



BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING CONTROL DIVISION

APPLICANTS'/AGENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

A total of 55 questionnaires have been received to date (1 May 2003).

MAKING AN APPLICATION

1. Are you a professional agent (eg architect, chartered surveyor) who submits applications for planning permission on behalf of clients?

Base	54
	100%
Yes	31
	57%
No	23
	43%

2. If you answered Yes to question 1, have you received a copy of this questionnaire previously?

Base	30
	100%
Yes	13
	43%
No	17
	57%

3. If you answered Yes to question 1, how many applications do you submit to Babergh over the course of an average year?

Base	28
	100%
Less than 5	12
	43%
Between 6 and 10	10
	36%
Between 11 and 20	2
	7%
Over 20	4
	14%

4. Were you aware at the time you submitted this application that planning application forms could be obtained via the Internet?

Base	54
	100%
Yes	18
	33%
No	36
	67%

5. Would you prefer to download forms from the Internet rather than asking us to supply paper copies?

Base	53
	100%
Yes	26
	49%
No	27
	51%

6. If we were able to provide facilities for you to submit applications to us electronically on line, would you welcome this?

Base	52
	100%
Yes	30
	58%
No	22
	42%

7. When you submitted the application were you aware of our practice of allowing applicants and others to address the meeting of Development Committee at which their application is decided?

Base	55
	100%
Yes	34
	62%
No	21
	38%

8. Were you aware of the name of the officer dealing with your application and of how you might contact him/her?

Base	55
	100%
Yes	47
	85%
No	8
	15%

9. Did the officer dealing with your application contact you (or your agent) at any time either to seek clarification or to seek changes or to keep you posted as to progress?

Base	54
	100%
Yes	31
	57%
No	23
	43%

10. Did you feel that you were kept adequately informed by us over the progress of your application?

Base	55
	100%
Yes	37
	67%
No	18
	33%

11. Did you contact the office before you submitted the application to discuss your proposal informally?

Base	55
	100%
Yes	34
	62%
No	21
	38%

12. Were you aware that you could do so and that this practice is encouraged?

Base	55
	100%
Yes	48
	87%
No	7
	13%

13. Before you submitted your application did you feel you understood the process through which an application passes?

Base	55
	100%
Yes	48
	87%
No	7
	13%

14. Do you feel you understand that process now?

Base	54
	100%
Yes	51
	94%
No	3
	6%

15. Is your understanding of the planning process different now to what it was before you submitted the application?

Base	55
	100%
Not at all	39
	71%
A little	13
	24%
Quite a bit	2
	4%
A lot	1
	2%

OUTCOME OF DECISION

16. Was your application granted permission or refused?

Base	54
	100%
Permission granted	50
	93%
Permission refused	4
	7%

17. If your application was granted permission were conditions imposed upon the approval?

Base	47
	100%
Yes	32
	68%
No	15
	32%

18. Do you feel that you are clear as to what these conditions mean?

Base	42
	100%
Yes	40
	95%
No	2
	5%

19. If your application was refused permission do you feel that you understand the reasons for refusal?

Base	7
	100%
Yes	6
	86%
No	1
	14%

20. If your application was refused permission do you feel that you understand the right you have to appeal against that refusal?

Base	9
	100%
Yes	9
	100%
No	-
	-

21. Do you think your application was decided quickly enough?

Base	52
	100%
Yes	35
	67%
No	17
	33%

22. In general, would you rather we negotiated with you as an applicant to arrive at the best solution or that we made a quick decision, even if this was a refusal?

Base	47
	100%
Yes	44
	94%
No	3
	6%

23. Would you be interested in forming a User Group to explore ways to improve the service we provide?

Base	50
	100%
Yes	12
	24%
No	38
	76%

Are there any other comments you would like to make on your experience in making the application?

- After leaving several messages for the Planning Officer asking for an update on the application I was surprised to suddenly receive a Refusal Notice without any negotiation
- The application was straightforward. Other applications require preliminary meeting/discussion. The time required for (a) arranging meeting (b) waiting for usually written response from you - is usually too great, and your comments are often not specific or helpful. The implication is to submit PA whatever and sort out issues during the application period when minds are concentrated
- These replies relate to our notice of intention to fell trees since it accompanied the Council's response to this.
- Worrying! Political influences versus planning expertise and common sense, which can be driven by a single letter of objection!
- Applications are not registered quickly enough and are often returned due to some minor point, delaying the whole process. Straightforward applications still often take the full statutory period. Planning and conservation officers often become bogged down in unnecessary detail, again delaying the process. There appears to be a culture of No in planning departments and the emphasis often seems to centre on finding objections. This is probably viewed within planning departments as diligence. Externally it simply looks like obstruction. Planners could save themselves much time and improve performance if they could see the wood for the trees better.
- One condition imposed that was never discussed or mentioned at committee (not a problem)
- As you and I know, these trees grow very quickly, seeing we should now require permission to set them?
- Not really clear as to planning conditions
- Eric Ainger, E A A Designs
- Why is it that the words "back handers" comes into the discussion when Babergh Planning is mentioned and why are decisions not consistent?
- It would also be useful if the fee guidance sheets were available on the internet too.
- Q22: not a "yes" or "no" question. The informal meeting with the planning officer was very useful. After the application was formally submitted we were left "in the dark" about what was happening, even when the deadline for the decision came and went without us hearing anything.
- Q16 - Refers you to Q16 if permission granted - I assume this should be Q17. Q23 - insufficient number of applications to make useful contribution
- I always find the people I deal with at Babergh very helpful and friendly. There is usually someone there who is able to offer information, if not they do call me back within 24 hours
- I felt sure you must have more important matters to attend to!
- Q9 and Q10, I was told a condition imposed was not clear and clarification would be sought. This was not done and the condition remained on this plan.
- Whilst it is appreciated that planning applications submitted can be viewed on line it would be beneficial to agents if more information could be provided with regards to individual applications i.e. if they were being considered favourably, timescale to a decision etc. Can the admin period from decision to issuing the approval/refusal notice be sped up since 2/3 weeks seems a long period for what should be a straightforward matter.
- Very smooth and sympathetic service

1 May 2003