



Alderbury Parish Council

Planning Applications: The Parish Council's Protocol

All planning applications made to Wiltshire Council (our Local Planning Authority (LPA)) for sites within or immediately adjacent to the Parish boundary are referred to the Parish Council as a statutory consultee.

Normal Procedure

When a new application is registered the LPA sends one paper copy of the application to our Parish Clerk, who notes the details, adds the application to the agenda for the next Parish Council meeting and sends the information to all of the parish councillors. The details of all new planning applications can be viewed online in the planning section of the Wiltshire Council website.

Consideration at a Parish Council meeting

Applications are considered by the Parish Council at the next available meeting. 'Planning' is an item on the standard agenda and applications are considered as part of that item.

A meeting is held each month, except for August. If a planning application is received and the monthly meeting has just been held and a response is required before the next meeting, an Extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council can be called if required so that it can be reviewed.

The conclusions of the PC may be:

- (a) 'No comment';
- (b) An objection, with reasons for the objection;
- (c) Support for the application
- (d) Support the application subject to conditions (which are outlined in the response)
- (e) 'No objections'

A high proportion of cases are minor matters to which the response is 'no objections'. Most other cases are straightforward and the Parish Council's response is sent to the LPA.

It is also unusual for the Parish Council to express positive support for an application; this happens when the Council as a whole concludes that the proposed development would provide positive improvements for the community, the local setting etc.

If a member of the public wishes to speak about a particular application, they will be invited to do so at the beginning of the meeting, before the Parish Council considers that particular application. Applications on which a member of the public wishes to speak, will be dealt with first if possible.

External consultation

In some cases the PC may seek input from (or make comments to) the Unitary Councillor (whose role includes responsibility for planning matters across their designated area).

Representations to the Parish Council by applicants or other residents

The Parish Council welcomes representations from applicants or from any resident who believes they (or the community) may be affected by a planning application and wants to make their views known. In either case you should in the first place contact the Clerk, preferably by email (clerk@alderburyparishcouncil.gov.uk).

In the case of applicants, if you believe your application may be controversial it's wise to contact the Parish Council before submitting it. Where a matter is urgent the Clerk can be contacted by phone, as shown at www.alderburyparishcouncil.gov.uk. The Clerk will inform the Chair and Vice-Chair and will advise as necessary.

Given the short time frame for responses to planning applications, residents are strongly advised to take up the matter as shown above rather than waiting for the next Parish Council meeting.

Site Visits

Arranging the visit

After receiving the details of a planning application, councillors will decide if they would like to visit a site. We can only do so with the agreement of the owner of the land concerned. When the LPA arranges a formal site visit, the Parish Council is informed and – whenever possible – a member of our Parish Council attends the visit. In the unlikely event that the landowner will not give permission to enter a private site, the site will have to be viewed from the public highway.

The Clerk or a nominated Councillor will liaise with the applicant to arrange a suitable date and time so that cllrs visit together. All parish councillors will be invited to attend. If only one cllr is able to attend, the clerk will also attend the meeting. Where a proposal would have a significant impact on an adjoining parish, the adjoining parish members will also be invited to attend.

Conduct of the visit

The purpose of the site visit is to enable councillors to familiarise themselves with the site and its surroundings, in order to understand the issues more clearly when considering the application.

While it may be necessary for an applicant or his agent to be present on the site (eg. to provide access or for safety reasons), discussions with the applicant or their agent or any third party should be avoided and they will be advised that lobbying of councillors is unacceptable. Presentations by applicants will not be permissible.

At no time during the site visit should councillors debate or comment on the planning merits or otherwise of a proposal.

Councillors will not make any decision at the site visit and individual members should keep an open mind about the merits or otherwise of the proposal to which the site visit relates.

Record of the visit

A record of the visit will be retained on the planning application file. The record will include the time of the meeting, attendees and what matters were viewed on site.

Representation at Local Planning Authority meetings

Most applications to the LPA (Wiltshire Council) are determined by council officers under 'delegated powers', but there is provision for some cases to be referred to Wiltshire Council's Southern Planning Committee, comprising elected councillors. That committee allows for 'public speaking' when it considers a particular application and the Parish Council can be represented, alongside the applicant, objectors and local unitary councillors. The Parish Council takes up this opportunity when:

- (a) The recommendation by officers (to approve or refuse an application) is contrary to the view taken by the Parish Council, and
- (b) The matter is regarded as of sufficient community interest to warrant the time and cost of preparing for and attending the meeting, and
- (c) In the view of the Parish Council's chairman, there is a reasonable chance that attendance will significantly influence the decision in favour of the PC's desired outcome.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Parish Council does not support an application to assist the applicant or oppose one to assist neighbouring objectors; our role is to represent the interests of the community as a whole.

Our protocol for planning applications

While every case is dealt with on its merits, as a general rule the Parish Council raises no comment or no objections on a minor change to a dwelling or its setting (for example work on protected trees), where there appears to be no impact on the community as a whole or the local neighbourhood.

The Parish Council carefully considers applications for new buildings of any kind, major extensions, or change of use, particularly considering the local impact. When the Council decides to object to an application, its reasons are usually stated in terms of how the proposal conflicts with either national or local planning policies.

The Parish Council as a whole does not 'take sides' as between neighbours; our role is to represent the community. The Parish Council doesn't provide help with applications or individual objections, or with the applications process – such matters are dealt with by Wiltshire Council.

Although the Parish Council seeks to frame its response to an application in terms of relevant planning policies, our focus is on local considerations. The Parish Council may be favourably disposed to an application that has local benefits, or opposed to one that in the Parish Council's view is inappropriate, whether or not it complies with all relevant policies - parish councillors are not expert in planning. The Parish Council may, of course, and as with any resident, seek advice from the LPA's specialist officers if they feel such advice is needed.

Questions or Comments

Questions or comments on the Parish Council's approach to planning matters should please be addressed to the Clerk, preferably by email.

This document was adopted by Alderbury Parish Council on 9th February 2017.