

Dear Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks

The East Suffolk Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) was first convened by the Chair of Council in July 2023 to carry out a fundamental review of East Suffolk Council's (ESC's) Constitution to ensure it is complete, accurate, up to date, clear, lawful, fit for purpose and democratically sound.

The Planning Service has engaged with the process and Working Group to review the planning components of the constitution, including the Scheme of Delegation.

Town and Parish Councils will be aware that the Scheme of Delegation (<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Your-Council/How-your-council-works/Constitution/Constitution-Part-A.pdf>) has been amended in the past year when I wrote to you in January confirming the commencement of the Planning Committee Member Call-In process. We've also covered it in our four Town and Parish Forum meetings over 2024. Over recent years officers and Members have noted a particular improvement which has been needed in the scheme of delegation. That was in respect of the methods by which comments from Town and Parish Councils, Ward Members and Statutory Consultees trigger the Referral Panel and Planning Committee Member Call-in processes. Previously responses occasionally cited no detailed reason for objecting to or supporting an application. It is important that Case Officers and members are well informed on why all consultees object or support to aid decision making.

Therefore, it has been agreed and implemented within the constitution to add the words 'material planning consideration' within the trigger points of the scheme of delegation

4. The 'minded to' decision of the Planning Officer is contrary to either:

a. The material planning consideration comments received from the Town or Parish Council within the 21- day consultation period; or

b. The material planning consideration comments received from the Ward Member within the 21-day consultation period; or

c. The material planning consideration comments received from a statutory consultee within the 21-day consultation period.

A response of 'No Objection' to an application remains neutral, is a perfectly acceptable response and need not be accompanied by material planning considerations.

We rarely receive responses stating only 'We Object' or similar. We do more often received responses stating 'We support' or 'We recommend approval' or similar. In all of those cases material planning considerations, which have influenced that position, should be added.

That need not be a detailed explanation. It may be as simple as ‘We object *because the proposal is poorly designed and an overdevelopment*’ as an example, or ‘we object *because the proposal does not accord with policy XXX*’ as another example. In terms of support for applications, it could be ‘We recommend approval *because the proposal accords with policy XXX*’ or ‘We support the proposal *because it is well designed and would improve the character of the area*’. Of course I am aware that many Town and Parish Councils write detailed and considered replies and that remains perfectly acceptable, so long as matters raised are material planning considerations. A range of examples of material planning considerations (and considerations which are not) can be found half way down this webpage [Comment on a planning application » East Suffolk Council](#), we have also covered this in past Town and Parish Forums and would be happy to again.

I hope that you find this update of assistance and of positive effect on how you engage in and influence decision making. We will be in touch again in the new year in respect of our next pair of Town and Parish Forums and with our next quarterly newsletter.