Charges for Pre-application guidance note

The Spatial and Land Use Planning Unit is responsible for dealing with planning applications for development relating to minerals and waste and for providing related advice and information on land and property. For potential applicants we are able to provide advice as to whether planning permission is required for minerals and waste related development; what the relevant considerations are likely to be; and the information that should accompany a planning application in order to ensure that it is valid. In order to provide a high standard of service with consistent advice the council has decided that the cost of providing this pre-application advice service should be met by potential developers rather than fall on council tax payers. The charges are set out below and come into force on 1 April 2009.

Whilst potential applicants are not obliged to seek pre-application advice, once a planning application has been received, it will normally proceed to a determination on the basis of the information provided without recourse back to the applicant – unless amendments of only a minor nature are to be requested.

Benefits of pre-application advice

• Help understand how an application will be judged against the policies in the development plan and other material considerations.

• Help identify where there is a need for specialist input such as that relating to trees or landscape, traffic, noise contaminated land, land liable to flood and anticipate other regulatory requirements.

• Help consider how a proposal could be improved to make it potentially more acceptable to the Council.

• May lead to a reduction in the time spent by professional advisors in working up a proposal.

• May indicate where a proposal is completely unacceptable to the Council, saving the applicant the costs of finalising an application and paying a fee.

• Can ensure an application is complete and comprehensive and to a satisfactory standard, avoiding rejection at registration stage or early refusal of permission because of inadequate or insufficient information.

Not all enquiries will require a meeting with a planning officer and advice can be provided by an exchange of correspondence. The decision on the method of providing advice will rest with the council. Advice relating to applications requiring Environmental Impact Assessment will always be given via a meeting.
Where a meeting is to be held, the details will be confirmed in writing. Meetings may be held at the council’s offices or on site if appropriate. You will be asked to confirm in writing your agreement to pay the council’s charges prior to any advice being given.

The charging scheme will not apply to discussions in connection with any enforcement investigation or the issue of formal notices. However, if as the result of unauthorised development a planning application is invited, the charging scheme will apply.

What you are required to do:

Submit a written request for pre-application advice. You can complete and/or download a form from http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/envplan/plan/ or you can request one by e-mail from Spatial and Land Use Planning. The form should be accompanied by:

- a location plan based on an up-to-date map at a scale of 1:1250 or 1:2500. In exceptional circumstances plans of other scales may also be required. Plans should wherever possible show at least:
  - two named roads and surrounding buildings. The properties shown should be numbered or named to ensure that the exact location of the application site is clear.
  - the application site, edged clearly with a red line. It should include all land necessary to carry out the proposed development – for example, land required for access to the site from a public highway, visibility splays, landscaping, car parking and open areas around buildings.
  - any other land owned by the applicant, close to or adjoining the application site, which should be edged clearly with a blue line.
- an outline of your proposals.
- whether you are requesting a meeting or advice by letter.

Where it is appropriate to meet with planning officers you will be sent written confirmation of your appointment with a planning officer and an indication of the likely charge. You will be asked to confirm your agreement to pay the Council’s charges prior to any meeting or written advice being provided.

What the council will provide

- Provision of information about current and relevant development plan policies; any other material considerations; and a relevant planning site history. An additional charge will be levied if site research is required after a meeting to enable a written response to be supplied where insufficient information about the site was provided prior to a meeting.
- Provision of information about the council’s technical standards for development proposals e.g. access, car parking, open space, tree protection.
- Provision of information about the council’s requirements regarding supporting information in order to validate a planning application.
• Provision of information about the council’s requirements for, or contribution to, infrastructure provision e.g. highway improvements or maintenance.

• Provision of advice about the council’s development control process including the consultation processes, likely timetable of consideration, and estimation of decision date, on any submitted application.

• Informal and without prejudice comments and guidance on the content, construction and presentation of an application likely to satisfy the council’s planning policies.

• Provision of appropriate contacts necessary for any further pre-application consultation and scheme preparation e.g. highways, nature conservation.

• A written summary of any views expressed by the planning officer if required. All written advice will be checked by a senior officer to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Charges

Written Enquiries

A flat rate of £200 (+VAT) – but may be subject to additional site investigation charge where insufficient information is provided in the first instance. Any additional charge will be on the same basis as charges for meetings with officers.

Meetings with Officers

The standard charge is £100 (+VAT) for the first half hour and £50 (+VAT) per half hour or part half hour thereafter. Where additional officers are required to attend the fee will be £50 (+VAT) per officer per half hour or part half hour thereafter. Charges will apply to the following:

- Meeting time
- Post meeting administration or research
- Travelling time to and from site
Standards of Service

Advice given will accurately reflect the planning policies and standards of the Council.

Within 5 working days of receiving a request for pre-application advice the council will contact you to confirm:

- whether the request has been accepted;
- whether an application for written advice is appropriate or that a meeting is required;
- whether any additional information is required before pre-application advice can be offered;
- the name of the planning officer who will be handling your enquiry and their contact details;
- whether any other officers will be required to assist with the advice;
- an indication of the charge that will be payable.

Once all the necessary information has been submitted to the council will arrange for the meeting to take place within 10 working days. The meeting will be made with appropriately qualified and experienced planning officers and any request for specialist advice will be confirmed at that time. Where a written response is required following a meeting, this will be supplied within 5 working days of the meeting, providing no further research or site investigation is required.

A ‘priority’ service may be available on request, providing an appointment within 7 working days of a fully supported request and a written response, if required, within 3 working days of the meeting. The charge for this priority service will be twice the standard charge.

If we have to postpone a meeting e.g. absence of relevant staff through illness, it will normally be re-arranged within 5 working days.

Responses to written enquiries will normally be provided within 15 working days of receipt of a fully supported enquiry.

Charges will be invoiced prior to advice being given. The council reserves the right to levy an additional charge if additional work is subsequently required. You will be advised of any additional charge and be invoiced prior to the work being undertaken.

Please note

Any advice given in relation to the planning history of the site, planning constraints or statutory designations does not constitute a formal response of the Council under the provisions of the Land Charges Act 1975.

Any advice given by Council officers for pre-application Inquiries for pre-application enquiries does not constitute a formal response or decision of the council with regards to future planning consents.
Any views or opinions expressed are given in good faith, and to the best of ability, without prejudice to the formal consideration of any planning application, which will be subject to public consultation and ultimately decided by the Council. The council cannot guarantee that new issues will not be raised following submission of a planning application and consultation upon it.

You should be aware that officers cannot give guarantees about the final formal decision that will be made on your planning or related applications. However, the advice note will be considered by the Council as a material consideration in the determination of the future planning related applications, subject to the proviso that circumstances and information may change or come to light that could alter the position.

It should be noted that the weight given to pre-applications advice will decline over time.

**Contact details:**

Spatial and Land Use Planning Unit  
Environment Department (CHN216)  
Hertfordshire County Council  
County Hall  
Pegs Lane  
Herts SG13 8DN  
Tel: 01992 556266  
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