

Discussion guide for general public submitting applications

This document outlines our research plan for the sessions with non-professionals submitting a planning application. It will be used as a guide and prompt for discussion. Design research is hands-on and participant led therefore we will not be using this document in a question and answer format.

We will use these tasks to uncover the journey that general public undertake when submitting a minor planning application and their interactions with the Council.

Aims of the research

- Understand how users access relevant planning information, submit, view and comment on applications.
- Understand the interactions between the users and the Council along the submission process.
- Highlight key pain points experienced by users across their journey when using current submission platforms.
- Understand how users use the planning portal, their challenges and barriers.
- Discover what users need from the Planning Applications MVP and list potential features.

Logistics

- Snook will be holding face-to-face conversations on each research day with people in the process of submitting a planning application.
- Each research session will last for 1 hour in total.
- Each participant will sign a consent form.
- Incentive: ?

Agenda

10 minutes

Introductory Questions

We want to gain an understanding of each user group and their interactions with Hackney / Southwark Council. We will capture an understanding of their motivations, challenges they face and actions they take.

40 minutes

Journey Mapping

Journey mapping is an exercise used to document the end-to-end experience of users when interacting with a service.

We will use journey maps to capture the main stages across:

1. Pre-application
2. Submission
3. Invalid applications & Re-submission
4. Consultation
5. Decision

We will identify:

1. Main stages
2. Tasks undertaken
3. Pain points
4. Touchpoints

The purpose of this exercise is to walk through the journey naturally however we may ask particular questions along the way that are listed below.

5 minutes

Wrap up questions

After the exercise, we will ask some remaining questions around any ideas or suggestions they might have to improve the overall experience and the quality of the planning application.

Introductory Questions: 10 minutes

Introduction [5min]

“A little bit of background on what we are doing today:

*We are working with Hackney Council on a project to **develop a digital service covering submitting planning applications, commenting and viewing**. We are looking to improve the ease and efficiency of the current planning application process with a view to reducing customer contact, lowering the number of invalid applications and improving customer satisfaction.*

We would like to hear your experiences to inform how we could make it better. This session will last for 1 hour and is an informal conversation about the planning process.

There are no right or wrong answers and what we learn today will feed into our prototype design phase.

Thanks for being here and taking the time to talk to us about your experience. Do you have any questions?”

Participant introduction [5min]

Q: Can you tell us a bit about you?

Journey mapping: 40 min

Planning application process [10min]

Q: We would like you to walk us through the stages of submitting a planning application in Hackney / Southwark.

Pre-Submission

- Which motivations did you have for undertaking the planning process on your own?
- What challenges and barriers did you face?
- How did you find out what documents you had to submit?
- Tell us about your experience of understanding and locating local policy. Can you show us where you find it?

Submission

- Which platform did you use? Can we log in and have a look and you talk us through the different steps by showing us?
- How did you find the process of submission? What do you think about [platform used?
- How, if at all, has this impacted on you? How has this made you feel?
- What, if anything, do you think may have helped you manage this?
- Did you receive support / ask for help?
 - Did you use the validation checklist? Was it helpful?
 - Did you contact any professional? Was it helpful?
 - Have you asked for a pre-application discussion? Why / not?
- How did you pay the application fee?

Invalid application and Re-submission

- Could you tell us if your application was successful?

- If NO, How did you feel? Could you tell us why it was invalid?
- Could you provide the additional info requested? Did you consider contacting a professional to fix those errors?
- Talk us through the experience of receiving advice to amend from the council

Decision issued (and recommendations)

- Tell us about receiving the final decision. How were you notified?

Viewing - Consulting

- How did you feel during the consultation phase?
- What communication did you receive?
- Were any disputes raised? How were they resolved?
- Have you ever viewed or comment on other applications?
- If so, what's your experience like?

Communications with the Council - Customer enquiries [5 min]

- During the application process, have you receive any feedback from the Council?
 - If YES, what was it about? After how long? Was it helpful for you? Which channel did they use? Would you have preferred another way of interacting with them?
 - If NO, would you have liked to get notified? Or would you prefer to contact them directly?
- What are the most challenging aspects of your interactions with the Council?
- Would it be important for you to be able to track the progress of an application?

Wrap up questions: 5min

- From your experience, do you have any suggestions on how to improve this process?
- What advice would you give someone else submitting a planning application for the first time? Would you recommend to hire an agent to do it? why / not?

Close

“Thank you so much for your time, it has been really useful to have you involved in this research and interesting to hear your experiences.”