

Charges for Pre Application Discussions: Guidance for Developer/Agents

The Council charges for the discretionary pre application discussion service. This guide explains the background, the fee scales, administration arrangements and the future of the scheme.

Background

The Local Government Act 2003 gives discretionary power to Local Planning Authorities to charge for providing pre application advice. An increasing number of the Councils are levying such charges. It is expected that this will drive up the quality of draft schemes submitted for discussion, improve Officer responses in terms of quality and timeliness, and improve the quality of the eventual application and its chances of success with quicker determination times. Added advantages include reducing the number of time consuming speculative or poorly prepared schemes and moving the cost of this service to the user rather than the general tax payer.

The primary emphasis though is on better service to customers and the promotion of higher quality development schemes.

Fee Scales

The Council has agreed that the flat rate scale of fees, based upon the size of development proposed should be charged for meetings, as follows:

PRE-APPLICATION MEETINGS	
DEVELOPMENT	FEE
Strategic major applications (over 50 dwellings or 10,000 sq.m commercial)	£1,200.00
Major proposals (between 10 and 50 dwellings or 1,000 – 10,000 sq.m commercial)	£896.00
Minor proposals (between 1 and 9 dwellings or under 1,000 sq.m commercial)	£605.00

All fees are inclusive of VAT.

These charges apply for the whole pre-application process, including any subsequent discussion of issues/submission of revisions following on from the initial meeting. This service / fee will include the provision of a letter to confirm the outcome of the meeting.

In addition, flat fees will be charged for the provision of written advice (where no meeting is held) at a rate of:

PRE-APPLICATION LETTERS	
DEVELOPMENT	FEE
Strategic major applications (over 50 dwellings or 10,000 sq.m commercial)	£600.00
Major proposals (between 10 and 50 dwellings or 1,000 – 10,000 sq.m commercial)	£450.00
Minor proposals (between 1 and 9 dwellings or under 1,000 sq.m commercial)	£302.00

All fees are inclusive of VAT.

Where a development proposal is by, or on behalf, or a resident, for development classified as 'householder', no fee will be charged. This accords with practices at other Councils. The Council does however charge to confirm whether a householder proposal would be permitted development or not, the form and guidance for this is can be found on our website.

Other development types such as Listed Building, advertisements, Certificate of Lawfulness will not attract a fee. Officers will be please to explain where any exemptions apply on specific request.

Administering the Fees Regime

Payment of the appropriate fee must be made **before** the meeting itself and at least **five** working days in advance of meeting / correspondence. If no fee has been paid, regrettably the meeting will have to be cancelled. Planning Officers cannot accept payment at the meeting itself.

Payment can be made via debit or credit card through Customer Services or at Council receptions. Alternatively payments can also be made by cheque, money order or bankers draft, made payable to the Council. Unfortunately we cannot accept cash.

The required pre application discussion can only proceed once the **Request Form** is complete, all of the specified technical information provided, and the appropriate fee has been paid.

Meeting Arrangements

For any pre application meeting Planning Officers will carefully assess whether, in order to deal with the query, Officers from other disciplines within the Council need to be present. This “Development Team” approach is particularly recommended for more complex developments which may require input from other specialist staff. Lead Planning Officers take responsibility for ensuring that the query is dealt with as efficiently as possible by involving all relevant Officers in as few meetings as possible. Customers should expect this level of service and that Officers will take all reasonable steps to avoiding unnecessary meetings.

On receipt of an enquiry letter a standard written or e-mail response will be sent briefly explaining the fact that there is a fee charging regime in place, offering guidance on the appropriate fee charge, and the need to submit this and the **Request Form** before a response can be given. The guidance papers/forms will be supplied.

For telephone queries, customers will be advised of this process and invited to submit the necessary form and fee. This means that informal advice within the fee charging categories cannot, for the most part, be provided over the telephone. However queries that can be answered briefly and succinctly will remain free of charge. More complex queries, requiring consideration, research, consultation, discussion, meeting or analysis will invoke the fees regime.

Where the Council considers it necessary to meet with a prospective applicant, no charge will be requested. All charges are discretionary and any charge may be waived for operational reasons by the Planning Applications Manager.

Review

The operation and scale of fees will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Council.