

FOXTON PARISH COUNCIL

Foxton Parish Council, Foxton Village Hall, Hardman Road, Foxton, CB22 6RN
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Cllr. Bridget Smith
Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridgeshire
CB23 6AE

15 January 2020

and by email: cllr.bridgetsmith@scambs.gov.uk

Dear Cllr. Smith

Thank you for your communication regarding planning applications referred to the SCDC Planning Committee following requests from parish councils.

Foxton Parish Council would like to raise some points from this communication as the parish councillors are not satisfied with the reasons given for the changes to the procedure of referrals and we would like to formally request that this matter is considered afresh in an open full SCDC council debate, especially as you are proposing a change to the SCDC constitution.

Previously, parish councils could request that planning applications are referred to the Planning Committee if the parish council recommended refusal of the application depending on the particular circumstances of the case. Of course, this being with the proviso that only valid planning reasons are given for such a referral otherwise planning applications are quite correctly decided under officers' delegated powers.

We find it astonishing, therefore that the decision to put applications before the Planning Committee or not, is currently taken by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee and the planning manager. Of course, the trained and professional planning officer should have a major input into these decisions, but why is part of the decision-making process given to elected councillors who may or may not have in depth knowledge of all aspects of planning law and procedures?

Surely it would be preferable for just the SCDC employed and professional planning officers to make the decision on planning grounds, as to whether the Planning Committee considered applications or not. This would then ensure that the Planning Committee deal with each application with the correct level of democratic openness and probity such matters require. This would also give reassurance to parish councils, and indeed anyone else

who makes an appeal, that both officers and elected councillors are carrying out their duties in an open and transparent manner.

We await your response on this matter.

Yours sincerely

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Annabel Wright

Parish Clerk

On behalf of Foxtton Parish Council

Cc: Ms Liz Watts, SCDC Chief Executive

Cllr Dr Claire Daunton, SCDC Vice Chair of Civic Affairs Committee