

1) How we can help you

This guidance document deals with the arrangements now in place for handling pre-application planning advice.

As part of the Development Management approach to planning practice in Worcestershire, Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils are able to provide you with advice and information on matters relating to planning. In order to provide the best possible advice and information within an appropriate timescale, however, it is important that you also provide us with as much clear information as possible regarding your proposed 'development'.

In order for the Councils to be able to sustain and improve its level of service, a range of charges have been introduced, in addition to the nationally set planning application fees.

In recent years the Councils have seen a significant increase in the demand placed on their pre-application advice services. The introduction of charges will ensure that the cost of providing them is recovered directly by service users.

Charges will apply to all enquires received on or after the dates above in accordance with the scale of fees and categories as outlined in the table under Section 6.

2) County wide service provision

The provision of planning advice services and the corresponding level of charges have been considered and put together in liaison with the other district councils across Worcestershire (Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Worcester City, Wychavon, Wyre Forest), in order to ensure a consistency of approach amongst neighbouring authorities. Whilst there are some small variations in approach, the scale of charges is the same across the County area, as is the service provided.

It is hoped that such an approach will minimise any confusion, particularly amongst local agents or those working across several authority areas.

It is acknowledged that the introduction of charging is slightly staggered across the county, however four authorities will begin from April 2010, with the other two likely to follow shortly. The date on the front of this document should clarify when charging began in each authority.

3) Benefits of service

The Councils encourage and welcome the opportunity to provide advice before an application is made. There are considerable benefits in seeking advice before making an application:

- It gives you an opportunity to understand how policies will be applied to your development;

- It can identify at an early stage where there is a need for specialist input, for example on matters relating to listed buildings, trees, landscape, noise, transport, contaminated land, ecology and archaeology;
- It will assist you in preparing proposals for formal submission which, providing you have taken our advice fully into account, is likely to be handled more quickly and smoothly;
- It may lead to a reduction in time spent by your professional advisors in working up proposals;
- It may indicate at an early stage that a proposal is completely unacceptable, saving you the cost of pursuing a formal application;
- It 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

4) Permitted Development (PD) Enquiries

These are enquiries that establish whether you need to make a planning application or not. Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) can be an area on which you may require guidance from a planning officer. PDRs are granted by the planning statutory framework, and allow some limited development to occur without the need to apply for planning permission. If you wish to check whether your proposal benefits from PDRs or whether planning permission is required, then you should submit a PD enquiry. To make this simpler, you will find a form on our website at:

<http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/pdf/Do%20I%20need%20Planning%20Permission.pdf>

which you can complete and send in to us with the relevant fee. This should provide us with all the information we need in order to be able to advise you.

What you need to provide:

- Completed form (see link above)
- Sketch drawings of floor plans and appearance
- Photographs of the site if available
- Fee (see table in section 7)

What service we will provide:

- We will respond in writing within **10 working days**
- We will confirm whether you need to make an application for planning permission, and if so why
- If you do need permission, details of what would be required as part of the application submission, and how to apply will also be provided
- Cases will be allocated by a manager to an appropriate case officer to respond

What happens next?

- If you need permission, you will need to apply
- If you do not need permission, then you can carry on with the works, providing you comply with all other relevant legislation

5) Pre-application advice

If you need to apply for planning permission, but wish to seek advice on the acceptability of your proposals, you may seek pre-application advice. This service is intended to provide an indication of whether your proposal is likely to gain planning permission or not, and what you would need to submit with any application that you make.

For smaller schemes, this is a simple process that can be done through the exchange of correspondence, although if necessary a meeting can be held at the town hall. For larger schemes, meetings may well be necessary, and the discussions can include several rounds of discussion.

What you need to provide:

- Your contact details, including a telephone number and email address (if you have one)
- A description of your proposed development
- A location plan to scale, with the site clearly marked
- Photographs or drawings of what you propose (with an indication of size/scale)
- Sketch drawings of floor plans and elevations
- Access and parking details
- Fee (see table in section 7)
- Any other details you feel would help us to provide a comprehensive response

What service we will provide:

- We will respond in writing within [20 working days for smaller schemes*](#)
- We will respond in writing within [30 working days for larger schemes*](#)
- For larger schemes, at least one meeting with your representatives and relevant consultees will be convened
- Consideration of the relevant site planning history
- Consideration of the relevant local planning framework designations of the site
- Consideration of the context of the site and the relative impacts across the site boundaries
- Where a planning obligation is likely to be required, we would seek to agree the likely content of such an agreement prior to the submission of an application
- We will confirm what information would be required to be submitted in support of an application for planning permission
- An informal indication of the likely outcome of your proposed development, with hints on how it could be improved, where possible
- We will consult with specialist colleagues and include them in discussions where appropriate

What happens next

- Once a point in the discussions is reached where your proposal is considered likely to be acceptable, you will be invited to submit an application
- Where necessary, discussions could continue during the lifetime of a formal application, but we generally seek to avoid the need for this through engaging in thorough pre-application discussions

**in this context, a smaller scheme consists of less than 10 dwellings, a proposed floor area of less than 1000m² or a site area of less than 1ha, and a larger scheme is above these thresholds.*

6) Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)

Where you propose a major application and wish to enter into a formal Planning Performance Agreement (PPA), you are advised to write to the planning team (see contact details below) and seek specific advice and guidance. A fee and a timetable will need to be agreed at the first meeting, and the fee received before the Council take the matter further.

Further detailed guidance is likely to follow on this matter, specific to Redditch and/or Bromsgrove, so check our websites for further details if appropriate (see below for links).

For further information on PPAs, see the guidance on the ATLAS website at:

<http://www.atlasplanning.com/page/ppa.cfm>

7) Table of fees and details of exemptions

Permitted development enquiries

Proposed development type	Cost
Householder	£25
Other	£50

Pre-application discussions

Proposed Development Type			Cost	Cost of additional meetings (each)
Householder			£40	£20
Residential Development	Development Site Area	Proposed Gross Floor Area**		
1 - 4 dwellings*	0.5ha or less	500 m ² or less	£250	£100
5 - 9 dwellings	0.6 - 0.99ha	499 – 999m ²	£500	£100
10 - 49 dwellings	1.0 - 1.25ha	1000 - 2499m ²	£1000	£500
50 - 199 dwellings	1.26 – 2.0ha	2,500 - 9,999m ²	£2000	£750
200+ dwellings	2ha or more	10,000m ² +	£3000	£1000

Proposed Development Type	Cost	Cost of additional meetings (each)
Advertisements	£50	£25
Change of Use	£150	£75
Telecommunications	£150	£75
Glasshouses/Poly Tunnels	£200	£100
Other***	£100	£50

* includes one-for-one replacements and conversions to/subdivisions

** measured externally

*** includes all other development proposals not falling within any of the above categories such as variation or removal of conditions, car parks & roads and certificates for lawfulness.

All fees are inclusive of VAT

The initial costs noted in the table above include up to three meetings. The charge for additional meetings would apply after the first three meetings have occurred.

Exemptions

Advice sought in the following categories will not incur a fee

- Where the enquiry is made by a local authority
- Where the enquiry is made by a Parish Council
- Where the enquiry is made by a Housing Association (HA) or Registered Social Landlord (RSL)
- Where the development is for the direct benefit of a disabled person (and as such there would be no fee incurred to make the planning application)
- Conservation advice e.g. works to listed buildings and Conservation Area Consents to demolish;
- Works to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or trees located within a Conservation Area;
- Advice on how to submit a planning application or a fee enquiry;
- Where the enquiry relates to a householder development within Wychavon district

8) Contact details

To seek further assistance or submit an enquiry, please use any of the following contact details:

Development Control Team
Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
B98 8AH

Bromsgrove contact details to be added.

01527 64252 ext 3399

developmentcontrol@redditchbc.gov.uk

Further information and advice can be found on the planning area of our website:

<http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/default.aspx>

9) General information

- No advice will be provided, or your request considered, without receipt of the relevant fee (unless the enquiry falls within the exemptions listed in section 7 above).
- Meetings are not a compulsory element of the planning application process. Therefore, we ask that where a meeting is not necessary, one is not requested, in order that resources can be made available to as many people as possible to deal with a higher volume of enquiries.
- The attendance of consultees at discussions cannot be guaranteed, however wherever possible and necessary, invitations will be issued.
- Where a meeting is held in the first instance prior to initial written advice, a timescale for the follow up written response will be agreed at the meeting. Wherever possible, the first meeting will be held within the response times noted above. Subsequent meetings will be dependent on the progress with the proposals and subject to availability of the Planning Officer and relevant consultees.
- All advice is provided without prejudice to the outcome of any future planning application, or change to the statutory or policy planning framework, however where changes are perceived to be imminent, we will attempt to advise accordingly.
- Where significant new information comes to light during the course of a planning application that was not considered at pre-application stage, the case officer will alert the applicant to this and seek additional information if appropriate.
- Development carried out on site without the benefit of planning permission (where it is required) is at risk of enforcement action and applicants and their representatives should be fully aware of this and mindful of it when considering their position and future options.
- Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we may receive a request to provide information regarding enquiries for pre-application advice. Sections 41 & 43 of the Act exempts information whose disclosure could result in substantial financial loss, or where it is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of a person. You are therefore asked, if you believe the enquiry to be confidential, to supply a covering letter setting out the reasons why and for what period. The decision as to whether to release the information however lies with the Local Authority.
- For more information on large developments and PPAs, see the ATLAS website at www.atlasplanning.com
- Free and independent professional advice on the planning process, and assistance with planning matters, may be available to you, depending on your circumstances. For further information, contact the local branch of Planning Aid through www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk