

Consultation Protocol

Making a good planning decision relies upon being well-informed. As such, effective consultation with other stakeholders and consultees is essential if well-informed decisions are to be made. However, this can lead to a tendency to over consult (as a safety net) and to wait for every consultee to reply before issuing a decision. This is inefficient and causes unnecessary delay and the PAS report of May 2021 identified these delays as being a major component in inhibiting timely determination of applications. This document sets out the roles and responsibility of those engaged in consulting upon applications and subsequently considering those responses with a view to ensuring that consultation is effective, efficient and targeted at securing the right information whilst not delaying determination unless that is essential for legal or other reasons

Admin/Validation Team

Undertake the Statutory consultations as per the GPDO

Use the “Who to consult list” to sense check and input non stat consultees

Check with a planner/Heritage Officer if unsure or it is an unusual application

Over consult rather than under consult at the initial stage if there is any doubt

If amended plans require re-consultation check with officer if same list is appropriate or if it can be more targeted

Planning Officer/Heritage Officer

Upon receipt of file, check who was consulted by admin/ validation and add any missing ones if required

Chase late responses for Statutory consultees as part of case management to ensure they are received in good time

Reconcile competing responses with the consultees at the earliest opportunity eg is the hedge that highways want removing the same one the ecologists are saying must stay?

When the 21 day consultation period has expired make a conscious decision as to whether any outstanding responses are ‘ nice to have’ or ‘need to have’ before decision can be made. This will in part be based on a professional judgement as to what is key to the decision (eg safety or legal necessity). Ask the question as to whether anything the consultee could say would be likely to change the recommendation and if not proceed to determine the application. Address the lack of response from the consultee and assess the pertinent issue in the case officer’s report.

When assessing conditions that are being suggested by consultees, ensure that they meet the 6 tests set out before a condition can be imposed and in particular that they do not unnecessarily ask for more info that we should dictate now ie can we prescribe what is required as opposed to asking for details and hence causing additional work and delay. If conditions are to be changed check back with the consultee to explain why that is the case

When considering a consultee based refusal if we are going to seek support from a specialist consultee at Appeal we need to ensure that they are happy with the reason even if they are only lack of info

Signing Off Officer

Sense check the above and issue decision