

## **Good practice note on pre-planning application meetings with elected members**

### **Context:**

This note has emerged following discussions between the South West Key Areas Group<sup>1</sup> and representation of major home builders in the region – through the Home Builders Federation. During this discussion the home builders identified a number of barriers to successful delivery of the significant sustainable growth agenda for the region. One barrier, they felt, was the lack of engagement with members prior to submission of formal planning applications. This was being hampered as a result of Council's interpretation of Nolan principles.

It was agreed that the Key Areas Group members would look at best practice amongst their respective authorities and pool this into some guidelines which each then might adopt within their own Authority.

Members of the group identified that only one of the Key Areas currently undertook any formal pre-application processes. This was Swindon, and their process is described below. Clearly there is also the opportunity to continue to develop this approach – looking at best practice beyond the South West. This work will commence early in 2007.

### **The Swindon Approach:**

- Elected members are involved from 'day one' of any pre-application discussion (with developers consent).
- Because the proposal is pre-application – there are no probity issues at this stage. As no application has been submitted, no pre-determination will have taken place.
- A "full submission" is used as a pre-application submission (in effect a dummy application). This enables the use of full consultation early in the process.
- Member engagement is through lead Member and local ward Member.
- Surgeries may also be held in some wards to advise on likely proposals or to discuss local issues in the context of particular applications.
- For some major developments (NB, **not all** applications), as the application progresses to a formal status, Member briefings may be held – in the form of an open seminar.
- It is at this stage that developers are then able to formally present *prior to determination*. Again, this element may not be used on every occasion.
- The meeting is NOT closed, and in principle open to all.
- Briefings will still take place with planning committee members.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of delivering **The Way Ahead** – The South West Sustainable Communities Plan

## Key Areas Group Action 2006

- **It should be noted, that because most work is done pre-application, the need for such seminars is infrequent.**