



BRIEFING PAPER

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Must planning committees follow officers' advice in reaching decisions?

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Summary

Controversy sometimes arises when planning committees, composed of elected local authority members, take decisions on planning applications that go against the advice of planning officers. This briefing examines the relationship between planning officers and councillors and how published guidance deals with the considerations that might arise when planning committees overturn officers' advice. It applies to England only.

Who takes planning decisions?

Applications for planning permission are submitted to and considered by the local planning authority (LPA). Applications are managed by planning officers, to whom councillors delegate most decisions. The largest and most contentious applications, though, will be considered by the planning committee.

Do officers have to make a recommendation?

Local authorities will have rules on the roles of councillors and officers, which should conform to the good practice on planning decision-making laid down in the [guide to probity in planning for councillors and officers](#), published by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). That guide says (amongst other things) that officer reports to committee should recommend the decision to be made.

Overturning the advice of officers

In cases where councillors overturn the advice of officers, reasons have to be given. The LGAPAS [guide to probity in planning for councillors and officers](#) suggests that councillors should be ready to explain why they have not accepted the officer's recommendation and that officers should be given an opportunity to explain such a decision's implications, including those for any appeal and award of costs.

Rejection of applications by councillors

In this scenario, the disappointed applicant has the right of administrative appeal to a planning inspector. The appeal will be heard on the basis of the national and local planning policy guidance. If the officers made a recommendation based on the planning policy guidance, then a rejection by councillors is more likely to lead to the council losing the appeal. In some circumstances, costs can be awarded against the council, particularly if there has been "unreasonable behaviour". The [Planning Practice Guidance on appeals](#) offers a definition of unreasonable behaviour in the context of award of costs.

[Research by the property consultants Lichfields](#) found that, for large housing applications in England, Wales and Scotland, refusals against officers' recommendations were more likely than refusals in line with officers' recommendations to be overturned at appeal.

Approval of applications by councillors

There is no analogous right of appeal for third parties when planning applications are approved in circumstances contrary to national policy and guidelines. The Secretary of State does have certain powers to revoke or modify planning permission, but these powers are used sparingly and only in the most exceptional cases.

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How has the position of councillors changed?

Over time, the role councillors can play in determining planning applications has changed.

There has been an increase in the use of delegation; the [most recent figures from MHCLG](#) show that, for the year ending March 2019, 94% of planning applications in England were delegated to officers. Changes to the rules on pre-determination introduced by the *Localism Act 2011* enabled councillors to speak or vote on a planning application on which they had previously campaigned or expressed a view.

- The Commons Library briefing [Comparison of the planning systems in the four UK countries: 2016 update](#) offers information about planning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Other Commons Library briefings on various matters to do with planning are available on the [topic page for housing and planning](#).

1. Who takes planning decisions?

In a nutshell: Applications for planning permission are submitted to and considered by the local planning authority (LPA). Applications are managed by planning officers, to whom councillors delegate most decisions. The largest and most contentious applications, though, will be considered by the planning committee.¹

The [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\) on determining a planning application](#) sets out (in quite broad terms) who in a local planning authority makes a planning decision, including the power to delegate (discussed again later), and how elected councillors and other members of the local authority must consider planning applications:

Who in a local planning authority makes a planning decision?

[Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972](#) allows the local planning authority to arrange for the discharge any of its functions by a committee, sub-committee, or an officer or by any other local authority. An exception where this power may not apply is where the local authority's own application for development could give rise to a conflict of interest, when [regulation 10 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992](#) applies.

The exercise of the power to delegate planning functions is generally a matter for individual local planning authorities, having regard to practical considerations including the need for efficient decision-taking and local transparency. It is in the public interest for the local planning authority to have effective delegation arrangements in place to ensure that decisions on planning applications that raise no significant planning issues are made quickly and that resources are appropriately concentrated on the applications of greatest significance to the local area.

Local planning authority delegation arrangements may include conditions or limitations as to the extent of the delegation, or the circumstances in which it may be exercised.

Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 21b-015-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

How must elected councillors and other members of the local authority consider planning applications?

Local authority members are involved in planning matters to represent the interests of the whole community and must maintain an open mind when considering planning applications. Where members take decisions on planning applications they must do so in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Members must only take into account material planning considerations, which can include public views where they relate to relevant planning matters. Local opposition or support for a proposal is not in itself a ground for refusing or granting planning permission, unless it is founded upon valid material planning reasons.

¹ For a brief guide to the planning process, see Planning Portal, [The decision-making process: the development plan](#) (undated, accessed 23 August 2019)

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Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 21b-016-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014²

Planning decisions must be made in the context of local and national policy, led by the National [Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#), which provides the background against which local plans are drawn up and applications for planning permission are decided. The NPPF sets out in broad terms how planning applications should be determined:

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

48. Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

49. However in the context of the Framework – and in particular the presumption in favour of sustainable development – arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission other than in the limited circumstances where both:

- a) the development proposed is so substantial, or its cumulative effect would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to an emerging plan; and
- b) the emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area.³

1.1 Do officers have to make a recommendation?

Local authorities will have rules on the roles of councillors and officers, which should conform to the good practice on planning decision-making laid down in the [guide to probity in planning for councillors and officers](#), published by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). That guide says (amongst other things) that officer reports to Committee should recommend the decision to be made:

² MHCLG, [Guidance: determining a planning application](#), 6 March 2014, updated 15 March 2019

³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), [National Planning Policy Framework](#), CP 48, February 2019: page 14

As a result of decisions made by the courts and ombudsman, officer reports on planning applications must have regard to the following:

- Reports should be accurate and should include the substance of any objections and other responses received to the consultation.
- Relevant information should include a clear assessment against the relevant development plan policies, relevant parts of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), any local finance considerations, and any other material planning considerations.
- Reports should have a written recommendation for a decision to be made.
- Reports should contain technical appraisals which clearly justify the recommendation.
- If the report's recommendation is contrary to the provisions of the development plan, the material considerations which justify the departure must be clearly stated. This is not only good practice, but also failure to do so may constitute maladministration or give rise to a Judicial Review challenge on the grounds that the decision was not taken in accordance with the provisions of the development plan and the council's statutory duty under s38A of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 and s70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- Any oral updates or changes to the report should be recorded.⁴

For further information on standards and transparency, see the Commons Library briefings [Local government standards in England](#) (SN 05707, 7 March 2019) and [Local government transparency in England](#) (SN 06046, 10 November 2015)

1.2 Overturning the advice of officers

In cases where councillors overturn the advice of officers, reasons have to be given. The LG/PAS [guide to probity in planning for councillors and officers](#) suggests that councillors should be ready to explain why they have not accepted the officer's recommendation and that officers should be given an opportunity to explain such a decision's implications, including those for any appeal and award of costs:

If the planning committee makes a decision contrary to the officers' recommendation (whether for approval or refusal or changes to conditions or S106 obligations), a detailed minute of the committee's reasons should be made and a copy placed on the application file. Councillors should be prepared to explain in full their planning reasons for not agreeing with the officer's recommendation. Pressure should never be put on officers to 'go away and sort out the planning reasons'.

The officer should also be given an opportunity to explain the implications of the contrary decision, including an assessment of a likely appeal outcome, and chances of a successful award of costs against the council, should one be made.

All applications that are clearly contrary to the development plan must be advertised as such, and are known as 'departure' applications. If it is intended to approve such an application, the material considerations leading to this conclusion must be clearly

⁴ Local Government Association and Planning Advisory Service, [Probity in planning for councillors and officers](#), November 2013: pages 12-3

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identified, and how these considerations justify overriding the development plan must be clearly demonstrated.

The application may then have to be referred to the relevant secretary of state, depending upon the type and scale of the development proposed (s77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). If the officers' report recommends approval of such a departure, the justification for this should be included, in full, in that report.⁵

The planning consultancy Lichfields published a report in August 2018, [*Refused for good reason?*](#), which found that residential schemes refused against the recommendation of planning officers were more likely than others to be allowed at appeal. The report looked at appeals on residential proposals decided in 2017 in England, Wales and Scotland. It found that 65% of appeals that had been refused by a planning committee against officers' recommendations were allowed, compared with 40% of appeals where refusals were in line with officers' recommendations.⁶

Lichfields found 78 appeal cases where a residential scheme had been refused against the recommendation of officers. The most common reasons for refusal given by planning committees in these cases were the impact on the landscape or countryside (36% of appealed cases), highways and transport-related issues (24%), and the impact on the character of the area (24%). Cases with these reasons given were also some of the most likely to be allowed at appeal. The report noted:

Whilst highways and transport issues are frequently among the most contentious in terms of resident concerns about development – views to which councillors will often give significant weight in their decision making – they are also ones where there is greater reliance by planning officers and Inspectors on technical evidence, including quantitative modelling that is in many cases common ground between the appellant and the relevant Highway Authority.⁷

These cases also took longer to resolve. The time between the validation of the planning application and the appeal decision was 19 months for these cases, higher than the 11-month average for all cases going through the appeals process. The report pointed out that decisions on major developments can be expected to be completed within 13 weeks if they are made locally and not appealed.⁸

For examples of decisions taken contrary to officers' advice, reported in the specialist press, see

⁵ Local Government Association and Planning Advisory Service, [*Probity in planning for councillors and officers*](#), November 2013: page 14

⁶ Lichfields, [*Refused for good reason? When councillors go against officer recommendations*](#), August 2018: page 4.

⁷ As above: page 7

⁸ As above: page 10. For comment on the research, see "[*Briefing: The risks of refusing large housing applications against officer advice*](#)", *Planning*, 23 August 2018

- [“Councillors reject business park plan on agricultural land against officer advice”](#), *Planning*, 22 August 2019⁹
- [“High Court overturns Suffolk council's homes approval because members failed to give reasons”](#), *Planning*, 30 July 2019
- [“Kent councillors vote to reject plans for 700 homes against officer advice”](#), *Planning*, 1 March 2019
- [“Berkshire councillors reject officer advice to approve 424-home mixed-use scheme”](#), *Planning*, 27 November 2018
- [“Council fails to defend decision after rejecting officer recommendation”](#), *Planning*, 6 November 2018
- [“Court overturns permission granted against officers' advice for inadequate reasoning”](#), *Planning*, 16 February 2018

1.3 Rejection of applications by councillors

In this scenario, the disappointed applicant has the right of administrative appeal to a planning inspector. The appeal will be heard on the basis of the national planning policy guidance. If the officers made a recommendation based on the planning policy guidance, then a rejection by councillors is more likely to lead to the council losing the appeal. In some circumstances, costs can be awarded against the council, particularly if there has been “unreasonable behaviour”.

The [PPG on appeals](#) offers a definition of unreasonable behaviour in the context of award of costs:

In what circumstances may costs be awarded?

Costs may be awarded where:

- a party has behaved unreasonably; and
- the unreasonable behaviour has directly caused another party to incur unnecessary or wasted expense in the appeal process.

Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 16-030-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014

What does “unreasonable” mean?

The word “unreasonable” is used in its ordinary meaning, as established by the courts in *Manchester City Council v SSE & Mercury Communications Limited* [1988] JPL 774.

Unreasonable behaviour in the context of an application for an award of costs may be either:

- procedural – relating to the process; or
- substantive – relating to the issues arising from the merits of the appeal.

⁹ Subscription required. As the Commons Library subscribes to *Planning*, Members and their staff may obtain copies of this and other articles by ringing 020 7219 3666.

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The Inspector has discretion when deciding an award, enabling extenuating circumstances to be taken into account.

Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 16-031-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014¹⁰

1.4 Approval of applications by councillors

There is no analogous right of appeal for third parties when planning applications are approved in circumstances contrary to national policy and guidelines. The Secretary of State does have certain powers to revoke or modify planning permission, but these powers are used sparingly and only in the most exceptional cases.

The Commons Library briefing on [revocation of planning permission](#) offers more analysis (SN 00905, 4 July 2016)

1.5 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for England (LGSCO) can investigate complaints of maladministration but cannot go into the planning merits of a decision.

More information about complaints about [how a planning applicant's application has been handled](#) or [how a neighbour's planning application has been handled](#), with examples of complaints considered by the LGSCO, is available from their website.

The Commons Library briefing [The Local Government Ombudsman](#) provides more information on the service (SN 04117, 17 July 2017)

¹⁰ MHCLG, [Guidance: appeals](#), 3 March 2014

2. Involvement in decision making

2.1 Delegation

In March 2002, the Labour Government introduced a target that planning committees should delegate 90% of decisions to officers, so that the planning committee could concentrate its efforts on the remainder. The target was not meant to be an absolute rule.¹¹

In January 2008, [Norman Baker MP complained](#) about the extent of delegation, suggesting that councillors had almost been excluded from deciding planning applications:

In recent years, however, the Government have moved almost to exclude elected members from taking decisions on planning applications; there is a push to delegate as much as possible to officers. Why should unelected officers be more accountable than elected councillors? Of course, some applications fit in to a system and are clearly within the terms of the local plan. Such applications are either controversial or uncontroversial, so they can be clearly rejected or accepted. In my day, about 50 per cent. of applications were delegated, so I am not suggesting that councils should take every single decision. However, we are now getting to the stage where 80 or 90 per cent. of applications are dealt with by officers—the figure is even higher in some local authorities.

Council members find that frustrating, but so do members of the public. They do not understand why, when they elect local councillors to take decisions on planning matters and lobby them to that end, a decision on an application that is important to them should be taken by an officer of whom they have never heard in a room that they did not know existed. It might be a small matter in the big scheme of things, but if a person's next-door neighbour gains permission for something that will intrude on them, it is a serious matter to them. The least that such people would wish to do is to lobby the local council and have some influence on the matter, but that is increasingly rare under the current system.¹²

There is no longer a target, and it is for the LPA to decide how to use its delegation powers, as the then planning minister, Brandon Lewis, [confirmed in March 2015](#):

The exercise of the power to delegate planning functions is a matter for the local planning authority to decide, as set out in the council's constitution. Unlike the last Administration, we have not imposed Whitehall targets on councils requiring the delegation of a specific percentage of planning decisions.

Councils will want to consider the best way of promptly processing uncontroversial planning applications, whilst ensuring elected councillors have the ability to scrutinise and debate contentious applications and applications with a significant impact.¹³

¹¹ DTLR Press Notice 085, *New Best Value Indicators Help Deliver Planning Reform*, 11 March 2002

¹² [HC Deb 8 January 2008 cc56-7WH](#)

¹³ [PO 225562, 9 March 2015](#)

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The most recent figures from MHCLG show that, for the year ending March 2019, 94% of planning applications in England were delegated to officers.¹⁴

The [PPG on determining a planning application](#) suggests that in making its delegation arrangements, the LPA should have regard to “practical considerations including the need for efficient decision-taking and local transparency”:

Who in a local planning authority makes a planning decision?

[Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972](#) allows the local planning authority to arrange for the discharge any of its functions by a committee, sub-committee, or an officer or by any other local authority. An exception where this power may not apply is where the local authority’s own application for development could give rise to a conflict of interest, when [regulation 10 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992](#) applies.

The exercise of the power to delegate planning functions is generally a matter for individual local planning authorities, having regard to practical considerations including the need for efficient decision-taking and local transparency. It is in the public interest for the local planning authority to have effective delegation arrangements in place to ensure that decisions on planning applications that raise no significant planning issues are made quickly and that resources are appropriately concentrated on the applications of greatest significance to the local area.

Local planning authority delegation arrangements may include conditions or limitations as to the extent of the delegation, or the circumstances in which it may be exercised.

Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 21b-015-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014¹⁵

2.2 Councillor involvement in planning-related issues and campaigns

Rules for councillors considering planning applications are discussed in the Commons Library briefing [Councillors and planning applications](#).¹⁶ As that briefing explains in more detail, the *Localism Act 2011* abolished the previous predetermination rule from 15 January 2012, but councillors must still be careful and (as the PPG points out) must still have an open mind.

Previously, councillors had little scope for intervention in planning. They could not vote on a topic on which they had expressed a view, under the predetermination rule. They were greatly restricted in what they could do if the application was near to where they lived. The planning officers would base their recommendations upon the large volume of

¹⁴ MHCLG, [Live tables on planning application statistics: table P134](#)

¹⁵ MHCLG, [Guidance: determining a planning application](#), 6 March 2014 updated 15 March 2019

¹⁶ SN 00931, 5 January 2012

planning guidance, taking account of targets in the Regional Spatial Strategies.

That has since changed. The notion of predetermination, the Standards Regime, and Regional Spatial Strategies were abolished by the *Localism Act 2011*. The introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 greatly reduced the volume of planning guidance, (arguably) making planning officers more reliant on their own judgement when recommending whether an application should be accepted or rejected.

The latest guidance is in the [PPG on determining a planning application](#), which, mentioning the *Localism Act 2011*, deals with the situation where an elected member has previously represented or campaigned with constituents. The PPG does not rule out councillors speaking or voting on a planning application on which they have previously campaigned or expressed a view. On predetermination or bias, it says that councillors must not have a closed mind, but they “may campaign and represent their constituents – and then speak and vote on those issues – without fear of breaking the rules on pre-determination”:

Can an elected member who has represented constituents interested in a planning application be accused of pre-determination or bias, if he or she subsequently speaks or votes on that application?

[Section 25 of the Localism Act 2011](#) clarifies that a member is not to be regarded as being unable to act fairly or without bias if they participate in a decision on a matter simply because they have previously expressed a view or campaigned on it. Members may campaign and represent their constituents – and then speak and vote on those issues – without fear of breaking the rules on pre-determination. Members may also speak with developers and express positive views about development.

A distinction can be drawn between pre-determination and pre-disposition. Members must not have a closed mind when they make a decision, as decisions taken by those with pre-determined views are vulnerable to successful legal challenge. At the point of making a decision, members must carefully consider all the evidence that is put before them and be prepared to modify or change their initial view in the light of the arguments and evidence presented. Then they must make their final decision at the meeting with an open mind based on all the evidence.

Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 21b-018-20140306

Revision date: 06 03 2014¹⁷

¹⁷ MHCLG, [Planning Practice Guidance: determining a planning application](#), 6 March 2014, updated 15 March 2019

3. Probity in planning

3.1 The Nolan Committee

The Nolan Committee, [reporting on standards in public life in 1997](#), argued that councillors should be more willing to take decisions against the advice of officers:

286 It should be firmly stated that there is nothing intrinsically wrong if planning committees do not invariably follow the advice of officers. Planning officers exist to **advise** planning committees, which are entitled to reach their own decisions by attaching different weight to the various planning criteria which are relevant to an application. If a decision is thought to be perverse, a planning officer should so advise the committee, but respect the committee's conclusion.

289 Councillors themselves may be influenced by feelings which do not derive from dispassionate examination of the planning issues. They may see themselves as leaders of local opinion rather than as judges, and they may even have been elected on a specific platform of opposing or supporting a particular development or type of development. In our view, if planning decisions by local authorities were to be regarded as quasi-legal decisions, in which councillors played a role similar to that of inquiry inspectors or judges, there would be no point in involving councillors in such decisions. They might as well be taken by planning officers, or by inspectors.¹⁸

This conclusion surprised many in the planning field, mainly because they felt that the analysis did not take account of the main issue – the policy framework. The Sweet & Maxwell *Planning Encyclopedia* commented:

The missing element in the Committee's analysis is the policy framework within [which] decisions must be taken, comprising both national policy (now principally represented by the PPGs) and local policy (now principally represented by the development plan). It is the policy framework which places the greatest constraints upon councillors' ability to reflect local community interests. The principal reason for Britain's national policy framework, indeed, is the need to pursue objectives, such as housing targets, that will often override local community wishes. Part of the impetus for planning gain is that the practice, as with its counterparts in other countries, minimises the cost to local communities of accommodating growth that is the product of national forces.¹⁹

3.2 The need for transparency

[A guide to planning for councillors](#) published by the Local Government Association and the Planning Advisory Service offers advice on probity and transparency – saying that “it is important that you represent the

For further information on standards and transparency, see the Commons Library briefings [Local government standards in England](#) (SN 05707, 7 March 2019) and [Local government transparency in England](#) (SN 06046, 10 November 2015)

¹⁸ Third Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, [Standards of Conduct in Local Government in England, Scotland and Wales](#), Cm 3702, July 1997

¹⁹ *Sweet & Maxwell Encyclopedia of Planning Law and Practice, Monthly Bulletin*, August 1997: page 19

needs of your residents in discussions with developers” - and refers councillors to their local authority’s code of conduct:

Are there risks to my involvement in development management?

Probity and conduct are areas of concern for many councillors. This is understandable given the consequences of behaviour or decisions that are perceived to be driven by a bias. But these concerns shouldn’t prevent you from performing your role. Your involvement in the development management process is crucial. It is important that you represent the needs of your residents in discussions with developers.

Your local authority will have a code of conduct for councillors. This will clearly state the parameters for your involvement on proposals. Your role in development management has to be transparent. Your decisions and behaviour in relation to applications are accountable to the public. It is important that you can explain the basis for your decision. You will need to declare personal or prejudicial interests on applications and may not be able to discuss the application or vote with the planning committee. The Localism Act gave provision for members of the planning committee to be able to campaign for or against and discuss planning applications prior to seeing the application at committee, as long as they can show that they are going to make their judgement on the application with an open mind, listening to all the evidence and not having predetermined their decision. National guidance on probity in planning is available to ensure that you understand the situations and behaviour that could be considered inappropriate or even illegal (see further information).²⁰

In March 2013, Brandon Lewis [made a statement](#) in response to allegations that councillors were taking money from property developers, arguing that the Government had acted to increase accountability and transparency:

This government has increased accountability and transparency over councilors’ interests, to accompany greater power and freedoms for local councils.

Councils should adopt a Code of Conduct that reflects the [Nolan principles on conduct in public life](#), with councillors declaring any private interest that relate to their public duties, and councillors must take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

In addition, it is now a criminal offence to fail to declare or register disclosable pecuniary interests - which includes any employment or trade carried out for profit or gain. The register of councilors’ interests must be published online by the council.

Councillors should act in an open and transparent way, to avoid conflicts of interest on issues such as planning applications or benefiting financially from the issuing of council contracts.²¹

The Department for Communities and Local Government published a [guide for councillors on openness and transparency on personal interests](#) in September 2013.

²⁰ Local Government Association and Planning Advisory Service, [How planning works: an introductory guide for councillors](#), updated May 2012

²¹ MHCLG, [Government response: Councillors’ interests and planning](#), 11 March 2013

4. Further information about planning

4.1 Briefings from the House of Commons Library

- Briefings on various matters to do with planning are available on the [topic page for housing and planning](#).

4.2 Guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

- The Department for Communities and Local Government (as it then was) published its [Plain English Guide to the Planning System](#) in January 2015.
- The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) was revised and updated in July 2018, following a consultation, with some further minor amendment in February 2019. It provides the framework against which local plans are formulated and planning applications are decided. More detailed guidance on aspects of planning policy is published in the [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

4.3 The Planning Portal

- The [Planning Portal](#) offers advice on a range of planning topics.

4.4 Other sources of information and guidance

- The Local Government Association and Planning Advisory Service have published a [guide to how planning works](#) (May 2012) aimed at councillors.
- The [Royal Town Planning Institute](#) publishes some online advice about planning. Its [Planning Aid Direct](#) page covers a range of topics.

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