

Agenda Item IMD14

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: 2019/14

TITLE	Local Validation List
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement - Wayne Smith
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	28 June 2019 SF1 at 12pm
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director of Locality and Customer Services - Sarah Hollamby

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

To enable applicants and agents to understand the plans and documents that need to be submitted for the many different types of planning applications so enabling planning applications to be valid on first submission.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement agrees that Wokingham Borough Council adopts and publishes the Updated Local Validation List contained in Appendix B to this report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Council first produced a Local Validation List in 2013 in line with Government advice that each Local Authority should identify local validation requirements. More recent Government advice in the National Planning Practice Guidance sets out three steps to reviewing the Local Validation List: Step 1 – review the drivers for the requirements which should be either a) statutory b) national or local policy c) set out in published guidance; Step 2 – consult on proposed changes; Step 3 – consider any representations and publish the updated list on the web site.

Since 2013, there have been changes to: technology, statute, national and local planning policy and guidance, the introduction of CIL and the introduction of new types of planning applications (i.e. prior approvals and permissions in principle).

As a result of these changes, amendments have been made to the Local Validation List to ensure it remains up to date. A consultation exercise has been undertaken on the updated draft and comments have been taken into account. There is a summary of the comments and amendments in Appendix A. This report seeks authority to adopt and publish the Updated Local Validation List which is contained within Appendix B.

Background

What is a Local Validation List?

The Town and Country Planning Act and the National Planning Practice Guidance set out the national requirements for those plans and documents which must accompany a planning application. In addition, the Guidance recommends that Local Authorities publish a Local Validation List setting out further local requirements.

The Updated Local Validation List provides clarity on those further documents and guidance on electronic formats for plans and documents, so providing transparency and assistance for applicants and agents.

Current issues with planning application validation and the steps taken

A significant number (58%) of planning applications are invalid on first submission. This results in delays and inefficiencies in the validation process as officers email the applicant/agent setting out the further information required and then once received need to check the application all over again. This results in considerable double-handling or duplication of work and at any one time there are circa 200 invalid applications on hand awaiting further information.

The top five invalid reasons are: no CIL form, inadequate red line application site plan, no or incorrect fee, no bat survey, inconsistencies between floor plans and elevations.

To try and reduce the number of invalid applications the following steps have been undertaken:

- Emails to all regular agents explaining the issue and highlighting the top five reasons
- Meeting of the Agents forum in March 2019
- Improved information on web site
- Provision of constraints mapping on the web site so that it is possible for applicants/agents to look up bat habitat areas (and hence work out if a bat survey is needed)
- Added the CIL form requirement to the Planning Portal making it impossible to submit the application without a CIL form
- Updated the pre-application advice response letter to include standard advice about the documents that need to be submitted with a planning application

Changes

What updates/amendments have been made to the Updated local Validation List?

The updated list includes:

- A request to submit applications electronically and via the Planning Portal along with information about format of electronic plans and documents.
- A document/plan naming protocol so that when the applications are uploaded to the Council's web site there is more consistency in document naming to make it easier for the public to find documents.
- A comprehensive list of all application types including recently introduced applications such as prior approvals and permissions in principle clearly setting out the requirements for different application types
- Up to date fees
- A description of each document and the information that it should contain and cross referenced to the Local Development Plan policies and guidance.

Consultation

What consultation was undertaken?

The draft Updated Local Validation List was published on the Council website and a six week consultation was carried out ending on 6 May 2019. The following publicity was undertaken:

- Email to all regular agents inviting them to comment
- Email to all internal and external consultees, town and parish councils and members inviting them to comment
- Newspaper advertisement
- Agents informed of the consultation exercise at the Agents Forum meeting in March

Comments

11 comments were received and are summarized in the table at Appendix A along with the changes made to the draft Updated Local Validation List.

As a result of consultation some changes have been made. Revisions have to be reasonable and proportionate to comply with National Planning Practice guidance. Not all requests have been included in the final document as they are too onerous, or the matters are dealt with by planning conditions. Intended to try and clarify the information needed to enable valid applications to be submitted, to speed up the application validation process for Wokingham Borough Council residents and businesses.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces significant pressure on resources and the high number of invalid planning applications causes inefficiencies in the validation team. A reduction in the number of invalid applications will improve the speed of validation of planning applications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
None

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Corporate Services	None received
Monitoring Officer	None received
Leader of the Council	None received

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
Appendix A – Table of responses and amendments Appendix B – Updated Local Validation List Consultation responses

Contact Marcia Head	Service Place
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6447	Email marcia.head@wokingham.gov.uk