



Commenting On Planning Applications

This leaflet explains:

- how to use the Public Access system to find, view and track planning applications on the internet
- how to comment on planning applications
- what happens to your comments
- the standard of service you should expect

How can I view a planning application?

All planning applications made since January 2009 with their plans and documents are on the internet in our Public Access system www.leeds.gov.uk/publicaccess.

You can search using an application number, the postcode, part of the address, or a keyword in the development description to find the application you are interested in and view all associated documents online.

If you register at the website you can also track the progress of planning applications you are interested in, find out when planning applications are made in your area, make comments on planning applications, and receive updates by email.

For major applications the site notice will tell you where you can view the application.

How can I comment on a planning application?

Your comments should be:

- submitted online using our Public Access system, or
- sent by letter to the contact addresses at the end of this leaflet

Your comments should:

- include your printed name, as anonymous comments cannot be considered (do not use your signature)
- include the application number
- be received by us before the date given on Public Access, the site notice or notification letter; this normally allows 21 days for you to comment

What happens to my comments?

- the planning officer dealing with the application will receive your comments
- we do not send confirmation of receipt, but;
- your comments, including those sent by post, will be available to view on the internet on our Public Access system. This means that anyone, including the applicant, can see your comments.

How are my comments used?

The planning officer will take into account all valid planning matters raised by public comments. Many things are taken into consideration when making a decision, including:

- local and national planning policies
- views of other council services, such as Highways
- views of external bodies, such as The Environment Agency
- comments received from local people

It is important to note that:

- objecting to a planning application does not necessarily mean it will be refused
- comments should only be made about 'valid planning matters'
- the number of comments received about an application is less important than the type of comments received
- pre-printed form letters and petitions are sometimes given less weight than individual letters that comment on valid planning matters, and you will not be notified of Plans Panel meetings or appeals

What is a valid planning matter?

Planning officers can only make a decision about a planning application based on 'valid planning matters'. These will vary with each application but may include:

- conservation of buildings and conservation of the natural environment
- effect on trees and the landscape
- design, appearance and layout
- effect on the character of an area
- noise, disturbance and odour
- impact on highway safety and traffic
- previous planning applications
- Development Plan Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance and other planning policies
- government guidance and legislation
- effect on living conditions – for example the effect on sunlight and daylight, privacy of neighbours and being overlooked
- effect on neighbouring properties
- what the building or development will look like

What matters are not valid planning matters?

These will vary with each application but the following are not usually valid planning matters and cannot be taken into account:

- issues covered by other legislation, such as Licensing, Building Control, or Health and Safety
- private property rights, such as boundary or access disputes
- the developer's morals, motivation, or activities elsewhere
- perceived impact on property values
- competition between businesses

What about the view from my property?

Although you do not have a right to a view over someone else's land, if we think an application is unreasonable because of the effect on your outlook we will try to negotiate changes to help overcome this.

What happens next?

We may seek to negotiate with an applicant to make changes to an application which:

- improve the appearance of the proposal
- improve its effect on neighbouring properties
- make it more acceptable in planning terms
- overcome matters raised by consultees and members of the public

Most decisions are made by a senior planning officer within 8 weeks for minor applications and 13 weeks for major applications.

Larger, more complex or controversial applications may be decided by a panel of elected Councillors at 'Plans Panel' meetings. These are held in the Civic Hall on a regular basis. We will let you know if an application you have commented on will be considered by the Panel, as you can attend. In certain circumstances, a representative of any supporters or objectors may make a short address to the Panel to set out their views. Separate guidance is available about speaking at panel. Please check our website at www.leeds.gov.uk/planspanel if you want the dates of meetings or a list of who attends.

The Plans Panel will:

- deal with a number of planning applications
- consider reports which note recommendations from the planning officers
- sometimes visit an application site
- decide to approve or refuse applications, or defer them for more information or negotiation.

How do I find out about the decision?

You can check the status of an application at any time by searching for it on Public Access. If you have chosen to track the application on Public Access, you will be notified of the decision by email. Once a decision has been made the decision notice and officer's report will be available to view on Public Access within 5 working days.

What if I am not happy with the decision?

There are no rights of appeal for third parties who are unhappy with a planning decision.

The officer's report will set out the reason for a decision and how your comments were taken into account.

The Internet and Public Access

Information about planning applications, including plans, documents and comments, can be viewed by anyone using our Public Access system. Information is also available about planning appeals.

A simple search function is available that can find planning applications made within the last two years when you know the application number, the postcode, part of the address or a keyword in the development description.

An advanced search function with a range of options, including searching between dates or by ward or parish, can be used to find applications back to 1974.

You can also view weekly or monthly lists of new planning applications or decisions made.

If you register with Public Access you can save your searches so that you can easily make the same search again, or receive email updates about new applications that fit your search.

If you register you can also make comments on planning applications and choose to track applications that you are interested in. You will be sent an email when the status of a tracked application changes, eg when a decision is made, or when a new document is available to view.

For more information and to access the Public Access system, please go to: www.leeds.gov.uk/publicaccess. A detailed user manual is available on the website.

Further information and how to contact us

You can write to us at: Planning Services, The Leonardo Building, 2 Rossington Street, LEEDS, LS2 8HD

You can visit our Enquiry Centre on the ground floor of The Leonardo Building. Opening hours are:
Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5pm
(except Wednesday: 10am-5pm)

You can phone or fax us: Tel: 0113 222 4409

Fax: 0113 247 4117

Minicom: 0113 2474305

Or email: dec@leeds.gov.uk