

# Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council – Internal Note

Source; Clerk

Doc. No; 1.29.10.7 Policy on Planning Applications V5 Adopted 110315.doc

Approved; V5 Approved by P&D 11/03/15

Issue; 5

Distribution; All Parish Councillor handbooks

Date; 11/03/15

## POLICY ON PLANNING APPLICATION SITE VISITS & THE MANAGING OF “SIMPLE” PLANNING APPLICATIONS

### 1. SITE VISITS

It is common practice for the Clerk to ask Councillors to provide a situation report on particular planning applications arising in their locality. Alternatively, if no councillors are available this role may be undertaken by the Clerk. The purpose for this is:-

1. To ensure those dwelling occupiers near to the application site (e.g. adjacent properties) are aware of the planning application and to offer them the chance to see the application details and plans.
2. To establish the relationship of the proposal with the established architecture and amenity of the locality.
3. To report the salient facts to the P&D Committee so that it may prepare a consensus response to the planning authority on behalf of the Parish Council (PC).

The following guidance points for site visits and subsequent report back to the P&D Committee should be considered as part of PC policy in addition to the Adopted NALC Model Standing Orders Section 15b(xiv), covering the recording of planning application details upon their receipt from the planning authority:-

Councillors, or the Clerk:-

1. should focus the response to the planning authority on and around the facts given in the application. This alone makes it unnecessary to visit the applicant, since any verbal comment or explanation is irrelevant unless it is stated in the application documentation.
2. must not ask anybody implicitly for objections.
3. must not put words into people’s mouths.
4. when approaching neighbouring dwelling occupiers, should say something along the following lines.... *“I am Fred Smith your local Parish Councillor and I am checking whether you are aware of a planning application on the property next door. I also wonder whether you have any comments or observations to make that will assist the Parish Council in making its response”*. [Note, that supportive and un-supportive comments are equally valid.]
5. should listen to any comments made, and if necessary, carefully and respectfully probe them further whilst remaining impartial.
6. must avoid becoming a mediator between applicant and neighbours; the Parish Council has no power to resolve such issues.
7. must not propose solutions to perceived problems.
8. should endeavour to remind those approached that they have the right to respond directly to SCDC and that individual responses are preferred to combined responses with neighbours (*the Round-Robin*).
9. when presenting a situation report to the P&D, should not as part of that report offer a personal opinion as to whether the planning application should be approved or not. They should simply present the facts as observed/obtained and let open discussion decide the recommendation without the influence of any early personal bias from the presenter. The presenter is of course free to voice personal opinion once open discussion commences.

## **2. MANAGING “SIMPLE” PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

A “simple” Planning Application is one that has:-

- a) negligible effect on the amenity of the neighbouring properties,
- b) is not of a prominent nature
- c) has a low visual or environmental impact on the neighbourhood.

On receipt and registration of a new planning application the Clerk will carry out an initial assessment to determine if, in his opinion the application fulfils the above criteria. If not, then the normal procedure is followed as in section 1 of this document.

If the application is initially deemed “simple” then the following procedure applies:-

1. The Clerk will refer the application to any two of:- The Chairman of the P&D, the Chairman of the PC, the vice-Chairman of the PC (*‘The Assessors’ for the purposes of this policy document*)
2. The Assessors will confirm the assessment of “simple” or refer the application to the P&D Committee and follow normal procedure as in section 1 of this document..
3. If the “simple” application is received in isolation (*no others pending review by the P&D Committee*) or the application is time restricted (*response required by SCDC before the next scheduled P&D Committee meeting*), The Assessors in association with the Clerk then have the devolved responsibility to compile and submit a response to the Planning Authority without reference to the P&D Committee (Note: Under time restrictions, the Assessors may determine the application must be seen by a full P&D meeting in which case section 6 below applies).
4. The compilation of a response of this nature would not normally require a site visit but it is not precluded. However, reference to any available on-line information is highly recommended (*e.g. Google Street View, SCDC Planning Database*).
5. The response must be agendered and reported at the next available P&D Committee meeting.
6. If the application is time restricted and deemed to require the attention of the full P&D Committee, but P&D meeting dates are unavailable before expiry of the response date, then the Clerk should request authorisation by SCDC Planning Admin of a suitable delay in the response date to enable due consideration of the application by the P&D Committee.

<b>Doc. History:</b>	Issue 1	29/05/07	Adapted from an original document written by R S Swain
	Issue 2	06/06/07	Approved for issue by P&D Committee
	Issue 3	01/03/11	Added devolved reporting responsibilities & renamed document
	Issue 4	10/03/11	Approved for issue by Parish Council
	Issue 4.1	28/05/14	Updated section 1 reference to Standing Orders to reflect new 2013 SO section number
	Issue 5	11/03/15	Added section 6 and addition to section 3 to cover expiry of response time