



Coulsdon West Residents' Association

thecwra.co.uk

A brief guide to the Croydon Planning Portal; how to view, and comment on, planning applications.

R. Walker, March 2021

Introduction

Croydon Council have implemented a third party system called Idox to run their planning and building control system.

The website address is <https://publicaccess3.croydon.gov.uk/online-applications/>

The Development Management is a useful 'single point of contact', and the email is: development.management@croydon.gov.uk

Building Control regulates structural aspects of building in the UK, for instance, design of foundations and minimum levels of heat insulation; whilst the planning system is concerned with use of land and buildings, and aesthetic aspects, such as 'what does it look like?' It does also look at minimum space guidelines – both for habitable space inside homes, and external play/leisure areas.

The description that follows is aimed at commenting on planning applications.

The Planning System.

The Idox system allows searching by area, type, address, dates, and by map; most elements work, but there are occasional anomalies. It is worth reporting any errors that you come across to the Development Manager.

If you register yourself, then you can save searches, and save lists of applications. This is quite useful.

All applications have a serial number which looks like this: 20/05370/FUL

The initial pair of digits represent the year, the next part is the number of the application within the year, and the suffix is the type of application:

HSE: House extension; FUL: Full planning permission; OUT: Outline planning permission; GPDO: General Permitted Development Order; TRE: Tree work; (there are several other categories).

Once you have found the application of interest, find the name of the case officer who is dealing with the application (under 'Further Information'); also look at the 'important dates'.

Material Considerations

If the public consultation period is still open for the application that you are interested in, then you can access the comments part of the menu. **It is very important that the application is read properly before commenting and that comments are restricted to 'material considerations'**. It is common for people to object to planning applications citing grounds that

are not valid, such as 'loss of view' or 'loss of value for neighbouring properties'. The local planning authority will not be able to take these objections into account when reaching their decision.

The 'documents' section for each planning application holds all of the drawings – plans, elevations, and nowadays, many computer generated graphics of what the finished building will look like, as well as a written description of the intended building, often littered with mistakes.

Each point of your objection letter must have a basis in one of these considerations:

- The proposed development is contrary to national, regional or local planning policy, government circulars, orders or statutory instruments.
- The proposed development is not in keeping with the stylistic context or scale of the local area.
- The proposed development will have a negative impact on the amenity of another property, through noise, overlooking, overshadowing, smells, light pollution, loss of daylight, loss of privacy, dust, vibration or late night activities.
- The proposed use is not compatible with existing uses, for example an industrial use in a residential area.
- The development may cause traffic problems such as traffic generation, access or safety problems.
- The proposal reduces the amount of car parking available or provides insufficient parking space itself.
- There is a history of rejecting similar developments in the area.
- Approval would create a precedent meaning that it would be difficult to object to similar proposals.
- Local infrastructure is not adequate to service the proposed development – ***especially sewerage in Coulsdon. Note that references to flooding don't just mean water!***
- The proposal is a piecemeal development that would prevent proper development of the area.
- The proposal will have an economic impact, such as impacting on tourism or on small businesses.
- The proposal will have environmental health impacts such as the use of hazardous materials or ground contamination.
- The proposed development will impact on listed buildings or a conservation area.
- The layout and density of the proposed development is inappropriate.
- The proposal is an inappropriate development within a green belt.
- Proposed advertising creates visual clutter.
- The proposed development includes insufficient landscaping, or lack of amenity space.
- The proposed development will demolish or adversely affect an ancient monument or site of cultural or architectural value.
- The proposed development will damage the natural environment or will result in significant loss of trees or the loss of trees for which tree protection orders are in place.
- The development will have an environmental impact on local wild life such as badgers, amphibians, and bats.
- The cumulative impact of the development when considered alongside other development will have an adverse impact on the area.
- There is inadequate access for people with disabilities.
- Archaeological issues.
- The type of housing proposed will not satisfy local housing needs.

Interestingly, should you find downright lies presented within the application, they do not count as material considerations; however, I recommend pointing them out as misleading!

Writing the Objection.

(I have not yet been asked to submit a supporting comment, only objections!)

Croydon have tailored the installation of the planning system in a peculiar way – you cannot see the actual comments that have been submitted, only the address of the commenters! So you have to write your own comments 'in the dark'. It is possible to see them if you make an appointment with Development Control and visit 'in person' – ask to see the Planning Application file.

If your objection is very small (less than 2000 characters), then you can enter it directly in the window provided on the council website. If your typing is as slow as mine is, it is a good idea to use some word-processing software to compose your text, and then copy it into the window, to avoid being timed out and losing your work.

If you have a larger argument to make, or have included any pictures or diagrams, then you should write up a reasonably formal document, and email it as an attachment. Include appropriate contact details for yourself, taking care to reference the application serial number in the title of the document AND in the first major heading, and in the subject line of the email.

The safest format to use is a pdf file (most word processor software provides an 'Export as PDF' option under the 'File' menu). Address your formal document to both the case officer, and the development management. Repeat the contact information in the email, and send it to the development management, asking that it is forwarded to the case officer.

(Whilst case officers' email addresses should be of this form: name.lastname@croydon.gov.uk this format obviously doesn't take account of possible name clashes.)

Other points

If you explore the 'Make a comment' section of the website, you will notice a drop down list for 'Commentor type'. Apart from those people that are involved in the administration of the Council's planning committee, and bodies that are providing consultation-type comments, and neighbour comments, there are some 'special' types: Member of Parliament, Member of the Greater London Assembly, Councillor, and Residents' Association.

An objection from anyone 'special' will prevent the application being approved by a planning officer alone (although a planning officer can refuse by themselves through 'delegated powers').

If 20 or more residents object to a planning application this will also trigger the planning application going to the Planning Committee if the Planning Officer is minded to approve the application.

The planning application will be discussed in a full Planning Committee session, which is open to the public, and objectors are invited to put their case to the committee. Pre-Covid, all objectors shared **a single three-minute slot** to state their case. At the moment, I believe that objectors may submit a statement outlining their case, and this will be read out by the clerk to the meeting.

Resources

Note: some of these web addresses can pick up unwanted spaces or invisible line feed characters when being copied and pasted into browsers, especially where they span two lines.

The Croydon Local Plan (last updated in 2018) is available on the planning/regeneration part of the Croydon Council website:

<https://new.croydon.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/planning/planning-policy/croydons-development-plan/local-plan-2018>

Examiner's report on the local plan

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C2-pRjoamkUvF7nHmyAI4gaN4-ibFYE5/view>

The same page has a link to the Mayor's London Plan (Draft plan 2019, final version 2021)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan>

This link is the inspectors' report on the London Plan.

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/inspectors_report_and_recommendations_2019_final.pdf

Updates

These notes were first compiled in March 2021 by Richard Walker.

Please send any comments/suggestions/corrections via this email link: **info@thecwra.co.uk**