

# Commenting on a Planning Application

A planning officer will also visit the site to consider the proposal in terms of its size, siting, design and effect on neighbouring uses, before making a recommendation as to whether the proposal is acceptable or should be refused.

## The Decision

Many applications are determined by officers under delegated authority. Before making a decision officers have to carefully assess all the planning considerations particularly the policies in the Development Plan. Where an interested party has objected but the Officer recommendation is for approval of the application, officers consult with Councillors before making the decision. Councillors can then ask for the application to be considered at Committee rather than by the officers.

More complex or controversial proposals tend to be determined by Committee which is made up of elected Councillors. The relevant Committee meets about every four weeks and a decision is made after considering a written report with recommendations from officers. The report contains a summary of any objections or supporting comments received and the full text of any letter is also available to Committee Members, and via the website.

The Planning Committee meeting is usually open to the public who can watch the proceedings. It is also possible to speak at the meeting (*see leaflet Speaking at the Development Control Committee*). Copies of the full report and recommendations will be available for inspection at the Council's offices in Kingswood and Thornbury five days before the meeting and via the website or at the meeting. We will advise the applicant and those customers who commented on the application of the date of the Committee meeting.

Occasionally decisions may be postponed for further information to be provided or for the Committee to visit the site. Again we will advise the applicant and those customers who commented on the application of the date.

Dates and Details of forthcoming meetings together with agenda papers and minutes of previous meetings are available on the Council's website.

## Can I appeal?

If the Council approves an application, neighbours and other third parties who objected do not have a right of appeal. However, if the Council refuses an application the applicant can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. The applicant can also appeal against a condition imposed on an approval.

You will be notified if an appeal is lodged. You will then have an opportunity to make comments to the Planning Inspectorate before they determine the appeal.

## What can you do if you are dissatisfied?

The Development Management Team aims to provide the best possible service.

However, if you feel your concern has not been given proper attention or has been mishandled you can complain.

Your first point of contact should be one of the Principal Planning Officers or the Development Manager or Major Sites Team Manager who have overall responsibility.

## For further information

If you wish to view the plans submitted you can follow the links on the Council's website: [www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk) or visit the One Stop Shop at Thornbury, Kingswood or Yate offices.

**If you have further queries about the proposal or Officer's recommendations please contact the Development Management or Major Sites Team by phoning the Customer Service Centre (01454) 868004**

### PLANNING AID SERVICE

If you need free independent professional Planning advice consider using the Planning Aid Service who can be contacted on 0870 850 9807 or [swcw1@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:swcw1@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

**This information can be made available in other languages, in large print, Braille or on audio tape. Please phone 01454 868009 if you need any of these or any other help to access Council services.**

For more information about this publication contact  
Tel: 01454 868009

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## Commenting On Development Proposals

This leaflet is to help you understand the process involved in determining a planning application. It outlines how you can comment on applications and the types of issues which can and cannot be considered by the Planning Authority in coming to a decision.

### What is the application for?

To find out more about the proposal you can look at plans at the Council's offices during normal office hours or on line via the Council's website. Free internet access is available at all South Gloucestershire libraries.

To help identify the right application you will need the planning reference number given in the notification letter. If you need help in understanding the plans a member of staff will be happy to help.

If the proposal is for an extension by your neighbours, it may help to talk to them to clarify any details or let them know if you are unhappy about certain aspects of the proposal. You may find that they will alter the extension to meet your concerns.

### How do I comment?

If you want to make any comments on the proposal, write to the Development Management Team or Major Sites Team if the proposal is a significant development or use the comments facility on the website. Ideally any comments should be made within 21 days of the date that the planning application was registered by the Council. It is in your best interests to submit your views as soon as possible so they can be taken into consideration

as part of the normal determination process. However the Council does permit comments to be made right up until the point that the decision is made by the Council. Please contact the case officer handling the application for further advice when considering whether to submit comments later than the usual 21 day period.

You may either object to the proposal or support it if you think that there would be benefits in allowing it. If a lot of people nearby object or support a proposal you could join together to present your arguments. Generally individual letters with valid planning reasons carry more weight than a petition. You could also consider contacting your local Councillor (details on the website or from our offices) or the town or parish council if there is one in your area. If you rent the property you should also pass the information on to the landlord, however, you are welcome to make your own comments.

### What is a planning objection?

The Council can only determine planning applications on the basis of their planning merits. They cannot consider non-planning arguments such as the effect on property values or on competition between rival businesses. Some comments that might be relevant when a planning application is decided are:

- The proposal would allow overlooking from windows resulting in a loss of privacy.
- The effect on traffic, access, visibility and parking would create a safety hazard.
- The proposed use of the premises or site would create noise and disturbance affecting local people.

- The design and appearance of any new building or alterations would be out of keeping with the character of the area or would have an overbearing impact on adjoining property.
- The proposal would result in loss of trees or open space.

### Matters which cannot be regarded as planning considerations:

- Generally there are no rights in law to a view across or light from land which is not in your ownership. If you are aware of any special rights which your property has in this respect then you should consult your solicitor.
- Disputes over land ownership, for example about party walls and rights of access should be settled privately between the parties concerned
- Letters that contain defamatory or racist remarks will not be taken into consideration and will be returned.

### What happens to your letter?

When we receive your letter it will be placed on the application file and be available for inspection by anyone, including the applicant, who wishes to view the file. It will also be made available on the website. At this stage, we regret your letter will not be acknowledged due to the large volume of letters received. However, if you make comments you will be informed of the outcome after a decision has been made. Public access to the files and letters will be subject to the Council's access to information policies.

*Some useful tips when commenting on an application:*

- **When signing your letter**, print your name in capitals below the signature. Before your letter is published on the website the signature will be blanked out.
- **If you are submitting personnel (medical) or financial information** in support of your comments, please indicate clearly at the top of each document whether or not you are prepared for this information to be made publicly available.
- **If you are emailing your comments** consider making your comments as a separate attachment, so that this can be published on the website without your email address being disclosed.

### Consideration of your comments

The planning process exists to regulate development in the public interest and the Council has a duty to act fairly when considering development proposals. It has to balance the interests of the developer or applicant who may wish to provide new housing, industry or a house extension, with those of local residents and neighbours who may be affected by the proposal.

Besides considering comments made by local residents the Council also has to take account of:

- The wider policy context provided by government guidance and policies in the Development Plan.
- The views expressed by a range of other organisations such as Parish Councils.