

Members Planning Seminar – 24 April 2008 Feedback

Initial Approach – Pre Application

What works well	Improvements
<i>Member and officer issues</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members not involved in 'pre application stage – concerns re pre determination Confidential advice to councillors of pre applications received enabling discussion to take place if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving unitary councillors and Town/Parish councils early in the process More involvement of members Member Involvement on Major Applications
A political – no bias on regulatory committee	
Relationships- Officers and Members	
Workload meetings – internal discussion of cases	
	Officer 'bias' in taking application forward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve Town and Parish Earlier in the Process / Major Applications / Chairman Template for Parish Council and Town Council Training for the Parish Council and Town Council and Members
	Planning Conference Approach
<i>Consultation, Information and Approach to Pre-Applications</i>	
Pre Application Works – Essential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about charging for pre application advice – applicants paying twice Charging for pre application advice could provide additional income
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developers consulting local communities before applications are submitted Good 'early' community involvement on major applications 	Encouraging more consultation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer assistance to applicants Open Dialogue and Trust Consultation with officer Clear guidance and SPG Clear Expectations Accessibility Consistency/Flexible Application allocated to officer at pre application stage who will take the case through Plain English Continue with advice being provided by officers or Parish Councils (PC) as required by applicant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice to be: accessible, timely, consistent, plain English Consistency of advice Communication about process Need clear advice/instructions on website or paper Design advice available Advice from planning consultants not officers Bookable access to planning officers within reasonable time frame (resource issue) Make applications 'yesable' Copy officer comments to Parish Council for advice and information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites (KDC) Planning History on website 	
	Clarification on Status of Local Plan
	Prevention of pitfalls

Submission of applications/Processing

What works well	Improvements
Member issues	
Training for Parish Councillors and Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and awareness of the constraints should be more available for members and town and parish councils • Prioritise Planning Training over others • More training in design for both officers and members • Qualification for Members
Individual notification to members of all applications registered in their ward with key details including consultation expiry date	
	The Unitary member must be the first to be informed of planning applications
	Where officers consider it suitable, Parish Councils could make decisions on minor applications and TPOs etc.
Consultation and notification: methods and processes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible site notices • Site Notices and Neighbour Consultations • Direct neighbour notification by letter • Publicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure neighbouring land owner notified • Move back to neighbour notification by letters • Notification cards to neighbours with material planning considerations • Better notification on applications site notices – for sale type boards could be used • Move away from Newspaper advertising • Encourage applicants to take show plans to neighbours • Local community publicity • Get Parish Council to display notices on Local Boards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging comments received on applications • Notified of Decisions – All Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application progress posted on website • Website – providing plans and application forms makes planning much more accessible • Access / Linkages to Web • Website – virtual file • User friendly website and staff • Valid Applications on Website as soon as Registered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it easy to find information; local access, use of website • Web – size of file • Improvements to website to show all correspondence • Better resolution of web plans and improvements to content to show neighbouring buildings • Application plans, forms etc on website
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations with Parish / Town Council • Continue consulting Parish / Town Councils on amended and revised applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations on line to clerks of Parish Council – Savings • Dates on parish lists • Reminders to be automated on consultation expiry dates • Be flexible in receiving comments from Parish councils depending on the meeting dates

Stakeholders Engagement	
	Encourage applications to visually show their proposal in the context of neighbouring buildings
	Quality Engagement Translated to Unitary Approach
Access to advice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy Access to Officers and Hot Line Number for Councillors • Access to officers – Open Door 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making officers/planning departments more accessible • Better information on planning for the public • Planning advice to be provided at each area office hub at the front desk • Planning surgeries outside office hubs • Highways to be in the same office as planning officers
Quality of advice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers who know the patch • Capable Conservation Team for Our Listed Buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of planning history in locality
	Transparency – avoid public suspicion. Need a better, clearer way of showing that they are made consistently in line with planning policy/ guidance
	When officers allow an application opposed by the Parish Council, relay reasons back to Parish. Conditions may allay concerns or be used by the Parish in similar applications
Tour of inspection	
Design Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the basic principles of design is essential. We need to be much more rigorous in improving design standards across the County • High design standards
	Identify the built mistakes and revisit them, officers and members together, so that lessons can be collectively learned

Delegation scheme and call ins

What works well	Improvements
Councillor call in and committee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors power of call in (3 week from date of registration) • Call in by members anywhere in the district • Flexibility / Discretion of Officers on 21 Day Call In 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility to extend 3 week call in period • Member calling application should attend planning committee • Should be a Minimum of 2 Members on Call in • Unitary member call in • Unitary member plus Town/Parish Council to be able to call in
Local Member call in on material planning consideration	Member call in with a planning reason as to why in all cases
	Must not have committee recess in August – with the numbers of applications needing to go to committee and the effects on performance

	Opportunity of emergency reports for late call ins (i.e. late report to committee meetings so not to affect performance)
	Liaison with local members on Finely balanced applications
	Ward Members and Parish Councils and Officers to work closely together
Town and Parish Councils	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Council to get agreement of ward councillor Parish Council object can go to committee if recommendation is for approval Call in from Town or Parish council where TC/PC wish to refuse and officers minded to approve Minority View that Parish Council Should Have Call In 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater involvement of Town and Parish Councils No Automatic Parish Right of Call In-Speak to Ward Member
Officer powers/delegation of powers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accept delegation needs to take place and also needs to be between 90% – 95% Happy with 90% delegation approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegation by exception High Level of Delegation
Public involvement	
Threshold of 5 letters of objection to take items to committee	Any applications where public are concerned i.e. no of objections should go to committee
	Educating Public
	Improved awareness of the process for members and public
Other	
Confidence in officers	
	Input from outside agencies e.g. Highways
	Encourage Pre- Application Discussions to Help Delegated Applications
	Flexibility
	Building Control and Development Control to work more closely together

Committees

What works well	Improvements
Speaking at committee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward member and Parish Councils can address committee Local member having the right to speak at committee first and having a right of reply 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public involvement and speaking Limit Speaking to 3 Minutes- Equivalent Time for Applicants / Objectors Input from public, parish councils and ward members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Speaking Rights Need to Be Explained Explain to public what cannot be taken into account Strong Chairmanship

Presentation/consideration of applications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee site meetings Site Visits (Committee) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee presentation distributed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Presentation includes photos, plans etc. Members briefing pre committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local member to be notified of applications going to committee and sent copy of presentation and report Members must read agenda papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good Audio and Visual Projection for Speakers, Plans and Photos – How Changed Full Officer Presentation Presentation at committee Good Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully Present Late Correspondence Brevity of information (Concise Officer Presentation) Hi Tec Presentations (Mobile) Web cams of DC committee Design Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarification of Members Ability to Consider Other “Material Consideration”
Membership of committee	
Current treatment of Parish Council and Town Council at Committees – no special treatment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every member having a seat on planning committee versus member by selection Officer support and involvement of every district councillor with regulatory powers on development control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New planning regulatory boards should involve every member on them who will have a vote on planning matters in their own and neighbouring divisions Due to the enlarged areas of political representation: each member to have a place on a planning regulatory board to meet the Neighbourhood Empowerment of the Unitary Bid
Town/Parish Councils and members	
Area committees –have worked extremely well in SDC (measured by their popularity with the general public, parish councils and district councillors)	
	Highway officer should be in attendance
	Parent Committee for the Whole of Wiltshire
	Committee based on old district boundaries
Time and location of committee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local meetings – meetings being held in publically assessable venues close to application sites Fixed venue for each committee – not roaming round village halls Local geographic area- reasonable travel Distance Meetings held in the evenings to help allow public participation and make it easier for moving committees 3- 4 Week Cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee meetings should be held in venues based on the area office hubs i.e. minimum of 4 Where will major applications e.g. Westbury Bypass be decided? Retain Adequate Committees for the New Authority e.g. 4 4-6 Committees Locally Based Ensure that Number of Meetings Created are Manageable Two area planning regulatory boards for south Wiltshire due to 400 sq. mile area Regulatory Committees to be set up in each area/district and to be made up of local Unitary, Town and Parish Cllrs - Town and Parish Cllrs from the same area as the applications being tabled. To achieve this a bank of Cllrs could be held

Training Issues	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating Parish and Town Council • More Member Training – Cannot Serve on Committee Without it • Quality of Debate (Training) • Better quality of officers presentations (training) • Better training for councillors which is ongoing

Enforcement

What works well	Improvements
Approach to Enforcement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breach of condition notices • 50% Pro active 50% Re active • Being re active to complaints, not going out looking for problems • Proactive Enforcement • Enforcement Needs to Be Done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a tough stance • Must be pro active • More of a 'can do' approach • Speed up time taken • Strategy to speed up enforcement process • The Enforcement Officer to keep records and check time limited temporary planning applications and ensure action is taken at the renewal date
Information/ Communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification to members on when enforcement complaints are received in their wards • Devolving / Updating Information to Local Member • Senior Officers Report to Regulatory Committee on Contentious Issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates for members on issues in their area • Reports on enforcement to be reported to DC committee (every 6 months?) • Better access to enforcement cases electronically (confidential for members only) • Awareness for Members • Communication • Publish decisions
Officers/Resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bespoke Enforcement Team • Approachable Officer • Having a Planner Involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Enforcement section • One County Wide Team • 24/7 cover for enforcement • Could Building Control help in carrying out enforcement? • Dedicated Enforcement resources • A local Enforcement officer per district/area. Also similar advice and direction from a local Conservation officer as they often have input to enforcement cases
Compliance Officer funding by contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More enforcement capacity – resources • More Resources/ Training • Improvements on Resources
	Good link and response to proposed changes in legislation

Other	
Links to Parish Councils	Rebuild trust with Town and Parish councils
Committee backing for major cases	
	Need to support the decisions made
	A robust enforcement protocol is required

Appeals

What works well	Improvements
Member/Officer involvement	
Member Involvement at Appeals – Training Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved training for members Encourage members to attend appeal hearings Involvement of parish councils at hearings and site visits to support the reason for refusal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency of Decisions by Officers / Members Authority Good standard of advice in officer reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions contrary to officers recommendation - members should be prepared to stand up to officers Officers should make it clear of the implications of making bad decisions, however this shouldn't influence the decision Assertive advice to members to avoid problems at appeal Greater Time for Officers to do a quality Job
	Opportunity for Member Review Boards to work outside of Wiltshire
Notification to members on appeals received and decisions made	
Resources/support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good legal team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good standard of evidence to support case (this may be expensive) Resources to match the appellants side Legal section with expertise/specialist to fight all cases effectively
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency Critical Friend 	
Planning Inspectorate	
	3 rd party right of appeal
	Inspectors Decisions - unaccountable