

COCKERMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

PROTOCOL ON PRE APPLICATION MEETINGS FOR MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS AND DEVELOPERS

Introduction:

Cockermouth Town Council recognises that pre-application discussion plays an important role in major planning applications and welcomes the desire of developers to consult both the Town Council and the public more widely.

Well informed Town Councillors may be able to assuage any unfounded fears held by their local communities and influence certain elements such as layout, density and design. They may also have valuable local knowledge to share on technical matters such as drainage or flooding.

Risks:

However, the Town Council is also aware of the importance of public perception in planning and the critical need to avoid any appearance that the Town Council is conducting secretive negotiations or colluding with developers.

Pre-Application Briefings

A pre-application briefing is a meeting of the Town Council at which a developer provides information on their proposed planning application to the Town Council and members of the public.

Cockermouth Town Council is, in general, willing to hold meetings with developers prior to public consultation on the following three conditions:-

1. Full public consultation is either already scheduled or firmly planned
2. The meeting is open to the public to attend and has been reasonably advertised
3. The developer must provide information about the proposed development affecting the parish in writing prior to the circulation of the agenda

The policy of the Town Council is not to hold private meetings with developers unless there is a necessary and compelling reason that could be justified to the public.

Developers should contact the Town Clerk to organise pre-application briefings on 01900 821869.

Pre-determination:

In all meetings with developers, Members are reminded of the critical importance of not pre-determining their position on any future application as this could require them to take no part in the discussion. It is noted however, that expressing a pre-disposition for example of either 'welcome in principle' or 'concerns' is permissible.

Individual Members' Discussions:

Individual members may be approached by developers for informal discussions of possible future applications. Whilst it is left to individual judgement of members whether or not to take part in such discussions, based on the nature and likely level of controversy of the application, they are advised:-

1. To carefully consider the public perception of such meetings

2. To avoid any appearance of collusion in applications likely to cause controversy
3. To avoid accepting hospitality in connection with such meetings
4. To advise the Chairman and where possible the Town Council of such meetings
5. To make a note of those present, the issues discussed and next actions and that those notes be handed to the Town Clerk to be placed on file and made available to anyone who may reasonably request to see it.

Members must not purport to be representing the Town Council at such meetings unless expressly authorised to do so by the Town Council.

Pre-Application Public Consultations

The Town Council strongly encourages developers to carry out full public consultation before submitting plans for major developments on the following basis:

1. An accessible and convenient venue
2. Sufficient publicity to likely interested parties in good time
3. Appropriate timings to allow as wide a range of people as possible to attend
4. A genuinely open mind and a willingness to adapt plans in response to feedback

In general Town Councillors are advised not to attend separate private briefings as part of public consultation, but instead to attend with the public.

Purpose of pre-application briefings and consultation

The purpose of pre-application briefings and consultation is as follows:-

- To be positive and proactive in engaging constructively with developers, the Borough Council and other service providers from an early stage
- Assist in identifying and engaging other interested groups/organisations operating within the community
- Help to provide information to the community by identifying local people, places or means of communication that could be used by developers to publicise their proposals and related community involvement opportunities
- Identify clearly and at an early stage the issues relating to the development proposal(s) that are a priority for the Town Council and the questions that need asking of the developer, the Borough Council and any other services