

PLAN YOUR OBJECTION

1. Know your rights

The English planning system is a complex beast which feeds on bureaucracy, complicated legislation and confusing jargon.

Before you begin your path to objection it is important to get to grips with your rights so that you can plan your challenge accordingly.

Our Top Tip:

Use internet search engines and browse through many of the freely accessible public service web-sites (like www.gov.uk) to understand the basics of planning legislation. Be careful who you believe; there are many unqualified 'advisers' out there - not everyone knows what they're talking about!

2. It's a date!

Planning applications are decided by local authorities according to strict time schedules. It is imperative that you make your objection in good time.

Did you know: As an objector **you have no right to appeal** if the planning application is approved!

Our Top Tip:

If you have been contacted by the council advising that they have received a planning application which will affect you - you will have been given the dates which you must adhere to in order to make an objection. If you've not been contacted directly you **must** find out when you are able to make comment on the application. **Put the important dates in your diary now!**

3. Get familiar...

aside from whether you think building near you is appropriate or not, it is extremely important that you understand the likely effects of the proposal. Use the planning authority's website or visit their offices to look at the planning application in detail. Get to know it, understand it and analyse it - only once you are completely conversant with the application should you even consider your next step.

Our Top Tip:

All local authorities are now obliged to publish details of planning applications online. This means that as well as *this* application, there are many others in your area that will have been submitted previously. All of these are available to view... There may be great advantage in trawling through previously refused applications... (Don't go too far back though - legislation changes)

4. Take advice

If you don't understand what you have discovered so far don't be shy - the application may have a long-lasting detrimental effects on you, your family or your property. It's really important that you get your objection right.

You could discuss the application with your family, friends or even your neighbours (if appropriate). Find out whether any of them have past experience of the planning system. If not don't be afraid to seek professional advice...

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5. The campaign trail

In our professional experience - particularly in sensitive situations - it is well worth coordinating a collective approach by the wider community. Join forces with neighbours and local residents - just make sure individual voices don't get lost.

Involve the press, make a stand, get heard - but make sure you understand the planning process (and your legal rights) before launching a new global movement!

Our Top Tip:

Avoid the dreaded petition - as tempting as it may be to gather thousands of signatures in protest to a planning application, petitions are rarely worth the paper they're printed on (let alone the hours that are wasted gathering them). **Why?** Any petition, duplicated letter or collective approach will generally be considered as a single objection - whether it has 10

THE CHEAT SHEET

5. List the big issues

As we've already said it's important to fully consider all aspects of the planning application. To make a really effective objection you'll need to express the issues that will affect you - and how those issues should be mitigated.

There's not enough space to list the 'material considerations' here - but lets just say that complaining about the loss of a view or effects on your property value wont be helpful to your cause...

Our Top Tip:

Objecting to a planning application is not something you can charge into in one sitting (unless you know the system inside out!). Why not print out a bullet point list of the main issues - tape it to your fridge (or similar household appliance!) and add to it over the coming two or three days. You'll be surprised what other things come to mind... remember you only get one chance!

6. Emotion

Human behaviour flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge (Plato)

Planners all but ignore desire and emotion... What does that tell you? Joking aside, it is important that your objection is based in fact. It can be easy to let your heart interfere when so much is at stake - by all means include some human interest - but never forget that you need to focus on informing the planning officer!

Our Top Tip:

When drafting your objection - work to a framework of headings based on material issues - certainly make your position entertaining - but don't loose sight of the goal; to help the planners REFUSE the application with as much hard evidence as possible... See 8!

7. Write, Submit, Wait

Once you have taken the above points into account you are ready to write your objection letter.

Avoid handwritten letters and remember that your letter will be published in public - so avoid any potentially libellous allegations! Adopt a factual writing style which will enable both the planning officer and members of the public to understand your position simply and fully. Remember you only have one chance!

Our Top Tip:

if you submit your objection early, it's quite likely that other members of the public will see your objection online and may well be guided by it. It is important therefore to get your objection letter in to the planning department as swiftly as possible.

8. Prepare yourself...

Submitting an objection can be the beginning of a long journey. Developers rarely give up easily (especially where large sums of money are involved) and you should bear this in mind at all times.

Keep track of revisions and alterations to the application on the planning authority's website - and make sure you continue to fight your corner until a suitable compromise / is reached... Most importantly: **Keep at it!**

Our Top Tip:

While the council are obliged to maintain a public record in relation to any planning application, it is advisable to open and keep a file of your own so that if an appeal is raised at any stage you will be properly prepared to take the fight to the next level.

IObject.co.uk

On the off chance that you find the whole planning process infuriating (trust us: you're not alone!) we've set up The Planning Objection Company to help!

We specialise in assisting objectors in preparing compelling and thorough planning objections for all types of application across the English planning system. Our consultants (some of which are active planning officers!) are on hand at a moment's notice to help you get your point of view heard.

Need help?

For more information about making planning objections please visit our website:

<http://www.IObject.co.uk>