

PLAISTOW AND IFOLD PARISH COUNCIL



Pre-Application Discussion Policy

Relating to a Planning Proposal

Why Pre-Application Discussions may be appropriate

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that it is appropriate for someone proposing development¹ 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.

Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council welcomes the opportunity for an exchange of information before a planning application of significance to the parish is submitted. These can be beneficial to both the promoter and residents.

If you are not familiar with the role and responsibilities of a parish council within the planning system, it would be sensible to obtain independent advice before approaching us.

Requesting a Pre-Application Discussion

A request for a pre-application 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.

Where the Parish Council agrees that it would be appropriate and in the interests of residents, the promoter will be invited to attend the next convenient Committee meeting of the Parish Council's Planning & Open Spaces Committee. That meeting will be held in public and subject to its standard procedures and standing orders.

¹ In this document we refer to them as 'the promoter' which includes a site owner and their agents

Members of the public may be present as they may be at any parish council meeting 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 parish council or by members of the public) and members of the press may be in attendance.

Meeting Process

The promoter will have the opportunity to make a short presentation of their proposals. This should normally not exceed ten (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. This material should all be considered in the public domain and the promoter should not include anything they consider sensitive or confidential.

Sufficient copies should be provided for all Members of the Parish Council, the Clerk and a reasonable number should be available for any members of the public in attendance.

To assist with the preparation for the meeting, the Parish Council would prefer to receive this material at least seven (7) days in advance. If that is not possible, then it may be tabled at the meeting.

The Clerk will be happy to give advice on quantity, the preferred format and content.

Members of the Parish Council may then ask questions of the promoter. These will relate to the material planning and land use aspects of the proposal, and planning policy.

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

The Parish Council 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 Parish Council 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.

Confidentiality

The Council does not believe that there is normally any justification or requirement for confidentiality in its participation in a planning matter whether this is before or after an application is made. Transparency and openness are essential to maintain confidence in the planning system and, as public representatives, the Parish Council considers this a very important principle.

Therefore, the Council will consider a request for the public to be excluded from a pre-application discussion only in the most exceptional circumstances. It is likely to agree only if it is satisfied that it is in the public interest to receive information which would not otherwise be shared, and without which it cannot act in the best interests of the community.

Parish Council Feedback

The Parish Council will minute the meeting to the same extent that it does any part of the agenda. As noted earlier, the meeting may be recorded by the Parish Council or a third party. The applicant may, of course, take their own notes or recordings.

The Parish Council 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 discussion and resolution by the Committee. The views of any individual Councillor, however and wherever expressed, cannot be taken to represent the views of the Parish Council.

Contact with Individual Council Members

Individual Councillors 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 Councillor with a view to influencing their position. Any information or material that a promoter wishes to provide to the Parish Council should be sent to the Parish Council as a whole and only via the Clerk.

Members have been trained in the distinction to be drawn between 'predisposition' and 'predetermination'.

Other Contact with the Parish Council

Where the promoter wishes to engage with the Parish Council 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.