



It's all in the timing! – key information for developers

Whenever people and businesses consider undertaking construction projects, they usually take into account the idiosyncrasies of the British weather. Let's face it, driving rain and high winds are far from ideal if the roof is to be removed from your property, leaving your valuables (or company assets) at the mercy of the elements. Equally importantly preparing foundations, drainage, and even roofing and bricklaying, are heavily dependent on fine weather to maximise progress, and reduce costs. It seems sensible to take advantage of our short summer, so what is the best way to go about doing this?

Planning your project:

Have a plan! Whilst for many the decision to expand the home or business is spontaneous, or precipitated by a life event such as a new baby, or a major commercial innovation. It is imperative that you

develop a strategy as quickly as possible for the project including:

- What you would like to achieve?
- How do you think this may be executed for **your** benefit?
- When do you need to finish by?
- What is your budget?
- Where are the funds going to come from to pay for it?

Employing an expert Architectural Designer to help you through the process or planning and building regulations is advisable. You need to have an open mind to get the best from their services. They can often help you with the project planning, and design a scheme to suit your aspirations, and budget. Ensure that your designer is a member of a reputable institute

(e.g. RIBA, CIAT, RICS, CABE etc.), as they are then insured to provide services to you, and are bound to follow a code of ethics, or conduct.

When to apply for Planning Consent?

In a nutshell, as soon as possible. Once you have Planning permission, you may take up to 3 years to start the work. You need to make sure that you are happy with your design, and that **all items that could affect the external appearance** of your structure are **agreed and fixed** before you apply. This will ensure your project is not put at risk, or delayed by the need to amend your permissions after starting!

Is a Spring Application sensible?

It seems somehow logical to apply for the relevant permissions in the spring, but you do not need until the spring for an early summer start. Many homeowners and businesses make this decision, as there are so many priorities in the winter months, such as Christmas, (and saving for Christmas!), company year ends and company and personal tax returns.

There are some circumstances where a spring application is perfectly valid, particularly for complex schemes, where design and planning requirements may take 12 months or more to resolve. For the average small commercial development, domestic extension, or loft conversion, taking this approach could delay your project. This could leave you having to start work in the autumn and winter months. The combination of a delayed start, and slower progress on site, can add months on to your programme, and £££'s to your budget.

Why is this?

There are a number of reasons for this, some of which are fairly obvious, and others that can come as a nasty surprise to developers:

1. The Planning Authorities at the Council can often become overwhelmed; you can run into delays through the pressure put on the Local Authority in the spring through the sheer weight of applications.

2. If there are protected species such as; bats, newts, or lizards on your site, you may have missed the only opportunity all year to relocate or rehome them. In other words, the presence of bats or other protected species can delay your project by over a year if the application is made at the wrong time. Archaeology can lead to similar delays.

3. The standard planning application for small domestic works will take 8 weeks to determine, so once your application is drawn up and submitted, it may already be too late. Larger projects involving multiple dwellings, or commercial and industrial projects can take longer to design, and longer for Planning, due to the extra consultation required, and the decision perhaps being made by planning committee, rather than delegated to an individual officer.

4. You will also need Building Regulations approval. If you run this application concurrently with planning permission, you are doing so at risk. Any changes required by the planners will result in additional charges from your designer, and possibly additional structural engineer's fees in addition, not to mention the inevitable delays.

5. **Planning Policy** - Take advantage of Planning Policy changes. Knowing what you can do without the need for planning permission can allow you to start the project planning at short notice. ***Note: Always get "Prior Approval" from your Local authority in the form of a certificate of lawfulness.**

Help and advice: You can read more at: www.planningportal.gov.uk

If you are in any doubt, please contact a qualified Architectural Designer, or your Local Authority Planning department. Depending on your location, and relevant Local Authority, They will usually be glad to help.

“The presence of Bats or other protected species can delay your project by over a year, if the application is made at the wrong time”

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