

Changes to the operation of the Harborough District Council Planning Committee

What are the changes that have been made to Planning Committee?

There are two main changes that have been made to the way in which Planning Committee operates:

- 1) a restriction on the number of people who can register to speak to the Planning Committee in relation to a planning application. Previously there were no limits on the numbers of speakers who could address the Committee, the new system has introduced a limit of a maximum of 3 speakers (3 minutes each) or the same amount of time as allowed for supporters, whichever is the greater) and a maximum of 3 speakers (3 minutes each) or the same amount of time as allowed for objectors, whichever is the greater. Parish Councils, Parish Meetings, Lutterworth Town Council and Market Harborough Civic Society all have a separate speaker's allocation for the Parish / non Parished area within which the application is located. Ward Councilors also have a separate time allocation.
- 2) A reduction in the number of Members of the Planning Committee from 12 to 9.

Who decided to make the changes?

The decision to change the operation of public speaking at Planning Committee was made by the Council following a recommendation from the Council's Constitutional Review Committee. The decision to reduce the number of Members who sit on the Planning Committee was also made by the Council.

How were the changes made?

For a number of years, the Council's Constitution Review Committee has been grappling with the need to modernise the operation of the Planning Committee. This has allowed for a very careful consideration of the changes and their affects on all customers. The changes were not consulted upon because they are not changes to Council policy, rather they are changes to the operation and constitutional governance of the Council's Planning Committee.

Why were the changes made?

The District Council has revised its procedures for public speaking at Planning Committee to adopt a more efficient and effective approach and bring the Council in line with other Local Planning Authorities. This will help ensure meetings do not over-run and become adjourned. Also, the new rules limit the time the public have to wait to speak. The previous approach of unlimited speakers had also resulted in an imbalance of representations on planning applications. The new system will help to restore natural justice to the Council's Planning Committee.

The reduction in the size of the Planning Committee was made in readiness for the overall reduction in the number of Harborough District Councillors from the 2019 Council elections following the implementation of the Local Government Boundary review. At the same time, it is important to ensure that there is an appropriate number of members to call upon, who are fully trained and conversant with the responsibilities of the Planning Committee. This will ensure the public retain confidence in the operation of the Planning Committee.

When were the changes made?

The changes were considered at the meeting of the Council on the 31st July 2018 and came in to operation as of the 4th September meeting of the Planning Committee.

Day in the life of a Planning Officer

Following on from successful events in the past, HDC are look to run a "Day in the life of a Planning Officer" event in Spring 2019. Further details of this event will likely be available in the New Year. If there are any specific subject areas / issues that you would like to be included as part of this, please feel free to let us know.

**Annual Parish Liaison Meeting 7th November 2018 – Harborough Local Plan
2011-31**

Progress So Far:

The Council has been preparing the Local Plan for a number of years. Public Consultation took place September to November 2017 and the plan was submitted to Government for Examination in March 2018. Planning Inspector **Jonathan Bore** BA MRTPI DipUD has been appointed to undertake an independent examination into the soundness of the Plan.

The Examination Hearings were held from 2nd to 11th October 2018. At the end of the hearings the Inspector expressed his preliminary views (without prejudice to his final report) that the plan is sound subject to certain modifications – it is normal for plans to require modifications.

Most of these modifications do not require significant additional work and the Inspector appears to be content with the amount and distribution of housing in the plan. However, following the submissions at the hearings, the Inspector has asked the Council to do some more work related to Policy BE2: Strategic Distribution.

Next Steps:

Main Modifications to the Plan are being prepared to make the plan sound. These modifications will be consulted on for 6 weeks towards the end of 2018/early 2019. The responses will be considered by the Inspector before he writes his final report.

If the plan is sound then it will likely be adopted in spring 2019.