

Public Participation

**From Mr. Michael Sprules, Chairperson R.A.D.A.R.
(Residents Against Development Affecting Recreational Land)
- Engaging with Local Residents**

Question

In April this year, I attended the appeal hearing for Brynards Hill, Wootton Bassett. This gave me a unique insight into the appeals process and also where the shortcomings occurred during the overall planning process, from both Wiltshire Council and also the Appellant in this case.

I made some extensive notes, while in attendance, as I hoped that these notes would prove useful during the consultation process of a planning application. However, this process can only be effective if the views of the local residents and their residents groups are heard.

I have listened to many Wiltshire Council Members over the past few weeks and the one common message that was repeated time and time again was that, **“Wiltshire Council wants to engage with the public and wants to make this process transparent”**.

With this in mind, my question to Cabinet is :

What measures do Wiltshire Council have in place should local residents consider that their views have not been listened to or, indeed, adequately addressed, during this crucial stage of a “Consultation Process”, especially if there is an obvious need to request that an Applicant should provide more assessments and appraisals prior to an application being submitted for discussion at the local Development Control Committee ?

May I thank the Cabinet Members and, indeed, all local Councillors in attendance for allowing me to put forward this question.

Response

The Council has a well publicised consultation process in place in respect of planning applications to secure local views and then take them into account.

- The Statement of Community Involvement asks developers to publicise and discuss major schemes with locals prior to submission so they can incorporate their aspirations into their plans.

- When planning applications are submitted they are widely advertised by a mix of neighbour notification letters, site notices and press adverts.
- Anyone concerned about an application then has an opportunity to contact their local Division Member, the local Parish or Town Council and the planning case officer to discuss/put their views.
- All representations received by the case officer are carefully taken into account in the decision making process and if necessary, applicants are asked to make amendments or provide additional information.
- If an application is considered by Committee, and most major applications are, there is a further opportunity for local residents to make representations to the Committee in person at the meeting.

There is sometimes a perception that the Council is not listening but the reality is that it has to make its planning decisions within a framework of local and national policies and these sometimes take priority over local concerns. In accordance with those policies, officers will always seek the information they believe is needed to make sound planning decisions. If information is 'obviously' needed it will be requested but the Council cannot ask for information which the legislation says is neither necessary or reasonable to require.

The Council always listens but as stated above, it cannot always accommodate every view expressed.