



Look at the application

To find out more about a planning application in your area, your first step is to arrange a visit to your local planning authority or visit its website.

Most local authorities now place all planning applications on their website.

The local planning authority is the local government body responsible for taking decisions on planning applications within its area. The majority of decisions are taken by your local district or borough council, as the relevant local planning authority. The council's planning officer responsible for the application will be able to help you understand the application.

Applications are kept in the planning register

Each local planning authority must keep a register of all the planning applications it receives (according to the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, article 2).

To see a copy of a planning application, along with any maps, plans and supporting documents, you need to access this register.

The register is usually kept at the local planning authority's main office

Call in advance

>Telephone the planning department in advance of a visit for details of opening hours and to check that the relevant up-to-date file will be available.

Some local planning authorities require you to request the file on a particular planning application some days in advance.

Registers must be available for inspection by the public 'at all reasonable hours' (according to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, section 69, article 5), but local practice varies enormously.

Take copies of documents

Local planning authorities are required by law to let you take copies of planning applications and related documents (according to the Copyright [Material Open to Public Inspection] [Making Copies of Plans] Order 1989). You may be charged for the cost of photocopying.

Some local planning authorities have been known to charge just to retrieve (not photocopy) environmental information.

Under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, local planning

authorities are no longer able to charge you purely to examine the information at the place where it is held, that is, just to retrieve the file, unless the information is deemed to have commercial value.

Examine the register for previous applications

Use the planning register to look at previous applications for the same site.

This is sometimes called **'the planning history'** .

Most sites have been argued over before and you may discover some information that is relevant to the current proposal.

Consider **what has changed** since the last time a planning application was made.

You should also look at recent planning applications in the wider area to get a picture of how the environment will be affected as a whole.

Note, however, that as planning histories can have commercial value, local authorities often charge for providing this information

If you can't see the planning register

If you have difficulty getting in to see the planning register, try approaching your town, parish or neighbourhood council.

Parish and town councils automatically receive copies of all planning applications from their local planning authority, **provided they have made a written request for them** (*according to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, schedule 1, article 8*),

They will probably be happy to share them with you.

If your parish or town council doesn't get copies of planning applications automatically either in paper copy or by email, you should remind them that they are legally entitled to do so.

The parish and town clerks are likely to be helpful. You can get their contact details from notice boards in the parish or from your planning authority.

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