

WORKING GROUP AGAINST OVER-DEVELOPMENT

Wealden District Association of Local Councils

GUIDELINES FOR TOWN/PARISH COUNCILS AND PARISH MEETINGS FOR OBJECTING TO A PLANNING APPLICATION

RESEARCH PRIOR TO RESPONDING TO A PLANNING APPLICATION

- It can be helpful to have a Planning subcommittee or, if a small council, a planning lead whose role is to draft the response for others to amend, add to, etc.
- Read all the documents submitted in the application.
- Look at planning history; has planning been refused before?
- Look at other recent applications in the local area search [Planning Home Page Planning and Building Control - Wealden District Council](#) – is there anything you can use?
- Appeals are a good source of information – read the Planning Inspector’s report; also refused applications – read the planning officer’s report. Both the Planning Inspector’s report and the Planning Officer’s report refer to key policies which you can refer to in your response (NPPF or Wealden Policies).
- Don’t discount local knowledge - it’s also a way to engage with the local community.
- If in Hellingly, Herstmonceux, or Hailsham, refer to your Neighbourhood Plan.
- Refer to the current Wealden Local Plan – this comprises the [Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan \(February, 2013\)](#), the saved policies of the adopted [Wealden Local Plan \(1998\)](#), the [Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan \(May, 2016\)](#), the [Waste and Minerals Local Plan \(February, 2013\)](#), the [Waste and Minerals Sites Plan \(February, 2017\)](#) and the three neighbourhood plans.
- Consider if the application could be setting a precedent (some Parish/Town Councils have taken the stance that anything outside of the development boundary – even if only one house – should be recommended for refusal; this is partly to avoid the situation where one small field is given planning permission for, say, 4 houses, and then it is considered almost carte blanche for WDC to permit development on the adjoining field as the first field was permitted). To stop this being used as a precedent, material planning considerations will be required.
- Where TRICS (Trip Rate Information Computer System) numbers for vehicle movements to and from the proposed development are mentioned, ensure the comparator examples are genuinely similar, e.g. not done in an urban area with much more infrastructure and public transport. However, the important thing is the impact of the TRICS number on the highway system.
- Consider if there is any benefit in engaging a Planning Consultant. You can search [The RTPI Directory of Planning Consultants \(rtpiconsultants.co.uk\)](#), but be aware it can be costly to engage a planning consultant.

RESPONDING TO A PLANNING APPLICATION

- Your council SHOULD ideally respond within the timeframe given. However, local residents and your Council can submit objections to the application after the deadline and these legally must be considered by Wealden.
- Try to gain support from your local District Councillor.
- Your Wealden Councillor can “call in” a non-major application for discussion by the planning committee.

WGOB Planning Guidelines for Town and Parish Councils, October 2022

- Be structured and concise but do not be afraid to repeat key points.
- Concentrate on facts and remain professional.
- Concentrate on material planning considerations – as described in the NPPF (link below).
- Objections to applications must be for planning reasons – and it will be helpful to understand the National Planning Policy Framework [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/426123/National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf) to identify in which areas your objection will carry weight . You will also find some useful guidance on planning considerations in [development-management-de-5f9.ppt \(live.com\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/426123/National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf) What you need to address are things that conflict with the Local Plan, Core Strategy and NPPF. You should talk about the impact of these issues on the parish/town/local area for local people. These might include:
 - The site being outside the development boundary (check out the Local Plan and District Core Strategy, see above).
 - The development not meeting local housing need (if it is for large homes, not affordable 'starter' homes).
 - The development would cause traffic congestion or, more importantly, impact highway safety – consider the availability of public transport, pavements, access from the site to the road network, existing congestion. For rural areas, a development that will be mainly car dependent ie public transport is poor, should not be favoured.
 - The development having negative impact on ecology, water courses, wildlife, etc.
 - Highway issues – and not just access to the site. And don't forget impact of construction traffic. Are there/should there be access restrictions?
 - Landscaping, impact on neighbours (being overlooked or loss of privacy, but not loss of view), does the size and design fit in the area?
 - Road safety, sewage capacity, infrastructure (GP surgeries, schools, shops, pubs, public transport), flooding (accepting you are not an expert in these areas). However, unless the provider of these services (e.g. Southern Water) objects to the application, WDC will give your objections very little weight.
 - The cumulative impact of proposed developments on the area. Include those sites with planning consent that have not yet been built, as well as existing developments.
- Include photographs if relevant to make your case, particularly in relation to traffic or the environment.
- Review/edit your response before final submission.
- Sign up for updates on applications from WDC planning portal, as this will ensure you are aware of any new documents submitted and ensure that you can read other objections as they are submitted.
- You may want to consider galvanising local support – the more people who send in individual objections the better! – and involving the local press. Your Wealden District Councillor can also be an ally in your opposition.
- Recruit speakers in readiness for presentation at Planning Committee – up to 3 speakers for a major application each having 3 minutes, and up to 2 speakers for a non-major application, each having 2 minutes to speak. You may be able to identify potential speakers via comments posted on social media/on the Wealden Planning Portal neighbour comments section, or if they have contributed local knowledge to parish/town council response.

AT THE WEALDEN PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Once you have objected to an application, the Planning Department will notify you of the date Wealden's Planning Committee will meet to discuss the major application, or a called-in non major application.

At this point you need to register to speak to the Planning Committee to oppose the application, 7 days before the meeting, by emailing Committee.Services@wealden.gov.uk. You will be limited to 2 or 3 minutes and 2 or 3 speakers (depending on the type of application) with no opportunity to respond to councillors' or the developer's points. You can watch a previous Planning Committee meeting here to see how it is run and how objectors use their time:
<https://council.wealden.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=660&MId=5100&Ver=4>

- Read officers' report and recommendations, to inform the focus of your speech.
- Where the planning officer is recommending approval, address/refute each of the points. Note that this is often to do with balance/tilt in a particular direction, i.e. not always clear cut, so try and balance it in the other direction. An example of this might be a large solar farm where the planning officer recommends approval on the grounds of government policy on extending renewable energy, but there is also a tension between the land being used for farming/pasture and for renewable energy. Either could be considered as important as the other.
- If you haven't done this already (and we advise that you do this much earlier in the process), contact your Wealden District Councillor and get them on board. They won't be able to vote on Planning Committee but they can give a briefing to all the PC members and get the last word before the vote.
- Identify members of Planning Committee, and contact them before the application goes to the Planning Committee to put your case to them. A single page is better than a long report. Include photographs if relevant.
- Prepare speeches with key points. It can help to co-ordinate your speeches with other speakers opposing the application so you each cover different points.
- Agree order of presentations and how they can make the most impact.
- Presentations are a performance – practice to make sure they can be delivered in under 2 or 3 minutes (to allow for stumbling). Don't rush your speech. Allow time for emphasis.
- Make eye contact with members of the Committee.
- Do not be afraid of emotion, but do not allow yourself to get angry.

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wealdenlocalcouncils@gmail.com