

Residents Association Forum (Development Management)

Pete Smith

January/February 2018

Service Priorities for 2018

- Delivery of an effective and efficient service within budget
- Exceeding the Government's targets in relation to the determination of planning applications
- Enhancing customer service and customer experience
- Enhancing web site experience and using new technologies
- Implementing the Local Plan (CLP1.1 and CLP2) to deliver sustainable development and the Council's borough wide growth agenda
- Managing planning enforcement expectations

NPPF – what is required of us?

- ❑ Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay
- ❑ Positively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and thriving local places the country needs
- ❑ Delivery of a 5 year housing supply (against housing supply targets)
- ❑ Look for solutions rather than problems and seek to approve applications for sustainable development
- ❑ Importance of pre application engagement and dialogue
- ❑ Use of planning conditions to mitigate effects

Some Stats - 2017

- ❑ **5,159** planning applications and other related applications received
- ❑ Of **4,070** planning applications determined:
15.7% refused (**642**) and **84.3%** approved (**3,428**);
- ❑ **191** planning appeal decisions of which **35%** were allowed;
- ❑ Receive and determine around **100** planning applications week on week;
- ❑ **73.5%** of non major planning permissions issued within the statutory 8 week period (over rolling 2 years)
- ❑ **87.2%** of major planning applications determined within statutory period - 13/16 weeks (over rolling 2 years) #
- ❑ **600** enforcement investigations on hand (5 officers)

Delivering on a wide range of customer expectations

- ❑ New Ways of Working
- ❑ Focused and regular Developer and Resident Association Forums
- ❑ Web site refresh, encouraging self service and prompting automated responses from the Council as regards issues of interest
- ❑ Engagement and focus on on-line services
- ❑ Enhanced planning application submissions and encouraging/requiring applicants and agents to lift their game
- ❑ Delivering a proportionate but proactive planning enforcement service

New Ways of Working (Objective)

To grant planning permission for sustainable development positively, quickly and cost effectively

Problems with the Old Way of Working

- Double handling – ownership and responsibility;
- Long ‘end to end’ times – 266 days
- Effectiveness of site notice procedure (when publicising planning applications)
- Over reliance on paper based systems and process rather than using time to assess planning merits
- Officer reports not being sufficiently proportionate (in terms of length and complexity)
- lack of time to be innovative – in terms of applicant and neighbour engagement (making most of site inspection);
- Not getting it right first time
- Statutory deadline impacting on determinations.

New Ways of Working - Key Changes

- Officers validate their own application - understand and assess merits as early as possible
- Validation and consultation at same time
- Paperless working
- Early contact with agents/applicants
- Encourage pre-application discussions where scheme has potential but is unacceptable as submitted.
- Publicity via letter to immediate neighbours rather than by site notice (notices with “majors” and CA cases)
- Reduced report writing especially where development is small scale, policy compliant and with limited representation

Enhancing Web-Based Information

- Encouraging residents and RAs to sign up to “My Account” to receive automated email alerts when applications are validated in specific areas
- Fully review web pages – to enhance the customer journey and provide information that is more digestible and relevant to the customer (developer and neighbour)
- Presenting news stories (major applications, enforcement successes, appeal outcome, service development)
- Data protection implications
- Ensuring that comments are registered and recorded against the on-line register more effectively.

What We Expect From You (Developer)

- Compliance with Policy Guidance – or fully justify departure
- Don't avoid the elephant in the room
- Good quality and bespoke submissions
- Get it right first time – validation checklist (viability)
- Photographs and images in D&A – and with householder applications
- Proactive pre apps and listening and acting on what we say
- Allow us to help you – we want to identify solutions
- Honest conversations about affordable housing delivery – transparency of information
- Engaging with neighbours and RAs

What We Expect From You (RA/Residents)

- We are interested in hearing your views on planning applications – they can be helpful and informative
- Recognition that we take our role very seriously
- Understanding of our role in the process – we are not the developer and we are objective
- Mutual respect of views and positions adopted
- Acknowledgment that planning decisions are sometimes taken in the balance
- An appreciation that strength of objection (numbers) might not be a critical consideration, where development accords with policy or has some positive attributes (to be considered in the balance)

Role of Ward Members

- ❑ Democratically elected to represent the views of local constituents
- ❑ Direct communication with officers – through Member Enquiry processes
- ❑ Ward Member referral processes with speaking rights (in accordance with Council's Constitution)
- ❑ Speaking rights with pre application presentations (in accordance with Council's Constitution)
- ❑ Opportunities for close working between Ward Members and RAs (cross fertilisation of views and ideas)

Planning Enforcement

- ❑ Proportionate approach
- ❑ Government expectation to negotiate and resolve issues – before moving to formal enforcement proceedings
- ❑ Retrospective applications is a recognised method to deal with breaches of planning control
- ❑ The service of a planning enforcement notice needs to be expedient
- ❑ Can be a drawn out and resource intensive process once a planning enforcement notice has been served (to deliver compliance)
- ❑ Enforcement Service Plan 2017
- ❑ Successful prosecutions (we are proactive)