

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee

14 March 2022



Title	Consultation on Emerging Large Major Planning Proposals
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Esmé Spinks, Planning Development Manager
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	Community Environment Service delivery
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: 1. Agree the report
Reason for Recommendation	To improve the communication on larger major planning applications by encouraging developers to consult with the community at an early stage in the pre-application process.

1. Summary of the report

1.1 The report sets out the process to encourage developers to consult with the community at an early stage in the pre-application process. The report also details the roles of members and the process around formal briefings.

2. Key issues

2.1 The planning process for Borough Councillors and the local community will be enhanced if they are consulted about emerging proposals for complex major development or other sensitive ones at an early stage. This is encouraged in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) which advises that *'early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community'*.

- 2.2 The process will normally apply to major applications proposing 50+ dwellings and/or commercial schemes of 10,000+sqm of commercial floorspace. It will also relate to major developments of a sensitive nature and will require consultation by the developer with the local community.
- 2.3 Following initial discussions with the planning officers, the developer will be requested by the planning officers to discuss their proposals with the local community.
- 2.4 The consultation process advises that the developers shall be responsible for arranging a consultation event for their proposals. This shall be arranged to cover an afternoon/early evening period to enable the maximum number of people to attend. Consideration shall also be given by the developer to arrange an evening event. The developer shall invite the borough ward councillors and local residents and businesses. Other borough councillors may attend if they wish.
- 2.5 The developer shall circulate a report of the proceedings. Further meetings may take place with the planning officers and a further meeting with the community may be necessary.
- 2.6 Following the consultation process outlined above and prior to the submission of the planning application, the applicant shall undertake a final public consultation process with the wider community. This shall be in a public area and include at least one evening and one weekend
- 2.7 The report advises Planning Committee Members should be careful not to say anything which could be perceived as showing they had taken a fixed position on the proposals (or any aspect of them) or could be taken as an indication of bias, known as predetermination or bias.
- 2.8 The process also outlines the arrangements for formal member briefings which have taken place over a number of years.
- 2.9 Spelthorne is taking a proactive approach to the communication on larger major planning applications and is leading the way for local planning authorities. However, it should be noted that there is no statutory requirement for this consultation process to take place and planning officers cannot insist developers undertake such meetings with the community.
3. **Options analysis and proposal**
 - 3.1 The proposal seeks to improve consultation between the developer and the ward councillors and local community on large and complex or sensitive proposals early on in the pre-application process.
 - 3.2 Early consultation with the community by the developer on large proposals encourages greater collaborative working and provides the community with an opportunity to express their views with the developer at an early stage when the scheme is still being formulated. However, it should be noted that the developer has no statutory obligation to undertake this.
4. **Financial implications**
 - 4.1 There are no financial implications.

5. Other considerations

5.1 There are no further considerations to be taken into account.

6. Equality and Diversity

6.1 This does not have any direct equality and diversity impacts

7. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

7.1 There are no sustainability/climate change issues.

8. Timetable for implementation

8.1 It is proposed that the process will be implemented with immediate effect.

9. Contact

9.1 For further details please contact Esmé Spinks at e.spinks@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers: There are none

Appendices:

1. Consultation on Emerging Planning Proposals.