

Meeting of residents' associations representatives with Croydon Planning Department

05.02.2018

This meeting was to hear about the way the Council Planning Department was going to deal with Planning Applications in future and to start a new conversation to understand where the Council and RAs want to go. They want us all to work together.

There was a surprising unity between all those representing Resident Associations in so far they were not satisfied with the way the current Council passed applications and ignored objections from residents.

The Council stated that Croydon is now required to build just under 3000 new homes a year thanks to an edict from the Mayor Sadiq Khan. This is more than any neighbouring Borough.

The Council states that it wishes to respect local character (RAs laughed at this point).

It was stated that most people currently still drive, but within 10-30 years they claim this will not be the case, so local transport and services need to be adapted to handle this change.

The Government has increased the fee that Councils can charge for planning by 20%, which brings more opportunities to the Planning Department (PD).

The PD wants to improve the 'Customer Experience'. They defined customers as developers and local residents.

The PD said they get 100 applications a week, and their aim is to deal with 100 a week.

The PD wishes to start having regular 'honest' meetings with RAs and developers to improve the efficiency of the planning process. This certainly hasn't been true to date.

The PD's main stated objective is to use online systems to process sustainable developments quickly, efficiently and cost effectively. They wish to reduce the time it takes to agree on a development by having a better negotiation procedure.

They want the Planning Officer to spend less time worrying about putting loads of site notices up and rather concentrate on trying to see the impact of any development on the neighbours – even discussing the plans etc - to get a better idea of views. Generally, site notices will no longer be put up, except in Conservation Zones. My comment – it doesn't take long to put up a site notice, so I don't see how this could make any difference other than to reduce the chance of neighbours (especially those without IT hardware) being aware of a local planning application.

The Planning Department wants everyone interested to use the enhanced on-line system. They really do want everyone to register online so they automatically receive notice of applications and any progress. This would also mean that everyone (developers and residents) receive the information at the same time. Comment – this is fine for those having internet access, but there are loads of residents who still do not have internet access.