

Your home, your voice

The planning system can seem daunting, and with further changes proposed in England, Wales and Scotland, it may seem even more so. Here is an introductory guide to help you to get to grips with planning in your area.

There are several differences between the planning systems in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, so consult with the appropriate authority and non-government organisation for your area. Some useful sources of further information and guidance are listed below.

PLANNING PERMISSION

Permission is needed from the local planning authority (usually the local District or Borough Council), before any major development work – new buildings or major changes to changing how land or building use – is undertaken.

Some changes to land and buildings do not require planning permission, however. This includes agricultural work and many types of internal changes to buildings. Minor development work may be automatically approved, such as small extensions and temporary uses of land.

Some areas have special planning requirements and restrictions; these include Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, National Nature Reserve and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

To find out more about what does and does not need planning permission, contact your local planning authority.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT A PLANNING APPLICATION

Notice

After a planning application has been submitted, the local planning authority will post notices near the site and/or write to those closest to the proposed development, to invite comments. Anyone affected by a new development proposal may also learn about when being consulted by the developer. Large developments will also need to be advertised in a local newspaper. The details of the proposals, including architects' drawings, will be made available to view at local council offices.

Making your voice heard

There will be a limited amount of time in which to comment on a proposal. You can do so in writing or by completing an online submission and sending it to the local planning office by the stated deadline. Organising a campaign encouraging local people to comment on or object against a proposal will help to inform the decision.

It is also possible to attend committee meetings that deal with planning applications and to speak about the proposal. Only elected members of the council are able to vote on the application decision.

After the decision

Any planning decision is final and third parties have no right of appeal **Planning in England**

The recently set up Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) will have the final say on major transport, energy, waste and water projects. Other changes to the planning system in England are also underway and mainly relate to planning policies and strategies.

Strategies and policy statements at three different levels outline what should and should not be allowed in your area:
– national level: Planning Policy Statements and the forthcoming National Policy Statements

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- regional level: Spatial Strategies/Regional Plans
- local level: Local Development Frameworks

Local Development Frameworks are intended to enact the strategies laid down at higher levels and provide guidelines for local planners at the County, Unitary or District Authority levels.

It is worth examining the relevant documents for your area – available from your local planning authority – to determine whether a proposal meets their requirements.

Sources of further information

Communities and Local Government: www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/about/planning

Planning Portal: www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/public/

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE): 020 7981 2800, info@cpre.org.uk, www.cpre.org.uk

PLANNING IN SCOTLAND

During 2009 the legislation covering planning in Scotland changed, with the Planning (Scotland) Act 2006 coming into force. This act is largely based on the existing planning system, covered by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. There are 32 local authorities in Scotland and two national park authorities which are responsible for the planning process in their areas. Each local authority will have a Local Development Plan.

Sources of further information

Scottish Executive: 0131 244 7888, eplanningsupport@scotland.gsi.gov.uk, www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/built-environment/planning

Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS): 0131 225 7012, info@ruralscotland.org, www.ruralscotland.org

PLANNING IN WALES

The Welsh Assembly Government is currently in the process of reforming the local planning system in Wales. The current system is based upon the old English system and will remain largely operational until the new systems are in place. There are 22 unitary counties and three national park authorities which are all required to produce Local Development Plans for their areas.

Two main documents provide the framework for planning policy in Wales:

- Planning Policy Wales (PPW)
- Minerals Planning Policy Wales

Sources of further information

Welsh Assembly wales.gov.uk/splash?orig=/topics/planning

Council for the Protection of Rural Wales: 01938 552525, info@cprwmail.org.uk, www.cprw.org.uk

PLANNING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Planning Service is the department responsible for all planning in Northern Ireland, and has a decisions on planning applications are taken by divisional planning offices. Policies covering different types of development are set out in Planning Policy Statements, and Development Plans are set out with the local council.

Sources of further information

The Planning Service: 028 9041 6700, <http://www.planningni.gov.uk>, planning.service.hq@doeni.gov.uk