



## **THE PLANNING APPLICATION PROCESS and how you can have your say**

Most building work and changes of use require planning permission. The City Council welcomes comments from neighbours, amenity societies and councillors as part of its consideration of planning applications. This note explains briefly how planning applications are dealt with and how you can become involved in the planning process.

If you are interested in what is happening in your area generally, you can look at all current application on the Council's website [www.westminster.gov.uk/planning](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/planning)

The City Council encourages that comments supporting or objecting to planning applications are made online. Please note that your comments will be displayed online, although all personal details will be redacted (signature, email and telephone numbers).

### **What you can comment on**

You can support or object to a proposal but you must bear in mind that planning applications can only be decided on the basis of planning issues, such as:

- The effect of neighbours' amenities such as daylight, sunlight, privacy and noise
- The impact of traffic, road access, parking and servicing
- The appearance, bulk or height of the scheme
- The potential loss of a valued local service or use, such as a shop, a community asset, or a residential flat.

Government legislation says that we cannot consider non-planning issues such as loss of property value, competition between local businesses, party wall and land and boundary disputes, fire escape and structural matters. Whilst the Council cannot refuse permission because construction works may cause noise and disturbance, it can restrict the hours of work, particularly in residential areas. If you have problems with noisy building works you can contact the Environmental Action Line on [REDACTED]

### **What happens to your comments**

All written comments received are considered by the planning officer. If objections can be supported in planning terms but could be overcome by changes to the proposal, the officer may contact the application and suggest amendments. We will advise you of major changes and normally give you a further 14 or 21 days for additional comments to be made.

When applications are decided by the planning committee, all written comments received are summarised in the officer's report. Please note at this point your letter or email will become available for public inspection (including personal data).

### **How the decision is made**

The planning officer can advise you when and how the application is going to be considered. Most contentious applications are reported to the Planning Applications Committee which normally meets on Tuesdays at 6.30pm at Westminster City Hall. These meetings are open to the public. However, there is no opportunity for third parties to address the Committee.

The Committee is made up of elected councillors who receive a written report in advance of the committee meeting. They make a decision after a presentation and recommendation by senior planning officers. All representations received are carefully considered by the Committee before a final decision is made. The Committee may grant planning permission (usually with conditions) or refuse it. Occasionally a decision on an application may be deferred for further information or negotiation.

### **After a decision is made**

Everyone who has made written representations to us about the proposal will be informed of the decision within 10 days. Soon after a decision is made and issued, the decision letter and the officer's report will be uploaded to the Council's website. If the application was considered by the planning committee then committee's resolution is also uploaded to the website.

### **Householder applications (works to alter or extend a house)**

If the Council refuses planning permission for a Householder application, and if an appeal is made which is to be dealt with on the basis of written representations, the Council will send copies of all letters and emails concerning the planning application to the Secretary of State. In all householder cases there will be no further opportunity to comment at appeal stage. All letters and emails will be made available for all to see on the Council's website although personal details (signature, email and telephone numbers) will be redacted.