



CHELTENHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Planning: Pre-Application Services Guidance Note

April 2026

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Foreword

As part of our ongoing commitment to improving service delivery and ensuring a smooth and efficient application process, I am excited to announce a refresh of Cheltenham's pre-application process. Our goal is to provide invaluable support to developers, businesses, and individuals planning development projects in Cheltenham, helping you navigate the planning system with confidence and clarity.

The pre-application service offers a wide range of benefits for both applicants and the local planning authority. By engaging early, you'll receive:

- **Targeted, Professional Advice:** Early-stage guidance ensures timely and expert reviews of your proposals, helping you understand key requirements from the outset.
- **Opportunities to Refine Your Proposal:** With feedback in the early stages, you can address potential challenges and adjust your plans, reducing the risk of delays or refusals at the formal application stage.
- **Community Engagement:** Early engagement helps you better understand local concerns and opportunities, enabling you to work collaboratively with communities and stakeholders.
- **Confidence in the Planning Process:** Our guidance helps break down any uncertainties, ensuring a smoother, more predictable journey through the planning system.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** Receive advice on environmental, sustainability, and other regulatory requirements before submitting a formal application, reducing the risk of delays caused by non-compliance.
- **Tailored Approach:** Each project is unique, and we provide a focused approach that reflects the specific needs of your proposal, ensuring you receive the most relevant guidance.

By refining our processes and adjusting our fees, we are investing in the quality and efficiency of our services. This enables us to allocate resources more effectively, providing you with a dedicated account management approach to ensure your project progresses smoothly.

We look forward to working with you and supporting the success of your development project in Cheltenham!

Cllr Mike Collins

Introduction

Cheltenham is a beautiful place to live, visit and work and it is important that new development enhances this reputation. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieving sustainable development and delivering positive outcomes. To help make this happen, 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 and evidence is clear that positive pre application supports a smoother journey through the planning application process itself.

The Development Management Team offers a range of pre-application services, providing advice and information on a variety of topics/projects. This includes duty officer appointments for householder projects, written pre-application advice for all types of development (following meetings or site visits where appropriate), and planning performance agreements for more major/complex proposals.

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2.0 The benefits of seeking pre-application advice

There are a number of benefits that can be achieved by seeking advice and guidance from Cheltenham's Development Management Team through our pre-application service. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) acknowledges that early engagement has significant potential to improve efficiency and improve outcomes of planning applications. Further benefits include:

- Providing an understanding of the local and national policies that will be relevant to your development.
- Identify at an early stage, whether specialist advice would be required in order to further develop your proposal. This could include information/details relating to listed buildings, trees, landscape, sustainability and climate change mitigation, noise, transport, contaminated land, drainage, ecology or archaeology for example.
- Assuming our advice is taken on board, it can often result in the quicker determination of a formal application, as well as increasing the likelihood of the application being approved without the need for revisions. There is a limit to how many sets of revisions we will accept during the processing of an application and therefore meaningful pre-application engagement will significantly reduce the likelihood of your application being refused. This provides an improved level of confidence to help build into development programmes, where often a key trigger on early costs is the perceived delays in planning which most often arise due to schemes not being tested at pre application stage and applicants not being invested in the pre application process.
- It can identify the necessary requirements for a planning application which may reduce the risk of the application being invalidated when received.
- It may also identify that a proposal is principally unacceptable and therefore may save you the time and money that would be associated with developing a full planning application submission.



3.0 Householder pre-application services

Whether you are considering an extension to your property, re-modelling works, the erection of an outbuilding or the installation of solar panels, the Planning Portal will first help you establish whether or not you need planning permission for your development.

You can apply for a Certificate of Lawful Proposed Development for written confirmation that your proposal is permitted development. If issued, this certificate confirms that planning permission is not necessary for your proposal and can prove very helpful should you come to sell your property in the future. Details of how to submit this type of application can be found on our website.

If planning permission is necessary for your works, you may wish to discuss your proposal further with one of our Development Management Team. In this instance we offer a range of pre-application services, which are set out below.



3.1 Duty officer telephone appointments

If you wish to discuss your proposal via a telephone appointment, we have a duty planning officer available at different times throughout the week and would be available to discuss your project with you.

Our duty planning officer appointments are available during the following times:

- Mondays and Thursdays:
11am – 1pm
(last appointment 12:30pm)
- Wednesday:
2pm – 4pm
(last appointment 3:30pm)

The fee for this service is £94 per appointment (appointments last no more than 20 minutes). Please note that before the appointment can be booked, payment and the submission of relevant information will need to be provided. The duty planning officer cannot provide focused advice without a clear understanding of what you are looking to achieve.

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 application. The more information you can provide ahead of the meeting, the more productive the appointment will be. There will be occasions where a site visit for householder development may be helpful, in this instance, the officer can advise you on the other pre-application services we offer. These are discussed in section 3.2 below.

If you wish to take advantage of this telephone appointment service, more information on how to book an appointment, make payment and how to submit the necessary information is provided on our [website](#).

3.2 Householder pre-applications

If a duty officer appointment is not suitable for your householder development, or should you require a more detailed service, such as a written response, a meeting and/or a site visit, we offer a more formal householder pre-application service that may be more suitable. The different levels of service we can offer are:

- A written response
- A meeting and written response
- A site visit and written response

Note: meetings will be held virtually (either by telephone or via video call) and any meeting or site visit will last no more than 30 minutes.

The process requires you to complete a pre-application form, provide the required information, pay the relevant fee, and to submit to us for processing. A pre-application submission will only be valid upon receipt of all relevant information and payment. Officers will then strive to provide a written response within 15 working days. If there is an extension to this time, you will be advised.

Further information on the requirements can be found in section 6.1.

The relevant fees for the different levels of service can be found in our fee schedule in section 10. Please note, if specialist comments are required, additional fees may be necessary.



4.0 New residential and commercial development

Formal pre-application is a great way to get advice and guidance on your project from Cheltenham's Development Management Team. This service can be used for development that may include new residential dwellings, commercial developments, a change of use of a building or site, advertisement consent and various other forms of non-householder development. We urge all prospective applicants to engage in this service, to reinforce the advice - this investment provides you with valuable advice that should address potential challenges which may arise through the application process.



4.1 Residential and commercial pre-application services

We offer different levels of engagement and response, depending on the service you require and the complexity of the proposal. You can choose from the following:

- A written response
- A meeting and written response
- A site visit and written response
- General principles meeting (no written response)

The process requires you to complete a pre-application form, provide the required information, pay the relevant fee, and to submit to us for processing. A pre-application submission will only be valid upon receipt of all relevant information and payment. Officers will then strive to provide a written response within the following timescales:

- Minor Development (up to 10 dwellings or up to 1000m² of non-residential floor space) – written response within 20 working days
- Major Development – written response within 30 working days (unless a Planning Performance Agreement ('PPA') is in place)

Note: where a meeting or site visit is requested, the timescales above will start from the date of the meeting or site visit.

Further information on the requirements of a valid submission can be found in section 6.1.

A general principles meeting is an option whereby you can simply discuss the principles of your project with a member of the Development Management Team, the proposal can relate to both new residential or non-residential development. The advice provided in the meeting will highlight the specific policy areas that may be relevant to the development, as well as offering initial comments/feedback on the project. This service will involve a virtual meeting which will last no more than 60 or 90 minutes, depending on the scale of development. A written response will not be provided.

The fees for the different levels of service can be found in our fee schedule in section 10.



4.2 Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)

In some instances, where a development is particularly complex, a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) may be the most appropriate way to process your pre-application submission and we encourage the use of a PPA with all larger schemes or smaller schemes where challenges are already represented. 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.

PPAs aim 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. Please visit our website for further guidance in respect of PPAs .



5.0 Conservation and Heritage

Cheltenham's historic environment is very valuable and benefits from many listed buildings, conservation areas with associated Character Area Management Plans and Appraisals. Development of a listed building, development within the setting of a listed building or within the conservation area need to preserve and enhance the heritage assets and the environment. It is therefore important that proposals are carefully planned and thought out before applications are made.

5.1 Listed Building Surgeries

To help assist with projects that may impact on Cheltenham's protected heritage assets, we host weekly 'surgeries' at which you can discuss proposals with our conservation officers. This is often the quickest and most economical way of getting informal advice. Our officers are experienced in processing listed building consent applications and their advice can prove invaluable as you develop your proposals.

We offer appointments at our weekly 'surgeries' to discuss matters relating to listed buildings, these surgeries take place on Friday mornings, please contact us for times as these vary from week to week. These appointments cost £94 (appointments to last no more than 20 minutes).

Please note that before the appointment can be booked, payment and the submission of all relevant information will need to be provided. The following information will be required:

- Full Address of the site or Site Location Plan.
- Details of the heritage significance of the site i.e. listed building, conservation area (refer to Historic England and the Conservation pages on our website for more information).
- Written description listing the proposed work identifying potential impact upon heritage significance of the area.
- Details showing the existing and proposed work. This should include (but not be limited to) sketch details of floor plans, elevations, product information and annotated photographs.

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. As per the Development Management Surgeries the more information you can provide ahead of the meeting, the more productive the appointment will be and clearer the advice you will receive.

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 officers may need to visit the site in order to offer the best and most appropriate advice. If appropriate, this will be discussed with you at your appointment. The fees for these further services can be found in our fee schedule in section 10.

Further information, advice and guidance on heritage matters can also be found on our [Conservation web pages](#).

5.2 Listed Building Pre-Application Service

If a surgery appointment is not suitable for your development, or should you require a more detailed service for other complex proposals, we offer other pre-application services that may be more suitable. The services we offer include the following:

- A written response
- A meeting and written response
- A site visit and written response

Note: meetings will be held virtually (either by telephone or via video call) and any meeting or site visit will last no more than 30 minutes.

The process requires you to complete a pre-application form, provide the required information, pay the relevant fee and submit to us for processing. A pre-application submission will only be valid upon receipt of all relevant information and payment. Officers will then strive to provide a written response with 15 working days of a valid submission.

The information necessary to process a conservation and heritage pre-application will include that set out in section 5.1 above, as well as the relevant information set out in section 6.1.

The relevant fees for these different levels of service can be found on our fee schedule in section 10.

Where specialist heritage and conservation advice is required in connection with other development that requires planning permission or advertisement consent, our conservation officers can provide comments/feedback on your proposal, and will ensure you get a comprehensive response to your pre-application submission. Please note that an additional fee is required where conservation comments are requested in connection with other development. Please refer to our fee schedule in section 10.



6.0 The pre-application service

We will endeavor to provide a timely service that is of most benefit to you and your future development. The level of service we can offer you, will depend on the level of information and the amount of detail you provide.

6.1 What we require?

For each level of service we offer, we ask that you provide as much detail about your proposal as possible, but as a minimum we would expect:

- A completed application form (found here) and the necessary fee
- Location plan
- Description of the site, including existing uses
- Description of the proposed development
- Existing and proposed site layout plan
- Existing floor plans and elevations
- Proposed floor plans and elevations
- Photographs and details of any trees likely to be impacted by the proposal

For householder and smaller scale developments sketches will often be accepted. We would also encourage you to provide site photographs, as these can be particularly useful where site visits are not undertaken.

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.

6.2 What you will receive

Where applicable, written feedback will be provided within the timescales set out in the relevant sections above and will be provided following a meeting or site visit (if applicable). If this is not possible for any reason, 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: The feedback you receive will be the opinion of officers, based on their understanding of current law and policy. It will not bind the planning officers or committee to a particular decision and the weight given to the advice may decline over time as circumstances and policy may change.

7.0 Building control services

Building regulations set standards for the design and construction of buildings to ensure safety and health for people, including those with disabilities, in or around those buildings and to help conserve fuel and power.

Building regulations approval is not the same as obtaining planning permission for your work. In the same way, being granted planning permission is not the same as taking action to ensure that the work complies with building regulations. If you are having construction work carried out you will have health and safety responsibilities to consider and may need to notify us before starting work.

Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Building Control (CTBC) was formed in 2010 to provide local authority building control service on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council. Our experienced team members are committed to providing highest standards and approaching sustainability in the design, approval and construction of buildings.

For further information on the services we provide and how to make a building control application, please visit the [Cheltenham and Tewkesbury building control website](#).

8.0 Climate Change

Climate change is having a major impact on our planet. Cheltenham Borough Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' and committed to becoming a net zero carbon council and borough by 2030. In February 2022 a [Climate Change Action Plan](#) was created with the goal of ensuring that we strive for Cheltenham to be a thriving and equitable town, ensuring a good life for everyone within the Earth's natural boundaries.

In order to take forward the Council's ambitions a new guidance document for planning was adopted by the Council in June 2022. The Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document ('SPD') communicates Cheltenham Borough Council's ambitions for all buildings within the borough and how they should respond to the climate change and biodiversity crisis.

The SPD, which is available from our [website](#), is intended to provide guidance to applicants on successfully integrating a best-practice approach towards climate and biodiversity in development proposals.

How successfully applications align with the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and on this basis you are asked to take account of this document when designing your proposals and to submit a sustainability appraisal with your application.



9.0 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

10.0 Fee Schedule 2026

Householder Fees	Letter Only £94	Letter and Meeting £120	Site Visit and Letter £160	Follow-up Meeting £62	Follow-up Letter
Residential Development Fees					
1-2 dwellings	£415	£520	£570	£130	£145
3-9 dwellings	£986	£1,090	£1,194	£145	£176
10-49 dwellings	£1,765	£1,868	£1,972	£311	£467
50-99 dwellings	£3,322	£3,633	£3,840	£415	£623
200-350 dwellings	£5,190	£5,812	£6,228	£519	£934
Non-Residential / Commercial Development Fees					
Up to 500sqm	£343	£457	£519	£130	£145
501-999sqm	£571	£675	£778	£145	£176
1000-4999sqm	£1,868	£2,024	£2,180	£311	£467
5000-9999sqm	£2,387	£2,854	£3,114	£415	£675
10,000-19,000sqm	£4,152	£4,671	£5,190	£519	£934
Other Pre-Application Advice Fees					
Listed Building (householder)	£94	£120	£160	£62	
Listed Building Non-householder	£182	£238	£285	£130	
Change of Use	£239	£285	£348	£130	£156
Advertisements	£130				
Telephone Appointment	£94				

General principle advice for 10 to 49 dwellings or up to 5000 sq metres floor space; meeting only (up to 60 minutes) with no written response - £727

General principle advice for 50 or more dwellings or over 5000 sq metres floor space; meeting only (up to 90 minutes) with no written response - £1,349

A number of exemptions and reductions apply in certain circumstances, these can be viewed in full on our website



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