

Whatlington Parish Council Planning Policy updated November 2021

1. Introduction

The Parish of Whatlington lies within the High Weald AONB. The Parish Council supports the AONB's Legislation and Planning Policy found at:

<http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/2484-legislation-planning-advice-note-july-2021/file.html>

and its Housing Design Guide found at:

<http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/2348-high-weald-design-guide-final/file.html>

Both documents are material to the consideration by the Parish Council of all planning applications. The Council will have regard to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in making its decisions as an advisory body within the broader planning process.

2. Planning Lists

A list of new planning applications, amendments, withdrawals and decisions is emailed each week by Rother District Council (RDC) to the Parish Clerk. Upon receipt the list is forwarded to Parish Councillors by the Clerk for their comment and/or information.

3. Comments on Planning Applications by the Parish Council

Comments on applications must be submitted to RDC by the date given on the planning list: usually within three weeks. To meet this time limit, and in the absence of a Planning Meeting, Parish Councillors' comments should be made via email to the Clerk, copying all other Councillors, within five working days of receipt of the list from the Clerk.

Councillors are strongly encouraged to consider and formulate an opinion on every application. However, there may be occasions on which a Councillor feels unable to come to a definitive view, in which case he/she may abstain from voting. No response from a Councillor due to unavailability, absence etc will be deemed an abstention. Any Councillor declaring an interest in an application will also be considered an abstention.

The Council's collective response will be determined as follows:

- (a) A majority of eligible Councillors (i.e., those who have not declared an interest) either supporting or objecting to an application will prevail; provided that
- (b) If only one Councillor either supports or objects, and the remainder abstain (either actively or by not responding), abstention prevails and the Council will make no comment on the application.
- (c) If votes to support and object are tied, and any abstaining Councillors remain unable to offer an opinion, a Planning Meeting will be called.

4. Response to RDC

The Council's response to RDC will be submitted by the Clerk. Except in the case of a Planning Meeting, prior to submission the Clerk will circulate a draft of the proposed response by email to Councillors. If any Councillor wishes to comment on the draft, this must be done within 48 hours by return email, copying all other Councillors, unless a shorter turnaround is required in which event this will be advised by the Clerk.

5. Planning Meetings

A Parish Council Planning Meeting will be held if:

- (a) As provided in clause 3 (c) above Councillors' votes either to support or object to an application are tied; or
- (b) The application is considered by the Chair or by one or more Councillors with the agreement of the Chair to be of wider public significance or Parish concern.

Planning Meetings will be held no later than two days prior to the last date stipulated by RDC for the receipt of comments. It is intended that Planning Meetings be held on weekday evenings; if this is not practicable, they may be held at a time and date convenient to the greatest number of Councillors, such that a quorum is achieved. The quorum for Planning Meetings will be three including, provided he/she has not declared an interest in the application, the Chair or Vice Chair. [If an inquorate meeting is held, the submission to RDC will be qualified by this.]

6. Conduct of Planning Meetings

- (a) Councillors will hear brief representations from applicants, applicants' representatives, neighbours, other parishioners and, if the Chair of the meeting so permits, other members of the public.
- (b) The meeting will only consider planning issues. It will avoid topics that have no direct bearing on the application.
- (c) If considered necessary by Councillors, a site visit will be arranged by the Clerk.
- (d) A decision either to support or object to an application will be put to a vote. A majority will prevail. If votes to support and object are tied, the Chair of the meeting will have a casting vote.
- (e) The Council's response to RDC will be drafted and agreed immediately following the vote such that it may be submitted by the Clerk to RDC in a timely manner.