

ASTON ROWANT PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Procedure for Commenting on Planning Applications

October 2018

This document is to inform Councillors (Cllrs) and residents on how Aston Rowant Parish Council (ARPC) review planning applications (PA) received for comment from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). ARPC do not approve or refuse a planning application but are asked to give their view either way.

Planning Process:

- On receipt of a planning application details are put on the ARPC website.
- The Clerk issues the document pack to the Cllrs and it is usually issued to a Cllr in the village where the application has been made.
- The Clerk puts a notice of all current and recent planning applications into the Parish Notes.
- The Clerk or Planning Committee Chair may post information regarding planning applications on KBAR or via any other means of approved communication.
- Any Cllr with a direct link to the application must declare an interest at this point and they cannot participate in any discussion or vote. See note 1.
- The document pack is circulated to the Cllrs whose private comments are made on the paper form included in the pack or via email with all Cllrs copied in. The Chair will collate and summarise the comments prior to the next PC meeting and circulate via email.
- Cllrs are reminded they should keep an open mind and view any application in a local context, consider the local impact as well as the wider benefits or issues associated with development. The Cllrs should consider the benefits and/or the harm to the whole community and not just the immediate residents or applicant.
- Cllrs are asked to fully consider the application, read the applicants submission documents in full. Cllrs should consider comments and issues raised by neighbours and other residents. The Chair may arrange a site visit and discuss the application with neighbours. Cllrs should take all the relevant information into account when making their decision. Cllr's should vote using their own judgement and should not vote on behalf of other people. Cllrs are to use their own best judgement after having considered all the facts.
- If the application is for a large development of 1 or more houses or a large-scale building, then the Chair will seek to have an 'open meeting' where the plans are laid out and residents can come and view the plans and give their views to the PC. The Chair will ask the applicant or developer to make a presentation and answer questions, but we cannot compel them to attend. We may hold 1 or 2 of these types of meetings. At no point in these meetings should any Cllr express a view or opinion on the application.

- During this time no Cllr should comment on the application in public, but it can be discussed between Cllrs.
- The PC will seek residents', neighbours' and the applicants' views on any issue that may be relevant or to seek clarity on any issues that arise.
- The chair and other Cllrs may visit the application site and the neighbours.
- Following an open meeting or internal discussion the PC may decide to seek modifications or alterations to the plans and the PC should try and resolve any issues with the applicant where possible before submitting a response to SODC. SODC officer should be informed. This may require members of the PC meeting with the applicant and asking for changes to be made.
- When the Cllrs have all voted on the final plans the forms are handed to the Chair they will circulate via email and at the next PC meeting the decision.
- If the majority of Cllrs vote 'Should Be Approved' then at the next meeting the Chair presents the application and declares SBA, no further discussion is needed in the meeting unless a Cllr wishes to add a condition or comment.
- If the majority of Cllrs vote 'Should Be Refused' then Chair presents the application and summarises in the PC meeting the reasons for refusal and where necessary refers to relevant policy. Cllrs can then discuss the reasons for refusal and add or remove any they do not agree with if they wish.
- Following the PC meeting the chair submits the agreed response to SODC.
- At all PC meetings the PC will be open to hear views from all sides but no one other than Cllrs can discuss and vote on an application in a meeting.
- Cllr's should not express an opinion on any planning application until the Chair has issued the PC's decision to SODC. After the PC's comments have been submitted Cllrs are entitled to submit their own personal comments to SODC but should remain open minded and willing to change their view if new plans or information is submitted subsequently.
- Any questions regarding a planning application are to be directed to the Clerk and a response issued ASAP. Note that the PC only meet once a month and if the reply needs discussion then the reply may be issued after the following PC meeting.

There are five councillors on the planning committee at any one time. The ARPC Chairman is not permanently on the committee but can be asked to vote on a case when there is no majority. The five councillors on the committee should be those with the most experience on the council. A councillor must have had training by an SODC planning officer before joining the Planning Committee.

NOTE. You must declare an interest if a member of your family or a close personal friend are making the application, or you will be affected financially then you will not be able to vote. Cllrs must decide themselves if a friend or neighbour is involved and they must satisfy themselves that they can make an unbiased decision.

NOTE. Cllr's do not have to comment in meetings, they do not have to answer questions from the public directly and any questions that residents do pose to the PC should go through the chair and will be addressed at the next meeting.

NOTE. The PC will seek funds from developers. We will aim do this prior to making any comments on the application and it will not affect our decision as we will seek funds from all new housing proposals. (not householder applications).