

27 APRIL 2026

GPANGE PRESTONFIELD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A SHORT GUIDE TO RESPONDING TO A PLANNING APPLICATION

The Scottish planning system is complex and technical. and complex. When you enter it to comment on a proposed property or land development in your area, you need to frame your remarks in a measured way, reaching for objective reference points to build your case. A long emotional rant doesn't do the job.

Your starting point is the City of Edinburgh Council **Planning Portal**. Invest the time to become familiar with the website content here. Take a good look around.

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning-13>

The portal present along the following lines.

Planning Applications >	Enforcement >
Planning Guidance	Local Development Plan and Guidance >
Edinburgh Design Guidance >	Pre-Application Advice Service >
Short Term Lets >	Privately Owned Trees >
INFORMATION ON PLANNING	CATEGORIES IN PLANNING

Planning Applications takes you into the live fields of sought-for permissions, consents and refusals

Planning Guidance opens a comprehensive library of material covering 'quick guides' on procedure, and more detailed material on, for example, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and Householder Developments.

Open **Planning Guidance** in the portal and then **View Planning Quick Guides – pdfs**. Find **Quick Guide to the Planning Application Process**. Keep in mind that a planning application, albeit 'limited' in scale, can be subject to a wide array of design impact, environmental and sustainability assessments. These in turn are sub-sets of governing documentation carried in the 'big picture' National Planning Framework 4 and the Local Development Plan, City Plan 2030. Technicality and complexity are built-in.

Here are a few of the key points from that **Quick Guide**.

From validating a planning application submission, the Council has two months to make a decision unless longer is agreed.

Your receipt of a Neighbour Notification Letter (required where your property is within 20 metres of the site) gives you at least 21 days to submit an objection.

Advertisement of the case in the local press should give you at least 14 days from the date of publication. (Check The Scotsman, Evening News and Edinburgh Reporter. You can also go to the Public Notice Portal site, <https://publicnoticeportal.uk/>.)

Returning to the portal directory above, go to **Planning Applications** and to **View and Comment on Planning Applications**. Your interest is in assessing the application and making a decision on submitting a comment or objection. Here, the **Planning Weekly Lists** and related **Planning Weekly Lists Map** is a core feature. There, you can go through the lists by Community Council or Ward area. Search to identify the case you are looking for. Note the **Reference** code for the application. In the first instance, refer to **Important Dates** to establish the closing date for your comments.

For the case, the **Planning - Application Summary** page hosts **Details / Comments / Documents / Related Cases / Map**. **Comments** are counted but not revealed. The **Documents** section carries the full description and drawings for the submitted application. Going through this material needs some patience and application.

I don't like this idea!

This is the point at which to pause. A hurried (and rambling) 'objection' or comment won't get very far. Your remarks should be worded in a concise, unemotional manner, framed around 'material considerations' and reinforced (if you can) by reference to statutory and non-statutory planning guidelines. This latter step necessarily takes you in to a lot more preparatory reading, but it's the clinical way to go about things if you have the time and some experience.

We turn at this point to two outside agencies for further guidance here.

Planning Democracy, a charitable network: <https://www.planningdemocracy.org.uk/>

Planning Aid Scotland, a charity and social enterprise: <https://www.pas.org.uk/who-we-are/>

Planning Democracy has a planning agenda that goes beyond just the wide technical arena. Under the Get Help / Resources, the site provides Guides on Responding to a Planning Application (Planning Democracy April 2025)

Guide 1: How to write an effective objection letter to a planning application.

Guide 2: How planning decisions are made and your rights to participate.

Guide 3: A Community Guide to Planning Appeals

<https://www.planningdemocracy.org.uk/get-help/resources/>

Guide 1 sets out a comprehensive list of **Material Considerations** and then illustrates how a 'letter of objection' might be styled.

Planning Aid Scotland has a narrower focus but offers a very good library of resources, guides and toolkits for individuals and community groups working on individual cases, wider neighbourhood plans and local development projects. There is a full set of information sheets on the **Planning System**, including a download on the all-important **Material Considerations**.

Material Considerations in Context

Your concise, unemotional, well-structured letter of objection should point to specific aspects of the proposed building project with which you take issue. Ideally, it would help to relate / refer each of your points of objection to a planning policy or guidance 'rule' that should be passed in the eyes of the Council Planning Division.

These policy and guidance rules go well beyond 'building regulations'. They are drawn from a wide list of **Policies** set out in two broad pieces of work, **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)** and the current **Local Development Plan (LDP, known as City Plan 2030 (CP 2030))**.

It goes on from there. Going back to the Council's **Planning Portal** and to **Planning Guidance**, you'll see references to **Edinburgh Design Guidance (EDG)** and to **Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (LBCA)**. A precise letter of objection is able to cross-reference each element of objection to a guidance **Policy** set out in NPF4, LDP, EDG or LBCA. If you could word your letter of objection with the same reference points as the professionals will view the case, then so much the better.

However, this takes some doing. At this point, we'll close by offering some extracts from **Reasons for Refusal** tabled by the Planning Division in a recent change-of-use case for a residential unit in the city. The extracts illustrate how the Planners come to a decision. They illustrate how you might word your submission.

- 1. The proposal is not acceptable with regard to Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 as it will not preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.*
- 2. The proposed development is contrary to LDP Policy Env 4 as it will negatively impact on the setting of the surrounding area.*
- 3. The proposal is contrary to LDP Policy Env 14 as it will negatively impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.*
- 4. The proposal is contrary to NPF4 Policy 7(d) as it will negatively impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.*
- 5. The proposal is contrary to LDP Policy Env 1 as it is not of a high enough quality of design to fit with the surrounding context.*
- 6. The proposed development is contrary to NPF 4 Policy 14 as it is not of a high enough quality design to improve the overall quality of the area.*
- 7. The proposal is contrary to Local Development Plan Policy Hou 6 in respect of Inappropriate Uses in Residential Areas, as the use as a short term let will have a materially detrimental effect on the living conditions and amenity of nearby residents.*
- 8. The proposal is contrary to National Planning Framework 4 Policy 30(e) in respect of Local Character and Amenity, as the use as a short term let will result in an unacceptable impact on local amenity.*