



FELIXSTOWE

TOWN COUNCIL

Planning Process

Planning applications for development are submitted to either East Suffolk Council which is the main planning authority for Felixstowe or to Suffolk County Council which has the ability to grant itself planning consent for items such as educational uses.

The Planning Authorities have to adhere to strict timetables set down by central government when considering any applications submitted to them. It is custom and practise for that authority to consult a wide range of stakeholders on that application such as the Highway Authority, Environmental Health, the water authorities, the Environment Agency, Natural England or other similar agencies which have direct involvement or influence on the proposed development and this will normally include immediate neighbours of the application site. Felixstowe Town Council is one such stakeholder as it represents the local residents and businesses that live or work within the town and may be affected by the proposals and is one of the first consultees to be contacted in this way.

Once an application is validated and registered it can be inspected by anyone and is given a reference number by the Planning Authority. That number and the site address are both used to reference the application proposal. A copy of the planning application is uploaded digitally to East Suffolk Council's website where it can be viewed remotely and currently a hard copy is also sent to the Town Council so that members of the public can view it physically. The Town Council uses a digital presentation of the application in its meetings and refers to the hard copy as backup.

Planning application proposals are submitted within a legal framework which basically comprises tiers of both legislation and policy guidance. It is the planning authority's responsibility to decide whether the application complies with the legal framework and the policy guidance. As a consultee, the Town Council can and does consider the policy guidance when assessing application proposals.

The Town Council interprets the documents and takes photographs of the application site although, unlike East Suffolk Council's Planning Officer, has no automatic right to enter the site unless invited to by the applicant. This process is undertaken by the Planning Administration Assistant who refers to planning policy and guidance within the Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management document and reports her findings to the Town Council's Planning & Environment Committee which meets every two weeks to consider proposals. Based on the information submitted and the advice it receives, the Committee makes a recommendation to the Planning Authority as to whether it feels an approval or refusal is appropriate in the circumstances. Compliance with policy and local knowledge are germane to the recommendation process by the Town Council but ultimately it is the Planning Authority's decision as to whether consent is granted or not.

Anyone is at liberty to make comments about the application to both the Town Council and the Planning Authority and comments will be taken into consideration by Town Councillors when making a recommendation. Comments should be based on relevant planning issues and not just whether someone likes the scheme or not. Guidance on this can be found on the East Suffolk Council website at <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/> .

Householder applications are normally decided at officer level at East Suffolk Council unless they are called in by a Councillor and larger more complicated applications will normally go before the Authority's committee for a decision.

East Suffolk Council has to review its Local Plan document periodically as, amongst other things, this sets targets for housing and population growth and allocates categories for land use. An adopted Local Plan has a 'life', a period during which its policies can be implemented and when targets should be met. The review process is cyclical and the Plan cannot be replaced until a new one has been adopted. This may take a long time as each stage has to be consulted on with relevant stakeholders. There are usually several component parts in a Local Plan which deal with different aspects of planning in the Authority's area of responsibility. East Suffolk Council is currently in the process of consulting on its proposals for the new Area Action Plan for the Felixstowe peninsula and further information about planning consultations and other planning matters can be found at <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/> .