

Development Pre-Application Advice Service Guidance Note

Introduction

The pre-application advice stage provides an opportunity for developers to work together to positively shape and help drive forward growth and regeneration schemes. Entering into pre application discussions is a proactive activity. Pre application discussions can help de-risk inward investment schemes and enhance the quality of schemes coming forward. We want to guide you through this process to help you to submit policy compliant planning applications to minimise delays and unnecessary cost.

This document sets out the approach and costs for pre application activity including the schedule of costs and timeframes associated with the process.

Why Submit a Pre-app?

Increases certainty – The submission of a pre-application enquiry enables you to obtain clear, impartial advice at an early stage before proposals are firmly set and will highlight issues that need consideration prior to submission of a planning application. It will help you to minimise the impact of any constraints on your proposal before the application stage.

More effective collaborative working - Opportunity for the Council to set out its expectations and adopt a partnership approach, with the provision of a tailored service to answer the questions you have raised to mutually agreed timescales.

Reduces delays (right first time) and costs – The service can help prevent unacceptable schemes from entering the planning system. This will help to save time and money in employing your professional advisors. The clear and pro-active advice will assist in turning an unacceptable development to an acceptable development, where possible.

Speeds up planning application process – Addressing issues at pre-application stage can reduce the time it takes to determine the planning application and assists in the determination of the planning application within statutory time frames and improves the quality of the development proposal.

Validation requirements made clear – Part of the response will identify the information to be submitted at the planning application stage so that your application can be validated without delay.

Able to tap into expert technical advice – This can help in the quality of your planning application submission enabling technical consultees to input into the scheme at an early stage. This can reduce potential delays and can avoid the need to provide additional information after submission of the planning application.

Early notification of likely planning restrictions – The service will enable you to gain an early understanding of the type of restrictions that could be applied to any consent to enable you to address them in your submission and save you time post decision.

Building Regulations Advice

The Council's Building Control Service can provide comments on pre-application schemes helping you to identify and design out potential building control issues saving you time and money at later stages of the development process. You can consult building control alongside your pre-application by contacting them separately. The following link provides additional information in relation to Building Regulations. [Helpful advice in relation to Building Regulations](#)

What to consider prior to submitting your pre application enquiry

- Undertake some initial research about the planning history of your site from the Council's public access system [Swindon Public Access](#) You can also search a map for planning applications nearby.
- The Council encourages you to approach the occupants of adjacent properties, Ward Members and Parish Councils in order to help them understand your scheme and to help you understand their concerns. Such discussions can help you to design a scheme which is more likely to receive community support.
- It is advised you contact us at the earliest stage of your project. You do not necessarily need professional representation to do this initially. It is for you to decide when to employ the services of a professional to assist in your project.
- You may, after initial views have been obtained from Officers, wish to employ your own private professional help to advise you – our service is not intended to be an alternative to employing professional consultants.

The more information you can provide in relation to your project, the better we are able to provide an effective and helpful advice. The quality of your submission will influence the level of detail the Council is able to provide in relation to your project.

Free advice provided by the Council

- Advice on Building Regulations. Please email buildingcontrol@swindon.gov.uk 01793 466138
- Advice on proposed facilities solely for adaptations for the disabled
- Applications for Listed Building Consent where planning permission would not be required. If planning permission is also required, the usual fees set out in this document will apply.

Reduced Fees

A reduced fee (50%) will be charged by the Council if the proposal relates to facilities for:

- A registered charity
- Parish Council
- School
- NHS facility
- Self-build homes
- Development within the Town Centre.
- Developments consisting of 100% affordable housing.

Householder Development

This service is not designed to advise that planning permission is required. If you seeking confirmation as to whether your development proposal requires planning permission, you can submit a Lawful Development Certificate Application. Further guidance on how to do this can be found at [Lawful Development Certificates](#).

Householder Development is defined, for the purposes of this document as:

“the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of an existing residential property (e.g. house, bungalow, flat, sheltered accommodation) and erection of buildings, structures, boundary fences/walls with the garden of a residential property, for the purposes ancillary to the enjoyment of the main residential property”.

This will include sheds, swimming pools and other structures at your home. However, it should be noted that a self-contained dwellings are excluded from this definition. A family annex would be included in the definition of householder development as long as it would be occupied by a member of the family and there remains a functional link to the occupation of the main dwelling on the site (use of shared facilities such as bathroom and/kitchen).

If you wish to provide self-contained accommodation to allow for separate occupation without any use of the main dwelling (for example used by a party, unrelated to the occupiers of the main dwelling, who does not need to enter the main house for their day to day needs) this is not considered to be ancillary to the main dwelling and would need to be considered as a change of use application.

Householder Development Fees		
Application Type	Service Provided	Charge
Householder Development within the curtilage of a residential property (including listed dwellings) and is <u>not</u> a change of use or provision of an additional dwelling. This includes, extensions to a property, including annexes (see above), construction of sheds, provision of a dropped kerb (when planning permission is required)	Schedule examining your proposal against relevant design guidance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice on the acceptability of the proposal. - Advice from the Council's Highways Team if required; - Suggested changes to the proposal to make it acceptable where this is possible; - A list of relevant information to be submitted with the application. This service also includes an opportunity for a follow up telephone discussion with the Case Officer to clarify aspects of the written advice. Please note: A site visit will not be undertaken as part of this process.	£100 (plus VAT)

Householder pre-application advice will be provided within **15 working days** of receipt of the fee, unless a mutually agreed extension to that deadline is agreed between the relevant parties.

Minor Development Proposals Scale of Fees		
Application Type	Service Provided	Charge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of 1-9 dwellings through subdivision or new construction • Change of use of land and building, including HMOs (not including the provision of new dwellings) • Non-residential extensions up to 999 square metres (including shopfronts) • Advertisement consent • Use of land measuring less than 15 Hectare for waste disposal or extraction of minerals • Telecommunication development • Renewable energy proposals • Minor operations such as the provision of car parks, roads, sports 	<p>Written advice consisting of a summary of key issues including consultation responses, suggested amendments required and a list of validation requirements.</p> <p>If you require a meeting or further advice after the initial response, additional fees will be charged.</p> <p>One unaccompanied site visit.</p>	<p>£500 (plus VAT)</p> <p>Meeting £500 (plus VAT)</p>
<p>For schemes where a meeting is not included, we aim to provide the written response within 25 working days.</p> <p>If a meeting is included in the request, you will be contacted by the Case Officer with potential meeting dates to be scheduled after the consultation period has expired (approximately 25 working days after receipt of the correct fee together with the application documents) and we aim to provide a written summary within 10 working days after the meeting date.</p>		

Major Development Proposals		
Application Type (applies to both outline applications and reserved matters applications)	Service Provided	Charge
Major Type 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of 10- 99 dwellings • Use of land with an area greater than 15 Hectares for disposal of waste or extraction of minerals. • Provision of 1,000 – 10,000 square metres of non-residential floor space. 	<p>One meeting with the Case Officer and relevant consultees.</p> <p>The fee also includes the provision of one piece of written advice, provided after the meeting. The advice will consist of a summary of key issues including consultation responses, suggested amendments if possible and a list of validation requirements.</p>	<p>£2000 (plus VAT)</p> <p>Additional meetings including subsequent written advice £500 (plus VAT)</p>
Major Type 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of 100 - 299 dwellings • Provision of 10,001 – 29,000 sq metres of non-residential floor area. 	<p>One meeting with the Case Officer and relevant consultees.</p> <p>Provision of one piece of written advice consisting of a summary of key issues including consultation responses, suggested amendments and a list of validation requirements</p>	<p>15% of the full planning application fee (plus VAT)</p> <p>Additional meeting together with written advice £500 (plus VAT)</p>
Major Type 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of more than 300 dwellings 	<p>Two meetings with the Case Officer and relevant consultees.</p> <p>Provision of two pieces of written advice consisting of a summary of key</p>	<p>15% of the full planning application fee (plus VAT)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of more than 30,000 sq m of non-residential floorspace 	issues including consultation responses, suggested amendments where possible and a list of validation requirements	Additional meeting together with written advice £500 (plus VAT)
<p>Once the application has been received with the relevant fee, you will be contacted by the Case Officer with potential meeting dates. We aim to schedule the meeting after the consultation period has expired. This is likely to take place approximately <u>25 working days</u> after receipt of the correct fee and required supporting documents. We aim to provide a written summary within <u>10 working days</u> after any meeting date. Subsequent meetings will be scheduled by mutual agreement between the applicant and the Case Officer.</p>		

Design Codes		
Application Type	Service Provided	Charge
Discharge of condition for Design Code Design Code associated with an application	One accompanied site visit. Guidance through the process to adoption and written advice consisting of a summary of key issues including consultation responses and suggested amendments. A series of workshops with a multi-disciplinary team led by the Case Officer to discuss the main issues and shape the design code. The number of workshops will be loosely based on 1 workshop per £1,000 of the Design Code pre app fee. If you require additional workshops or further advice, additional fees will be charged.	15% of the equivalent outline planning fee (for no. of dwellings) for the area covered by the Design Code (plus VAT) £500 (plus VAT) per additional workshop and advice.
<p>On receipt of the fee you will be contacted by the Case Officer to arrange workshop dates, the first of which will be scheduled after the consultation period has expired (approximately <u>25 working days</u> after receipt of the correct fee together with the design code documents).</p>		

Additional fees		
Design Review Panel	In addition to the pre-application fees above (unless negotiated as part of the Planning Performance Agreement), applicants are strongly encouraged to refer proposals to the Design Review Panel. Further advice can be found in Appendix B	See Appendix B for charges
Scoping Meetings	A one-off scoping meeting for any Major development proposal to primarily consider the principle of the proposal only in the context of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026. The discussion of detailed matters regarding development proposals will be required to enter detailed pre-application discussions as detailed above.	£500 (plus VAT)
Planning Performance Agreement	If you consider the service does not meet your needs, you can contact the team to negotiate a bespoke service programme and enter into a Planning Performance Agreement (please see the relevant contact details at the end of this document). In addition, if when we receive your pre application and the development is complex or highly time constrained it may be recommended that a Planning Performance Agreement is more appropriate to assess the development in full.	P.O.A
External consultees	Please note that other external statutory consultees may charge for their own services separately. If this is the case then these charges will be in addition to the charges outlined above. You are advised to speak to the relevant statutory consultee who will be able to advise in advance if charges are likely to apply to their services.	

What do you need to do to begin the pre-application process?

1. Complete the relevant forms available at <https://www.swindon.gov.uk/planning>
2. Pay the relevant fee. This can be paid by:
 - Online via the Council's website, at https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20030/planning_and_regeneration/492/apply_for_planning_permission
 - cheque payable to Swindon Borough Council submitted with your form
 - by calling 01793 466340
3. Provide appropriate supporting information.

Information to be submitted with your pre-application submission

The certainty of advice provided from the Council is in part dependent on the quality and accuracy of the information you submit. We therefore suggest that you include the following:

- 1:1250 Location plan
- 1:500 Site Plan showing the boundaries of the site and any neighbouring structures, trees, and other constraints
- A covering letter detailing your proposal and your understanding of the constraints of the site
- Indicative site layout including existing site constraints
- Indicative scale and massing information in sketch or written form
- Any supplementary information relating to the mitigation of environmental effects such as Ecological Reports, flood risk, highway safety measures etc.
- Photographs of site and surroundings

Please note.....

Each project or separate site referred to in an enquiry will be charged at the appropriate rate.

Any advice given by Council officers following pre-application enquiries does not constitute a formal response or decision of the Council in respect of any future planning applications.

Any views or opinions expressed are given in good faith, and to the best of ability, based on existing planning policies and standards, without prejudice to the formal consideration of any future planning application. The final recommendation on any application can only be taken after the Council has consulted local people, statutory consultees and other interested parties. The final decision on an application will then be made by senior planning officers or by the Council's Planning Committee and will be based on all of the information available at the time.

It follows that officers cannot give any guarantees about the final formal decision that will be made on any future planning application. However, any pre-application advice that has been provided will be carefully considered in reaching a decision or recommendation on an application, subject to the proviso that circumstances and information may change, and alter that position. (The weight given to pre-application advice notes will inevitably decline over time and little or no weight may be given to the Council's pre-application advice for schemes which are submitted more than two years after the advice being issued)

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

Pre-application requests for advice will not be subject to any publicity but we may be obliged to release documents if we receive a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. Our file notes will form part of the public file if an application follows.

We cannot therefore guarantee confidentiality. If the information you provide includes sensitive or confidential information this should be clearly stated at the head of the submission. We can then take this into account should an FOI request be received.

Do you need further information?

You can find further information by visiting our website www.swindon.gov.uk/planning

There is also further help provided on the planning portal, including ways to purchase plans of the development site if you require them. Please visit <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>

Contact Details

Building Control

Principal Building Control Surveyor- Building Control Department 4th Floor Wat Tyler House West , Beckhampton Street, Swindon, SN1 2JH email: buildingcontrol@swindon.gov.uk Tel 01793 466138

Development Management

planningenquiries@swindon.gov.uk

Masterplanning, Design & Conservation Team

designmasterplanning@swindon.gov.uk

New Eastern Village Development

nev@swindon.gov.uk

APPENDIX A – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Whilst pre application discussions are treated as confidential, Swindon Borough Council encourages applicants to carry out pre-application consultation with local residents and other sections of the community. Early engagement with interested parties should result in better quality development which is more likely to be supported by the community and less likely to be delayed by objections.

Single householder applications

- Approach immediate neighbours and other nearby occupiers/owners of properties/land at the earliest stage in order to view sketch plans and discuss proposals.

Major development proposals or those below the major threshold but which are likely to have a significant impact due to the type of proposal or sensitivity of the site or its surroundings

We strongly encourage some or all of the following should be carried out when the proposal is still at an 'early ideas' stage of the process:

1. Approach immediate neighbours and other nearby occupiers/owners of properties/land at the earliest stage in order to view sketch plans and discuss proposals
2. Engage with Local Ward Councillors. Contact details can be obtained via the Council's website.
3. Contact the relevant Parish Council. You can obtain information on the Parish Councils via the Council's website (see link below). Parish Councils are consulted about the majority of applications in their area. Their role is to make representations on behalf of their parishioners. Most Parish Councils meet monthly but some of the larger councils have separate planning committees which may meet more regularly. Time is allocated in each meeting for attendees to raise issues with councillors and to gain feedback. Parish Councils can:
 - Give feedback as to whether a proposal is likely to be acceptable or not to the local community
 - Suggest improvements or mitigations to make a proposal more acceptable
 - Provide contact details for local community groups and other stakeholders
 - Provide additional useful local information eg about land ownership/flooding/community aspirations
 - Help with arranging public information events to publicise proposals
4. Make arrangements to meet representatives of local stakeholder groups either separately or at a wider exhibition/event in order to present sketch plans and ideas. Attendees should be requested to provide written feedback, either by a form/questionnaire available at the event or by email/post within 2 weeks.
5. Prepare a proposed Statement of Community Involvement detailing the planned engagement.

Useful links:

To find out which Parish Council to approach go to: [Parish Council postcode checker](#) and use the postcode checker and then view the contact details for the relevant Parish [Contact Details for Parishes](#)

To find out which Ward Members to engage with see the SBC website at: [Your Councillors](#)

APPENDIX B

Swindon Borough Council's Design Review Requirements

The use of a Design Review Panel is not to duplicate or replace our existing in-house design service. Instead it provides independent advice from a multi-disciplinary expert panel to support scheme progression and offer support to both the developers and Swindon BC in securing high quality development.

Achieving high quality design requires early dialogue. A design review supports dialogue most effectively when given concurrently with key consultee feedback, and that avoids the need for major changes and costly revisions. Design Review is therefore best held at the pre-application stages.

Creating Excellence South West Design Review Panel* (CE SWDRP) provides independent design review services to Swindon Borough Council.

The CE SWDRP Panel provides multi-disciplinary expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, heritage design, urban design, hydrology, town planning, highways and transport planning, engineering, environmental sustainability, energy, development delivery and viability. The composition of the Panel for each design review session is tailor-made to meet the needs of the particular proposal under consideration.

The Panel follows the [Ten Principles of Design Review](#) as set out by the RIBA, RTPI, Landscape Institute and Design Council CABI. As to their work, CE provide some [case study examples](#).

The CE SWDRP Panel is managed and administered by Creating Excellence (CE) a not-for-profit organisation that has been delivering design support in the South West since 2005. There is more information on the [Creating Excellence South West Design Review Panel](#) website.

Contact

Administration and advice on design review requirements is provided by CE SWDRP's Panel Manager Julie Tanner (MRTPI) julie.tanner@creatingexcellence.org.uk 07970 514480.

Please contact Creating Excellence who will agree design review requirements and a convenient date and time with you. The Design Review meeting will be held at Swindon Borough Council Offices and will be preceded by a site visit.

Confidentiality

In line with the Council's normal pre-application process, design review advice provided to the applicant before an application is confidential at that time. Applicants should feel free to share their proposals openly and honestly with the Panel in order to receive the most useful advice. After an application is submitted, Design Review letters, including those produced at a pre-application stage will be published on the Council's website - in line with maintaining transparency in the Council's planning process.

In order to ensure the process is streamlined and consistent, both the case officer and an urban design officer will be present at each design review session.

Design Review Letter

CE will produce a formal letter on behalf of the Panel Chair following the design review that will be provided to the LPA and Applicant simultaneously 10-14 days from the review session. This will carry the CE SWDRP logo and the contents will be taken into account and reflected in the Planning Officers report to fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 62.

Cost

CE is a not-for profit organisation, run independently from the Council. Fees for Design Review are paid directly to CE. The range of Design Review services offered by CE can be tailored to the scheme and agreed with the applicant first. A list of typical charges is available to view at this [link](#).