

**Barrow Borough Council
Planning Committee
14 December 2021**

Updating of Local Validation Criteria

Report from: Development Services Manager (Planning & Enforcement)
Report Author: Jason Hipkiss
Wards: All

1.0 Summary and Conclusions

1.1 Under current legislation the Planning Authority are required to monitor and update its validation criteria at least every two years.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That this Committee endorses the validation criteria to form part of the consultation exercise; and

2.2 That this committee agrees to delegating powers to the Planning Manager to make any changes arising from the consultation exercise for their adoption and publication in January 2022.

3.0 Background and Proposals

3.1 In 2008 Government introduced a requirement for Planning Authorities to adopt validation documents in order to streamline the planning application process. These would inform applicants of the nature and level of supporting information needed when submitting an application. The objective was to introduce greater clarity and certainty for applicants, as well as some improvement in the quality and consistency of the information available to Planning Authorities.

3.2 The introduction of validation criteria was also part of Government's increasing emphasis on the speed of determination and delivery of projects. In practise this has helped Authorities to quickly triage poor quality submissions that lack suitable information and supporting documentation, by avoiding registering them until suitably complete.

- 3.3 Validation is the first stage in the determination of an application and it is therefore a crucial part of the process. If the procedure is to be efficient, it is important that applicants, especially agents need to engage in the process. As such, Officers direct enquirers to the list in order to minimise delays and, in some extreme cases, to avoid disposal of the submission before registration. This is not to say that over the past two years we have not disposed of submissions prior to registration.
- 3.4 Paragraph 44 of the updated NPPF advises that Planning Authorities should publish a local list of their contemporary validation criteria for the registration of planning applications. This is in addition to the national requirements. These documents can be found on our website and via the Planning Hub.
- 3.5 The purpose of such a list is to provide applicants with guidance as to what supporting information is needed to make an application, thus avoiding disputes as to what supporting material is required. It also seeks both to improve the completeness of submissions and reduce delays in the registration (and hence the determination), of applications. The national advice is that the requirements should be relevant, necessary and material to the character of the submission.
- 3.6 The guidance goes on to state that the Authority should regularly review its validation criteria at least every 2 years. This is to take account of changes to national guidance and legislation as well as local changes such as the adoption of a new Development Plan.
- 3.7 The subject criteria will form the template for the validation checklists covering a variety of subjects such as listed buildings, advertisements, and works to trees. The instructions have been improved and there have been revisions as to the nature, format, and type of supporting information that may be required when applying.
- 3.8 There are several documents within the list, each relating to a specific type of application. Some are by necessity quite detailed, such as the criteria for listed buildings and heritage assets, whilst others are broader in scope such as the one for Full applications. The success of the scheme will be dependent upon the continued pragmatism and professional judgement of Officers.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 The draft lists will be uploaded to the Councils website during the week commencing 13th December 2021 as part of a public and statutory undertaker consultation exercise. To allow for the Christmas break, we will upload the final documents to the same in January 2022. In order to minimise delays I am recommending that any changes be delegated to the Planning Manager.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 Without a Local List there would be a significant reduction in the accuracy and relevant content of planning applications, leading to excessive delay in the determination process whilst case officers were tasked with obtaining sufficient information with which to make a decision.

6.0 Contribution to Council Plan Priorities

None

7.0 Implications

Financial, Resources and Procurement

None

Legal

None

Equality and Diversity

7.1 Have you completed an Equality Impact Analysis? No

Contact Officers

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Appendices Attached to this Report – None

Background Documents Available

| Name of Background document | Where it is available |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| None | |