

Pre and Post Planning Application Charging Service

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to the Planning Applications Committee on 15 March 2011

Summary: Charging strategy for non statutory planning advice

Recommendation: To agree the imposition of a charging strategy

Local Member: N/A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to seek Members' agreement to introduce a charging regime for providing non statutory planning advice and to consider options available to the County Council.

Background

2. The Local Government Act 2003 gives Local Planning Authorities discretionary powers to recover the costs of pre-application advice in recognition of the time officers have to spend researching information in order to provide answers to prospective developers or applicants. In recent years there has been a trend in authorities charging for a pre-application service. This includes county council, borough council and unitary authorities.
3. The benefits of prospective applicants seeking pre-application advice are strongly encouraged by Government and Local Planning Authorities. It is widely recognised as good practice and results in better quality applications and development on the ground. Pre-application advice provides an opportunity to shape development at an early part of the development process and can lead to quicker decision making. Developments that are unlikely to be successful during the planning process can be discouraged resulting in potentially expensive consultancy and survey work being avoided for the developer. The Planning Applications Group invests considerable resources in its pre-application service, which it currently provides at no cost to the developer.
4. Across the country, there are a number of different charging models. There is considerable variation as to the amount charged, the service offered and what exemptions apply. All declare that there are benefits to the prospective applicant and that advice whilst taken into account during the planning process does not constitute a formal response or decision of the Council with regards to future planning consents and that any application will be subject to public consultation and ultimately decided by the Planning Authority. Similarly, use of the pre-application service does not guarantee that any application following advice will be valid or will gain approval.

Benefits of Pre-Application Advice

5. The benefits of seeking pre application advice are fairly standard across planning authorities and is an area that central government strongly encourages. The benefits can be summarised as providing the following:
 - An understanding of how national, regional and local guidance and policies will be applied to a development.
 - Allows conflicts to be identified and addressed at an early stage in the planning process
 - Potential for reducing the time professional advisors spend in working up the proposals.
 - An indication of those proposals that are completely unacceptable, so saving the cost of pursuing a formal application.
 - Written confirmation of the advice given at the pre-application stage.
 - Advice that is consistent, reliable and up to date and tailored to specific needs
 - An opportunity for wider engagement with other stakeholders where appropriate which can deliver better outcomes for all parties.
 - Comprehensive information on what is needed to provide in order for an application to be considered favourably
6. Charging for the advice service also brings potential wider benefits. Fee income received would help to cover the cost of the planning application service thereby assisting in maintaining the level of the service. It would also help discourage speculative requests for advice, thereby allowing staff to focus on requests that are more likely to result in an application being submitted.
7. Most of the Kent Districts charge for pre-application advice including Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Dover, Gravesham, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling, Thanet and Sevenoaks. Similarly a number of county councils charge for planning advice. Examples of charging schemes are set out in appendix 1.

The Current Pre/Post Application Advisory Service

8. Whilst the County Council does not have any formal processes or procedures for imparting pre and post application planning advice, the Planning Applications Group encourages prospective applicants to seek pre-application advice in accordance with Government good practice. The service is currently provided free of charge as a complimentary service to the formal planning application process. It can take a number of formats depending upon the nature of development. This includes:
 - Short telephone conversations asking whether planning permission is required and simple requests that can be handled with very minimal officer input/research.
 - written advice on major and minor development proposals
 - site meetings and verbal planning advice

- site meetings and subsequent written planning advice;
 - Meetings at Invicta House with representatives from the applicant, officers and where appropriate specialist advisors. (Note officers do not usually produce a written of the meeting unless asked to, although they may comment on a note produced by others);
 - commenting upon draft applications following pre-application advice;
 - Planning histories and land charge requests from solicitors;
 - Advice to address breaches of planning control
9. In addition, the Council currently provides a free service to:
- advise on changes to schemes post determination of a planning application;
 - deliver a legal agreement associated with a resolution to permit development where planning officer costs are not included in the resolution
10. With the exception of very minor requests, the prospective applicant is invited to put their request in writing so that it can be allocated to a case officer.
11. The current service works well and from informal feedback from applicants and agents is well regarded and valued. In particular, for the County Matter development (minerals and waste), the ability to meet on site and thereby combine a meeting with a visit is an aspect that is particularly valued and is an effective tool in establishing key planning issues.

Proposed Changes to the Advisory Service

12. In the current economic climate, it is not reasonable in my view for the wider community to subsidise the developer for the cost of preparing a planning application, revisions to schemes or detailed work associated with legal agreements. We have seen a recent trend where officers are being asked to play a much greater role in advising on the contents of prospective planning applications as applicants rely less on planning consultants. I therefore propose that certain aspects of the pre and post planning application service attract a fee from April 2011.
13. Any new system needs to keep the key benefits of the current system, be easily understood and be fair. It also needs to be simple and cost effective to operate and administer. A key benefit of the pre-application service is to shape applications at an early stage which results in better quality planning applications and developments on the ground and arguably swifter planning decisions. It is a very important part of the planning service and not an area which we should discourage. This factor influences the type of service we should provide in the future and the fee attached to types of planning advice listed within a new charging system.
14. As can be seen from the appendix there are a variety of schemes in place. In determining what scheme is appropriate for this planning authority, I have considered the nature of the existing advisory service, what works well and the potential implications of charging as well as the nature of the business and the practices of other planning authorities. I have also had regard to the 2003 Local Government Act which allows for charges to be made but does not allow the authority to make a profit on the service.

15. I have considered a number of different models with different charging rates and various delivery mechanisms. Some of these are illustrated in Appendix 1. Broadly the schemes charge for most of the pre-application service with a limited amount of free advice. There is mainly a tiered approach to costs depending upon minor or major development, although the definition of each varies between authorities. Advice for major development tends to be via meetings and there is scope for meetings on site in some authorities although this is discretionary and attracts an additional cost. In terms of costs, the approach varies from a flat fee to an hourly rate. A number of authorities have a 'component' or 'pick and mix' approach depending upon the service sought. There is also variation on a written advice service. Some authorities provide written advice for major and minor development, others only on minor development and others not at all. In the Districts, advice on householder developments is usually free. Some authorities also provide a free advice service to voluntary groups and parish councils.

Proposed Charging Options

16. In the case of Kent I have considered two options in detail and undertaken a customer impact assessment as part of the requirements under equality legislation. Both options are based upon the current pre-post advisory system which works well. I therefore propose that we continue to offer the same range of pre and post application advice, (i.e. written, site meetings and office based meetings) albeit some aspects will in future attract a fee.
17. Option 1 proposes charges for major and minor development for both County Council community development and minerals and waste development. Generic free advice would be available on the Council's website in the form of the recently approved Validation Guidance and other material. Option 2 proposes retaining some element of free advice for minor development, particularly for the community proposals. This option also proposes to provide free advice relating to minor amendments to working schemes, minor variations and discharge of conditions for mineral and waste development.
18. A number of other council schemes impose a charge for travelling time to site visits as part of the service and charge an additional fee for more than one officer to attend a meeting or site visit. Based upon current experience, meetings on site are particularly valuable in understanding the planning issues. Given the geography of the county, I would not wish to penalise prospective applicants promoting development further away from Maidstone than others, so I am not proposing to include travelling time for site visits for either option. Similarly, the charge will relate to one planning officer even if more than one officer attends. Written advice would be verified by the Head of Planning Applications or nominated Principal Planning Officers.

Option 1 – Charge For All Site Specific Advice

19. Charges would apply to all planning advice pre and post application for minerals and waste development and the County Council's community (Regulation 3) development irrespective of scale. Free generic guidance would be available via the Validation Guidance and other material available on the Council's website.

20. Requests for pre-application advice will need to be made by completing a pro-forma which will be available on the Council's website. Prospective applicants would be required to identify which service they required and submit the form and the fee prior to allocation of the work.

Post-determination Advice

21. There are occasions where detailed advice is provided past determination of a planning application, for example in relation to changes to approved development. The County Council would reserve the right to charge for this advice at the same charging rate as the pre-application service set out below. Requests will be considered on a case by case basis irrespective of the type and scale of development.

22. At present, planning officer time (in addition to Legal costs) in connection with a legal agreement (post identification of the heads of terms) is chargeable to the applicant on a case by case basis and is included in the relevant Committee resolution. I propose that this element also be incorporated into the proposed charging regime.

23. The charges would be as follows:

<u>Meeting on Site (verbal advice)</u>	
Major Development	£400 (+vat)
Minor Development	£200 (+vat)
<u>Meeting at County Hall (verbal advice)</u>	
Major Development	£300 (+vat)
Minor Development	£150 (+vat)
Written advice following above meeting	£150 (+vat)
Subsequent meetings will attract a further meeting charge as above.	
Where additional specialist advice is required, consultant's fees will be charged at cost. Attendance of other officers at the meeting, including specialist advisors, will be at the case officer's discretion	
Written advice including commenting on a draft application (prepared following advice contained in the Council's validation documents)	Depending upon complexity of request – price upon application.
Planning histories and solicitor enquiries	£150 (+vat)
Work in connection with a legal agreement (post identification of the heads of terms)	£150 per hour (+vat)

24. Major community development would be defined as proposed buildings over 1000m² or sites over 1ha, or schemes subject to Environmental Impact Assessment. Minor community development would be those excluded from the major definition.

Major mineral and waste development is defined as all minerals and waste development other than minor amendments to working schemes, minor variations and discharge of conditions. Minor minerals and waste development would be defined as minor amendments to working schemes, minor variations and discharge of conditions.

25. Fees would cover administration costs and officers' time for research, assessment, a meeting and as necessary a written response. Travelling time to meetings on site is excluded from the charge.

The service would identify:

- key planning considerations which need to be taken into account in preparing any planning application;
- the need for any specialist input
- informal and without prejudice officer advice on the planning merits including an indication if the proposal will be completely unacceptable
- advice about the Council's development control process including consultation processes, likely timetable of consideration and estimation of decision date or Planning Application Committee date where applicable

Option 2 - Retain Free Site Specific Advice for Minor Development

26. Option 2 proposes retaining some element of free advice for minor development for community and mineral and waste proposals. This option proposes to provide free advice relating to minor amendments to working schemes, minor variations and discharge of conditions for mineral and waste development and all minor community development. Charges would apply to advice for all major development for minerals and waste proposals and the County Council's community (regulation 3) development.

Major community development is defined as any of the following - proposed buildings over 1000m² or sites over 1ha, or schemes subject to Environmental Impact Assessment. Where pre-application advice is sought for multiple community projects that cumulatively exceed the threshold then the proposed charges will apply.

Major mineral and waste development is defined as all minerals and waste development other than minor amendments to working schemes, minor variations and discharge of conditions.

27. As with option 1, requests for pre-application advice would need to be made by completing a pro-forma which will be available on the Council's website. Prospective applicants would be required to identify which service they required and submit the form and the fee prior to allocation of the work.

Post-determination Advice

28. Where detailed advice is provided post determination of a planning application, for example in relation to changes to approved development, the County Council would reserve the right to charge for this advice at the same charging rate as the pre-application service set out below. Requests will be considered on a case by case basis irrespective of the type and scale of development. Similarly, officer costs in connection with a legal agreement (post identification of the heads of terms) would be chargeable to the applicant on a case by case basis.
29. The charges would be as follows:

Meeting on Site (verbal advice)	£400 (+vat)
Meeting at County Hall (verbal advice)	£300 (+vat)
Written advice following above meeting	£150 (+vat)
Subsequent meetings will attract a further meeting charge as above. Where additional specialist advice is required, consultant's fees will be charged at cost. Attendance of other officers at the meeting, including specialist advisors, will be at the case officer's discretion	
Written advice including commenting on a draft application (prepared following advice contained in the Council's validation documents)	Depending upon complexity of request – price upon application.
Planning histories and solicitor enquiries	£150 (+vat)
Work in connection with a legal agreement (post identification of the heads of terms)	£150 per hour (+vat)

30. These fees would cover administration costs and officers' time for research, assessment, a meeting and as necessary a written response. Travelling time to meetings on site is excluded from the charge.

The service would identify:

- key planning considerations which need to be taken into account in preparing any planning application;
- the need for any specialist input
- informal and without prejudice officer advice on the planning merits including an indication if the proposal will be completely unacceptable
- advice about the Council's development control process including consultation processes, likely timetable of consideration and estimation of decision date or Planning Application Committee date where applicable

31. An important consideration for either option is that in future applications would normally proceed to determination on the basis of information provided in the application without recourse back to the applicant. Applications of poor quality without pre-application discussions will either be returned if not valid or refused speedily so as not to waste resources. The Head of Planning Applications would have the right to decline a request for pre-application advice where it is not considered either appropriate or necessary.
32. Prior to the implementation of either option, I would prepare a guidance note setting out the process and the service that will be provided. This would be available via the Council's website and based upon detail contained in this report. Operation of either option would require the completion of a standard pro-forma and specified information so as to enable meaningful assessment for any advisory work. The timescale for the delivery of the charging service varies between authorities. Acknowledgement is usually within 3-5 working days with advice being provided up to 20 working dates post receipt of advice request. At present Kent CC places considerable importance to pre-application work and responds in a timely manner – usually a response or meeting within 2 weeks, although this is dependent upon availability of officers and specifically other officers giving specialist advice. With current resources I propose that that would continue with the new charging strategy.

Consideration of Options

33. The pre-application advisory service is an important part of the planning service and one that provides added value, both to the developer and the wider community by higher quality developments on the ground. In these difficult economic times, it is no longer feasible to continue to provide the current service for free, nor is it a realistic option not to do this area of work given the wider benefits of the pre-application service and government support for this work. It is therefore important to devise a scheme that is fair, viable and does not deter prospective applicants from seeking advice. This would be counter-productive resulting in poorer quality applications that would need greater resources to resolve during the formal planning application process, lead to more refusals and resubmitted applications (that are processed for free under current legislation) and a potential increase in planning appeals. Both options are based upon the components of the current service which appear to work well.
34. There are merits with both options. **Option 1** would allow the individual developer to bear the cost of the pre-application advice arising from their development. Whilst this has some initial attraction in terms of equity, I do not consider that it is the most appropriate solution at this time. Given the nature of the county planning service, the impact of this option would be greater on minor community development. The majority of this type of development is small scale and on sites where the principle of community development has already been established. The issues raised tend to be simpler and resolved with minimal but timely advice.
35. Were a charge to be made there is a strong likelihood that this would act as a significant deterrent to seeking pre-application advice. This would result in poorer quality applications, more planning refusals and free resubmissions. In addition, as many of the proposals are promoted by the community (i.e. schools direct), any charge would be diverted from the project itself or the wider community budget. This

would in my view lead to poorer development overall. Furthermore community development is quite unique in that the prospective applicants are strongly encouraged and in some cases required by the County Council as joint promoter/applicant to seek the advice of the Planning Applications Group irrespective of the experience or expertise of the appointed agent and whether they need the advice or not.

36. For the County Council's planning application service, the exclusion of minor community development such as fencing and small extensions are akin to the district council's householder extensions which tend to be exempt from pre-application charging. Similarly the exemption of charges for development which is provided for social rather than economic gain reflects other local authority practice's whereby development provided by public bodies (i.e. parish councils) and voluntary groups is exempt.
37. There is also merit in providing a limited amount of site specific advice for mineral and waste development on previously approved sites. Charging for advice relating to minor amendments to working schemes, minor variations and matters arising following site monitoring is likely to be counter-productive and act as key deterrent to seeking advice. This would result in poorer development overall, greater resources expended during formal processing and on free re-submissions and a potential increase in appeal work. There is also a greater risk of unauthorised development and an impact upon the enforcement service. On balance, the provision of a limited free advice service for this type of development is effective use of resources and outweighs the imposition of a charge.
38. Given the issues generally raised by minor community and county matter development and the planning fees involved, charging for pre-application advice, even with a reduced charging rate is in my view likely to be a significant deterrent factor and one that would result in delays to development, poorer applications and development overall. I do not therefore support this option.
39. **Option 2** would focus costs associated with the more resource intensive major developments which generally raise more complex issues. Arguably these are the developments where the greatest added value is made from the advisory service. The experience of other local planning authorities and informal soundings from existing applicants has indicated that charging for this advice is not likely to be a major factor that would deter prospective applicants from seeking advice, provided that the fee is set at a reasonable level. All authorities that have a chargeable advisory service charge for major development advice. This proposed option includes a limited element of free advice for minor development proposals for both community and county matter developments. Officer time in responding to these minor requests is usually minimal and the benefits from reducing poorly presented or unnecessary applications in my view outweigh the imposition of a charge for minor development.
40. Informal soundings with applicants have indicated that charging for some pre-application advice is unlikely to deter pre-application discussions. I would however propose that we monitor the effectiveness of any new service and review on an annual basis.

Financial Considerations

41. It is difficult to calculate how much income the service would generate as this will be influenced by the type and nature of developments that are promoted and whether applicants are prepared to pay for the advice. One hourly meeting on site per week would generate around £20,000 pa.

Conclusion

42. The pre and post planning application advisory service is an important part of the Planning Applications service and is one that provides added value, both to the developer and the community by higher quality developments on the ground. In the current economic climate, it is not reasonable for the wider community to subsidise the developer for the cost of preparing a planning application, revisions to schemes or detailed work associated with legal agreements. I therefore propose that certain aspects of the pre and post planning application service attract a fee from April 2011.
43. This report illustrates the variety of local planning authority pre-application charging schemes that exist and discusses two options based upon the Council's current pre and post application advisory service that could reasonably be implemented in the next financial year. For the reasons set out in paragraphs 33 to 41 above I propose that Option 2 (charging for major development advice) be implemented.

Recommendation

44. I RECOMMEND that MEMBERS NOTE the contents of this report and AGREE TO
- a) the implementation of a pre and post planning application charging strategy as set out as OPTION 2 in paragraphs 26 to 32 above.
 - b) the Head of Planning Applications preparing a Pre and Post Advice Protocol based upon the information contained in this report to accompany the charging scheme.

Officer: Sharon Thompson	01622 696052
--------------------------	--------------

Background Documents: Local Government Act 2003

Examples of Local Authority Pre-Application Charging Schemes

APPENDIX 1

NB: A number of these schemes are currently under review.

Ashford BC

The Council provides a limited telephone and written pre-application advice service, although the majority of development advice is chargeable. For all Major applications, the Council provides a service centred on meetings and discussion of the issues that large applications entail. There is a charge for each meeting. Other enquires are dealt with in writing and a set charge applies.

Free advice is provided for householder applications, works to trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders or located in Conservation Areas, advice on how to submit an application to establish whether planning permission is or was required (A fee is charged for the application itself) and application advice following an Enforcement investigation.

There are 2 levels of written advice and a 3rd meeting level for major development. The categories of development are

Level 1 Written Advice

£68.42 (inc VAT) is charged for written advice on all proposals that require a consent from the Local Planning Authority under the Planning Acts, other than those free services listed above and those in levels 2 and 3 below.

Level 2 Written Advice

£135.83 (inc VAT) is charged for written advice on all minor developments - . (defined as development that does not meet the criteria for level 3 major development and is not a level 1 application or householder development)

Level 3 Meetings with Officers

£342.13 (inc VAT) per hour or part thereof is charged for all meetings to discuss major development proposals (Applications for 10 residential units or more, Residential sites of 0.5 ha or more , the creation or change of use of 1000m² or more of non-residential floor space, all sites of more than 1 hectare in size

Attendance of other officers at the meeting, including specialist advisors, is at the Case Officer's discretion. If the meeting is on site then travelling time is included in the assessment for the above charge. If further meetings are sought then a further fee is levied at the above rate.

At the end of the meeting, the appropriate fee is agreed. Following the meeting, the Council writes to the applicant confirming the advice given. The written response is verified by the Development Control Manager or the Strategic Sites and Design Manager as appropriate and outlines the major planning issues, matters agreed or raised at the meeting, and other constraints and requirements which have been agreed with the Council. The applicant can also take notes at the meeting and if they wish, the Council will check and amend these as necessary.

These fees cover administration costs and Officers' time for research, assessment, a meeting as necessary and a written response. Any request for written advice must be accompanied by the relevant fee otherwise advice will not be provided. Each project or separate site referred to in an enquiry will be charged at the appropriate rate.

Canterbury City Council

The City Council provides a limited free service for householder development and a tiered approach for minor and major development. Written advice for minor and major development is £100 + vat and £150 + vat respectively. Meetings for major development are £250 + vat per hour or part thereof or £175 + vat per hour for minor development.

Dartford Borough Council

The Borough Council imposes charges for pre-application advice, handling minor amendments to permissions and consents, compliance checks and researching planning histories for permitted development restrictions. The service is similar to that provided by Ashford Borough Council in that there is a very limited free service. For all major applications, the Section provides a service centred on meetings. There is a charge for each meeting. Other enquiries may be dealt with in writing and a set charge will apply.

Minor Development

Written advice	£120.00 (£100 + VAT), flat rate
Meeting with officers	£210 (£175 + VAT) per hour or part thereof

Major Development

Written advice	£180 (£150 + VAT), flat rate
Meeting with officers	£300 (£250 + VAT) per hour or part thereof

If the meeting is on site then travelling time will be included in the assessment for the above charge. If further meetings are sought then a further fee will be levied at the above rate.

These fees cover administration costs and Officers' time for research, assessment, a meeting as necessary and a written response.

Dover District Council

The Council provides a limited free informal telephone advice on simple enquiries. It charges for the majority of its pre-application service including pre-application advice, compliance checks and researching planning histories for permitted development restrictions.

Any meeting will normally take place at the Council Offices. In exceptional cases this may be varied to allow a request for a meeting on site. If so, the fee will normally be adjusted to reflect time spent. The Development Control Manager has the right to decline a request for pre-application advice where it is not considered either appropriate or necessary.

Major Developments

New residential development of 10 or more new dwellings; change of use of buildings or land where the gross floor space or site area is 1,000m² or more; new non-residential

buildings and extensions to non-residential buildings of 1,000m² or more of gross floor space; mixed use developments where the combined gross floor space is of 1,000m² or more. Other large scale or complex/specialist applications that require significant officer input.

Fee

£250 or 1% of the appropriate fee under the Application Fees Regulations, whichever is the greater, for written advice only. Additional advice may be required and will be charged at the same rate;

£500 or 1.5% of the appropriate fee under the Application Fees Regulations, whichever is the greater for up to an hour long meeting plus written confirmation, additional meetings may be required and these will be charged at the same rate. The Planning Officer will agree the need for additional meetings and may recommend the involvement of third parties if it is felt necessary (Specialist Advice, Ward Members, Parish Councils etc;

Minor Developments

New residential developments of 1 to 9 dwellings; residential conversions involving change of use to more than one dwelling; change of use of buildings or land where the gross floor space or site area is less than 1,000m²; new non-residential buildings and extensions to non-residential buildings from 100m² to 1,000m² of gross floor space; Mixed use developments where the combined gross floor space is less than 1,000m². Proposals affecting Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas; Advertisements.

Fee

£150 for written advice only. Additional advice may be required and will be charged at the same rate;

£250 for up to an hour long meeting plus written confirmation, additional meetings may be required and these will be charged at the same rate. The Planning Officer will agree the need for additional meetings and may recommend the involvement of third parties if it is felt necessary (Specialist Advice, Ward Members, Parish Councils etc.);

What the costs cover

These fees cover administration costs and the time spent in research, assessment, a meeting as necessary, and in making a written response. Any request for written advice must be accompanied by the relevant fee otherwise advice cannot be provided. The Development Control Manager has the right to determine the fee. In the event of any disputes, the issue will be referred to the Head of Development and Public Protection whose word will be final.

Gravesham Borough Council

Has a flat fee approach with free advice for householders, voluntary groups and parish councils.

Major development (residential >10 units or more than 1000m ² commercial	£1005
Medium development (residential <10 units or smaller commercial	£335
Other (excluding householders)	£150

Thanet District

Major development of 10 units or more or 1000m² of commercial development or sites of 1ha or more

Written advice	£250 +vat
Meetings and written confirmation	£500 + vat

Additional meetings at the same rate.

Minor development

Written advice	£150 +vat
Meetings and written confirmation	£250 + vat

Advice regarding planning histories and conditions £48.50

London Borough Merton

Pre application charges apply for all minor and major/complex developments. Major development is defined as more than 10 dwellings or the provision of a residential site of 0.5ha, commercial floor space in excess of 1000m², Complex developments are those subject to EIA, complex listed building applications and telecommunications equipment.

Major/complex applications – initial charge £936 + Vat

Minor applications - initial charge of £470 +vat

Additional officers are charged out at an hourly rate depending upon seniority. Fees cover investigation stage, meeting and written response.

Hertfordshire County Council

Has a flat fee approach.

Written enquiries - £200 (+vat)

Meetings with officers - £100 (+vat) for first half hour and then £50) per hour or part thereof plus additional charges for meeting times, post meeting administration or research and travelling time to and from site.

West Sussex

The West Sussex model includes a charge for pre-application advice relating to the amount of time taken by the case officer(s), from the investigation stage to a meeting with the applicant and the subsequent written confirmation of advice. The charges range from £450 - £2000+ depending upon the scale of the proposed development (defined by WSCC and not DCLG definition) If necessary the service includes input from other specialists such as heritage and biodiversity officers. Depending upon the category of development the advice fee ranges from £100 to £450. Additional meetings incur additional costs at an hourly rate. The 5 categories of development to which charges apply are defined by West Sussex and unlike other authorities do not use a DCLG definition of major and minor development.

The service includes meeting with planning officers to advise you on the case, including any site visits needed, detailed written confirmation of the officer's advice and what is needed to support an application; advise on whether a Section 106 agreement is likely and the process used to agree it.

Proposals for project work, large or major schemes with highly complex highway issues a series of meetings or pre application submissions may be required. These should be discussed on a case by case basis and an approach agreed during an initial pre-application meeting

Exemptions

The charging scheme does not currently apply to discussions in connection with minor residential applications (0-9 units), very small business premises, and related advertisement proposals, certificates of lawfulness, enforcement or advice to any local resident affected by a development.

If a developer requires written advice only, without a pre-application meeting, a written response will be provided within 21 days of receipt of all necessary information. There is a reduction of 25% to the appropriate fee for this service.

Somerset County Council

Charges are applicable to scheme specific issues regardless of county matters or community development. As of April 2010, the first half hour is free, thereafter the charge is £50 per hour (+vat) chargeable in 15 minute blocks of time. This includes research, one officers input and administration. Site visits at the invitation of the applicant or if deemed necessary are charges at £50 per hour (+ vat) inclusively of travelling time. Additional staff are charged at £36 per hour (+vat) and are likely to be required for major development.

The provision of general advice on completion of application forms or validation requirements is chargeable. The first 30 minutes are free; thereafter an hourly rate of £50 + Vat applies, chargeable in 15 minute blocks. This assumes one officer input.

Staffordshire County Council

In 2008, the Council considered 4 options relating to charging for advice in relation to mineral and waste development, although it has not yet implemented charging. The options considered were:

- a) Single fee for all pre-application discussions – true costs (up to £400+ vat);
- b) Single fee for all pre-application discussions – contribution;
- c) Split fee for strategic/major and minor applications – true costs
- d) Split fee for strategic/major and minor applications – contribution (£200 + vat and £100 + vat)

Northumberland County Council

This authority charges for a range of its pre-application service with each component attracting a specified fee. The charge is calculated on the basis of all components required egg site history, meeting, informal view. It charges for minor and major development. Payment is required in advance.

Minor Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1-9 Dwellings (including outline)• Commercial retail, leisure, office, other business development, including changes of use –all on sites smaller than 1 hectare or creating less than 1000 square metres floor space (all including outline)• Telecomms. proposals• Advertisements• Agricultural development• Minor minerals & waste, energy and infrastructure developments egg: minor amendments to working schemes, minor variations, installation of plant, buildings, machinery & discharge of conditions• Domestic wind turbines	Planning history of site	£30
--	--------------------------	-----

	Informal officer advice/opinion of proposal including unaccompanied site visit	£100
	Informal officer advice/opinion of proposal including meeting and/or site visit Including consultees where appropriate	£200
If multiple meetings are required a total fee will be agreed		
Major Development (including outline) of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 – 50 dwellings or more; • On sites > 1 hectare • Of or proposing buildings over 1000 square metres; • Schemes subject to EIA • Minerals or Waste proposals, except those listed in 'minor' or 'significant major' categories 	Planning history	£50
	Informal officer advice/opinion of proposal including unaccompanied site visit	£250
	Informal officer advice/opinion of proposal including meeting and/or site visit Including consultees where appropriate	£350
Significant Major development of 50 dwellings or more Major urban developments for example town centre redevelopments Major energy schemes egg commercial windfarms, Major infrastructure developments Major minerals and waste schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new + extensions to opencast coal sites • All new + extensions to landfill sites except inert landfill • Proposals for new mineral sites (+ 	Planning history	£200

extensions) over 15 ha in size • Waste facilities with annual throughput over 50,000 tonnes		
	Informal officer advice/opinion of proposal including initial meeting and unaccompanied site visit if required	£500
	Informal officer advice/opinion of proposal including meeting and /or site visit including consultees where appropriate.	£750
If multiple meetings are required a total fee will be agreed		

Bradford (Unitary)

A tiered approach is charged depending upon development type for all development.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Large scale and complex, | meeting £900 +vat |
| 2. other major | meeting 500 + vat |
| 3. other non-major complex | meeting £300 + vat |

Follow up meetings attract a 50% fee. Fees cover officer assessment and investigation, meeting and written comment and cost of any specialist.

Medway Council (Unitary)

A variety of charges are in place including

pre-application meeting including pre meeting, research with follow up written advice.	£1099.80 (April 2010)
Written advice only	£824.85
Pre application site visits	£117.50
Presentations to Members	£587.50