

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Protocol on Consultation Meetings with Developers, Pre-application meetings and meetings during the application process

Guidance for Councillors

1. Pre-determination

The Localism Act 2011 makes it clear that it is proper for Councillors to play an active part in local discussions. In all meetings with developers Councillors are reminded of the need to abide by the Parish Council's adopted Code of Conduct and Policies and the importance of not pre-determining their position on any future planning applications. It is noted that expressing a pre-disposition, eg. 'welcome in principle' or 'have concerns' is permissible.

However, should a Councillor demonstrate a predetermination of their view about a specific planning application and not approach the matter with an open mind, then they should not take part in the formal consideration of that matter at a meeting of the Planning Committee or any other Parish Council or Committee meeting.

2. Policy on the holding of pre-application meetings with developers

LPC will only engage with developers/applicants at a pre-planning stage on major applications. For smaller, less significant applications, applicants should be seeking pre-planning advice from SDC.

Major applications are considered to be, but not exclusively limited to, those involving multiple dwellings.

3. Purpose of pre-application briefing meetings and meetings during the application process

- To be positive and proactive in engaging constructively with developers, Sevenoaks District Council and other service providers from an early stage
- To assist in identifying and engaging with other interested groups / organisations operating within the community in order to assist developers to publicise their proposals and related community involvement opportunities
- To seek to understand the full range of community interests the Parish Council is representing with regard to particular development proposals
- To identify clearly, and at an early stage, the issues relating to development proposals that are a priority for the Parish Council and the questions that need asking of the developer, the Local Planning Authority (SDC) and/or other services
- To help with identifying gaps or pressures on existing services or facilities and to identify the need for local infrastructure improvement
- To acknowledge and respect the rights of all stakeholders to express their views

4. Procedure at pre-application briefing meetings

A pre-application briefing is a meeting of the Parish Council or the Planning Committee at which a developer provides information on their proposed planning application to members of the Parish Council and members of the public.

Developers are invited to provide the Parish Council with a pre-application briefing which is:

- Without prejudice to the Parish Council's response to the formal consultation
- Included as part of a meeting of the Parish Council or the Planning Committee
- Advertised as part of the meeting agenda
- Open to members of the public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960
- Included as part of the public record in the minutes of the meeting
- Subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act

5. Procedure at meetings during the application process

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications within the parish of Leigh and the final decision on all planning matters rests with Sevenoaks District Council. The Parish Council has delegated powers to its Planning Committee to consider planning applications and to decide whether to support or object to an application, or to make any other relevant and appropriate comment if a full Council meeting is not being held.

Developers are welcome to attend and speak at meetings at which planning applications are considered during the statutory consultation process, and which:

- Are open to members of the press and public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960
- Have advertised the relevant planning application as part of the meeting agenda
- Include discussions as part of the public record in the minutes of the meeting
- Are subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act

6. Organising pre-application briefing meetings and attending meetings during the application process

Developers wishing to organise a pre-application briefing or attend a meeting during the planning application process should contact the Parish Council.

Leigh Parish Clerk email: clerk@leighkent.org.uk