

# Guidance and Fees for Pre-Application Advice



**Planning and Place Service**

**April 2023**

**Lancaster City Council's Planning and Place Service is responsible for the determination of planning applications within the Lancaster District.**

Planning applications can sometimes be complex or contentious. For that reason, we encourage applicants and developers to share their development proposals with us at the pre-application stage. By working together, the parties can achieve sustainable and viable development that will benefit our district.

Pre-application advice can:



## Categories of Pre-Planning Application Advice

The level of pre-application advice you need will depend upon the complexity of your development proposals.

### 'Forum' Advice

For major, strategic developments (i.e. more than 10 residential units, or more than 1000 square metres of non-residential development), we would advise that applicants use our **FORUM** advice. This allows applicants to develop their proposal with a Planning Officer, who will be assigned to your site and will visit the site with you and make a written assessment.

Applicants will then present their proposed development to the Councillor Engagement Forum, which consists of a selection of Planning Committee Councillors, Ward Councillors and Parish Council/Local Group representatives. The Forum will usually be chaired by the Service Manager for Development Management or the Planning Applications Manager.

Our **FORUM** advice service is popular amongst major developers because it takes a collaborative approach to identifying and resolving local issues prior to planning application submission.

### 'Engage' Advice

Our new **ENGAGE** advice service puts the applicant in charge of how they would like to receive their pre-application advice. It is available for all development proposals (except for domestic/householder extensions and outbuildings). Applicants may choose from the following menu of options:

- ENGAGE 1 Advice (E1) - To receive their pre-application advice via a site meeting only; or,
- ENGAGE 2 Advice (E2) - To receive their pre-application advice via a site meeting, with a written summary of the meeting afterwards; or,
- ENGAGE 3 Advice (E3) - To receive their pre-application advice via a site meeting, followed by a written summary of the meeting, and the opportunity for a further follow-up meeting.

All of the above **ENGAGE** options involve a site meeting because Lancaster City Council considers that meaningful pre-application advice should be a collaborative process, starting with a shared understanding of the extent and characteristics of the development site. Site Meetings will be a maximum of 2 hours in length and will usually only be attended by a Planning Officer(s).

## Pre-Application Advice Thresholds and Fees for ENGAGE and FORUM Advice

DEVELOPMENT TYPE	ENGAGE (E1) Fee	ENGAGE (E2) Fee	ENGAGE (E3) Fee	FORUM Fee
<b>Residential:</b> 1-2 New residential units	£269	£323	£376	<b>Not Available</b>
<b>Residential:</b> 3-9 New residential units (or where the number of units is not specified, up to 0.49 hectare)	£323	£376	£430	<b>Not Available</b>
<b>Residential:</b> 10-49 New residential units (or where numbers are unknown, between 0.5-1.0 hectare)	£699	£860	£1075	£2150
<b>Residential:</b> 50+ New residential units (or where numbers not known, development in excess of 1.01 hectare)	£860	£1075	£1881	£3225
<b>Non-Residential:</b> Proposals involving development, works, operations or change of use of up to 1000 sq.m	£269	£323	£376	<b>Not Available</b>
<b>Non-Residential:</b> Proposals (defined above) between 1001-2000 sq.m	£323	£376	£430	<b>Not Available</b>
<b>Non-Residential:</b> Proposals (defined above) in excess of 2000 sq.m site area	£538	£806	£860	£2150

In all cases, the fees are payable in advance of the meeting. Further details are provided at the end of this document.

From the date of receipt of a valid pre-application form, fee and plans, we aim to have met you on site within 3 weeks (this applies equally to ENGAGE and FORUM services).

If you have selected the ENGAGE written advice option too, then we aim to issue this within a week of the site meeting.

For FORUM advice, because proposals are more complex, we aim to have provided your written advice within 2 weeks of the site meeting. The Councillor Engagement Forum will then be arranged at a date to mutually suit the applicant and Councillors.

*NB: For the purposes of the pre-application system, the term 'residential' also includes holiday and student uses.*

## Planning Performance Agreements

An alternative option is to use a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) to manage the end-to-end delivery of a planning application.

PPAs are a project management tool that can be used to mutually agree timescales, actions and resources for handling a planning application.

They are usually more effective for large-scale, complex proposals, although they can be used for smaller scale developments too. The scale and costs of the PPA will be commensurate with the scale of the development proposal and the anticipated level of work required. There may be some circumstances where a simple PPA is agreed, identifying the critical milestones in the pre-application, application determination, and post-application processes. More comprehensive PPAs will be required for multi-phase proposals that have a greater number of issues to scope and resolve.

The common elements of a PPA are that they are:

- Usually agreed prior to the submission of a planning application, and include the pre-application process to enable the proposals to evolve;
- That the local planning authority and the applicant are signatories to this voluntary agreement; and,
- That the agreed determination date usually exceeds the existing national statutory time limits.

The benefits of a PPA are that they can:

- Develop a shared understanding of the vision and objectives for the development and how it will fit into the local community;
- Identify the information requirements necessary to address the issues; and,
- Map the process for engaging the community and involving Elected Members.

The initial dialogue to discuss the appropriateness of a PPA (and the likely fee level) is free and will either be conducted by the Chief Officer – Planning and Climate Change, the Service Manager for Development Management, or the Planning Applications Manager. To request a discussion regarding a PPA please email [dm@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:dm@lancaster.gov.uk)

If both parties agree that a PPA is appropriate, then the local planning authority will initially draft the agreement using their established template, and will share this with the signatories for comment, modification where necessary, and agreement.

Although a PPA is a nationally-recognised method of joint collaboration, signing up to a PPA does not guarantee that planning permission will be granted.

## Specialist Heritage Advice

Our **Specialist Heritage Advice** service is available for queries regarding proposals that may require:

- Listed Building Consent; or,
- Planning Permission for 'Relevant Demolition' in a Conservation Area.

Our Specialist Heritage Advice will be provided by a Conservation Officer. This means that where there are minor proposals requiring Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission, then the advice provided will relate to the *heritage implications only*. In those circumstances you may need to seek separate application advice via our 'ENGAGE' service subject to the guidance provided earlier in this document.

Where there are more significant development proposals requiring both listed building consent and planning permission, then the Specialist Heritage Advice service would not be appropriate, and we would advise that you seek 'ENGAGE' or 'FORUM' advice instead. In those circumstances a Planning Officer will lead the advice and will involve Conservation Officers in an advisory capacity.

Specialist Heritage Advice may involve a site meeting and/or written correspondence, and the fee levels are set out below.

Specialist Heritage Advice	Heritage (H1)		Heritage (H2)		Heritage (H3)	
	Level of Service	Fee	Level of Service	Fee	Level of Service	Fee
<b>Listed Building Consent Advice: or, Relevant Demolition in a Conservation Area Advice</b>	Written Correspondence Only	£32	Site Meeting Only	£59	Site Meeting and Written Correspondence	£91

For Specialist Heritage Advice, we will require details in writing, preferably via email, to clarify what works are proposed (please see contact details at the end of this document). Each item of work should be separately numbered within your correspondence. Sketch plans are sometimes helpful, as are photographs of the historic building where the works are proposed to take place, both inside and out as necessary.

In all cases, the fees are payable at the time of submission. Further details regarding the submission process are provided at the end of this document. From the date of receipt of your Specialist Heritage Advice pre-application form, fee and plans, we aim to have met you on site and provided you with any written advice within 3 weeks.

## Householder Development Advice

For homeowners wanting advice regarding house extensions and outbuildings or other domestic alterations, the Planning and Place Service has produced a *Householder Design Guide* which sets out design recommendations, which if followed will improve your chances of securing planning permission. Full details are available on the Council's planning webpages (details at the end of this document).

The national Planning Portal website also provides advice regarding planning permission and building regulation approval. They provide visual guides via their Interactive House service, and they have also developed a series of mini-guides for the most common type of householder development projects, including conservatories, extensions, loft conversions, outbuildings and porches. Their advice can be accessed via <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/interactive-guidance>



Access our interactive guides to the planning and building rules for various house types and single mini guides for conservatories, extensions, loft conversions, outbuildings and porches.

Detached house



Terraced house



Flat and shop



(Left:) Interactive Guidance - Source: Planning Portal

## Post-Decision Advice

We recognise that a planning decision is not the end of the process. If you have been successful in obtaining planning permission, then there will be planning conditions to discharge or possible amendments to consider. If you have had your application refused, then you may wish to discuss your options.

### **If your application has been granted planning permission:**

- Information regarding the process and costs of discharging your planning conditions is available via the Planning webpages (details at the end of this document).
- Initial telephone discussions regarding the discharge of conditions or the submission of amendments are also free.
- Where you require a meeting – either on site or in the Council’s offices – to discuss the acceptability of amendments to the approved scheme, then a meeting fee is charged (and is payable in advance of the meeting). This will be verbal advice only.

### **If your application has been withdrawn or refused:**

- If you have followed the pre-application advice provided by us but for some reason the application has still been refused or withdrawn, then an officer can meet with you for free to discuss the potential for resolution. This will be verbal advice only.
- If pre-application advice was provided but not followed, then you can still meet an Officer to discuss your options but the meeting fees below apply. This will be verbal advice only.
- If you did not apply for pre-application advice, then we would advise that a new pre-application proposal is submitted to allow the best chance of obtaining consent.

<b>Post-Application Type</b>	<b>Post-Decision Meeting Fee</b>
<b>Residential:</b> 1-2 New residential units	£54
<b>Residential:</b> 3-9 New residential units (or for an unspecified number of units, up to 0.49 hectare)	£140
<b>Residential:</b> 10-49 New residential units (or if unspecified, between 0.5-1.0 hectare)	£280
<b>Residential:</b> 50+ New residential units (or if unspecified, development in excess of 1.01 hectare)	£333
<b>Non-Residential:</b> Development, works, operations or change of use up to 1000 sq.m	£140
<b>Non-Residential:</b> Proposals (defined above) between 1001-2000 sq.m	£280
<b>Non-Residential:</b> Proposals (defined above) in excess of 2000 sq.m site area	£333
<b>Advertisement Consent:</b> Proposals for New Adverts	£38

Please liaise with your Planning Officer to discuss your options regarding the Post-Decision Advice Services.



## Further Information

Lancashire County Council are the highway authority for the district. They provide their own pre-application advice regarding transport and highway matters. Further details of their services can be found at <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/business/business-services/pre-planning-application-advice-service/pre-planning-application-highways-advice-service/>

## Submitting Your Pre-Application Proposal

With the exception of **SPECIALIST HERITAGE ADVICE**, the pre-application process does not usually require the submission of documents, except for:

- The pre-application form, available via <https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/pre-application-advice>
- The pre-application fee; and,
- A scaled plan indicating the layout and elevational detail of your proposal.

You can submit all **ENGAGE, FORUM** or **SPECIALIST HERITAGE ADVICE** submissions via email to [dm@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:dm@lancaster.gov.uk). Alternatively, our postal address is:

*Planning and Place Service  
Development Management  
PO Box 4  
Town Hall  
Lancaster  
LA1 1QR*

Once your submission has been received it will be registered and a reference number will be sent to you with details of how to pay. The quickest way to pay is online through our **eStore**. You will need your application site address, your pre-application reference number if you have one (which we will send to you upon receipt of your application) and your debit or credit card.

Advice regarding all stages of the planning process is available via: <https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/planning>

## Terms and Conditions

*We will make every effort to ensure that the advice provided is accurate and is delivered in a timely manner. Officers act on behalf of the Council in offering impartial advice, based upon their professional judgement and without prejudice to the formal consideration of any subsequent planning application.*

*Advice does not constitute a formal decision at either the pre-application or post-decision stage. Therefore, it cannot be held to bind the Council in either its validation or determination of planning applications, nor can it bind the Council in terms of the discharge of conditions or consideration of amendments.*

*If a planning application is later submitted that fails to take on-board the advice given by Officers, then the Council reserves the right to refuse the planning application without further discussion with the applicant/agent.*

*Users of the service should also recognise that the weight that can be attributed to the written pre-application advice will diminish over time, due to any changes in national planning legislation or changes to national or local planning policy.*

*All submissions will not be processed until they are accompanied by the relevant fee and documentation.*

*Finally, the advice we provide is also dependent upon the accuracy of the information that is provided by the applicant. If the information submitted is inaccurate, then the advice provided will cease to carry weight.*