



Fact Sheet 3

The Planning Application Process

Every planning application is different and every local authority varies. This Fact Sheet sets out the key stages which are generally applicable.

Pre-application

Define as precisely as possible what development is required – there are two, main types of application – for a building or engineering operation to construct something or for a change of the use of an existing building or area of land. An application may be ‘full’ with all details submitted for approval or ‘outline’ to establish a principle and then at a later date submitting more information on any matters where approval is ‘reserved’.

Check the Council’s Local Plan to see if there are any policy designations affecting your site – such as a protected landscape. If there is a conflict between the proposal and a policy the scheme may need to be modified.

Check on the planning authority’s website what supporting material will be needed for an application – alongside a site plan, plans of the proposals and the application form a range of reports may be needed such as a transport report or an ecology report. Allow adequate time for any such work to be undertaken (and some studies, particularly ecology surveys, have to be carried at particular times of the year). This work may need to be undertaken by a number of professional experts. A list of the main environmental issues is in GAAC Fact Sheet 10 (Planning 6).

Consider a pre-application meeting with the planners. This may incur a fee but could save time and money in the long run as it will give a good steer on issues of importance to the Council and its likely response to an application.

Depending on the scale and nature of the proposal, engaging with local residents and groups in advance may be appropriate.

Prepare a thorough and well argued application and all supporting material. Most material can be submitted on-line (and can be loaded up over a period of time).

Post-application

The planning authority will consult with ‘statutory consultees’ such as the Highway Authority or Drainage Authority and with any local residents. Consultation responses will be available on the Council’s website allowing the applicant to monitor responses and, if necessary submit further details or clarification.

The planning authority may move immediately to approve or refuse the application or may request changes to the scheme to make it acceptable. One or more meetings between the applicant and the authority may be necessary or desirable to reach a positive outcome.



The planning authority may give 'delegated' authority to an officer to determine smaller applications although most will be reported to a meeting of the Planning Committee. Normally an applicant has the right to speak in favour of the application at the meeting.

Post Decision

If the application is approved it will normally have planning conditions (see GAAC Fact Sheet 8), including a time limit within which the work must be started. Other conditions may require surveys to be undertaken before any construction work can start ('pre-commencement' conditions of which the applicant must now be notified in advance) (such as an archaeology survey) or, for example govern the hours when construction work may be undertaken.

If the application is refused an appeal may be lodged within six months of the decision. Appeals can be costly and usually it is worth taking legal advice on the merits of and issues around this.

Key Messages

- Many planning authorities and planners do not have much experience of aviation. Make sure key people (the planning case officer and or the Committee) know the site and understand what the proposal is and why it is important to the airfield.
- Try to tell a story in the planning supporting statement submitted with the application, for example, how the proposed development will enhance safety, assist long term viability, provide more jobs, and create something of value to the local area.
- Planning 1 (GAAC Fact Sheet 5) highlighted the role of the planning system in achieving 'sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – seek to embody this whenever possible – for example the current positive messages about the role of GA airfields in providing training and support for STEM subjects and the need for more pilots and engineers to support the aviation sector in the future.
- Ensure that comments from local people, tenants or users are fully listened to and addressed as far as possible.
- Make the planning application package 'user friendly' for the planning case officer – if they can lift sections to go straight into a committee report this will be appreciated.

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*This is one of a series of Fact Sheets available from the GAAC.
The planning system is not straightforward. Local policies and concerns vary across the country and as each airfield is unique, interaction with the planning system needs to be tailored to fit. If your airfield has a particular issue or if you would like further information, please contact the above address or see our website at www.gaac.org.uk*