

# HOW TO WRITE AN OBJECTION LETTER

When objecting to a planning application, there are certain things that you should always try and make sure to do:

- 1. Write the application reference number and name/address of the scheme at the top of your letter.** This will make sure that there is no confusion as to which application you are objecting. This is less of an issue if you choose to make your representations by way of the online system that most local authorities use because you have to navigate your way to the application in question before you can submit your objections.
- 2. Make clear that you object.** State in bold, capital letters in the very first sentence 'I OBJECT to this application for the following reasons...' It is amazing how many responses don't make this clear and can be put in the 'neutral' pile by the case officer. Also, give your address so that the local authority knows you come from within the district/local area in question.
- 3. Refer to development plan.** For each point you make, explain why it is contrary to the development plan and list the relevant policy reference. You should also try and respond to any development plan policies that conflict with your views, making clear why you consider them to be less relevant in determining the application. In respect of the development plan, it is important to distinguish between the adopted plan and the emerging plan. It is usually the adopted plan which is the one that holds most weight but an emerging plan, particularly if at an advanced stage, also holds weight. If in doubt, you can ask the case officer or, best of all, simply refer to the policies in both plans.
- 4. Make clear if there are any other material considerations that should be taken into account.** These are matters which policy does not cover but are planning issues of importance. There is more guidance on what might represent a material consideration here.
- 5. Don't be emotive, focus on the issues.** The case officer is usually not the one making the final decision but will be making his or her professional recommendation to the members that will. In most cases, the members of the planning committee will accept those recommendations which are made solely on the planning matters at hand. It is best to leave the more 'personal' arguments to the time when you are allowed to address the members at the planning committee meeting.
- 6. Consider the public interest - explain how the development affects the local community as a whole.** Avoid focusing on issues such as land ownership, the effects of the proposal on the value of neighbouring property, or the personal circumstances of the applicant.
- 7. Always try to use evidence to support a point, rather than just making an assertion that cannot be backed up (even if, in your heart of hearts, you know it to be true).** If at all possible, refer to planning case law on an equivalent matter.
- 8. Make as many points as you can.** Give the planning officer and members the ammunition they need to justify refusing the application.
- 9. Use pictures to make your point.** Don't just say that the site floods, take a picture and make sure the photo includes the date and time it was taken.
- 10. Get your comments in on time.** Late comments may be taken into account, particularly if your views don't cause any delay in the decision, but you can't rely on this. If you are sending an email, then include a postal address.