

Warwick District Planning Forum Survey Results

The following people responded to the survey:

Norman Stephens, Leamington Spa Chamber of Trade
Richard Ashworth, Leamington Society
Rosemary Woodforth, Weston under Wetherley PC
Rosemary Woodforth, Bubbenhall PC
Arthur Fowkes, Norton Lindsey PC
Richard Slatem, Beausale, Haseley, Honiley, Wroxall JPC
Joanna Illingworth, Kenilworth Society
Mick Jeffs, CPRE Warwickshire

2 Do you/your organisation value the Forum? If not, why not

- We have not been informed.
- The Forum appears to be more relevant to Town Councils and not small Parish Councils.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

3 What do you/your organisation consider to be the purpose of the Forum?

- Discussion of planning matters.
- For larger village and town councils to discuss planning issues
- To gather up to date planning information and have the opportunity to discuss planning issues that affect our rural community. For example we have a number of farm / barn conversions in the area and want to understand what if any further development of these properties may take place. Also if they were originally a farm but now residential could they also claim development under agricultural use?
- For planning officers to brief member organisations on new developments in national and local planning policies. To give member organisations the opportunity to express their concerns and/or ask questions about planning policies and procedures. Overall, to improve the quality of public involvement in planning policies and to improve the quality of planning decisions.
- As a formal link between the district council which has a statutory role in planning and the various bodies which offer advice or criticism.

4 Do you/your organisation consider the Forum is achieving its purpose at present? If not, why not?

- No. Low attendance due to invites being sent to wrong addresses!
- Probably not if we do not attend meetings. However we would submit issues or concerns to be raised at a meeting.
- The Planning Forum is only partly effective. The level of participation is low and the interval between meetings is too long. There is little follow up of the points raised in questions and discussion.
- Partly. There appears to be a lack of input from some organisations which could be expected to be members.

5 What topics do you/your organisation feel the Forum should cover at its meetings?

- Planning
- Topics relevant to smaller Parish Councils
- Items that arise from day to day matters that affect our PC or community members. For example difficulties with some of the electronic planning submissions and planning information in general (lack of information on submissions, revisions of drawings – explaining what the changes are, keeping in touch with 'piecemeal' or multiple submissions).
- New national legislation and guidance on planning matters, the local plan and supplementary planning documents, planning control procedures (principles of not specific issues)
- 1 Update on national policy, planning legislation. 2. Amendments to local planning policy - local plans, supplementary guidance, standing orders for committee etc. 3. Suggestions from forum members for changes in local policy. 4. Feedback on WDC involvement with other relevant bodies such as Sub Regional Group, Enterprise Partnership etc. 5. Explanation of recent planning decisions.

6 Have you or your organisation missed any of the Forums held in the past three years, and if so, what were the reasons?

- I have not been invited.
- Yes, the Leamington Society has by no means sent anyone regularly. Certainly communication is one reason but also perhaps a degree of scepticism plus I feel sure the simple human case of dealing with rather a lot and missing out some things.
- The Forum is not relevant to the smaller Parish Council

- We do try to send a representative
- *Yes, because no one was available to attend.*
- I think we have attended most. One member does not receive direct invitation.

7 The Forum meets in September and February each Municipal year. Is this frequency satisfactory? If not, what do you propose?

- Yes. Unless important planning matters arise in the interim.
- Is perhaps a key problem. Having complained about too much to deal with, you might think it perverse to say that if the Forum is to be useful and valued, then probably it has to be more frequent. Obviously 6 monthly meetings can only deal in very general terms of procedure, consultation, etc. It was pointed out that more immediate issues are sometimes brought up at CAAF (even if quite informally). This is no doubt a slight confusion of purposes, but illustrates the point. Intervals of six months are probably just too great for any continuity of thought or action, of indeed any review of whether previous issues have been followed up and acted on. Perhaps quarterly Forum meetings would help to engage better participation, without being onerous.
- The frequency is satisfactory.
- Ok.
- No. Quarterly meetings. Kenilworth has its own annual Planning Forum, usually held in November. The timing makes for a lop-sided timetable - 3 meetings in 5 months followed by a gap of 7 months.
- If not, what do you propose? It depends how much business is on agenda. It seems very busy at the moment so that 6 months is a long gap.

8 Do you/your organisation find the time/venue of the Forum convenient?

- Where and at what time is it?
- The time/venue is convenient
- Yes
- Yes when the meetings are on a Monday evening, no when they are on a Thursday evening.
- Yes

9 Is there anything you/your organisation would like to change about the way the Forum operates?

- Yes. The planning department need to communicate, internally and with the towns people!
- Because of your wide range of members we may feel our rural voice is not heard or important.
- There have been too many questions about issues that are specific to one particular parish or estate. Sometimes the questioners set out the history of the problem in great detail. This can be very tedious for other members of the Forum. Member organisations should be asked to focus on the matters referred to in 5 above.
- We are generally satisfied. See Q5 above for extending agenda.

10 Which organisations do you think should be involved in the forum (current membership attached)?

- WDC, CoT, other interested parties.
- Those organisations already involved.
- Certainly the organisations listed.
- The membership is strange and seems to have no rationale behind it. Many but not all of the District's residents' associations are on the list, but Crackley Residents' Association, which has a large membership, is not. Walkers and cyclists are represented, but not horse riders or any other leisure group. Kenilworth History and Archaeology Society is a member, but no other history society. Perhaps the Forum would work better if it did not have so many member organisations whose interests are specific to a very small area. This does not apply to CLARA and ROCK who cover their respective town centres.
- I have not seen the list which is mentioned. We think membership should be as at present.

11 Do you/your organisation have any other comments on the operation of the Forum?

Q. 2 - 5 There seems to be considerable doubt about what the Forum is for, hence some scepticism about whether it achieves a purpose and whether it is valued. Frankly it was a mixed indication: certain matters had been followed up; but also a sense that it was mainly a "talking shop".

8-10 No specific comment to report.

May I round off, with thoughts from my recent experience. Currently the District is working on its new Local Plan and I am aware that this is crucial in its timing, in view of the government's recently published planning

framework proposals. However awareness of this has gradually dawned from personal contacts, the press, etc. Apart from an invitation to look at heritage aspects, early this year, I have been unaware of any further specific work with ourselves among the various bodies listed as members of the Forum. You may have thought it inappropriate as it were to coach local groups in the process, beyond the bare bones of the public consultation questionnaire. Also I guess that the Planning Department has had its hands more than full of late, but perhaps these broad brush, very important current procedures, might have been enhanced through Forum membership. Likewise, the new national framework proposals are hugely important, as well as controversial. Should the Forum be trying to focus attention better on this process and what it is likely to entail?

Bubbenhall Parish Council has in the past attended the Planning Forum, however in the Council's experience the forum is for bigger towns and villages. Over the years the Parish Council found the issues discussed were relevant to Town Councils.

Bubbenhall Parish Council would welcome a Planning Forum devoted to rural areas especially with regard to the Localism Bill which the Parish Council considers a matter of extreme urgency.

The Parish Council considered the purpose of the Forum was to enable constructive dialogue and the exchange of ideas and policy on Planning Issues. However, the meetings soon developed into a scenario where little factual progress was made and the feeling that it was another talking shop without any benefits to make one want to attend. This Council endeavour to attend meetings but due to sickness and Holidays our attendance recently has been poor and other priorities have intervened. I am not sure that a meeting of such diverse membership can succeed as expectations are so diverse. I would like to suggest that a review of the terms of reference is urgently required together with a relook at the possibility that the representatives from Parish Councils/Town Councils may want a different agenda.

I don't know if this helps but as this area is getting more complicated, there is a need to have a forum for discussion of the Planning Process and the method by which that is consistently applied.

If we have a particular question to raise would you like us to contact you prior to a meeting in order for it to be answered fully at the forum?
