

## Plot Suitability Check List

Don't be alarmed by the length of this list, a lot of sites will only have a few constraints, but by taking a careful approach you will head- up any potential issues quickly and avoid the expensive mistake of falling in love with a site that will cost a lot of money to develop.

By checking these things you will be more certain you can create your project and be able to form a more accurate budget.

If there is anything you are unsure about, get further advice. You can speak to your local authority about planning matters, ask your solicitor for legal advice or get in touch with us about design advice and other specialists you can talk to.

You can also look at planning applications for similar projects that have been granted permission nearby using the council's online records. This might highlight potential stumbling blocks or show how others have dealt with them.

To find your Local Authorities planning applications online look for "search for applications online".

### IS THE SITE SUITABLE?

- Is the site big enough for the size of house you want to build?
- Will the site take the value of the property you want to create
- What are the neighbouring sites used for (are there any smelly or noisy uses?)
- What is the site's orientation – will windows have light?
- Is it a sloping site? If so, would a split-level house work without significant excavation, which can be expensive?
- What will access for cars and deliveries be like?
- Will it be easy to create level wheelchair access?
- Are there any existing structures, trees, cables or pipes?
- Check with your solicitor or Land Registry to find out who owns and is responsible for maintenance of the boundaries and access. What condition are they in?

**PLANNING  
CONSENT**

**HAS:**

- Is it full or outline permission? Full planning consent will mean the site has more value than outline.
- If the site does have full consent, do you like the design and layout or will a re-design be required? This may require additional planning consent.
- If there is outline permission does this state what is likely to be approved? If not there is more risk associated with applying for consent.
- Was permission granted within the last 3 years? If not the consent might have lapsed and the existing consent is not worth very much.  
If there is not much time left on the permission that, that might be an issue for a scheme that involves a redesign or discharge of planning conditions.
- Can you comply with all the planning conditions? Common requirements include council approval on external materials and/or landscaping, plus ecological surveys etc. Have you looked up the council's online file for the application and read the officer's report, along with any letters from neighbours?  
The results of this could impact any alternative design you wish to put forward.

**PLANNING  
CONSENT**

**HAS NOT:**

- Is the site within a development boundary defined in the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan?
- If not, are there circumstances that could enable you to build, such as a housing land supply shortfall, or a need to live on-site for farming or another rural business?
- Would a building on the plot fit in with the pattern of housing and prevailing character of the area?
- Can you build a new home without compromising neighbours' light, outlook or privacy?  
Is the plot in a conservation area or close to a listed building?
- If so, would your scheme have any implications for these 'heritage assets'?
- If it might, you will need a heritage statement to accompany your planning application.
- Are there any other special planning designations that could impact your scheme, such as an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB)?
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- Have you taken advice on the likelihood of getting permission, either via the council's pre -application service or from a planning professional?

**ACCESS & PARKING**

- Is there safe access with good visibility in both directions along the principal road?
- Will there be enough space to turn a vehicle on-site?
- Is there room for sufficient parking to meet the council's standards?
- If any of the above affect the site, you might need a traffic assessment to accompany your planning application.

**TREES**

- Are any trees on site protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)?
- Is the plot in a conservation area (where all trees are protected)?
- Would any specimens have to be felled or are any trees close to the area of your build?
- You may need a tree survey and an arboricultural implications assessment if any of the above apply to the site.

**ECOLOGY**

- Do you intend to demolish any structures that could host bats?
- Are there ponds on or close to the site that could harbour great crested newts?
- Are there other signs of protected species, from badgers to reptiles?
- If so, you will need an ecological report identifying what species are present and how they will be safely re-homed. Note that surveys can be season-dependent with bat emergence surveys only carried out in the warmer months, which may cause delays

**ARCHAEOLOGY**

- Is the plot within an Archaeological Notification Area?
- If so, you will need an archaeological assessment to accompany your submission. In some circumstances, a watching brief may also be required – whereby you pay for the excavation work to be monitored.

**CONTAMINATION**

- Is there any possibility of contamination on the site from former industrial, agricultural or garage use?
- If so, you will need an environmental assessment. If contamination is found, further investigations will be required to determine what it is, along with a method statement to confirm how it's to be disposed of.

**FLOOD RISK**

- Is your plot located within an area at risk of flooding from river,
- sea or surface run-off?
- If so, you will need a positive flood risk assessment to support your application. Note that mitigation measures are likely to add to your build costs.

**GROUND CONDITIONS**

- Have you consulted the council's building control department to establish the likely soil conditions?
- Are there signs of poor ground, such as wet areas, heavy clay, soft sand or filled land?
- Could there be former mine workings in the region?
- Are there signs of current or historic subsidence in the area?
- If any of the last three points apply, you will need a soil survey to determine the most suitable foundations. Should an engineered solution be recommended, this will increase build costs.

**DRAINAGE & SERVICES**

- Can you connect the planned property to a public foul sewer; or if not is there enough space to accommodate a private system?
- Is there a public surface-water sewer you can connect to?  
If not, is there a watercourse for rainwater to drain into, or would soakaways be effective? Does the site have straightforward access to the following services (e.g. water, gas, electricity, telecoms, broadband)?
- In each case, check the availability and cost of making a connection (as well as any temporary supplies and disconnections if you are dealing with existing services). If a supply is unavailable, the extra cost of a site-based alternative should be reflected in your offer price for the plot.

**PLANNING  
CONSENT**

**HAS:**

- Do you have right of access to get to the plot?  
You may need consent from the Highways Authority if you need to cross a pavement.
- Does anyone else have a right of way or right of access over the plot?  
In some cases, a third party may own a ransom strip between the site and highway, which means you'll need to pay them to secure an agreement for access. This should be factored into your offer for the land.
- Are there any easements (typically granting access) or way-leaves (usually to allow for services) affecting the plot?
- If so, do any time limits or other potential issues need to be addressed?  
Do any restrictive covenants exist that could affect whether, what or where you build?
- Are there any planning obligations (Section 106 agreements) affecting the plot?  
These legal agreements might be put in place to prescribe the nature of the development, or they may require that compensation be paid to the council for any perceived damage that would be caused by your scheme (such as loss of open space).
- Are there any public footpaths or bridleways that could affect your planned project?
- These access routes may need to be preserved, diverted or closed – and could impact your chances of gaining planning consent.