

Objecting to planning applications: The Key Considerations

1. Is your stance on the planned development *reasonable*?

Is it consistent with the local development plan and national policy? Is it justified by *evidence*? Or is it that you just don't like it or you just don't want it near you? If so you may struggle to justify an objection.

2. What does the Development Plan say and which policies are *relevant*?

If you get involved in the planning process, you must have an awareness of relevant National and Local Planning Policy and other material considerations. Seek guidance and clarification from the Planning Officer if you feel you need to.

3. How does the proposal comply with The National Planning Policy Framework's 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development'?

4. *Remember* - if the application lies outside the boundary of the Local Development Framework, development approval is still possible when the Council hasn't a 5 year supply of housing sites.

5. There are *judgements* to be made by the Planning Officer and Planning Committee.

Policy requires *interpretation* based on *evidence* and *opinion*.

6. Read the application carefully, thoroughly and unemotionally

It should set out the *relevant planning policy* and justify the development against that policy. Consider all of the detail. Challenge unjustified claims.

7. Don't just say "*It's wrong!*"

Explain why it's wrong – in relation to relevant planning policy and using evidence.

8. Can the development be improved?

Is it wrong in terms of detail? What is the impact? For example, on the *character* of the village or the *landscape*? Be concise. You can't just say "it will ruin the village", "it will be an eyesore". Summarise what makes the area

or village 'special'. Describe the context for the development. What features make the place what it is? Then explain why the proposal is inappropriate.

9. Do your research

Conservation Area? Listed Buildings? Open Spaces? Landscape Character? Use photographs to illustrate your points to the planning officer.

10. Protected species and habitats, trees and hedgerows

Most applications will require supporting evidence on the impact on these aspects.

11. Historic assets

Consider the impact on nearby buildings and monuments *and their setting*.

12. Question and review what the development looks like in itself

For example, character, layout, density, design, scale, materials, landscaping; its relationship with its surroundings.

13. Review impact on the amenity and privacy of adjoining properties

Check current standards or guidelines.

14. Be reasonable about how much you say

Planning Officers are human. Planning committees are made up of ordinary people. Don't *bombard* them – this can be counter-productive! If you do feel you need to write several pages, provide a bulleted summary of your main points.

15. Stay calm

Emotion and anger cloud judgement and tends towards irrelevant and subjective arguments, unrealistic expectations and deters dialogue.

16. Enter into *dialogue* with the Applicant

Get your views across. Try to achieve an understanding of each other's views. Focus on the key *policy* issues. *Compromise* can sometimes improve a scheme.

17. Avoid irrelevancies or personal attacks

Don't waste time on matters which won't lead to a refusal eg protecting a view you don't own, questioning property values or the need for development. Don't attack the motives of applicants.

18. It's not a popularity contest!

Quality, not quantity is what's required. One well-written objection, with a solid policy foundation, is much better than an unconvincing petition or multiple circular objection letters.

19. Don't forget the possible implications of a *planning appeal* against refusal.

Is the reason for refusal defensible? Could it come back to haunt you?

20. Technical elements

For example, traffic, highway safety, ecology, trees, archaeology. Get professional help if you need it. Traffic and highway safety is often a big issue for objectors. *Find out what the Highways Officer thinks* – you could be wasting your time if he or she has no objection.

... and finally ...

We are fortunate in Shropshire to have public access on-line to planning information. Register on the Council website and track applications. E-mail alerts can be sent to you when new information is published. Don't forget to read the officer's reports on similar applications and check out other websites covering, for example, flood risk (the Environment Agency) and heritage information. Check out, too, the Council's own research into the Local Plan, eg. strategic flood risk assessments, open space studies, landscape character assessments, retail studies and local plan site assessments.

CPRE Shropshire is most grateful to David Parker of DPPA Oswestry (dppa@talktalk.net) for drafting the guidance above which formed the basis of his presentation at CPRE Shropshire's 'Your Countryside Under Threat' event held jointly with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust on 3 April 2014.



Can you help us?

CPRE Shropshire promotes the beauty, tranquillity and communities of Shropshire. Our campaigning work is done at branch level by volunteers and we need your help!

There are a number of ways in which you could really help our Branch:

- Reading your local planning application listings and alerting us about anything you think looks important
- Writing your own objections to planning applications where you see fit (CPRE can advise if you need guidance)
- Joining your local District Group, attending one or two meetings per year and helping with planning issues very local to you
- Letting your friends, family and neighbours know about the work of CPRE Shropshire and nationally

If you have any questions or would like to offer help, or join a district group, do please contact Sarah Jameson on 01547 528 546 or at admin@cpreshropshire.org.uk