



Bookmaking Offices

The purpose of this Advice Note is to give general guidance to intending developers, their professional advisors and agents. It is designed to provide advice on the planning criteria to be applied when an application for this form of development is being considered. It should be stressed that the note is not a specific statement of Departmental policy but rather one of advice and guidance.

Each application or appeal is treated on its merits and the application of the guidance given to a particular case is always a matter calling for judgement.

Any legal views stated in this note have no statutory force and should not be relied upon as an authoritative interpretation of the law.

A list of other current notes in this series can be obtained from [Divisional Planning Offices](#) or from the Planning Service Headquarters.

1. This note deals with the planning issues that arise concerning applications to establish bookmaking offices, however described, and sets out the criteria which the Department will take into account when determining such proposals.
2. A proposal to develop a bookmaking office, whether by new construction or by the material change of use of existing premises, requires planning permission. Bookmaking offices are expressly excluded from the definitions of both "shop" and "office" given in the Planning (Use Classes) Order 1973 so that a change in the use of either type of premises will require the consent of the Department.
3. Additionally, to operate within the law, bookmaking offices require to be licensed under the Betting and Lotteries Act (NI) 1957. It is a matter for an applicant to decide in what order he will seek a licence and apply for planning permission. Normally, however, planning permission is sought first. Planning permission cannot be withheld solely on the grounds that the premises have not been licensed.
4. The two forms of control, ie, planning control and licensing are quite distinct and should not be confused. The Department, as planning authority, in determining a proposal will deal only with those aspects of the proposal which are relevant to planning. Since the 1957 Act allows the licensing authority to consider matters such as the need for new premises having regard to the facilities already existing and social issues, the Department takes the view that planning powers should not duplicate the provisions of other legislation.
5. In considering applications for bookmaking offices the Department will consider their proper location, their effect on adjoining property, the question of noise, litter and disturbance, car parking, and design especially where the proposal lies within an existing or proposed Conservation Area.
6. Proposals for bookmaking offices are unlikely to receive favourable consideration from the Department if located in a predominantly residential area. In such locations noise, litter, general disturbance and the generation of additional traffic both vehicular and pedestrian would be likely to give rise to conditions which would have an adverse effect on amenity and cause inconvenience to neighbours.
7. Areas of mixed (commercial and residential) land uses where there are concentrations of other leisure facilities, eg, public houses, may be suitable locations. Such areas are often to be found on the periphery of a town or city centre or in secondary shopping streets. In some areas of mixed land uses, eg, in a village or small town or in a Conservation Area amenity value may be higher and here the major consideration will be the effect of the proposal upon the general character of the area.
8. Additionally, bookmaking offices may be acceptable in a town centre or out-of-town or edge-of-town shopping centre.
9. The question of loss of retail floor space and the fact that the proximity of bookmaking offices may discourage the location of certain types of retail outlet will be considered when appropriate. In some instances it may be possible for bookmaking offices to locate on the upper floors of a building thus avoiding the problems associated with breaks in the continuity of shopping frontage. However, cognisance will need to be taken of Section 7 of the Betting and Lotteries Act (NI) 1957. In particular it will be necessary to ensure that the premises does not form part of premises licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquor, and that it does not communicate internally with other premises.

10. Bookmaking offices by the nature of the activities carried on generate a certain amount of noise, litter and disturbance which may be detrimental to the amenities of an area. These factors are valid planning considerations. In dealing with proposals to establish such premises the Department will consult the Environmental Health Department of the District Council which has appropriate powers under the Control of Pollution and Local Government (NI) Order 1978. Its advice will be considered when deciding whether or not to give permission and also when formulating any conditions to be attached to a planning permission.
11. The amount of car parking provision required for bookmaking offices is dependent upon their location and size. The Department's car parking standards differentiate between the centres of large towns where no provision would be required and premises situated outside town centres where a standard of one car space per premises plus one car space per 60 square metres would be required. Whilst this set standard will be used as a guide each application will be considered on its merits.
12. In considering proposals for bookmaking offices in shopping centres and streets, and particularly in Conservation Areas, the Department will pay particular attention to design to ensure that it does not mar the street frontage and that the nature and colour of the external finishes are compatible with the surrounding properties. This can be achieved by the provision of shop-window type display and a fascia and lettering that is compatible with surrounding retail outlets. Designs which are fundamentally alien to the existing character of an area or building are not acceptable, eg, blank frontages with high level windows.