

First in Charnwood



In November the Council's Plans Committee granted planning permission for a groundbreaking new solar farm on Wymeswold Airfield. The £35m scheme involves around 120,000 photovoltaic panels set in rows across the land between and around the runways. When it becomes operational, in April 2013, it will produce 32 MW of clean renewable power, about the same as 40 of the size of wind turbines sited nearby, and enough to provide power to 7,000 homes. Lark Energy who will be building the farm were pleased with the positive reaction to the proposal locally, and for the way in which the planners dealt with their application. The picture above shows a similar development near Newark. This would mean that, in a sense, the Wolds area of the Borough would become carbon positive.

Did you know?

In 2012 we dealt with some 1,990 planning applications and 1,759 Building Regulation submissions.

Planning application fee income was £694,838 with £40,464 coming from pre-application advice requests. We are currently dealing with Building Regulation supervision on 1,300 sites around the Borough.

This year 75% of major planning applications, 87% of minor applications and 97% of all other applications are dealt with on time.

Sometimes it's hard

Decisions on planning applications can be very hard to make. There are many competing issues and it is difficult to strike the right balance. It is often possible to overcome difficulties by imposing conditions on a planning permission or even to require a developer to enter into an agreement under section 106 of the Planning Act 1990 requiring them to do something relevant to planning control. There are rules about using these things, but they can be effective and can help to allay fears about a development. Section 106s are usually reserved for the larger development, but conditions are often imposed on quite small developments. If you are thinking about the effect a development might have on you then why not give thought to ways in which conditions or an agreement might be able to help your situation. Conditions can cover things like screening, landscaping, the materials for walls, roofs and ground surfaces, the hours a user can operate, noise limits etc. 106s can be used to secure affordable housing on large developments, education provision, contributions to healthcare costs and help with other services and facilities. If you think this might help contact the application case officer and discuss it with them, or go on line at <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk> to get more information. It might make a hard decision a little easier!

Where can I find out?

The Council's web site is a mine of information on all planning matters. You can contact Building Control, see all the documents with a planning application and comment and follow the preparation of the new local plan. The web site address is:

www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/planning_and_development.



LABC - It's for our own good

One of the sides of our work that sometimes doesn't get attention is the control over development once planning permission is granted. Building Control Officers, under the LABC banner, are supervising developments ranging from domestic extensions to a new fire station on about 1,300 live sites throughout the Borough. This involves approving the details of developments submitted and then inspecting the works regularly to see they are being carried out according to the requirements of the Building Regulations. Examples of domestic building work that may require an application include new dwellings, extensions, loft conversions, garage conversions, new garages, new windows, electrical work, drainage work, removal of walls, replacement or reinstating of roofing materials and newly insulated floors walls or roofs. Pictured: a typical scheme being supervised by the Building Control Officers.



This is crucial work to ensure the safety and sustainability of all new development and ensures that the record of the safety of building structures in this country is of the highest order. The LABC team deals with breaches of the Regulations and with dangerous structures brought to the Council's attention. There have been 22 dangerous structures that have had to be dealt with in the last year where a building, or part of a building, has represented a danger to the public.

You're appealing

If planning permission is refused you have the right to appeal to the Secretary of State by contacting the Planning Inspectorate. We have received 37 appeals this year so far, the Council's appeal performance this year is excellent in that 17 appeals have been determined and only two were allowed - representing 12% of appeals that have been allowed. One was withdrawn and 15 are outstanding. Recent appeals dealt with the issues surrounding new housing on greenfield land, changes of use to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), house extensions, advertisements on the highway and new buildings in the countryside.

The Council has hosted three major planning inquiries over the last two months. These have involved the refusal of planning permission for new housing on greenfield sites. There were 15 full inquiry days and the cases for all sides have been put by Queen's Counsel, expert witnesses, Parish Councils, resident action groups and members of the public. The inquiries accessed detailed highway matters, the interpretation of policy, relationships between local plans policy and the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, the importance of having an up to date local plan and a five-year supply of housing land and the impact of development on the landscape and how it should be assessed. These inquiries ensure there is scrutiny of the planning process.

Have you ever wondered?

You may pass it every day. It's now part of the town scene. But it came about as a result of the Council working together as asset managers, lawyers, town planners and project and parking managers to bring it about and to modernise the way the Council uses its assets. It is of course the Premier Inn. The Asset Team wanted to make best use of the land so talked to the planners. The planners talked to the Highway Authority and others. The planners talked at great length with the developer about design etc and the developer did the deal with asset managers and the lawyers once planning permission had been granted. The town has a new modern hotel, but the icing on the cake is that the Council will get an income from the development and Queen's Park will get a new work of art, paid for by the development. It is good when a plan comes together.



When it goes wrong!

Planning is complicated. We know that. Sometimes things happen that shouldn't and they need to be put right. We deal with some 700 enforcement complaints a year and about half of them turn out to be actual breaches of control. It can range from a fence in the wrong place to a large building without planning permission. It could be an advertisement without consent, a use that needed planning permission, works to a listed building, conditions on a permission that have not been complied with, or an agreement that has not been adhered to. We have a dedicated team of four who deal with all this work. Much of their time is spent giving advice. Often there is no offence, or it is just a matter of getting retrospective planning permission that was necessary and this is an integral part of the process. Whether or not permission is granted involves exactly the same judgment as if the development had not happened. The law requires it to be this way. Sometimes planning permission is refused and then formal action becomes necessary. In most cases this resolves the problem and very occasionally the Council has to take direct action, but this is rare. Complaints about suspected unauthorised developments are treated confidentially, so if you are concerned about something that you think should not be there, please get in touch with our Enforcement Team.

The Government is progressing with revisions to 'permitted development' rights for home owners by consulting on changes that would allow larger extensions to be erected without the need for planning permission. The Government sees this as a way of freeing up development and boosting the economy, while reducing the workload for local authorities. The other side of the argument is that there will be occasions when an extension has more effect on the neighbouring property. The Council has strongly objected to the proposal.

The 8 metre conservatory

And finally...

We would like to wish all our customers, the developers, residents, Parish and Town Councils, the elected members of the Council, the planning agents and the many consultees we are involved with, a very happy Christmas and prosperous new year.

