

Planning and Development Management

Guidance Note

Planning Pre-application Advice

1st April 2023

This guidance note is intended to help you understand the most appropriate way to go about seeking advice through us. We have included relevant links to our forms and you can navigate through the table of contents in its digital version.

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Introduction

Pre-application advice refers to any advice received from the Council for a development proposal either before the submission of a planning application or in the “post-application” stage before resubmission.

Crawley Borough Council welcomes and encourages seeking advice before the submission of a planning application. The Council’s objectives for providing this discretionary service is to enable productive pre-application discussions that enhance and facilitate the planning process, encouraging and promoting high quality developments that support Crawley’s Local Plan.

We provide free informal advice for householders and small scale proposals and a chargeable service for “minor” and “major” developments with effect from 1 October 2018. The introduction of fees aims to improve the quality and consistency of the service and as a means to recover our costs.

Why is pre-application advice important?

Although seeking pre-application advice is not mandatory, it is highly recommended. Some of the benefits of seeking advice early include:

- A clear indication of those proposals that may be unacceptable. This helps the applicant decide whether to progress to a formal planning application or not, potentially avoiding wasted time and costs
- Increases the opportunity of enhancing the proposal leading to better quality applications which stand a better chance of a successful outcome
- It gives you an opportunity to understand how our policies and other material planning considerations will be applied to your development
- Detailed information on what you may need to provide for your planning application to be determined by us

Our service

A) Free pre-application advice for householders and small scale developments

This free informal advice will be in the form of a phone call, email or letter at the discretion of the planning case officer).

Householder development proposals are:

Extensions, conversions, lofts, windows, porches, garages and outbuildings, swimming pools, walls and fences, roof alterations, hardstanding and access for vehicles.

Small scale development proposals are:

Shopfronts, advertisements, air conditioning units, telecommunications equipment and commercial proposals affecting 99 square metres (sq m) or less.

Please see a full list of exemptions in the [relevant section](#).

Note: this service does not include:

- Proposals involving new dwellings
 - Conversions
 - Changes of use
- which are chargeable enquiries.

B) Chargeable pre-application advice for minor and major developments

We provide a chargeable service for both “minor” and “major” development proposals.

Minor Development proposals are:

- Residential developments up to and including 9 dwellings
- Commercial developments between 100-999 square metres of floorspace
- Changes of use between 100 – 999 square metres of floorspace
- HMOs over seven occupants

Major Development proposals are:

- Residential developments of 10 or more units/dwellings or where the site area exceeds 0.5 hectares where it is not known how many units are being created
- Development of 1000 square metres or more for non-residential purposes or where the site area is 1 hectare or more
- Changes of use between 100 – 999 square metres of floorspace

Chargeable service options

Our chargeable service will be provided in two ways:

Letter: a written response with comprehensive advice on a range of matters. Recommended when the enquiry is “in principle only”.

Meeting: a virtual discussion with a planning officer followed by a letter confirming the advice provided at the virtual meeting. Recommended when you have developed your proposal further and need more detailed advice.

Follow up/ post application service: any additional letter or virtual meeting provided in relation to the same pre-application case.

Your assigned officer could recommend which may be more suitable for your enquiry if you are unsure.

Pre-application advice and discussions can be appropriate for any development proposal and not all development enquiries will require a meeting with a planning officer; therefore, we have adapted our offer to include the option of a written response.

Note: we do not offer a bespoke Pre-Application Advice service through a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA).

What advice we will provide

The matters that will be covered by our pre-application advice include:

For an initial enquiry:

- The relevant planning history of the site
- The relevant development planning policies against which the development proposal will be assessed
- Relevant key planning issues or material factors applying to the site/development
- Summary of the site constraints based on the Council’s mapping database
- Explanation of the Council’s development control process (if requested)
- Likely requirements for developer contributions to provide infrastructure necessary to support the development, for example affordable housing, open space and tree contributions. Please note that likely contributions can only be provided when a proposed scheme is at an advanced stage
- Informal, and without prejudice, comments on the planning merits of the proposal

For a follow up enquiry:

Assessment of any additional information or amendments submitted in relation to the list above, but will not repeat advice previously given on the relevant planning policies or site history unless circumstances have changed.

The following subjects can be included for either an initial or follow up enquiry (if requested):

- Validation requirements
- Advice regarding the procedure, consultation arrangements and estimated time scale for processing the application and useful contacts and sources of information where applicable
- The provision of paper copies of any relevant documents, subject to the Council's standard charges for documents
- Advice on completing the necessary forms, plans and establishing the correct fee

Depending on the enquiry, we might be able to provide:

- Specialist officer advice can be included as part of the service if requested but is subject to availability and additional fees
- General advice on the CIL formula can be provided but a detailed calculation is chargeable under the consultation fees, if requested

Note: the advice provided will depend on the level of detail that you provide and the development type.

Service standards

Timeframes

We aim to respond promptly to pre-application enquiries. Once we have received sufficient details about the proposal and any appropriate fee:

- We aim to respond within 28 days for the majority of enquiries.
- Where a meeting is requested, the planning issues are more complex or internal consultation is included, we aim to respond within 42 days.

Note:

- Different response times are due to the different complexities of each type of pre-application.
- We will start reviewing your proposal only after payment is confirmed, if a charge is applicable.
- If the advice of other specialists is sought, this is subject to their availability which can affect the response times. In addition, staff availability can vary in Christmas and summer holidays.

Meetings

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, currently only virtual meetings are being offered.

Please note that a fee is payable prior to any meeting taking place and a refund may not be provided if you subsequently cancel the meeting, as preparatory work would have already taken place.

A meeting will not normally be offered for householder proposals except where, at discretion of the planning officer, a meeting is considered beneficial.

Our officers will only be able to comment on plans provided before a meeting. Any amended plans will need to be provided more than a week in advance before the meeting for consideration and any feedback will therefore be limited.

The estimated duration of meetings are up to 1 hour for minor non-residential, up to 1.5 hours for minor residential and up to 2 hours for major developments, depending on the enquiry. The meeting times may be extended when needed, at discretion of the planning officer, but refunds will not be provided if the guidance times are not reached.

Although we will not issue formal minutes, officers may take notes during the meeting in order to inform the subsequent letter.

Consultees

We may be able to include internal consultation as part of the service. This will be suggested by the planning officer when relevant and depends on the availability of other officers. You may request other specialist advice if you feel that it would assist. Adding the advice of specialist internal officers may incur a fee as explained in the [Fees and Exemptions](#) section.

Consultees will only stay in the meeting while their area of expertise is covered.

Note: Whilst you may request the involvement of other officers, the Council retains absolute discretion as to who is involved in delivering the pre-application service.

Major proposals

We may agree to hold further meetings before a formal application is submitted if your proposed development has complex issues or needs significant amendment. Additional meetings or written responses will be subject to a further charge as a follow up enquiry.

We will only be able to comment on one proposal type under each pre-application enquiry per site and proposal. Multiple proposal options will each attract the relevant fee.

Follow ups

We will consider one set of revised proposals from the same applicant, amended in response to our feedback as part of this service.

This will not cover major revisions (such as completely different proposed use) or cases where a considerable time period has passed or material considerations (such as planning policies) have significantly changed since the initial enquiry.

Please note that our advice is limited on:

- Complete design review
- Highways matters, which are the responsibility of the local highway authority. Please see: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/information-for-developers/pre-application-advice-for-roads-and-transport/>
- Ecology, listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeology. We may be able to guide you to our planning external consultants for these matters, if relevant.

Fees and Exemptions

Type of development	Initial fee		Follow up fee	
	Letter	Meeting	Letter	Meeting
Dwellings				
Single new dwelling (including replacements and conversions/ subdivisions)	£199.50	£472.80	£173.00	£232.90
House for Multiple Occupation, for seven or more occupants	£267.60	n/a	n/a	
2 – 9 new dwellings	£399.00	£502.80	£173.00	£232.90
10 or more new dwellings	£572.10	£742.90	£226.10	£379.50
Non-residential				
Change of use only where a site is of a 100 sq m or more of floorspace size or over 0.1 ha and where additional floorspace is not being provided	£267.60	n/a	n/a	

Minor commercial (creation of 100 – 999 sq m of floorspace or over 0.1 ha)	£276.80	£350.60	£173.00	£232.90
Major commercial (creation of 1000 sq m or more of floorspace or over 1.0 ha)	£572.10	£742.90	£226.10	£379.50

These figures are inclusive of VAT at current rate of 20%.

The fees have been calculated according to the amount of work required to process different enquiries and the complexity of the matters involved.

- Please find the exemptions below-

Additional specialist advice (depending on availability)

(per any extra CBC officer and to be discussed after submission of enquiry request)

Advice from another officer included in the written response (per hour if it requires more intensive research)	£67.90 for any type of development		
Another officer attending the meeting	Minor commercial	£102.60	
	Minor residential	£136.10	
	Major developments	£170.70	

Exemptions (advice provided FREE of charge)

- Householder enquiries (alterations, extensions and creation of incidental residential outbuildings)
- Advertisements and minor commercial alterations and improvements, such as shopfronts or telecommunications
- Development proposals and changes of use for commercial properties affecting less than 99 square metres of floorspace
- Local voluntary organisations (except for major development proposals)
- Variation of conditions (except when they are complex and/or require detailed research)
- House in Multiple Occupation, for six or less occupants

Note:

- Any decisions on the scale of fees for development categories not included in the fees or exemptions tables will be subject to a decision from the Group Manager (Development Management) in consultation with the Head of Economy and Planning on a case by case basis (e.g. complex mixed-use change of use).
- A follow up charge applies when you have had a previous pre-application enquiry on the same proposal and you are submitting additional information prior to a planning application.
- Please note that all meetings will take place virtually.

How to make an enquiry

You will need to complete one of our two forms depending on your pre-application enquiry:

1. **Free service to householders, small scale and fee-exempted proposals:** please fill the [e-form](#) in our website and attach relevant supporting information when prompted.
2. **Chargeable service for minor and major proposals:** please download, complete the form (using Adobe Reader) and email it to Development.Control@crawley.gov.uk attaching supporting information.

We will check to make sure that sufficient information has been submitted. Please see the next section "[what you need to submit](#)" for details on this.

We will then invoice you for payment of the correct fee, if needed, and confirm the contact details of your assigned officer once paid.

We will aim to use email for all correspondence.

What you need to submit

Minimum requirements for all pre-application enquiries:

- Relevant free or chargeable pre-application enquiry form

- Current Site Layout Plan (preferred scale 1:1250* showing access to the public highway)
- Proposed Site Layout Plan (preferred scale 1:500*showing access to the public highway)* or sketches of the proposal
- The appropriate fee payment once an invoice is sent to you, if relevant

Note: The more information you provide, the more detailed our response will be.

Others, if possible or to get the most of your enquiry:

- Floorplans of the proposed development*
- Elevations if you are making changes to a building or a new build*
- Photographs of the site and surroundings
- A brief cover letter/ statement with any other background information to help explain your proposal and current use of the site
- Any key issues for which you require a specific response in your cover letter (depending in the enquiry and if advice is available, please see the Guidance Note section: "[what advice we will provide](#)").

Especially if it is a major or complex proposal:

- Photomontages
- A design statement
- Response from any other consultation carried out, in particular to constraints you may have previously identified
- Results from any relevant assessments

* Details of trees should be provided wherever possible.

* All plans must be submitted to a metric scale.

* There is no need to provide paper copies.

Note:

- Not providing enough information will delay the response until it is provided.
- Advice will not be provided without payment. Please ensure you pay as soon as you are invoiced to avoid delay.
- We will not be able to comment on design issues without detailed elevations and floorplans.
- Providing an electronic version of all documents submitted will also enable faster internal consultations by email and help us provide you with a more rapid response.

Please follow these guidelines to make the meeting as productive as possible:

- Invite no more than three other people with you to the meeting and provide the name and job title of each attendee in advance
- Sufficient information should be provided beforehand to describe the proposal including, when possible, an analysis of the character of the area and an assessment of the constraints and opportunities of the site, to ensure that a design-led approach is taken in developing an appropriate scheme for the site.

Where to find more information

General advice and information, including the Council's Local Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance, is available on the council's planning webpage at: http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pw/Planning_and_Development/Planning_Policy/index.htm.

You can also find more information on the Planning Portal's website www.planningportal.gov.uk.

If you are unsure on the level of fees your proposal would incur please email Development.Control@crawley.gov.uk.

Disclaimers

Any pre-application advice provided is the Planning Officer's informal opinion only and does not represent a legal determination by Crawley Borough Council on whether the proposed development would be acceptable. Any planning application subsequently submitted would be subject to public consultation in accordance with statutory requirements and the Council's procedures.

Pre-Application Advice and Freedom of Information Requests:

All pre-application discussions will be treated in confidence although some information may need to be shared with others to process your request.

Please Note: that if requests for information about pre-application discussions are received under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and/or the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), we will contact you regarding possible disclosure. For more information please read the [Privacy Notice](#), [Access to Information](#) or [Freedom of information](#).

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