

Worcestershire County Council

Pre-Application Discussions

Protocol

- The decision on whether pre-application discussions involving members should take place will be made on an individual application basis on the advice of officers after discussion with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning and Regulatory Committee.
- It should always be made clear at the outset that any discussions are on a without prejudice basis.
- Discussions are for information exchange and the improvement of understanding, they are not negotiations or part of the determination process and will not bind the Council to making a particular decision.
- Members attending such discussions will not give opinions on the merits of a scheme. If any views of a general nature are expressed by them it should be made clear that they are personal and provisional.
- Where confidentiality is requested this will be respected at this stage.
- Discussions shall be open to Committee members, substitutes and local members.
- Separate and specific arrangements to brief other members can be made, depending on the nature of the application. Committee members, substitutes and local members are not precluded from attending such briefings, but members who will be responsible for determining an application should not express their views on the merits of the development at such meetings.
- Two or more planning officers shall attend and be present at all times at any pre-application discussions.
- The developer and any parties required to assist the developer shall be entitled to attend such discussions.
- The procedure for any such meetings would in summary be the planning officers gives some background to the proposal, the developer explains the key issues relating to the proposal, and then an opportunity for councillors to ask questions of the developer.
- Any officer advice that may be required will be impartial and if requested it will be confirmed in writing.
- A written note should be made of any pre-application discussions and placed upon the relevant application file and officers should confirm the content of the note in writing with the participating bodies.

- Any subsequent Committee report will state that a pre-application discussion was held.