

Consultation on streamlining infrastructure planning

Chobham Parish Council response

Submitted 20 October 2025 (deadline for responses 27 October 2025)

Please note the Parish Council responded to selected questions of this consultation only, via the online questionnaire. Responses submitted were as follows:

Question 1: Please provide views about the potential risks and benefits of government producing more prescriptive or less prescriptive guidance about pre-application consultation and engagement in absence of statutory requirements. In particular, we are interested in views on how guidance on engagement can support an efficient, faster, proportionate and effective NSIP process or whether doing so risks undermining the potential time and cost savings.

Q1: The Parish Council recognises the aim of clear guidance to support efficiency and speed up the NSIP process, but the proposals appear to remove a statutory layer of pre-application consultation. This would leave Parish Councils with no formal guarantee that they will be notified at an early stage on major infrastructure projects in their area, which is not acceptable. Guidance should therefore explicitly ensure Parish Councils are involved early in a proportionate way.

Question 3: Would it be useful for applicants to consider these factors while preparing their applications and in particular in relation to any non-statutory engagement and consultation (at paragraph 19)? What changes or additions to these draft factors would you welcome?

Q3: The Council supports guidance that expects applicants to be open, proportionate and timely. Applicants should be encouraged to provide information in accessible formats and to allow sufficient time for Parish Councils and communities to respond, noting that Parish Councils are often capacity/resource constrained.

Question 4: Do you agree guidance should set out at a high level the benefits of non-statutory engagement and consultation? Are there any benefits not listed which we should include?

Q4: Guidance should emphasise that good non-statutory engagement reduces later issues and improves outcomes, and should set out that Parish Councils are a priority source for community insight.

Question 6: Should guidance include advice to local authorities, statutory bodies and applicants on finding the right balance between engaging early and engaging with sufficient technical information without creating unnecessary delay? We would also welcome comments on whether and how guidance could encourage applicants, local authorities and statutory bodies to work together to most effectively manage resources in their engagement.

Q6: It is important that engagement happens early enough for local communities to understand what is being proposed and to have their say, even if some technical details are still being developed. Guidance should make clear that information should be presented in a way that is accessible to the public.

Question 7: Is guidance needed to support applicants to identify which statutory bodies should be consulted based on the potential impacts of the proposed application? If so, what should that guidance include?

Q7: Guidance should help applicants identify the right local consultees and explicitly include Parish Councils among the bodies applicants are expected to approach.

Question 9: Is guidance needed to support proportionate, effective and constructive engagement from both the applicant and local authorities? If yes, what should such guidance cover?

Q9: Guidance should require applicants to engage proactively with Parish Councils as representative local authorities. Parish Councils are often the first point of contact for local residents and should be treated as key stakeholders in proportionate engagement, especially where there may be early community concerns or local impacts.

Question 12: Is guidance needed to encourage applicant engagement with communities in a proportionate, effective and meaningful way? If so, what should it say? We would also welcome thoughts on how guidance can provide clarity and support engagement by communities.

Q12: Guidance should encourage use of community events, clear summaries and accessible materials, and it should advise applicants to work with Parish Councils to identify hard to reach members of the community.

Question 18: Should guidance indicate a point at which the applicant should issue the notification? If so, at what should it say?

Q18: Parish Councils should be formally and directly notified of proposed applications. This could be achieved either by requiring the applicant to notify relevant Parish Councils at the same time as the local planning authority, or by requiring the local planning authority to notify Parish Councils upon receipt.

Question 20: Do you agree with the proposal to move to a ‘digital first’ approach by only requiring information to be made available for inspection online? Please explain why. The government would welcome information and data about any potential impacts, including equalities impacts, of this change.

Q20: Guidance must require alternatives or support for members of the community who do not have online access or choose not to engage online (e.g. summary leaflets, in-person events or physical inspection points).

Question 24: What further steps should government consider to strengthen the role of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAP), so that it supports early clarity for all stakeholders, procedural fairness, and a more focused and effective examination?

Q24: Local concerns should be actively identified and included in the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAP) to ensure that matters raised by Parish Councils and local communities are not excluded from examination. Parish Councils often provide the earliest and most locally informed view of potential impacts, and their input should form part of the IAP process from the outset.

Question 27: How can guidance seek to reduce existing barriers that public authorities face in engaging with the process?

Q27: Guidance should set out the roles and responsibilities of public bodies, including Parish Councils, during examination to ensure clarity and effective participation.

Question 28: What should guidance say to ensure public authorities engage appropriately with examinations? We would welcome views on how guidance can outline the circumstances in which public authorities are relevant to the application.

Q28: Guidance should clearly define the formal role of Parish Councils during the examination stage, including rights to submit evidence and make representations. Clear expectations will ensure Parish Councils’ remit is unambiguous and that local communities have a recognised voice in the process.