

Do You Need Planning Permission To Work From Home?

I'm surprised by the number of times that I'm actually asked this question and once again it comes down to whether the impact of what you're proposing to do is acceptable or not.

For example you may want to convert an existing room such as a box room, loft room or even your garage into a little home office or if your plans are for altering an existing room in your home you need to consider if there is enough room for your desk, enough natural light and space to get all your office furniture in. Don't forget about having access to the internet and a telephone line too.

Alternatively, you can do what I have done in the past when working from home and get yourself a little building in your back garden which you can convert into a small office.

The key thing to take on board is whether or not the overall character of your house will change as a result of your business activities. If what you're proposing has a negative impact, you need to ask yourself the following questions... Will your home be no longer be used mainly as a private residence? I have known that you can change up to 30% of the floor area of your house to business use. As long as at least half of your house is still residential use I think that would be acceptable. As a rule of thumb, I would say try not to use over 30%.

Also, have a think about whether or not customers will be visiting the house? Will you need additional parking and would that affect your neighbours? Something else to think about, the activities you are doing within your business, would that be unusual for your area? For example, If you put a building in your garden to do some light engineering work would the noise upset your neighbours? Think about the hours of work, and again it's down to whether you're going to cause undue disturbance whether it's down to noise or even smells. I've known people who have wanted to start up a small catering business from home, they're making cakes and curries etc and you have to think about whether cooking at 2 am would upset the people who live around you. There's also the consideration of whether renting out bedrooms to tenants or lodgers constitutes a business. I will cover this in future posts.

So the key question is, is your home still mainly your home or has it become business premises?



How To Object To A Planning Application

It's all very well getting your planning permission approved but what if you see a planning application for example neighbour is putting in a planning application and you don't like it, you want to object to the proposal, what can you do?

When a local planning authority receives a planning application, the law requires it to give publicity to the application in several ways. This allows those who may be affected by it to have to opportunity to make their views known. The advertisements of the publicity for the application quite often includes publishing a notice in a local newspaper, posting a public site notice as you'll see on gates/posts/fences and neighbour notification in form of a letter which is given to the occupiers and owners of adjoining properties.

You've got to remember the impact and balance of what the application is doing, you cannot complain about an application because you feel it might reduce your house value. Just because they wanted an extension, do bear in mind that what if you were in an identical situation and you wanted an extension on your house. Would it be unfair to object against theirs if you want to do it yourself? Once again, it's all about balance.

You need to write down your planning concerns and any relevant points then send them to the local planning authorities planning department. There is usually a case officer allocated to deal with each application. You can always send a letter to the enquiries desk at the planning department if you don't know who the case officer is, always try and include a planning reference number and the address on the application if you can.



Getting The Balance Right

I believe that planning is all about the careful balance between the impact and the desirability of what you're thinking to do. Planning is all about how we plan for and make decisions about the future of our cities, our towns, and the countryside.

The local planning authority is responsible for deciding whether a development which could be anything from an extension on a house to a new shopping centre, whether it should go ahead.

As an example of an impact and whether something is desirable or not, it would not be a good idea to build a nightclub or a disco next to a retirement home, it would have an unacceptable impact. Therefore when balancing up the probabilities it would probably be refused, whereas building a nightclub on the high street would be more acceptable.

Careful and sometimes clever planning combined with a sensitive design and landscaping can make some developments acceptable where previously it would have thought to have been unsuitable. This is the reason why applications are considered so carefully by the planning officer. The planning system is needed to control development in your area.

But, you don't always need planning permission, in certain cases, developments can be done without the need for planning permission called permitted development. In actual fact that isn't quite true, everything requires planning permission. Whether you want to put up a gate, a garden fence or a flagpole, if you want to put a shed in your garden or park your car on your driveway, everything needs planning permission to some degree.

But because some operations of development are considered to be minor, as long as it complies with the limitations and conditions of the permitted development order then it's deemed to be permitted development and planning permission has been granted almost by default. I will talk about permitted development in more detail in further posts.



How Do I Ensure That My Planning Application Has The Best Possible Chance Of Being Approved?

As I have said in a previous post, I believe that planning is all about a careful balance between the impact and the acceptability of your proposal. If you look at this from an impartial point of view and you look at a proposal and you think it's a little outrageous or wouldn't be acceptable then surely the local authority and planning officers would look at it the same way.

You couldn't put a thatched cottage in the middle of a high street nor could you put a house of multiple occupations with lots of parking in a sleepy village. It has to be a careful balance between what you think would be acceptable in a location against what the neighbours would want.

I appreciate that some neighbours are likely to hate everything you want to do but if you look at it subjectively, you'll see whether something on the balance is acceptable in terms of the impact that the development will have, if you always get that balance right, you will always get the best result.

More often than not, the planning officer will ask for amendments to your planning application and usually ask for it to be changed slightly, this may be because they feel it has too much of an impact and harshness about it and therefore as it stands, they don't think it is acceptable. The extension may be too big or the house is too tall, maybe the roof shape doesn't fit in with the neighbours. It's all about the balance of the impact and what is acceptable.

Some of the major things to consider when making a planning application and getting that balance right are the loss of privacy, overlooking and overshadowing, is what you're trying to do going to affect your neighbours? Also, consider highway safety, traffic, traffic noise and is there enough parking?

The location of where you want to build is also very important, is it next to a listed building or in a conservation area? What about the layout and the density of what you're trying to do. Think about the materials, if you're trying to have something which has a sand and cement rendered wall as opposed to nice matching brickwork. Things like nature conservation, will you be upsetting the local wildlife?

These are all sorts of things which should be considered when making a planning application, remember it's a careful balance of the impact and whether it's acceptable. If it's got a very little impact, it's more likely to be acceptable and therefore your planning application is more likely to be approved.



Can Planning Permission Be Granted Retrospectively?

If you go ahead with a development like an extension or a new building of some sort and you don't have planning permission then the local authority could ask you to make a retrospective planning application.

This is interesting because although they may say yes you need planning permission, it is not commonly known that it is not against any law to build or change the use of something without first having made a planning application which was approved. What is against the law is that should the local authority decide that no they don't like what you're doing, they can issue an enforcement notice which is where the planning enforcement officer will tell you to stop what you're doing and make a formal application. It only becomes unlawful not to comply with the enforcement officer, not the fact of needing a planning application in the first place.

When a local authority looks at a situation they have to decide whether or not it's in the interest of the council, owner or neighbours to actually issue an enforcement notice. Sometimes you see things being built even if they haven't been given permission, it is not actually unlawful to do that, it's unlawful not to comply with an enforcement notice and it is then up to the local authority planning department whether they will issue an enforcement notice. Enforcement is a very complicated area which I will go into more detail another time.



Does Everything Need Planning Permission?

I was asked by a local builder recently whether I could help out with a planning problem. What the situation was, was that a gentleman in the grounds of his rural house had a stable and he wanted to convert that stable into an annex for his family. As his children were starting to get a little bit older they want to have more space so he wanted to put the kids in another building so he could have a bit of peace and quiet, I can relate to that!

So, he understandably thought that he needed to go for planning permission so he employed quite an expensive architect who said: "yes no problem we'll get you planning permission to turn your stable into an annex." Then the local authority started to mess him about.

The first thing they wanted was a series of surveys including an owl survey to make sure there weren't any barn owls in the stable. They wanted another survey to make sure there weren't any bats and then another survey regarding newts because he was within 200m of a pond and lastly he needed a structural survey to say whether or not this building was structurally sound and suitable for conversion. So he's already spent several thousand pounds for around four surveys and has also spent quite a lot of money with this architect. As you can imagine he was quite upset after several months of going back and forth when the local authority then refused him permission.

This is when I was asked to come in and have a look at the problem. I noticed straight away that this conversion was a horse stable, a stable is for pets and therefore pets are part of an ancillary residential use whereby you store pets eg if you were to keep greyhounds in your garden, the building in your garden is ancillary to the main use of your house.

So the upshot of it was that he could change the insides of his stable to any residential use that he wanted without the need for planning permission.

Now, the trick here is we use Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act which says that any changes that are purely internal on a building, which doesn't change the use of that building, do not require planning permission. So all the work that he wanted to do to create a bedroom, a lounge, a kitchen and a bathroom he didn't actually require planning permission because the stable was ancillary to the main house so after he'd spent all that money on the architect, he could have saved that money by using me. He is now in the process of suing the architect to get his fees back, I wish him luck.

So no, not everything requires planning permission if you know the ways around it you can circumvent the planning laws.



My Favourite Saying

One of my favourite sayings is that 'In the wake of adversity, seeds of greater things are sown'. Basically, when life is shit and everything is put in your way, that makes you become more creative and find alternative solutions to a problem.

I had one such incident like that just this week, whereby a client of mine wanted to put quite a substantial side extension on his house in Norwich and the local authority didn't really want him to do that. Then to compound the problem, he wanted to put a large double garage in his front garden. Now that isn't really unusual because it was a private road and neighbours had similar garages in their front gardens, but for some reason, the local authority really didn't want this guy to have this project so they wouldn't allow the garage whatsoever.

So the way forward was that I suggested him to lessen the impact of the extension. He could do this by reducing it a little. The reduction in width of the extension then allowed him to get access to the back garden.

Now those of you that know about permitted development would know that you can do all sorts of weird and wonderful things without the need for planning permission. So my suggestion essentially was to appease the local authority, remove the garage all together from the front of the house, reduce the extension in width just a little to get access to the rear and then he was able to put an absolutely massive building at the back of his of his garden probably about twice maybe even three times the size of the garage that he wanted in the first place.

So now not only did he now have a garage that he originally wanted but he's also got a gym, an art room and an office all in all that doesn't require planning permission.

So like I say in the wake of adversity, seeds of greater things are sown. It pays to be creative!



Permitted Development

As most of you will probably realise by now, I really love permitted development. It enables you to get round all sorts of planning restrictions and planning laws and provides you with ways of getting the permissions that you require but with perhaps a much easier route than having to do battle with planning officers.

Aside from planning permission there's also three little bits of information which are very useful, these are to do with time limits in The Town and Country Planning Act and they deal with the 10-year rule, the 4-year rule, and the 28-day rule. The 28-day rule is the lesser known of the three and I'll cover the other two in future posts.

The 28-day rule was found to be very useful to get over a particular problem an acquaintance of mine had recently. He is a scrap metal merchant and he had a small yard which was rapidly running out of room. He was using skips which were being filled with scrap metal and he had deliveries and pick-ups of lorries taking the scrap metal away. The issue was, he needed somewhere to store the spare skips.

He asked me what was the likelihood of him getting planning permission to expand his yard. I said the nature of the business is not exactly very neighbour friendly and it might take some time to do, but in the meantime, I had an idea that we could use to enable him to carry on with the business and expand a little which involved the 28-day rule.

The 28-day rule effectively says that you can use any piece of land that you own, for any purpose that you like for 28 days of the year. It doesn't have to be 28 consecutive days, it is just any random 28 days of the year. As long as you reinstate the land back to how it originally was, then you can do what you like with it.

Travelling showmen and travellers tend to use the 28-day rule as they don't need planning permission to put up fairgrounds and caravans etc as long as they put all the land back to how it previously was and make sure they clear the site.

So using that same principle, I looked at his piece of land which was about 50m by 50m and I thought to myself you've got 365 days in a year, so divide 365 by 28 days, that gives you 13 (13 strips of land) as long as each one of those strips of land is in a separate ownership (how he got around that one is a subject for another post) he had effectively got 13 individual strips of land which he was able to put his skips on.

This meant that as a skip was picked up or delivered, it would go onto an alternate piece of land, using all 13 strips in rotation. He would be able to do that for quite a few months without breaking the law. He was perfectly within his rights to do this as long as each time he picked up a skip or delivered one, he makes sure that the land wasn't damaged in any way. This enabled him to carry on with his business.

In the end, he did get his planning permission but it did take around 9 or 10 months, but using the 28-day rule, he was able to carry on with his business.



More Permitted Development Agricultural Use To Residential



You can achieve anything when you know how !

The conversion of two agricultural grain silos to two single-storey residential properties has been given the go-ahead, after an inspector judged that the scheme was in accordance with class Q of the General Permitted Development Order (GDPO).

How The Housing Shortage Affects Developers

Did you know that only 5% of the UK is actually built upon?

Even when you consider the farms, mountains, lakes, rivers, national parks, motorways and other areas that you can't build on, this leaves a huge amount of space that's seriously underused.

Despite the government putting in about £25 million into the construction industry under new rules to provide some new housing, there is still a chronic shortage.

Now I'm no expert on economics by any means, but as any schoolboy knows, demand plus scarcity equals rising prices. Thinking about it, banks, building societies, and other financial institutions including pension funds invest heavily in property to create profits.

If there are more housing developments then surely this will affect this financial mechanism. So does it really benefit the government to build new houses?

Maybe I'm being cynical on this point; but apart from this paradox, I do think that the real problem with housing supply in this country is the very strict and overly restrictive planning rules and regulations which actively prohibit residential development anywhere other than in the already overcrowded settlements of villages and towns. It seems to me that you need to remove one medium-sized dwelling to cram on 3 smaller ones in its place.

Trying to find a building plot in a village or a town and getting the financials to work for the developer is actually quite difficult, despite the government creating legislation that allows the building on previously developed land otherwise known as brownfield sites. They have also introduced permitted development rights to allow the changes of use of offices and retail and warehousing to residential. So in this way, they are in fact utilising existing property to create more housing to help with the shortfall, but building in the countryside remains tricky.

However, some councils cannot demonstrate a housing supply of at least 5 years as required by the government. When this happens their planning rules can be overruled and as long as the proposed houses are 'sustainable' (and that's a huge subject on its own) then building in the countryside is allowed. But despite the housing demand, councils still resist these plans and using the '5-year housing supply' route is not by any means guaranteed.

So, residential development on the 95% of unused land which is outside of towns and villages is far from easy.

The developer must learn how to get around the planning restrictions by using other means. Permitted Development is one way that can be used to their advantage so they can build in 'the countryside' and contribute positively to the housing shortage.

Permitted Development As A Way To Build In The Countryside.

Part 1

You can perform certain types of work without needing to apply for planning permission. These are called "permitted development rights". They derive from a general planning permission granted not by the local authority but by Parliament.

One area of permitted development which allows the change of use of an agricultural building to residential could have a significant impact on housing supply by allowing houses to be built in the countryside.

This allows the change of use of a livestock barn or agricultural storage into a maximum of three houses. This is significant because generally speaking most local authorities, especially in the rural districts specifically prohibit residential development in the open countryside. They do usually allow replacement or rebuild of a residential building but you certainly can't normally build one from scratch eg 'new build'. The various limitations and conditions of this usage change can be quite complex and the local authorities certainly don't make it any easier because they have jealously guarded their rural policies for years, so any means that allows somebody to circumvent those policies are usually resisted.

Under part 3 schedule 2 of the general permitted development order, Use Class Q allows for this change of use. The first part of this class allows for the change of use, and the second part allows for the building works.

It's this second part that generally speaking trips up the developer. You see, most conversions require a certain amount of building work. The phrase used under that Class is that the building work must be 'reasonable', and it's this word 'reasonable' that the local authorities tend to use to prevent the application being approved. Eg the amount of building work required to convert the barn to a house is 'unreasonable' and in excess of what they would allow as a conversion. They would term it as 'new build' which is not normally allowed.

Most planning consultants when making an application under Class Q, are not aware that you can apply just for the first part e.g Q(a) which is the change of use. The legislation is a little confusing and it could be read that an application under class Q must be made for both the change of use and the building works. But this is not the case. Planning inspectors on appeal have ruled that an application can be made for the change of use only, class Q(a). Now, this is very significant because it's the change of use that is actually the important part because you can apply separately either using class Q(b) or a separate planning application for the building work.

It's this change of use that allows the residential part to go ahead, not the building of it.

Most agricultural barns are unsuitable for conversion without substantial building work, therefore, most applications under class Q are refused. But now consider what would happen if you were able to successfully get a change of use only under the first part of class Q and then subsequently at a later date able to apply for the building works. This is, in my opinion, a game changer. In part 2 I will outline how to do it.

Permitted Development As a Way To Build In The Countryside.

Part 2

I would advise using a planning consultant to work this method to allow building in the countryside (well I would wouldn't I ;-)). Or at least get the expert knowledge to do it. The principle is called a 'fall back position'. This fall back has been established by the Courts and accepted by us experts after several very important high level judicial decisions. Basically, if you can build something, or change the use of something, by using Permitted Development rights, then this principle of development must be a 'material consideration' when considering a planning application.

Going back to Part 1 of this post, we can use Class Q(a) to change a barn to residential use providing we can meet some limitations and conditions. We do not need to actually build it or in some cases, actually make a PD prior notification application.

And.... the barn can be converted into up to 3 dwellings.

The council won't like countryside development but using Class Q you can do it anyway under PD.

However, you may prefer to build say, 3 detached houses in a better part of the land.

The 3 dwellings created under PD is a material consideration coupled with the fact that the council must act 'proactively and constructively' to allow your planning permission, they must not be 'obstructive'.

Subject to a well presented case to the planning department, you've now got permission to build in the countryside where this would not normally be allowed.

The fall back position can be used in lots of other ways as well.

A few examples

Large extensions to a dwelling that would otherwise be refused.

Converting shops to large HMO's

Increasing the size of a new build development.

Annexes and garages.

Converting Pubs To Residential

This strategy relies on the the pub serving hot food and that service is a main part of its business activity.

Pubs are 'drinking establishments' which is Use Class A4.

A4 does not have Permitted Development rights for change of use. Some pubs are also protected by the locals as being an 'asset of community value'. This doubly protects the pub's demise, which is fair enough as there is currently 1 pub closing nearly every week which is terrible for the industry and more should be done about it, but that is a whole different topic.

Pubs that serve food are more accurately classed as restaurants. Restaurants are Class A3, and A3 does have permitted development rights.

Subject (as always with PD) to limitations and conditions, A3 can be changed to Class A2 (professional services eg solicitor or accountant) or Class A1 (retail, shop)

Then the magic happens.

A1(or A2) can be changed to 2 flats Use Class C3(not HMO) per A1(A2) unit.

This is done using either, or both Class G and Class M.

But unlike residential C3, there is no limitations on how far you can split A1(A2) into further subdivided units.

Complicated? Consider this;

Change the pub which is classed as a restaurant (A3) to a shop(A1)

Then you can sub divide the A1 unit into several more A1 shop units. (do it reasonably; don't create rabbit hutches!)

Each A1 shop unit can have up to 2 flats (C3) over it using the Permitted Development Prior Notification process of Class G and/or Class M.

Depending on location, most councils don't like shops in rural areas, they prefer them in towns (bizarre I know, but there you go)

So you can then apply with a formal planning application to change the ground floor shop to residential.

No building work needs to be carried out just the approvals where applicable. So the use of the pub could be changed to wholly residential.

But there's more..... What if the pub has a carpark? Remember my post regarding creating a 'Fall Back position' ? Well, with residential use established you may have a better chance for even more residential units.....



Pre-Planning Applications v Outline Applications

Part 1

The Official Line on Pre Application Advice;

Pre-application engagement is a collaborative process between a prospective applicant and other parties which may include: the local planning authority, statutory and non-statutory consultees, elected members.

Providing constructive informal advice to help shape and progress development proposals is an important part of the planning process. It can help shape schemes positively before too much time and money has been invested. It can also help us to identify at an early stage schemes that our planning officers do not believe are likely to get planning permission.

The pre-application process will

- Identify adopted/emerging policies that are relevant to development proposals
- Identify relevant planning considerations
- Identify external consultees, groups and residents with whom you should engage
- Confirm 'local requirement' documents which will be needed in a submission
- Provide an indication of likely financial contributions (if any) which will be sought
- Provide, where possible, an indication of whether officers think the proposal is likely to get a favourable recommendation in the light of current policies
- Where a scheme is not considered acceptable, provide guidance on what needs to be done to address concerns.

There is normally a fee for this service and the timescales for appraisals can take as long as a planning application.

My view on pre-applications... They are as much use as a chocolate teapot.

Why? For the fact that it can cost the same as a planning application and takes as long and at the end of it, the advice given IS NOT BINDING ON THE COUNCIL. So what's the point?

I see the question of 'pre apps' (pre-planning application advice) come up quite a bit so if I may can I share my view.

Years ago you could pop along to your council and have an informal chat with the planning officer who would provide great insight and advice for your scheme. You could then follow it up with a sketch and they would then write back with their helpful advice with amendments where necessary.

So before even engaging a planning professional with your application or you started spending any money you would have an excellent idea whether your ideas were acceptable. Now fast forward 25 odd years and the helpful senior planning officer with decades of experience has been replaced by a 'line manager' that you can't speak to, let alone have a

meeting. Cutbacks mean that you have to deal with a planner who most likely is on a 4 day week and, on the one time you want to speak to them, is at college(!).

Ok a bit of a rant, but the all important informed, accurate and dependable advice has now been replaced by the 'pre-app' which you have to pay for.

There are 4 things that are seriously wrong with the 'pre-app';

1. It can in some cases cost as much as a planning application
2. It can take as long as a planning application to get a response.
3. Not in all cases are statutory consultees asked their opinion
4. It's not binding on the planning department. !

Now this serious.

Not only does it cost you and takes ages and, say, highways or environmental dept have not been asked their opinion

And...

There will be a final paragraph in the planner's appraisal that the advice given is (in as many words) subject to the formal decision made by a planning authority!

I have known uninformed developers buy land and buildings on the strength of a pre-app. Guess what? They were refused permission!

One recent case a young couple sunk their savings buying a barn because the planners said a residential conversion was ok. It wasn't because it failed the 'bats test' - ecological survey. Luckily I was asked to sort it, but they wasted time and money (and nearly their life savings) on poor pre-app advice.

But there is an easy answer.

I'll explain that in Part 2

Pre-Planning Applications v Outline Applications

Part 2

So what's the alternative to a Pre-App? (see part 1 of this post)

Simple - You make an outline planning application.

Because

1. You can make a 'detailed' outline application with all the important or concerning points covered.
2. The cost is a fraction of a full application
3. With a bit of prior knowledge, most developers could do it themselves with a bit of help saving time and fees
4. Best of all it could be approved leaving very little detail to be resolved. You can then go to the next stage or capitalise on the increase in site value.
5. If the outline app is refused then you will be given precise reasons why, which if you can fix it you will get your permission. The planners aren't allowed to find anything else wrong.

With an outline application, you pay currently (Nov 2017) £385 per 0.1 of a hectare of site area. You can fit, generally speaking, at least 3 houses on 0.1 of a hectare (100 sqm) so you're up £770 straight away if not more. The cost of professional services for the outline is much less than a full application and you don't need professional surveys if the application does not include it. Eg ecological or contamination surveys. Trees can be asked for on sensitive sites.

The minimum that is required for an outline application to establish the principle of development is access.

So download the "gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets" for information.

But please note, in conservation areas, LPA's aren't too happy with outline planning applications because without full details the LPA may not be able to judge the impact of your development proposal. However, an outline application can be made with full details if required, which can address the objections - and have a chat with the conservation officer.

A full planning application is required for changes of use.

~ So use Permitted Development instead!

In my opinion, consider an outline application over a pre-planning application every time.

So newbies. ... Be careful out there!



What Can I Do With This Property? - Using The Council's Planning Search Page

So for our newer ladies and gents here are some more thoughts.....

The most common question...

'What can I do with this property?'

You know how find your Gold Mine area, right?

You know how to value a plot or a building for its new intended use?

You know your HMO rules or whatever your strategy is?

Heck, you even know how to find JV's and present a deal to your funders.

So why don't you know what the planning officer will allow you to do?

You have all the basic developer building blocks and yet the most important part you probably leave to a pre-app (I hope not, see my post on this subject) or you ask an architect or planning consultant for advice.

Fact is, you should have a fair idea yourself before you start spending money on their fees. In the same way, you know your area and your strategy you need to know your planning department and their rules and policies.

The trouble is, It's a bloody minefield of legaleez jargon that consultants like me make our living on, and we won't be giving up that trick anytime soon.

But the truth is, my life would certainly be made simpler if the same old question wasn't always asked.

If you know your exit (because you know not only what the financial numbers are but also that your development has a fair chance of approval) you will be light years ahead of your competition - and I can cut to the chase and get the proper work done!

You will be pleased to know that there's a shortcut to making a basic appraisal of your project that's free and fairly quick with practice.

You need to know how to search for planning applications in your chosen council. It's a goldmine of information and a source of deals that present themselves months before they hit Rightmove

1. Have the postal address and postcode.

You can check what the local authority is by going to planningportal.co.uk and entering your site's postcode in the box.

2. Councils pride themselves in making their websites unnavigable

So go to Google and enter the name of the council and 'planning application search'

The first result normally takes you to their search page. Use the advanced search option.

3. You can search by keyword, address, postcode, applicant, agent, date, parish and lots more.

You want to search for similar stuff as you want to develop in your area.

You can use the wildcard “%”

Say you want to build flats in postcode AB1 5XY

In keyword description use, for example, %development%flats%

In postcode put AB1%

And up pops a list of applications that fit your criteria.

Be creative in your searches. E.g. HMO keyword search %multiple%

Or change of use office to resi try %B1%C3%

You get the picture...

Click the link and open 'documents'

Then see if the application was refused or approved. Then look at the decision notice and the officer's comments/assessment

This will tell you exactly what is right or wrong with the application and therefore you can compare yours.

You'll get the referred policies and how they are applied which you can use later or give to your planning consultant/architect.

If you can't see any relevant applications ask yourself why.

Chances are it's not allowed or refine your search.

Apply a bit of common sense, and practice

4. You can also look up weekly and monthly lists of new and decided applications.

New applications are projects that you can offer on even before they come to market.

Decided applications if refused are a chance to fix the problem and offer below market value.

If approved, deal package them or buy them!

If you want more detail and hacks and tips to get your application approved then visit my page - thanks!

Some Useful Links

The whole General Permitted Development Order - read it and learn it to save money and time when appraising your development opportunities

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/596/contents/made>

The Use Classes Order - see whether the building is a shop or professional services or a bank or a warehouse or...

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1987/764/contents/made>

With Special Thanks to Steve Speed a clever diagram showing how to use Permitted Development.

<https://planningjungle.com/wp-content/uploads/Use-Classes-Order-1987-Quick-Reference-Guide.pdf>

Your starting point for all things regarding Planning Permission

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200127/planning>

A massive resource that every developer should have in their knowledge base

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>

Is your building listed?

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

Find your Local Authority, Parish and County councils

<https://mapit.mysociety.org/>

Land Registry- login and find out who owns the property you're after

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/land-registry>

The National Planning Policy Framework - the backbone of planning policy

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

The Planning Practice Guidance - essential planning policy guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>