

Our Advice

Our advice will set out the issues raised by the development proposed and outline what would be needed to make it supportable, or in the event that it cannot be made acceptable, what the grounds of refusal would be. Advice will be given on what information would be needed to accompany an application.

Payment can be made by cheque (made payable to West Somerset Council) or by debit or credit card (over the phone or at our offices).

Please note our advice will be provided based on the available information but will not form any guarantee that any subsequent planning application will result in a particular decision and will not be binding on the Council in any way. Our opinion may change during the formal application process as a result of views of consultees or other interested parties. Furthermore the decision may be made by our Planning Committee rather than officers, and it is possible that the Committee may reach a different view.

Whether or not you decide to seek and accept pre-application advice does not affect your right to submit an application or appeal against the refusal of permission. Please note that if you do not choose to make use of the pre-application advice service, or choose to ignore any advice given, we cannot guarantee to negotiate amendments to a scheme during the formal application stage.

West Somerset Council Development Management: Guide to Pre-Application Planning Advice and Charges

April 2013



This guide explains how and why we provide pre-application advice and clarifies what you need to submit to us when requesting it. There is a charge for this service and these charges are set out in the planning fees and charges sheet.

Why seek our advice?

We provide advice to people who wish to carry out development so that their application is more likely to be acceptable and a quality scheme is delivered. This is often called pre-application advice and we recommend that it is sought as early as possible in the development process.

Both Central Government and the Council believe that pre-application advice has a number of benefits, these include:

- We can identify, and where possible, help you to resolve any potential problems before you submit a formal application;
- We can alert you to the relevant policy and guidance which we will use to assess your scheme and provide clear guidance to you on what you need to submit with your application;
- Early discussion about detailed aspects of the scheme, such as architectural design and the use of building materials can take place. This can result in a better overall quality and quicker processing; and
- Providing guidance on who else you will need to speak to.

Pre-application advice can also identify those schemes which have little or no realistic chance of success, for example where there is a fundamental conflict with the Council's adopted policies or advice from Central Government. Whilst this advice may not be welcome in the short-term it can save you spending a considerable amount of time and money on a scheme that won't be acceptable.

We believe it can be very helpful for you to seek our advice about your planning proposals before submitting your actual application. This might involve a meeting with us, or just sending us your proposals for us to comment on. Our charging scheme is designed to reflect both the scale of development proposals and the type of advice sought, so that we tailor our service to meet your needs.

You may also find it helpful to obtain advice from an independent planning specialist/consultant when drawing up your scheme. People who regularly prepare planning applications have the experience and expertise that can help you make sure your scheme has the best chance of being granted planning permission.

While we are not able to recommend particular individuals or practices we do have a list of 'Accredited Agents' who have previously submitted high quality applications to us. This list can be found on our website at:

<http://www.westsomersetonline.gov.uk/Planning---Building/Planning/Accredited-Agents>

Spending time and effort in preparing your scheme is more likely to result in an acceptable, good quality development and will also help us process your application quickly. As a result of the time and resources involved in giving what we believe is high quality pre-application advice we have introduced pre-application charges. This means that the service does not fall as a general cost to the council

tax payer.

How the scheme works

Requests for pre-application advice, including a request for a meeting, need to be in writing and be accompanied by the appropriate fee. Meetings in the Council offices or on site will be attended by an appropriate planning officer from the Council.

You will need to provide us with information about the site and details about your scheme*. This will normally include as a minimum:

- a site location plan;
 - a block plan showing the relationship between the proposal and the surrounding properties
 - a description and summary of your proposals, and preferably sketch plans;
 - photographs of the site and its surroundings
 - your contact details and an invoice address

If a meeting is requested, we will arrange the date as soon as possible after receipt, usually within 10 working days



*Clearly the more information and detail you can provide about your proposed development, the more comprehensive and constructive our advice will be. Where necessary our advice will include changes required to make a scheme acceptable (where that is possible).