

Planning can be downright perplexing!



Have you ever applied for planning permission only to find the whole thing rather perplexing and far from easy? Although over the last few years some planning laws have been relaxed, much of it remains a minefield for many people. I asked someone the other day what they thought about the current planning process and their answer was, "It's still a whole load of red tape!", and I agreed with them.

So, here's the thing. Say you want to put an extension on your home, build a lovely sauna in your garden, add a conservatory, erect a couple of wind turbines, convert your garage into a living or office space, build another home at the bottom of your garden, convert a barn to live in, or build a new home out in the open countryside, then the first thing to find out is whether you'll need planning permission.

Depending on what you want to do, especially if it's a big project, then it's highly likely that you will need planning permission. However, for smaller projects, like home extensions, you may not need planning permission because what you want to do is now classed as 'permitted development', because it's here where planning law is now far less strict than it used to be. Of course, you'll probably still need some architect/building plans but at least you can avoid all the red tape!

If you do need planning permission, then there are three key things that you'll need to do:

- ✓ decide whether what you want to do will be regarded as a *sustainable development* as far as your local planning authority's (LPA) Local Plan or the National Planning Policy Framework is concerned (remember, the first may not exist and the second is often open to considerable interpretation!)
- ✓ choose and complete the *appropriate application form* (there are lots to choose from but you must complete the correct one)
- ✓ provide all the other *documentation and information* that your LPA requires for your particular planning application (this can be anything from location plans, site/block plans, design and access statements, scaled plans of existing and proposed elevations, floors and roofs and photographs, to tree surveys, energy and sustainability statements, flood risk assessments, foul sewerage details, parking provision and so on).

If all this looks somewhat daunting, and for many people it is, then you'll need to think very seriously about paying for the services of a planning consultant who will act as your agent. Make sure though that you chose someone who is bang up-to-date with current planning policy, who's prepared to speak well on your behalf to your parish or town council and, if needs be, your LPA's Planning Committee, who doesn't charge exorbitant fees and, above all, someone who really can make planning easy for you.

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