Date adopted: 27th February 2024
To be reviewed as required

BURNHAM-ON-SEA AND HIGHBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

PLANNING PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSION POLICY

Introduction

Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Town Council recognises that pre-application discussions play an important role in major planning applications and welcomes the desire of many developers to consult both the Council and the public more widely.

Good engagement with developers should ensure that communities have a genuine opportunity to have their say in shaping development proposals before any planning applications are submitted. Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Town Council is also aware of the importance of public perception in planning and discussions are as transparent as possible and that they are seen to be transparent.

Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Town Council's involvement in pre-application discussions

As a statutory consultee in the planning process, it is desirable for the Town Council to be involved in the pre-application process for the following reasons:-

- It has a good understanding of its area and the community.
- It is keen to ensure growth within the Parish is of the right type and in the right location.
- It provides an advocacy role for its residents, effectively representing their views when they feel they are unable to.
- The Town Council may be a party to Section 106 negotiations on community assets required for the Parish.

Pre-determination

In all meetings with developers' members are reminded of the critical importance of not pre-determining their position on any future application, as this could require them to take no part in the discussion. It is noted however, that expressing a pre-disposition, for example of either 'welcome in principle' or 'concerns' is permissible.

Meetings should be used to gather more information about proposals and help developers understand the concerns of the community with a view to giving them the opportunity to address those concerns in future public consultations.

Pre-application discussions/briefings

Pre-application discussions will consist of a presentation to the whole Council. Individual Councillors who are approached directly by a developer, should refrain from expressing a view that could be thought of as the view of the Town Council.

Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Town Council is, in general, willing to hold meetings with developers prior to public consultation on the following conditions:-

- Full public consultation is either already scheduled or firmly planned.
- Meeting notes are published.
- A genuinely open mind and willingness to adapt plans in response to feedback.

The Town Council understand there may sometimes be a need for developers to seek confidential discussions with the Town Council. The Town Council is mindful of its duties under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the need to ensure that as much information as possible is available to the public.