

TUNBRIDGE WELLS PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING ADVICE SERVICE

The Council would encourage you to seek advice before submitting a formal planning application to help speed your application successfully through the formal planning application process. This will also reduce the likelihood of you incurring the costs associated with the submission of an unacceptable proposal.

This service applies to all types of development proposals.

The provision of this service is time consuming and costly, and the Council is therefore introducing a charge. The Local Government Act 2003 allows us to operate a scheme of charging for discretionary services such as this so that the costs of providing the service do not fall to the Council Tax payer. The current statutory planning application fees do not cover the cost of pre-application advice.

What we will provide as part of the service:

Pre-application service will provide you with the following benefits:

- Consistency in dealing with your pre-application submission and any subsequent applications for planning permission.
- Information on key planning policies and previous planning decisions.
- Advice in relation to all relevant planning matters and the planning merits of the proposal.
- Informal comments and guidance, which are without prejudice, on the content, construction and presentation of an application likely to satisfy the Council's planning policies.
- Advice on the documents to be submitted with your planning application.

It will not provide:

- Detailed technical advice.
- A plan drawing/design service.
- Feedback from outside organisations that we may consult at the planning application stage although will give you details of organisations you may wish to contact directly.
- Feedback from neighbouring residents or other interested parties that may be notified of your proposals at the planning application stage.

Benefits of Pre-Application Advice

- It explains how planning policies, constraints and other requirements affect your proposals.
- It identifies at an early stage any need for specialist input (e.g. listed buildings, conservation areas, trees, noise, health, highway issues).
- It gives an indication of the likely requirement for contributions to be made by a developer (e.g. levels of affordable housing, highways, education or any other payments).
- It will help you to submit a complete and accurate application for planning permission which complies with the relevant policies, plans and guidance and provided you take all the advice into account, it should be possible to determine your application in a shorter timescale.
- It highlights unacceptable proposals, thereby saving you the time and costs of submitting a formal application.

How will the pre-application advice service work?

For Householder, Minor and Major development proposals two types of pre-application advice is available, with different levels of charging as set out below:

- Written advice only; or
- Meeting and written advice

The following process should take place:

- You will need to submit a pre-application request form and make payment as required – see below.
- We will write to you within 5 working days to acknowledge your request and give you a reference number. If your enquiry is straightforward and we are able to give you a full response quickly, we will not send you the acknowledgement letter.
- We will carry out research and may visit the site.
- For written advice, we will endeavour to respond within 15 working days of receipt of the required fee and / or any additional information we have requested from you.
- For the meeting/written response option the case officer will normally contact you within 10 working days to arrange a site visit and/or the initial meeting. Following this meeting you will receive a written response within 20 working days confirming the advice given (unless the complexity of the case requires a specific time frame to be agreed with the applicant).

Our written response will include an outline of any actions you may need to take in order to make your formal planning application valid, give details of any groups or organisations we think you may need to consult with, and provide an officer level opinion on the acceptability of your proposals.

If you require further specialist advice or wish to submit a revised pre-application proposal following our full written response to your enquiry, a further pre-application enquiry and fee will need to be submitted and depending upon the proposal we may arrange a meeting/further meeting. We will go through the same procedures as outlined above.

What the applicant will need to provide in order for the officer to be able to deal with the enquiry?

Apart from the correct fee, the following information should be provided:

- Site location plan, preferably on an OS base at 1:1250 or 1:2500 so that we can identify the site.
- Sketch / outline drawings and elevations at suitable scales .e.g. floor plans at 1:100 or 1:50, elevations at 1:100 or 1:50, block plan at 1:500.
- Written details of the proposals.

Other material such as photographs; site surveys; and drafts of supporting documents for example Design and Access Statement, Transport Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Ecological Surveys etc are optional at this pre-application stage. The more complex and large scale your proposal is, the more detail we are likely to require.

The more information you provide the more specific our response will be.

Fees and Charges

The fees are set out below according to category of development and whether or not you wish to have a meeting in addition to having a written response.

Meetings (with letter)	Fee (all include VAT)
Pre-Application – Majors	£450 per hour
Pre-Application – Minors	£150 (for 30 minutes meeting)
Pre –Application – Others (including householder)	£50 (for 20 minutes meeting)

Letter (No meeting)	Fee (all include VAT)
Pre-Application – Majors	£250 per letter
Pre-Application – Minors	£75 per letter
Pre –Application – Others (including householder)	£25 per letter
Planning History of a site	From £25 per history

- (1) Category of application: ‘Majors’ are 10 or more dwellings or residential site area of 0.5ha or more; buildings with floorspace to be created or affected by proposed change of use is 1000 sqm or more; or any sites of 1ha or more); ‘minors’ are 1 to 9 dwellings; or floor area less than 1,000 sqm and sites less than 1ha.); and “others’ refer to all other cases e.g. house extensions. If you have a query about anything that does not appear to be covered by the above please contact us for further advice

- (2) The Council has discretion to alter the fee for individual cases or in specific circumstances which may be publicised from time to time.
- (3) Further charges may apply where the Council incurs additional costs e.g. specialist advice.
- (4) Only basic general advice will be available by telephone.
- (5) Parish/Town Councils, Charities and Voluntary Group – Free.
- (6) No charge is made for Listed Building Consent pre-application advice, however a charge will be payable for any associated development requiring planning permission.

Payment of fees

The fee needs to be paid before a request for pre-application advice will be processed. Payment can be made via the Council's website by following the 'Pay' instructions on the website's Home Page, or by sending a cheque made payable to TWBC.

What you should also be aware of

The Council's advice is based on the planning policies and circumstances that apply at the time the advice is given. There is no guarantee that the advice will be relevant if there have been significant changes in either planning policy or the site and its surroundings by the time a formal application is received.

Providing there have been no material changes at the time an application is submitted, any pre-application advice given will be taken into account in determining the application.

Receipt of pre-application advice cannot guarantee the outcome of any subsequent planning application as it is only through the submission of a formal application that full consultation is carried out and the decision may be taken at Committee level. Therefore all advice is given on 'without prejudice' basis.

Where pre-application advice is not followed subsequent planning applications are likely to be determined without further negotiations.