

Planning

Planning is the system by which both the use and development of land is controlled. The overall aim is to ensure a balance between allowing appropriate development to take place and conserving, protecting and, hopefully, enhancing the environment.

The planning system, as we know it today, has largely derived from the raft of social welfare legislation following the end of the second world war. This far-reaching legislation also created New Towns, the National Parks and laid the basis for access to the countryside and protection of the natural environment. So, it is central government which sets the legislation within which Local Planning Authorities operate – in our case this is East Staffordshire Borough Council.

Local Planning Authorities control development by requiring applicants for all but the most minor proposals to submit a planning application, for either the change in the use of land, or the development of that land. The definition of ‘development’ is wide-ranging. East Staffordshire Borough Council is the responsible local planning authority, but it does not operate in a vacuum. Government legislation dictates that when you determine a planning application, then it must be made in accordance with the “development plan”, unless, what it calls “material considerations” indicate otherwise.

The development plan, primarily the Local Plan for the Borough, sets out a range of planning policies to control development. These include allocating specific sites in the borough on which future development will be allowed, subject to the normal planning application process. They also set out a range of criteria against which planning applications can be assessed. The Local Plan goes through several stages in its preparation, which are subject to local consultation. There is also a public inquiry where an independent planning inspector hears objections and makes recommendations in a report. The current Local Plan was adopted by the Borough Council in 2015 and runs until 2031. We expect that this Local Plan will be reviewed in the near future.

An example of a material consideration is the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework, which sets out national planning policies for all development in England. But what may be acceptable in Battersea may not be appropriate in Barton and so the Borough Council will have to use its judgement in reaching its decisions to either permit or refuse a proposal. Decisions on applications are considered by either a Planning Committee of Borough Councillors, or, in the majority of cases, by planning officers. If a proposal is refused, then applicants have the right to appeal to a Planning Inspector.

All planning applications, and accompanying documents, including planning officer reports, are available on the Borough Council’s website. When an application is submitted then anybody can make comments, but this must be done generally within a period of 21 days. Legislation again dictates that planning applications will be determined within eight weeks, although this is longer for larger and more complex proposals.

Although, as the Parish Council, we are the third tier of local government, we do not determine planning applications.

The Parish Council has a Planning Committee which considers all planning applications in the parish. It meets every two weeks. Our Planning Committee can only make comments on proposals, like everyone else. Within the parish different people will inevitably have different views and we always encourage residents, especially neighbours, who may be directly affected by a proposal, to look at the planning application for themselves and submit comments accordingly. We try and make the comments which hopefully represent the interests of the community, as a whole. As an example, we have recently been concerned about the need to maintain and enhance both the conservation area, and the commercial heart of the village. Notes and detailed comments on planning applications can be found in the "Additional Documents" section of the Minutes of each full monthly Parish Council meeting.

We should perhaps also point out that planning applications for minerals, such as sand and gravel, are determined by Staffordshire County Council as the Mineral Planning Authority, which also produces a local plan for minerals. The County Council is the Local Highway Authority responsible for all public roads in the area, except trunk roads such as the A 38.