

Appendix B: Development Management Forum for East Herts

What is a Development Management Forum?

A development management forum is a meeting where residents can present their views to councillors, planning officers and the applicant early in the planning application process prior to a decision on the planning application.

What is the aim of a Development Management Forum?

The aim of the forum is to allow early, constructive discussion of the planning issues raised by residents and to explore the scope for building consensus and resolving concerns.

Is it a formal decision making meeting?

It is an informal meeting and the forum does not determine the application. The decision on planning applications is determined by the Council's Development Management Committee or through delegation to officers.

What types of applications fall within the Development Management Forum?

Generally, complex and sensitive major planning applications for development of 50 or more homes.

There may be cases where the significance of development may not be measured solely on scale (e.g. 50 or more homes) but on the potential impact on the community and local character of the place into which it is to be introduced, and the ability to bring forward benefits to the community. This approach is consistent with the approach to masterplanning in the District Plan and any such requests will be considered at the time. Any such requests should be submitted (via email) to the Head of Planning and Building Control who will review with the Executive Councillor for Planning and Growth.

How is a Development Management Forum requested?

A Development Management Forum can be called if all of the following requirements are met:

- Complex and sensitive major planning applications for 50 homes or more;
- The provision of at least 25 signatures and addresses of East Herts residents impacted by the proposals;
- The request has to be received within the initial 21 day consultation period;
- In support but only if there is a qualifying request of objection to be considered; and
- That solely relates to comments on an eligible planning application that is under consideration.

Requests must clearly state the planning concerns related to the application. Requests are also encouraged to say what changes might be made to the development to overcome concerns.

It will be expected that residents explain what changes are being sought at the Forum.

Timescales are set for the receipt of requests because the Council has to determine applications within timescales set by the Government.

What will the Development Management Forum not consider?

A Development Management Forum request will not be considered for the following applications:

- to alter, extend or carry out other works to a house and its surroundings (householder applications)
- to create a new single house or other single residential unit
- for a change of use of an existing building(s)
- for works or alterations to existing buildings or other structures creating no additional floorspace
- for new commercial development of less than 200 square metres (gross) additional floorspace
- for advertisements
- to determine whether a use of land or building needs planning permission - ie a lawful development certificate
- for works or alterations to listed buildings
- to demolish a building in a conservation area
- by telecommunications operators asking whether the local authority's 'prior approval' is needed for the siting and appearance of works that would otherwise be 'permitted development' not requiring planning permission.

The Forum will not consider requests expressing an in-principle outright objection to the application with no suggestions for a compromise solution or a request not received within the correct timescales.

A Forum will not normally be held for a request relating to a current application amendment, or where a Forum has already been held on the current application.

How to submit a request for a Development Management Forum

If the requirements for a request are all met, a submission can be made to the Head of Planning and Building Control via email planning@eastherts.gov.uk

Applicants and residents will be expected to meet the next available Forum date because of the timescales and deadlines associated with planning applications.

How does the Development Management Forum work?

Dates and times of the Development Management Forums will be made available on the Council's website.

The Development Management Forum will be attended by:

- up to three resident representatives. You can ask your local councillor to present your petition if you wish
- up to three representatives of the applicant
- members of the relevant committee that will determine the application
- ward councillors
- the planning officer dealing with the application
- other relevant officers, including a senior officer who chairs the meeting
- the press and public can attend as observers

What is the format of the Development Management Forum?

- Introduction by chair and declaration of councillor interests
- presentation of the application by the applicant/agent
- presentation of the views of the those against the application (up to three representatives)
- presentation of the views of the those in support of the application (up to three representatives) where applicable
- member questions and issues arising – applicants to respond to questions.

In exceptional circumstances, the order of proceedings may be changed at the discretion of officers and the chair.

The planning officer will take the outcome of the meeting into account in further negotiations on the application and report to committee. The notes of the Forum will be attached to the committee report for information as an appendix.

The role of Members at Development Management Forum meetings?

All members can attend Development Management Forum meetings.

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 the planning application.

All members can:

- use the meeting to understand the development, the issues important to local people and to the applicants, and how the relevant policies are being applied by asking questions;
- seek advice from officers as to the process to be followed, issues being reviewed and the likely policy position.

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 to fully understand issues presented at the Forum.

Local Members who are not on the Development Management Committee can greatly assist this process by taking an active part in the Forum meeting and asking questions. It 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.