

HARINGEY AGENTS' FORUM

Date: 20 April 2009 - 15.00 – 17.30 p.m.

Venue: Haringey Civic Centre Council Chambers, N22

Haringey Council: Marc Dorfman, Costas Christoforou, Paul Tomkins, Bob Mclver, Drew Williams, Sule Nisancioglu, Emma Hardy, Henrietta Jones

Agents Reps: Mr Francisco Gutierrez, Mr Mike Easton, Mr Leon Bicknell Alan Crawford, Mr Oliver Burston, Mrs Nurhan Erk, Mr Vasos Vasiliou, Magda Adeyemi, Val Flemming, Mr George Constantis, Mr Colin Bargioni, Mr Peter Brades, Mr Kleanthis Charalambous, Justin Kelly, Mr Thomas Thomas, Angelo Thomas, Mr Audley English, Mr Andreas Michael, Mr Richard Maltese, Stuart Moss, Claudio Novello Architects, Charles Nebechi, Mr Hassan Solaimani, Mr Abdurrauf Kaleli

Minutes taken by: Henrietta Jones

1. Welcome and Introductions	
<p>Marc Dorfman, Assistant Director: Planning & Regeneration Service welcomed the group and expressed his gratitude to the agents attending. Marc explained that the purpose of the forum was to keep agents informed of our services and up and coming events, as well as, any changes in the legislation. The forum would also be a place where we hope to improve our customer relationships by consulting with them on changes in policy.</p> <p>Costas Christoforou chaired the meeting by introducing the first speaker Paul Tomkins to the group.</p>	
2. General Permitted Development Order (GPDO)	
<p>Paul Tomkins Head of Haringey's Development Control (North), presented an overview of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO). A number of slides were presented and discussed, detailing the guidelines. Handouts were distributed containing these details.</p> <p>There was a number of questions raised from the group such as ; If a house was converted into flats, can an extension be included? Also, can houses be actually converted into flats under the permitted development criteria? Answer: No – it was made clear that planning permission would be required.</p> <p>Did permitted development rights require regularisation by applying for a certificate of lawfulness? It is not a requirement. (However, many of the agents felt that by applying for a Certificate of Lawfulness their clients would have written confirmation that developments have been approved.)</p>	

Roof extensions

There was much discussion around the distances from the boundaries and the pitch of the roofs, single and double storey extensions, with the consensus that 2 storey extensions should have similar roof pitches to that of the main building, whilst side extensions should not extend the height of more than 4 m.

Restrictions of conservation areas were also briefly discussed.

Terraced Housing

With regard to terraced housing it was asked how would a planning application be judged if you wanted to match it to the adjoining property, which maybe different to the permitted guidelines? In response, it was highlighted that settings and contexts would be taken into consideration with regard to these issues and looked at favourably. However, each case would need to be assessed individually and planning permission sought.

Right of Lights

The issue of natural light was raised – Did the new GPDO take into account Natural light? Paul Tomkins advised that the distances from the boundary have been set to take account of the potential lost of natural light.

Further information about the General Permitted Development Order - is available on the website at www.haringey.gov.uk/planning

3. Life After IAPP -

Mr Williams from the Department of Communities and Local Government was our guest speaker and provided a step by step guidance of how to use the Planning Portal online resource. The portal hosts all the National, Regional and local policy documents such as RPG, PPG (PPS), UDPs and LDFs, also information on Building Regulations and can be found at ;

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

He informed us that 35% of planning applications are submitted on line through the portal and a show of hands from the group showed that approximately just over 10% those present regularly submitted applications online, however most agents were aware of the Portal itself. **Planning applications can be made through the portal on line using the following website link;**

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/genpub/en/1011888236124.html>

Mr. Williams went on to provide discs of a demonstration of the 'Interactive House and Terrace' guide, which are on the portal for the public and agents use. The house guide gives information on the changes to Permitted Development, Green projects such as Solar Panels and other minor projects, as well as, Building Regulation advice for internal and external works.

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/hhg/houseguide.html>

The terrace guidance relates to flats, shops and basements, and also includes many common householder projects and all the PD changes.

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/thg/terraceguide.html>

The Guides were demonstrated live from the Portal, as were a series of "how to" videos which are available at;

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/help/en/1115316656422.html>

(One of the videos is a step by step guide on how to make a planning application, which will soon be on the Haringey website too www.haringey.gov.uk/planning

Finally, Mr Williams commented that although the numbers of applications are down, the online application numbers have in fact increased. This may be because companies are looking to cut costs in the present climate, and are finding that online submission is a more cost effective option, for example with reduced printing costs.

He thanked Haringey for the invitation to the Forum and for the chance to help Haringey implement electronic working.

Electronic Drawings

Following on from this session, the issue of submission of electronic drawings was brought to our attention again, with regard to the quality and the problem of losing fine details of the drawings when submitting in A3 PDFs. In particular, an agent expressed his concerns that he thought that local authorities had been supplied with grant funding to facilitate printing large drawings to keep plans to scale.

It was explained that local authorities had been given the Planning Delivery Grant by the Government and this was to be spent on what they felt was most appropriate to improve planning." Nevertheless, where necessary, plans would certainly be printed at the correct size to reflect their scale, especially where measurements need to be assessed. This would be for decision making purposes specifically, not for general comments where dimensions are not important. Hopefully this would prevent an inappropriate waste of resources. Another matter of concern raised, was the non-use of colour printing, as black and white copies do not differentiate the details of the drawings.

Drew Williams did also reiterate that Local Authorities were not given funding for printing purposes. Even still, Haringey will look into this problem, and review their criteria on how they make judgements on this process, as well as looking at improving their electronic viewing.

4. Killian Pretty Review

Paul Tomkins summarised the 17 recommendations of this review and provided each attendee with a disc to download on their computer or alternatively a hard copy of the review.

Marc Dorfman suggested that an 'Accredited Agent's Scheme' could be considered. This would set out the customer standards required to improve the quality and speed of processing certain planning applications. Marc also asked the audience, whether they thought it would be a useful marketing tool for them, and if they would be interested in getting involved? The general consensus from the floor; was that it was worth exploring further.

Recommendation 9 - Statutory Consultees

The issue of early consultation on applications was discussed in detail, particularly where applications were likely to be refused under delegated powers. The key issue being whether the Planning Officer informed the applicants in good time, prior to a decision being taken, to allow them the time to negotiate any outstanding problems.

The group responded by expressing concerns that; quite often they found that Planning Officers were not available. Others felt that this situation had improved recently, but it really did depend on which individual officer you were dealing with, as some officers were more helpful and open to discuss matters with clients, than others.

In summary, the agents said they would really like to be informed when an application is heading for refusal, and asked if this could be incorporated within the procedures.

Another issue was raised with regard to the fact that preplanning discussions were not being documented.

Marc responded by reiterating that these issues must be looked into, and said that he hoped that there would be some improvement in the future, as the number of applications have decreased recently. Hopefully this will provide an opportunity to spend more time on negotiating with clients. In the meantime if you were experiencing any problems please do contact Marc Dorfman, Paul Tomkins or Paul Smith Development Control.

5. Fast Track Household Appeals Service

Paul Tomkins presented a series of slides regarding the 'Fast Track Household Appeals Service' which came into force from 6 April 2009. These changes are aimed at improving the speed of appeal procedures. This will be achieved by employing a 'one stage' process, enabling better use of electronic processing, as well as costs being awarded for unreasonable behaviour.

It was raised by the group that they would like to know how quick a new appeal can be turned around. They were assured that it should definitely not take longer than 3 months, but it was intended that it would be much quicker. Certainly it was anticipated that appeals would be completed within 10 weeks, rather than the recommended 12 week introductory period.

We hope to consult with agents by the end of June and all agents will receive a letter asking for their views. The forum was also asked if they would prefer a specific meeting to discuss the new system, however no preference was raised from the group.

6. Core Strategy Review / Consultation

Sule Nisancioglu - Planning Policy and Design gave an overview of the planning policy work being carried out to prepare Haringey's Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is the new spatial planning policy document to replace the Unitary development Plan and will provide a strategic planning policy framework and how we will deal with housing needs in the future. The Council will be consulting on the Core Strategy Preferred Options from 5th May and this was an opportunity for the developer forum attendees to participate in this consultation.

Marc Dorfman also offered further explanation of what is a core strategy and emphasised that it is a 'New Plan for Haringey 2011 – 2026' that will set out in detail future opportunities and development constraints, in both residential and non residential areas. Looking at improving standards for homes, including space requirements, and environmental issues, such as increasing public spaces in town centres to improve the public realm, as well as enhancing industrial use of land.

7. Building Control Update

Bob Mclver – Group Manager Building Control gave an update of recent changes to the Building Regulations on a slide presentation to the group highlighting the fact that sustainability will be important within the Building Regulations and targets do need to be constantly met.

Bob went on to discuss the LABC – Local Authority Building Control Organisation which is able to offer a wide range of services to the client which includes defects insurance for the commercial sector, assistance with obtaining accredited noise consultants, and energy specialists. Providing a partnership scheme for those who wish to continue to use the same surveyor for all the future projects as a single point contact.

If you wish to explore the Building Regulations in full, you can use the following website www.haringey.gov.uk/buildingcontrol

The group was asked if they would like to be informed of the meeting regarding 'Sustainability and Climate Design Construction' – which will be used to develop a guideline. Meeting to be held on 19 May 2009 at 9.30 a.m. in the West Green Centre. Tottenham N15 – notice will be sent out nearer the time.

We are awaiting future outcomes of the Building Control consultation paper. Periodic reviews are carried out every 3 years now.

The use of privately accredited surveyors was felt by the audience to provide a better level of service, in that it allowed a 'one to one' relationship to develop and removed the 'us and them' conflicts that occur from time to time. It was also stated that local authorities would lose business the private sector if they were unable to adapt to the changes and provide a similar service.

Bob responded to these comments by stating that the council are willing to engage in dialogue with agents to provide the level of service they require, and that the forum was a good starting point.

8. Customer Satisfaction Survey

Costas Christoforou – Group Manager Business Support spent some time introducing the new Customer Satisfaction Survey form that we are currently developing as part of the Killian Pretty Review recommendations. He expressed the importance of having your views and feedback to enable us to improve our services.

The audience was encouraged to complete the attached survey/questionnaire using the reference of their last application submitted to the council, and return it to Planning and Regeneration Service, Attn Ms H. Jones, 1st Floor, 639 High Road, Tottenham N17 8BD, or alternatively you can complete the questionnaire it online using the following links :

Building Control

http://www.haringey.gov.uk/haringey_survey?k=124090945644

Development Control

http://www.haringey.gov.uk/haringey_survey?k=124090957232

9. Items for the next meeting:

Please can all parties involved provide us with any ideas/items for the next meeting that they would like discussed by email to Henrietta.jones@haringey.gov.uk or emma.hardy@haringey.gov.uk by the end of May 2009.