

Changes to how we handle customer queries

Our Planning Service

This web page explains some important changes to the way that planning services will be delivered **from Mon 13 September 2010**. This will affect the way you:

- [contact us](#) for advice and
- how you [view plans](#) at council offices

The aim of this revised service is to ensure that we focus resources for the customer in the most effective and efficient way. Find out more about [why we are making these changes](#).

The Planning Service currently receives enquiries in two broad categories. These are:

General - Householder development questions (Do I need planning permission for... related to houses and their curtilage), Do I need planning permission (unrelated to dwelling houses), How much are the planning fees? How do I obtain the relevant forms? Is my building listed?, Am I in a Conservation Area?

Live planning or listed building applications - Has it been registered/decided? I want to make a comment - how can I do this and by when? Has the application been registered? Is the application going to Committee? When is the deadline for the decision?

How we will handle customer enquiries from 13 Sep 2010...

Who do I contact for advice about a planning application?

Phone Council Connect on 01225 39 40 41 for general planning information. If you need more detailed advice and guidance, Council Connect will put you through to a Planning Information Officer.

If your query is complicated, and you do need to talk to a Planning Officer, we will arrange a call back for you. This should be within 24 hours of your call and means the Planning Officer will be fully prepared to answer your queries.

If you are currently dealing with an application your Case Officer will have provided their direct contact details.

If you wish to submit a comment on the application, this can be done either in writing to Planning Services, Trimbridge House, Trim Street, Bath, BA1 2DP, by email to development_control@bathnes.gov.uk or from the public access website at: <http://planning.bathnes.gov.uk/PublicAccess/>

Other important changes to how you view plans from 13 Sep 2010...

How will I be able to view plans at council offices?

All planning application forms, which include the plans, will be available online at <http://planning.bathnes.gov.uk/PublicAccess/>

If you don't have access to the internet, you can use the self-service computers at all **Council Connect offices**. They are available at Trimbridge House in Bath, The Guildhall in Bath, Riverside in Keynsham and The Hollies in Midsomer Norton.

Council Connect staff can help you use the Planning public access website if you need assistance to view these applications electronically.

Will I still be able to look at paper copies of plans?

The majority of planning applications are now submitted online. So we won't automatically provide paper copies of current applications at Council Connect offices from 13 September.

Can I print copies of plans myself?

Yes. If you require a paper copy of a plan they are available for you to print yourself from the public access website at: <http://planning.bathnes.gov.uk/PublicAccess/>

If you don't have your own printing facilities, you can use the People's Network service at all branch libraries. However a charge will apply. All local libraries also provide internet access through the People's Network service. More details are available online at www.bathnes.gov.uk/libraries in the 'Computers and the internet' section.

What if I have a visual impairment and can't read a computer screen?

If you need the information provided in an alternative format, Council Connect can arrange this for you. A Planning Information Officer will contact you when the documents are ready.

What if it's a really complicated scheme?

Some major and complex schemes can be difficult to view online. We will encourage applicants to supply a summary of their scheme as a paper copy where appropriate.

Finally

The whole Planning Service will be moving from Trimbridge House in October 2010 and we will be providing more information about the move in due course.

Why are you making these changes?

The implication of **Government Budget savings** (see link below) means that we must focus our resources in the most effective way.

<http://wwwi/media/news/2010/June/pages/Government%20budget%20savings%20impact%20on%20local%20services.aspx>

The revised customer enquiry service is designed to replace the existing duty planner system at Trimbridge House and in Keynsham which are an inefficient uses of technical skills. The changes should allow Planning Officers to concentrate on core technical activities such as dealing with applications and pre application submissions.

More than half of our planning applications are now submitted via the web as it's the most efficient means of submission. In order to contain costs and meet our environmental targets, we will no longer automatically provide paper copies of current applications.

Things that are not changing...

It is important to note that the new system does NOT make any changes to "live" applications therefore agents, applicants, neighbours or councillors will still be able to contact the relevant Planning Officer. (As noted earlier, if you're currently dealing with an application your Case Officer will have provided their direct contact details.)

No changes are proposed to the current [pre application service](#) offered, or the [householder development questionnaire](#) and [Development Team](#) on large projects.