

SEEND PARISH COUNCIL

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SEEND PARISH COUNCIL PRE-APPLICATION COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROTOCOL

(Adopted by Seend PC September 2018)

This Protocol is part of the suite of documents that together will form the **Seend Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan**. The aim of the Protocol is to do all possible to ensure that planning applications accord with this plan and with those of any higher level plans, notably that of Wiltshire Council, as well as all national policy. One particularly effective way of achieving this is through early, planned engagement with the Seend community via the Parish Council.

Use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of Seend Parish Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good engagement process has been agreed and followed.

Context

The revised **National Planning Policy Framework** (2018) makes several mentions of the considerable value of pre-application involvement, for example in paragraph 39:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

(All the relevant extracts from the revised NPPF are appended.)

The **“10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Engagement”**¹ published by a group representing planning, industry and community groups states that:

“Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities affected by a new development can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes and ensure improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs.”

It is the view of Seend Parish Council that, for their community, the above should also apply to smaller developments because these can have at least as much impact as larger ones.

Seend Parish Council fully support and endorse all of the above and will play their appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application engagement with themselves and the wider Seend community as proposals come forward.

Process

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best practice, potential applicants should work with Seend Parish Council to fulfil the following principles:

- **‘Day One’ contact:** By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with our Parish Council, and through us with our local community, at the very start of any process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes is not productive.

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-topics/planning-applications/10-commitments-effective-pre-application-engagement>

- **Agreed Process:** A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope, timetable, information and so forth of the engagement – i.e. the process to be followed.*
- **Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility:** Although it is the applicant’s role to lead and fund engagement, the Parish Council will offer as much support as possible to any agreed process; for example by providing local information, contact details for local groups, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters and so forth.
- **Openness and Transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Parish Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed Community:** A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on all of the parish. The details of those to be involved will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential ways to contact and engage them.
- **Agreed Scope:** There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the engagement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).
- **Proportionality:** The nature and scale of engagement will be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals.
- **Final Reporting:** The applicant should submit, with any final application, a thorough report – a full ‘audit trail’ - describing and summarising the outcomes of the engagement, showing how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this. If the process has been followed fully, the Parish Council will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it**.

* There is considerable benefit for applicants in also sharing any process with Wiltshire Council, as planning authority, and securing their agreement to it.

** As per the opening proviso, endorsement of an engagement process and results does not necessarily mean support for the resulting proposals.

Initial contact should be made at the very outset with the Parish Council via the Parish Clerk. The Parish Council commits to doing all possible to arrange an initial meeting as soon as possible following this contact.

National Planning Policy Framework 2018 Extracts

Para 39: *“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”*

Para 40: *“Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they do offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.”*

Para 42: *“The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits. For their role in the planning system to be effective and positive, statutory planning consultees will need to take the same early, pro-active approach, and provide advice in a timely manner throughout the development process. This assists local planning authorities in issuing timely decisions, helping to ensure that applicants do not experience unnecessary delays and costs.”*