

Part 1 - Minor Planning Applications

I am a Thurlestone resident, a district Councillor, and have had many years of experience in planning and housing issues. Planning is always a hot topic, and the common complaint is that the local planning authority (in our case South Hams District Council) didn't listen or didn't take any notice. This is quite a broad subject but, over a series of articles, I'll try to take you through how the local authority is required to consult and how you can make the most of any response you send in so that hopefully the council does 'listen'. There are several categories of planning applications, but most fall under the heading of major or minor. There are further classifications for listed buildings and conservation areas. All these have slightly different requirements for advertising the public consultation period.

Here I am only going to deal with minor applications which fall into a householder or 'other' classification.

These are by far the most common and usually cause the most problems because the requirements for publicising them are the least stringent.

Minor applications must be shown on the council's website and either accompanied by a site notice OR a neighbour notification letter. In practice a site notice is put up; but never relies on receiving a letter. A copy of this notice will also appear on the application website, usually with a note from the officer dealing with the case as to where and when it was posted. This date is then the start of the obligatory three week consultation period, after which the facility on the website for submitting comments closes down.

However, the council is obliged to consider relevant comments up to the date the application is decided or 'determined'. This can be any time after the end of the consultation period, though should be within a maximum period of eight weeks from the 'start' date for minor applications. If you are too late for the official consultation period, you can always try emailing or writing to the officer dealing with the application. You need to define whether you support or object to the proposal, or just wish to comment. Please always copy in your parish clerk. Your remarks should only relate to 'material planning considerations'. There is some advice about what these are via the bullet point on the South Hams home page labelled 'comment on a planning application', but I will expand on these further in a later article. All comments will be only considered in the light of local and national planning policy and guidance applicable at the time.

Finally, the consultation period may start afresh if the applicant is asked to submit significantly revised plans to overcome a problem, so keep a close eye on the web page if you are interested in a particular application, as you may be able to comment again on the revised plans.

Judy Pearce

VILLAGE VOICE article - June / July 2015