

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 12 JANUARY 2012
 title: EXTENSION TO THE DELEGATION SCHEME IN RELATION TO DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
 principal author: JOHN MACHOLC – HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To request minor changes to the scheme of delegation in relation to the determination of planning applications.

1.2 Members may be aware that most recent revisions to the delegation scheme was on the 14 January 2010 to take into account the changes to the planning legislation which introduced a new application type in relation to minor amendments and non-material amendments. Prior to that the most recent change was in April 2009 when it was revised to allow approval of household applications subject to no more than 3 objections from different addresses.

1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – }
 - Community Objectives - }
 - Corporate Priorities - }
 - Other Considerations - }
- To be a well-managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer need.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 It is evident that the Government has expressed concerns in relation to the possible delay that the present system has caused and its impact on driving the economy. Part of the impact has been the delay in the determination of planning applications. It is important to explore ways of a enabling quicker decisions without significant harm to the planning process.

2.2 Part of the way forward is to explore whether or not it is possible to increase the level of delegation on planning applications so that more applications could be determined without the need to go to a Planning and Development Committee. Many Members will be aware that this is a sensitive issue and when the scheme was revised to increase the level of delegation on household applications it was first done as a temporary measure with the objective to review the process after 12 months. This was carried out and in overall terms the scheme resulted in a speedier determination rate without any significant impact on the planning process. Initially, some concerns were expressed in relation to the inability to speak at Committee but these have been limited and over the last 12 months I cannot recall any complaints.

2.3 Planning Advisory Service previously identified how some planning authorities are achieving better planning outcomes by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the way they make planning decisions by delegation. The common factors characterising this good practice were identified as:

- Maximising the number of delegated planning decisions – delegating higher than 90% of planning decisions, which gives planning committees more time to focus on complex and controversial applications.

2.4 It is intended that the current scheme of delegation be altered so that all applications with the exception of major proposals be delegated to the Director of Community Services/Head of Planning Services where there is no more than 3 objections from single households. The attached Appendix A – Proposed Delegation Scheme, gives further details with Appendix B showing the existing Delegation Scheme.

3 ISSUES

3.1 In assessing the revision proposed I do not consider this would have a significant detrimental impact on the planning process and key applications would still need to be determined by the Planning and Development Committee. I envisage that this proposed revised delegation scheme allowing delegation on minor commercial schemes as well as minor residential developments would speed up the process of determination of planning applications. The type of applications I envisage to be determined on this process will be ones where there have been one or two objections from either a Parish Council or a competitor of a business but these applications would not be of particular significance that would normally need to be determined by Planning and Development Committee. Examples in the past have been when either a Parish Council have consistently objected to a substitution of house type or because they either perceive this as a new dwelling or object on the basis of historical facts.

3.2 The current delegation scheme has been around 79% over the last four years, whereas nationally the Government still would wish to see a delegation scheme of between 90%-95%. This change will bring us more in line with similar Councils and I hope will also free up officer time and member time to be available on key applications with the fact that less applications would need to go to Planning and Development Committee.

3.3 I have not been able to fully analyse the effects that this revised delegation scheme would have on the length of the agenda but it is clear that it would, in some instance, reduce the number of planning applications on the agenda by between 30-50% on a regular basis would have the effect of significantly increasing the delegation level towards the 90% target *85%). This should enable quicker decisions to be made.

3.4 It is also requested that the wording of the delegation scheme to be altered to refer to Director of Community Services and Head of Planning Services rather than relate to Director of Development as this post is no longer in the establishment.

3.5 It is also requested that the delegation scheme be revised to make it clear that any application can be taken to the Planning and Development Committee even if it falls within the delegation scheme should be Director of Community Services or Head of Planning Services considered it appropriate.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – any changes could be met with existing staffing and it may also free up some member and officer time.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – none.
- Political – none.
- Reputation – it may lead to a minority of people expressing concerns about inability to express their views and that the system is less democratic.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Endorse the revised changes to the delegation scheme on determination of planning applications to include:

- applications for up to 3 new dwellings;
- all other minor developments, including minor commercial extensions, changes of use and developments of up to 3 new dwellings;
- delegation to Director of Community Services or Head of Planning Services to decide to take applications to Planning and Development Committee even if they fall within the delegated procedure if it is deemed appropriate.

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 Current Delegation Scheme.

For further information please ask for John Macholc, extension 4502.

PROPOSED DELEGATION SCHEME UPDATED 12 JANUARY 2012

- RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
- PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
- SCHEME OF DELEGATION OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND COUNTRYSIDE MATTERS
- LAST REVISED 12 JANUARY 2012

This note is designed to clarify when applications received by the Council in relation to planning, countryside and some other related matters will be decided by the Planning and Development Committee and when those decisions will be delegated to officers of the Council. Many of the delegated items date from the inception of Ribble Valley Borough Council. Where dates are known for later additions they are given. Details of planning decisions made under delegated powers will be reported to Committee for information.

From time to time legislative change may rename or make minor amendments to some of the listed delegated items. Whilst the scheme of delegation will be amended to reflect these changes, there may be periods where the clear intention must be respected even if precise wording or legislative reference has changed.

These powers are delegated to the Director of Community Services.

1. GENERAL DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
 - (a) Determination as to whether applications are county matters or district matters under Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
 - (b) The statutory or the discretionary need to advertise various types of applications.
 - (c) What statutory or other consultations/notifications are required.
2. APPLICATIONS FOR A CERTIFICATE OF LAWFULNESS AND DISCHARGE OF CONDITIONS
 - 2.1 There are two types of application for a Lawful Development Certificate.

These are:

 - (a) Determination of applications for a Certificate of Lawfulness of existing use or development under Section 191 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
 - (b) Determination of applications for a Certificate of Lawfulness of proposed use or development under Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
 - 2.2 Applications for the discharge of conditions placed on planning approvals.

2.3 Since all these types of application relate to issues of fact, both refusals and approvals are delegated to the Director of Community Services. **These applications remain delegated even if representations are received.**

3. DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

3.1 Applications submitted on behalf of family members of councillors and officers should be placed before the Planning and Development Committee even if they fall within the below categories.

Approvals 1

3.2 The following types of planning applications are delegated to the Director of Community Services [providing no objections are received:

- Applications for up to 3 new dwellings (14/1/12)
- Substitute dwellings on existing plots within an existing housing estate
- Applications for new access points wither on classified or unclassified roads.
- Applications for a change of use (26/5/94)
- Extensions or ancillary buildings within the curtilage of industrial or commercial buildings subject to the alterations not constituting a major proposals, ie it should be no more than 100 square metres floorspace (this includes temporary buildings). (6/3/03 then 18/12/08)
- Proposals for new shop fronts on existing shops
- Applications for consent to display advertisements
- Applications for agricultural buildings (11/4/90 then 18/12/08)
- Proposals to reinforce existing overhead power lines.
- Applications for listed building consent
- Applications for conservation area consent (11/4/90 and 30/04/09)
- All applications about which the observations of the Council are requested (23/4/98 and 18/12/08)
- Renewals of previously approved schemes (23/4/98)
- Renewals of temporary consents (15/6/99)
- Applications for temporary buildings (15/6/99)
- Reserved matters applications
- Modification of conditions that were not part of an original Committee
- Minor material amendments (14/1/10)
- Non material amendments (14/11/10)

Approvals II

3.3 The following types of planning application are delegated to the Director of Community Services providing fewer than three objections from separate addressed are received by the date of consultation closure. The total of these includes statutory consultees.

- (a) Ancillary development within the curtilage of a dwelling house (for example, domestic garages, conservatories, porches, greenhouses and means of enclosure etc) (40/4/09).
- (b) Extensions to dwellings (30/4/09).

- (c) All other minor developments including minor commercial proposals, change of use applications, and up to 3 new dwellings.

Refusals

3.4 Planning applications falling into these categories can be refused under delegated powers without prior reference to the Chairman (or if unavailable the Vice Chairman) of Planning and Development Committee.

- Household extensions and curtilage buildings
- Listed buildings
- New housing clearly contrary to Policy
- Applications raising design issues
- Advertisement proposals
- Buildings in the open countryside
- Change of uses that do not generate significant employment issues
- Reserved matters

Such delegated refusals can be issued with registered objections.

Planning applications falling into the three categories below will normally be discussed with the Chairman (or if unavailable the Vice Chairman) or Planning and Development Committee to decide whether they can be refused under delegated powers or should be referred to Committee.

- Developments that may have significant employment issues
- Modification of conditions
- Applications that may resolve bad neighbour developments

Section 106 Agreements

3.5 Negotiations leading to the satisfactory completion of Section 106 Agreements will be delegated to officers unless Committee have formally requested further involvement at the time of the original decision. This is subject to the Affordable Housing Memorandum of Understanding where it relates to affordable housing provision.

4. PRIOR NOTIFICATIONS

4.1 Proposals for agricultural buildings, demolition work and telecommunications apparatus within certain size and locational thresholds may benefit from permitted development rights. The developers are however required to serve a prior notification upon the Council.

This gives the local authority the opportunity to assess whether planning consent is required and also to seek technical alterations if appropriate. The Council has a limited time to respond; but as failure to issue a decision results in an automatic approval these items need to be delegated regardless of the decision reached.

5. ENFORCEMENT

- 5.1 In all cases where there is a breach of planning control, the Director of Community Services is authorised to take the necessary action to regularise the situation, including the service of notice on untidy sites.

6. BUILDING PRESERVATION NOTICES

- 6.1 In the case of an unlisted building that is of Special Architectural or Historic interest and is in danger of demolition or alteration, the Director of Community Services is authorised to serve a building preservation notice. (This is sometimes known as spot listing).

7. TREE PRESERVATION AND COUNTRYSIDE

- (a) The Director of Community Services is authorised to make provisional tree preservation orders where necessary because of the immediate threat to tree involved.
- (b) Decisions on applications for work on protected trees.
- (c) Confirmation of tree preservation orders when no objections have been received.
- (d) Decisions on notifications under the Hedgerow Regulations.
- (e) Confirmation of public rights of way diversion orders.
- (f) Responses to Lancashire County Council on the consultation stage of footpath diversion orders in liaison with Committee Chairman (or if unavailable the Vice Chairman) and ward member(s).

8. OTHER MATTERS

- 9.1 Decisions on whether an application is needed for consent to demolish a building.
- 8.2 Decisions on whether an environmental impact assessment is required for any specific proposal.
- 8.3 The attachment of appropriate conditions to approvals following overturns of officer refusal recommendations to Committee (8/3/01).
- 8.4 Decisions whether or not to use consultants to prepare and present an appeal case is delegated but only following discussions with the Chairman (or if unavailable the Vice Chairman) of the Planning and Development Committee,
- 8.5 Proposed working amendments are delegated to officers even if the original application fell into category 3.1 above.
- 8.6 Delegation to Director of Community Services or Head of Planning Services to decide to take applications to Planning and Development Committee even if they fall within the Delegated procedure if it is deemed appropriate.

9. COUNCILLORS POWER TO REQUIRE A PLANNING APPLICATION TO BE DETERMINED BY COMMITTEE

- 9.1 A ward councillor will have the right to require that any application appearing on the weekly list is presented to Planning and Development Committee for decision providing that such an instruction is received by the Director of Community Services in writing within 14 days of the 'received week ending' of the relevant list.

APPENDIX B

EXISTING DELEGATION SCHEME UPDATED 14 JANUARY 2010

- RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
- PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
- SCHEME OF DELEGATION OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND COUNTRYSIDE MATTERS
- LAST REVISED 14 JANUARY 2010

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