

REPORT TO AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW PANEL

Title: **IMPROVING INFORMATION SUBMITTED WITH PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Date: 16th December 2009

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Wards Affected: All wards

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the meeting on 21st October 2009 the Panel requested a short report to come to the next (this) meeting identifying how information accompanying planning applications can be improved.
- 1.2 National legislation defines the minimum information which must be submitted with planning applications for them to be made validly. Councils can also go through a legal and consultation process to adopt an additional list of local requirements which must be met before a planning application is registered. This process is expected to change in April 2010, after which the Council will progress a local list of requirements.
- 1.3 In the meantime applicants making major applications will be requested to submit colour, computer generated impressions of how completed developments are expected to look to aid understanding of these often complex proposals by residents and Councillors.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

That:

- 1. Applicants for major developments be requested to submit colour, computer generated impressions of how completed developments are expected to look; and**
- 2. Local requirements for validating planning application are progressed once the new legislative process takes effect.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
Residents will have improved information available to them when they comment on planning applications.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 At the meeting on 21st October 2009 the Panel requested a short report to come to the next (this) meeting identifying how information accompanying planning applications can be improved.
- 3.2 National legislation defines the minimum information which must be submitted with planning applications for them to be validly made. Councils are required to consider and determine applications made meeting these national standards. Where an applicant considers the minimum information has been submitted but a Council does not register the application, after a period of eight weeks has passed the applicant may appeal. In these circumstances the applicant claims that a valid application was made and the Council did not determine within eight weeks as required.
- 3.3 There is also the ability for Councils to go through a legal and consultation process to adopt an additional list of local requirements which must be met before a planning application is registered. This process is expected to change in April 2010, and any Councils already with a "local list" will need to review and re-adopt it under the new process.
- 3.4 The Royal Borough has not so far adopted a local list of additional requirements. Experience of these in other authorities is mixed. An overly prescriptive list can serve to increase the costs of making planning applications, including for householders. Differing requirements in each Council area can also add to confusion. It can make a process which is already perceived by some to be complex and bureaucratic even more so. A balance is therefore necessary, and there is a need to learn from the experience of others and work with nearby authorities.
- 3.5 Initial discussions have taken place with other Berkshire authorities about the prospect of a single local list across the County to provide a consistent customer approach and reduce the consultation, legal and adoption costs of producing it. Even if this does not occur, it is proposed to progress a local validation list when the new process come into effect, currently expected to be April 2010.
- 3.6 In the meantime applicants making major applications (10 residential units or more, or 1000m² of non-residential floorspace or more) will be requested to submit colour, computer generated impressions of how completed developments are expected to look to aid understanding of these often complex proposals by residents and Councillors. In most cases this is likely to be accepted as there is unlikely to be additional cost to these applicants.

4. IMPLICATIONS

The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A

Background Papers:

Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995.