

Dear Guy

Please see below comments from Keele Parish Council – these have been collated in view of your deadline today – sorry if its past close of play but my hours of work are outside the norm. If there are any further that come out of the next meeting (and Audley also) I will forward them in the hope that they may add some value.

“I think it's very important that the planning section web area should be easy to use (by very ordinary and prob rather basic computers!) and this has to be TESTED in the *realisphere* . There were many examples of repeated additions of comments in a recent operation..this is inefficient and suggests lack of understanding of their OWN methods at the Council and creates lack of confidence...the actual process of getting at comment was poor and deterring of all but the most dogged !”

“A very interesting report and containing some useful recommendations most of which I would support. I particularly welcomed the recommendation for closer liaison with parish councils. I did notice the absence of any comment on the very "clunky" planning web-site and the apparent lack of consideration by either officers or councillors of reasoned and detailed public objections and how they should be incorporated into the planning process.”

My personal views (may/may not help) with respects to improving relations with Parish Councillors :

Accessing planning applications online prior to and at meetings – it would help if training (even at a cost) was available in this respect. I find it easy enough, but as you can appreciate some do not. I understand this is a national planning website format, but it is a very antiquated system compared to other public sector websites. Comments, plans, reports etc could be better organised and filtered eg date order or name order – for ease of use and to avoid repetition. The maps do not seem to work – and I would find it helpful to overlay the applicable policies and constraints.

Similarly with the broadband inconsistencies across the Borough (mostly in rural areas), it is difficult to view live planning applications at remote meetings where there is no wifi/internet access other than mobile data – hence why the papers are still so valuable. Also some people just find it easier (me included) to have paper in front of them and view plans side by side.

Personally I do feel that as much as Planning Committee members and officers need training, Parish Councils and Clerks could also benefit from similar training to understand current and emerging Policy, constraints, the “bigger” North Staffs picture, the decision making process, NPPF and how much influence they can/cant have on planning decisions. Currently SPCA only provide basic training around planning, and nothing to do with policy or NPPF. Maybe Chairs and Clerks should be given the opportunity to spend a half a day at the Planning Office to get a feel for things.

I think a lot of frustration comes from feeling that community views (those who will be affected most) are not taken into consideration and count for nothing. The production of a pilot neighbourhood plan in the borough may be beneficial to demonstrate how community led planning can work where there is a clear evidenced need for development - however the funding and expertise required to do this is very off putting. The other issue is understanding the hierarchy of developable and priority sites and their relationship in the bigger picture....where are all the brownfield developable sites, greenfield, etc etc in the borough and what evidence is there to demonstrate there is a need for such development – I guess this will come through the Joint Local Plan?

With regards to the Joint Local Plan – a fully inclusive consultation exercise will be vital from a Parish Council point of view in terms of ownership and understanding, and I would say people get more out of a hands on approach when looking at potential development sites – maybe through planning for real type exercises.....which will also be open to all to have their say in each area (even if the majority tend not to).

Many thanks
Clare

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From: Benson, Guy [mailto:Guy.Benson@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk]
Sent: 19 September 2014 17:48
Cc: Clifton, Neale
Subject: Newcastle Borough Council's Planning Peer Review

In July my colleague Beverley Clearly invited your Council to participate in a Review of the Council's Planning Service with the aim of addressing perceived concerns about facets of the Service to ensure that this important service is both effective and efficient. The review process was undertaken in accordance with a nationally-agreed approach. This involved an assessment around a number of key themes. The review team spent three days on site during which they interviewed a wide range of Members, officers and other stakeholders.

The Borough Council has received a final report from the Peer Review Team, a copy of which is being circulated to you, and to other stakeholders. I attach the report

The Planning Peer Review Team have made a number of recommendations. You will find these listed in Appendix 1 of the report. We would welcome your ideas on what action the Council should take in response to the recommendations, so that consideration can be given

to including them in the Action Plan that the Council is now preparing. **Please could you submit them to me by no later than the close of play on 2nd October.**

You may wish to note that the current intention is to bring a report on the Action Plan to the Council's Cabinet at its meeting on the 12th November.

Yours sincerely,

Guy Benson

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