

# Notes

## Planning Agents and Architects Forum (PAAF)

09 February 2024, 10:00 – 13:00

Council Chamber, County Hall

### 1. Welcome and Introductions (OB)

- Welcome from Oliver Boulter, Strategic Manager Planning Services
- PAAF launched to provide opportunity for agents, architects, and planning staff to all engage face to face. Part of ongoing service improvements
- Planning Services looking for feedback and willing to tweak format and structure of PAAF when necessary to ensure it is and remains relevant

Introductions to Planning Services staff: James Brewer (JB), Planning Policy Manager; Carolyn Herbert (CH), Ecology Officer; Sarah Wilkinson (SW), Planning Development Manager; Russell Chick (RC), Planning Development Manager

### 2. Terms of Reference (OB)

[PAAF Terms of Reference](#) can be viewed on the council's website. They are there to ensure the forum is constructive and remains beneficial to attendees.

PAAF is to be held in person, on a quarterly basis. Dates, times, and venue will be publicised on the council's [PAAF website page](#). Agendas for future Forums will be publicised at least seven days in advance and will also be circulated directly to those agents and architects who have opted-in to the PAAF mailing list.

Attendees will have the opportunity to put forward suggested agenda items ahead of each forum by emailing [paaf@iow.gov.uk](mailto:paaf@iow.gov.uk).

### 3. Implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (JB & CH)

Overview of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and what it means for agents and architects, from the Planning Policy Manager (JB) and Ecology Officer (CH). It was acknowledged

that BNG is new for everyone. Locally and nationally, everyone will need to get used to BNG therefore staff will be as flexible and supportive as they can until it is embedded.

What is it?

- A requirement in law that development must increase the overall biodiversity value of a development by a minimum of 10% post completion.

Where has it come from?

- Introduced through The Environment Act 2021

When does it come into effect?

- Major development (10 plus units) from 12 February 2024
- All other site from 2 April 2024
- Some exemptions, including householder, PD, small scale self-build, 'de minimus habitat <25m<sup>2</sup>

Mandatory BNG is not applied retrospectively to planning applications that have already been submitted or granted permission prior to the implementation dates above.

The [Biodiversity Metric](#), created by DEFRA is the tool used to calculate Biodiversity Net Gain. The existing biodiversity value of a site will be measured by 'scoring' all habitats on site which is based in:

- Habitat size;
- Habitat condition;
- Habitat distinctiveness;
- Strategic significance;

A baseline habitat value should be taken in the optimum summer months to account for full array of habitat(s).

A post completion scoring also takes place to enable a comparison between the existing value of a site and what will be delivered through development or management.

It is the applicant's responsibility to submit a completed and dated metric with relevant planning applications. BNS is in addition to and does not replace or reduce existing protection for protected sites, habitats or species or any mitigation required for those.

See [government statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides](#) for more information.

The main ones include:

- The [statutory biodiversity metric](#)
- The draft biodiversity gain plan template
- The [Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan](#) template
- A package of [Biodiversity Net Gain guidance](#)

How will BNG be incorporated into the planning application process?

- As part of the pre-application advice service. Applicants need to design BNG in at the earliest stage to achieve the best outcomes
- Validation of planning applications, ensuring all the correct BNG information is supplied
- LPA to review the information submitted with the planning application (using specialist ecological input where needed)
- Add relevant conditions and or agree S106 clause to secure BNG
- Check the Biodiversity Gain Plan
- Receive and check BNG monitoring reports
- Carrying out enforcement if required

What will major applications need to submit from 12 February 2024?

- Applications forms on the planning portal are being updated
- Statement as to whether planning permission is subject to BNG and if not what exemption applies
- Completed and dated biodiversity Metric. **Applicants are asked to use the macro disabled version.**
- Pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat at the date of application
- Statement confirming whether the biodiversity value of onsite habitat is low on the application date due to any activity that has led to the degradation of habitats, with supporting evidence of the activity and degradation
- Description of any irreplaceable habitat

- Scale plan showing existing onsite habitat at the application date including any irreplaceable habitat

Without all the above information, the application cannot be validated.

It is also important to note that specific tree and or ecology information reports will need to be submitted in addition to the BNG documentation.

For further information check the [Isle of Wight Council's Ecology webpages](#)

**Action:** Agents and architects encouraged to get in contact with Planning Services with any issues, concerns, or experiences once BNG comes into play.

#### 4. SUDS SPD (JB)

- Currently out for consultation, closing on 8 March. Draft document tries to provide all advice.
- This may become mandatory in the near future. However, SUDS not something to be afraid of. It can aid water management.
- Development can actually help reduce surface water and reduce flooding. Development can have a positive impact on water management. Therefore the documents are being developed so that they are in place if it becomes mandatory.
- Planning services are trying to educate on the positives. By actively taking out and managing rainwater, drainage becomes more sustainable.

**Action:** Agents and architects encouraged to read documents out for consultation and any comments will be welcomed.

#### 5. Health Contributions SPD (JB)

- Consultation expected to start 16 February for six weeks.
- Working in partnership with Integrated Care Board, the SPD will set out how any contributions will be calculated for any development that meets the threshold.
- Could come into effect following May cabinet meeting.

**Action:** Agents and architects encouraged to read documents once published for consultation and any comments will be welcomed.

#### 6. Statement of Community Involvement 2024 (JB)

- [Statement of Community Involvement has now been published.](#)

- Draft version consulted on last year. It has since been reviewed by colleagues in the Design and Print team to ensure it is more accessible.
- The big change is that people are no longer notified if an application they have commented on is readvertised.
- Updated section on Neighbourhood Plan consultation
- Added social media platforms was a way of providing information in local plan consultations.

## 7. Refresh of validation requirements (SW & RC)

- Looking to update local validation requirements to help front-load the application process with the right information and enable applications to be determined more quickly.
- This will follow the changes to national validation introduced by BNG.

## 8. Delivering Peer Review Recommendations (OB)

- Brief overview given of the [LGA Planning Peer Review](#) and the recommendations which came from it.
- An awful lot of work has already been undertaken, but recognises that more needs to be done to shine a light on the progress and service improvements already made.
- A Planning Services Improvement Steering Group (PSISG) was established in October 2022 and identified four priority workstreams from the Peer Review recommendations/ actions:
  1. Progressing the Local Plan
  2. Improving the Pre-application advice service
  3. Improving Development Management function
  4. Improving Enforcement function

All with the overarching aim to improve communication, trust and customer service.

- Given the political processes involved with point 1 the Steering Group asked Officers to focus on points 2 - 4.
- Overview of work underway including workshops carried out with agents and architects to gain insight into what works and what does not work in relation to the Pre-application service.

Further workshops with users – staff and public- planned to better inform any potential changes to the service.

- Relaunch of the officer of the day is another example of recent service improvements. The walk-in service, re-launched earlier in the month, has already proved popular with the public.
- Updates will be made to the website in due course.

## 9. IPS update (JB)

- The IPS was due to go to full council in January but was delayed after central government published a revised NPPF on 19 December 2024. It is currently in a period of assessment.
- It is now due to go to full council in March.
- Once published for the Regulation 19 period for representation in some instances weight could be given to the emerging policies.

## 10. Q&A

**Q- As a developer, development on the island seems no longer viable, particularly with new regs, BNG etc.**

As a service, and as the LPA, we have to balance all policies in place, and ensure when combined that policies do not stop development. Planning Services is not trying to put unnecessary barriers in the way of development. The island needs small developments, but we need to ensure sustainability.

**Q- What is the council doing to ensure it's tourism policy remains relevant? E.g. too many old fashioned hotels, increase in Air BnB.**

A - Policy needs to be reflective as possible. The market has and continues to change, therefore the policy needs to reflect and adapt to changing behaviours. The team reviews the impact on development and changing needs. The draft IPS includes refreshed tourism policies, and if published for consultation the sector will be able to comment on those policies.

## 11. Future Forum dates agenda items

[Forum dates can be viewed on the PAAF web page](#) of the council's website.

The Forum dates for 2024 to 2025 are:

- Friday 3 May 10:00- 13:00
- Friday 19 July 10:00- 13:00

- Friday 18 October 10:00- 13:00
- Friday 10 January 2025

## 12. AOB

None