ITEM 3: Review of Development Management Validation Checklist

1. Purpose of Report

This report deals with a review of the Northumberland National Park Authority Development Management Validation Checklist relating to the local information requirements to be sought for the validation of planning applications by the Authority. The current checklist was re-published in September 2017, to be reviewed within 6 months of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) being published by the Government. The NPPF was published on 24 July 2018 and therefore the implications for the local validation checklist need to be assessed.

2. Recommendation:

Members are recommended to:
Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to agree the finalised local validation checklist to be published.

3. Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report. Amendments to the local validation checklist can be undertaken as part of the Development Management team’s day to day duties.

Equalities:

There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

4. Background

4.1 To validate a planning application, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) needs to receive specific documents prior to starting the formal process of determining to grant or refuse planning permission. Some documents are set out as national requirements (completed application form, location plan, ownership certificate, scaled plans and the relevant fee) and are statutory documents, but the LPA can also request applicants to provide additional information appropriate to local circumstances.

In order to be relied upon for validation purposes, local information requirements must be set out in a list on the local planning authority's website. Only information included in that list can be required of an applicant.

4.2 The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 states that the Local Planning Authority can only request documents beyond the national requirements if the LPA has published a list of local requirements on their website and that list was published (or republished) during the two year period immediately before the date on which the application is made.

4.3 In September 2017, members agreed at Full Authority to the republishing of the 2015 local validation checklist subject to a few minor amendments and to it being re-assessed within 6 months of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) being published by Government. The National Policy Framework has now been published and officers have considered the implications for the local validation checklist.

5 Consideration

5.1 The current validation checklist is a web based checklist on the planning pages of the NNPA website. The checklist is set out by application type and grouped into general
categories such as “Householder applications” or “Full applications”. Each potential requirement explains:

- When it is required
- What is required
- Why it is required

In most cases hyperlinks are included which link to requirement specific documents such as the relevant Policy within the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy, National Planning Policy Framework paragraph, relevant legislation and other external websites such as Natural England or the Environment Agency. Links to other sources of information are provided to assist applicants in obtaining access to up to date information sources. Paper copies of these lists can be sent out to applicants who do not have internet access.

5.2 In relation to local validation requirements, much is dependent upon on the location of the development, its size, scale and nature/ character and/ or its potential impact on the National Park special qualities, and the requirements are not prescriptive in every case. Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek pre-application advice before submitting an application. One important aspect of the pre-application service that the Development Management team provides is a list of validation requirements so that applicants can know up front what additional information is required.

5.3 In September 2017 officers advised members that due to there being very little change in material planning considerations, with both local and national planning policy being the same as when the 2015 checklist was agreed and published, that there were no significant changes required to the previous published checklist and a refresh of the 2015 checklist could be republished.

5.4 Having considered the revised NNPF published in July 2018, officers consider that there are no significant changes to the areas of the NPPF that relate to local information requirements. Whilst the NPPF has changed many aspects for Local Plan preparation and delivery, focusing on the delivery of housing and calculating housing need, large scale developments, town centre shopping frontages and minimum density standards for city and town centres, these are not relevant to the type of applications received by the National Park.

A greater importance on design standards is emphasised by Government but this is already addressed in the existing validation checklist, as design is important within the National Park. As such officers consider that the revised NPF does not materially change the planning framework to require a significant review of the validation checklist at this time.

5.5 Given there are few relevant material planning changes, officers consider it would not be necessary or worthwhile carrying out a 6 week consultation period on a very similar validation checklist to that already published. Instead officers consider an update and review of hyperlinks and reference to the new NPPF paragraph numbers, followed by its republication would be most appropriate at this time. This is with the knowledge that the current Core Strategy is under review and is likely to be submitted for examination within the next year.

The Local Plan review is likely to have a more significant impact upon the validation checklist and it is at that time that a full review of the validation checklist, including consultation is likely to be most appropriate.
5.6 Even with the republication of the local validation checklist, planning technical officers and planning officers will continue to ensure that information required as part of the validation process is necessary and proportionate to the proposed development and information is only sought where a matter is likely to be a material consideration in the determination of the application.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Officers consider that the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not materially change the planning framework to require a significant review of the 2017 validation checklist. The review of the hyperlinks and reference to the new NPPF paragraph numbers is necessary to ensure applicants are referred to up to date information.

This review has not yet been completed and therefore it is recommended that Members delegate authority to the Chief Executive to agree the finalised updated checklist and republish it on the Authority’s website.

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Background papers: To view the current validation checklist please see the webpages below: https://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/planning/planning-permission/validation-checklist/