

## **Little Comberton Parish Council Guidelines for Responding to Planning Applications**

### **Purpose:**

In a small community, planning applications can be emotive for everyone involved. Applicants will often have invested a lot in getting to a planning application stage. Neighbours and others in the community will often have concerns about the potential impact on themselves. Meanwhile, the Little Comberton Parish Council (LCPC) has a responsibility to enable the village to thrive in a sustainable way. Councillors are mindful of the need to maintain transparency and fairness and also to preserve harmony within the village community. With this in mind, we are clarifying our role in how we respond to planning applications in this set of guidelines.

### **Our principles:**

- To manage planning responses according to the guidelines shared by CALC (Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils)
- To maintain respectful and professional dialogue with all parties
- To be consistent and fair across all applications
- To consider the interests and views of the community, as a whole, when responding to applications

### **Our responsibilities and actions:**

- The LCPC does not have the power to accept or refuse a planning application. This responsibility lies with the local Wychavon planning committee or Wychavon planning officer.
- The LCPC can submit to Wychavon formal comments that are representative of the views of the village and which direct the planning officer's attention to issues that are relevant to the application's compliance with planning policy. This is to ensure issues are given due consideration in any planning decision made by Wychavon. Where the LCPC does raise a question or concern in their formal comments to the planning officer, this cannot, in itself, stop the application. However, the Wychavon planning officer may be alerted to giving this issue closer attention when considering the application. Similarly, comments in support of a planning application do not override the planning officer's consideration of compliance with planning policy.
- There is a precedent within the planning system to approve a planning application unless it can be shown to be non-compliant with local or national planning regulations and guidelines. It should be recognised that the LCPC Councillors are not planning experts but in their capacity as spokespeople of the village community will highlight areas of community concern that could be pertinent with respect to planning regulations and guidelines.
- The LCPC has a duty to coordinate and understand the wide range of views that might arise in response to an individual planning application proposal. This range of views should be considered in a formal meeting before deciding on a corporate response to the planning application. Whilst councillors are each entitled to share their own personal opinions, it is important that we are seen to represent the views of the community as a whole. This point is particularly important to remember where an application more directly impacts a

councillor, for example relating to a councillor's neighbour, or a close contact of a councillor. Note that, by law, if a councillor has a direct financial interest in an issue, perhaps where the planning application is for their own property, this must be declared and the councillor is expected to abstain from discussions.

- In deciding on the LCPCs corporate response, it is noted that not every individual villager will have their own view directly represented in the ultimate agreed response, although their view will have been considered in coming to this formal agreed response. Individual villagers are, nevertheless, entitled to share their own personal views directly with the Planning Office at Wychavon if they wish to. Where a councillor themselves has personal concerns about a planning application that are not shared with the wider community or the LCPC as a whole, they too are entitled to share these directly, as an individual resident, with the Wychavon planning officer.
- The LCPC should focus its agreed formal comments on whether the proposal is compliant with planning policy such as:
  - o whether it is a "sustainable development" and in keeping with the local development plans and the National Planning Policy Framework.
  - o whether it is in keeping with policies and guidelines for the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where relevant to a specific application's location.
  - o whether it is in keeping with the Village Design Statement (VDS). The VDS was developed in consultation with the village and was then adopted by Wychavon District Council as a Local Information Source that can have a meaningful influence in planning matters. The VDS outlines a set of design guidelines that ensure new development respects the distinctive character of the village.

Rather than consider issues of personal preference, the LCPC should focus its agreed formal comments on matters "material" to the planning system such as:

- o Loss of sunlight (based on Building Research Establishment guidance)
- o Overshadowing/loss of outlook to the detriment of residential amenity (though not loss of view as such)
- o Overlooking and loss of privacy
- o Highway issues: traffic generation, vehicular access, highway safety
- o Noise or disturbance resulting from use, including proposed hours of operation
- o Smells and fumes
- o Capacity of physical infrastructure, e.g. in the public drainage or water systems
- o Deficiencies in social facilities, e.g. spaces in schools
- o Storage & handling of hazardous materials and development of contaminated land
- o Loss or effect on trees
- o Adverse impact on nature conservation interests & biodiversity opportunities
- o Effect on listed buildings and conservation areas
- o Incompatible or unacceptable uses
- o Local financial considerations offered as a contribution or grant
- o Layout and density of building design, visual appearance and finishing materials
- o Inadequate or inappropriate landscaping or means of enclosure
- o Access to open spaces
- o Impact on the landscape character associated with the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- The cumulative impact of a series of planning proposals and/or precedent that might be set for future development applications
- The LCPC reserves the right to appoint a sub-committee to discuss planning applications and to decide on the appropriate level of consultation with the whole Council and community.
- The LCPC will endeavour to notify the village when it has been invited to comment on a planning application and create appropriate opportunities for villagers to share their comments with the LCPC, for example in writing or in person at a formal meeting.
- The LCPC will include a more detailed review or wider village consultation when the LCPC deems it necessary based on initial discussions. The LCPC might abstain from submitting comments where the LCPC considers that any comment will have no meaningful impact on the decision-making at Wychavon level.
- Residents of Little Comberton are entitled to put in writing any concerns they have about the process the LCPC has adopted for planning applications and to send these to the parish clerk. The LCPC commits to discussing any concerns raised and reviewing its processes for responding to planning applications as appropriate.
- A summary of all comments received from villagers, and any minutes of any planning discussions will be recorded and kept for reference as per guidelines by CALC.
- Formal comments should be submitted by the LCPC to Wychavon Planning within the timeframe set out within the planning consultation process. The LCPC will liaise with the Wychavon Planning Committee and seek an extension on any consultation deadline as required to ensure that villagers can be appropriately consulted and that there is an opportunity to discuss an application at a formal meeting before deciding on any formal response.

For additional documentation see:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- South Worcestershire Development Plan
- Village Design Statement