

Area Plans Sub-Committee – Three Week Cycle **Responses from Town and Parish Councils**

1. Response from North Weald Bassett Parish Council:

The above matter was discussed at the Parish Council Planning Meeting yesterday evening where the following comments were made:

North Weald Bassett Parish Council would have no objection to the changes to the committee system for plans to be on a 3 week cycle, providing that all Parish and Town Councils are able to have their views read by Councillors who are Members of the relevant Planning Committee. We would prefer all Parish Council views and comments be placed within an Agenda, however we are aware that these views may have to be circulated on a Yellow Supplementary Agenda. Providing that this could be circulated in time for it to be read by the Members of the relevant Planning Committees we would have no objection. However we feel that the District Council should be 'lenient' when there are additional gaps between Parish Council meetings such as the summer recess and Christmas/New Year Period, and allow an extension of time for comments to be submitted. Subject to these matters being adhered to we would have no objection.

2. Response from Loughton Town Council:

As the district council are already within the government targets for the turn around of applications, there would seem no real need for this proposal to be adopted. If it were adopted it could restrict the ability of town councils to properly consider planning applications. It could also mean that local councillors would not have as much opportunity to attend subcommittee meetings, as there would inevitably be more clashes.

3. Councillor Caroline Pond: this is a personal view as a planning councillor:

Our officers are to be congratulated on the way that performance last year way exceeded the Government targets, and is similar at this stage.

It almost reached the council's own targets so it is premature to change the cycle. With the extra meeting in May/ June it may improve.

The spare week is useful for parishes to hold their own meetings (often held on Wednesdays), thereby avoiding some clashes for dual-hatted councillors, and for parishes wishing to speak at Area Plans.

It can also be useful for extra non-planning District meetings.

More information is required on the costs of holding an extra meeting. More information is also needed on how this will effect consultation by the public, and the parish councils. It is not acceptable for views to be given on the night, and not included in the agenda.

Cllr. Caroline Pond

4. Response from Roydon Parish Council:

Roydon Parish Council considered the suggestion of a 3 week cycle to committee meetings recently and has concerns that this will not give Parish Councils like Roydon sufficient time to comment on applications particularly major ones.

Roydon PC considers the majority of planning applications at its regular monthly meetings. Very occasionally we hold a planning meeting in-between times but generally this has not been necessary as the current arrangement, with some flexibility asked for and usually agreed with individual planning officers, has sufficed.

Our concerns are that holding a second regular monthly meeting (to ensure that our comments are included for a 3 week cycle sub-committee meeting) will mean more of a time commitment from members and the Clerk as well as hall costs - historically it has always been more difficult to ensure quorum attendance at ad-hoc planning meetings.

We trust that our comments will assist in the decision making process.

5. Response from Stapleford Abbotts Parish Council:

Their members believe that a three-week cycle would incur extra costs to Parish and Town Councils because additional planning meetings would be required. At

the present time the Sub-Committee meetings are on a specific day each month and are easy to diarize; three-weekly meetings would lead to confusion.

It is understood that the proposal would assist the Planning Department to meet Government guidelines but the Council would suggest that other avenues be explored to meet these guidelines rather than put Parish and Town Councils under pressure.

6. Response from Nazeing Parish Council:

Members of the Nazeing Parish Council would object to Plans Sub Committee meetings being held on a three-weekly cycle.

Members consider that it is not necessary because Planning Services already meet government targets and that an extra week in the monthly cycle could be put to better use within the Parish Council, Town Council and District Council.

The present meetings are not always well attended by sub committee members and therefore there would be doubt if this would improve attendance if asked to attend more meetings.

The cost has also got to be considered, and Members ask that the costing issue be dealt with and circulated before any decisions are made.

The Council has already changed the dates for Planning Committee meetings to accommodate turn around times and would ask that this matter be seriously reconsidered.

7. Response from Ongar Town Council:

Councillors would wish there to be a demonstrable reason for this change as they are concerned that this may result in extra meetings (and therefore an increase in costs) for Parish and Town Councils and a difficulty in meeting the required deadlines.

Members would also like to see a return to the practice of holding these meetings at various locations throughout the District and not only in the Civic Offices, Epping. Members believe this would result in a greater public attendance at these meetings.

8. Response from Epping Town Council:

The following is an extract from the Council's minutes, indicating their view on this matter:

Council considered a letter and report on the District Council's proposals to move the Planning Sub-committee cycle from four weeks to three weeks. The Clerk advised the Council that the Council's decision will be little affected by the change but exceptionally, single applications are received outside the normal weekly list arrangements and these may be troublesome under the current delegations.

Council RESOLVED to direct the Clerk to write to EFDC Planning Section advising them of Council's general approval of the three-week cycle for Planning Sub-committees; provided the 'weekly list' arrangements are strictly adhered to. Council also resolved to delegate authority to the Clerk acting in consultation with the Chairman of Planning and General Purposes Committee to: either respond to any applications which, due to time of receipt, cannot be placed before an ordinary meeting of Committee (advising the next available Committee of any decisions); or to call an extraordinary meeting of Committee.