

## Planning Applications - Making Your Comments Heard

Planning is a topical subject both locally in Marnhull and nationally as the Government tries to tackle an acute housing shortage across the country. Locally, here in North Dorset planning is an emotive issue as the lack of a 5 year land supply (ie building of sufficient new dwellings to meet Dorset Council's "quota") means that the "tilted balance" is to approve applications that are deemed sustainable even if they are outside established settlement boundaries. So how can individuals comment on new planning applications that may impact them or their communities?

There are two main channels available to you here in Marnhull if you wish to comment on a planning application.

The first is to attend a Marnhull Parish Council Planning Session. These are usually part of the monthly Parish Council meeting, typically scheduled on the first Monday of the month at 7pm at the Village Hall. Agendas are posted on the Parish Council website ([www.marnhull-pc.org.uk](http://www.marnhull-pc.org.uk)) and around the village on noticeboards. Each Planning Application that the Parish Council has been asked to comment upon as a Statutory Consultee will be announced and then the general public is invited to provide their comments, if any. If the applicant, or their representatives are present, they will also be given the opportunity to comment. When all public comments have been heard, the Council will then discuss the application and come to a decision. Valid responses are OBJECT, NO OBJECTION or SUPPORT. Along with the decision, the Council can provide supporting reasons. These are particularly important if a decision of "OBJECT" has been made, as the Planning Authority, i.e. Dorset Council Planning Department, will need the reasoning for such a decision.

If a member of the public is unable to attend a meeting, they may always provide their comments to the Clerk, Mrs Sally Upshall ([clerk@marnhull-pc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@marnhull-pc.org.uk)) prior to the meeting. It is important that comments are received prior to the meeting, as once the Council has decided, it will only alter that decision under extreme circumstances. Also note that the Council, whilst taking into consideration public comments, will decide with the best interests of concerned individuals and the village at heart and based upon relevant material planning conditions (see below).

The second channel available to make your comments known is to provide them directly to the Dorset Council planning department (<https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>). We suggest anyone wishing to provide comments should take this route regardless of whether they have made them known to the Parish Council. The reason for this is that, despite being a Statutory Consultee, the Parish Council is just one voice. Dorset Council planning will take note of the volume of responses to an application when considering the decision, especially if there are many individual objections. In addition, Parish Councillors will take note of any comments made to Dorset Council planning if they are put online prior to the Parish Council planning session.

## So what are Material Planning Conditions?

It is important to provide your comments forearmed with some knowledge of the matters that Dorset's planning case officers must consider when deciding whether to grant or refuse an application. Like the Parish Council, Dorset Council will ultimately make decisions based upon the balance of positive and negative consequences within the constraints of national planning legislation.

Objections may not always result in planning permission being refused, because there are other factors such as Dorset Council's and central government's planning policies which may outweigh such objections.

However, material planning matters that can be considered by the Planning Authority – and the Parish Council - can include (but are not limited to):

- ▶ **Overlooking/loss of privacy**
  - *Is the property too close to neighbours? Are there second storey windows overlooking?*
- ▶ **Loss of daylight/sunlight or overshadowing**
  - *Does the position of the new property block natural light reaching neighbours?*
- ▶ **Scale and dominance**
  - *Is the new property in keeping with its surroundings?*
- ▶ **Layout and density of buildings**
  - *Is the development in keeping with the local setting?*
- ▶ **Appearance and design of development and materials proposed**
  - *Would the property be a 'blot on the landscape'?*
- ▶ **Disabled persons' access**
  - *Has consideration been made for disabilities (where relevant)?*
- ▶ **Highway safety**
  - *Is access onto the highway dangerous? This applies to cars and pedestrians*
- ▶ **Traffic and parking issues**
  - *Does the development increase traffic to undesirable levels and/or cause unacceptable disruption?*
- ▶ **Drainage and flood risk**
  - *Will rainwater runoff occur and if so can it be mitigated? Is the local sewerage system capable of accommodating the development?*
- ▶ **Rights of way**
  - *Will any footpaths/bridleways be impacted?*
- ▶ **Noise, dust, fumes etc**
  - *Will the development create a nuisance to the local area?*
- ▶ **Effect on listed buildings, heritage assets and conservation areas**
  - *Extra conditions are required in Conservation Areas and in the vicinity of historic buildings*
- ▶ **Effect on trees and wildlife/nature conservation**
  - *How is the natural environment impacted and have necessary measures been proposed to mitigate and/or compensate?*
- ▶ **Impact on the community and other services**
  - *Can local services cope with any consequential population influx?*
- ▶ **Economic impact and sustainability**
  - *Are there jobs, shops, leisure facilities nearby? Is transport being made available?*
- ▶ **Government policy**
  - *Local housing targets, green belt etc.*
- ▶ **Proposals in the Local Development Plan**
  - *Has the location been favoured in a local plan?*
- ▶ **Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)**
  - *Has a similar development been refused in the past? Were conditions applied to a previous application?*

Issues which are NOT material planning considerations and therefore cannot be taken into account, include:

- Who the applicant is/what the applicant's background is
- Loss of private views
- Loss of property value
- Loss of trade or increased competition
- Strength or volume of local opposition\*

- Construction noise/disturbance during development
- Fears of damage to property
- Maintenance of property
- Boundary disputes, covenants or other property rights
- Personal circumstances

*\*Note: The strength or volume of local opposition (such as petitions or multiple copies of the same objection letter) is not in itself a material planning consideration, but if the content of such objections is focused on the material planning issues then they can be taken into account.*

## To Summarise

Make yourself heard! You can influence the way planning decisions are made, particularly if you concentrate your arguments around the material planning considerations as detailed above. Ensure you voice your concerns (or support for that matter) to both your Parish Council and Dorset Council's Planning Case Officers.