

Planning Committee

18 June 2008

Proposed New Validation Procedures for Planning Applications



Report of Rod Lugg, Head of Environment and Planning

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To inform the Committee of the new national standard planning application form that came into effect on 6 April 2008, along with associated validation requirements and to obtain agreement on the use of a proposed list of local validation requirements.

Background

- 2 As part of the drive to provide a quicker, more predictable and efficient planning service, the Government has introduced a standard planning application form in England (1APP). This has replaced all previous types of forms (except in the case of minerals related development). At the same time, the Government introduced new requirements for the validation of planning applications. These are contained in a 'National List' of mandatory information and a 'Local List' that can be adopted by the Planning Authority from an approved Government schedule. These changes are reflected in the recently amended Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (GDPO).

Validation Checklist

- 3 The appended 'Draft Validation Checklist' document includes the national and local list of requirements to validate planning applications submitted to the County Council as Planning Authority under the new arrangements.
- 4 The checklist is intended to help applicants understand the level and type of information that will be required of them from the outset and enable the Planning Authority to have the information it needs in order to determine applications and avoid unnecessary delays in the planning process.

Consultation Process and Responses

- 5 Government guidance recommends that the local list should be subjected to consultation for a minimum of six weeks before being reported to the relevant committee for formal resolution and adoption. Within County Durham, the 7 District Councils and the County Council have produced local lists with the same validation requirements to ensure consistency in approach, ease of customer understanding and in anticipation of the formation of a unitary council in April 2009. This is to ensure that a standard list is in place for use by the new Planning Authority. Local lists

can be reviewed if necessary (on a 3-yearly basis) in response to requirements and experience.

- 6 Consultation on the County Council's 'Draft Validation Checklist' commenced on 30 January 2008 at a briefing event (attended by over 40 people) held at County Hall to introduce the changes due to take place with the planning application process. The document was also made available on the website and copies were emailed to statutory consultees. In total, 11 responses were received. The comments largely focused on expanding some of the details and criteria mentioned in the 'Local List'. These have been incorporated where possible although Government guidance does not allow additional categories of information to be added to the list.
- 7 One query raised during the consultation process concerned the extent to which the national and local list could ensure that sufficient information is included in larger planning applications involving waste and highway proposals, in order to allow proper assessments to be made. It is likely that these matters would be covered as part of environmental impact assessments but a section has been included in the draft document indicating that additional information may be required. This section includes reference to a Waste Statement, Sustainability Statement and Landscape/Visual Impact Assessments. These documents are not included in the national or local list and would not affect the validation of applications but there may be circumstances where the information would be an important component in determining a planning application. Formal requests can be made for such information within 1 month of the receipt of applications under current planning procedures and this option would still be available.

Recommendation

- 8 The introduction of the national standard planning application form and associated validation requirements is intended to simplify the process of submitting and determining planning applications. The national list is now in force and states the minimum information requirements needed to validate a planning application. Until a local list is formally adopted these are the only requirements that need to be met and are not always adequate to allow for a proper assessment of submitted proposals. The adoption of the 'Local List' is therefore essential in order to fully benefit from the new arrangements.
- 9 Having notified relevant parties of the intended introduction of the list and considered the issues raised, the Planning Committee is asked to approve the 'Draft Validation Checklist' attached to this report.

Background Papers

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995

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