

## **Feedback from local experience:** David Brackin, Chairman of Fulmer Parish Council

### **1. Why planning is difficult**

Everyone (residents, developers, new councillors) expects planning to be a political activity - where their representatives can do "the right thing" to protect greenbelt etc. Many mistakenly think TPCs make the decision, or that a TPC objection is fatal to an application.

Planners view planning as a technical activity - where the rules just have to be followed and a good result is one that is justified and not appealed. Any political influence should be present once a decade in the local plan.

The difference makes planning feel frustrating and leads to a lot of disappointment all round. The grief for this lost belief follows the classic patterns of grieving

- denial (they got this wrong)
- anger (whose fault is this? they are corrupt!)
- negotiating (inappropriately)
- depression (why do we even bother turning up on a Tuesday night?)
- acceptance

It is helpful for us all to understand where stakeholders are in this journey and be sympathetic to the demands which arise.

### **2. Given this, what can TPCs do?**

Once TPCs reach a level of acceptance, what can they do?

- Show up. Answer every application even if it is just to say we've reviewed it and have no objection.
- Speak to developers. Sometimes applications can be nudged towards better if not stopped.
- Get smart about comments
  - Learn how to phrase comments as planning-relevant. Provide local insight.
  - Decide if the technical side is a weakness. Have a panel of experts (transport, planning, design), that you can pay for on just a handful of cases where it will make a difference.
  - Use your unitary to call-in: planners talk to them about the case and won't engage with a TPCs. Use your call in only if important.
  - Decide early what is realistic to stop, what to nudge and what will pass. Although sometimes you have to go in with a two-footed tackle even though you know you won't win because your residents need it.

### **3. Our experiences with Pinewood Development**

I spoke about how we had adopted these principles in the recent Pinewood development.

We decided that we were unlikely to stop the development and a technical attack was unlikely to make a fundamental difference.

We asked the developer to present to the public very early on and captured issues. Distilled these to three asks of the developer which remained unchanged over 18 months. Every meeting about moving these three forwards.

Planning was granted by SSC but we secured shielding for local neighbours, 1/4m for traffic improvements in the village and permanent dedication of 2/3 of the application site as a nature reserve to prevent further expansion and improve access to the greenbelt.