

Berkhamsted Town Council: Town Planning Committee meeting process and minuting guidelines

As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Berkhamsted Town Council has put in place arrangements to hold virtual meetings, as permitted by legislation.

The move from physical to virtual meetings, and the Town Council's ongoing desire to encourage community engagement requires the Town Planning Committee to review its guidelines for meeting process and minuting guidelines to ensure good practice during this period.

Supporting inclusion of residents:

Residents who would perhaps usually attend a physical meeting of the Council may be understandably reluctant or unable to attend a virtual meeting. It is important that the Town Council maintain close alignment with residents, and understands and discuss local concerns. Many residents are now communicating by email or letter rather than in person. It is important that the Committee gives such submissions their due weight and consideration.

Accordingly, the Committee Chair will request that the attending Clerk highlight, during the discussion of any application, the total number of letters received, and how many supports, object to, or raise concerns regarding an application. This shall include letters posted on the Dacorum planning portal. The cut-off time for submission of comments to the Clerk and when the last check of the planning portal will occur is at midday on the day of a meeting.

Recorded/Majority Voting:

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, any member of the Committee may request a recorded vote on an item on the agenda, which will then be minuted. Alternatively, a member may request that that it be minuted that they do not agree with a majority decision.

Sharing work on the Town Council Facebook page:

To support public engagement, the Chair may request that a key decision, which has a broad public interest be shared on the Town Council facebook page, with a link to the minutes and an invite for residents to share any comments with Dacorum.

Minutes:

Minutes are the legal public record of decisions made by the Committee, and are shared with stakeholders in the community and the Borough Council.

It is important that stakeholders see that their contribution was considered by the Committee and acknowledgement positively encourages further engagement from residents.

Minute writing is a significant workload for council staff. It is important to ensure that requests are efficient, and represent value.

Extensive minutes, including significant detail of discussions require the clerk to judge which contributions are and are not material, a task which is subjective, risks omission, and risks politicising the Clerk. Moreover, complexity increases the risk of mistakes, and misassignment of contributions.

Accordingly, the Committee proposes these guidelines:

Minutes should:

- Reference the core application information (application number, address)
- Note the number of letters received and the total by positions: in favour, against, concerns.
- Name any attendees who spoke or commented and state their position: (support, against, concerns) and thank them.
- Briefly note the issues considered by the Committee, including issues raised by residents.

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- Note the decision.
- Note basis of decision where it is not unanimous, either via a recorded vote or recording a member (s) disagreement with the majority, if requested.
- Record the planning policies which support the Committee's position.

Minutes shall cease to include:

- Narrative summaries of individual contributions.
- Procedural interventions which are not material to decisions.
- Content of notices already contained in the agenda.

These guidelines are advisory only, and the Clerk taking the minutes retains the flexibility to vary from these where necessary.

Proposed Style:

20/01639/FUL	<p>AMENDED/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</p> <p>New two storey dwelling, with accommodation at basement level, adjacent to 36 Kerby Lane with associated landscaping (resubmission of 4/99999/19/FUL) 36 Kerby Lane (EP)</p> <p>Ahead of the meeting, 4 letters of objection to the application had been received from: Mr & Mrs Snap, Mrs Crackle, Mrs & Mr Pop, TQP Townscape Group and 2 letters in support of the application had been received from Mr Pink, and Mrs Blue.</p> <p>The Chair suspended Standing Orders to enable members of the public to speak.</p> <p>Mrs T Parry spoke against the application. Mrs G Ness spoke in favour of the application. Mrs Tront raised concerns over the application.</p> <p>The Chair reinstated Standing Orders.</p> <p>The Committee thanked the contributors for their time and views, which were noted.</p> <p>The Committee considered in particular the following points raised: Overlooking, loss of sunlight and loss of privacy to neighbours. Deciduous nature of protecting trees, streetscene, building line, parking availability, value of nearby trees, wildlife impact, loss of green space, conservation area status, scale & bulk, heritage asset status, amenity space, setting of precedent, flooding concerns, and previous site applications.</p> <p>Following debate, Cllr X proposed and Cllr Y seconded that there be an objection to the application.</p> <p>On a recorded vote, there were 3 votes in favour and 1 against.</p>
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	<p>In favour were: Cllr X, Cllr Y, Cllr Z. Against were: Cllr A. It was therefore RESOLVED to OBJECT to the application.</p> <p>Objection</p> <p>On the grounds that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The application is an overdevelopment and its scale, design and citing out of keeping with the street scene.• The proposed scheme would destroy the current building line, have a detrimental effect on a locally listed building in the Conservation Area and unnecessarily remove mature trees at detriment to the natural habitat.• The proposal would result in a loss of amenity for the neighbour to the rear, number 5 Kerby Lane, due to overlooking into their private amenity space.• The proposal would also significantly impact on local parking provision. <p>NPPF (paras 127, 230, 184, 193 and 194) CS12 (b, c, d, l, g), CS27, Appendix 3 (i, ii, iv), P120</p> <p>Contributors are recommended to share comments with Dacorum's Development Management Committee in person or via the portal.</p>
20/11111/FHA	<p>Loft conversion. 30 Creaky Gate Lane (JM)</p> <p>No Objection</p>