

To all town and parishes

Mike Gilbert
Development Manager
Planning Service
mike.gilbert@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Tel: 01235 547681

Our ref: MG/parishes

Your ref:

Dear Sir/Madam

Date: 11 April 2011

Planning service update

I thought it would be helpful to let you know about some changes we will be making over the next few months, and that we will be offering some planning training workshops in the autumn. The changes aim to improve the service we provide to customers, including your council, and will help us to provide a more efficient service and better value for money.

Planning service

As part of our shared working with South Oxfordshire District Council, some of our teams will be based at one or other council offices. For example, the shared planning enforcement team is now based at South's offices in Wallingford, although we still have a regular presence at the Vale's offices at Abbey House. Once the combined and more robust team and new systems are in place, your council and other customers should notice an improvement in the way we deal with planning matters. The whole service is continually reviewing what it does and is seeking more efficient ways of working in order to reduce the costs to the tax payer. One of the ways we are doing this is by optimising opportunities for electronic ways of working. Increasingly, our planning application and enforcement files are being held only in an electronic format.

All the information submitted with a planning application is available for viewing on our web site and we plan to introduce case tracking for both planning applications and enforcement investigations during the next 12 months. This will include, once you have signed up, regular email alerts when changes are made which will help keep you and customers informed of a case's progress.

Application consultation timescale and deadlines

As you know, the deadline for parish council and neighbour comments on planning applications is 21 days. However, the deadline for commenting on amended plans received whilst we are considering an application is 14 days.

Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE
T: 01235 520202 E: info@whitehorsedc.gov.uk
www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk
Textphone number: 18001 01235 #####

We encourage you to respond to us online within these time frames in order to help us to determine applications within their statutory determination periods (8 weeks for other and minor applications and 13 weeks for major applications). Receiving your comments as early as possible is very helpful as it can allow officers time to negotiate with applicants and secure amendments/improvements to proposals where appropriate. Such amendments often address concerns raised by parish councils, neighbours and other consultees, making development proposals acceptable. It can also help to avoid the time and costs, to both the applicant and council, associated with defending an appeal.

Decision notices on planning applications

Over the next month we will stop sending you hard copies of decision notices and replace them with an electronic copy by email. This will ensure that as soon as we have issued a decision you are provided with a copy of the decision notice. This will provide you with almost instant information and help reduce our printing and postage costs.

You can also access this information using our planning decision register. You can find the link on our planning home page at:

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/Planning/default.asp>

Alternatively, you can sign up to our email/text alerts, which automatically advise you that we have made a decision, with a link to the decision notice on our web site.

Planning committee training

Following the local elections this May, we will be offering training through workshops to all town and parish councils in the autumn. We will send you an invitation setting out the details at least a month in advance. This training will be for those who are new to planning as well as a refresher for others. We will also talk through aspects of the Localism Bill and what it may mean for town and parish councils.

Localism

I thought it would be useful if I provided you with a copy of a presentation recently given to district councillors about the Localism Bill. This sets out the main changes that are currently proposed in the Bill and some of the comments made by a number of interested parties. Whilst I hope this is useful, please note that as the Bill progresses through Parliament, changes will no doubt occur, so this is only a snap shot in time.

Town and parish council planning web page

All of the information contained in this letter together with future updates will be published on our web site. The web site is currently being redesigned and it will soon include a page specifically designed to help you with planning issues. If you have any suggestions of other planning information you would like to be included please email planning@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

I hope you find this update useful.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Gilbert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct loop at the end of the last name.

Mike Gilbert
Development Manager