



PLANNING APPLICATION CONSIDERATIONS (ENGLAND ONLY)

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guidance note is to help members explore the process of creating and submitting a planning application. This note also provides information on permitted development rights contained within the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO 2015) and the prior approval process associated with these.

Gaining full planning permission is continuously becoming more complicated, expensive and time consuming. Therefore, members should consider from the outset all the documents, and surveys that an application will require.

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1. SCOPING AN APPLICATION

Local planning authorities (LPA) play a crucial role in applying planning policies and do so within a framework that is tightly structured by planning legislation, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance.

At the time of writing, Devolution and local government reorganisation are changing governance arrangements in parts of England. Some areas are moving towards new or expanded Strategic Authorities, including Mayoral Strategic Authorities and combined county authorities. Applicants should check the current arrangements where devolution or reorganisation is underway.

A valid, well-prepared planning application requires more than proposed plans and an application form. It must meet statutory requirements, address national and local planning policy, justify the proposal, and provide sufficient information for the LPA to assess impacts, mitigation and benefits. Inadequate documentation can result in an application being invalidated or refused, causing delay, cost and uncertainty.

1.1 Types of Planning Application

There are many different types of planning application, and it is important to understand which application route is the most appropriate for your proposals:

- **Full Planning Application:** Standard type of application that results in a grant of planning permission for how a site can be developed. A full planning application includes all the relevant forms, plans and information for the proposed development including materials, access, landscaping, and appearance.
- **Outline Application:** Agrees the general principles for a proposed development without full, detailed designs. This application type is followed by a Reserved Matters Application.
- **Reserved Matters Applications:** Follows the granting of an Outline Application. Provides details on the matters that weren't approved at Outline stage such as layout, landscaping and materials.
- **Non-Material Amendment Application:** Follows the granting of a planning permission and is used to make a minor change to that planning permission. The change needs to be non-material (not impacting the nature of the approved development).
- **Section 73 Application:** Used to vary or remove planning conditions that are attached to a planning consent (under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).
- **Discharge of Condition Application:** Submitted following the granting of planning permission and is used to fulfil the requirements of planning conditions attached to decision notices.
- **Certificate of Lawful Use or Development:** Used to confirm that a proposed or existing use or development is lawful for planning purposes. Can be used prior to

development or post-development or in response to enforcement action. Further information on these processes can be found within CLA guidance note reference GN07-24.

- **Prior Approval:** Used when permitted development rights apply, but the development still requires prior approval from the LPA. See Section 6 of this Guidance Note for more information.
- **Prior Notification:** Used when permitted development rights (contained within the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 apply, some permitted development rights require the LPA to be notified of the intention for the development to take place; they will then assess if Prior Approval is required for some aspects of the development or if a Full Planning Application should be submitted.
- **Permission in Principle Applications and Technical Details Applications:** A streamlined way to obtain planning consent, comprising two planning stages. Permission in Principle (PiP) is like an Outline Application and establishes the principle of development and then grants permission for that development 'in principle'. A Technical Details Application must then be submitted, and this is more like a full planning application than a reserved matters application. Once the Technical Details Application is approved, the development can proceed subject to conditions as a normal full planning application.
- **Householder Applications:** Specific type of application used for alterations and extensions to dwellings.
- **Listed Building Consent Applications:** For alterations to Listed Buildings only and these can be submitted, alongside a full planning application, if planning consent is also required. These applications are free and when planning permission isn't required, they can be submitted standalone. They are required for any work that will affect a listed building such as alterations, extensions or demolition work.
- **Advertisement Application:** Sometimes required for the display of advertisements.

The rest of this section sets out the next steps to submitting a planning application and what is required beforehand. It explains the core components of a typical full planning application, explains why each stage should be followed and is required, and clarifies when additional documents may be necessary.

1.2 Pre-application

It may be appropriate to submit a pre-application enquiry to the LPA before making a full planning application, although this is optional. Pre-application advice can help identify the LPA's initial views, highlight potential issues and allow changes to be made before submission. The process is usually confidential and remains outside the public domain.

The more information provided at this stage, the more useful the LPA's advice is likely to be. Although pre-application advice can add time and cost, it can improve the quality of the final submission and the prospects of approval.

Not all LPAs offer pre-application advice, and the scope, timescales and fees vary between authorities.

Pre-application advice is most useful where a proposal is unusual, higher risk, technically complex, or on a site with a complicated planning history.

1.3 Planning Precedents

Previously submitted and live planning applications can be viewed on the LPA's website (often contained within the Planning section and is called 'view application and decisions'). Undertaking a search of these can provide useful comparables of determined applications or appeals, providing helpful precedents. Decision notices and Officer Reports detail the assessment and (in some cases) reasons for refusal, citing relevant specific planning policies with interpretation.

A search of the Planning Inspectorate website for a national comparison of planning appeal decisions (case law) can also be useful in some cases. Understanding how similar schemes have been assessed within a local area can enable the inclusion of relevant information that can be incorporated into an application. Improving the quality of the application submission and demonstrating that steps have been taken to comply with policy will contribute to improving chances of planning success.

1.4 Professional and Expert Input

Given the complexity of the planning system, we recommend using a professional Planning Consultant to prepare and submit a full planning application. A list of professional planners can be found on the CLA's [Business Directory](#)¹. Planning consultants can help not only with preparing the application but also by project managing an application, leading a team of consultants (such as Architects, Ecologists, Landscape Designers etc.) and by monitoring the application post-submission and liaising with LPA Planning Officers. The use of an expert can become invaluable, and you will need to choose the expertise of your team depending on the complexity of your proposal.

Increasingly, planning is becoming more complicated. This may necessitate not only a Planning Consultant but also specialists to produce technical surveys and reports such as:

- A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) environmental report and management plan
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and subsequent reports such as bat, owl and newt surveys
- Flood risk assessment where a site is over 1ha or located within Flood Zones 2 or 3
- Tree survey (arboricultural assessment and management plan)
- Structural survey may be required for a conversion; demolition works or works on land with a high risk of ground movement
- Transport assessment
- Heritage statement
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

¹ <https://www.cla.org.uk/listings/> Note: planners can be found under the classifications; Land Agents, Land Promoters, Planning Consultants, Surveyors and Town Planning

- Lighting, noise and vibrations impact assessments
- Contamination reports

Please note that the above list highlights the number of considerations that may be relevant. In many cases only a selection of the above reports will be needed.

For the applicant's own purposes in designing the best possible proposal, it may be appropriate to conduct a utility survey, business plan assessment and general property assessment. The property assessment should consider the property ownership, boundaries and exploration of the rights. Including access rights, restrictive covenants (including overages that are also known as "claw back" clauses), reserved matters such as the ownership of mineral rights by a third party.

1.5 Business Plan

Running parallel or preferably in advance of the planning application should be a business plan. The function of the business plan is to demonstrate that the proposal is viable and highlight any items that must be addressed. Any identified factors may need to be incorporated into the planning application, such as a larger car park area, renewable energy provision, specific wording for the description of development, financial contributions (such as Community Infrastructure Levy) or BNG requirements. In some cases, a business plan may be essential to demonstrate a business need and justification. Submitting a business plan as part of a planning application may satisfy specific planning policies and enable approval. This is frequently the case with the creation of agricultural workers dwellings or new agricultural buildings.

The formation of this plan must incorporate all relevant stakeholders in the current and proposed business/property, plus any professional advisors, such as accountants and bank managers.

Planning is an expensive and risky exercise; it is important that it results in a valuable permission at the end of the process to justify the investment.

2. PLANNING APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

A full planning application must contain a minimum number of documents to ensure that it is valid when submitted to the LPA. Missing information can result in the application being made invalid and returned for further information. This will delay the planning process. We encourage you to read this guidance note in conjunction with the relevant LPA's planning validation checklist which can be found on the LPA website.

2.1 Planning Application Forms

Every application must begin with the correct planning application form, submitted via the Planning Portal or directly to the LPA. The form captures essential information including:

- Site address and description
- Type of development (including description of development)
- Ownership certificates
- Agricultural land declarations

- Details of existing and proposed floorspace (if relevant)

The application form establishes the legal basis of the application and confirms that the applicant has authority to submit it. Ownership certificates and notices are particularly important: incorrect certification can invalidate the entire application. It is important that the description of the type is accurate and unambiguous.

2.2 Required plans and documents

2.2.1 Site Location Plan

A site location plan is mandatory. This plan identifies the application site in its wider context and must:

- Be drawn to a recognised metric scale (usually 1:1250 or 1:2500)
- Show the site edged in red
- Show a north point
- Show any other land owned or controlled by the applicant edged in blue
- Include surrounding roads (ideally with at least two road names), buildings, and features

The site location plan allows the LPA and consultees to understand where the development is located and how it relates to neighbouring land uses.

2.2.2 Site Block Plan (Layout Plan)

A site block plan shows the application site in more detail than the location plan. The plan must be drawn at a scale of 1:200 or 1:500 and typically include:

- Existing and proposed buildings
- A north point
- Boundaries, fences, and walls
- Access points, parking, and turning areas
- Trees, hedges, and landscape features
- Drainage features or services (where relevant)

This plan is essential for assessing layout, access (including any public rights of way), and site constraints, and must be consistent with the proposed drawings.

2.2.3 Existing and Proposed Drawings

Most applications require existing and proposed drawings, including:

- Floor plans
- Elevations
- Roof plans (where relevant)
- Sections (where changes in level are important)

Drawings must be:

- To scale (e.g. 1:50 or 1:100)
- Include a north point
- Clearly labelled
- Accurate and internally consistent

Existing drawings allow the LPA to understand the baseline situation. Proposed drawings show exactly what is being changed or built, enabling assessment of scale, design, appearance, and neighbour impacts.

2.2.4 Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement (DAS)

A Planning Statement and the Design and Access Statement (DAS) are related but serve different purposes. The Planning Statement assesses and justifies the proposal against relevant legislation and planning policy, while the DAS explains the design approach, including use, layout, scale, appearance, access and landscaping.

Together, these statements provide the narrative justification for the proposal and assist the planning officer's assessment. They are particularly important for complex sites, sensitive locations such as Green Belt or conservation areas, or proposals that depart from policy. In practice, the two documents are often combined.

2.2.5 Supporting Technical Reports

Depending on the nature and location of the development, additional technical documents may be required. The local authority's validation checklist sets out exactly which reports are required for which type of application and must be reviewed at an early stage.

All documents should be consistent and mutually supporting. Common examples of surveys and technical reports include:

Ecology and Biodiversity

The Environment Act 2021 requires all development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to deliver a minimum 10% gain for biodiversity. All development sites over 0.2ha in size must consider BNG and prepare and submit an assessment. Further information regarding BNG and planning considerations can be found in CLA guidance note GN26-29.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Protected species surveys

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) combines a desk survey and site assessment to identify if there are any protected habitats or species. Follow up specific assessments will determine any impacts on habitats and species and suggest mitigation.

Heritage Statement

A Heritage Statement or Heritage Impact Assessment will be required where development affects listed buildings, conservation areas, or archaeological assets.

Transport and Highways

Depending on the scale and nature of a proposal, a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment may be required to assess traffic, highway safety, and accessibility. Some LPAs may also require an access plan demonstrating that the necessary visibility splays can be achieved to ensure safe access for the development.

Flood Risk and Drainage

If the proposed development is located within Flood Zones 2 or 3, or over 1ha in size then a Flood Risk Assessment should be submitted as part of the application. A Sustainable

Drainage Strategy (SuDs) detailing how surface water and foul sewage will be dealt with should also be submitted if relevant.

Trees and Landscape

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan may need to be included in an application where trees, notably one's with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are impacted.

Landscape visual impact assessment

A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) evaluates how proposed development may alter the landscape character and visual amenity of an area. This may be necessary where trees, hedgerows, or landscape character may be affected.

2.3 Planning Application Fee

Every planning application must be accompanied by the correct fee, calculated according to national regulations. Underpayment will automatically result in invalidation. The Planning Portal has a tool that can be used to calculate the correct planning fee -

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/app/fee-calculator>

3. PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan for an area unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant local planning policies (development plan) for a local area can be found on the LPA website.

The NPPF is a material consideration for any planning application and carries significant weight in the assessment of proposals.

Understanding and addressing local policy requirements early is critical to achieving a positive planning outcome, as an adopted Local Plan takes primacy in local decision making.

Some areas also have a Neighbourhood Plan which contains policies for a smaller area (such as a Parish or group of Parishes). These must also be considered as part of any planning application. To find out if your area has a Neighbourhood Plan, please refer to the LPA website. Not all areas have one, but where present they can be influential.

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England. Policies contained within the NPPF must be reviewed when preparing a planning application to ensure compliance with the national rules. If a proposal is not in accordance with the NPPF then it is unlikely to comply with the local development plan for an area. Where the NPPF is inconsistent with local policy the NPPF should be given overriding weight.

In addition to the NPPF, the [Planning Practice Guidance](#) (PPG) provides guidance that supports the NPPF. The PPG can be used to understand NPPF policies in more detail.

3.2 Local Planning Policy

The development plan for an area is usually available in the planning policy section of the LPA's website. It may comprise one or more documents, sometimes described as a Local Plan or Core Strategy. Where a new Local Plan is being prepared, both the adopted and emerging policies should be considered. Applicants should check the date and status of any policy relied on.

All the relevant policies to the proposed development must be assessed and complied with. An assessment of both these policies and the relevant NPPF policies should be undertaken within the submitted Planning Statement.

Please note that, at the time of writing, planning policy is changing. Preparing local planning policy is often slow, complex and costly. As a result, local policy may not always reflect the latest national policy, particularly where an LPA has not yet had time to update its plans. This may be more likely where an LPA is reorganising or is waiting for new national policy to be published. In these cases, the NPPF will often take precedent.

3.2.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide additional detail for specific topics or areas in addition to the LPAs adopted development plan. These documents do not carry the same weight as Local Plan policies but are material considerations.

Common SPDs include:

- Design guides and design codes
- Parking standards
- Affordable housing guidance
- BNG guidance
- Developer contributions (e.g. Section 106)
- Householder extensions guidance

3.2.2 Policies Map

Most LPAs provide an online interactive local plan map, showing the following planning designations. These assist in understanding what may apply to a development site and as such, which planning policies are relevant. Policy maps can include the following:

- Green Belt
- National Park and other areas with statutory protection, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Conservation Areas
- Designated green or open spaces
- Flood zones (the central government website can be found [here](#))
- Allocated sites
- Settlement boundaries
- Previous local planning applications

4. SUBMISSION VIA PLANNING PORTAL

Most planning applications are submitted through the government's Planning Portal: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>

After creating an account, select the relevant application type, complete the form and upload the required PDF documents. Plans must retain their scale when converted to PDF. The portal may identify required information and prevent submission until the form plus supporting documents are complete.

5. APPLICATION PROCESS AND DETERMINATION

Once submitted, the LPA will validate the application, by checking that all the relevant documents and plans have been submitted, and the application fee has been paid. If any of the plans are not drawn to scale or the fee has been calculated incorrectly, this can invalidate the application.

Once validated, which usually occurs within a week of submission, the statutory determination period begins. Typically, a standard application should be determined within 8 weeks (13 weeks for major applications). Despite government policy requiring all planning applications to be determined within a 26-week deadline, many LPAs are unable to meet this deadline.

In some cases, the LPA may request an extension of time to allow them to review the application or provide an opportunity for statutory consultees to provide comments. When determining whether to permit an extension of time, each situation is unique. We advise agreeing to such an extension to avoid the LPA simply refusing the application.

Contact with the LPA, via the Planning Officer and potentially local Councillors can help ensure that the nature of the application is understood and can ensure the application is reviewed in a timely manner. Any discussion may require professional advice; it must always be respectful and represent a reasoned balanced view in line with planning policy. Also note that LPAs and Planning Officers are under no obligation to contact an Applicant unless it is to inform you of their decision. Therefore, it is key to be proactive and timely with any contact you make.

5.1 Who makes the decision?

Planning applications are determined by the LPA, usually by a Planning Officer under delegated powers or, for larger, more complex or contentious applications, by Planning Committee.

Planning Officers

Planning Officers assess applications against planning policy and other material considerations, including design, amenity, highways and ecology.

Planning Committees

Planning Committees comprise elected councillors. Officers make recommendations, but councillors vote on whether permission should be granted or refused. Applicants, supporters and objectors may be able to speak at committee meetings.

5.2 Appeal process

If an application is refused, then an appeal can be made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). The planning refusal decision notice will outline the timeframe and procedure to make a valid appeal. The appeal can take the form of a written submission, informal hearing or public inquiry.

6. POST PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Before implementing planning permission, applicants will need to address several matters including the following:

6.1 Planning conditions

A planning condition is a requirement imposed by a LPA when granting planning permission. Conditions control how, when, and in what manner development is carried out, to make an otherwise unacceptable proposal acceptable in planning terms. Planning conditions can be pre-commencement, during construction, pre-occupation or set out operational limits. Some conditions require discharging, but others may simply require compliance and no subsequent application. It is important that you fully understand the implications of these conditions.

6.2 Community Infrastructure Levy

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge that local authorities can apply to new development to help fund the infrastructure needed to support local growth.

The levy is charged per square metre on certain types of new development, and the fees are set locally. Whilst exemptions and reliefs exist, there are strict procedural requirements to follow to qualify for these. Relevant notices must be served to the LPA at the correct time in the process. If not, exemptions or reliefs may be revoked, or a surcharge will be applied. In some cases, CIL payments can reach tens of thousands of pounds and leave proposals unviable.

6.3 Section 106 Agreements

In addition to the planning documents, a Section 106 agreement (S106) (of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) may need to be entered into. This is a legal obligation negotiated with the LPA, requiring contributions towards infrastructure or community needs arising from the development, to make it more acceptable. A S106 agreement can also be used to mitigate against harm or secure off-site contributions such as BNG. It is negotiated as part of the planning process.

6.4 Contracts

Ensuring that you have all the relevant arrangements and contracts in place with builders and trades who may be delivering the whole or part of the development.

It can be useful to scope out the works to check that all items are in place to allow for as easy a construction process as possible. This process should devote attention to ensuring that all relevant health and safety items, utilities and insurances are in place.

6.5 Building Safety Levy

From 1 October 2026 the Building Safety Levy (set out in The Building Safety Levy (England) Regulations 2025) is a new mandatory charge on major residential developments. The tax will be set locally, with greenfield development being charged double the rate of brownfield development.

It will not apply to supported housing, Affordable Housing or housing built by non-profit registered providers.

Members must not overlook the upcoming levy and should factor the cost into their Business Plan.

6.6 Waste Disposal

Construction works and the subsequent use of the property will generate a certain amount of waste. Following the CLA's lobbying work, the government are taking a stronger approach in tackling waste crime.

You are legally responsible² for ensuring that waste from your site is properly disposed of. This includes conducting due diligence of everyone in the supply chain. Records and receipts of disposal should be kept from verified contractors to avoid enforcement being taken against you, with stringent penalties being applied, if waste isn't properly disposed of. The CLA has more guidance on this area.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

National Planning Policy Framework - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

CLA Guidance on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn25-08-national-planning-policy-framework-december-2024-update-england/>

Planning Practice Guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

Local planning authority finder - <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Flood risk map - <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

Town and Country Planning Act – <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents>

Planning Portal - <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 – This legislation covers what permitted development rights exist
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/596/contents>

² Important legislation is contained in section 38 Environmental Protection Act 1990 and regulation 38 Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016

CLA Guidance on Permitted Development Rights for Temporary Buildings and Uses of Land - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn25-14-permitted-development-rights-for-temporary-buildings-and-uses-of-land-england-only/>

CLA Guidance on Getting Heritage Consent - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn25-03-getting-heritage-consents-and-heritage-relevant-planning-consents-in-england/>

CLA Guidance on Archaeological Features including Scheduled Monuments on your Land (England and Wales) - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn23-24-archaeological-features-including-scheduled-monuments-on-your-land-england-and-wales/>

CLA Guidance on Listed Buildings - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn24-22-listed-buildings-what-listing-includes-fixtures-and-attached-and-curtilage-structures-england-and-wales/>

CLA Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn05-24-biodiversity-net-gain-planning-considerations-england-only/>

CLA Guidance on Nutrient Neutrality - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn15-22-nutrient-neutrality-impact-on-development/>

CLA Guidance on Certificates of lawfulness of existing use of development (CLEUD) and Certificates of proposed use or development (CLOPUD) - <https://www.cla.org.uk/advice/gn07-24-certificates-of-lawfulness-of-existing-use-of-development-cleud-and-certificates-of-proposed-use-or-development-clopud/>

The Planning Inspectorate - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate>

8. CONTACT

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