



### **Why Pre-Application Discussions may be appropriate**

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that it is appropriate for someone proposing development to engage with a Local Planning Authority and with statutory consultees, including a Parish Council, before a planning application is submitted. This is in addition to consultation with neighbours and member of the public, which is a separate but important part of the planning system.

Discussions with landowners, developers or their representatives (subsequently referred to as promoters) are welcomed by the Parish Council (PC) at an early stage when set within the context of the Wisborough Green Neighbourhood Plan (NP) or NP Review.

Promoters should ensure that they are familiar with NP policies before requesting a meeting. Whether the PC accepts the request may, however, depend on whether development complies, in principle, with the NP policies, or is a site put forward as part of a NP review. Where there is no immediate likelihood of planning permission being granted, the PC may decline a request.

### **Requesting a Discussion**

A request for a meeting must:

- be made in writing by email or letter to the Parish Clerk; and
- give details of the site and of the proposal to be discussed; and
- give an indication of the current status or schedule for the submission of the application; and
- explain who will be in attendance on behalf of the applicant.

A decision to meet promoters should be minuted either by the PC or NP Review Group. If there is insufficient time to enable either the PC or NP Review Group to consider such a request at one of its meetings, the Chairman, in consultation with the PC Clerk, has delegated authority to respond on behalf of the respective group. This decision and the content of any meeting that may take place shall be noted at the next meeting.

### **Meetings**

At least 3 members of either the PC and/or NP Review Group will attend. The PC Clerk will make the meeting arrangements and be in attendance to take minutes. The format and length shall be agreed in advance and be limited to the development proposal. Meetings will normally take place in the Village Hall.

Transparency and openness are essential to maintain confidence in the planning system and, as public representatives, the PC considers this a very important principle.

Private Meetings: The PC understands that early discussion may include provisional plans or commercially sensitive details. The PC believes that being able to have an early open discussion with promoters is in the best interests of the village. As such, the PC will consider holding initial meetings in private and the promoter can make this request on application. The meeting will be chaired by a Parish Councillor or NP Review Group member. No hospitality shall be offered, and none will be accepted from the promoter by any PC or NP representative.

Public Meetings: Where the PC agrees that it would be appropriate and in the interests of residents to meet in public, the promoter will be invited to attend the next convenient Planning Committee meeting. That meeting will be subject to its standard procedures and Standing Orders. The agenda, supporting papers and subsequent minutes will be published.

Members of the public may be present to observe proceedings. They will not be allowed to participate in the discussion beyond the usual arrangements for public participation. As allowed by law, meetings may be recorded (either by the PC or by members of the public) and members of the press may be in attendance.

### **Meeting Purpose**

The promoter will have the opportunity to make a short presentation of their proposals. This should normally not exceed 10 minutes in length, although the Chair of the meeting may exercise discretion depending on the complexity and importance of the proposal.

Promoters are encouraged to speak to printed material, rather than a PowerPoint presentation. Sufficient copies should be provided for all Members of the PC. The Clerk will be happy to give advice on quantity, the preferred format and content.

The PC will endeavour to be constructive and consistent in its engagement with a proposal. However, it must be clearly understood that any comments or observations provided represent interim and provisional feedback. It is for the applicant to determine how to interpret or act upon them. They do not indicate that the PC has reached a settled or final position how it views the proposal and are without prejudice to any formal response to the Local Planning Authority.

If the proposal is familiar to the PC, for instance it has been the subject of prior discussion through the planning system, Council or NP Group members may also make specific suggestions, observations or mention points of local concern to the applicant.

### **Parish Council Feedback**

The PC will minute the meeting. For private meetings only, the promoter will be asked to confirm that the minutes accurately reflect discussion. As noted earlier, when meeting in public, it may be recorded by the PC or a third party. The applicant may, of course, take their own notes or recordings.

The PC will not normally provide a formal, written response to the promoter setting out its views following the meeting, or prior to its submissions to the Local Planning Authority. However, there may be circumstances in which it is appropriate to do so and that will be subject to a separate formal Council discussion and resolution. The views of any individual Councillor, however and wherever expressed, cannot be taken to represent the views of the Parish Council.

A developer shall not make any comment or claim about the PC's actual or perceived position in any planning application or in any other documents relating to proposed developments in the Parish without PC agreement.

### **Confidentiality**

Private Meetings: Minutes and presentations will be made publicly available, on request, if a planning application is subsequently submitted.

Planning Committee Meetings: Presentations and minutes should all be considered in the public domain and the promoter should not include anything they consider sensitive or confidential.

### **Contact with Individual PC or NP Group Members**

Individual Councillors or NP Group members are entitled to make reasonable enquiries and seek information about a development proposal to assist them in representing the community. However, no promoter should engage in direct communications with an individual PC or NP Group member with a view to influencing their position. Any information or material that a promoter wishes to provide to the PC or NP Group should be sent to the PC as a whole and only via the Clerk.

PC Members have been trained in the distinction to be drawn between 'predisposition' and 'predetermination'. Councillors will approach the discussions with an open mind and can do so without fear of being accused of bias or facing legal challenge.

### **Other Contact with the Parish Council**

Where the promoter wishes to engage with the PC in its corporate capacity, rather than as a planning consultee, for instance in relation to the future management of open space or proposed planning obligations, the applicant must write separately to the Clerk so that a formal response can be considered.