



4

PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND STAVERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Over recent months Staverton Parish Council has received many objections to some local planning applications: some emails arriving just 24 hours before the Planning Application deadline and wanting to change democratic decisions already made by Councillors.

For the benefit of residents who may have objections to future planning applications we would like to explain the role of your Parish Council.

When a planning application has been received, the Parish Clerk adds this to the next agenda of the Parish Council meeting to be fully discussed and voted upon. (The agenda is on noticeboards and the website with full details of dates when the meetings are held at least 3 working days before the meeting). Dates of meetings for the coming year, are on the home page of the Parish Council website. It is expected that those who are affected by these applications will attend the Parish Council meeting and discuss their objections so that the Councillors can reach a fully informed decision on how to respond. Quite often, only the planning applicant, attends the meeting, and then the Parish Council is led to believe that there are no objections from those living nearby and is left to make a judgement on this basis. It is mandatory that **all** councillors jointly discuss planning applications together, with due process and consultation.

If the deadline to send in the comment, is before the next meeting of the Parish Council then all Councillors are asked to look at the application and discuss their views online. Then a consensus is reached on any possible objections (and enables a Councillor to abstain if he/she wishes). It can take up to a couple of weeks to get responses from Councillors as they are unpaid volunteers who have work and personal commitments. No one single Councillor is allowed to put forward formal Parish Council objections on the Wiltshire Council website comment form or otherwise, without the full approval of the Parish Council. Councillors who may have a personal involvement or interest in the application, must declare this interest and abstain from the voting process as required by law.

A Parish Council meeting is not a PUBLIC MEETING but the public can attend and may not speak unless the Chair grants permission. The public is required to contact the Parish Clerk in advance of the meeting requesting an item or question be included on the Agenda no later than 3 working days before the date of the meeting. The Parish Council may not give a verbal response at the meeting but may wish to respond in writing if information is not to hand or councillors may want to discuss it in more detail.

If you wish to raise objections to a planning application at a Parish Council meeting the Chair will decide on the amount of time to be allocated to the subject how long each person can speak. The order of council business has to take priority. However, at the meetings we are grateful to have the expert guidance of Wiltshire Councillor Trevor Carbin who can give advice, or find out information, on many of the planning issues involved. If you are unable to attend a meeting in person then objections should be raised at least **2 weeks** before the deadline to allow for proper discussion.

Many applications are very detailed and need full and careful consideration. Our Councillors are not experts on planning issues and must make judgements with the limited information provided. In some cases, where objections have been raised by the Parish Council, they may feel that their comments have sufficiently covered any possible local objections. Again, please attend a meeting or contact the Parish Council in plenty of time if you have information or objections to raise.

Objectors need to understand that their Parish Council has very limited powers to influence a planning application. Their powers are **ADVISORY ONLY** and are not always successful. Remember, without your input, Councillors are unable to reach the fully informed decision you may hope for.