Clapham Society Planning Sub-Committee

Guidance Notes for Reviewing Planning Applications

July 2025
Revision A

1. Our Role and Purpose

The Planning Sub-Committee is the Clapham Society's voice in the planning system. It monitors planning applications in and around Clapham—particularly within our Conservation Areas—and responds where proposals may affect the architectural, historical, or environmental character of the area.

Our objective is not to oppose development per se, but to ensure that new proposals are of high quality, respectful of context, and compliant with planning policy. We aim to inform and influence decisions constructively, drawing on evidence, expertise, and the views of the local community.

2. What Makes a Valid Objection

Only planning-related issues—known as material considerations—can be considered by Lambeth and Wandsworth Council's Planning Officers and Planning Committee. The following are valid and recognised grounds for comment or objection:

Design and Architecture

- Poor or inappropriate design quality
- Excessive scale, height, massing, or bulk that harms local character
- Inappropriate materials or detailing
- Harmful or unsympathetic alterations in Conservation Areas

Heritage and Context

- Harm to Listed Buildings or Locally Listed Buildings
- Impact on the character and appearance of Conservation Areas
- Loss of historic features, boundaries, or distinctive detailing

Neighbour Amenity

- Loss of daylight or sunlight
- Overlooking and loss of privacy

- Noise, odour, or disturbance from intensified use
- Overbearing or visually intrusive extensions

Land Use and Overdevelopment

- Over-intensification of residential or commercial use
- Insufficient outdoor space or poor living conditions
- Inadequate bin, bike, or service storage

Highways, Access and Parking

- Unsafe or inappropriate vehicular access
- Increase in traffic or congestion
- Reduced pedestrian or cyclist safety
- Inadequate or poorly designed parking provision

Environmental Impact

- Unjustified loss of trees, especially those with TPOs
- Harm to biodiversity, wildlife corridors, or green spaces
- Unsustainable drainage or increased flood risk
- Basement excavations without suitable safeguards

Planning Policy

- Conflict with the Lambeth and Wandsworth Local Plans, London Plan, or National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Breach of Article 4 Direction or Conservation Area guidance
- Failure to comply with Lambeth and Wandsworth's Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

3. What You Cannot Object To

These are non-material considerations and will be disregarded by Lambeth and Wandsworth's planning department:

- Loss of property value
- Impact on personal views or outlook
- Applicant's character, identity or intent
- Temporary construction disruption (dust, noise, access)
- Business competition
- Boundary, access or ownership disputes
- Dislike of the applicant or fear of change
- Aesthetic preferences without planning context

4. Our Working Approach

To be effective, the sub-committee aims to work constructively, collaboratively, and in line with planning policy. When reviewing applications:

- Be thorough – read all plans, statements and policy references
- Be policy-led – reference Lambeth and Wandsworth's Local Plan, SPDs, and national guidance
- Be concise – keep comments under 500 words, focused and clear
- Be measured – avoid emotional or personalised objections
- Be strategic – pick the battles that matter most to Clapham's future

5. When and How to Submit

- Check the Lambeth and Wandsworth Planning Portal's weekly for new applications
- Ensure comments are submitted within 21 days of validation
- All official responses should be made in the name of the Clapham Society
- For significant applications, consider:
    - Requesting a site visit
    - Engaging ward councillors
    - Speaking at Planning Committee
    - Encouraging community representations

6. Escalating Our Involvement

In exceptional or high-impact cases, the sub-committee may:

- Submit formal objections with policy references and visual analysis
- Mobilise local opinion via newsletters, meetings or social media
- Liaise with local councillors for political support
- Attend and speak at Lambeth and Wandsworth's Planning Applications Committee
- If necessary, alert the GLA or Secretary of State for call-in powers

7. Useful Resources

- Lambeth Local Plan
  https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan
- Lambeth Planning Portal
  https://planning.lambeth.gov.uk

- Wandsworth Local Plan
  https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/localplan
- Wandsworth Planning Portal
  https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/search-planning-applications/
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
- Lambeth Conservation Area Statements
  Available from: https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning-building-control/conservation-heritage/conservation-areas
- Wandsworth Conservation Area Statements
  Available from: https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/conservation-and-urban-design/conservation-areas/