

# Planning & Sustainable Development Service



## Pre-application Community Engagement guidance

As part of measures to ensure greater community engagement and involvement in new developments in Cornwall, the Council has decided to introduce options for developers as part of the pre-application process offered by this Service. Planning case officers will advise applicants and developers on the most appropriate form of community engagement for their proposal; this advice will form part of all pre-application discussions.

Case officers will recommend one of three options for community engagement:

1. **Level 1 (Full Committee) Pre-application Community Engagement (PACE) Forum** – this level of pre-application forum is for strategic major schemes that would be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee. This is a full PACE Forum with all members of the Strategic Planning Committee, local Member(s), Local Council and residents. The fee for this facilitated community engagement forum is £1500 and is payable as part of the pre-app fee or Planning Performance Agreement. Developers receive the formal notes of the Forum including the advice of Members of the Committee and local residents to inform a subsequent planning application.
2. **Level 2 PACE Forum** – this level of engagement is suitable for items that would likely be considered by the Area Planning Committees or contentious smaller-scale schemes. Attendees at this forum would include the Committee Chair, Vice-Chair, local Member(s), Local Council and local residents. The fee for this forum is £500 and is payable as part of the pre-app fee or Planning Performance Agreement. Developers receive the formal notes of the Forum including the advice of attendees to inform a subsequent planning application. This forum can be led by either a Lead officer (Case officer/Group Leader/Strategic Manager) or the local Member. Any costs for venue hire are rechargeable to the applicant/developer.
3. **Community Engagement facilitated by the Local Council** – the case officer could recommend that community engagement led by the Local Council would be appropriate for a proposal. The developer approaches the Local Council to facilitate a community engagement event. This may be using the Cornwall pre-app protocol for Local Councils that was recently adopted by the Cornwall Planning Partnership. It should be noted that however a Local Council chooses to deal with pre-application proposals, they should publish how they do so on their parish websites. Further information on the Cornwall pre-app protocol for Local Councils can be found on the Cornwall Planning Partnership webpage at:

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/local-councils/planning-partnership-meetings/>

# **Pre-application Community Engagement (PACE) Forums FAQs**

## **What is the Forum?**

The Forum is a meeting held in public, where a developer is able to explain proposals directly to Members, the Local Council and local residents at an early stage about a development site. The process is designed to assist the developer to deal properly with important issues and to reduce delay and frustration on everyone's part in the formal planning process.

## **What is the Forum's purpose?**

Its prime purpose is to help identify issues that a proposal, which is considered by the Forum, may need to address. In particular a Forum will:

- identify any issues that may be considered in any formal application
- inform Members and the public of a development proposal at an early stage in the pre-application process
- inform officer pre-application discussions with the developer
- enable the developer to shape an application to address community issues

## **When will a Forum be held?**

As part of the initial discussions regarding suitable community engagement between a developer and the case officer or senior officer within the Planning and Sustainable Development Service, a developer will be asked whether and when in the pre-application stage discussions he would like to take advantage of the Forum process.

## **Will all pre-application matters be referred to a Forum?**

No. Only those proposals that are significant strategic major developments or contentious smaller scale schemes, which are likely to raise issues sensitive to the wider community, are likely to be suitable for one of the two Forum options.

## **If proposals are sensitive to the wider community do they have to be subject to the Forum process?**

No. Whilst developers will be encouraged to use this opportunity when appropriate to be able to demonstrate their engagement with the community, it is not mandatory and it will depend upon their co-operation and willingness to take part.

## **Is a Forum a substitute for the Planning Committee?**

No. The Strategic and Area Planning Committees will still need to consider any subsequent planning applications submitted based on the facts, issues and advice and nothing said at the Forum will prejudice that consideration.

## **Who can attend the Forum?**

For all Forums, the meeting will be held in public and the relevant local Member(s), Local Council and members of the public likely to be affected will be

invited (local residents will be invited on the same criteria as notifications for a subsequent application, ie adjoining or abutting the application site). For a full PACE Forum, all the members of the Strategic Planning Committee will be invited; only the Chair and Vice-Chair will be in attendance for smaller-scale forums as well as local Electoral Divisional member(s).

### **Who will be invited to speak?**

All attendees can speak at the Forums with a maximum of 3 minutes allowed per speaker. There is no need for local residents to register to speak but it is emphasised that speakers must make a new point or emphasis and no duplication of topics will be permitted. Residents may wish to make written comments to officers who will forward any comments received to developers, and take account of any points made in any subsequent discussions about the proposal. Forms to make written comments will be available at the Forum events. In any event, a PACE Forum will not affect any rights to make representations when a formal planning application is submitted. The role of Members at the Forum is to listen, understand the issues, ask questions and offer advice rather than voice opinions on a proposal.

### **Will the Forum negotiate a proposal with a developer?**

No. The purpose of the Forum is to raise issues that participants consider need to be addressed by the developer prior to submitting a planning application.

### **How will I know about a Forum?**

Arrangements will normally be made about two weeks in advance of a Forum. Invitation letters will be sent to neighbours who would normally be consulted on a planning application advising them of the event at least 5 working days before the Forum, and additional information will be placed on the council website.

### **What happens at the Forum?**

The Chair (Committee Chairman for a full Forum; Committee Chairman, Local Member or appropriate officer for a simplified Forum) will introduce the Forum, explain who is going to speak, the order of speakers and the rules that the meeting will follow. The order of events will normally be as follows:

1. The Planning case officer will provide a background to the proposal (including planning history and planning policies – up to 10 mins)
2. The developer will explain the proposal (this may involve contributions from several people) – up to 20 mins
3. Attendees will then have an opportunity to speak, ask questions and raise any issues, observations and comments – up to 45 mins for a full Committee Forum
4. The developer has an opportunity to respond to what has been said by attendees – up to 10 mins
5. The Planning case officer summarises the main points raised during the Forum – 5 mins
6. The Chair will close the Forum

### **How long will speakers have to address the Forum?**

This will be dependent upon the nature and complexity of the case. However, developers will need to be given sufficient time to properly explain the

proposals, this is not likely to be more than 20 minutes unless in exceptional circumstances. Individual speakers may have up to 3 minutes but there must be no duplication of points raised.

### **What if third parties are disruptive to the process?**

It is important to understand and capture any genuine objections someone may have to proposals. However an attendee who has made their points and becomes disruptive will only damage the process for others. Disruptive behaviour can include shouting and interrupting speakers and thereby not allowing points to be made. Any members of the public who become disruptive will be instructed to leave.

### **What happens at the end of the Forum meeting?**

The main points raised by the Forum will be recorded and clarified as the meeting progresses. At the end of the meeting the Planning case officer will summarise the main issues. This will help the developer decide how he wishes to proceed with the proposal.

### **What happens after a Forum meeting?**

The main points will be recorded and passed to the developer for his consideration during further pre-application discussions with officers of the Council and in putting the application together.

Planning and Sustainable Development  
Cornwall Council

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