

Marple Area Committee Having Less Influence Over Planning Decisions?

[Some notes produced by our committee member Joe Jessop following a discussion at a recent area committee – see below for a link to the actual discussion]

From 31st of October 2026 there will be a new 'national scheme of delegation'. This introduces a fundamental change of rules for consultation on planning applications with the public and with area committees.

All applications will have to accord with NPPF and the Local Plan (when that is ready), of course, but they will be separated into 2 categories.

'Schedule 1 applications' will include more minor applications, householder applications, minor residential schemes (fewer than 10 houses for example), minor commercial schemes and a range of technical consents including discharge of conditions lawful development certificates and non-material amendments. They will be delegated to officers for a decision and will not appear at Area Committees for discussion nor will public objections be considered.

'Schedule 2 applications' for larger schemes may be referred to the Planning & Highways Regulation Committee but only where statutory gateway tests are met . . . this effectively requires a nominated officer (proposed to be the Chief Planning Officer) and a nominated member (proposed to be the chair of the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee), who between them can argue for the application to be referred to the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee for determination when it raises either a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and other material considerations or an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the area. As part of the reform it seems, it is proposed that public representation on an application be moved from the Area Committee to the Planning & Highway Regulations Committee, closer to the point where the decision will be made.

It follows that not all applications will come to MAC so elected members would lose their call-in powers and the rules over the number of letters of objection that obliged an application to come before MAC would fall into desuetude. Indeed, though reports may be sent to MAC concerning some planning applications they will be for noting and comment only and not for deciding on outcomes. In effect 'decision making will be taken away from area committees and everything goes straight to Planning & Highways Regulations Committee: in essence, the 2 nominated people decide what comes to MAC.

All of this will require changes to the Council Constitution and presentation to the round of Area Committees and be considered by Planning and Highways Committee, Cabinet and the full Council in the next cycle.

There were, naturally, responses made by Councillors to the scheme but to present them here, which would require editing to fit the space, may do them an injustice. Please watch the webcam, item 7:

https://stockport.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/1118040