



**Epping Forest District Council
Development Management Forum**

1. The Council believes that local people have a key role to play in shaping the quality of their environment and is committed to involving the community in planning proposals. The Development Management Forum allows the local community to contribute to shaping development proposals and aims to ensure input from local residents on large or difficult proposals for development.
2. This note:
 - a) Explains in what circumstances development proposals will be subject to discussions at the Development Management Forum
 - b) Explains how the Development Management Forum will operate
3. The Council holds Development Management Forums to facilitate the discussion of large-scale or contentious development proposals – generally the Council will expect schemes of more than 50 homes or 5,000 sq metres of commercial/other floorspace to be the subject of such discussions. The forum does not reach a decision about an application. Its purpose is to allow participants to raise issues of concern and obtain answers to questions about the particular proposal. Wherever possible this will be prior to the review of a development proposal by the Quality Review Panel and the submission of a formal application. The aim is to allow early discussion by Councillors and members of the public on planning issues related to these proposals and to explore the scope for amendments and agreement between all parties in a positive and constructive way prior to the later decision being made at the District Development Management Committee.
4. Forum meetings occur mostly at the pre-application stage and occasionally once the application has been made but before the Committee meeting. They do not remove the opportunity for objectors, supporters and applicants to submit representations once an application is submitted or address the Committee when an application is to be determined.

What applications does the forum consider?

5. Proposals that may be considered by the forum include major developments and those of significant local interest. It is not possible to prescribe the exact type of proposals but they may include the following:
 - Proposals which involve more than 50 residential units or over 5,000 sq m of floor space;
 - The Assistant Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Planning and Governance considers that a forum would be beneficial in resolving issues on a particular development proposal.
 - Developments that will not be considered by the forum include:
 - Minor developments such as those to alter or extend houses



- Amendments to existing planning permissions or those which have already been the subject of a forum discussions

Who can attend?

6. Meetings are open to all Members of the Council including Ward Councillors, local businesses and residents. Notification will be given direct to Councillors, Parish/Town Councils and Community Groups and may also include notices around the site and leafleting of adjacent residential areas (as appropriate).

Time and Location

7. Forum meetings are normally scheduled in the evening in a suitable venue in the District close to the site. A Forum meeting is generally held for 1.5 hours with one proposal being considered.

Format of the meeting

8. To assist the running of the meeting an agenda is prepared and a short briefing note on the proposal is available.

The format of the meeting is as follows:

- A senior officer chairs the forum. They ensure that all planning issues arising from the proposal are raised but that there is no discussion on the merits of the application.
 - The applicant is invited to make a presentation of the proposal for a maximum of 15 minutes.
 - Planning officers provide information on the progress of the proposal
 - Local residents and organisations have an opportunity to present their views either for or against the proposal.
 - The applicant responds to questions from members, parish/town councillors and ward councillors and local businesses and residents.
9. An attendance record is kept and a note of the meeting is made which is reported to the Quality Review Panel and the Committee, together with the planning application, when it is submitted for decision.

Members Role

10. All members can attend Development Management Forum meetings which are called to promote early exploration of issues relevant to a particular development. They do not seek to reach any decision about the likely outcome of an application.
11. The particular role that members can play at the meetings is dependent on whether or not they are likely to sit on the Committee which will have a formal role in



determining a subsequent planning application for example are a member of District Development Management Committee or the Cabinet, but all members will need to take account of the generic guidelines for example, publicly clarifying their particular role.

12. All members can:
 - use the meeting to understand the development, the issues important to local people and to the developers, and how the relevant policies are being applied by asking questions;
 - give advice about adopted planning policies and local priorities and clarify or seek clarification of policies and priorities;
 - give advice about planning processes or direct those present to relevant officers or other sources of advice and information both present or outside the meeting;
 - refer local objectors or supporters to ward colleagues who are in a position to take a wider role if theirs is limited and further Member assistance is required; and
 - seek advice from officers as to the process to be followed, issues being reviewed and the likely policy position.
13. Members should not use the forum to undertake negotiations or appear to put undue pressure on the officers in relation to any future decision on the scheme. Members are however entitled to robustly question developers and officers in order to fully understand issues before the forum.
14. Ward Members who are not on the District Development Management Committee can greatly assist this process by taking an active part in the forum meeting, asking questions, commenting on planning policies and local priorities, and advising on the planning process. They can usefully draw attention to local circumstances and issues, and comment on the appropriate weight to be given to those. It will be important that ward members ensure that their remarks and advice are based on adopted Council planning policies as far as possible, or if not that the divergence is made clear. This is important to avoid creating any confusion in the minds of developers or local people about who speaks for the Council in negotiations or about the Council's negotiating position.