# Guidance Notes: Making a Planning Application Online

The Planning Portal's service lets you make and submit an application for planning consent online.

The service has been implemented so that, in most cases, all parts of the application for consent can be completed and submitted electronically, including payment.

At any stage during the completion of your application you can check what you have or have not completed from the My Applications screen (on the left-hand menu).

**Application overview**

This screen lets you manage your active application from initial creation through to submission. From here you can access the application to complete the following tasks:

- Complete the application forms
- Attach supporting documentation
- Calculate fees for the application
- Pay for the application
- Check the application is complete
- Submit the application to the local planning authority

This screen will also tell you the name of the application, its reference number, the type of planning consent being applied for, the local planning authority responsible for determining your application, as well as the status and date of the application.

You can also make an amendment to a submitted application by selecting 'amend' within the application details box. However, once you have amended your application you will need to validate and submit the application again for this to be sent to the Local Planning Authority.

Details of the individual steps you will need to complete before your application can be submitted to the local authority are as follows:

## Step 1. Complete the forms

Your form is made up of a series of questions that need to be answered to allow the local planning authority to determine your application. It is recommended that you answer each question in order as the system will automatically remove (grey out) subsequent questions that are no longer required, i.e. where answers to previous questions mean subsequent questions are no longer relevant.

After you have entered details on a page, selecting 'next' will load the next page and save the details entered so far should you wish to end the session and return to the application at a later date.

After you have filled in the forms, all forms sections should show as 'Complete'. If any sections are showing as 'Incomplete' you will need to load that page again, by clicking on the link on the screen, and make sure all questions have been answered.

If you deem that the question being asked is not relevant to your application then you may need to enter 'not applicable' within the relevant section. However, we would advise you to contact your local authority planning department to make sure that they do not need this question answered to validate your application type.

You will also need to contact your local authority if you have any planning queries relevant to the application. You can find your LPA and their contact details on the right-hand side of the 'fees' page within your application, alternatively you can use the following Planning Portal link:

www.planningportal.gov.uk/localauthoritysearch

Note: Most questions in the form have help text to assist you in completing them. You can access the help text by clicking on the 'question mark' icon at the top right-hand corner of the form page.

## Step 2. Attach supporting documentation

Most applications require more information than can be provided by the application form alone.

The local planning authority will not be able to process your application unless the mandatory supporting documentation has been provided. You can also attach any other relevant documentation which you think will help the local authority determine the application.

There are two levels of mandatory documents, national and local:

• **National -** The application service will tell you what mandatory documentation you need to provide in support of your application.

• **Local -** The local planning authority will have produced a list (usually available from a link in the right-hand side panel on the supporting documents screen) which details any specific documentation that is required to accompany the application in addition to the national requirements.

For further details of the mandatory documents please refer to the CLG guidance note 'The Validation of Planning Applications: Guidance for local planning authorities'.

Currently you can only add one document per attachment type in the mandatory section. If you have more than one attachment for a mandatory section e.g 'Site and Other Plans' you will need to upload these documents by selecting 'add document' under the optional documentation section.

When uploading supporting documents for electronic submission individual files should not exceed 5MB in size. There is currently no limit on the overall size of all attachments however we do recommend that you do not exceed 25MB as some LPAs may have restrictions on their own sites.

There are several ways in which you can help the receiving authority process your application more efficiently:

- Portable Document Format (pdf) is a trusted and reliable open file format used to convert virtually any document into an easily readable, industry standard format. Converting, (or scanning) original drawing files into pdf format reduces the original file size, while protecting file integrity and preserving source file information.

- Wherever possible, try to format your plans and elevations on A3 sheet size (or reduce the original to A3), this reduces print time and costs for the planning authority where printed copies are required for consultation.

- Make sure you always clearly state the original sheet size and drawing scale, include a scale bar and key dimensions which will enable your drawing to be scaled accurately on-screen at any size.

- If you reduce your original drawing to A3 for submission, ensure you state the original sheet size and scale, as well as the reduced sheet size (e.g. Scale 1:500 at A2 original size, reduced to A3). Also ensure that annotations and other text are legible at the reduced size.

For consistency it is recommended that you use the following file types, for supporting documents, wherever possible.

- Images/plans: **pdf**, bmp, gif, jpg/jpeg, plt, png, tif/tiff
- Documents: **pdf**, doc, rtf, txt, xls
- Video: avi, mpg/mpeg, wmv

If you wish to use any other file types you should check with your LPA before submission as this may cause problems in receipt.

Ultimately, if the LPA cannot view an attached file then you may be asked to provide it in a file type they can use or supply a hard copy of the information.

When using compressed file formats (jpg/jpeg, pdf, avi, wmv) you should ensure that the document is of high enough quality and resolution, otherwise you may be asked to resubmit it.

You should not upload exe, zip or other archive formats as these are commonly identified by security software as high risk and may not be transferred to the LPA correctly.

**Attaching plans and drawings**

All plans **must** have a scale bar, key dimensions, original paper size and scale (E.G 1:200 at A3) clearly marked upon them.

All drawings **must** have dimensions and a scale clearly marked upon them.

While not compulsory, submitting plans and drawings on A3 will help the local planning authority process your application more efficiently. For example, consider placing fewer elevations on smaller page sizes, even if this means submitting more documents.

## Step 3: Calculate fees for the application

The fee calculator has been provided so that, by selecting the relevant tick boxes, you can work out what fee is required for your application.

Please note that while every effort has been taken to ensure that the fee has been calculated correctly, the determination of whether the fee is correct is solely the responsibility of the relevant local planning authority. Once you have submitted an application, the fee will be checked by the local planning authority and they will confirm whether the fee is correct.

If you are claiming an exemption in payment (e.g. if the proposed works are in connection with the provision of disability access to a building), or if you are claiming a reduction in payment (e.g. if it is a development by a parish council), then some local authorities may require a statement attached to your application giving the appropriate details (you will need to contact your LPA before submission to confirm this).

## Step 4. Paying for the application

Once you have calculated the correct fee you can pay for your application in up to four ways. The payment options available are determined by the local authority to which the application relates.

Most local authorities will accept the following three payment options:

1. Secure online payment by credit or debit card
2. Payment by cheque: the system will tell you where to post the cheque when you select this option
3. Payment by phone: the system will provide the correct telephone number when you select this option.

Some local authorities will also accept payment by BACS Transfer. If you choose this option, the system will provide you with further information on making the payment.

If you have selected the 'Secure online payment by credit/debit card' option, but then wish to change this, you will need to access the 'Payment' tab, and then click 'Cancel'. This will return you to the payment options screen and you will then be able to reselect your payment method.

## Step 5: Check application

You will not be able to submit the application until you have completed the 'Check Application' stage.

Once you have completed the forms, added supporting documentation, calculated the fees and chosen the payment method, the system will check the entire application to make sure all the mandatory information and stages have been completed.

If you have not completed any part of the application, these will be identified by the system, i.e. 'incomplete' will appear next to the section or area that contains missing or incorrect information. To correct this area simply click on the link and the system will take you to the area of the form requiring completion.

Once all stages of the application have been completed you can submit the application to the local planning authority.

To proceed to 'Submit the application' you will need to click the 'Next' button at the bottom right of the 'Check Application' page.

## Step 6: Submit the application

Submitting the application will send the application form and supporting information to the local planning authority.

You can view and access your submitted application at any time from the My Applications screen. However, once it is submitted to the local authority you will not be able to make any changes to that application without making an amendment.

To make an amendment to a submitted application you will need to select 'amend' within the application details box of the 'overview' tab. Once you have amended your application the system will note this as the next version number for that application and will send this version to the LPA once you have re-checked and submitted the application as detailed above.

## What happens next?

Once the local planning authority has received your application successfully you will receive a confirmation email from the Planning Portal. The confirmation email will include a unique reference number which should be quoted in all correspondence with the local planning authority.

Your reference number is also available from the Application Overview page. Please note that the email from the Planning Portal does not constitute the formal acceptance of your electronic submission by your local planning authority.

Once the local planning authority has received your application it will validate it within its normal workflow processes and timescales. If the local authority needs more information or has any queries it will contact you directly.

For further information on the progress of your online application please contact your local authority quoting your reference number.

## Getting Help

If you are having difficulty completing the application or using the service please contact the Planning Portal Support Team on support@planningportal.gsi.gov.uk or (0117) 372 8200.

Once the application has been submitted the local authority will be able to assist with any queries.