

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL  
29<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2025**

**BRIEFING NOTE**

**MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS – PRE APPLICATION  
MEETINGS WITH THE TOWN COUNCIL**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Council will recall meeting with Ms J Houselander (WDBC Planning Services) in the Spring. At that time discussion took place regarding, amongst others, a procedure/protocol that might be adopted for consideration by the Council of requests for pre-application discussions with the Council in respect of planning applications for major development.
- 1.2 It is important to note this report solely deals with pre - application meetings with the Town Council as a statutory consultee. Meetings with other bodies such as the LPA, or consultation/engagement with the public fall to other bodies to arrange and regulate.

**2. THE CURRENT SITUATION**

- 2.1 Subsequent to discussions with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) earlier today the following approach is now recommended in respect of arrangements where the Council chooses to agree to pre-application discussions for prospective developments classed as 'major'. Accordingly, and whilst the matter has been duly tabled, it has only just now been possible to produce the accompanying report and apologies are tendered for the delay arising from the timing of that meeting with the LPA.
- 2.2 Turning to pre application meetings more generally and in the interests of clarity, it is a matter for the Council whether to engage in such discussions, and if so on what basis.
- 2.3 The arrangements below substantially reflect a review of practice recommended by LPA's (see eg <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/local-councils/pre-application-discussions-guidance-for-local-councils/>).

2.4 The assistance of the LPA in finalising this document is gratefully acknowledged and the following format is suggested by your Clerk:

- i. Pre-application meetings shall normally only be held in respect of developments classified as major under the prevailing Town Council Policy (30 residential units currently);*
- ii. Pre application meetings shall normally only occur where a public consultation or engagement event (pre application community engagement – (PACE)) is either scheduled or firmly planned;  
(to ensure equality of opportunity for the public);*
- iii. Any pre application meeting will be distinct from (ie not run together with), any associated PACE meetings;*
- iv. The format for pre-application meetings will typically be in the form of a major developer presentation prior to a DM&L meeting (ie not at a formally constituted/procedurally regulated committee meeting);*
- v. The Council will determine a time limit for such presentations (typically not to exceed 15 minutes) which will be followed by Q&A from Town Councillors;*
- vi. All Town Councillors shall be invited to attend the presentation; which shall be open to the public to observe and also live screened (as the Chamber has limited seating) but not recorded;*
- vii. where additional advertisement is required any associated reasonable expense shall be met by the developer;*
- viii. The Developer shall also meet any specific additional costs – such as venue or AV hire/large scale plans etc;*
- ix. Town Councillors shall only ask questions related to facts associated with the application by way of understanding what is proposed;*
- x. to maintain probity no discussion, debate, nor expression of support or objection (ie nothing that could infer the Council or any one Councillor takes any particular view (or not) on either the application as a whole or constituent parts) shall be made;*
- xi. Only Town Councillors shall participate in the meeting;*
- xii. No private pre-application meetings shall be held with developers by the Council, nor shall individual councillors attend or participate in any such meetings;*
- xiii. If lobbying (either of the Council or individual Councillors) takes place, the Council reserves the right to withdraw from any pre-application process.*

2.5 On a different point the LPA has advised that it does not consider it appropriate – either in terms of probity or capacity, to provide a planning officer to attend pre application meetings – whether to introduce the application or answer questions on the planning policy framework.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 It remains the case that the question of whether, and if so in which circumstances (and how), the Town Council engages with developers at the pre-application stage is very much one for it. There is no requirement. As a statutory consultee historically this was generally considered poor practice – being open to claims of undue influence, preferment etc.
- 3.2 However, the emphasis in planning guidance has shifted in recent years to a more facilitating approach. In the circumstances it is submitted the foregoing represents a simple pro forma that can be applied to any request that the Council chooses to accede to help ensure probity, transparency and fairness.
- 3.3 In the interests of clarity this is not a process for a public consultation or engagement exercise, nor is it an exercise for other public authorities or agencies – for which separate arrangements exist. It is a recommended process for a pre-application meeting with the Town Council at which the public or other bodies may attend and listen.
- 3.4 If adopted this approach will be trialled with the request received previously from Cavanna Homes.

### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 That Tavistock Town Council endorse the approach as set out in para 2.3 above.
- 4.2 The instructions of Council are sought.

**CARL HEARN  
TOWN CLERK  
TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL  
JULY 2025**