

Getting involved... in planning

An appendix to Crawley's Statement of Community Involvement

December 2011



Why get involved in planning decisions?

Planning affects us in all. The homes we live in, the places where we work, the open spaces where we relax and the roads we travel on are all a result of planning decisions that have been made. The way that Crawley develops in the future will be affected by planning, and it is important that local people and organisations are able to put across their views by participating in planning decisions.

This appendix builds on the commitments the council has made in Getting involved – Crawley’s Statement of Community Involvement to set out how Planning Services will involve people in planning decisions. It provides brief guidance to explain how the planning system works and advises on how you can participate in planning decisions, and what you can expect if you choose to get involved.

How does the planning system work?

There are two key parts to the planning system – Planning Policy and Development Management:

Planning Policy is concerned with producing the local planning documents and policies that are used to guide development in Crawley. These documents must conform with relevant Government guidance, and there are specific regulatory procedures which must be followed during their preparation.

Development Management is responsible for processing and determining planning applications, along with other applications including works to trees, advertisements and listed buildings. The team also provides pre-application planning advice and is involved in investigating breaches of planning control.



Planning Policy

Local Planning Documents

The planning documents produced by the Planning Policy team work together to set out a strategic vision for the future of Crawley, and put in place the planning policies to help achieve it. They consider a range of different issues such as the provision of new housing, and the delivery of employment, retail and open space, seeking to ensure that these are delivered in the right place at the right time. There are two main types of planning document; Development Plan Documents (the Local Plan) and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Development Plan Documents are formal plans that set out policies for a particular geographical area. They are subject to public consultation and Sustainability Appraisal (an assessment of the economic, social and environmental impacts of a plan). They must also be considered at independent examination

and obtain Full Council approval before they can be adopted.

Supplementary Planning Documents can expand upon a particular theme covered in a Development Plan Document to provide additional detail and guidance. These are also subject to statutory consultation and may sometimes require a Sustainability Appraisal. Although Supplementary Planning Documents are not subject to independent examination, they need to obtain approval at Cabinet.

Sometimes we will produce other non-statutory documents to help guide development, including Development Principles Statements. These will normally be subject to a period of consultation, and document sign-off can be delegated to the relevant cabinet member as appropriate.

Producing a planning document

From time to time, the council will need to produce new planning documents, or update existing ones. The timetable for drafting and consulting on the plans will be made available for public viewing.

Depending on whether we are working to produce a Development Plan Document or a Supplementary Planning Document, there will be different preparation and consultation stages to undertake. We will work to involve people as early as possible and will invite feedback on the draft documents we produce. We will also work to ensure that people are kept informed throughout the document drafting process. The steps involved in document production, and opportunities to participate, are summarised below.

I N F O R M

Involve

Stage 1 – early engagement

Gather evidence (independent studies and advice)

Notify and work with people, groups, and other organisations to identify the key issues that need to be addressed by the plan. Engagement will be in a variety of different forms to include targeted stakeholder and general public consultation, and a list of interested parties will be maintained to ensure people are aware of consultation.

Consider if issues identified can be addressed by the plan, and make available feedback to show how responses have been considered.

For Development Plan Documents, additional consultation may be undertaken to invite feedback on the council's preferred approach. This will have been drafted taking into account all comments submitted at Early Engagement.

Consult

Stage 2 – publication

Draw upon evidence and feedback received at early engagement to produce a final draft planning document.

Undertake consultation to allow comment on the draft plan and any supporting documents including the Sustainability Appraisal (if required). For Development Plan Documents this will be a minimum 6 week period. For Supplementary Planning Documents this will be a period of between 4 and 6 weeks.

Publicise consultation and ensure that all documents are readily available to view to make sure that everyone has sufficient opportunity to comment.

INSPECT

Stage 3 – independent examination

Consider feedback received at Stage 2 and any other new evidence to inform a final plan.

Publish a consultation statement to demonstrate how the commitments outlined in the Statement of Community Involvement have been met. This will set out how consultation responses have been taken into account in producing the plan.

If a Development Plan Document is being produced, this must be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. Interested parties may attend and/or speak at examination. Provided the plan is found 'sound' at the examination it can be considered at Full Council for formal adoption.

A Supplementary Planning Document does not require independent examination, and would be considered directly by Cabinet for adoption.

MONITOR

We will regularly monitor all of our adopted plans to make sure they are achieving their aims, and may if necessary review them to reflect any changes. We will also monitor the effects of plan policies as required by European Directives.

Consulting on planning documents

When the council consults people and organisations on a planning document, we will be guided by the five engagement commitments set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. By using a range of methods to inform, consult and involve people in the right ways at the right times, we will work to ensure that they are able to influence the approach of planning documents and the future planning of Crawley.

We also have to meet the statutory consultation requirements of the Planning Regulations. To meet these requirements we will:

- Make all consultation documents available to view at council offices and at other public buildings such as libraries. For a Development Plan Document these must be available for comment over a minimum six-week period. For Supplementary Planning Documents, consultation can last between four and six weeks.

- Documents and supporting information (including details of where and when copies of the documents can be viewed, and how people can comment) will be published on the council's website at www.crawley.gov.uk/planning
- Publish a notice in local newspapers to provide information on the consultation being undertaken.

Who are we involving?

The council is required to send details of planning document consultations to the 'specific consultation bodies'. These are the statutory organisations that the council must consult:

- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- National Rail
- Highways Agency
- Adjoining local authorities (Horsham, Mid Sussex, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, Tandridge)
- Relevant district authorities (West Sussex County Council, Surrey County Council)
- Strategic Health Authority
- Relevant electronic communication companies
- Relevant electricity and gas companies, such as EDF and Scotia Gas
- Relevant sewerage and water undertakers, such as Thames Water and Southern Water



But there are many other people, groups and organisations that will have an interest in the future of Crawley and will want to get involved. These could include individual residents, employees and employers, members of the Local Strategic Partnership, residents' associations, housing associations, local businesses, Conservation Area Advisory Committees, the development industry, disability groups, youth groups, faith groups and other stakeholders. These people may have a variety of different priorities and interests, and will be able to contribute expertise and knowledge across a range of subject areas.

If you are interested in finding out more about consultation on planning policy documents, you can email your contact details to us at [plans@crawley.gov.uk](mailto:plans@ Crawley.gov.uk) or call us on 01293 438761 and we will add you to our database.

Adopting a planning document

The last stage in producing a planning document is to present it to the relevant decision makers, who will consider its adoption as council policy. Depending on the type of document, the decision to adopt may be taken by an individual Cabinet member, or a decision may be taken at either Cabinet or Full Council.

Local Development Framework Working Group is attended by a nominated group of councillors who are responsible for discussing and providing a steer on the content of planning documents. It is an advisory group, rather than a decision-making group, and is not a public meeting.

Portfolio Briefing is a monthly meeting between council officers and the Cabinet member for a particular area. For Planning, the relevant councillor is the Cabinet Member of Planning and Economic Development.

At Portfolio Briefing, the Cabinet member has delegated powers to approve non-statutory planning documents, such as Development Principles Statements.

Cabinet is responsible for most council services, and makes day-to-day decisions on behalf of the council. Each member of the Cabinet has a portfolio of services for which they are responsible. The Cabinet will normally be consulted during the production of planning documents. Members of the public are able to attend meetings of the Cabinet and can ask questions at the start of the meeting.

Full Council is made up of all 37 councillors in the borough. It is responsible for taking all of the major decisions made by the council, including approval of all statutory documents produced for the Local Development Framework. Members of the public are able to attend meetings of the council and can ask questions at the start of the meeting.

If you would like to know more about asking questions at Cabinet or Full Council, you can contact Democratic Services on 01293 438549.

Neighbourhood Planning

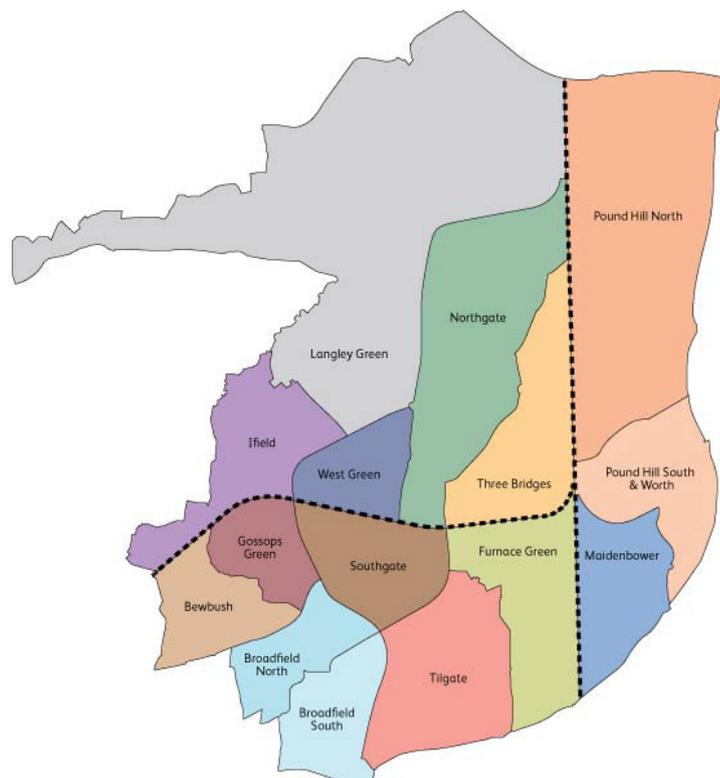
Neighbourhood Plans are community-produced documents that enable people to take a more direct role in shaping the places where they live. A Neighbourhood Plan can build upon the broader policies set out in the council's local planning documents and represents a chance for people to influence the level, location, appearance and type of development that comes forward in a neighbourhood.

A Neighbourhood Plan can be produced by an interested neighbourhood forum, and the Government has placed responsibility on the community to lead in plan production and consultation. Recognising this can require a significant commitment from neighbourhood forum members in terms

of time and resources. The council will seek to provide support and advice on a range of issues, including consultation and the process of document production. If you are interested in getting involved in producing a Neighbourhood Plan, or would like to find out more, please contact the council's Corporate Policy Unit on 01293 438225 or email nora.davies@crawley.gov.uk

What is Development Management?

Development Management is the stage at which decisions are made about the future of a particular piece of land or building. The Development Management team is responsible for determining the planning applications we receive.



Development Control

Decisions must take into account national planning guidance as well as local planning policies for Crawley, along with any other material considerations.

Consulting on planning applications

There are two distinct stages at which people can be consulted on planning applications; pre-application consultation (undertaken by developers), and application consultation (undertaken by the council).

Pre-application consultation

This is consultation undertaken by a developer before a planning application is submitted, usually on larger schemes. It can be a helpful stage as discussion between a developer and local residents can help to identify potential problems or improvements that could be made to proposals at an early stage. This can benefit local people by enabling their input into the design of proposals to

help ensure development is acceptable, and can also assist developers by reducing the scope for objections at a later stage.

The Development Management team would strongly recommend that developers undertake pre-application consultation with local residents and organisations prior to submitting any planning application for significant development. Developers undertaking pre-application consultation are asked to work with the commitments identified in Crawley's Statement of Community Involvement. In particular we would ask developers undertaking pre-application consultation to:

- Set clear objectives and agree the consultation approach, including who will be consulted, with Development Management
- Let people know what the scheme is proposing, and be clear about what they can influence by making comments

- Use different engagement approaches (as identified in Crawley's Statement of Community Involvement) to maximise opportunities for people to influence the proposals. Particular steps should be taken to involve any seldom-heard groups that could be affected by the proposal
- Submit a statement alongside the final planning application outlining any community involvement work that has been undertaken. This should include a summary of any responses received at consultation, and should explain how feedback has influenced the proposals.



Application consultation

When a planning application is registered there is a statutory consultation period of 21 days during which anyone can comment on the proposal. It is the council's responsibility to carry out consultation on planning applications through statutory publicity and notification. Our approach to consulting on planning applications will be to:

Publish details of planning applications online. You can view details of planning applications at the council's website via www.crawley.gov.uk/plansearch. This can be used to see which planning applications have been registered in the last seven days and to access plans and supporting information relating to both current applications and historic planning decisions. Applications can be searched by address or by an individual planning reference (this will begin with 'CR').

Make planning applications available to view. Paper copies of

all planning applications are available to view at Crawley Town Hall, The Boulevard, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 1UZ.

Undertake appropriate notification. Depending upon the type of application being consulted upon, we will undertake notification as appropriate. This could be by writing to neighbours, a site notice or a press advert. The council will also consult statutory consultees (please see page 4 for details) as required.

Commenting on a planning application

If you would like to comment on a planning application, your comments must be submitted to the council in writing, and within the 21 day consultation period. You will need to provide details of your name and address, which will appear with your comments on the council website and with the paper copy of the planning application. All valid comments that are submitted will form material considerations that must be taken into

account in determining the application.

The easiest way to comment on a planning application is to search for it at the council's website via www.crawley.gov.uk/plansearch. You can search for an application by address or by its planning reference number, and clicking on the 'comment on this application' link. You can also view any comments that other people have submitted in this way. You can also write to or email the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services.

The comments we receive in response to planning applications are a matter of public record. This means that we cannot treat comments as confidential, and they will be made available to view on the council's website, alongside the address of the person making the comment. We will not publish telephone numbers or email addresses. We will not publish any comments or parts of comments that are not considered suitable for public view, including comments that are offensive or personal.

What can I comment on?

If you comment on a planning application it is important that your comments relate to planning matters as it is only these matters that can be taken into account by the council when making a decision. Some of the issues that are considered to be planning matters include:

- External appearance and design
- Impact on the street scene or character of the local area
- Issues of noise, privacy and disturbance
- Loss of trees or impact on conservation issues
- Flooding
- Highway safety, traffic and parking issues
- Loss of light or overshadowing.

This list is not exhaustive. There may be other relevant issues that you wish to comment on.

Some issues are not normally regarded as planning matters, and are not usually taken account

of when reaching a planning decision. These include:

- Loss of private view
- Property value
- Other private property matters such as boundary and ownership disputes
- Moral issues or applicant's motives
- Possible future uses
- Matters covered by other legislation, such as building regulations, licensing or restrictive covenants.

Making a decision

There are two main ways in which the council will reach a decision on a planning application. This can be by either the officers of the council (a delegated decision) or through the Development Control Committee.

Delegated decisions

Once the consultation period has been completed, the planning case officer will take into account all material considerations, including any valid comments on the application, and will

make a recommendation to either permit or refuse the application. The reasoning behind the case officer's recommendation will be set out in a report that explains the approach taken. A final decision will then be made in accordance with the council's Scheme of Delegation on behalf of the Head of Planning and Environmental Services by authorised officers.

Development Control Committee

In some cases, a decision cannot be made under delegated powers and must instead be decided by a councillor vote at meetings of the Development Control Committee. A planning application will be referred to Development Control Committee if:



- The planning application is classified as a ‘major’ application
- Four or more people have objected to the application
- A Conservation Area Advisory Committee has objected to the application
- A councillor has referred the decision.

As a general rule anyone can speak at meetings of the Development Control Committee provided that they have submitted written comments on the planning application (either supporting or objecting) within the 21 day consultation period. If you would like to speak at a meeting you will need to contact Democratic Services on 01293 438311 no later than 12 noon on the day of the meeting and should bring to the meeting a written note setting out what you intend to say.

Appeals

In circumstances where a planning application is refused, the applicant may choose to appeal the council’s decision. Where this happens, an independent planning inspector will make a final decision on the application, and there may also be a further opportunity for public involvement in the appeals process.

How can I find out about planning decisions?

Once a decision has been made, a decision notice is sent to the applicant and/or agent to inform them of the decision. Anyone who commented on the application will also be notified. All planning decisions are published on a public register, which is available to view online at www.crawley.gov.uk/plansearch

Contact us

If there is a planning application-related issue that you would like to discuss, you can contact the Development Management team on 01293 438512 or by email at development.control@crawley.gov.uk

