

Application Advice Service  
*Pre-application, application and post  
decision stages*

Guidance Note & Charging Schedule

10 September 2025

## Why are we charging for pre-application advice?

Be First, a wholly Council owned company, is providing pre-application advice and processing planning applications on behalf of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council.

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Be First is committed to providing clear, consistent and timely pre-application advice which places an emphasis on working with applicants in a positive and proactive way. By charging for pre-application advice Be First are able to allocate more resources to this important early stage of the planning process.

**Pre-application discussions offer particular benefits**, including:

- more certainty at an earlier stage in the process by front-loading discussions regarding key issues
- assessment of development proposals by officers, senior managers and technical officers at an early stage in the process
- the opportunity to steer projects in the right form that will be attractive to the community and acceptable to the local planning authority
- reducing the risk of abortive work and associated delays and costs
- discussions regarding potential planning conditions and S106/CIL costs.

Be First is committed to accelerating the number of new homes and jobs provided in the borough and wants to work with developers to ensure their proposals are viable and deliverable and this will be a focus of pre-application advice.

Working in partnership

**BeFirst**

**Barking &  
Dagenham**

### Be First Planning Consultancy

The Development Management team do not charge for pre-application advice for proposals submitted by the Be First Planning Consultancy Team, relating to land and buildings solely owned by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

*The Be First Consultancy Team offer a full range of client side planning services with expert local knowledge to help you through the pre-application and planning process.* <https://befirst.london/planning-and-design-consultancy/>



## Our Pre-Application Services:

Be First's pre-application service will operate across the Borough for developments up to 49 residential units and/or 4,999sq.m of non-residential floor space in size. For developments above this size, Be First will seek to engage with developers by way of an inception meeting followed by a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) (*if deemed appropriate*) which will be tailored to the individual scheme and the needs of the applicant. A PPA service is also available for matters relating to post-decision matters such as the discharge of planning conditions.

### Pre-Application Advice

Category: A

Category: B

Category: C

Category: D

Category: E



Residential and  
commercial extensions  
&  
1-49 new residential units



Non-residential  
development  
0-4,999sq.m of floor  
space



Change of use up to  
4,999sq.m of floor  
space

### Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)

Inception Meeting

Followed by:

Category: F

Category: G

Category: H



50 new residential  
units and above



Non-residential  
development 5,000sq.m  
and above of floor space



Change of use  
5,000sq.m and above  
of floor space

**The issuing of the final pre-application report or letter of salient points (dependant upon category) closes the pre-application service.**

Should you require additional advice after the issuing of the final written response, this will represent a new request for pre-application advice and will be chargeable at the full fee for the pre-application service. Where more than one detailed development option is submitted additional fees may apply. Cancellation fees may also apply.

Category: **A**

Householder Development

If you are proposing significant levels of development to a residential property, you should consider engaging with Be First prior to submitting your application.

It will be expected that all proposals for extensions and alterations to homes will be designed to respect the character of the property and to be neighbourly. Extensions must be attractive, work well for residents of the property and for neighbours, promote biodiversity and overall be of a high quality.

Category A: Relating to the following categories of development:

- All householder development (e.g. extensions, home offices, loft conversions)

*NOTE: Conversion of single dwellings to flats, short term lets or HMO's are not included within this category. Limited to max 2 options only relating to the same element*

Pre-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
A.1	Pre-application meeting (up to 30 Mins) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£270

Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of letter of salient points):

A.2	Charge for an on-site meeting with Officers (15 Mins)	£145
A.3	Team Leader / Principal Planner attendance at pre-application meeting	£140



Category: **B**

Local Businesses (Sites not exceeding 200sq.m)

If you are proposing works to extend your business, change the use of the building, make changes to your shopfront or update your signage/advertising, you should consider engaging with Be First prior to submitting your application.

It will be expected that all proposals will be designed to respect and improve the character of the property and the wider street scene.

Category B: Relating to the following categories of development:

- Extensions to an existing business premises (new floor space not to exceed 50sq.m)
- Changes of use of an existing business premises (from a use within class E to a different use)
- Works to change the shopfront of an existing business
- Signage and advertising on an existing shopfront

Pre-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
B.1	Pre-application meeting (up to 30 Mins) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£720

Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of letter of salient points):

B.2	Charge for an on-site meeting with Officers (15 Mins)	£140
B.3	Team Leader / Principal Planner attendance at pre-application meeting	£140



Category: **C**

# Small Scale Development

Small scale developments and those on ‘in-fill’ land can often raise complex issues and generate neighbour concerns. Be First welcomes the opportunity to assist developers through the planning process in order for high quality small scale schemes to be delivered.

**Category C: Relating to the following categories of development:**

- 1 to 3 new residential units
- Conversion of single dwellings to flats (max 3), short term lets or HMO's
- Non-residential applications or change of use (site area or floor space up to 499sq.m excluding those in Category B)
- Telecommunication equipment/masts and Advertisements; (excluding Category B)
- Certificates of lawfulness; and prior approvals within this category

Pre-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
C.1	Pre-application meeting (up to 1 Hr) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£1730
C.2	Premium condition review service <i>Meetings to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£360 <small>(per condition)</small>
<u>Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of written response):</u>		
C.3	Follow up meeting within 6 months (30 Mins) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£690
C.4	Charge for an on-site meeting with Officers (30 Mins) <i>Where possible recognising government advice</i>	£345

Post-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
C.5	Discharge of planning conditions meeting (30 Mins) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£690
C.6	Premium condition review service <i>Meetings to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£390 <small>(per condition)</small>



Category:

D

## Medium Scale Development

Medium scale developments and those on ‘in-fill’ land can often raise complex issues and generate significant neighbour concerns.  
Be First welcomes the opportunity to engage with developers to deliver high quality development.

**Category D: Relating to the following categories of development:**

- 4 to 9 new residential units
- Non-residential applications or change of use (site area or floor space of 500sq.m - 999sq.m)
- Certificates of lawfulness; and prior approvals within this category



Pre-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
D.1	Initial pre-application meeting (up to 1 Hr) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams or Be First offices.</i> Also included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Detailed written pre-application report</li></ul>	£5180

Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of written response):

D.2	Follow up meeting within 6 months (30 Mins) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£1380
D.3	Charge for an on-site meeting with Officers	£690

Post-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
D.4	Discharge of planning conditions meeting (30 Mins) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£690
D.5	Premium condition review service <i>Meetings to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£390 <small>(per condition)</small>

Category: **E**

# Large Scale Development

Large scale developments will raise complex planning issues, may generate significant neighbour concerns and require off-site contributions. Be First welcomes the opportunity to engage with developers to deliver high quality development. A PPA is often appropriate for this

Category E: Relating to the following categories of development :

- 10 to 49 new residential units
- Non-residential applications or change of use (site area or floor space of 1000sq.m - 4999sq.m)
- Reserved matters pursuant to outline permissions within this category
- Certificates of lawfulness; and prior approvals within this category



Pre-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
E.1	Pre-application meeting (up to 90 Mins) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams or Be First offices.</i> Also included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Detailed written pre-application report</li></ul>	£9,500
<u>Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of written response):</u>		
E.2	Follow-up meeting within 6 months – up to 1 Hr (where no PPA)	£3850
E.2	Charge for an on-site meeting with Officers	£1382

Post-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
E.3	Meeting to discuss discharge of planning conditions or minor material amendments (up to 1 Hr) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£2760
E.4	Premium condition review service <i>Meetings to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£390 (per condition)





# Planning Performance Agreements

Planning Performance Agreements provide a framework through which the applicant and Be First commit resources and work together to manage the entire planning process in a timely manner based on key targets and milestones. Applicants for schemes requiring a Planning Performance Agreement are expected to first undertake an inception meeting to present an overview of proposals and discuss the project plan and timescales.

PPA Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
PPA.1	Inception Meeting <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams or Be First offices.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>With attendance from the Head of Statutory Services and the Development Management Team Leader</li></ul>	£10,450
	followed by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Letter of salient points / key planning issues</li><li>Draft Planning Performance Agreement (<i>only available for schemes which broadly accord with the development plan</i>)</li></ul>	

Following an Inception Meeting, if a Planning Performance Agreement is deemed appropriate for your proposal, Be First will then send you a draft Planning Performance Agreement tailored to your proposed development. Be First's Planning Performance Agreements fall within a categories based on the size of your proposed development. Full details of these categories and charging schedule are found on the following pages.

Please note, should specialist external consultants (e.g Viability, Ecology, BNG, Heritage, Sun/Daylight) be required these will be provided at an additional cost on a case-by-case basis.

Be First also offer stand alone pre-application products within categories F and G in relation to meetings to discuss the discharge of planning conditions or minor material amendments to schemes which already have obtained planning consent.

If desired category E can also enter into a PPA, with the first meeting being the 'inception meeting' without the attendance of the Head of Statutory Services or the Development Management Team Leader.

Category: **F**

# Planning Performance Agreements

Schemes which are not referable to the Mayor of London and do not form to be EIA development.

**Category F: Relating to the following categories of development:**

- 50-149 residential units
- Non-residential applications or change of use (site area or floor space of 5,000sq.m – 14,999sq.m)
- Development with a site area of between 0.5 and 1 ha
- Reserved matters pursuant to outline permissions within this category
- Certificates of lawfulness and prior approvals within this category.



PPA product (following Inception Meeting)		Fee <small>(inclusive of VAT)</small>
F.1	First PPA meeting following inception (up to 2 Hrs) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams or Be First offices.</i> Also included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Detailed written pre-application report</b> (to be issued following the PPA meeting)</li></ul>	£10,350

Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of written response):

F.2	Any subsequent PPA meeting (up to 2Hrs) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£6900
F.3	On-site meeting with officers or attendance of specialist officers (e.g Transport / Design)	£1380

Post-application Product		Fee <small>(inclusive of VAT)</small>
F.4	Meeting to discuss discharge of planning conditions or minor material amendments (90 mins) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£5180
F.5	Premium condition or S106 review service <i>Meetings to be held online via MS Teams</i>	Quoted as part of a PPA

Category: **G**

# Planning Performance Agreements

Schemes which are referable to the Mayor of London and/or require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Category G: Relating to the following categories of development:**

- 150 or more residential units
- Non-residential applications or change of use (site area or floor space at least 5,000sq.m)
- Development with a site area over 1 ha
- Reserved matters pursuant to outline permissions within this category
- Certificates of lawfulness and prior approvals within this category.



PPA product (following Inception Meeting)		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
G.1	First PPA meeting following inception (up to 2 Hrs) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams or Be First offices.</i> Also included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Detailed written pre-application report</b> (to be issued following the PPA meeting)</li></ul>	£15,550

Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of written response):

G.2	Any subsequent PPA meeting (up to 2Hrs) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£9670
G.3	On-site meeting with officers / Attendance of specialist officers / Attendance to external pre-application meetings (e.g GLA/EA)	£2760

Post-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
G.4	Meeting to discuss discharge of planning conditions or minor material amendments (2 hrs) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£6900
G.5	Premium condition or S106 review service <i>Meetings to be held online via MS Teams</i>	Quoted as part of a PPA

Category: **H**

Planning Performance Agreements  
post-consent: phased

Post approval delivery of strategically important and multi-phased planning permissions

Category H: Relating to the following categories of development:

The post approval delivery phases of a consent with more than 2 phases of development 150+ homes.



PPA product (in addition to and following the inception meeting)		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
H.1	First PPA meeting following inception (where required) (up to 2 Hrs) followed by letter of salient points <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams or Be First offices.</i> Also included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Detailed written pre-application report</b> (to be issued following the final PPA meeting)</li></ul>	£15,550

Fees in addition to the above (prior to issuing of written response):

H.2	Any subsequent PPA meeting (up to 2Hrs) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£9670
H.3	On-site meeting with officers / Attendance of specialist officers / Attendance to external pre-application meetings (e.g GLA/EA)	£2760

Post-application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
H.4	Meeting to discuss discharge of planning conditions or minor material amendments (2 hrs) followed by letter of salient points. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£6900
H.5	Premium condition or S106 review service <i>Meetings to be held online via MS Teams</i>	Quoted as part of a PPA

# Additional PPA/Pre-Application products

## Quality Review Panel

The Quality Review Panel provides expert independent professional design advice on Pre-Application proposals for PPA developments. The Panel consists of highly qualified professionals within the built environment, including architects, landscape architects, public realm specialists and urban designers. The Panel is set up and run by Frame Projects and the Panel exists to advise officers with independent design advice. It does not have decision-making powers, but serves as an advisory body helping officers to achieve high quality urban and architectural design for new developments.



All proposals for development falling within categories F, G and H or complex sites, sometimes including E, are recommended to attend at least one QRP review at the pre-application stage. Frame will send invoices directly to the applicant. Cancellation charges apply.

## Members Briefing

This is an internal meeting which usually meets once a month made up of planning committee members, local ward members and officers. This is not a public meeting but developers (*where considered appropriate*) will be invited to present their scheme at the pre-application stage. The briefing is also recommended for all applications being taken to planning committee.

Pre-Application Product		Fee <small>(Inclusive of VAT)</small>
QRP.1	Full review – (full panel)	£6250 +VAT
QRP.2	Workshop review	£4550 +VAT
QRP.3	Chair’s review	£3425 +VAT
MB.1	Presentation to Members Briefing (30 Mins) including open discussion & questions form Members. <i>Meeting to be held online via MS Teams</i>	£4320



## Applying for Pre-Application advice

To request pre-application advice, please complete the 'Pre-application request form' and email this to [planning@befirst.london](mailto:planning@befirst.london)

On receipt of your pre-application request, our validation team will undertake a review of your submission and you will be contacted to make payment where required. Payments can be made online via the Council website or by invoice. Our validation team will assist you with this.

Within 5 working days of receiving a pre-application request and relevant fee, your request will be allocated to an Officer who will contact you to arrange a suitable meeting date and confirm which Be First officers will be in attendance. Additional information should not be sent unless agreed by the officer.

### Information Required

Be First will require a basic level of information to ensure that proper advice can be given. The following is not exhaustive but is a useful guide to what you will need to ensure that you get the advice and guidance you need. The more information you provide at pre-application stage the greater the extent to which Be First can provide you with a comprehensive pre-application response.

The list below sets out the minimum recommended level of information to be submitted at Pre-Application stage:

- Covering Letter - including details of the pre-application product(s) you require; *e.g. E.1 and E3*
- site address and details of site ownership and the applicant's status
- the existing use of site and relevant planning history
- the proposed development, including details of land uses, scale and height of built form, schedule of floor space, housing details such as tenure/mix/size (where relevant)
- Drawings/Plans – including:
  - location plan at 1:1250, with site outlined in red, any adjoining land in the ownership of the applicant outlined in blue;
  - plans and elevations of existing buildings on the site; and
  - plans and elevations of the proposed development.
- Supporting Information - Depending on the type/scale of the proposed development and how advanced the scheme is it may be helpful to include supporting information regarding the key planning issues, such as an urban design analyses, or draft Design and Access Statement.
- Where necessary, a completed checklist of commercially sensitive documents. (further advice at page 14)
- VU City 3D compatible file format for Cat F, G and H (if requested by the officer/ available).



# Commercially sensitive documents

## Freedom of Information

Your pre-application request, together with any documents or response made by Be First, will be made available for public inspection unless you confirm in writing to us that the information provided is commercially sensitive. If Be First receives a request, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), to disclose information relating to this pre-application enquiry, we may be obliged to do so unless the information is deemed exempt under the Act. Please outline in the table below (*or one similar within your pre-application covering letter*) items which you consider are confidential and genuinely commercially sensitive and which are not for disclosure in respect of your application.

**Commercially sensitive documents not for disclosure to third parties under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) as amended:**

Name of Applicant / Agent:			
Information / Document	Reference / Page Number	Reasons for non-disclosure (cite FOI / EIR exemption(s) to be considered)	Duration of confidentiality

The applicant acknowledges that the commercially sensitive information listed above is of indicative value only and Be First may be obliged to disclose it pursuant to a request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) or Environmental Information Regulations (EIR).

Be First shall act reasonably and use its discretion when making a decision to release or withhold information pertaining to the above if it is requested. By indicating what information you believe to be commercially sensitive Be First will consider your views however will make the final decision to disclose information or not.