



Use a URA Outline Application to Test a Property Plan Before Full Design

Description

Answer first: Use a URA outline application when the expensive uncertainty is a broad planning question such as use, intensity, height or access principle. It is an early feasibility tool, not permission to build.

For a property owner, prospective buyer or developer testing a non-conforming land use, height or intensity proposal, the useful outcome is specific: decide when an outline application is useful, secure owner consent and frame the planning question before paying for a full submission. Preliminary signals are kept separate from final authority. An eligibility signal, headline, displayed price or preliminary response is not presented as a secured outcome.

Before acting, write down the exact date, amount, person, place or account that makes this reader's case different from the general rule. That context check prevents a broadly correct source from being applied to the wrong transaction, household, journey or service.

What the official sources establish

Ask a planning question

URA describes an outline application as an in-principle decision before detailed plans are prepared. This point is grounded in the [primary official source](#).

Practical control: Frame the few propositions that decide whether design work should proceed. Date the check and state whether the result is confirmed, conditional or illustrative. Recheck it if the underlying event changes.

Provide proportionate site information

URA still needs enough context to understand the proposed development and uncertainty. This point is grounded in the [primary official source](#).

Practical control: Show the site, present use, proposed use, scale and access concept. Keep a short audit trail: question asked, source opened, answer found, limitation noted and action authorised.

In-principle is not final approval

A favourable response can carry conditions and later detailed or agency assessment. This point is grounded in the [primary official source](#).

Practical control: Copy each condition into a constraints register. Record the source date, the case-specific input and the final readback. An unanswered field remains open; it does not become a working fact.

Choose the route deliberately

URA's wider permission guidance covers the full development application system. This point is grounded in the [supporting official source](#).

Practical control: Compare early uncertainty cost with the value of preparing detail now. Put the evidence beside the decision it supports, name its owner and set a stop condition for any missing or conflicting detail.

Preserve version and assumptions

Material design, policy or site changes can reduce the usefulness of an earlier response. This point is grounded in the [primary official source](#).

Practical control: Record the decision date and proposal version. Preserve the current authority page and the reader's own record separately, so a general rule is not mistaken for case approval.

Decision table

Control point	Action	Authority
Ask a planning question	Frame the few propositions that decide whether design work should proceed.	primary official source
Provide proportionate site information	Show the site, present use, proposed use, scale and access concept.	primary official source
In-principle is not final approval	Copy each condition into a constraints register.	primary official source
Choose the route deliberately	Compare early uncertainty cost with the value of preparing detail now.	supporting official source
Preserve version and assumptions	Record the decision date and proposal version.	primary official source

Keep case evidence beside the general rule so they cannot be confused. Assign every open item to the person who can obtain the authoritative readback.

Two original value tools

A go-direct, outline-first or stop decision matrix

This first tool organises the decision evidence. Keep the two most consequential uncertainties visible at the top. Assign each to the person who can resolve it and retain the confirmation that closes the row.

A feasibility brief that separates land use, plot ratio, height, access and owner-consent evidence

This second tool supplies an independent cross-check. Treat it as a decision aid, not proof of approval. The authority or operator still controls the live result, while the tool helps the reader notice gaps before action.

Worked example

A concept is viable only above a broad intensity. The team tests that planning proposition before commissioning full design, then prices every condition and still reserves time for the full technical and agency process.

Do not copy the sample inputs into a real application, booking, account or care plan.

Five failure modes to avoid

- Using a convenient proxy instead of resolving “ask a planning question”.
- Using a convenient proxy instead of resolving “provide proportionate site information”.
- Using a convenient proxy instead of resolving “in-principle is not final approval”.
- Using a convenient proxy instead of resolving “choose the route deliberately”.
- Using a convenient proxy instead of resolving “preserve version and assumptions”.

The common risk is moving from incomplete evidence to action without a stop condition. Resolving the correct record early is safer than reconstructing it after a submission, payment, booking, medical change or dispute.

Action checklist

1. Frame the few propositions that decide whether design work should proceed. Keep the evidence that supports: URA describes an outline application as an in-principle decision before detailed plans are prepared.
2. Show the site, present use, proposed use, scale and access concept. Keep the evidence that supports: URA still needs enough context to understand the proposed development and uncertainty.
3. Copy each condition into a constraints register. Keep the evidence that supports: A favourable response can carry conditions and later detailed or agency assessment.

4. Compare early uncertainty cost with the value of preparing detail now. Keep the evidence that supports: URA's wider permission guidance covers the full development application system.
5. Record the decision date and proposal version. Keep the evidence that supports: Material design, policy or site changes can reduce the usefulness of an earlier response.

If later facts conflict, preserve both records and resolve the difference explicitly. A named owner and a dated follow-up prevent an unresolved point from disappearing between people.

Limits and live verification

Planning outcomes are site and proposal specific. URA's formal response controls, while landowner consent, technical agencies, conservation and building approvals may still apply.

At the point of action, reopen the [primary official source](#) and [supporting official source](#). Together they supply the central rule and a separate legal, operational or verification layer. Consequential details should not be inherited from a commercial summary.

Related LBRD guides

- [check another URA permission and status question](#)
- [compare a separate URA use-permission route](#)

Date Created

01/09/2026

Author

rachelng