

## **A Model Approach To Pre-Application Discussions**

### **Guidance for Parish Councillors and developers**

**Feckenham Parish Council** recognises that pre-application discussions play an important role in planning applications and welcomes the desire of developers to consult both the Council and the public more widely. However, the Council is also aware of the importance of public perception in planning and the critical need to avoid any appearance that the Council is conducting secretive negotiations or, colluding with developers.

#### **Pre-application briefings**

The Council is, in general, willing to hold meetings with developers prior to public consultation on the following three conditions:

1. Full public consultation is either already scheduled, or firmly planned.
2. The meeting is open to the public to attend and has been reasonably advertised.
3. The developer meets all reasonable costs for the hosting of the public meeting including the provision of large scale paper plans for display purposes.

The policy of the Council is **not** to hold private meetings with developers.

#### **Pre-application public consultations**

The Council encourages developers to carry out full public consultation before submitting plans for major developments, on the following basis:

1. An accessible and convenient venue.
2. Sufficient publicity to likely interested parties, in good time.
3. Appropriate timings to allow as wide a range of people as possible to attend.
4. A genuinely open mind and willingness to adapt plans in response to feedback.

Councillors are advised not to attend separate private briefings as part of public consultation, but instead to attend with the public.

#### **Individual Councillor's discussions**

Councillors must be aware of their obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct. Individual Councillors must not enter into informal discussions of possible future applications with a developer; to do so may lead to a complaint for a potential breach of the code.

If it is considered that a site meeting is needed with the developer then individual Councillors are strongly advised to attend with other agencies (i.e. highways, officers from the Local Planning Authority) or the clerk and not on their own.

#### **Pre Determination**

In all meetings with developers, Councillors are reminded of the critical importance of not predetermining their position on any future application, as this could require them to take no part in the discussion. It is noted however that expressing a prior view, or pre-disposition, for example of either

'welcome in principle' or 'concerns', is permissible. Taking a closed position to the development and adopting an 'over my dead body' approach to it may well be viewed as predetermination and if this is the case a Councillor would be unable to vote on the matter when it comes before the Council.

### **Presentations at Meetings**

Developers may express a wish to present their proposals at a Meeting of the Council. Such presentations cannot be made as part of the Meeting Agenda because matters on the Agenda require decisions to be made. Such decisions cannot be made in advance of the finalised Planning Application being put before the Council for proper consideration. Short presentations may be made during the Open Forum section (when the meeting is suspended and members of the public can ask questions) but it should be emphasised that Councillors should not make any comment at this stage. Such comments may be construed as pre-determination. It would be helpful to notify the clerk by email: [clerk.feckenhampc@feckenham.com](mailto:clerk.feckenhampc@feckenham.com)