

# Introduction to the UK Planning System

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## National Level

The UK Planning system is very complicated and central government keeps on changing it, often before the last set of changes has been fully implemented. A good introduction is on the CPRE website at:

<http://www.planninghelp.org.uk/planning-system/system-in-brief>

Subsidiary pages there cover various aspects of the national system

There are also documents called Planning Policy Statements which have replaced the previous Planning Policy Guidance notes - PPGs. Central government uses these to tell local authorities how to run their local systems. The 25 documents cover a number of subjects such housing, historic environments, green belts, sustainable development, noise, flood risk, renewable energy and so on.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicystatements/>

## Oxford

At a local Oxford level the City Council, which is the planning authority for the city, has a Planning Policy:

[http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Planning\\_Policy\\_occw.htm](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Planning_Policy_occw.htm)

A main part of that is the Local Development Framework:

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/23925LocalDevelopmentFrameworks.pdf>

which is a group of documents, of which the Core Strategy:

[http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Core\\_Strategy\\_occw.htm](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Core_Strategy_occw.htm)

is the most important.

Other documents under the Core Strategy cover sustainability, Action Areas, telecommunications, affordable housing, parking standards, community involvement, etc. The core strategy is still being developed.

## Development Control

If you want to build something, or change the use of a building, it will almost certainly need Planning Permission. It is also well worth while talking to your neighbours before you apply - or they could make difficulties.

There is a web site called the Planning Portal that covers this:

[http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/wps/portal/portalhome/unauthenticatedhome!/ut/p/c5/04\\_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gjtXBnJydDRwMLbzdLA09nSw\\_zsKBAIwN3U\\_1wkA6zeHMXS4gKd29TRwNPI0s3b2e\\_AGMDAwOIvAEO4Gig7-eRn5uqX5CdneboqKgIAGUwqho!/dl3/d3/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/wps/portal/portalhome/unauthenticatedhome!/ut/p/c5/04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3gjtXBnJydDRwMLbzdLA09nSw_zsKBAIwN3U_1wkA6zeHMXS4gKd29TRwNPI0s3b2e_AGMDAwOIvAEO4Gig7-eRn5uqX5CdneboqKgIAGUwqho!/dl3/d3/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/)

or maybe you could just put "planning portal" into Google.

To apply you have to produce "existing" and "proposed" drawings to scale, and a "Design and Access Statement". It is not really practical to do this without professional help, but the city does try to be helpful to householders with very small applications. All applications are now on line. If your development affects a Listed Building the application system is very much more complicated, as English Heritage gets involved.

It is well worth while keeping in touch with the city conservation officers for this district. They are very knowledgeable and helpful.

If you want to check on someone else's planning application and you know the application number go to:

[http://uniformpublicaccess.oxford.gov.uk/publicaccess/tdc/DcApplication/application\\_searchform.aspx](http://uniformpublicaccess.oxford.gov.uk/publicaccess/tdc/DcApplication/application_searchform.aspx)

If you don't know the number you can search there under the address, but it is not so efficient.

But in any case the city planning website is being changed in January 2011.

If you want to keep an eye open for things happening in your district check PlanningFinder.

<http://www.planningfinder.co.uk/page/home>

If you apply for planning permission and it is refused you can appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol:

<http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/index.htm>

If you wish to object to a planning application you can write to the city planners about it. But you have to make sure that you only object on planning grounds (such as that the proposal does not conform to the city's published policies). If you wish to object to an appeal, you can write to the Inspectorate. Most appeals are settled on documents.

If someone builds something that is not in accordance with their permission, the city can require them to rectify it. There are enforcement officers to deal with this.

[http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Enforcement\\_Of\\_Planning\\_Control\\_occw.htm](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Enforcement_Of_Planning_Control_occw.htm)

Cutting down trees, or doing major work to them, needs permission. Reputable local tree surgeons can apply for you, and they know what the city will accept, so applications are pretty much rubber-stamped ("Raise No Objection" appears on the web site). A "Tree" is over 100 mm diameter at 1.5m above the ground.

Very small work to buildings can be done under "Permitted Development" rights. In the conservation area these are very restricted.

Be aware that all documents - drawings, letters of objection etc - appear on the city web site. Letters may be removed when an application is determined, but the main documents - drawings mostly - stay there for decades. (Be careful what you say in phone calls to the planners - there was a case recently when an innocent question caused an application for that address to be posted).

### **Building Control**

The city Building Inspectors are separate from Development Control. The building inspectors make sure that new work is stable and legal. You have to get them in to check what you build, and do what they say.

And a valuable tip: when you complete a project you need to ask them to come and sign it off to say that it complies with the regulations in all respects. You need to ask for this, they won't do it by themselves. You need to keep that form, and produce it in the distant future when you (or your heirs) want to sell the building. If you can't prove that it complies with the regulations you may not be able to sell it at all easily. Cutting corners and sailing close to the wind does not pay in the long run.