



Guiding you through the planning process


Fields in Trust's **Ten Step Guide** can be used to help you throughout your campaign. It is useful however to know the system with which you are engaging and may find the following helpful.

Your Rights !

In a democratic society it is important that everyone's voice has the opportunity to be heard at all levels of public life. This is important within the planning system which can be challenging to the uninitiated. It is essential to know how a planning application is made and processed.

How the Planning System Works

Planning Applications are submitted to, and decided by, the relevant local council, often referred to as the local planning authority. Usually anyone anticipating making a planning application and wanting to ensure its success will have a preliminary discussion with a planner at the local council concerned.



ACTION

- 1** Obtain the details of the planning application. You can go to the Council and ask to see a copy, or you can usually find details of the planning application on line on the Council's website.
- 2** Should it be necessary to invoke it then under the Freedom of Information Act you can require to see records of conversations that the planners have held regarding the proposed development. Search for Information at www.whatdotheyknow.com
- 3** Make sure that you discover the deadlines for submitting objections, as these are strictly adhered to, and the date of the hearing of the application when you will be able to object.
- 4** Alert the local media to your campaign

Development in England is plan-led, through plans developed at a local level, within the framework of a national planning policy that is published by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Whether the development contemplated is large or small the person making a planning application will want to know whether it accords with planning policy in the local area.



ACTION

Get familiar with the strategies that apply to your area, especially the policies concerning the protection of recreation space and play facilities. A well-prepared planning application will likely accord with most local planning policies, but you may still find some planning policy that will support your opposition to the application too.

The content of local policies will differ depending on local circumstances, but wherever the local authority the policies should all be consistent with national policy.

National Policy

In relation to open space for recreation the national policy currently in force as at October 2011 is PPG17. This may change in the next year as the proposed National Planning Policy Framework has been advertised and is out to consultation. Following this consultation it may be re-drafted if re-drafting is thought necessary and will then be adopted. However this is for the future and currently PPG17 should be used as a reference. Keep an eye on our website to alert you to when the new Framework comes into effect.

Wales

For Welsh planning policy go to:
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en>



Scotland

For Scottish planning policy go to:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Policy/newSPP>



Northern Ireland

For Welsh planning policy go to:
http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/policy_publications/planning_statements.htm



The Planning Application

You must study this carefully and consider whether you want to oppose it outright or whether you would like to suggest amendments that could make it acceptable or suggest an alternative site. Constructive opposition can be powerful so do not reject this method as an approach.

Plan your Objection


When making your case you will stand a greater chance of success if you show how your arguments tally with local and national policies. You should tackle local planning strategies initially because they will carry most weight at the local level, but it will also support your argument to bring in ways that your arguments support national policies across other government departments such as Health, Education, Environment, Crime, and Transport.

Your objections will also carry greater weight if they are supported by other people and organisations: your interaction with the media and local press should have attracted other objectors to your banner. Remember that you and they represent votes and your councillors will need to heed your arguments, and be seen to do so. We cannot emphasize enough how important it is to get the local media covering your activities.

If the Council or the Developer offer to provide alternative open space as a substitute to the one that you are trying to save then you should examine the following:

- **Has alternative provision been made to replace a loss of recreation space?**
- **Is the alternative acceptable in terms of location, quantity and quality?**
- **Would the proposal result in an equivalent or improved outdoor recreation facility?**
- **Would the proposal have an acceptable effect on amenity?**
- **If the space is a green field site have all possible brownfield sites been assessed and rejected for sound reasons?**
- **If the space is a green field site within an urban setting have sites on the urban fringe or the green belt been assessed and rejected for sound reasons?**

If the answer to any of these questions is no then Fields in Trust recommends that you should object and ask for the proposal to be amended.



ACTION

Remember the deadline for submission of your Objection.

[Draft letter of objection](#)

The Officer's Report

The largest planning applications will invariably be decided by Planning Committee, and a preparatory step is for the case officer to prepare a Report to Committee. This will summarise the application, the policies, and the consultation that has been undertaken, and will then analyse the case made by the applicant against all of these factors before concluding with an overall recommendation.

The Report therefore forms the basis for the Councillors' debate and decision at the Planning Committee. This should take place within about 13 weeks after the application is submitted, but don't be surprised if it takes longer – you are objecting to a proposal that may well impact on the environment and this could trigger the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment. In this case it will take longer for it to come up at the Planning Committee.

The Hearing


You may be allowed to speak and should find out in advance whether this is the case. If you are you must prepare what you are going to say in advance and aim to get all your points across while keeping it short and to the point. Many local authorities who do allow people to speak at Committee require that representations stick to no more than three minutes so it is important to be succinct. If your campaign has involved other organisations make sure that they request to speak as well.

The Decision

This will come as an approval, a refusal, an approval with conditions, or a deferment if more information is requested.

Any Other Actions

If an applicant is rejected then they have a right of appeal for 6 months but objectors have no right of appeal. However objectors can apply for a Judicial Review but this must be within 3 months from the date the planning permission is granted.



Lobby councillors while you are waiting for the planning committee to consider the application



For more useful advice please visit:
www.fieldsintrust.org

Draft letter of objection

Address of the Local Authority

Your Address

Reference if you have been given one

Town

Postcode

Dear Sir

Planning Application Number
Property as described in the Planning Application

I am writing in respect of the above planning application for the development of
(Name of Property) at (Details of Property).

I am a resident of the borough and represent myself/other inhabitants/organisations.
I/we wish to object to the proposed development on the following basis.
(Describe the grounds of your objection).

We consider that this development, if approved, would be counter to the following
planning policies:

Local:

National:

*(Include any specific objections that you have that arise from your personal knowledge
of the area and of the effect that this development would have in practical terms. Avoid,
if possible, any objection that might lead to criticism that your position is no more than
that of a "NIMBY".*

*Refer to the support that your campaign has attracted, both from organisations and
individuals.*

*Ask for the opportunity to speak at the Planning Committee should the application end
up there.)*

I look forward to hearing from you in response to this letter,

Yours sincerely

(Name)

cc. If sending copies to anyone, say so here.

Saving Your Playing Field

1. Get Involved

- The best way to protect recreational open space is to use it! Use your local playing fields as much as possible for formal sport and general recreation.
- Let the owners know how valuable they are and, if they neglect them, make them aware of your views.
- Get involved in any consultation processes connected with your Council's local plan 1.
- Ensure that general policies and those related to specific sites make adequate provision and provide protection for recreational sites.

2. Keep Watch

- Don't ignore rumours of planned proposals or developments. They are often true!
- Contact the owners and your local authority planning department immediately and ask for specific information about any plans for sale or change of use.
- Read the list of planning applications displayed at the council's offices, on its web site or in the local newspaper.
- Look out for any official notices displayed at the site. It is important to respond to the notice in writing by the stated deadline.

3. Get Organised

- If you discover that recreational space in your neighbourhood is under threat, you will have to move quickly. Talk to local residents, sports clubs, play associations, school governors, local councillors, council officials, environmental and conservation groups.
- Find out details of the proposals and get as many people on your side as possible. The more people you can involve, the more chance you have of success.
- Assess the demand for the land under threat as a playing field: if you can establish usage your case will be stronger. Make a log of the user groups, the different sports which take place, the number of hours used and the number of people employed there. Look also at unmet and potential demand.
- You need to think through your own views to make your case as strong as possible and support your campaign to fight the planning application. Ensure that the key organisers in your campaign have the time available to make the case effectively. It can be helpful to have a lawyer and/or a town planner on your campaign team.



4. Seek Expert Advice

- Write to FIT and let us know the name and address of the playing field, the name of the local planning authority and the development proposed. Keep us informed of any developments.
- Become a FIT member and reference FIT in all correspondence. Membership details can be found at www.fieldsintrust.org.
- Contact the Royal Town Planning Institute for details about Planning Aid. Planning Aid is a free, voluntary service offering independent professional advice and help on town planning matters. It is aimed at individuals, community groups and other voluntary groups who cannot afford to pay for private consultants.

5. Check Local Need

- Ask your Council about its policies which affect local recreation space. They will be found in the local plan. Look particularly for the Council's policies on:
 - Open space
 - Sport
 - Recreational land
 - Play space
 - Green Belt or other forms of protected green networks.
 - Metropolitan Open Land (in Greater London)
- Establish whether the proposals would contravene the policies contained in the local plan.
- Ask the local authority if the amount of outdoor playing space in your area meets the recommendations of FIT's *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play* (formerly *The Six Acre Standard*) or a local standard contained in the local plan.
- Check whether a playing pitch assessment has been carried out and, if so, when and by whom.

6. Involve Council Leaders

- Contact your local Councillor to request a meeting with the Leader of the Council, members of the Cabinet with responsibility for planning, leisure and education and the Chairman of the planning or development control committee, so that you can register your opposition formally.

7. Go to National/Central Government

- Request a meeting with your Member of Parliament (Westminster, Scottish or Welsh at their next surgery. The local library should have details about the time and place. You will need to provide all the relevant information on your case and emphasise the strength of local opposition. Ask your elected representative to raise the case with the appropriate government departments e.g. in England the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Department for



Education (DfE) and the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). Write to these Departments presenting your case and request a response.

- Planning matters, in England, are the ultimate responsibility of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, supported by the Planning Minister; in Scotland the ultimate responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainability, supported by the Minister for Local Government and Planning; and in Wales the Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development supported by the Planning Minister. Deputy Prime Minister (in Scotland the Development Department's Planning Division, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, in Wales the Minister for Environmental planning and Countryside). If appropriate, ask the Deputy Prime Minister (or Minister) to call-in the application for their own consideration and decision, under Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This should be done by writing to the relevant regional Government Office. In Scotland, ask the Communities Minister to call in under Section 46 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
- Check that your national Sports Council has been consulted and ask for a copy of its response. Local planning authorities have a statutory duty to consult the relevant Sports Council on most planning applications for development on playing fields that have been used at any point during the last five years.
- In the case of school playing fields in England, ask the Secretary of State for Education whether consent has been given for the change of use or disposal of the land in accordance with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This includes land that has been used as a school playing field at any time during the last 10 years.

8. Use the Media

- Write to your local newspapers, radio and television stations. If you do not get any response, call and ask to speak to the News Editor. Publicise your views in the local community to gain support. You may wish to call a public meeting at a local hall. Invite representatives of the developers or applicants for planning permission, the Council and your Member of Parliament (Westminster, Scottish or Welsh) to take part. Invite the local press.
- Set up a Facebook group and Twitter account and encourage as many people to join as possible
- Produce a poster which can be easily photocopied and ask all local shops and offices to display it. Send a copy to the press, radio and television stations. It will help if you can produce an inexpensive leaflet outlining your case for distribution to homes in the area. You should avoid extreme language and extravagant claims in anything you say or publish.



9. Seek Wider Support

• A number of interested organisations could help your campaign and you should contact them for advice and support. They may include:

- County Playing Fields Associations
- Local sports associations
- Local Sports Associations
- Rural Community Councils
- Council for Voluntary Services

Telephone numbers for County Playing Fields Associations can be found on the FIT website www.fieldsintrust.org.

10. Fight Applications

- You should fight the planning application by objecting to the proposals, in writing, at both outline and detailed planning stages.
- An increasing number of local authorities allow members of the public to address their planning or development control committee. If available, you should use this opportunity to speak.
- If the application for planning permission is refused by the Council but the applicant appeals against this decision, you can lodge a further objection. The local planning authority will explain the appeal procedure to you.

