Planning pre-application advice and other services
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1.0 Introduction

Cheltenham is a beautiful place to live, visit and work and it is important that new development enhances this reputation. The planning system is about making things happen so we want to work with applicants to achieve our overall aspiration of delivering high quality development for the town. We consider that this is best achieved through effective pre-application discussions.

This prospectus sets out the different ways our multi-disciplinary team can help with your projects including pre-application advice, planning performance agreements and fast-track services.

We can provide advice on all types and sizes of projects and our different levels of service help us tailor our involvement to your needs. They will add value to your projects and provide you with confidence as you develop your proposals. Effective pre-application discussions will also often result in a quicker determination period. We adopt a positive approach to development management in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and aim to deliver planning permissions where possible.

The council also provides an effective and competitive building control service that will help you deliver your projects once planning permission has been achieved.

Further details of all our services are set out below and fees are provided in Appendix 1.

2.0 General planning enquiries

2.1 Householder extensions

The planning portal helps establish whether or not you need planning permission for your development. If you are unsure, our team will be able to help you interpret the rules.

If planning permission is not necessary, we can provide you with a certificate of lawful development to confirm this. This confirms that planning permission is not necessary for your proposal and proves very helpful should you come to sell your property. The cost is £86 and your application can be processed within five working days.

If planning permission is necessary for your extension and you wish to discuss your proposal further, our duty planner is available during the hours set out below. There is a £25 fee for a 15 minute appointment (please book in advance):

- Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 10am – 4pm
- Tuesday, Thursday: 10am – 1pm
During your appointment, we will provide valuable advice on how likely your proposals are to gain planning permission, how you can best improve these chances (if necessary) and what information we need to register your application. This can save you time and money when it comes to submitting your plans. Please bring with you sketches of the proposal, as well as photographs of the site as this will help us provide better advice. There will be occasions where a site visit for householder development may be helpful and our team can discuss this with you on the telephone or when you visit our offices.

2.2 Small-scale business proposals
An appointment with the duty officer is also a suitable starting point should you wish to discuss small-scale commercial development or changes of use where no new floor space is being created. Please see above for the hours our duty planner is available and call 01242 264328 to book an appointment.

The more information that you can bring to your appointment, the more productive the meeting will be.

Our team will advise on how likely your proposals are to gain planning permission, how you can best improve these chances (if necessary) and what information we need to register your application.

Please note: Our duty officer system is not appropriate for discussing medium to large-scale commercial development or proposals for new houses. Pre-application advice is most suitable for these types of discussions. Please see below for more information on our pre-application services.

3.0 Fast-track determination
We are committed to providing flexible services to meet the needs of applicants and recognise that there are often time pressures when applying for planning permission. We therefore offer a premium service for householders for a faster determination period. This process attracts a higher fee but brings with it a commitment to determine your application within four weeks of submission (without fast-tracking, applications can take up to eight weeks to determine). Our officers will discuss the suitability of fast-track determination for your proposal with you.
Our fast-track services are most suitable for householder projects that have already had pre-application advice from our team, either following a discussion with the duty officer or a site visit and written feedback. This is because these discussions will provide some clarity on the acceptability of your project.

As part of the fast-track process, your case officer will validate your application and consult neighbouring properties within two working days of receipt (on the basis that your application is accompanied by all necessary information). They will then visit your site within the first week of the application (if they haven’t already done so through your pre-application discussions) and discuss the proposal with you shortly after if necessary.

If revisions are required, you will be given the opportunity to provide these and they will be dealt with in a timely manner.

Please note: A four week determination period will not be possible if a committee decision is necessary, although the vast majority of householder applications are not heard by committee. Processing revised drawings can also impact on these timescales and it is for this reason we strongly encourage pre-application discussions as this will reduce work during the application itself.

Should you wish to discuss fast-track proposals for other types of development, please speak to the development manager or with your case officer as part of your pre-application submission.

4.0 Conservation and heritage ‘surgeries’

Cheltenham’s historic environment is very valuable and benefits from many listed buildings. In order to preserve and enhance this environment, we host weekly ‘surgeries’ at which you can discuss matters relating to listed building with our conservation officers. Our officers are experienced in processing listed building consent applications and their advice can prove invaluable as you develop your proposals.

We offer 30 minute appointments at our weekly ‘surgeries’ to discuss matters relating to listed buildings and these take place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings between the hours of 10am and 1pm (appointments at: 10am, 10.50am, 11.40am and 12.30pm). Appointments cost £50 and should be booked in advance. Please call 01242 264328 to make an appointment.
The appointments give you the opportunity to discuss your proposals with our specialists who will provide you with a clear indication of how to best proceed. The devil is in the detail where alterations to listed buildings are concerned so our advice can help provide a smoother and timelier decision for your subsequent application.

There will be occasions where your initial appointment requires a site visit and written feedback to ensure that you receive the best possible advice. This will be discussed with you at your appointment where necessary.

5.0 Pre application submissions

If you already know that you require planning permission, or if you have established that you need it through our duty officer system or the planning portal, a pre-application submission is the best way to understand the acceptability of your project before you commit to making a planning application.

We offer three different tiers of pre-application advice, each tailored to the complexity of your project. The detail of each tier is set out in the following sections:

1. Standard advice
2. Development team approach
3. Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)

5.1 Standard advice

This service is well suited for householder projects that require more detailed consideration but also developments on straightforward sites that only requires advice from a planning officer.

You will be allocated a case officer who will visit the site and provide feedback in writing within two weeks. If necessary, your officer will also meet with you to discuss the proposal. If multiple meetings are necessary this will incur additional fees.

This service is not suitable for all projects. Developments that will require specialist input such as conservation officers, tree officers, environmental health and highway engineers will be considered through our development team approach (see below) where our specialists provide valuable advice.

If your officer considers you require additional input, they will discuss this with you shortly after we receive your submission.
5.2 Development team approach

For more complex proposals, your officer will lead a development team made up from specialist disciplines to provide a coordinated response for you.

This service promotes early design review and will provide you with timely advice that can add significant value to your application.

Our design surgery meets on a monthly basis in our urban room (please see website for dates) and gives you the opportunity to present your scheme. It is chaired by the development management team leader and is attended by case officers, our specialists (including representatives from the townscape team, conservation and heritage and trees) and a representative from the highways authority when necessary.

Each review will last about an hour and commences with an opportunity for you to make a 15 minute presentation to the team to explain your proposal. The team will then ask questions and provide some initial comments on the proposals. Following the meeting you will receive written feedback from your case officer.

We work closely with other design review bodies including:

- The Cheltenham Architects’ Panel (an independent panel of Cheltenham based architects) meets monthly and provides an opportunity to present pre-application proposals. Their comments directly feed into our assessment of your proposal.
- The Gloucestershire Design Panel conducts valuable design review for more complex and significant proposals.
- The Civic Society also engages with pre-applications.

Attendance at any of these meetings should be discussed with your case officer who will make the necessary arrangements.

We can also involve local councilors in the process as they can provide equally valuable insight. This is carefully managed to ensure confidentiality and to prevent pre-judgement and councillors engaged in the process are guided by the council’s planning code of conduct. Pre application is the most appropriate time for this type of engagement.

Submissions that follow the development team approach may evolve over time and require our ongoing involvement. We are committed to this as we see the value it can bring to projects but we charge for additional meetings and/or feedback unless negotiated through a planning performance agreement.
5. 3 Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)

The aim of a PPA is to improve the quality of planning applications and the decision-making process. By giving you a clear understanding of the resource we will invest and in agreeing the key milestones and timelines that all parties will work within, they can offer a greater level of clarity, certainty and confidence.

They supplement and build on our development team approach and terms are agreed on a case by case basis, because of this they attract a higher fee.

PPA aims to set out a realistic timetable for the delivery of the project, identifying and defining key milestones and identifying key team members, stakeholders and consultees.

They can run for the duration of a development proposal if desired; from pre-application advice through to validation, determination and discharge of conditions. Such certainty throughout the course of a project can prove invaluable.

While a PPA will help ensure an application is processed to an agreed timetable, the agreement does not prejudice the outcome of a planning application nor does it guarantee a planning permission.

5.4 What is required from you?

For each tier advice, we ask that you provide as much detail of your proposal as possible but as a minimum:

- A completed application form and the necessary fee
- Location plan
- A brief summary of what you are trying to achieve and why
- Drawings and/or written description of the development explaining the proposal

If insufficient information is provided, we may not be able to process your request but you will be given the opportunity to provide additional details.

5.5 What you will receive

For standard pre-application submissions we will conduct a site visit, meet with you if necessary and provide a written response within two weeks. If this is not possible, a clear timetable and explanation will be provided.

If you opt for our development team approach, your case officer will contact you within a week of your submission to arrange a site visit and any subsequent meetings. Your officer will discuss who will be involved in the project and also the merits of a PPA if appropriate.
If your proposal is to be presented at design surgery and/or architects’ panel, we will take it to the next appropriate meeting. Both meet monthly and your case officer will be able to advise on dates.

Following a site visit and design review/meeting, written feedback will be provided within three weeks. If this is not possible, a clear timetable and explanation will be provided.

If the proposal merits a PPA, the timescales may be different but this will be discussed with you on an individual basis.

The feedback you receive will provide the following:

- Our views on your proposal including feedback from specialist disciplines (where relevant)
- Advice on how to improve the scheme if necessary
- Commentary on relevant policies
- Guidance in relation to the documents and statements necessary to validate your application.

With all of these services, your proposal may evolve over time. We welcome ongoing involvement with your projects but will charge for additional meetings or feedback on revised proposals unless negotiated through a PPA.

**Please note:** Your feedback will be the opinion of officers, based on their understanding of current law and policy. It will not bind the planning committee to a particular decision and the weight given to the advice may decline over time as circumstances and policy change.

### 6.0 Building control services

The building control service deals with the more technical side of the construction process. The main areas of interest for the building control team are:

- Structural stability.
- Fire resistance, safety and means of escape in case of fire.
- Thermal insulation and building efficiency.
- Drainage and building ventilation.
- Inclusive design focused on minimum provisions to allow a reasonable standard of access to new buildings and extensions.

The building regulations are divided into 16 categories and details of the regulations and the approved documents supporting those regulations can be viewed on the [planning portal](#).
It is likely that any construction project you are considering will require building regulation approval. Although some projects may require both types of approval, other projects may only require planning or building regulation approval, another reason to meet early in the design process.

Unlike some planning approvals, building control is not a committee driven approval process; all of our decisions are made by the officer dealing with the case which makes our decision process quicker. The regulations are not written in a prescriptive form and so there is always an opportunity for us to discuss and agree unique methods of compliance with the regulations, there is never a single right answer. For this reason there is always benefit in meeting early in the design process to agree the most efficient and satisfactory way for you to complete a project which satisfies your needs and complies with the building regulations.

Cheltenham and Tewkesbury building control service, as the name suggests, operates for both local authorities. The service has a good working relationship with the planning teams at both Cheltenham and Tewkesbury borough councils. The building control service can offer advice as part of the planning pre-application process or as part of the development team approach.

If you want advice regarding building control please ask the planning team and they will arrange for a building control surveyor to attend their meeting. The first 30 minutes will be free of charge but extended discussions will be charged at £65 per hour and then the total charge will be deducted from any subsequent building control fee when we receive your application.

It is important to the building control team that your project is successfully completed. We will work with you so your project fulfils your requirements and is safe, comfortable and efficient to use.

7.0 Contacts
To contact the planning team, book an appointment or enquire about any of the services available, please call: 01242 264328, or email: planning@cheltenham.gov.uk

To contact building control, please call: 01242 264321, or email: buildingcontrol@cheltenham.gov.uk
### 8.0 Appendices

#### Appendix 1 – Fees list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of development</th>
<th>Nature of service</th>
<th>Fee</th>
<th>Further meetings and additional feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Domestic extension</td>
<td>a) officer appointment (15 minutes)</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td>£25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) visit and written feedback</td>
<td>£25 after appointment</td>
<td>£25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£60 without prior appointment</td>
<td>£25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Fast-track application <em>(the fee associated with this process is inclusive of the statutory fee of £172)</em></td>
<td>£250 after ‘a’ and ‘b’</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£260 after ‘b’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£315 after ‘a’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Works to listed buildings</td>
<td>a) Heritage officer appointment (30 minutes)</td>
<td>£50</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Site visit and written feedback</td>
<td>£100 after appointment</td>
<td>£75</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£200 without prior appointment</td>
<td>£75</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Residential development</td>
<td>1 – 2 dwellings</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>£100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 – 5 dwellings</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>£250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Commercial development</td>
<td>Up to 500m²</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>£100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change of use (with no new floorspace)</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>£100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Development team: Residential development</td>
<td>1 dwelling</td>
<td>£250</td>
<td>£125</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 – 9 dwellings</td>
<td>£700</td>
<td>£300</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 – 49 dwellings</td>
<td>£1,800</td>
<td>£500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 – 99 dwellings</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
<td>£750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100+ dwellings</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Development team: Commercial development</td>
<td>Less than 500m²</td>
<td>£250</td>
<td>£125</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>501 – 1000m²</td>
<td>£700</td>
<td>£300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001 – 5000m²</td>
<td>£1,800</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5001 – 10,000m²</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
<td>£750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000m²+</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7) Planning performance agreements</th>
<th>Suitable for all projects but most appropriate for complex developments.</th>
<th>Twice the relevant fee for the development team process.</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JCS sites considered on a case by case basis</td>
<td>No additional fees for further meetings.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>