

Planning guidance/info

All applications for planning permission must be submitted to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC), which is our local planning authority. SDC consults with a number of bodies, including the Town Council, and with neighbouring residents. Any member of the public can make representations to SDC about a planning application.

There is a limited 3-week period to respond to applications received from SDC. SDC's planning officers determine the majority of applications. Larger or more contentious applications will be sent to its Development Management Committee (DMC). In making its decision on an application, SDC will consider all representations received; but can only take account of material planning considerations. *Please remember that any comments made are treated as a public document, details are published anonymously.*

In considering an application, the planning authority (SDC) has a statutory duty to have regard to the planning policies it has adopted, set out in the Council's Local Plan(s), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Government Planning Policy Guidance and any "material considerations".

Material planning considerations include:

- Overshadowing or loss of outlook – but not loss of or change of a view
- Overlooking and loss of privacy
- Visual amenity (but not loss of private view)
- Design, appearance and materials
Landscaping
- Visual character of the area and need to protect high Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Highway issues, including access and highway safety – the local highways authority will be consulted and its advice will usually be followed by SDC
- Adequacy of parking/loading/turning
- Noise or disturbance resulting from the proposed use
- Effect on trees, nature conservation or biodiversity
- Design and appearance of proposal
- Hazardous materials; smells
- Effect on listed building and conservation area
- Government circulars, orders and statutory instruments
- Proposals in the Development Plan
Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)
- Nature conservation
- Archaeology
- Eco energy – Solar Panels

A Neighbourhood Plan that has been through a Referendum and is 'made'; this then carries full legal weight and forms part of the planning considerations.

Matters that are not classed as material planning considerations include:

- Matters relating to Building Regulations
- Private issues between neighbours, such as boundary disputes or private access rights
- Disruption during building works – although planning conditions can be used to mitigate the impact of the construction period
- Concerns about property values
- Loss of a private view
- Motives, financial or otherwise, of the applicant

THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ROLE IN DECIDING PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Town Council is a statutory consultee and makes a recommendation to SDC as to how it considers planning applications should be decided. The recommendation is based on the Town Council's local knowledge and perspective and on material planning considerations.

The Town Council holds regular Planning Committee meetings to consider planning applications sent to it by SDC. Applicants and objectors are always welcome to attend the Committee meetings and make representations during the period set aside for public participation at the start of the meeting. Members of the public are welcome to stay and observe the Council's deliberations, but may not take part in them. A schedule of meetings is published on the [website](#), additional meetings re called as necessary. The legal requirement for agendas is to publish 3-clear days before the meeting; for example, we would publish our agendas on Wednesday afternoon for a Monday meeting.

The Planning Committee takes account of all representations made, but **must base its recommendation on relevant planning considerations**. Inevitably there will be occasions when applicants or objectors disagree with the Committee's recommendations. SDC does not always follow the Town Council's recommendation.

It is important that Councillors do not predetermine any application before they have had the chance to see all the materials and before they have discussed the issues at a Planning Committee meeting. Until then, they can discuss the matter in general terms and comment on any potential relevant issues, but must be seen to approach the deliberations at the Committee with an open mind. Councillors who have expressed a firm view one way or the other before the Committee meeting might have to declare an interest and not take part in the meeting, although they could still send their own individual representations to SDC.

Discussions and Consultations about planning proposals

SDC, as local planning authority, gives pre-application advice about potential applications. This includes advice about the policies and material considerations against which a proposal will be judged, what sort of information will need to be provided, and preliminary views about whether a particular scheme might be suitable. This can help 'weed out' unsuitable applications or ensure that applications don't have to be sent back as they are incomplete.

Members of the Town Council are not professional planners, but are occasionally asked to discuss informally a proposed or submitted application, or an objection to an application. In such cases, it is always made clear that, while Councillors are happy to listen to what the person has to say and will point out any issues they consider might be relevant, they cannot and will not discuss the merits or otherwise of the matter until the Council's Planning Committee meeting.

Developers wishing to build residential developments must submit with their application a Statement of Community Involvement. This must demonstrate that the views of the community have been sought and taken into account and should include reports of discussions with the local Council and feedback received from public exhibitions and advertising.