



WORTH PARISH COUNCIL

POLICY FOR MEETING WITH DEVELOPERS

Purpose

Worth Parish Council (the "Council") acknowledges that discussions with developers during various stages of the planning process (including pre-application and in-application) can play a significant role in shaping developments. As a statutory consultee, the Council recognises the importance of engaging with developers to ensure that proposed developments benefit the Parish and its residents.

However, the Council is equally aware of the importance of transparency and the need to avoid any perception of secrecy or collusion with developers. This policy sets out clear procedures and guidance to manage interactions with developers, ensuring they are conducted openly and impartially.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Councillors, Working Party Members, employees, and third-party contractors of Worth Parish Council.
- Developers, landowners, and their agents or representatives seeking to engage with the Council about development proposals.

Procedure

1. Initial engagement with Developers:

- Developers wishing to present proposals to the Council must provide written details of the proposed development affecting the Parish.
- If the developer considers the information sensitive, they should specify this in writing. However, any information provided to the Council may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

2. Meetings with Developers:

- All communication with Developers (whether informal or formal) should be co-ordinated through the Proper Officer. No individual Councillor may engage with developers privately or informally on behalf of the Council.
- Developers may request a meeting to discuss their proposals. If agreed, the Proper Officer will arrange the meeting, and the developer must provide information in advance.
- Meetings will not bind the Council or any Councillor to any particular decision, as full consultations and relevant information may not be available at this stage. Any opinions expressed are provisional and will not pre-determine the Council or any Councillor.
- A minimum of two Councillors, along with the Proper Officer, should attend these meetings. Minutes will be taken and reported to the Planning Committee.
- **Councillors may not disclose or discuss information gained at meetings with Developers with any party that was not present; communications in this instance will be the responsibility of the Proper Officer (or delegated to another employee). Infringement of this will lead to invitations to future meetings being revoked.**

3. Confidentiality:

- Developers may request certain information to be treated as confidential. However, Worth Parish Council reserves the right to disclose any information it holds, unless valid reasons are provided for confidentiality.
- Any confidential items will be recorded separately to ensure clarity and transparency in decision-making.

4. Public Meetings and Consultations:

- Developers may attend public Parish Council meetings but can only address the Council if invited or during public participation.
- If a Developer presents commercially sensitive information or if discussions may prejudice public interest, Councillors may vote to exclude the public (under Section 1(2) Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960).
- Developers are encouraged to hold public consultations prior to submitting major development applications to the local planning authority. The Council expects developers to genuinely engage with feedback from the community and the Parish Council.

5. Post-Submission of Planning Applications:

- Once a planning application is live on the District Council's planning portal, further discussions with developers will only occur during public Parish Council meetings or specially arranged public meetings.

6. Legal Considerations:

- Under **Section 1 of the Bribery Act 2010**, it is a criminal offense for a developer to offer financial or other advantages to influence the Council's decision on a planning application.
- The Council may request developers to provide evidence of their anti-bribery policies.

References and Legislation

1. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages early engagement with local communities and authorities before the submission of a planning application. While the Planning Act 2008 requires developers to consult local authorities, this does not automatically extend to Parish Councils. However, the Parish Council may still be involved, particularly when it is consulted as part of the statutory process.

2. Relevant Legislation:

Planning Act 2008 (s. 42, 43, 44): Outlines consultation requirements for developers with local authorities and other interested parties before submitting an application.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Schedule 1, Paragraph 8): States that Parish Councils can be consulted on certain planning applications.

Localism Act 2011 (s. 25): Addresses pre-determination and clarifies that Councillors can express views in the planning process without being deemed biased, provided they maintain an open mind when making decisions.

Date of Adoption: xxx