

Planning Services

Pre Application Advice Charges 2007/8

Epping Forest District Council

Why seek pre-application advice?

It can be very helpful to seek our advice about your planning proposals before submitting your actual application. This might involve meeting with us or just sending us your proposals for us to comment. This can help to overcome potential difficulties and to make sure your application deals with all the important planning considerations.

You may also find it helpful to obtain advice from an independent planning specialist when drawing up your scheme. People who regularly prepare planning applications have the experience and expertise that can help make sure your scheme has the best chance of being granted consent. Spending time and effort in preparing your scheme is more likely to result in a good quality and acceptable development and also help us process your application quickly.

For small developments, we can usually offer pre-application advice free of charge. However, because of the time and resources involved, **we will be introducing a charge for providing advice on major developments from 1 October 2007.**

Major development schemes

A major development is defined as:

- **any scheme on any site of over 1 hectare,**
- **a residential scheme on any site over 0.5 hectares,**
- **a residential scheme providing 10 dwelling units or more, or**
- **a commercial scheme of over 1000 square metres floorspace.**

The charge for providing pre-application advice will be £1500 plus VAT.

Your payment must be made in advance by cheque, electronic funds or banker's draft and made payable to Epping Forest District Council. We will need to be satisfied that your cheque has cleared before we can meet you or provide a written response.

How the scheme works

We will decide which officers from Planning or other Council services, or from outside organisations need to deal with your enquiries or meet with you. You can ask to meet with certain officers but the ultimate decision will be ours. Meetings will usually be held at the Civic Offices in Epping unless there are good reasons to meet elsewhere.

You will need to provide us with enough information about the site and your scheme to be clear about what you propose and to help us decide who else should be consulted. This will normally include:

- a) description and summary of the proposals
- b) a site location plan
- c) photographs and drawings of the site and the proposals and
- d) your contact details and whether you request a meeting.

If an actual meeting is needed, you will need to send us this information far enough in advance for us to be able to reach a preliminary view before we meet you and we will arrange the meeting as soon as possible after receipt.

The issues we will consider include:

- The planning history of the site.
- If there are any constraints on the site. For example, is the building listed; is the development site in a conservation area; is there a flood risk; are there any national or local designations etc.
- Government advice.
- Relevant Development Plan policies.
- The design, including sustainable construction and energy issues.
- Amenity impact.
- Possible obligations on you as the developer. For example, the provision of infrastructure, affordable housing or contributions to service provision.
- Necessary practical measures. For example, dealing with possible contamination.
- Process or timetable issues.

We will provide a written summary of our advice usually within 10 days of meeting with you.

If further investigation or meetings are required then additional fees are likely to be invoiced at the rate of £80 per hour. At the service's discretion minor follow up queries may not be subject to further charge.

Our advice will be provided in good faith but it will not be any guarantee that your application will result in a particular decision and will not be binding on the Council in any way. It will only be applicable so long as there is no change in policy or other circumstances relevant to the case.

Our opinion might have to change during the formal application process once the views of neighbours, Local Councils and District Councillors have been obtained. The final decision may also be made by the relevant Council Committee, rather than by officers, and it is always possible that the Committee Members may reach a different view.

Whether or not you decide to take pre-application advice does not affect your right to submit a planning application nor to appeal should consent be refused.

To request pre-application advice, please contact a relevant professional officer or the Customer Contact Team on 01992 564584

Other planning advice available

We now provide much more information and documents on line at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk . This information is available free of charge and at virtually all hours. Examples include:

- Our Local Plan with all planning policies.
- Advice when planning permission is needed.
- Information about the planning history of sites.
- Real time up dates on the progress of current applications.