



THE PLANNING APPLICATION PROCESS – General guidance notes

If you have decided that you would like to build an extension or modify your property in some way then you should make inquiries as to whether you need to apply for planning permission.

If you believe you need planning permission, then contact your local council planning department for advice. They should be able to tell you whether or not you do need permission before starting any building work. If they advise you that permission is required, you will need to prepare a planning application which can either be completed on line or more traditionally with a Planning Application form. If it is the later ask the council how many copies of the application they wish to receive (usually four copies) and also how much they charge. Local Authority householder planning application fees are standard and currently cost £150 in England.

You will also need to prepare and submit plans of the existing building and clearly show what you are proposing to do. Again, several copies may be required and they must be at a specified scale, often 1:50 or 1:100. Site plans, normally at 1:500 and 1:1250 will be required by the council to give them an accurate idea of where the property is situated. Boundaries of the property must be clearly marked on these maps in red, and appropriate notices served in line with planning requirements.

How the Council Processes Applications

The council should acknowledge receipt of your application within a couple of days of receiving them. They will then publish your application onto the Register of Planning Applications that the Council is legally required to maintain and make available for public inspection. These applications are then publicised to the relevant people and organisations. This will most likely include your neighbours, which is why it is a very good idea to inform your neighbours of your planned extension.

To ensure the application is thoroughly assessed a planning officer will visit your property to check out the proposed positioning of the extension and to ensure that the plans submitted match the current layout of the property.

At this stage representations made by interested parties will be considered. This is done by the planning officer who co-ordinates all relevant information and prepares a report on the application and how it should be determined. If the application is straight forward and not controversial the Chief Planning Officer may be able to determine the result of a planning application.

How Long Does the Process Take?

As a guideline, the council should decide your application within eight weeks. If it cannot do so, it will usually seek your written consent to extend the period. If, after the end of the eight week period, you have not heard from the council either giving/refusing consent or asking for an extension, you can

appeal to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. But appeals can take several months to decide and it may be quicker to reach agreement with the council.

Conditions

Where appropriate, the Council is able to impose conditions on your planning permission which may limit or control the way the development can be implemented. Some conditions need to be discharged prior to any work commencing and these should be formally discharged with your local authority.

You may need therefore to complete another application for a discharge of conditions and a local authority fee of £25 per application will be required (for householder applications) - so if you have several conditions that need discharging they should all be done at the same time.

Refusal of Permission

What can you do if your planning application is turned down? A council must give sound planning reasons when refusing planning permission or imposing a condition. Council staff will be happy to explain these reasons or conditions if they are not clear. It is probably worth discussing with the council whether making changes to your plans will affect the outcome of the application. A modified application can often be submitted free of charge within 12 months of a refusal being made.

Appeals

If you think your application has been unfairly treated by the council, you can make an appeal to the Secretary of State. Any appeals must be made within 12 weeks of the date of the council's notice of decision. Appeals are intended as a last resort and they can take several months to decide; however a householder appeal fast track is now in operation to help speed up this process. It is often quicker to discuss with the council whether changes to your proposal would make it more acceptable.

