

Frequently Used Terms



Please note that this glossary of terms is intended as a general guide. It should not be relied upon, or taken to be a full interpretation of the law.

Affordable housing - low cost housing for sale or rent, often from a housing association. It is provided to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford accommodation through the open or low cost market, or other subsidised housing.

Agricultural dwelling - a dwelling which is subject to a condition that it shall only be occupied by someone who is employed or was last employed solely or mainly in agriculture, forestry or other appropriate rural employment.

Area of Special Control of Advertisements - an area which is specifically defined by the local planning authority because they consider its scenic, historical, architectural or cultural features are so significant that a stricter degree of advertisement control is justified in order to conserve visual amenity within that area. Much of South Cambridgeshire is within such an area.

Area Action Plan (AAP) – provides a statutory planning framework in the form of a set of detailed proposals for a particular area to be developed.

Backland development - development of a site which has no natural street frontage.

Biodiversity – The existence of a whole variety of plant and animal species. Often the subject of an Action Plan.

Breach of Condition Notice (BCN)
A notice served by the LPA when there has been a failure to comply with any condition or limitation imposed on a grant of planning permission.

Breach of Planning Control
Where development which requires planning permission has taken place, yet this permission has not been obtained.

Brownfield land - land that has been previously developed having been occupied by a permanent structure. The definition covers the curtilage of the development and therefore includes the gardens of residential properties. Agricultural and forestry buildings are usually excluded.

Building Control/Regulations – regulations separate from planning permission, which are concerned with the structural, health and safety aspects of new buildings and extensions.

Building notice – notice to carry out works without a detailed building regulations application.

Called-in application - a planning application referred to the Secretary of State for determination by him.

Circular – Government document that sets out policy and procedures, which have legal implications

Climate change - long-term changes in temperature, precipitation, wind and all other aspects of the Earth's climate.

Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) – legal method by which a Council or Government department may acquire land or property without the owner's agreement.

Conservation Area – statutorily designated area of special architectural or historic interest

Core Strategy - a Development Plan Document setting out the spatial vision and strategic objectives of the planning framework for an area,

Curtilage – the garden or yard, which belongs to a property.

Decision notice – formal letter, which either grants or refuses planning permission.

Deemed consent – planning permission or advertisement consent, which is automatically granted by virtue of certain regulations.

Delegated powers – powers granted to a planning officer to determine a planning application without reference to a committee.

Density - in the case of residential development, a measurement of either the number of dwellings per hectare (known as dph), or the number of habitable rooms per hectare (hrh).

Departure - a proposed development that is not in accordance with a local plan but which due to exceptional circumstances the local planning authority proposes to accept.

Design Guide – sets out important design principles that the Council will take into account when determining applications.

Development – any building, engineering or similar operation or any change of use of land or buildings that may require planning permission.

Development Brief – a Council statement or policy for a particular site, which is drawn up when a future development of the site is likely.

Development Control – the statutory process by which development is managed by the local planning authority.

Development Plan – the statutory plan for an area, which sets out the policy for future development over a given period.

Development Plan Document (DPD) – statutory plan that makes up part of the Local Development Framework.

Enforcement Notice - A notice served by the LPA to remedy an alleged breach of planning control by requiring a use to stop or building works to be removed.

Environmental assessment – detailed study carried out by an applicant of a major scheme to show how development would affect the local community and the environment.

Examination in Public (EIP) – Inquiry led by an independent planning inspector into proposals for and objections to Local Development Documents.

Full Application - where permission is granted for all of the details of the development. It may, however, be subject to conditions.

General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) – legal document containing lists of various uses and works that do, or do not, require planning permission.

Green Belt – designated area of open land in which most types of development are prohibited.

Greenfield land - an area that has not previously been developed.

Habitable room - any room except kitchens (unless they contain dining space), bathrooms, WCs or circulation space.

Informative – note attached to a planning permission advising the applicant of other legislation or matters which must be considered.

Injunction - Action sought in the County Court or High Court to restrain any actual, or expected breach of planning control.

Listed building - statutorily designated building of special architectural or historic interest.

Local Agenda 21 – an action plan by local authorities for achieving sustainable development in their area.

Local Development Document (LDD) – Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents

Local Development Framework (LDF) – Planning policy document that will eventually replace the Structure Plan and Local Plan. Consists of Local Development Documents and related statements.

Local Plan – statutory document that contains detailed policies for development and the use of land in an area, usually all of that within a district authority.

Material Planning Considerations - Government guidance, planning policies, planning standards which should be taken into account when determining a planning application.

Ombudsman – investigates complaints against a Council's action or failure to act (known as maladministration).

Outline application – an application that seeks to agree the principle of development. Where the application is approved, further details will need to be submitted (see 'reserved matters').

Parish Plan – A vision of how a town or village should address social, economic or environmental problems.

Permitted development – development that is granted planning permission by the GPDO or the Use Classes Order

Planning brief – See Development Brief.

Planning Contravention Notice (PCN) - A notice served by the LPA when it suspects there has been a breach of planning control and information is required about activities on the land or the nature of the occupiers' interests in the land.

Planning gain – an additional benefit to the community as a result of granting planning permission.

Planning obligation – legally binding document in which a developer promises to provide community benefits or is restricted in carrying out other specified works.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) – Planning Policy Guidance Note issued by the government on a variety of topics. Local planning policies should generally conform to this advice.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) – New form of government guidance that will replace PPGs over time. Similar to a PPG, though usually shorter.

Planning register – statutory record of planning applications available for public inspection.

Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) – Regional Policy Guidance, gradually being replaced by Regional Spatial Strategies

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – a broad development strategy for a region over a 15 – 20 year period.

Reserved Matters – Certain matters for which details were not approved as part of an outline application. These are defined to include details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale.

Section 106 agreement – see planning obligation.

Statement of Community Involvement - sets out the local planning authority's policy on how the community will be involved in the development of local development documents and planning applications.

Statutory instrument – legal document containing rules or regulations approved by Parliament but which is not a statute or Act of Parliament.

Stop Notice - A notice served in conjunction with an enforcement notice to require unauthorised activities to cease with almost immediate effect.

Structure Plan – statutory document that provides a strategic framework for development and the use of land in the County.

Sui generis – a use of land, which does not fall into any particular class of use and will therefore almost certainly require planning permission.

Supplementary planning guidance (SPG) – policy adopted by the Council,

usually after public consultation, to assist in determining applications.

Supplementary Planning Document – Informal policy that has been the subject of public participation (the new name for SPG).

Sustainable development – development which meets our needs without prejudicing future generations from meeting their needs.

Travel Plan – Sets out a series of measures to encourage the use of transport other than the private motor car. Sometimes called a 'Green Travel Plan'.

Unilateral Undertaking – similar to a planning obligation, but is usually proposed by the developer and enforced by other relevant parties if they consider it necessary to do so.

Urban Capacity Study – Assessment of vacant land within a built-up area, which could be developed.

Use Classes Order (UCO) – Document used by the local planning authority to determine whether certain changes of use need planning permission

Village Design Statement (VDS) – advisory document produced by a village community with the support of the local planning authority. Suggests how development should be carried out in harmony with the setting and character of the village.

Windfall – sites which are proposed for planning permission, but which have not been identified as such in a local plan or Local Development Document.

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