**Planning Process**

Planning applications for development are submitted to either Suffolk Coastal

District 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 the District 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 the District’s Planning Officer, has no automatic

right to enter the site unless invited to by the applicant. This process is undertaken

by the Town Council’s Estates Officer 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 Suffolk Coastal District Council website at

[www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk](http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk).

Householder applications are normally decided at officer level at the District 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.

Suffolk Coastal District 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.

Suffolk Coastal District 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 [www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk](http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk).