



# Planning Department Procedure and Data Protection

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## **This document**

This document set out the Council as a Local Planning Authority, obligations under data protection legislation (the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Action 2018) and the importance of balancing our obligations with the duties and requirements under planning rules and legislation in the context of the everyday work of the planning department.

Set out in this document are the Council's adopted principles and approach to processing and publishing of personal data. This procedure has been prepared in accordance with the Council's formally adopted Data Management Strategy.

The procedure set out in this document is provided to officers who work in the Planning Department.

## Context: GDPR and planning

The introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has required councils to review the way they manage data in the course of their work providing the functions of a local planning authority (LPA). Unlike many tasks carried out by councils where data is generated by council officers, planning involves the receipt of personal data from third parties which is then shared more widely during the course of decision-making. The requirement on the Council to consult widely and to operate in a democratic and accountable way needs to be balanced against the need to manage data properly. This procedure gives thought as to how long data should be kept and how it is presented online in order to promote a self-service culture.

The reason for preparing this procedure is due to a large fine imposed on a planning authority in 2017 which has brought into sharp focus the need to take stock and ensure that data management is being done legally and properly. The Council has made enormous progress in becoming more open, transparent with our services being made available online. It is vital that our response to the GDPR, and the threat of fines for getting it wrong, does not undo this progress. Those proposing development – and those impacted by it – have a long-established expectation of participating meaningfully in the decision-making process. This procedure, however, has been devised to ensure there is no reduction in the public involvement of the decision-making process or avoid the need to 'hide' important documents and data, or return to a paper-based approach where the only way to access documents is to visit a local planning department in person.

It is important we maintain a sense of proportion. Protecting personal data takes precedent, but it doesn't have to be a barrier. As the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the regulator in charge of data protection, says: '*Data protection law doesn't set many absolute rules. Instead, it takes a risk-based approach, based on some key principles. This means it's flexible and can be applied to a huge range of organisations and situations, and it doesn't act as a barrier to doing new things in new ways. However, this flexibility does mean that you need to think about – and take responsibility for – the specific ways you use personal data*'.

## GDPR and the planning system: principles

The GDPR sets out a legal framework for processing personal data. It is in part a response to an increasingly digital world and sets clear guidelines over how organisations should manage personal data it uses.

The Council will use personal data to make planning decisions. Therefore, we are responsible for the way we use that data. We cannot avoid this responsibility by asking people to sign a waiver or ask that consultees flag data that deserves special care. Instead, we need to embed compliance with the GDPR in the way we operate and demonstrate how we are compliant by documenting our processes and decisions.

## What kind of data?

The GDPR is concerned with personal data i.e., the information we hold about applicants, owners, neighbours and other people identifiable from data we hold.

A separate category of data is called special category data. This type of data is personal data which GDPR says is more sensitive and so needs more protection. Examples of these include information about a person's religion, health and ethnicity. Therefore, such special category data poses the most risk for the data controller.

Both types of data could be provided in support of or in response to a planning application. Information about businesses, viability or environmental conditions is not personal data and so does not fall within the ambit of the GDPR.

# Data controllers, processing and publishing

As the planning department forms part of the local authority i.e., Stevenage Borough Council, it is the local authority (not the planning department) that is the data controller. As controller, the Council has responsibility for complying with data protection regulations and ensuring there are appropriate policies and procedures in place. However, as the planning authority, we need to ensure that the decisions we make about managing data is in line with the Council's policies.

Because the Council is the data controller it can choose to use the information collected as part of the planning process in other departments (e.g., legal) without the need for data-sharing agreements. However, it is important that this has been done thoughtfully and for purposes that are compatible.

There is a distinction to be drawn between processing data for making planning decisions and publishing it online. There will be some situations where the Council as planning authority establishes a lawful basis for processing personal data, but not for publishing.

## The legal bases for data processing

There may be several different purposes for processing information as part of the planning process e.g., consultation on plans, making decisions on planning applications, sharing the information from the Planning Inspectorate for appeals. The Council, as data controller will need to have identified a lawful basis, to process personal data for these purposes.

There are six lawful bases available, that authorise the Council's use of personal data and each one is appropriate to different circumstances. They are listed in Article 6 of the GDPR:

### **The lawful bases for processing personal data as set out in Article 6 of the GDPR are:**

- (1) **Consent:** the individual has given clear consent for you to process their personal data for a specific purpose
- (2) **Contract:** the processing is necessary for a contract you have with the individual, or because they have asked you to take specific steps before entering into a contract.
- (3) **Legal obligation:** the processing is necessary for you to comply with the law (not including contractual obligations).
- (4) **Vital interests:** the processing is necessary to protect someone's life.
- (5) **Public task:** the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law.
- (6) **Legitimate interests:** the processing is necessary for your legitimate interests or the legitimate interests of a third party, unless there is a good reason to protect the individual's personal data which overrides those legitimate interests. (This cannot apply if you are a public authority processing data to perform your official tasks.)

See: ICO Guide to Data Protection and GDPR Article 6.

## Processing personal data

The basis under which we collect or publish data in relation to planning applications is deemed to be a public task. This is used when the task or function has a clear basis in law. It covers processing data that is deemed necessary to process for a specific purpose. For example, the publication of individual names and addresses in connection with planning applications is required by Article 40 of the Development Management Procedure Order. In contrast, the publication of personal email addresses, signatures and telephone numbers is likely to be excessive to the task at hand.

Whilst consent is unlikely to be an appropriate basis for processing personal data in relation to planning applications, there are certain purposes for which we process data using consent as the lawful basis. For example, where we maintain mailing lists of for example local agents to invite them to a planning and development forum or those who wish to be part of a planning policy consultation.

## Processing special category data (SCD)

The processing of special category data requires a GDPR Article 9 condition. For Planning, the most relevant condition for processing such data, is where it is considered necessary for reasons of substantial public interest (Article 9(2)(g) of the GDPR). The Council has published [guidance on data protection](#) which also deals with special category data.

When it comes to utilising such data in the planning process, this could include for example:

- As evidence of a medical condition to support a planning application.
- As evidence of disability to support a discounted fee or to support a planning application.
- As part of the consultation process provided either directly by people about themselves or in relation to third parties.

Special category data is by nature highly sensitive and should not be published other than by exception. This also extends to sharing data with other participants or data processors in the planning process such as for example the Planning Inspectorate. Therefore, we should be issuing a narrative of the situation so that individuals are not identifiable, but the substance of the representation or situation is clear.

## Publishing data

Publishing data is not the same as us processing data. Even the data we hold whereby there is a fair and lawful basis to process may not be appropriate to publish. Therefore, we are required to consider whether any publication is deemed proportionate in achieving a specific purpose. Any lawful basis considered for the publication of information will only apply, based on an assessment of necessity. The publishing of data should only be carried out, where deemed necessary, to fulfil an identified legal or regulatory requirement or provision and cannot be reasonably achieved by less intrusive means.

When it comes to planning, officers across the department will be involved in the processing of planning consultations responses and other comments on planning applications and policies. Therefore, you must follow the detailed procedure around redaction and publicity which will be set out in detail in this document.

## Document redaction

The Council uses redaction as a way to safeguard personal and special category data. It allows the Council to publish documents with sensitive parts removed. The aim of redaction is:

- To publish data in line with GDPR requirements.
- To reduce the risk of fraud and identity theft.

The Council utilises software to redact documentation **before** it is uploaded onto the Council's website. With regards to planning applications, as part of the validation process the Council will publish a redacted version of the application form whilst the non-redacted version is held confidentially where it can only be accessed by members of the planning team.

Where the Council receives correspondence from a third party on a particular application, it will redact certain information such as contact details and signatures. This is undertaken **before** correspondence is uploaded onto the Council's website which can be accessed by members of the public. However, the planning department will have a complete and unredacted version of any

correspondence. This is in order to allow the decision maker to see personal data and where necessary, use it, to inform the decision-making process on a particular application.

## **Transparency, privacy and the right to be informed**

Under GDPR, individuals have the right to be informed about the collection and use of their personal data. This is done by providing a privacy notice which must contain information such as the purposes for processing their personal data and the lawful basis for processing it and who it will be shared with.

The Council has its own Privacy Notice Policy, which sets out detailed service-level information. When it comes to the Council as a Local Planning Authority, details of the Privacy Notice for planning are set out in the 'Privacy Notice' section of this procedure.

## **Information about third parties and Article 14 of the GDPR**

When people provide data directly to the Council by submitting a planning application or where someone makes a comment on a planning application, the Council sets out how we use their data with a link to the Council's Privacy Notice.

However, there are some situations where we receive personal data about people not from the data subjects themselves but from a third party. One of example of this includes certificates of ownership ('Certificate B'), and where applications in which applicants declare a relationship to a local authority member or authority.

When data is provided from a third party, Article 14 of the GDPR becomes relevant, meaning those individuals have the right to be informed about the processing of their data. Therefore, we are required to send them a link to the Council's online Privacy Notice . This has to be undertaken within a reasonable period and no later than one (1) month.

The privacy policy notice will include the following required information:

- The identity and contact details of the data controller
- The categories, purposes and legal basis for processing the data
- The receipts of the personal data
- The period for which the personal data will be stored,
- The existing of the right to request access to, rectification or erasure of personal data subject and the right to object to processing and lodge a complaint to the ICO.

## **GDPR Data Protection Principles**

The GDPR Data Protection Principles sets out requirements for organisations, processing and publishing personal data. When making decisions on how to respond to particular situations, it is important to remember the importance of the data protection principles. The GDPR principles relating to the processing and publishing personal data is set out in Article 5 and is detailed as follows:

- Lawfulness, fairness, transparency
- Purpose limitation (collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes)
- Data minimisation (limited to what is necessary)
- Accuracy
- Storage limitation
- Integrity and confidentiality
- Accountability.

Therefore, as the Council as Local Planning Authority operates an openness and transparent policy, comments on planning applications will include the following information:

- Name
- Address (or part thereof).

The Council will not publish

- Email addresses.
- Phone numbers.
- Signatures.

When officers are processing applications, they need to be mindful of the data in which is being processed and what information is to be published online. This is set out in more detail in the following sections of this procedure.

Officers within the planning department will undertake mandatory training on how to process personal data. The training sessions will cover:

- Implementing the measures and procedures outline in the Council's privacy notice.
- Data protection principles.
- The importance of identifying special category data.
- Applications that may involve national security.
- Who to ask if unsure.
- How to escalate, report and deal with a problem.

## **Planning applications**

### **Pre-application advice**

The Council may from time-to-time receive pre-applications for a particular development. However, pre-applications are generally confidential so they will not be held on the planning register. This is because it may contain confidential or commercially sensitive information.

However, we are committed to ensuring that the planning process is open and transparent. Therefore, once a related application is validated, we will publish the council's advice given to applicants at pre-application request was submitted to the Council.

When it comes to Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), there is a statutory code of practice with which public authorities must comply, and which deals with obligations of confidence. The Council will release pre-application information as standard practice, as appropriate, following a request under FOI or EIR. However, should an applicant not wish for their pre-application information to be released, they must explain to us, when making their application why they regard the information provided is confidential.

If the Council receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of the applicant's explanation but the Council cannot give assurance that confidentiality will be maintained in all circumstances.

### **Receipt of applications**

The Council has a clear privacy policy where applicants need to be directed to with respect to how we will handle their data. When receiving the application, the Council will:

1. Share the privacy notice with the applicant (and agent);
2. Decide how to respond to any third parties involved.
3. Be clear whether there are any special circumstances relating to the application that require any procedures to be altered.

### *Ownership certificate*

The planning system allows any person to make a planning application on any land, including land that they do not own. Where the applicant is not the owner of the land, they must serve notice of their application in accordance with the requirements of [Article 13 of the Development Management Procedure Order](#).

The serving of notice on a person who is the owner (a person owning a freehold or leasehold interest with an unexpired term of not less than 7 years) or a tenant of an agricultural holding. If the applicant knows the name and address of the interested parties, they must include it on their application form (Certificate B). The planning application cannot be valid if the applicant fails to provide the name and address of each person who has been served notice by them.

### *Relationships to applicants*

Councillors and officers may themselves make planning applications, as well as close members of their families. These relations to officers and members of the council are declared on the planning application for. In this way, the decision can be open and transparent whereby all planning applications made by councillors are determined by the Council's Planning and Development Committee.

### *Publication of data*

Whilst processing of third parties data is deemed to be for meeting a public task, there is no requirement in law to publish it, with the view of the ICO cautioning against automatically publishing data about third parties. Therefore, the Council will not seek to publish third party data when it comes to the receipt of planning applications.

### **Validation**

When an application is made valid, the application will be placed on the Planning Register.

### **Consultation – Publication of comments**

[The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulation 2014](#) has been designed to promote transparency and accountability of Council's to their local communities. Stevenage Borough Council as the local authority when it makes a decision to grant permission by an officer rather than a committee, the Council must make available for public inspection the written record of the decision and background papers for public inspection.

Whilst the above regulations is seen as a reason that we “must” publish the names and addresses of those making representations on planning applications, the regulations are clear that they do not require the Council to disclose to the public confidential information (i.e, information the disclosure of which is prohibited under an enactment, such as data protection legislation). In addition, the ICO has confirmed that Councils do not have to provide personal data on representation, even when requested via FOI or EIR.

So, there is no requirement to publish consultation responses, and the decision to publish or not is down to the Council. However, this Council believes in transparency and enable people to effectively participate in the decision-making process. Therefore, we undertake the following:

- All information that enables the public to participate effectively in the decision-making process will be published online where it is consistent with GDPR.
- Information is presented and organised in a way that it is easy for the public to find what they need.
- Public access to information required for the statutory Planning Register will still be retained, even when a decision has been made, including at appeal. This includes the approved plans, officer report and decision notice.

All online comments will adhere to the Council's privacy notice as set out in this procedure document.

## **Inappropriate responses**

Where inappropriate, defamatory or unacceptable responses are issued in response to a planning application, the Council has a right to refuse to publish or accept such responses. In addition, we have a responsibility to respond, and report hate crime when it occurs as well.

## **Photographs**

Photographs may be submitted to accompany a representation in relation to a planning application. However, any photographs with personal information will be redacted for the purposes of online publication. Officers will retain access to unredacted versions as part of the overall assessment of the application.

## **Reports and decision letters**

Delegated and committee reports are not required to be held in the register. There are separate requirements for officers' decisions and committee papers to be published.

Documents published in part 1 of the register only need to be retained until the application has been disposed of (the point at which a final decision is made), sometimes following an appeal.

There may be personal data contained within documents that while necessary for publication (and therefore not redacted) during the consultation phase, may not need be retained after the formal consultation has ended.

However, it is Council policy that we will redact these documents before a final decision is made. Once the decision has been issued, the application moved from part 1 to part 2 of the planning register, the latter being a permanent record of the application (See the Planning Register section).

## **Planning application appeals**

As there is a statutory right to appeal a decision to the Planning Inspectorate, the Council will have to share details of the case with the Inspectorate, including personal data and possibly special category data, along with all representations made about the application.

Upon receipt of an appeal, we should:

- Review the personal data held on the case, paying particular attention to any special category data.
- Decide whether any personal data is critical to the decision-making process. It is the Inspectorate's view that SCD should only be shared with them in exceptional circumstances.
- Notify people of the appeal, directing them to the [appeals case work privacy notice](#).

It is important to note that the Inspectorate cannot work in confidence and regulation require that they and the appellant have the same set of documents. Therefore, we will be unable to provide unredacted documents to the inspector and redacted documents to the appellant.

## **Working with the inspectorate on planning appeals**

The appeal questionnaire statutorily requires us to provide the inspectorate and the appellant with information relevant to their processing of the case. For planning appeals, this includes any interested party representations at the application stage. The Council also has to consider the explicit obligation to make the appeal information available for inspection to any interested party.

As the address of the person making a representation may provide additional context (e.g., overshadowing, privacy, noise), this information will normally be included with the interested party representations that the Council are required to provide to the Inspectorate and the appellant. Where information is redacted, the redacted information will be shared with both the Inspectorate and the appellant.

If an interested party asks the inspectorate to withhold their identity, this will be redacted from the representation that the inspectorate provides the appellant and the Council. However, this may affect the weight that the inspectorate gives to the representation, and this is confirmed in the Inspectorate's privacy notice.

On enforcement appeals, the questionnaire does not require the Council to provide correspondence or the personal details of any party who may have notified them of the potential breach of planning control.

## Document retention

The Council document retention policy relating to planning applications is set out in the table below.

	<b>Category</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Policy</b>
1	Supporting documents for developments that are finished.	Officer reports	These are retained on the Council's electronic database.
2	Documents required for the statutory planning register	Application form, approved plans, design and access statement, enforcement notice, decision notice, legal agreement, the effect of any decision made following appeal.	These are retained on the Council's electronic database.
3	Documents not required for the statutory planning register	Neighbour and consultee responses, CIL form, supporting technical reports.	These are retained on the Council's electronic database, however, are not public post decision. All responses will be retained in accordance with GDPR requirements.

## Enforcement

Enforcement relates primarily to land in which a suspected planning breach may have taken place. As such, it is not immediately obvious that person data (and therefore the GDPR) is involved. However, personal data is any data that can identify an individual directly or makes them indirectly identifiable in combination with other information. A person's name associated with a matter at a particular address constitutes personal data.

As such, enforcement notices and the enforcement register include third parties' personal data and therefore require a lawful basis for processing, in this case, it is to fulfil a public task. A detailed procedure is set out below with respect to how we should handle personal data when it comes to enforcement cases.

## **Allegations and investigations**

Where an allegation of a potential planning breach against a particular property or person is made, any personal data whether it be a name, address and telephone number for example should not be made public. This is because in most instances, allegations of unlawful development end up being concluded that no breach has occurred, and the matter is closed.

It is important that there is not a “weekly list” of new allegations circulated, as this could be seen as some indication of wrongdoing and even prompt members of the public to undertake their own investigations.

## **Enforcement appeals**

In certain cases, a person has a right to appeal against an enforcement notice. This will involve sharing data with the planning inspectorate in line with the advice in the section above on planning application appeals.

## **The Enforcement Register**

Section 188 of the Town and Country Planning Act requires the Council to maintain an enforcement register and Article 43 of the Development Management Procedure Order requires us to main a register that contains and index and copies of every:

- Enforcement Order.
- Enforcement Notice.
- Stop Notice.
- Breach of condition notice.

Any notice that is rescinded or quashed should be removed, along with any expiring enforcement order. The register will contain orders and notices that contain personal data. These are deemed to be an important record and should not be redacted.

The register will be published on the Council’s website because it must be readily available under the Environmental Information Regulations. It is important the register is kept up to date as it can prevent for example, people purchasing land where there is a pre-existing notice in place. In addition, we also have a right to refuse to entertain planning applications on sites where there is a notice in place. Therefore, having an up-to-date register is also deemed useful when officers are dealing with relevant sites.

## **Local Plans**

The Council has a statutory duty to prepare local plans and to consult on it. We are required to notify and invite representations from residents or other persons carrying out business within the area as well as from a range of specific and general consultation bodies that may have an interest.

The Council will process various personal data at various stages in the process of making local plans, which includes:

- A call for sites: landowners, agents and other promoters will put forward their suggestions along with their personal details.
- Consulting on draft policies at Regulation 18 and 19 stage, members of the public, landowners and other stakeholders.
- Preparing for a local plan examination.
- Consulting on other types of development plan document, site briefs or other guidance documents.

The steps have to comply with GDPR and are largely the same as planning applications. The lawful basis for processing personal data remains a public task, although comes under the Development Management Procedure Order, whilst Local Plans are the Town and Country Planning Act.

How we used data is set out in the Privacy Notice outlined in this procedure document. This notice covers all functions of the planning department.

## Examining Local Plans

The examination of a Local Plan is generally co-ordinated by a programme officer. They will require personal data in order to arrange and co-ordinate sessions throughout the examination period.

[The Planning Inspectorate Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations](#) has been prepared to reflect UK GDPR practice and will enter into a data sharing agreement that covers the examination. The guide sets out to the Council what we need to be aware of in terms of compliance with the Council's Data Protection responsibilities.

The Council is obliged to "make available" representations which are made on the Local Plan, but consideration must be given to GDPR in relation to the "substantial public interest test". Therefore, the Council has the following policy in place when it comes to data protection, but also being able to meet its obligation to make available representations:

- We will generally publish full names, addresses and unredacted responses as part of the plan examination.
- We check each one for SCD. We apply the secondary test of 'substantial public interest', to satisfy ourselves that the disclosure is not for trivial reasons or an attempt to frustrate the examination process.
- In those situations where the secondary test has been satisfied, we go back to the consultee and explain about SCD and ask them to confirm in writing that they want their original response publishes or whether they would like to change it.
- We hold a record of this process and keep it for a reasonable time afterwards.

## The Planning Register

Part 1 of the Planning Register ([Article 40\(3\)](#)) is the live part and must contain any application for planning permission including:

- A copy of the application, and any plans or drawings.
- Details of any obligations, and
- Modifications.

In the case of applications for EIA development and subsequent Part 1 of the register must also include a copy of any relevant-

- Screening opinion
- Screening direction
- Scoping direction
- Notification give under regulation 11(2), 12(5), 13(5) or 14(6)
- Direction under regulation 63
- Environmental statement, including any further information
- Statement of reasons accompanying any of the above (Regulation 28(1) EIA Regulations 2017).

Part 2 of the planning register (Article 40(4) holds the permanent record of the application for planning permission, once finally disposed of, which in addition to the requirements of Part 1 include:

- Any directions
- A design and access statement where relevant
- Decisions of the local authority, including details of any conditions
- Reference number and effect of any appeal (including any conditions attached to the appeal)
- Date of subsequent approval following reserved matters
- A copy of any planning obligation(s) or section 278 agreement entered into
- Particulars of any modifications.

There are additional requirements for publishing on the register documentation relating to applications for EIA development and their associated decisions.

## **Privacy Notice**

This privacy notice explains how Stevenage Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority will use information in the course of our work. This work includes:

- Making decisions and providing advice on planning applications
- Making planning policies and local plans
- Working with neighbourhoods on their plans
- Working with neighbouring authorities on strategic policies
- Responding to allegations of unlawful development
- Entering legal agreements and service notices.

Any questions about data or privacy, you can contact the Council's Data Protection Officer.

In terms of ascertaining information, it is supplied to us directly (or via a planning agent on a person's behalf) or receive it from a third-party website that provides a transaction service such as The Planning Portal.

## **How we get your information**

We also receive comments, representations, allegations and questions via email, letter and through for example our Public Access portal or Common Place which is accessible on the Council website.

## **What we do with you information**

To allow the Council a decision on applications, individuals must provide us with some personal data (e.g., name, address, contact details). In a small number of cases individuals will provide us with 'special category data' in support of their application (e.g, evidence of medical history).

We use the information provided to us to make decisions about the use of land in the public interest. The lawful basis for this is known as a 'public task' and is why we do not need your explicit consent for your information to be used.

Some information provided to us we are legally obliged to make available on planning registers. This is a permanent record of our planning decisions that form part of the planning history of a site, along with other factors that form part of the 'land search'.

## How we share your information

We do not sell your information to other organisations. We do not move your information beyond the UK. We do not use your information for automated decision making.

We make details of planning applications we receive available on our website so that people can contribute their comments. Please note:

- We do publish the name of the person applying for planning permission along with their address.
- We don't publish their signature or contact details.
- We do publish comments on planning applications by members of the public. We redact some details of the comments such as signatures and contact details.
- We do publish comments received on planning application by for example amenity groups, consultees and statutory consultees.

We send some planning applications to consultees for their advice on safety, infrastructure and other matters. We will sometimes need to share the information we have with other parts of the Council, for example, to establish how long a building has been used for a particular use.

In circumstances where a planning application is appealed, we are required to share data from a planning application with the Planning Inspectorate, which includes any comments made by statutory consultees and members of the public. We also share information with the Planning Inspectorate when they examine our local plan. This includes the names of site promoters and people submitting representations on the plan.

## Redaction ('blanking things out')

We operate a policy where we routinely redact the following details before making forms and documents available online:

- Personal contact details for the applicant, e.g. telephone numbers, email addresses.
- Signatures.
- Special category Data – e.g. supporting statements that include information about health conditions or ethnic origin.
- Information agreed to be confidential.

Sometimes, we might decide it is necessary, justified and lawful to disclose data that appears in the list above. In these circumstances, we will let you know of our intention before we publish anything.

If you are submitting supporting information which would like to be treated confidentially or wish to be specifically withheld from the public register, please let us know as soon as possible, ideally in advance of submitting any applications or comments. The best way to contact us about this issue is by email on [planning@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:planning@stevenage.gov.uk).

## Retention ('how long we keep your information for')

We process many different types of information according to our retention policy. A brief summary of how long we keep this information is set out below:

- Statutory Registers (e.g., planning decisions, approved plans): For ever.
- Supporting Documents, reports: For ever.
- Representations, letters, general correspondence: For ever, however these are not publicly viewable following the determination of an application.

Some supporting documents relating to major or otherwise significant developments may not be destroyed but instead are relocated onto the Council's website.

## Complaints and problems

Making decisions on planning matters is a public task and you do not have a right to withdraw consent for your data to be processed. However, if you think we have got something wrong or there is a reason you would prefer for something to not be disclosed, please ask us by email on [planning@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:planning@stevenage.gov.uk). Your request will be discussed with the Data Protection Officer. If you need to make a complaint specifically about the way we have processed your data, you should in the first instance use our complaints policy via: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/compliments-and-complaints>. If we fail to respond properly you can direct your concerns to the [Information Commissioners Office](#).