



## COUNCILLORS' PLANNING CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE (PCGP)

### Introduction

1. Members of Wonersh Parish Council (WPC) are required to act in the public interest of the whole parish and not just the people of the ward you represent when considering any items of business, including local planning applications (PAs). You should always act impartially in reaching decisions and avoid taking account of your personal feelings or those of a planning applicant. Members should not favour improperly, or appear to favour improperly, any person, company, group or locality.
2. Members are always bound by your commitment to uphold the Wonersh Parish **Code of Conduct** whenever you contribute to the decision-making of the Council or of the Planning Committee. This **Planning Code of Good Practice** has been produced to provide supplementary advice to you relevant to the consideration of local PAs.
3. If you are unsure about whether or not you have a disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in relation to any matter under consideration at a Council or Planning Committee meeting please do not hesitate to consult the Clerk.

### The Parish Council Planning Committee

4. At its annual meeting in May each year the Parish Council *resolves* to constitute a **Planning Committee** of all Members, delegating to you responsibility for consideration of all planning-related matters and making **decisions** over comments and observations about PAs to the relevant statutory Planning Authority (usually Waverley Borough Council<sup>1</sup>).
5. The Planning Committee meets regularly (usually fortnightly) throughout the year.
6. The Planning Committee formally decides on behalf of the Council about the observations to make on PAs and whether or not to object to them.

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<sup>1</sup> Surrey County Council (SCC) is the Planning Authority for some issues such as minerals extraction or waste disposal. The Committee may also wish to comment occasionally on planning applications submitted to neighbouring Planning Authorities, eg Guildford Borough Council, if you consider there will be material impact on the parish.

7. The Planning Committee's agreed observations are submitted to the relevant Planning Authority by the Clerk.

8. In reaching its decisions, the Planning Committee must take account only of **material considerations**, ie issues that are, in law, *material* or relevant to a planning application. These include:

- the **Local Plan** as part of the **Local Development Framework**
- the **Village Design Statement**
- a site's planning history (including earlier applications)
- accessibility
- traffic
- roads and parking
- the historical significance of structures
- archaeology

9. All Members may submit written comments and observations about PAs ahead of the meeting of the Planning Committee so that these may be properly taken into account, especially if you are unable to attend the meeting.

10. You are encouraged to acquaint yourselves with the site of a PA by making a visual inspection from the public highway, footpath or other vantage point accessible to the public.

### **Contact with applicants, developers and objectors**

11. If anyone approaches you for detailed planning, procedural or technical advice, please refer them to **WBC Planning Services** instead. However, Members are encouraged to explain the Parish Council Planning Committee's **consultative role** in contributing to the WBC's decision-making process on PAs and to draw attention to the development guidelines in the *Wonersh Village Design Statement* (see paragraph 8 above).

12. If applicants, developers or groups of objectors seek to lobby you or request a private meeting about PAs please advise them instead to submit comments in writing to the Parish Council or to make representations during the "public-speaking" sessions provided at the start of all meetings of the Planning Committee or the full Council.

13. If participation in a private meeting with an interested party is unavoidable you should declare it and report the details to the Clerk and to other Members.

### **Site visits**

14. Members should only enter a site which is subject to a proposal as part of an official site visit. Members should use an official site visit to make observations that will contribute to material considerations by which the Planning Committee reaches a decision about a PA. However, you should not hear representations from any other party or express opinions or views to anyone during the visit.

15. Official site visits may be organized: (a) under the auspices of the statutory planning authority (and which are led by an officer of that authority); or (b) by agreement of the Planning Committee.

16. If an individual Member receives an invitation from an applicant or any other interested party to make a site visit, you should inform the Clerk and request that the Planning Committee designate a visit as official and invite other Members to participate. If possible, at least two Members should attend a site visit. You should make clear to the inviter the *dos and don'ts* about the visit (see paragraph 14 above). If anyone present seeks to lobby you about the PA please ask them to write to the Council or to make personal representations at the Planning Committee or Council meeting (see paragraph 12 above).

17. If a site visit is organised by the Planning Authority do try to attend. Do ask Planning Services officials leading such a visit questions or seek clarification from them on matters which are relevant to the site inspection.

18. Members participating on a site visit should always submit a report of their findings to the Planning Committee.

### **Adoption and review of the PCGP**

19. This Planning Code of Good Practice was originally approved and adopted for use by the Members of the Planning Committee at the meeting of the Council held on 10 November 2011.

20. The Code was reviewed by the Council at its meeting on 12 September 2013 and the present, revised text was adopted.

**12 September 2013**