

Appendix 3

Ross-on-Wye Town Council Pre-Application Community Involvement Protocol

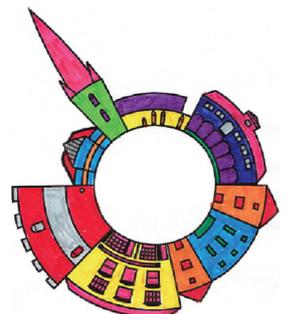
Ross-on-Wye

Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 - 2032

Consultation Draft
November 2018



NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED



ROSS-ON-WYE TOWN COUNCIL PRE-APPLICATION COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROTOCOL

This Protocol is part of the suite of documents that together form the **Ross-on-Wye Neighbourhood Development Plan**. Any proposals must accord with this plan and with those of any higher level plans, notably that of Herefordshire Council, as well as all national policy.

Because much of any pre-application community involvement will be about overall and detailed design and character, particular attention is drawn to the **Ross-on-Wye Character Portfolio*** because applicants will be required to demonstrate how their eventual proposals will enhance the local distinctiveness of Ross-on-Wye. (* Or the latest version at the time.)

Use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of Ross-on-Wye Town Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good community involvement process has been agreed and followed.

Context

The **Revised National Planning Policy Framework** (2018) states that:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

The **“10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Involvement”**¹ published by a group representing planning, industry and community groups states that:

“Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities affected by a new development can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes and ensure improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs.”

The Herefordshire Council **“Statement of Community Involvement”** (SCI)² states that:

“There will be certain developments which in the view of the Council are likely to generate public interest which should be canvassed prior to any formal application..... if the development proposed is considered to be significant, it would strongly encourage the applicant to involve the community.”

(The SCI also includes some specific suggestions for how good community involvement should be managed. These are introduced below.)

Ross-on-Wye Town Council fully support and endorse all of the above and will play their appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application involvement with themselves and the wider Ross-on-Wye community as proposals come forward.

Process

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best practice, we encourage potential applicants to work with Ross-on-Wye Town Council to fulfil the following principles:

- **‘Day One’ contact:** By far the best results for all emerge when contact is made with our Town Council, and through us with our local community, at the very start of any process; consulting people late with already prepared schemes is not productive.
- **Agreed Process:** A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope,

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-topics/planning-applications/10-commitments-effective-pre-application-involvement>

² https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200185/local_plan/143/statement_of_community_involvement

timetable, information and so forth of the involvement – i.e. the process to be followed.* (*The SCI suggests a need to “agree methods for ... involvement ... (and) a timetable”.*)

- **Applicant Leadership but Shared Responsibility:** Although it is the applicant’s role to lead and fund involvement, the Town Council will offer as much support as possible to any agreed process, for example by providing local information, contact details for local groups, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters and so forth.
- **Openness and Transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Town Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed Community:** A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on all of the town. The details of those to be involved will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential ways to contact and engage them. (*The SCI suggests the need to “identify groups and/or individuals who should be involved”.*)
- **Agreed Scope:** There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the community involvement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.).
- **Proportionality:** The nature and scale of involvement will be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals.
- **Final Reporting:** The applicant should submit, with any final application, a thorough report – a full ‘audit trail’ - describing and summarising the outcomes of the involvement, showing how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this. If the process has been followed fully, the Town Council will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it**. (*The SCI suggests that any application should be supported by a “statement on the consultation exercise (that) sets out how any feedback (has been) assessed and identifies where that feedback has resulted in a revision”.*)

* There is considerable benefit for applicants in also sharing any process with Herefordshire Council, as planning authority, and securing their agreement to it.

** As per the opening proviso, endorsement of an involvement process and results does not necessarily mean support for the resulting proposals.

Initial contact should be made with the Town Council via the Town Clerk (clerk@rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk). The Town Council commits to doing all possible to arrange an initial meeting as soon as possible following this contact.

Please note that all of the above applies to formally allocated sites. For any proposals on unallocated sites, although initial contact should still be made, the Town Council reserves the right to limit or even refuse its partnership role. If this proves necessary, the decision to not engage with an applicant, or to do so in a limited way, cannot be used against the Town Council by the applicant.