge and expertise of our stakeholders, and their input into the decision-making process through consultation ensures that not only do we abide by the twin tenets of openness and transparency, but that any decisions we subsequently take are informed by a wide range of people who all bring different experiences to the process. In this way, we can be confident that our policies are robust, and that they meet the needs of those who are affected by them.

HM Government: Code of Practice for Consultation

The Government has developed a code of practice for consultation and identified seven criteria for conducting consultation exercises. ARB has noted these, and has adapted them so that they are proportionate and relevant to us as an organisation and to our human and financial resources.

ARB believes that the Government's code of practice identifies and forms the basis of good practice for conducting consultation exercises, and we will abide by the criteria we have developed from the Government code.

ARB's Consultation Criteria

1. When to consult

We undertake consultation exercises when we are planning changes to our rules or policies. The process of consultation allows our stakeholders to scrutinise the proposed changes to rules or policies and provides them with the opportunity to contribute to the debate. This input helps to inform the development of the rules or policies and their subsequent implementation.

2. Timing of consultation

Our consultation exercises are timed to ensure that we can harness the views and comments of our stakeholders in sufficient time to feed these back to the Board to consider when finalising the policy.

3. Duration of consultation exercises

As a general rule, our consultations will run for a period of three months to allow people enough time to consider the proposals and to make a response. Occasionally, and depending on the subject of the consultation, we will vary the timescale – sometimes longer, sometimes shorter – but we will always make this clear in the consultation documents.

4. Scope of the proposals

Along with the consultation proposals, we explain clearly what the consultation is about and why we are consulting, so that respondents have an understanding of the issues we are seeking their views on. We also give a deadline for responses, and details of who to contact should any queries be raised.

5. Clarity and accessibility of consultation

We always avoid using jargon in our consultations, and we try not to use technical terms that might not be understood by the people taking part. Where this is unavoidable, we make sure that we give an explanation of what the terms mean.

We want our consultations to be as inclusive as possible, and we have put together a diverse and wide-ranging list of organisations to ensure that the consultation reaches a broad audience. We review the list regularly, both to make sure that it is representative and to avoid any element of “consultation fatigue” on the part of our consultees. Our consultation process is an open one; not only are we targeting specific organisations or groups, we are issuing a general invitation to participate by publishing the documents on our website.

For reasons of economy and the environment, we no longer issue paper-based consultations; they are all issued electronically although we can provide the documents in a different format on request and we will make sure that this is clearly stated on the form. Respondents can either complete the response forms online, or they can download a Word or pdf version of the consultation response form. Responses can be sent by email, post or fax, and should be addressed to the person whose name is on the consultation document.

6. Our responses to the consultation

We give very careful consideration to the views and comments that are submitted by respondents. It is important for us to keep an open mind when analysing the responses as they may include proposals for a new or different approach that we hadn’t considered.

Once the Board agrees that the policy can be implemented, we will publish the consultation responses on our website, along with a short summary or explanation of how we actioned them.