

Willington Parish Council
Guidance On Responding To Planning Applications

The role of the Parish Council:

Willington Parish Council is asked by Bedford Borough Council for its opinion on every planning application within the Parish. The Parish Council meets every other month to review all such applications received. If required, special meetings may be called between scheduled meetings. An example of where this might be necessary would be to consider an application for a large housing development within the village. The agenda for all meetings are published on the Parish Council's notice board and on the website.

All such meetings of the Parish Council are open to the general public. This gives members of the public an opportunity to air their views on specific planning applications and to hear the discussions and the decisions made by the Council (ie whether or not to object to a particular planning application) and the reasons for this. Members of the public are also encouraged to contact the Parish Council (either the Parish Clerk, or any Parish Councillor) if they have a concern or query about a particular planning application.

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications within the parish. This means that the Parish Council must be consulted by the planning authority before coming to a decision. It does not have the power to approve or refuse applications, but is able to object to or comment on every application. Willington Parish Council is also one of the parties that can speak at the Borough Council's Planning Meetings, along with the local borough councillors and any residents' spokesperson. The responsibility for making **decisions** on the applications rests with Bedford Borough Council.

To ensure Willington Parish Council's opinion is taken into consideration its objections have to take account of the constraints placed on planning authorities by government guidelines and policies. This occasionally results in a 'No Comment' even though there may be significant objections from near neighbours. We welcome input from residents, and will be better able to take your views into account if you let us know of objections soon after plans are announced and by being copied in on any letter of objection being sent to the Borough Council. Please send your views or copies of such letters direct to the Parish Clerk.

While considering the views of residents and other interested parties, the Parish Council is not bound to pass on these views when making its decisions. In the same way, Bedford Borough Council is not bound to take account of the views of Willington Parish Council, although its local knowledge can often be influential in the outcome of an application.

Willington Parish Council comments to the Bedford Borough Council will normally fall into one of three categories:

- Do not object, possibly giving reasons
- Do not object in principle, but expressing concerns over certain aspects of the application
- Object, giving reasons

In addition the Parish Council may request the planning authority to consider imposing conditions if the application is granted planning approval, eg enhanced landscaping, or times that industrial units can be in use.

What you can do if you wish to object or comment on a planning application:

The following notes are issued by the Parish Council as guidance for members of the public. Further guidance is available on the Bedford Borough Council's planning website.

- The key purpose of planning is to manage development in the public interest.
- Bedford Borough Council, as the local planning authority, must take decisions on behalf of the whole community. They must make decisions openly, fairly and with sound judgement.
- Letters of objection can only be considered on 'material planning grounds' (*see list below*).
- Whilst views of local residents are always considered, local opposition or support on its own is not a reason for refusing or granting permission.
- All planning applications are determined in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework which set out material planning considerations that the local planning authority must take into account when reaching planning decisions.
- In addition to the above, the local planning authority must also consider other Government policies issued in technical documents and ministerial statements.
- Previous court decisions must also be considered and taken into account.

Set out below are 'material planning grounds' that Bedford Borough Council, as the Local Planning Authority, can consider when determining applications:

- Parking and servicing in relation to traffic flow for deliveries.
- Access and highway safety, including access for emergency vehicles.
- Traffic generation – increased traffic movements arising from the proposed development.
- Overlooking and loss of privacy.
- Overshadowing.
- Privacy/overbearing nature of the proposal.
- Design and appearance.
- Visual impact.
- Daylight/sunlight.
- Layout and density of buildings (over-development).
- Noise, nuisance and disturbance from the scheme.
- Loss of trees.
- Loss of ecological habitat.
- Flood risk.
- Loss of public visual amenity – not the same as loss of private individuals view.
- Risk of increased crime.
- Economic impact.
- Planning history/related decisions.

The following is a list of issues that cannot normally be considered:

- Loss of view or value to private individual property.
- Private rights of way.
- Land ownership.
- Age, health, status, background and work patterns of those objecting or supporting.
- Disruption during the building phase.
- Time taken to carry out the work.
- Damage to property.

- Possible change in property value.
- Competition (Business).
- The applicant's personal conduct or history.
- The applicant's motives.
- Potential profit for the applicant arising from the application.
- Private covenants or agreements
- Boundary disputes
- Capacity of private drains/sewers.
- "Better" site or "better" use.

NB: The examples listed above are definitive but not comprehensive and are only a guide to assist in the preparation of letters or statements of support or opposition.

Handling of Planning Applications by Willington Parish Council

Bedford Borough Council sends a notification to our Parish Clerk of any planning application they have received which they believe is relevant to the Parish. They are also responsible for publicly displaying a planning notice nearby the relevant site affected by the planning application.

The Parish Clerk will advertise details of these planning applications on the Parish Council website (the following link <http://willington.bedsparishes.gov.uk/planning/> will enable you to see all current applications).

Willington Parish Council

Planning Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

- 1) Membership of the Group will be agreed at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May each year.
- 2) The Group will be administered and managed in accordance with these Terms of Reference.
- 3) The Group will consist of the three parish councillors and will appoint a Chairman.
- 4) The purpose of the Group will be to make recommendations for consideration by the full parish council.
- 5) Procedure for dealing with Planning Applications:
 - Once the Clerk receives notification from Bedford Borough Council of a planning application, she will e-mail all parish councillors with details and deliver a hard copy of any plans to the Chairman of the Planning Advisory Group. She will also put the details on the website.
 - The Chairman will consult with the other members of the Group.
 - If the timescales allow for a response to a planning application to be dealt with at the regular scheduled meeting of the Parish Council, the Parish Clerk will ensure it is added as an agenda item. The Chairman of the Planning Advisory Group will advise the parish council on an appropriate response.

- If the timescales for a planning application can be altered to allow it to be handled at a regular scheduled meeting of the Parish Council, the Parish Clerk is authorised to request the Borough Council to grant a time extension for a response so that it too can be added as an agenda item.
 - If an appropriate time extension cannot be arranged, the Parish Clerk will circulate the proposed response advised by the Planning Advisory Group to the Parish Council and assuming no objections, the Parish Clerk will submit the response to the Planning Department of Bedford Borough Council within the necessary timescale.
 - If the Parish Council consider that the application requires it, the Parish Clerk will schedule and advertise a special meeting of the Parish Council that will allow residents to be informed of the application, to seek their feedback on the matter and to allow the Parish Council to reach a decision on the response to be made to the Planning Department of Bedford Borough Council.
- 6) These Terms of Reference will be reviewed at least annually and revised as necessary by the parish council as the need arises.

Reviewed 7th May 2019