

Casework Review for 2008-2009

Sheet 2 - July to September



Engaging Communities in Planning



The Planning Aid Service provides free independent advice to members of the community, who can not afford the services of a planning consultant.

Our reactive Advice and Support Service (Casework) steadily continues to grow. Although the actual number of enquiries dropped on the last quarter, the potential number of people supported by Planning Aid North increased to 2,141. During the last three months, we processed 99 enquiries of which 77 were eligible.

The annual regional target is to process 500 enquiries. Within 6 months, we have achieved 43% of our annual target of enquiries but supported 2,827 people.

This information sheet reviews our service delivery on Advice and Support (Case Work) during the period of July to September 2008.

Review of Cases in the North of England during July to September 2008

Introduction

The summary below gives details of some of the help which has been given by Planning Aid North to some of our clients:

Change of Use in Newcastle

We were contacted by a resident in Newcastle who was concerned about the potential redevelopment of a former community building. Our client was seeking advice as a change of use was being proposed for the building to convert it to a proposed office and restaurant, with a separate 3-storey block of flats. Apart from the potential loss of a community building, our client was also concerned that the application may be considered by delegated responsibilities as against a Planning Committee decision.

Our Planning Advisor liaised with the Council case officer to get a better understanding of the case and progress. In addition, he did some research on the Use Classes Order. Our client was then briefed accordingly.

Positive feedback from the client included *"Thank you very much for your help today."*

Erection of Smoking Shelter in Tees Valley

Planning Aid North was contacted by a householder whose property was adjacent to a public house, where a smoking shelter had been erected. At the time of the planning application, our client objected but the development progressed. The new structure is visible from our client's rear window and they were experiencing noise and anti-social behaviour.

Our client was frustrated with their dealings with the Council. Under the circumstances, our Planning Advisor was able to direct them to a number of web sites to assist them in persuing their concerns.

Positive feedback from the client included *"I found your attitude towards our problem very considerate, patient and extremely helpful. It is nice to know that there are people not affected by such issues actually willing to offer help. I can only commend the attitude of Planning Aid."*

Further examples of case work can be viewed overleaf.

Planning Aid North

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Planning Aid North is part of a network of services run by
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The effective use of Volunteers

Alterations to Residential Property in Gateshead

Planning Aid North was approached by the son of his parents who lived in a detached property located in an Area of Special Character, local designation in the Unitary Development Plan. An planning application had been approved for the adjacent property to have the flat roof of a two storey extension with a pitched roof, to create additional living accommodation. The gable end of the extension was only 300mm from his parents' property.

Our client had not been aware of Planning Aid at the time of the application, but was keen to get any advice that could help his parents. Although our Planning Advisor was sympathetic to the plight of our client's parents and provided information on the Council's design guidelines, he tried to give a balanced response by advising that the replacement of a flat roofed construction could also be seen as enhancement.

Positive verbal feedback was received from our client and we await their formal response.

Potential Redevelopment of Rural Hotel in County Durham

We were approached by a residents' group in County Durham who had a number of concerns over the proposed demolition of a rural hotel and the redevelopment of the site with a residential development. Our clients were keen for Planning Aid North to review their proposed arguments against the proposed planning application.

Our Planning Advisor contacted the Council's case officer to get a broader understanding of the application. During helpful discussions, he was able to highlight a number of points for further consideration. The officer was also prepared to meet with our clients to discuss the application further. Our client was then briefed and advised of opportunities.

Planning Aid North Information Leaflets

We have a range of information leaflets on our advice, communications, community planning, education initiatives, progress and resources, good practice, learning resources, planning knowledge, seminars, topical task sheets and volunteers.

Some cases can cover a diverse
range of planning issues

Development of Council Land

Planning Aid North received an enquiry from a client in County Durham, who had been referred to us by the Ombudsman.

Our client, who leased a piece of land, had obtained planning permission and erected garages. He had subsequently carried out a number of further enhancements to the site with tarmac, planting and decking. He had subsequently been advised by the enforcement officer that he required planning permission.

Our Planning Advisor determined quickly that our client had a basic lack of understanding of basic planning and permitted development. He was then advised to put forward proposals in line with the planning process.

Residential Development in Conservation Area

We were contacted by a former client in County Durham who was acting as spokesperson for a group of local residents concerned about a potential residential development within a Conservation Area. The site had been formerly used as a builder's yard but was the location of a medieval manor house of regional interest. There were many apparent wildlife amenities with well preserved trees and a potential bat population.

Our clients were looking for advice to object to the application. The case was passed to one of our volunteers with Conservation experience. They were advised that the archaeological survey and report appeared to be "sound" and in accordance with national policy. Advice was given for the Council to be pushed on the protection of trees identified as worthy of protection. Our clients were also advised of the legislation and provisions for the protection of bats.

The residents' group has also received follow up advice from our volunteer on some minor points raised about the application.

