



## **PROTOCOL FOR PRE-APPLICATION DEVELOPER BRIEFINGS TO PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE (JDMC), CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL  
PLANNING COMMITTEE (City PC); SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT  
COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE (SCDC PC)**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this protocol is to formalise the process for pre-application developer briefings to planning committee members.

### **Benefits:**

The active involvement of members at an early stage of a development project is important to improving the quality of the development scheme and reducing potential delays in decision making.

The GCSP Collaborative PPA framework to guide a good pre-application process for proposals covered by a PPA identifies early councillor engagement and developer led committee briefings as an important part of community engagement and participation [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

The importance of effective community engagement in improving pre-applications and PPA engagement has been identified by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) as one of 10 key principles, following a review of best practice across local planning authorities in 2023 [Ten principles for successful pre-applications and PPAs | Local Government Association](#) The GCSP approach to developer led briefings to planning committee was identified in the review report as an example of good practice.

## **Governance Arrangements:**

The pre-application briefing with Members and the developer will be in the form of a 45 minute briefing session delivered either before or at the end of the formal planning committee agenda.

In certain circumstances, and with the prior agreement of the planning committee chair and relevant Delivery Manager, a 60-minute briefing may be appropriate.

The Applicant will have the opportunity to give a presentation on the development proposal. This will be followed by an opportunity for committee and ward members to have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on the details of the proposal.

The session will not enter into detailed discussion of the merits of the proposals, or negotiations, and such negotiations should be left to discussions between the applicant and the planning officers, otherwise members are at risk of appearing to be pre-determined one way or another to the application when it comes before the Committee.

The briefing will be live streamed, recorded and a record kept of the questions asked will be minuted by the Democratic Services officer.

As the briefing will be part of the planning committee meeting, it will be held in public. Attendance will therefore include members of the committee, officers, the developer and their representative and ward councillors. Members of the public and parish councillors may also be present in the committee room, although will not be permitted to ask questions or seek clarification.

In addition to the pre-application briefing to committee, the developer will be encouraged to undertake further pre-application consultation with the public as appropriate, in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

## **Process (in advance of pre-application briefing):**

1. Planning case officer identifies the need for a pre-application developer briefing through PPA process.
2. Planning case officer confirms the approach and target committee date for presenting the pre-application briefing in conjunction with the applicant and the relevant Delivery Manager.

3. Planning case officer adds pre-application developer briefing details (site address, development description, and Ward / Parish Council) to Committee Virtual Board.
4. Democratic Services officer confirms Planning Committee agenda with relevant Delivery Manager.
5. Democratic Services officer notifies the relevant ward councillors and Parish Councils of pre-application briefing taking place.
6. Democratic Services officer requests Applicant to submit presentation at least three working days in advance of the committee meeting, and to confirm representatives in attendance on behalf of the developer team.

### **The pre-application briefing:**

1. Briefing to be chaired by the committee chair
2. The Chair will introduce the purpose of the briefing, the planning case officer, and advise how the briefing is to be conducted. They will reiterate that the purpose of the discussion is fact finding and for clarification of the main issues relating to the proposed development. They will remind members with regard to the need for probity and that members must not predetermine any matter under discussion.
3. Chair will ask developer team to introduce themselves.
4. Applicant will present their proposal. This should be no more than 20 minutes. This will include a strategy for future engagement with ward members and the local community.
5. Committee and Ward Members have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification. This should be no more than 25 minutes.
6. The Democratic Services officer will make a record of the questions asked at the briefing.
7. For larger and more complex schemes – chair's discretion for 30 minutes presentation and 30 minutes Q+A to be agreed in advance.

### **Probity:**

The Local Government Association with PAS published 'Probity in Planning' in December 2019, which provides clear advice on early engagement with applicants and pre-application discussions. This encourages early councillor engagement to ensure that proposals for sustainable development will lead to settlements that communities need. It reinforces the benefits of pre-application discussions between a potential applicant and the Council that can benefit both parties.

However, it also warns that it would be easy for such discussions to become or be seen by third parties to become part of a lobbying process on the part of the applicant. A decision taker must not have made up their mind on a proposal such

that they have a closed mind to any new information or alternative views before taking a decision.

To safeguard against the risk of pre-determination by planning members or giving a perception of pre-determination, this protocol has been published on the council's website and appropriate training has been provided for members and officers.