

**Pre-Application Advice – Large major development**

This service is designed for proposals that are more complex or propose the following types of application:

* Over 50-200 dwellings
* 0ver 10,000sqm commercial floorspace
* Over 2ha site area
* Energy projects

Larger developments are important to us. They can have a considerable impact on Oldham and it is important to get them right, both for the local economy and for the impact that they will have on the local community and area. We will offer a pre-application advice meeting to discuss these proposals. The pre-application service is intended to speed up the planning application process for these complex cases and provide developers with a greater level of certainty.

**Scope of advice**

* Information on the relevant policies and other planning requirements.
* Provision of advice regarding the procedure, consultation, and estimated time scale concerning the processing of the application
* The required information for making a valid planning application
* Informal and without prejudice comments and guidance on the content, and presentation of an application likely to satisfy the Council’s planning policies
* Responses from internal consultees received during the process such as:
	+ Highways
	+ Environmental Health
	+ Legal
	+ Housing
	+ Strategic Planning

**What is required from the applicant:**

The Council will require sufficient information to enable a quality advice service to be provided. Generally, the more information you can give us the more assistance we can give you in developing your proposals and making your application.

For these larger, more complex proposals, we strongly encourage you to contact us at the concept stage so that you gain the most out of this service. For an initial discussion at scheme concept stage, all you will need to supply are:

* OS map of the site.
* A description of the development.

**What are the stages?**

There are a number of key stages. For less complex schemes, these stages will be less distinct and probably combined. Flexibility is key, and the process can be tailored to meet the needs of each development proposal. These stages do not represent the whole of the service. In between, we will continue to communicate with you by phone, by email, or in writing.

**Stage 1 - Agreeing a project plan**

This meeting is to ensure that your proposals are supported in principle by strategic policy at national, regional and local level. This enables us to advise you if your proposal is likely to fail on principle, thus allowing you to avoid unnecessary cost.

If your proposals can be supported by the development plan, we will then agree a project plan, deadlines and a set of commitments on both sides, so that you can be informed of the likely number of meetings and the approximate cost of the service. These elements are also likely to form the basis of a Planning Performance Agreement. This is an agreement between the Council and the applicant, which sets a timescale for processing and determining major applications that are likely to take longer than the statutory period to determine. We will also identify relevant consultees and discuss with you the methodology and process for carrying out effective consultation.

**What you need to provide:**

* OS map of the site.
* A description of the development.

**What outcomes are expected?**

* Planning statement, covering strategic policy issues.
* DTS project plan.

**Stage 2 - addressing the issues**

At this stage, our advice concentrates on ensuring that your proposal addresses established urban design principles. This includes appreciating the context, creating an urban/rural structure, making the connections and detailing the place. At this stage, the Design Statement that will accompany any planning application should be developed.

We will also give advice on whether the policy issues identified in Stage 1 have been addressed and begin to drill down into more detailed local policy and planning issues. Dependant on how far advanced your scheme is, we will begin to identify the relevant consultees, and if appropriate initiate an informal consultation process.

**What you need to provide:**

* Draft Design Statement, including a design analysis

**What outcomes are expected?**

* Design Statement and concept scheme.

**Stage 3 - consultation**

At this stage, we would seek to carry out the consultation process. This includes statutory as well as non-statutory consultees. This is the appropriate stage for you to carry out your own consultation with the local community. We will advise you on how you should do this, how we will involve Councillors in this process and how to address issues raised as part of the consultation process in preparation for a formal submission.

**What you need to provide:**

* Illustrative material of proposed scheme, possibly including options.

**What outcomes are expected?**

* Consultation response report and amendments to concept scheme.

**Stage 4 - Planning application preparation**

At this stage, we will work with you to develop your scheme in detail so that it addresses the policies in the development plan and represents good quality design and best practise. At the end of this stage, we will make sure that your proposal is ready for submission by checking that it is complete so that the application can be validated on receipt. We will also ensure that the heads of terms of any S106 agreement have been agreed in principle and any Planning Performance Agreement signed.

**What you need to provide:**

* Draft planning application.
* Draft heads of terms.

**What outcomes are expected?**

* Complete planning application.
* Agreed Planning Performance Agreement (where necessary).
* Draft S106 heads of terms.

**Stage 5 - Advice letter**

At this stage, we will provide you with a written summary of the issues that have been discussed and the matters agreed. This will normally be in the form of a letter signed by a senior officer. If you request it, we will check the draft of the letter with you before we issue it. We will be happy to receive comments, and consider changes to the wording, but we cannot change the actual advice given. The letter should provide a basis for the submission of a formal application, thereby speeding up the registration process.

**The involvement of consultees**

It is important to recognise that statutory consultees (such as Historic England and the Environment Agency) do not have a duty to respond to consultation within a given deadline prior to the submission of a planning application. However, every effort will be made to involve them early in the process and to ensure that they have the correct information necessary for them to provide a timely and meaningful response.

**Involving the local community**

We believe it is important to include local communities early in the process. In our experience, objections are often based on a lack of information or a fear of the unknown. This process should help to reduce those risks. We will offer guidance on how you should carry out your own consultation processes so that you can be satisfied that your responses are robust, have reached the same people that the Council would consult, and have included hard to reach communities.

**Ward Councillors**

With your agreement the case officer will arrange for Ward Councillors to be part of the pre-application consultation process at the appropriate time. This will generally be combined with community consultation by the developer or via a Members Briefing Session.

**What the applicant will receive**

A point of contact, a named senior planning officer, who will be responsible for project managing the pre-application process. The Senior Officer will ensure that agreed timescales and deadlines for providing written or verbal responses are adhered to. Meetings will be arranged promptly and within timeframes that take your commercial needs into account.

At the end of the process, you will receive written advice from a senior officer that will carry significant weight when any planning application based on that advice is submitted to the Council.

Usually the meeting will involve the planning case officer only but if you wish officers from other service areas within the Council to be involved in the pre-application meeting, then you should indicate this. An additional charge will be made for the involvement of each additional officer. Whilst you may request the involvement of other officers, the Council retains discretion as to who is involved in delivering the service.

Subject to the availability of all the required information, you will receive:

* A meeting with a senior officer where your draft planning application will be discussed, and advice will be given outlining the planning issues, constraints and application requirements, plus a view on whether the scheme is acceptable
* Identification of key national, regional and local policy issues that need to be addressed at an early stage, therefore affording you the opportunity to ensure that your proposal complies with the spatial policy framework.
* Identification of and advise on key urban design Issues, so that your proposals are developed properly and respond to their context.
* Identify and agree heads of terms for S106 agreements, prior to the submission of your application.
* Identify the decision-making process, including arrangements for consultation and participation, S106 drafting requirements, committee lead in times, committee deadlines and referral constraints.
* Facilitate the involvement of the local councillors in the development of your proposals
* Maintain and make available to you a written record of the advice given
* If requested, negotiate a Planning Performance Agreement with you so that you will know the timetable for the determination of your planning application.

**Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)**

For complex, major developments, where it is likely to take longer than the statutory period to determine them and where you want the Council to provide a priority service to ensure determination within a specific period, we will negotiate with you to enter into a Planning Performance Agreement.

This is a voluntary project management agreement between the Council and the applicant that sets a realistic timescale for processing and determining the application. This gives sufficient time for the Council to deal with these complex applications, but also provides more certainty to the applicant as to when a decision is likely to be made. These agreements are encouraged by government.

They are used to help:

* developers, the Local Planning Authority and key stakeholders to work together
* set mutually agreed timescales for proposals to progress through the application process
* clarify the requirements needed to submit an application
* make sure appropriate resources and expertise are provided
* provide greater opportunity for dialogue through the planning process and help deliver high quality development

As this is a bespoke service. the timetable and the fee should be agreed at an initial meeting. The fee will be dependent on the scale and complexity of the proposal and the resources that are required to achieve the timetable. If you are interested in using a PPA, please email planning@oldham.gov.uk or contact either the Head of Planning (0161 770 1917) or the Development Management Team Leader (Tel 0161 770 4116) to discuss your requirements.