



Agenda item 8

For decision: **Protocol for engaging with developers, landowners and agents in relation to planning applications, the planning process – and future development in Bradford on Avon**

Written by: Chris Stringer, Deputy Town Clerk

Background

Wiltshire Council is the planning authority for Bradford on Avon.

This means that Wiltshire Council (rather than the town council) will approve or reject planning applications in the town. This is done in line with the relevant policies in the Wiltshire Local Plan (which includes the Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood Plan)

The town council is a statutory consultee on planning applications in the parish, though. And this means that Wiltshire Council asks the town council for its views on submitted planning applications.

So although the town council doesn't have any powers to approve or reject planning applications, we do have a role in trying to ensure that development in the town contributes to the town – and meets the aims and aspirations of the community.

Notably, development in Bradford on Avon is significantly constrained by the geography and topography of the town.

The town also places great value on its history and heritage – and its green spaces and landscapes.

For all these reasons, new development(s) can be challenging and (at times) can be contentious.

However, Wiltshire Council's draft Local Plan, that looks ahead to 2038, identifies the need for development in Bradford on Avon.

If they are properly considered, new development(s) could see high quality places to live and work and high standards for development – as well as wider benefits for the town, including investment in infrastructure.

As such – like some other town and parish councils – we feel it is timely to adopt a **protocol** to frame and inform our conversations with developers, landowners and agents.

By doing this, we can introduce a consistent, structured and transparent approach that enables and encourages early and effective community involvement in planning applications and the planning process.





New protocol

We're currently working with [Place Studio](#), reviewing the town's Neighbourhood Plan.

Alongside and related to this work, Place Studio's team has also adapted and drafted a protocol that can guide conversations between the town council and developers, landowners and agents at the earliest possible stages – and crucially before planning applications are submitted.

The protocol will encourage important conversations between developers and the town council - and by extension, the Bradford on Avon community.

It also makes clear the town council's expectations – and the aspirations of the community.

The protocol contains some specific and technical language – and some specific references to planning. This is essential and important since the protocol must be robust and effective – and needs to sit next to planning policies and other strategic documents.

The draft protocol for Bradford on Avon is at appendix A.

As the Neighbourhood Plan review progresses, we will look to embed this protocol in the new Neighbourhood Plan.

This could be by way of a policy in the reviewed Neighbourhood Plan - something that has already happened in Melksham:

[Information for Agents and Developers from Melksham's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group](#)

Recommendation
1. Adopt the draft protocol to frame and guide the town council's engagement with developers, landowners and agents.