

Agents' Forum Minutes 06.11.07

Council Officers Present:

Mark Berry	Head of Planning
Jacy Yates	Senior Planner
John Robinson	Planning Officer
Claire McAlister	Planning Officer
Nic Pettifer	Planning Officer
Nigel Eveleigh	Acting Head of Planning Policy
Susie Peck	Planning Policy Officer
Anthony Evans	Conservation & Design Officer
Tony Michael	Conservation Officer

Agents present:

Andy Mannington	-
Lee Pitters	Canopy Planning Services Ltd
Ian Stagg	-
Ian West	EPS
Peter Elkins	-
Brian Cross	Brian Cross & Associates
George Williams & Amy	Plans People Ltd
Brian Townsend	Huggins, Edwards & Sharp
John Cavilla	
Aziz Kocheh	Aksess Ltd

General welcome by Head of Planning, Mark Berry.

Round-up of local and national planning issues

Mark Berry outlined a series of recent and proposed changes to the planning system including the proposed revision of the Permitted Development rights. Although no changes have yet taken place, the summary of the recent consultation is shortly expected to be released.

There is also increasing concern for sustainability and energy efficiency to be incorporated into proposals, including the smaller-scale householder extensions. New dwellings are expected to meet 10% of the sites energy needs by way of renewable sources, but householder proposals should also be thinking about ways of reducing their environmental impact by way of materials, design and layout.

This leads to the requirement of all proposals to display 'good design'.

Increased Fees

It is likely that planning fees will be increasing from 6th April 2008. Although the increase is not yet known, it is thought that it could be around 25% of the current fee for some applications. A householder application fee may therefore go up to about £150 (an increase of about 8%).

Update on the LDF

Susie Peck set out a brief update on the Council's Core Strategy which was formally adopted by Members in July 2007. This document sets the overarching policies for development within the borough for the next 15 years.

Within this, the policy team will be introducing a Design Guide to replace the current *Supplementary Planning Guide – Householder Extensions*. The recent workshop held at the Agent's Forum in July 2007 was a good starting point and there will be the opportunity for agents to become involved in the new Design Guide which will become a Supplementary Planning Document, a vital part of the LDF.

The Council wants to involve agents in how we present this information and cited an example which has recently been produced by Wealden Council.

The Policy team also are currently working a Developer Contribution SPD, set for adoption in mid 2008. This is intended to clarify any contributions expected in conjunction with new developments, covering aspects such as infrastructure, Education provision, open space and Health Care.

1 App

Delays to the new national application form has meant that the mandatory date will now be April 6th 2008. Applications from this point on will only be accepted on the 1App forms.

There is confirmation that electronic payment of applications made through the Planning Portal is on the way, although there is no firm date.

Conservation Area Appraisals

Anthony Evans summarised the recent Stamford Green Conservation Area Appraisal which was carried out during late 2006-early 2007 and approved by the Environment Committee in March 2007. This report has identified a number of areas, both negative and positive and suggested possible new boundaries for the Conservation Area. The report *Stamford Green Conservation Area – Character and Management Proposal (March 2007)* is published by the Council and can be viewed here: <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/2FB8BE41-AD91-4C33-A964-EDF896FD67A1/0/StamfordGreenCAADTPversionLowRes2.pdf>

Epsom & Ewell's Corporate Plan

Mark Berry briefly introduced the Council's new core values and ambitions and how these tie in with the service provided by the planning department.

Within this framework, the question was asked: how can we deliver a good quality planning service?

The aim is to provide a customer-focussed service which can be held accountable. We should be aware of shortcomings and strive to improve these.

A question was asked regarding the compliance of approved proposals, whether there is any monitoring of compliance or if we waited until there was a complaint lodged against a site. The issue of compliance monitoring would require additional resources.

Processing of applications

It was noted that the 8-week target date seemed more important to the Council than achieving an agreeable outcome to an application. In some instances, minor amendments could be made to a scheme which would render it acceptable, although this would take the application over its 8-week target date.

The adherence to the 8-week target in most application cases, was primarily down to performance monitoring of Local Planning Authorities set in place by Central Government. Furthermore, the re-submission fee is waived for a second application.

The ideal process of a householder planning application is to be made valid within 3-days of receipt. The case officer should be able to visit the site within 2-weeks and help to identify any issues after the 3rd week. This ideal situation would allow more time for any amendments to be made by agents.

It is also likely that applications will be scanned on receipt, so that drawings, letters and any other relevant material will be available on-line during the application process.

The advice given at the pre-application stage could also be reviewed, whereby any advice given is noted, dated, signed and provided to the applicant, providing a direct link with any future applications. A file of pre-application discussions would then be kept by the planning team.

Other matters

- Suggested 'live' demo of a 1App submission
- Also suggested was to summarise how a planning application is dealt with in terms of considerations applied.
- Three meeting per year suggested rather than the originally envisaged quarterly meetings

Date of next meeting: To be confirmed for a time before Easter 2008.