

Warwick District Planning Forum Survey Results

The following people responded to the survey:

Andy Garsed, ROCK (Residents of Central Kenilworth).

Elaine Priestley, Lapworth PC.

John Murphy, Barford, Sherbourne, Wasterton JPC.

Graham Nicholson, Kenilworth Society.

Graham Cooper, Old Milverton & Blackdown JPC.

Richard Coates, Leek Wootton PC.

G D Symes, Kenilworth Town Council.

James Mackay, Warwick Society.

Jenny Mason, Whitnash Town Council.

Steven Wallsgrove, Ramblers Association.

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

- Yes.
- Usefulness has declined due to lack of questions and lack of questions and lack of attendance.
- Yes.
- Yes – as and when needed.
- Yes overall, but subject to items being relevant to this Council or of broader/overall interest to all Councils and other bodies that attend.
- Yes.
- Yes as long as points are taken note of. The discussions tend to be too long winded.

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

- Dissemination of current planning policy with an avenue for representatives to give an opinion on this but with no real power to change anything.
- To enable planning subjects to be discussed and, hopefully, to be used by WDC.
- To disseminate updates and emerging policy, educate councillors in planning law/mechanisms, question/understand policy/interpretations, raise concerns and hopefully raise issues which might eventually lead changes in mechanisms or policy.
- To resolve and clarify planning queries. Our queries on specific applications are usually resolved directly; our queries of a general nature are rare at present.
- To brief and discuss on interest that are broadly of interest to all attendees,

with a limited range of specialist/parochial items that cannot readily be addressed by other means.

- To enable briefing and discussion on the development of planning policy and processes, so that we can understand better the response of the District Council to higher level requirements, and the Council can understand better our views on them.
- To discuss the latest planning requirements and discuss any issues relating to new developments in planning.

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

- Yes but with major changes in the planning regime I guess we will have to wait and see what implication this has. Please see 9 and 11 below.
- No – main items raised are objections to how planning applications are processed, rather than positive discussions.
- To some degree - as there is little planning guidance/education available elsewhere, perhaps this should become a fixed element of future forums.
- Yes, as far as we are aware.
- They feel that it is currently focused on the smaller parishes' concerns and is therefore too often rather more parochial than desirable for the majority. This Council raises its concerns direct, so prefers the Forum to concentrate upon policy (WDC, central government, guidance on changes that affect all etc). They feel that sometimes forums are also too much of a 'talking shop' from their perspective, but appreciate that this is welcomed by the smaller parishes and some of the specialist groups that attend. Such limited items may perhaps attract a smaller audience.
- Not fully. It does not take place often enough to enable briefing on fast changing policies, nor to take into account the response of member bodies. It does not therefore quite play the part that it should at the summit of 'Community Involvement' in planning.
- Don't think it is achieving its purpose hence the low attendance rate.

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

- I wasn't aware that you could change this?
- Items/subjects of wider, general interest which would benefit from discussion.
- New or altered legislation and requirements - to be specified on the notice of meeting.
- Broader policy and changes such as the New Local Plan, design guides, guidance on what government policy means in implementation terms, etc;

preferably briefed by senior officer.

- Future planning development and new planning policies.
- Current policy, emerging policy, interpretation of policy plus some enlightening/educational elements and any other planning related matters that delegates/members wish to discuss.

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

- One missed in the last three years that clashed with the Kenilworth Community Forum.
- Yes – conflict with another meeting.
- Yes – usually due to clash of meetings for those willing/wishing to attend, inadequately compelling agendas and of course indifference/indolence of a majority of members.
- Yes, owing to no outstanding queries.
- We normally nominate a representative for all meetings that have agenda items of interest; in the past more than one member has attended but the scope more recently has not supported that need. Therefore, sickness or another sudden Council commitment may mean that an intended representative has not attended.
- I think, but am not sure, that we have always been represented.
- Yes, because of other commitments or if it clashed with a Town Council meeting.

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

- Yes satisfactory.
- Should be arranged when there is an item of wider interest which would benefit from wider discussion.
- Sounds about right to me.
- Yes.
- Yes, but that hinges on matching with suitable agenda items which should be the crucial aspect. Rescheduling for a special item, such as the new planning rules when introduced, would seem logical.
- As stated at 4 above, it would be more useful if it met say 4X/year.
- Propose the frequency is changed to once a year.

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

- Yes reasonable. However please see 9 and 11 below.
- Yes, but there are always lots of other meetings and distractions. Provided the agendas are good the forum will float to the top!
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes, but I understand that the chosen day of the week may have reduced other bodies', especially parish councils', attendance. I am not sure, for example, that Warwick Town Council has regularly been represented.

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

- Please read this with 11 below. I guess many potential invitees were put off by the complex detail of RSS etc. Also there is little apparent power for attendees to make a real impact on policy. This probably made the Forum appear rather remote from communities. In my mind the Forum will have a greater value going ahead when planning policy changes (Localism bill) and communities realise they can influence outcomes. Why not consider holding meetings via local Community Forums; a few more meetings but maybe a much better outcome.
- It may work better if it was a bit less formal - closer seating, no mikes, network session at the start.
- No.
- Essentially summarized in para 4; whilst there should be room for minor issues that cause problem, the thrust from our perspective should be on the larger issues.
- The meeting should be more open.

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

- As invited plus local residents when sessions are held at Community Forums.
- Provided there are no decisions being made I have no problem with any number from all or any local organisations. If decisions are to be made then voting rights should rest with elected members with a strict limit on voting numbers from each council.
- All likely to be involved in planning applications.
- No comment, although we note that a number of other interest groups

might be interested; this all hinges on the scope/format of the agenda.

- Not to the copy that I received.
- The meeting should be open to all interested parties.

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

My perception is that your questionnaire is rather premature at the moment. I feel that I would be better able to answer these questions when I know the full impact of the Localism Bill which might change my responses.

Firstly I would reiterate that sending details out in August for a September meeting can cause problems as there is no meeting in the summer and it does not give Parish Councillors the opportunity to discuss topics, likewise an approach over the Christmas period may not receive the attention it deserves.

The Parish Council did discuss this evening and the over-riding comment was that Parish Councillors did not know enough about the function of the Planning Forum to comment - so perhaps initially some awareness raising.

The Parish Council that updates in relation to planning processes and what is a 'valid planning objection' could be usefully disseminated in writing, with perhaps any follow up questions being taken to the Forum.

Topics that would be found useful include:

- piecemeal development of the Green Belt, including splitting of fields and stables being placed on small plots, erosion of agricultural land.
- guidance in relation to acceptable frontages - some applications appear to be required to plant hedges to remain 'in keeping' whilst in others hedges can be removed and unattractive fencing and gates put in place.

Although I have been aware of the existence of this forum for some time I have never attended as The Kenilworth Society, of which I am a member is usually represented by our (now) chairwoman, Mrs Joanna Illingworth who then updates the society, as required.

However, today I received information as to the forthcoming meeting from Mr Clive Henderson, national chairman of The Inland Waterways Association because I have recently taken on the post of planning officer for the Warwickshire branch of the IWA. Having never attended a meeting and with no information from my predecessor, I am afraid I can answer very few of your questions.

The Inland Waterways Association is keen to listen to the Council's views and certainly comment with regard to any development which affects the waterways routes through the Warwick area.

To this end, we have already become consultees in your planning process and have commented on several proposed developments over the course of the last 2-3 months, since I took on the post.

I hope to attend the next meeting, if only with a watching brief to report to my committee and membership, in order to gain some insight into the workings of the forum, if this is o.k. with you.

Advance dates are useful but timely notices (full agenda details 3-4 weeks before the event) are essential to prioritise attendance.

As a member of Leek Wootton PC and a fairly regular attendee at these meetings, I must say I have always found them informative and well run. However I can see the dilemma you are in as the agenda often seems removed from the immediate interests of many parties. I don't see an easy solution to this as the last thing you want is simply meeting for meeting's sake or conversely having an agenda that is so diverse and lengthy that it pleases no-one. Certainly I feel our PC is always interested to be kept up to date on the development of national/regional issues but tends to lose interest in smaller local matters unless it directly concerns us. Again it mustn't be forgotten that membership of the Forum is largely made up of voluntary organisations who will always make decisions about what is important and what they can afford to miss. In conclusion I feel the present format serves its purpose as well as anything.

The meeting should have a theme such as future developments and any changes to Planning legislation.