

How to look at and comment on planning applications

July 2011

Introduction

The purpose of this advice note is to explain the simplest, quickest and cheapest way for you to look at planning applications and how to make your views known so that we can take them into account in reaching our decision.

How to look at a planning application

You can view the plans and other documents on our website. If you do not have a computer at home you can use the free computers at any North Somerset Library or at the council offices at Weston-super-Mare. The library and reception staff can help you.

At page four we have included a simple step by step guide to explain how to view and comment on planning applications using our website.

Relevant Planning Issues

The development plan for North Somerset currently comprises the North Somerset Local Plan and the Replacement Structure Plan. These plans contain a number of policies against which individual planning applications are assessed. You can view these policies on our website.

Other material planning considerations include:

1. Policy Guidance from Central Government
2. Supplementary Planning Guidance issued by the Local Planning Authority
3. Legal Judgements
4. Individual site circumstances, including levels, trees and boundary screening
5. The relationship between a development and neighbouring properties
6. Overshadowing, loss of privacy, loss of light, noise and disturbance and odours
7. Prevailing traffic or parking conditions

Please note that this list is a guide and is not intended to be exhaustive.

Issues that will be given little or no weight in making our decision

Some matters, including those covered by other legislation, can be given little or no weight when deciding to approve or refuse applications. These matters include issues relating to structural stability, party wall disputes, fire precautions, loss of property value, loss of a private view, who the applicant is and legal covenants.

Who can see my written comments?

The law requires that any written comments must be made available to other members of the public, the relevant area committees and any interested parties who may ask to see them, including the applicant. We also usually display comments on our website. We have prepared a separate advice note to explain why we hold the information and how we deal with personal information. This guide is called 'How we deal with information submitted in connection with planning applications' and is available on our website.

Who makes the decision?

The Council has a written constitution which enables about 90% of applications to be delegated to officers for a decision. These applications are not considered by a planning committee.

About 10% of applications are decided by one of three area committees. These committees meet about every four weeks. If an application is to be considered by a committee we will announce this by placing a 'notice of committee' on the case file on our website.

There is an opportunity for members of the public to speak at the relevant meeting. Details of how to register your desire to speak at the meeting can be found on our website in our separate advice note called 'Public speaking on planning applications'.

How long does a decision take?

We aim to make most decisions within eight weeks. For larger scale proposals (called 'major' applications) we aim to make a decision within 13 weeks. For some applications we may make our decision far sooner than this, but some others may take a little longer. For this reason it is essential that you submit any comments to us as soon as possible and within the consultation period or they may not be taken into account by us when we make our decision.

What happens after a decision has been made?

The applicant can appeal against a refusal of planning permission (or against a condition attached to an approval notice) to the Secretary of State. There is no right to appeal for anybody other than the applicant.

Appeals must be made to the Planning Inspectorate based in Bristol. Any written comments submitted in time to the council on the original application will be forwarded to the Inspectorate so that they can be taken into account in determining the appeal. If the application relates to a 'householder' proposal (house extensions etc) then there will be no further opportunity for you to submit additional comments. For all other types of development any one who has previously made comments on the application will be notified by the Council of the type of appeal and the timetable to submit further comments. More information about appeals can be found on the Planning Inspectorate website at www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk. Please note that in planning law there is currently no right of appeal for any one other than the applicant.

Where can you get more information?

You can find a lot of helpful information on the national Planning Portal website at www.planningportal.gsi.gov.uk.

This useful website is operated by the government and contains simple interactive tools to explain planning law and regulations. Features freely available include:

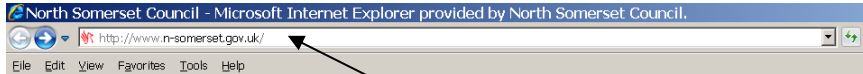
1. An interactive model of a house that explains what requires planning permission
2. A simple explanation of the UK planning system
3. National planning news and policy updates
4. A glossary to planning terms

You will also find lots of helpful information on our website. Our online service includes information about how to find what requires permission, an explanation about the different types of planning applications, our pre-application advice service, a map which shows key planning designations, details of our planning committees and much more.

Four steps to look at a planning application.

Step 1

Enter the address of our website into the internet browser on your computer.



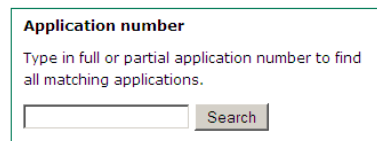
The address is: www.n-somerset.gov.uk

Step 2

Once you have arrived at our website click on the '[search planning applications](#)' text on the left hand side of the page which is located on the left hand side of the page under the heading '**Top Tasks**'.

Step 3

Enter the full application reference number in the 'Application number' field.



Application number
Type in full or partial application number to find all matching applications.
 Search

Then press the 'search' button.

If you don't know the application number then simply add the name of the street or road then press search. You will then be shown a list of all the applications received for that street. Select the one you want to look at by clicking on the blue application reference number.

Step 4

The application file will now be displayed*.

The documents are shown in date order according to when they were added to the website. Scroll down the page until you find the document that you wish to view.

Click on the document once to view the file.

You can make the image smaller or larger by using the green +/- bar at the top right hand side of the page.

To return to the main file simply press the return arrow at the top left corner of the screen.

*If you the screen states 'No matching case files were found.' Please check that you entered the reference number correctly. If this fails it may be because the file has not yet been added to the website. You should try again in a few days.

How to submit comments

You can submit your comments free of charge on our website. This is by far the quickest and most reliable way to ensure that we receive your comments. The date by which you need to submit your comments to us is displayed on our website. If you do not submit your comments to us by this date then your views may not be taken into account. Please read the next section 'Relevant Planning Issues' on page four before you submit your comments.

Five steps to comment on a planning application.

Step 1

Follow steps 1 – 4 above to view the case file.

Step 2

Click on the 'Comment On Application' text



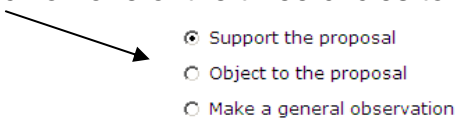
If there is no such text it is because the application has already been decided. This means you cannot submit any comments. You will be able to view a copy of the decision notice on the file within a few days of the decision.

Step 3

Enter the required details into each the fields marked with a *. You do not need to include your telephone number or email address. If you do it may be displayed on our website.

Step 4

Click on one of the three circles to indicate if you support or object to the proposal.



Then type in any comments you would like to make in the 'Your comment' square.

We have provided advice about what issues can be taken into account on the next page.

Step 5

Click on the 'Submit' button.



Note that after you have clicked on the 'Submit' a message will be displayed acknowledging that we have received your comments. You should read this message and then print a copy of this acknowledgement for your records. Your message will normally appear on our website within five days.

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