

Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 2018/19: Neighbour Notification Letters for Planning Applications				Head of Service: Gary Lugg Author: Gary Lugg		15 February 2018 Version 2 (Exec)		
Proposal:		To cease sending individual notification letters to properties in the vicinity of a planning application, where there is an option to choose between notifying neighbours by letter or by site notice.						
Total budget 2017/18:		£17,500	Initial proposed saving 2018/19:		£17,500	Recommended saving 2018/19:		£17,500
No. of responses:		In total, 97 responses were received. Of those that responded: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 87 identified themselves as residents of West Berkshire• 8 as council employees• 17 as Parish/Town Councils• 2 as District Councillors• 3 as other						
Key issues raised:		The key issues raised related to the potential impact on the elderly and those with a disability and suggestions relating to improved use of orange notices.						
Equality issues:		No issues were raised during the consultation, that weren't already included in the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) stage one.						
Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:		Suggestion		Council response				
		43% suggested that better use be made of orange site notices: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• displayed more prominently• extra notices for larger sites or sites which are more isolated and off a main road• displayed longer• removed when no longer needed		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site notices are erected in prominent locations by case officers during their site visits.• Additional notices are erected as required for larger sites.• Notices are erected for the 21 day statutory consultation period.• Community and village notice boards, and notice boards at venues, are operated by Parish and Town Councils who can advertise planning applications on them if they feel it is appropriate.• Case officers erect site notices during their initial site visit.				

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easy read options for disabled people • displayed on community/village notice boards and venues, • combine site visit and putting up site notice 		
	Still send to nearest neighbours	The purpose of the proposal is to generate a saving. To continue to send letters to nearest neighbours would result in no saving.	
	Braille letters, increased font size in NWN adverts	<p>The purpose of the proposal is to generate a saving by ceasing neighbourhood notification letters, so no letters will be sent should the proposal be implemented.</p> <p>To increase font size of adverts in the press would result in a financial pressure.</p>	
	Applicant writes to neighbours	Unfortunately the legislation requires the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to undertake consultation and does not allow the LPA to insist that the applicant correspond with neighbours.	
	Developer engage with the community	The Government's National Planning Policy Framework suggests that developers of larger sites should engage with local communities, but the legislation requires LPAs to undertake the formal consultation.	
Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Allow people to sign up for email notifications	This facility already exists. People can register on the Council's website to receive automatic notification of new planning applications within set distances of a property.	
	Improved access to the website	It is unclear what is suggested here. The general feedback received about the web site is positive. All specific suggested improvements are considered.	

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	Use social media	This is to be discussed with the Council’s communications team.		
Suggestions for income generation:	Suggestion	Council response		
	Charge the applicant/developer	Unfortunately planning fees are set by Government and the Council has no discretion to alter them.		
	Increase the planning fee	As above.		
Suggestions for how others may help contribute:	Suggestion	Council response		
	Parish councils to inform residents	This is for Parish Councils to consider.		
	Volunteers to deliver notifications and support local elderly residents and those with a disability.	This is for local residents and often happened with large or controversial planning applications.		
Conclusion and recommendation:	No viable alternative or objections that require the proposal to be reconsidered have been identified and so officers recommend that the proposal is progressed and implemented.			

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