

Planning Applications and the Parish Council.

Consideration of local planning applications is a regular agenda item at Parish Council meetings because Parish Councils are statutory consultees. This means that Parish Councils are invited to express a view on applications but have no power in the determination of the outcome. This power resides with a Planning Officer unless there are 8 or more objections in which case the application will be referred to the District Planning Committee meeting with an Officer's recommendation. Parish Councils can support or express an objection or register no comment on specific applications. St Margaret's is unusual in that the whole village is set within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Therefore St Margaret's Parish Council will normally object to any applications for development outside the built up areas known as the "confines", as that would be within the AONB. Exceptions would only be considered where substantive community gain could be demonstrated. Planning Officers take account of the views of Parish Councils but in most cases decisions are based on the application's compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework and local policies in the Core Strategy. Objections to planning applications are more likely to carry weight if they meet the standard of "material considerations". Here are examples of what Planning Departments consider material considerations and what are not material considerations:

MATERIAL	NOT MATERIAL
Adequacy of roads, parking, traffic concerns	Loss of private view
Impact on neighbours, overlooking	Infringement of ancient rights to light
Impact on surroundings, Conservation area, listed buildings, AONB, SSSI, green space	Breach of covenant, private rights of way, land ownership
Conservation issues, effect on local ecology	Fear of property devaluation
Compliance with National Planning Framework and District policies	Matters subject to statutory control, e.g. building regulations
Noise, contamination, pollution	Fear of business competition, or what might happen
Economic, retail, tourism issues	Political reasons
Archaeology	Moral objections
Sustainability	Informal opinion of a planning officer
Loss of open space	Popular or unpopular personalities
Planning history	Number of objections

It is not enough to object because you do not like an application and, as indicated above, the number of objections does not necessarily influence the outcome. In the National Planning Policy Framework the Government introduced a presumption in favour of granting permission so objections need to be based on factual, relevant criteria if they are to have any effect. Where a planning application has been refused an applicant can appeal to a Planning Inspector although this might result in further cost. There is no appeal against the granting of planning permission.

Information about the National Planning framework and the policies in the Dover Core Strategy can be found on the Parish Council website, www.stmargaretspc.co.uk under the heading Planning.