

Commenting on an application – frequently asked questions

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How can I comment on a current application?

There are three steps to commenting on a current application:

1. Open the [Applications Register](#)
2. Search for the application record using the application reference number
3. Click on the Comment button to open the comment form.

You can comment in one of three ways:

1. By on-line Application Register comment form
2. By email to planning@staffordshire.gov.uk
3. By letter addressed to:
Planning, Policy & Development Control
Staffordshire County Council
2 Staffordshire Place
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2DH

Please note:

1. We prefer to receive your comments online using our comment form as this is more efficient for us and for you. You will receive an automated acknowledgement email containing all the relevant details (including your comments) so that you can save them for your record purposes.
2. Your comments will be held on a public file and we may publish them on our web site. For more details refer to our [A to Z of Planning](#) - 'F' for 'Freedom of Information and Data Protection'.



What information do I need to provide?

All correspondence about an application must include:

- your name and full address (including your post code);
- the application number;
- the site address;
- a clear statement that you are objecting / supporting / making observations or raising questions about an application. This will allow us to acknowledge your correspondence in writing.

To avoid possible confusion, you should avoid asking questions as part of your representation in support / objection. Instead please first seek clarification from us or the applicant / agent before commenting in support / objecting to the proposals.



Who can comment?

Anyone can make comments in support or against a planning application and send a petition of objection or support provided that:

- each page of the petition is headed with the aim of the petition
- the names and addresses of those signing are provided and are readable
- the comments are material in planning terms and clearly stated
- the name and address of the petition coordinator is included so that we can acknowledge receipt and notify them of the decision (We will not acknowledge and notify everyone else who signed the petition)

Anyone can arrange for standard letters to be circulated, signed and submitted and we will treat them as though they were a petition.

If the application is due to be considered by the Planning Committee we will only accept any further comments up to midday on the Monday before the Thursday meeting. The only exception to this will be material likely to have a significant bearing on the Committee's ability to make a decision as determined by the Officers in consultation with the Planning Committee Chairman/Vice Chairman.

We notify neighbours and publicise all planning applications we receive to provide an opportunity for anyone to comment in accordance with our Statement of Community Involvement (see [A to Z of Planning](#) – 'S').

All those notified will be given 21 days as a statutory minimum consultation period to respond or make any comments on the application. If we receive additional information which we consider would result in a material change to the proposals we will re-consult and allow a further 14 days in which to respond or make additional comments.

If you intend to comment outside the consultation period you should check the status of the application using our [Applications Register – Online Search](#) in case the application has already been determined.



What can I comment on?

In reaching a decision we will consider any material planning objections and weigh these against any material planning benefits of the proposals.

Material planning objections or material planning benefits must relate to:

- policies and proposals in the [development plan](#). For example the policies and proposals in the Waste Local Plan, in the Minerals Local Plan, in the local plans prepared by the relevant Staffordshire District / Borough Council and in Neighbourhood Plans prepared by Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums; and,
- other material planning considerations. For example government policy, planning appeal decisions and supplementary planning guidance.

Policies in the development plan typically relate to matters such as:

- the effects on people and local communities (including amenity – operating hours, disturbance)
- the effects on local roads (including access, highway safety and traffic congestion);
- the effects on footpaths / public open space;
- the effects on the landscape, countryside, trees, hedgerows and wildlife;
- the effects on features / areas of historic / conservation interest;
- the effects on the environment in terms of pollution (including the effects of noise, dust, traffic, odours, water pollution, contaminated land, flooding, artificial light);
- the quality of the design and visual appearance;
- the effects on Green Belt land (note: Green Belt is defined in District Plans and does not apply to all areas of open countryside);

Planning operates in the public interest so we do not normally accept the following as material planning considerations:

- the effect on the value of neighbouring property (this is a personal / private interest and)
- the loss of private rights (for example rights of access, to water supplies, boundary disputes between neighbours)
- the loss of a private view
- the personal circumstances of the applicant
- the morality of the proposals
- matters controlled by separate legislation. For example Building Regulations under the control of the relevant District / Borough Council; pollution controls which are under the control of the relevant District / Borough Council / the Environment Agency

You should explain your particular reasons for objecting or supporting the application



with reference to relevant material planning considerations and any relevant local knowledge. For example you may wish to explain with reference to your local knowledge, why you consider that the proposals fail to comply with a planning policy; or, why you have concerns about traffic, noise or the appearance of the development.



You can also ask for certain matters to be addressed by the applicant or controlled by planning conditions, for example, to limit the operating hours or traffic movements.

The Government has published a [Plain English Guide to the Planning System](#) (January 2015) which may be of further assistance to you.



What happens to my comments?

Planning Officers compile a report taking into account all the comments from consultees and the representations received, as well as the relevant policies and other material considerations.

Applications may be determined by Officers of the County Council in accordance with delegated powers (see [A to Z of Planning](#) – ‘D’) or by the [Planning Committee](#).

If the application is considered by Planning Committee we will write to everyone who made representations to notify them about the meeting and to provide an opportunity for one objector and one supporter to speak to the Committee.

