

7 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Sections 4 to 6 of this Statement of Community Involvement dealt with how the local community of Rochford District will be involved in the drafting and evolution of the planning policies and proposals that shape the development and use of land in the district. The following sections deal with planning applications, the development control process, and how local people can influence the decision making process on individual planning applications.

Planning applications are made to Rochford District Council by individuals or organisations for activities that require planning permission. In general terms all types of development or change of use of land will require planning permission either from the Council or the Government. Appendix A at the end of this document details the process used for processing planning applications.

7.1 PUBLICATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

In its role in dealing with planning applications, where Rochford District Council is the Local Planning Authority, the Council will publicise the details of all planning applications. No system for publicising planning applications can be foolproof, however extensive. The system that Rochford District Council uses is a balance between consideration of cost, speed of decision making and providing a reasonable opportunity for public comment. The way in which the Local Planning Authority will publicise and seek the views of local people is outlined below.

The Council will use a variety of techniques to publicise planning applications depending on the circumstances of the application. The following methods will be used:

Notification of Neighbours: Occupiers of properties most likely to be affected by a proposal are notified individually by letter that an application has been received. They are invited to inspect the application and make any written observations within 21 days. If the occupier is disabled or elderly and unable to get to the Council Offices copies of the plans can be provided free of charge. Plans will also be available to view on the internet at www.rochford.gov.uk.

As a general rule, the adjoining occupiers to a proposal are notified. In practice, this means properties bordering an application site will receive individual notification of that application. This may be different for householder applications.

Within rural or isolated areas there may not be any neighbouring dwellings, or it may be unclear as to who the neighbours affected are. In such cases, it is left to the case officer's judgements to whom the neighbour notification should apply. Additionally site notices may be posted.

The extent of the neighbour notification process will vary depending on the type of proposal for which permission is being sought. This will be at or beyond the level specified by the legislation.

Site Notices: A site notice consists of a bright yellow A4 size notice. It is displayed in the vicinity of the site where a planning application has been made. The site notice will list details of the application together with information on how plans for the proposal can be viewed and how to make comments on the application. Site notices will be displayed for all major applications, and applications that are considered likely to affect a listed building or a conservation area. However, not all planning applications will be publicised with the use of a site notice.

Statutory Consultees: The Council seeks to engage with a whole range of bodies who may have an interest in the planning process. The Council will consult a whole range of statutory consultees. Not all bodies are consulted on each application. The bodies and organisations consulted will depend on the type of proposal and its location. Consultees are notified in writing and, as with local residents, have 21 days in which to respond. In addition bodies such as Natural England will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.

Local media: Applications classified as being major applications or those thought to affect the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or Listed Building will be advertised within the Southend Standard, Evening Echo and / or the Yellow Advertiser newspaper.

Other Forms of Publication: All major applications and applications that are thought to affect the character or appearance of a listed building or conservation area will be publicised within the Evening Standard newspaper.

A list of all planning applications currently being considered by the Local Planning Authority is available on the Council's website (www.rochford.gov.uk).

7.2 GETTING INFORMATION ON A PLANNING APPLICATION

Copies of all plans of applications being considered by the Council are available to view at the Council Offices in Rochford. Plans are also available to view at the relevant Parish Council Offices in Hockley, Hullbridge, Rochford or Rayleigh Civic Suite depending on the location of the application site. At these outlying offices, unlike the main Council Offices in Rochford, there are no officers to give advice.

All planning applications can be viewed through 'Public Access to Planning', which can be found on the Council's website at www.rochford.gov.uk.

Planning Officers are available during office hours to provide information on planning applications, either by telephone or in person at Council Offices in Rochford. Queries can also be submitted by email at any time, although responses can only be made during office hours.

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8 HAVING YOUR SAY ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Council will seek the views of the public through the methods outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Public involvement techniques for Planning Applications				
	Large scale applications likely to generate considerable controversy	Applications contrary to policy	Applications broadly in accordance with policies, but likely to generate some controversy	Householder applications
Notification of Neighbours	✓	✓	✓	✓
Site Notices	✓	✓	✓	
Statutory Consultees	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local media	✓	✓		
Other Forms of Publication	✓	✓	✓	

In addition to those listed in Table 3, other non-statutory groups and organisations will be consulted on planning applications, when relevant, at the Case Officer's discretion.

Anyone can put forward their views on any planning application that is under consideration by the Council. The Council, in determining the planning application, can only take into consideration comments that are relevant to planning, known as material planning considerations.

For help and guidance on what matters can be considered relevant to a planning application please contact the Council's planning department during office hours where a Planning Officer will be available to assist. Rochford District Council has also produced a guidance leaflet on making comments that is available from the Council Offices in Rochford and Rayleigh. This leaflet is also available electronically on the Council's website (www.rochford.gov.uk). There are a number of other advice leaflets available from the Council which can be viewed online on the Council's website and are also available in paper.

Planning Portal also provides information and can be accessed via the Council's website. Other possible contacts and references that may be of assistance include Planning Aid and the Royal Town Planning Institute's website (www.rtpi.org.uk).

Rochford District Council is committed to providing an open and transparent planning system. The Council also has to be able to justify its decisions and defend them in an appeal situation when necessary. For these reasons anonymous comments cannot be considered, views must be submitted in writing and will be open to the public to view. In

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In addition to this, the Council is currently examining the possibility of giving members of the public the opportunity to speak at Planning Services Committee.

If you wish put forward your views on a planning application and are unable to put them in writing then contact the planning department to put your views across verbally and an Officer will record them in writing (see page 27 for contact details)

A diagram illustrating the decision making process for planning applications is shown in Appendix A at the end of this document.

8.1 FEEDBACK

The Council will endeavour to respond to all who have submitted comment on a planning application at several stages:

On receipt of the comment: Rochford District Council will write to the contributor confirming receipt of their submission. This letter confirms that the contributor's views will be taken into account and that the Council will keep them updated with the progress of the planning application.

Mid-application: In the event that the application will be determined at Planning Services Committee, members of the public who have commented on the application will be informed of this. They will be provided with the date, time and venue of the relevant Committee.

Alterations: When an applicant makes changes to a proposal mid-application, depending on the scale of such changes, the Local Planning Authority will usually write to those that have contributed inviting further comment.

Post-application: Once the application has been determined Rochford District Council will write to all contributors detailing the outcome of the application and how to get further information if required.

Appeals: When an applicant appeals against the decision of the Council to refuse their proposal those that have contributed, along with other neighbours who adjoin the site, will be informed that an appeal has been made. This will be done in writing and will include details on how to comment on the appeal application.

In addition to the above, the progress of planning applications can be tracked through Public Access, including viewing appeal decisions.