Revised Local Validation Checklist Cabinet Report

Report subject	**Revised Local Validation Checklist**
Meeting date	4 February 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report sets out the background to local validation lists including what they are, the necessity for every local planning authority to have one and the importance of it being regularly reviewed, kept up to date and tailored to current local planning policy.
	The national requirements for the content of a planning application are prescribed by
	legislation and are limited to a small number of documents and other supporting information which is mandatory. For this reason, legislation also enables local planning authorities to go further and supplement the national requirements with their own local requirements in the form of a 'local validation list' (sometimes referred to as a 'local validation checklist'). Once a local validation list has been adopted and published it is legally binding; an applicant is then obliged to submit the information set out in the local validation list when the application is first submitted and if they do not, the council can refuse to validate the application until that information is provided.
Recommendations	**It is RECOMMENDED that:** 1. **The Local Validation Checklist be adopted and;** 2. **Minor variations to the Validation Checklist are delegated to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the Head of Planning Operations and Head of Strategic Planning.**
Reason for recommendations	1) To put in place an up to date and enforceable local validation checklist to provide certainty for applicants and officers in the submission and processing of applications. 2) To enable adaptations to the local validation checklist in light of changes in legislation/ policy and to remedy any unforeseen circumstances found during the operation of the checklist.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Millie Earl, Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet.
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	Katie Herrington
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. When a planning application is first received, it must go through a validation process to ensure that the minimum level of information requirement by statute is present. Only when that minimum level of information has been received by the council can the application be validated, made public and the process of consultation and assessment begin.

2. It should be noted that the accuracy of the information supplied is the responsibility of the applicant. There are specific requirements in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, that local planning authority shall not entertain an application unless the requirements are met. Any person who knowingly or recklessly issues a false or misleading certificate is guilty of an offence. It is therefore the responsibility of the applicant to ensure certificates are completed accurately and with the appropriate evidence in place to support if requested.

3. The validation requirements take the form of National and Local Lists. The national validation requirements, as predominantly set out in the Town & Country Planning Development Management Procedure Order 2015 (as amended), are limited to:

    - The application form;
    - the correct application fee;
    - existing and proposed plans/drawings;
    - ownership certificate;
    - a Design & Access Statement (in certain circumstances);
    - an Environmental Statement (if EIA development);
    - biodiversity net gain information (if a liable application); and
    - a Fire Statement (in certain circumstances in relation to tall buildings)

4. BCP has a local validation checklist that is published on its website. The benefit of Local Validation Checklists is that it means we can request additional information beyond that of the National List.

5. NPPF paragraph 45 sets out that for a local authority to require additional supporting information that this must be specified on a formally adopted local list/ validation check list which has been published on its website less than 2 years before an

application is submitted. However, as this was created in 2021 it is now out of date and was not formally adopted.

6. This report seeks formal approval for a new local validation checklist.

Review of the existing Local Validation Check List

7. A review of the existing Local Validation Checklist (LVC) was undertaken to see whether any changes were required. The existing Local Validation Checklist pulls together the policy requirements from the 3 legacy local plans, and comprises a single advice note and 47 individual checklists each addressing a particular application type, e.g householder or householder application in a Conservation Area. These are presented as a list under application categories.

8. Whilst have a single checklist for a particular application is useful, having them stored as lists online is difficult to navigate. The quantum of such lists also makes it difficult for officers to keep such lists up to date.

9. Each checklist comprises a list of national requirements and then local requirements. These local requirements are broad and list a whole range of possible information required for a submission. However, the local list requirements are worded subjectively – e.g. they are only required if they are 'relevant' to the proposal. In practice, this has resulted in uncertainty and delay for both applicants and officers assessing the validity of applications, with validation officers asking Planning Officers whether some information is required or not. This has also resulted in differences in requested information across the teams, creating inconsistency.

10. Uncertainty and delay to the planning process are well versed criticisms of the planning process, and any new Local Validation Checklist must seek to reduce these.

New Validation checklist

11. The New Local Validation checklist **(Appendix 1 and 2)** is designed to address the downsides of the current local validation checklist and update it towards current planning requirements. The multiple checklists have been removed to provide a matrix **(Appendix 2)** and a single document with both guidance and checklists **(Appendix 1).**

12. The checklists seek to address the uncertainty and inconsistency by providing clear and objective document or plan requirements. It does this by requiring documents based on application type, local plan location, and designation based on mapping.

13. This clear and objective approach also enables the ability for the Local Planning Authority to charge to recoup the costs associated with processing invalid applications[1]. A more discretionary checklist would bring too much ambiguity for such an approach to succeed.

14. Whilst this provides certainty for both applicants and agents to what information is required to validate an application, it removed the ability for officers to require bespoke information upfront before the 8/13/16 week timescale starts. For instance, the officer may be aware that there is a bat roost on the site, but there is no

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[1] The charging schedule and justification for such will be subject of a separate cabinet report.

requirement for a bat survey to be submitted in order for the application to be validated. The officer will need to either need to ask for the report during the processing of the application or refuse it on that basis, ultimately causing delay. However, the council has a pre-application service that applicants can use if they are unsure of what other information may be required outside of the local validation checklist.

15. Information requested with a planning application must meet statutory tests introduced by the Growth and Infrastructure Act. The requirements have been assessed taking this into account.

Consultation

16. A consultation was undertaken for planning officers and internal consultees in April 2025 (with no end date) including; Business Support (the validation team), all planning officers, trees, urban design & Heritage, and Policy. Following feedback, the checklist was amended and was reconsulted internally in June 2025 to planning officers; BNG/Biodiversity; Flooding and Drainage; and the Council's geoengineer. The checklist was amended and then reconsulted with team leaders in September 2025.

17. The checklist was published on the Council's Website, and an email went out to agents consulting on their views on the 6 October 2025 which ended on the 17 November 2025.

18. A summary of the feedback received in set out in **appendix 1.** These have been taken into account, and the checklist has been amended accordingly.

Options Appraisal

19. The options are to;

    a. Keep the existing local validation checklist and adopt it in its current form. This is not advised as its local requirements are now out of date.

    b. Adopt the proposed new local validation checklist.

Summary of financial implications

20. The new Local Validation checklist is worded to enable applications to remain invalid if they have not paid a relevant fee. This new validation checklist does not result in additional cost or itself result in additional payments. As such, the local validation checklist is not considered to have any financial implications.

Summary of legal implications

21. Legal services have been consulted on the Local Validation checklist but have raised no objections.

Summary of human resources implications

22. The New Validation Checklist is designed to improve efficiency at the validation stage of the planning process and therefore will result in efficiencies with the relevant Business Support Team. This local validation checklist will result in changes

to what is provided to officers as part of their planning applications. However, such changes are unlikely to result in material changes in human resource.

Summary of sustainability impact

23. Several requirements in the Local Validation Checklist relate to climate /sustainable/nature policies which ensures impact in these areas are considered within the planning application process. The associated aim is to mitigate negative implications and improve sustainable development within the area.

Summary of public health implications

24. The proposal is unlikely to have a material impact upon public health.

Summary of equality implications

25. A full EIA screening document has been completed and approved by the EIA panel - EIA

26. The Impact assessment summary sets out that he benefit of the change to the Local Validation Checklist is that it provides an up-to-date local validation checklist that is more objective in its requirements than that set out before. The key identified impacts are set out below;

27. **Visual impairment:** this is a document and there may be people with visual impairments seeking to use it. Therefore, it must be able to be read by relevant adaptive software (text to word). The document is shorter, and the checklists are presented as a list int the appendix which is easier to find and use such software with than the existing multiple separate PDF lists.

28. **Socio-economic : T**he checklist includes a provision to allow an application to be invalid if relevant fees are not paid. This includes if the application is invalid or submitted by email. This could increase the cost of the service for those users if the checklist is not clear. (the fees themselves and the principle of charging will be subject to a separate cabinet report). The limited discretion requires applicants/ agents to provide more information upfront which whilst assists with the smooth determination of the application has a cost implication. Obtaining scaled plans can be expensive, particularly for the public seeking improvements to their home. Taking this into account, householder applications do not have to provide scaled drawings, but they must be of a reasonable likeness and include dimensions.

29. **Neurodivergent :** Those who are neurodivergent may need to use the document. This means that the document needs to balance the need for information with clarity, simplicity and flexibility. The checklist is less discretionary than the current, setting out clearly what documents are required and when. The checklist itself is shorter and in a list form and in a visual matrix. This is easier to 'see' and navigate

30. The document is worded, where possible, in 'plain English' and navigable. The visual matrix is more accessible for those with more visual brains. The checklist is also 'text to word' enabled should this be a preferable way of processing

information. *T*he checklist, being more objective, could remove some flexibility and officer discretion as part of the checklist.

31. **Digital divide** - The local validation checklist is an online only document, so those with issues accessing internet (socio-economic status/ age/ disability) may struggle to view it. This is the current situation and a result of the current council wide protocol to move away from paper copies. However, officers still have discretion to accept lesser or alternative information where reasonable and necessary, considering the EIA needs of the applicant.

Summary of risk assessment

32. The current Local Validation Checklist is out of date and is not adopted, and relying on it to invalidate applications or require additional information beyond the National Validation Checklist risks challenge to the council, with monetary and reputational costs.

33. The proposed validation checklist seeks will provide a clear and objective local validation checklist and can be relied upon to require such additional information. There is a risk that the nature of the checklist will mean that some additional information is required during the application process causing some delay. However, it is considered that overall the provision will provide consistency and certainty at the start of the application process to its benefit.

Background papers

- Existing local validation checklist (Published work)

- National Planning Policy Guidance: Validation (Published work)

Appendices

Appendix 1: proposed new Validation checklist

Appendix 2: Proposed new Validation checklist Matrix

Appendix 3: Summary of Consultation Comments.