

DRONE USAGE PROTOCOL – PLANNING COMMITTEE

Introduction

Under the terms of Tendring District Council's (TDC) Drone Policy, the use of the authority's drone is permitted in support of committee services.

This protocol sets out the criteria for using the drone in support of Planning Committee work.

Purpose

In the determination of a small number of planning applications considered by the Planning Committee it has become apparent that the use of drone footage could often be extremely helpful, if not essential, in allowing committee members to make a fully informed decision relating to the impacts of the proposed development.

It is expected that the required drone use for Planning Committee will be low and not necessary for every meeting.

Criteria

If a planning application meets one or more of the criteria below then it should be considered appropriate for use of the drone.

However, these criteria are not prescriptive and each application should be considered on its merits, bearing in mind other factors which may give – or take away – weight for use of the drone.

- Large greenfield applications
- Larger (50+) housing developments on vacant land (brownfield or greenfield)
- Solar farms
- Sites which are relatively inaccessible

Examples of factors which could reduce likelihood of drone use could include sites failing suitable flight risk assessment (as per the drone Operations Manual), in sensitive ecological sites, or built-up urban areas.

Process for agreeing/using drone

- 1) At least two weeks before the relevant Planning Committee meeting, any sites which officers consider would benefit from drone footage should be brought to the attention of the Planning Manager and agreement reached as to which sites should be surveyed.

The Planning Manager will then liaise with the Chairman of the Planning Committee to confirm any such footage can be presented at the relevant meeting.

On occasion a request for drone footage to accompany reports may be made by the Chairman of the Planning Committee, and this will be discussed and agreed with Corporate Director of Planning and/or the Planning Manager.

- 2) Case officers to then liaise with the applicant and/or landowner to seek their agreement to the drone flight to capture images to support the decision-making process.
- 3) Case officers liaise between the drone operator and the applicant/landowner to agree a mutually agreed time(s) to meet at the relevant site(s) and the survey be undertaken. A secondary date should be agreed in case weather or other conditions prevent flight on the first date.
- 4) Case officers should instruct the drone operator as to exactly which parts of the site should be surveyed and the key view points identified.
- 5) At all times care should be taken to avoid views of private land, property or citizens outside of the application site. It may not be so critical when relating to long distance views. All parties agree that footage may be edited to blur out such features if required.
- 6) On completion of the survey the drone footage to be forwarded to the planning case officer or Planning Manager to be uploaded to the application file, and to form part of the officer presentation to committee.