



**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDANCE  
ON NOISE AND PLANNING –  
WHAT IT MEANS FOR DEVELOPERS**

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## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDANCE ON NOISE AND PLANNING - WHAT IT MEANS FOR DEVELOPERS

Following the recent publication of [Professional Practice Guidance on Planning and Noise for New Residential Development](#) (ProPG) by the Institute of Acoustics (IOA), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and Association of Noise Consultants (ANC), Surface has prepared this review of the document to highlight what it means for developers of new residential developments.

Implementation of the ProPG will inevitably lead to changes in the way that noise issues are addressed during the design and planning process for new residential developments. Rather than the current practice of carrying out Noise Impact Assessments when noise is identified as a potential issue, each site should have an Acoustic Risk Assessment (a high-level identification of potential noise issues at the site) and, in most cases, an Acoustic Design Statement which demonstrates how noise issues have been taken into account in the design of the development.

It is recommended that:

- Acoustic specialists are engaged at an earlier stage of the design of a development;
- The Acoustic Risk Assessment is carried out for each development site as early as possible; and
- Interaction between acoustic specialists and designers (architects and/or structural engineers) is increased.

Following the approach recommended in the ProPG is anticipated to provide the following benefits to Developers:

- Greater consistency of approach, leading to faster delivery of new homes;
- Early identification of inappropriate sites, avoiding wasted expenditure;
- A streamlined design and planning process and therefore lower costs for sites with negligible risk;
- With Good Acoustic Design, development may be possible on sites that may previously have been considered unsuitable (higher development costs should be anticipated in areas with higher noise levels); and
- An increased chance of planning consent on appropriate sites.

If you wish to discuss the ProPG in general, or a specific development site, please contact [noise@surface-property.co.uk](mailto:noise@surface-property.co.uk)

Please also get in touch if you would be interested in attending a seminar on this topic.

### Summary of Guidance

Noise is a material consideration in the planning process and a key aspect of sustainable development. The ProPG Supports the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF), [Noise Policy Statement for England](#) (NPSE), and [Planning Practice Guidance on Noise](#) (PPG Noise) and therefore applies principally to England, although it may also be useful elsewhere, e.g. Scotland.

The ProPG is focused on new residential development affected by transport noise but some of its principles may be applicable to other types of noise. It encourages better acoustic design for new residential development and aims to protect people from the harmful effects of noise.

The ProPG *"...provides advice for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), developers, and their respective professional advisers. It aims to complement Government planning and noise policy and guidance. In particular, it strives to:*

- *advocate full consideration of the acoustic environment from the earliest possible stage of the development control process;*
- *encourage the process of good acoustic design in and around new residential developments;*
- *outline what should be taken into account in deciding planning applications for new noise-sensitive developments;*
- *improve understanding of how to determine the extent of potential noise impact and effect; and*
- *assist the delivery of sustainable development."*

A risk-based approach is advocated, in two-stages:

- 1 – an initial noise risk assessment of the proposed development site; and
- 2 – a systematic consideration of four key elements:

- i. Demonstrating a Good Acoustic Design Process
- ii. Observing internal Noise Level Guidelines
- iii. Undertaking an External Amenity Area Noise Assessment
- iv. Consideration of Other Relevant Issues

An Acoustic Design Statement (ADS) should be prepared by a suitably qualified acoustic practitioner (e.g. a full member of the IOA) commissioned by the developer, in conjunction with other designers of the development. The ADS should be more detailed for a high risk site and should not be necessary for a site with negligible risk.

The outcome of the ADS is one of four recommendations to the decision maker:

- 1 – Grant planning permission without noise-related conditions;
- 2 – Grant planning permission with noise-related conditions;
- 3 – Avoid significant adverse effects by recommending refusal unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary; or
- 4 – Prevent significant adverse effects by recommending refusal of planning permission.

In most cases, it would be the role of the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) at the Local Planning Authority to make this recommendation. The ADS should aim to guide the EHO to recommendations 1 or 2 where possible.

### **The Initial Noise Risk Assessment**

This should be conducted by a competent acoustic practitioner at the earliest opportunity and before submission of a planning application. It should identify the level of noise risk at the proposed site as negligible, low, medium or high, without including the effects of any new or additional mitigation. It may be based on measurement or prediction and should aim to describe noise levels over a typical worst-case 24-hour period now or in the foreseeable future.

ProPG provides indicative noise levels for each risk category, which should be interpreted flexibly with regard to the locality, the nature of the project and its wider context:

- **Negligible Risk:** Site is likely to be acceptable
  - below 40 dB(A) at night
  - below 50 dB(A) day
- **Low Risk:** Likely to be acceptable provided that Good Acoustic Design (GAD) is followed
  - between 40 and 50-55 dB(A) night
  - between 50 and 60-65 dB(A) day

- **Medium Risk:** Likely to be less suitable and application may be refused unless ADS demonstrates GAD, how adverse effects will be mitigated and significant adverse effects avoided
  - between 50-55 and 60 dB(A) night
  - between 60-65 and 70 dB(A) day
- **High Risk:** Increased risk of refusal, which may be reduced by demonstrating GAD in a detailed ADS, expert advice recommended
  - above 60 dB(A) night
  - above 70 dB(A) day

The Initial Noise Risk Assessment should not be the basis for the eventual recommendation to the decision maker, but an indication of the likelihood of the site being acceptable, of the need for Good Acoustic Design and the level of detail required in the ADS.

### **Key Element 1 – Good Acoustic Design Process**

Good Acoustic Design:

- Is an implicit requirement of NPSE and NPPF;
- Should be considered at an early stage of the development control process;
- Takes a multi-faceted approach to achieving optimal acoustic conditions both internally and externally;
- Should avoid unreasonable and prevent unacceptable acoustic conditions;
- Is not just compliance with noise level standards, but should provide an integrated solution where the optimum acoustic outcome is achieved without adversely affecting living conditions, quality of life or other sustainable design objectives and requirements, e.g. the need for adequate ventilation; and
- Should avoid the use of fixed unopenable windows.

The planning application should, iteratively:

- Check the feasibility of relocating or reducing noise levels from relevant sources;
- Consider options for planning the site or building layout;
- Consider building orientation;
- Select construction types and methods for meeting building performance requirements;
- Examine the effects of noise control measures on ventilation, fire regulation, health & safety, cost, CDM, etc.;
- Assess the viability of alternative solutions; and
- Assess external amenity area noise.

The Acoustic Design Statement should provide evidence that a good acoustic design process has been followed. Additional advice and guidance on GAD is provided in Supplementary Document 2 which accompanies the ProPG.

### **Key Element 2 – Internal Noise Level Guidelines**

ProPG provides internal noise level guidelines, which are based on those described in BS 8233:2014, which is currently the main source of guidance on this matter. The guideline levels are targets, with some flexibility available according to circumstances, and relate to the annual average noise level in most cases. The recommendations of BS8233 are supplemented by guidance on external noise events, i.e. short duration, high-level sounds, and additional explanatory text is provided.

Guidance is also provided on the interaction between the use of enhanced glazing to manage noise levels and the need for adequate ventilation. In particular, the aim should be to achieve the target levels with windows open through the use of GAD. In some circumstances this may not be possible, which should be addressed in the ADS.

### **Key Element 3 – External Amenity Area Noise Assessment**

ProPG reflects and extends the advice given in BS 8233:2014 and PPG noise on noise levels in external amenity areas that are an intrinsic part of the development. External noise levels in such areas should ideally not exceed 50-55 dB(A). As this may not be achievable in all cases, a number of mitigating factors and alternatives are discussed, including:

- The development should be designed to achieve lowest practicable levels in such areas;
- Where, despite GAD, significant external noise impacts remain, these may be partially off-set if the residents are provided with access to a relatively quiet:
  - Façade or externally ventilated space (e.g. balcony) as part of their dwelling;
  - Alternative or additional external amenity space for sole use by a household (e.g. quiet private garden);
  - Protected, nearby external amenity space for the sole use by a limited group of residents (e.g. quiet shared garden); or
  - Publically accessible nearby external amenity space (e.g. public park).

Where external amenity areas are not an intrinsic part of the development, GAD still requires consideration of the need to provide access to a quiet or relatively quiet external amenity space.

### **Key Element 4 – Assessment of Other Relevant Issues**

The ADS should include details of the assessment of other relevant issues, which may include:

- **Compliance with relevant national and local policy:**  
i.e. NPPF, NPSE, PPG Noise and Local Policies;
- **Magnitude and extent of compliance with ProPG:**  
Where it has not been possible to achieve internal or external noise level guidelines throughout the development, the number of affected rooms / areas should be identified and any mitigating factors discussed;
- **Likely occupants of the development:**  
Different groups may require differing acoustic conditions;
- **Acoustic design vs. unintended adverse consequences:**  
Acoustic design measures may have unintended adverse consequences in other ways, e.g. barriers may block views, sealed windows may prevent personal control over ventilation. Where possible, GAD should obviate such effects; and
- **Acoustic design vs. wider planning objectives:**  
Some wider planning objectives may have unforeseen acoustic implications, e.g. 'active facades' that overlook public footpaths etc. could result in some residential units facing a noisy street.

### **Acoustic Design Statement**

The Acoustic Design Statement should:

- Provide sufficient evidence that ProPG Stage 1 and Stage 2 Elements 1 to 4 have been followed;
- Be proportionate to the scale of development and degree of noise risk;
- Not normally be necessary where the risk is assessed at Stage 1 as negligible;

- Increase in detail with increasing risk level;
- Present:
  - The initial Noise Risk Assessment;
  - External noise levels across the site before and after any mitigation measures;
  - How GAD is integrated into the overall design;
  - Confirmation of how internal noise level guidelines will be achieved;
  - A detailed assessment of potential impact on occupants where individual noise events are expected to exceed 45 dB(A) more than 10 times per night;
  - Prioritisation of the use of openable windows, justify where this is not possible and detail proposed ventilation and thermal comfort arrangements;
  - The external amenity area noise assessment;
  - The assessment of other relevant issues;
  - For a low noise risk site, how the adverse impacts of noise will be mitigated and minimised in the finished development; and
  - For a medium or high risk site, how the adverse impacts of noise will be mitigated and minimised and that a significant adverse noise impact will be avoided in the finished development.

### **Recommendations to the Decision Maker**

As previously stated, the outcome of the ADS is one of four recommendations to the decision maker:

- 1 – Grant planning permission without noise-related conditions;
- 2 – Grant planning permission with noise-related conditions;
- 3 – Avoid significant adverse effects by recommending refusal unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary; or
- 4 – Prevent significant adverse effects by recommending refusal of planning permission.

In most cases, it would be the role of the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) at the Local Planning Authority to make this recommendation. The ADS should aim to guide the EHO to recommendations 1 or 2 where possible.