

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council Protocol for Planning Applications

This protocol is applicable to all planning applications received by the Parish Council and is intended to ensure that they are handled as quickly as possible and in an efficient manner.

Major and/or controversial planning applications shall always be reviewed and debated during the Parish Council following the date upon which they are received (see clause 3). If necessary, the Clerk shall be asked to contact the planning department to request an extension period to allow this to happen.

In certain cases, an ad hoc meeting may be called to discuss such applications, e.g. due to time restraints or the need to consult with parishioners.

Planning applications other than the above (e.g. such as small to medium alterations and extensions to a single property) shall be handled in the following way.

1. When a planning application is received it shall be passed to the Parish Council's Planning Co-ordinator (or in the case of absence, to the Deputy Planning Co-ordinator) for review and the action to be taken. Typically this would be to pass the application to a Parish Councillor who lives near to the applicant and does not have a personal or prejudicial interest. In cases where this is not possible, e.g. because of a 'declaration of interest' or unavailability, another Councillor shall be selected.
2. The designated Parish Councillor shall review the application to determine the appropriate action to be taken.

In general, the aim is to visit the immediate neighbours of the subject property to see if they are aware of the application and whether or not they wish to comment on it. (Although the Parish Council will take such comments into account, the neighbours should be encouraged to write directly to the planning department.)

If any of the neighbours have objections to an application, the designated Parish Councillor shall (with the agreement of the Planning Co-ordinator or Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, as appropriate) refer the item for debate during the next Parish Council meeting. If necessary, the Clerk shall be asked to contact the planning department to request an extension period to allow this to happen.

If contact with the neighbours is not possible or they have no negative comments to make, the designated Parish Councillor shall discuss the application with the Planning Co-ordinator (or Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, as appropriate) and one other member of the Parish Council and agree an action.

- In cases where the designated Parish Councillor does not see a problem with an application (e.g. it is typical of others granted within the immediate area), he/she can choose not to visit the neighbours. However, the designated Parish Councillor must then explain his/her reasons and discuss the application with the Planning Co-ordinator (or the Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, as appropriate) and the other Parish Councillor involved.

If there is agreement between the three councillors, the Clerk shall be asked to write to the planning department to inform them that '*The Parish Council has no comment to make on the application*', otherwise the item shall be referred to the next meeting of the Parish Council.

- In cases where the designated Parish Councillor sees a problem with an application, he/she shall discuss it with the Planning Co-ordinator (or the Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, as appropriate) and the other Parish Councillor involved with a view to referring the item to the full Parish Council for further discussion (see clause 3).

3. When an application has been reviewed and debated during a Parish Council meeting, the Clerk shall be asked to write to the planning department to inform them of our response.

There are three types of response, as follows.

- The Parish Council objects/strongly objects to the application for the following reasons.
- The Parish Council supports/strongly supports the application (with or without reasons).
- The Parish Council has no comment to make on the application (if appropriate, observations may be made, e.g. with regard to tree protection).

Remember: If an application has been reviewed by three Parish Councillors [i.e., the designated Parish Councillor, the Planning Co-ordinator (or the Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, as appropriate) and one other Parish Councillor] in accordance with this protocol, then they can **only** ask the Clerk to inform the planning department that '*The Parish Council has no comment to make on the application*' (and without any observations being made).

Summary

- Without exception, all major and/or controversial planning applications shall be reviewed and debated during the next meeting of the Parish Council.
- If a neighbour has a valid objection to a planning application, it shall be debated during the next meeting of the Parish Council.
- If a designated Parish Councillor has a valid concern about a planning application he/she can, after discussion with the Planning Co-ordinator or Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, refer it for debate during the next meeting of the Parish Council.
- If a designated Parish Councillor does not see a problem with an application (e.g. because it is typical of others granted within the immediate area, the neighbours have no comments and/or are supportive) he/she can, with the agreement of two other councillors (one being the Planning Co-ordinator or the Deputy Planning Co-ordinator), ask the Clerk to inform the planning department that '*The Parish Council has no comment to make on the application*'. No other response is allowed in this situation.