

Committee: Planning Committee

Date: 16 March 2022

Title: Changes to the Consideration of Major Planning Applications and Consultations on Major Applications submitted directly to the Planning Inspectorate.

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Summary

1. This item considers the Council's response to the functioning of Planning Committee following the formal Designation Notice dated 8 February 2022 from the Minister of State for Housing (Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities).
2. The impact of this Designation Notice offers the opportunity for an applicant to submit any Major Planning Application directly to the Planning Inspectorate for determination. In such circumstances the Local Planning Authority will merely be a consultee on these applications and the timescales, which will run parallel, with other statutory consultations will be **twenty-one days**. Any consultation responses by the Council in this way will have to be reported to Planning Committee, the current arrangements (specifically the frequency) of Planning Committee (including its governance requirements for publicity), does require some changes to the current arrangements.
3. In response to the Designation Notice, the Council has considered its approach to the determination of all Major Planning Applications, and it is considered sensible that all Major Applications **regardless of recommendation** be reported to Planning Committee. This by its nature will certainly increase the cases and will add to the already busy Committee Meetings.
4. These two significant changes do require the need to revisit the current arrangements of Planning Committee. It is not possible to retain the current arrangements of a sole four-weekly Committee cycle.
5. In response to these challenges, the Planning Committee Working Group on 3 March 2022 considered various options to address this challenge. The priority was to allow some agility to scheduling of Planning Committees without reducing the numbers of Committee members to be able to attend. Although quorate for Planning Committee is three members, it is imperative to maximise the number of members being able to attend Committee.
6. In order to accommodate consultation responses for any majors submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and to provide additional Committee time for

the consideration of the increased volume of major planning applications, then the frequency of Planning Committee needs to be considered. The option of three weekly Planning Committee would not provide the agility to provide a timely consultation response on PINS submitted application.

7. It was considered that the introduction of a fortnightly cycle for Planning Committees be considered. It is accepted that a fortnightly cycle would have considerable impact on officers both with the Planning Team, and colleagues in Legal and Committee Services, as well as Councillors. So rather than move the Committee cycle to fortnightly, it is considered prudent to schedule additional **Reserve Planning Committee** days on the fortnight between then scheduled monthly cycle. Whilst it is anticipated that the Reserve Days will sometimes be required, in is anticipated that occasions may arise that they are not needed and they will be enacted. These Reserve Planning Committee days will be subject to the same processes of publicity around agenda publication.
8. The scheduling of Reserve Planning Committee days will provide a more predictable diary for Councillors, Officers, and the Public. These additional dates will provide the necessary agility and is considered preferable to the current practice of doubling-up with meetings rolling to the following day.
9. These additional Reserve Committee Dates will be added to the existing Municipal Calendar for 2022-3. This calendar is appended to this report for information.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee notes for information the addition to the Municipal Calendar to include Reserve Planning Committee days on the fortnights between scheduled Planning Committees.

Impact

1.

Communication/Consultation	This group is a working group and will make recommendations to Planning Committee
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Risk Analysis

1.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That a review does not take place in accordance with good governance and best practice as recommended by the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA)	3	3	The recommended changes are intended to improve the efficiency of the Local Planning Authority and create space for major applications to be determined by Planning Committee
The Local Planning Authority's Failure to respond to consultations within the strict deadlines	3	3	Review of the frequency of Planning Committee and the maximising the agility of Planning

stipulated by the Planning Inspectorate			Committee to respond in timely way.
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- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.