



CHEADLE HOUSING AND PLANNING (CHP) CONSULTANCY LTD.

Notes for Attendees Seminars on 11th and 17th March Chichester

The two sessions are based on a module produced by the Planning Advisory Service (module 6 The Role of Members in Major Applications). If you would like to see what the course contains including the PAS Powerpoint presentation and extensive reading list this can be found on-line at www.pas.gov.uk (<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageId=39005#module6>).

I will be basing the two sessions on this material but will be tailoring it to the current issues facing the West Sussex coastal area.

At the heart of this will be a discussion about the relative roles of the Applicant, the Members, the Officers, and the local community in determining major schemes.

The responsibility for taking the planning decision rests firmly on the shoulders of the Members. This is not an easy task given that a major application will require the consideration of a mountain of reports on highly technical issues produced by specialist consultants, may well have given rise to much public opposition; and the actions of the Members are challengeable through the Courts, through the Planning Appeal process, through the Standards Board, and through the Ombudsman most offering the potential of the award of some form of costs against the Council.

Now put yourself in the position of an Applicant. A major application costs upwards of £500,000 to prepare, costs upwards of £30,000 in fees to the Council (maximum planning application fee stands at £250,000), will easily take a year to eighteen months from start to finish to prepare and submit and will be determined by Councillors who are voted in to their positions by the local community. Somewhere along the line you will have to negotiate a Section 106 agreement and the cost of this is unknown. Would you risk over £500,000 when the outcome is unknown and you could easily end up with a refusal?

As a Member how do you prepare yourself for taking such a decision? What do you do when there is widespread public opposition and yet the scheme is fully in accordance with your policies and plans? Look what has happened at Poole recently where the relationship between the local Community and the Council has broken down over planning decisions with the Police and an independent investigator appointed by the Council brought in to try and remedy the situation. Couldn't happen here? Well I am not so sure as there are some highly controversial decisions to be made in the next eighteen months and there is the potential for significant public protest over meeting the housing allocation figures set in the South East England Spatial Strategy.

So, lots to think about and discuss. As I know many of the Members attending, I am expecting a lively debate!

Regards