Charging for Pre-Application Advice

Guidance Note – November 2019

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.

Be First is committed to providing clear and consistent advice on planning applications and welcomes pre-application discussions as this should help speed up the development process and avoid unacceptable proposals. Whilst Be First does charge for processing planning applications, this does not cover the cost of providing pre-application advice which can be time consuming and costly.

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.

Be First’s formal pre-application service will operate across the Borough for developments up to 49 residential units and/or 4,999m$^2$ of non-residential floorspace. For developments above this size developers are expected to enter into a Planning Performance Agreement with Be First.

The pre-application fees

Be First’s charges are set out below. These are based on an assessment of the cost in terms of officer time for providing pre-application advice for each category of development.

a) **PPA schemes**

Applicants for schemes requiring a PPA are expected to first undertake an inception meeting to present an overview of proposals and discuss the project plan and timescales. These meetings are charged at £7,000 which is discounted from the subsequent PPA fee.

b) **Category A – Medium Development**

Pre-application meeting with written response = £7,000
Pre-application meeting = £3,500
Follow-up meetings = £3,500

- 10-49 residential units
• Non-residential applications or change of use with a site area or floorspace of 1,000m² - 4,999m²

c) **Category B – Small-Medium Development**  
Pre-application meeting with written response = £4,800  
Pre-application meeting = £2,400  
Follow-up meetings = £2,400

• 4-9 residential units  
• Non-residential applications or change of use with a site area or floorspace of 500m² - 999m²

d) **Category C – Small-Medium Development**  
Pre-application meeting with written response = £2,000  
Pre-application meeting = £1,000  
Follow-up meetings = £1,000

• 1-3 residential units  
• Non-residential applications or change of use with a site area or floorspace of 200m² - 499m²

e) **Category D – Small Business Development**  
Pre-application meeting with short written record = £600

• Non-residential applications or change of use with a site area or floorspace of less than 200m²

f) **Category E – Householder Development**  
Pre-application meeting with short written record = £250

• All householder development (e.g. extensions, outbuildings, loft conversions)

These charges are inclusive of VAT at 20%. A full VAT receipt will be issued after payment.

**The pre-application process**  
If you have a proposal which falls within one of the above categories you should make a request to Be First using the pre-application meeting request form which is available at the end of this note and paying the relevant fee.

With this request we would normally require the following information:

• Contact details including e-mail addresses;  
• Full site address and location plan to identify site;  
• A brief summary of the proposed development;  
• Sketch drawings and photographs to describe the site/building as existing;  
• Sketch drawings to describe the proposal.

Requests for specialist advice should be confirmed at this time so we can make sure the right officers are available to attend the meeting.
Early discussions with the relevant officers are intended to provide certainty and clarity as to the planning issues and requirements arising from a particular application.

Within 10 working days of receiving your request Be First will contact you to confirm whether pre-application advice is necessary and the name of the planning case officer(s) who will be handling your enquiry and contact details from here on in. Be First will also advise if further information is required.

A meeting will be held with the appropriate planning officers within 20 working days of receiving the application request. A case officer will contact you to arrange this. This meeting will cover:

- How planning policies will be applied to your development.
- Advice regarding the procedure, consultation and estimated timescale to process the application.
- A breakdown of the information necessary to submit a valid application to us.
- The likely planning obligation commitments/suggestions involved, such as levels of affordable housing, highway, education and other infrastructure payments.
- Whether any additional meetings are required (see follow-up meeting charges above).

On the larger more complex cases a series of meetings may need to occur before an application is submitted. These meetings will consider in more detail issues such as the design and layout, highway implications and sustainability aspects of the development.

Where the pre-application meeting with written response option has been requested, Be First will provide a written response within 15 working days of the meeting which will be reviewed by a senior manager. Where it is not possible to provide a response in this timescale due to the issues being more complex, a specific timescale reflecting this will be agreed at the meeting.

**Status of advice**

Whilst pre-application advice is more likely to result in a speedier and positive outcome, planning permission cannot be guaranteed. The final decision on some applications is made by Council Members. Decisions are made following consultation with the public and statutory bodies. In some cases the decision is delegated to senior officers. Therefore the pre-application advice we provide is without prejudice to the final decision which is made on the planning application.

We will not publish any pre-application material on the Council’s public access website. You should be aware, however, that under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and/or the Environmental Information Regulations it is possible that we may receive a request from a third party for disclosure of pre-application material relating to your site. If a request for disclosure of pre-application material is received from a third party then we will need to consider, in accordance with the relevant legislation, whether there is any exception that allows us to refuse to provide the requested information. If there are any reasons why you believe the pre-application material relating to
your site should remain confidential, please note these in the confidentiality section of our pre-application request form so that we can consider whether these reasons amount to an exception to disclosure should we be faced with a request for pre-application material in the future under the Freedom of Information Act and/or the Environmental Information Regulations.
Pre-application meeting request

Please complete this form and submit by e-mail:

E-mail: planning@befirst.london

1. Agent’s details (if relevant) 
   Name:

2. Applicant’s details 
   Name:

Address:

Address:

Postcode: 

Postcode: 

Phone: 

Phone:

E-mail:

E-mail:

3. Site address (full address and postcode)

4. Your proposal

5. Type of pre-application request (please identify with reference to the category descriptions above and note the different charges that apply)

   PPA scheme – inception meeting [ ] (tick box)

   Category A – Medium Development: do you require written response? Y or N

   Category B – Small-Medium Development: do you require written response? Y or N

   Category C – Small-Medium Development: do you require written response? Y or N

   Category D – Small Business Development

   Category E – Householder Development

6. Extra information

Please include where possible:

- Location plan identifying the site.
- A brief summary of the proposed development.
- Sketch drawings and photographs to describe the site/building as existing.
- Sketch drawings to describe the proposal.
Larger sites may require extra information. If required, you will be notified of this.

7. Confidentiality

Please state any reasons why you believe that the pre-application material should remain confidential in the event of a request for disclosure by a third party under the Freedom of Information Act and/or Environmental Information Regulations (please attach a separate sheet to this form if further space is required):

8. Payment details

The pre-application fee should be paid online by debit or credit card using the Council’s online payment facility, details of which can be found on the Planning ‘Before Submission’ page of the Council’s website alongside this advice note.

ONLINE PAYMENT: Payment made on:

9. Declaration

I have read and understood the terms and conditions set out in this document and enclose the initial consultation fee.

Signed: On behalf of: Date:

For official use