

Draft Corscombe, Halstock & District Parish Council

Planning Protocol

This guide explains:

- Why the Parish Council is consulted on planning applications
- How residents can comment
- What matters can (and cannot) be considered
- How planning decisions are made

Why is the Parish Council Consulted?

Under planning law, Parish Councils are **statutory consultees**. This means the Planning Authority must inform us of certain planning applications and allow us to comment.

The relevant legislation includes:

- Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
- Section 293G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Corscombe, Halstock & District Parish Council (CHDPC) has also adopted the **General Power of Competence**, allowing it to act in the interests of the community where appropriate.

As the first tier of local government, CHDPC is the council closest to local residents. Councillors are elected (or co-opted) to represent the parish and to form a collective view on local matters, including planning consultations.

Individual councillors cannot decide matters alone and must declare any disclosable interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Where an interest exists, they must not participate in discussions or voting.

Councillors may attend planning training, but they are not professional planning officers.

Who Makes the Final Decision?

The decision-making authority for planning applications in our area is **Dorset Council**.

Dorset Council makes decisions based on:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Dorset Council's Local Plan and adopted policies
- Consultation responses (including from CHDPC)
- Public representations

Planning applications can be viewed and commented on via the Dorset Council planning portal. <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning/planning>

Consultation Periods

- Standard consultation: **21 days**
- Large or complex applications: up to **56 days**

If an application is refused, the applicant may appeal within six months to the **Planning Inspectorate**.

The Planning Inspectorate will assess whether Dorset Council applied policy correctly. No new evidence can usually be introduced at appeal stage.

How the Parish Council Responds

- CHDPC aims to respond to all planning consultations it receives.
- Responses are agreed at public Parish Council meetings.
- If timescales are tight, a public planning meeting may be arranged.
- Decisions are made by majority vote.
- The Clerk submits the agreed response on behalf of the Council.
- There is **no legal requirement** for a Parish Council to respond to planning applications.

All meetings are open to the public.

How Residents Can Comment

Residents must submit their comments **directly to Dorset Council** during the consultation period for them to be considered.

Important points:

- Any member of the public may comment — not just neighbours.
- Every registered voter may submit an individual comment.
- Individual letters carry more weight than petitions or template letters.
- CHDPC does **not** submit comments on behalf of residents.

Comments are public documents, although Dorset Council can redact personal details on request.

How to Engage with the Parish Council

CHDPC looks to consider the views of residents about planning applications, and as such advises residents to comment on applications via the Dorset Planning Portal as soon as possible after a consultation period opens, so CHDPC may view these on the Dorset Council Planning Portal for awareness prior to resolving a view of the council.

- Planning applications under consideration are listed on CHDPC agendas under “Planning”.
- Members of the public may speak during “Public Time” (maximum 3 minutes).
- Comments should be directed to the Chair.
- You may stay to observe the discussion.
- Decisions are recorded in the minutes and published on the website and noticeboard.

Although not required to do so, CHDPC also shares planning applications via its website (chdpc.org.uk) and local social media to raise awareness.

Who Notifies Neighbours?

It is the responsibility of Dorset Council — not the Parish Council — to notify neighbouring properties.

This is usually done by:

- A site notice displayed by the applicant
- Notices in the local press (where required)

If you believe you have missed a consultation, contact the relevant case officer at Dorset Council.

What Can Be Considered?

Planning decisions are based on “material planning considerations”. These include:

Relevant (Material) Considerations

- National and local planning policies and guidance – Acts, Circulars, Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) etc; for example, Dorset Council’s Local plan.
- Adopted supplementary guidance – for example. village design statements, conservation area appraisals, car parking standards, including the Dorset Conservation Area character statement

- Replies from statutory and non-statutory agencies (e.g., Environment Agency, Highways Authority)
- Highway safety (access, visibility, parking, traffic impact)
- Design, layout and appearance
- Impact on the character of the area
- Overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing
- Noise, disturbance, smell
- Flood risk and drainage
- Effects on trees and hedgerows
- Impact on conservation areas or listed buildings
- Nature conservation (bats, badgers, protected species)
- Public rights of way
- Infrastructure capacity
- Crime prevention
- Planning history of the site
- Safeguarding important land uses

Clear, concise, evidence-based comments are most effective.

Matters That Cannot Be Considered

The following are **not** material planning considerations:

- Loss of property value
- Loss of a private view
- Boundary disputes
- Identity or character of the applicant
- Competition between businesses
- Breach of private covenants
- Religious or moral objections
- Developer reputation
- Whether development has already started

Including these weakens objections.

You should also not speculate about future use of the property.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

The Dorset Council Planning Process – Step by Step

1. **Consultation & Publicity**
Notices are issued and the consultation period begins.
 2. **Assessment**
A planning officer inspects the site and reviews policies, responses and representations.
 3. **Negotiation (if required)**
Amendments may be requested. Significant changes may restart consultation.
 4. **Recommendation**
The officer prepares a report recommending approval or refusal.
Some applications are decided by committee in public meetings.
 5. **Committee (if applicable)**
A Parish Councillor and up to three supporters and three objectors may speak (3 minutes each).
 6. **Decision Issued**
 7. **Appeal (if refused)**
Handled by the Planning Inspectorate.
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Getting Support for Your View

If you feel strongly about an application:

- Encourage others to submit individual comments.
- Focus on planning reasons.
- Be clear, factual and respectful.

Well-reasoned individual responses are more persuasive than petitions.