

9 STEPS TO INFLUENCE A PLANNING APPLICATION

1. LOOK AT THE PLANNING APPLICATION

All planning applications are available to view on the relevant local planning authority's website. You can also visit the planning department in person and simply ask to view the planning application documents.

2. VISIT THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT TO ASSESS ITS LIKELY EFFECTS

Take photos of the site and anywhere else where you think will be affected. You can send in photos with your comments.

3. DECIDE WHETHER THE PROPOSAL WILL AFFECT YOUR INTEREST IN THE LOCAL AREA

These must be relevant to the planning application. Extra traffic, impact on bats and birds, visual intrusion/loss of light, loss of residents amenity etc are issues that matter, but do remember, house prices and views from private properties are not a planning consideration.

4. EXAMINE RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND STRATEGIES

You can look at copies of the National Planning Policy Framework, Strategic Plan, local plan, and Neighbourhood Plans (where they exist) at your local planning authority's office, libraries or on the authority's website. Think about how you can use the policy wording to support your arguments.

In addition, consider looking at other national and local strategies. For example, if you are concerned about:

- rural landscapes and local character, look at [Natural England's Natural Character Area Profiles](#);
- ecological impacts, look at www.magic.gov.uk for environmental designations that are relevant;
- transport issues, refer to the Local Transport Plan;
- flood risk data is available for free from www.data.gov.uk or by request.
- There are other issues such as design, crime, supporting infrastructure, development contributions, air and water quality etc.

5. DECIDE ON YOUR ACTION

Depending on your concerns and the strength of policies supporting your view, you need to decide whether to accept, seek amendment, actively support or outright object to the application.

You may feel that the principle of a scheme is okay, but that alteration to the access, design and/or layout, etc of a proposal would reduce harmful impacts. In these cases, you can write a letter of support subject to improvements being agreed. Minor alterations can be made to an application without resubmitting another one – so it's important to follow the progress of the application carefully. In cases where you oppose the principle and you see the balance between benefit and harm being towards harm you should lodge an objection, stating clearly what harm would be caused and why the authority ought to refuse the grant of permission.

6. SPEAK TO THE PLANNING OFFICER

When you have considered the application details, have read relevant planning policies and have focused your concerns, it is useful to speak to the planning case officer responsible for the application. Remember that they are doing their job. They have to show balance and have to consider the application in accordance with stated planning policies. Like you, they are human, and should be treated courteously.

7. PUT YOUR COMMENTS IN WRITING AND SEND THE LETTER TO THE PLANNING AUTHORITY

If speaking to the planning officer does not satisfy your concerns and you still feel strongly about adverse impacts of a planning application, then write to the planning department. You can either comment online, send an email or a letter. Be as clear and concise as possible, clearly stating why you think the application should be refused. Remember that your objections must relate to relevant issues, so refer to any relevant policies in the development plan if you can.

8. GATHER SUPPORT FOR YOUR VIEWS

Think about gathering support from other members of your community, elected representatives within the parish council or local authority. You can also contact your MP or MEP. The planning officer will consult other officers in the local planning authority about an application. These will include conservation, highways, public rights of way, ecological and housing officers. If you feel any of these specialists may be able to help, contact them to express your concerns and see if they will raise them in an official capacity with the planning officer.

Depending on the issue, you should also consider speaking to statutory agencies such as the Highways Agency, English Heritage, Natural England and Environment Agency....

...This will apply particularly to developments affecting nationally designated nature conservation sites, designated landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), listed buildings, and those that are close to water or in flood plains. Other local groups can also provide valuable support. There are a wide variety of these groups including historical societies, community action groups and environmental organisations such as Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, RSPB or The Ramblers.

9. SPEAK AT THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Applications are decided (or “determined” in the jargon) at either planning committees (or “planning boards”) or by planning officers who are allowed to make delegated decisions about small, uncontentious applications.

If the application is being determined by the planning committee, you can speak at the meeting. You must inform the local planning authority beforehand. If you are allowed to speak, you’ll only get three minutes to get your points across! Best of luck!

Each of the 6 local planning authorities across Gloucestershire has planning committee dates and procedures in place. Please find them on the respective websites. There are also joint plans for minerals and waste, and transport plans for the relevant Highway Authority.

If you are in a group, decide who’ll best represent you at the committee. If one person can cover all the issues within the allotted time, there is no need for other group members to repeat what they have said. If there are a range of issues, which cannot be dealt with in one go, try to split the content according to the issue and the speakers’ expertise. Write a note beforehand. Practice reading it aloud to make sure you are familiar with it, and don’t over run your allotted time. This will help you stick to key points. Committee members might ask questions about what you say, so do make sure you can support any comments with evidence. If you cannot justify what you say, it is best to leave it out, as you’ll damage your case if you can’t back up claims.

APPEALS AND INQUIRIES

Applicants who are refused planning permission have the right to appeal to the Secretary of State against the decision. This will be dealt with by the Government’s Planning Inspectorate. Members of the public affected by a planning decision cannot appeal themselves. Alternatively, a local planning authority may approve an application but defer the final decision to the Secretary of State if it goes against the authority’s policies. The Secretary of State will decide whether the application needs a thorough examination at a public inquiry.