



# Slinfold Parish Council

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## Policy for Pre-Application Planning Consultation

### Purpose

Slinfold Parish Council welcomes the opportunity for pre-application planning discussions with applicants and/or developers and their agents before a planning application is submitted. These discussions may be beneficial to both applicants and the residents of Slinfold. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee for all planning applications in Slinfold. Its role is to comment on applications and forward recommendations to the local planning authority, Horsham District Council (HDC). The Parish Council has chosen to adopt a protocol for pre-application planning consultations and engagement so that developers; applicants; the Council and residents are aware of the status of such discussions.

### Requirements

All pre-application requests must:

- be of strategic importance to the Parish (in the view of Slinfold Parish Council)
- be made in writing to the Parish Clerk
- give details of the site plan
- describe the proposal
- include an existing and proposed layout plan with proposed elevations

### Confidentiality

The Parish Council will not treat as confidential any request for pre-application consultation or engagement. Any information provided will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. From the outset the developer/applicant must identify information which the Parish Council cannot share or make public and give reasons for this.

Confidentiality of communications about the development will rarely be justified even if the developer's/applicant's interest is sensitive.

### Public Access

The Parish Council will discuss pre-application submissions at a Council or Committee meeting. These meetings are open to the public and the minutes of such meetings are available to all via the Council's website. The Parish Council may invite developers/applicants to attend a Parish Council meeting at which the public are present, to give a presentation on their proposal. This will help to ensure that the developer's/applicant's communications with the Council are transparent. If the developer/applicant does not wish to discuss the proposed development when the public are present, the meeting would need to ascertain why the developer/applicant considers it necessary to communicate with the Parish Council in closed session.

A proposed development may be regarded by the developer/applicant as either confidential or 'sensitive' and in their view it may be unsuitable for discussion at a meeting when the public is present. It is however, the Councillors at the Parish Council meeting who will decide if there are grounds to exclude the public from the meeting when the proposed

development is being considered.

In very rare circumstances the Parish Council meeting may exclude the public if publicity for agenda item(s) would prejudice the public interest due to its confidentiality or for other special reasons. (s.1(2) Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960). The Parish Council may invite developers/applicants to attend a Parish Assembly, which is open to the wider public, to present or discuss their proposals.

### **Pre-Application Planning Discussions**

Pre-application planning discussions and communications given by the Parish Council will not bind the Parish Council to making a particular decision when the application comes before it for formal consideration and any views expressed at the pre-application stage will be provisional and on the basis of the information available at that time.

### **Councillor Communications**

Informal meetings and telephone conversations between a developer/applicant and Councillors or the Clerk will be documented in writing and are subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Furthermore, the Parish Council will report that a meeting has taken place at the next full Council meeting and a brief overview of the discussions will be given at the meeting. If there is a legitimate reason for confidentiality regarding the proposal, the Parish Council will keep a written record of the confidential and non-confidential issues. Any informal discussions must involve a minimum of three Councillors. Pre-application discussions must not take place with individual Councillors and any contact will be recorded with the Clerk. Thus, subject to the detail of the policy described above, where an applicant/developer seeks to discuss a proposed development with a member of the Parish Council, any such discussion will take place as part of a Parish Council meeting which is open to the public and minuted.

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