

Tower Hamlets pre-application planning advice service



The value of pre-application advice

Obtaining pre-application advice can help to improve the quality of planning applications and their likelihood of success. This can be achieved by:

- providing an understanding of the relevant planning policies and other material considerations associated with a proposed development;
- identifying and resolving potential planning issues associated with a proposed development;
- discussing the possible mitigation of the impact of a proposed development, including any planning conditions;
- identifying the information required to accompany a formal planning application, thus reducing the likelihood of delays at the validation stage;
- setting up a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) where this would help with managing the process and agreeing the resources for progressing the application.

Tower Hamlets offers a pre-application planning advice service suitable for all projects – large or small. This guide explains how to use the service, what we offer and what you can expect.

Our service standards

Tower Hamlets pre-application planning advice service is open to everyone. The service provides you with planning advice before you submit a planning application. Pre-application advice can provide you with several benefits:

- **Certainty** – we can provide advice on whether a proposal is likely to be supported in planning terms before you spend time and money on preparing a planning application. We can explain how proposals could be amended to make them acceptable.
- **Speed** – deliver quicker planning decisions due to issues being identified and resolved early on, so that fewer problems are likely to arise when a planning application is submitted.
- **Quality** – a collaborative approach can result in better developments, by adding value and helping you to design proposals that help to meet Local Plan policies.

The pre-application service is based on the principle of working collaboratively and proactively to shape development proposals so they are more likely to be recommended for approval.

How to get started

For any of the pre-application services listed in scale A1 – A4 and scales B to E, please complete the request using the [Pre-application advice request form](#) located on the planning pre-application advice page on the Council's website. If you experience any problems or issues completing the form, contact can be made with the customer advice service via an e-mail to planning@towerhamlets.gov.uk or via phone on 0207 364 5009.

Following receipt of your completed form we will contact you to arrange payment of the correct fee within 2 working days. The fee request will detail the methods of payment but usually fees will be paid by BACS.

Duty Planner Service

You can also access the free Duty Planner Service for more general enquiries. Contact can be made using the [Planning free advice form](#) located on the planning pre-application advice page on the Council's website. This is the preferred method, however if you cannot use the online form then you can also make contact by phoning 020 7364 5009. We will respond to your enquiry within two working days.

Paying the correct fee

The pages below list our services and the associated fees. The fees are based on the scale of development as calculated by floor space or number of new homes for larger housing developments. Fees are inclusive of vat. Any alterations to existing floor space that would be affected by the proposals should be included alongside new floor space to establish the correct fee. If in doubt, contact our customer service team on 020 7364 5009 or e-mail planning@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

The Council reserves the right to determine the correct fee.

A discounted fee is charged for follow up meetings. To arrange a follow up meeting, please use the [Pre-application follow-up meeting request form](#) on the planning pre-application page of our website. In the event that you are not able to use the online form then an e-mail can be sent to planning@towerhamlets.gov.uk , quoting the pre-application advice reference number, address and "Follow-up meeting" in the subject header. You will be contacted within two working days to make payment.

For major development, you may wish to consider a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) for an agreed programme of meetings.

Timescales

When we have received your pre-application request and the correct fee, a planning case officer will be allocated and will begin to review the information you have provided, coordinate the input from colleagues in other services and scheduling an initial meeting. The planning case officer will aim to contact you within **10 working days** to make the arrangements for an initial meeting to take place at the earliest opportunity.

Following the initial meeting, we will provide you with written advice in the form of a pre-application report or letter. This will be issued within **10 working days** of the date of the meeting.

Providing information to support your request

The basic requirement to use the pre-application advice service is a completed pre-application form and an Ordnance Survey site location plan, usually to a scale of 1:1250, or similar.

The information you provide should be *proportionate* to the scale and complexity of the development proposed and the level of advice you would like to receive. For example, basic floor plans and elevations, along with photographs of the current site should be sufficient for advice on household extensions or small commercial development proposals such as shop fronts or changes of use.

More information will be needed to provide advice on larger scale development proposals or those which may affect more sensitive locations or heritage assets, such as development in conservation areas or listed buildings. A good starting point is to include the first draft of a [Design and Access Statement](#) as this is likely to be a requirement if you submit an application.

As a rule, our advice can only be proportionate to the level of information you are able to provide.

What to expect

A dedicated planning case officer will be allocated. They will aim to contact you within **10 working days** of your request being accepted, to arrange an initial meeting. They will normally visit the site before the meeting takes place (except for scale A services).

At the initial pre-application meeting there will be an opportunity to present your proposed development ideas to a planning officer and discuss with other members of our team, for example a design or conservation specialist or transport and environmental health officers. We will discuss the principles of the development and provide advice on the Local Plan, other planning policies and material considerations that will have to be considered.

We will look at how local context and constraints will influence the scale and design of the proposals. We will also provide specialist advice on technical issues such as transport, access, servicing, parking, noise, neighbours amenity and other environmental effects.

For major or more complex proposals we will agree a programme of follow up meetings which may be structured within a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA).

As part of the service, we will provide advice on the submission requirements for a planning application, confirm the likely planning conditions and planning obligations and an estimate of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liability.

For major development proposals, we will advise on whether a presentation to the Council's **Conservation and Design Advisory Panel**, the **Isle of Dogs Community Development Forum** or the **Planning Committees** would be appropriate.

Pre-application planning advice will be reviewed by a team leader or area manager to ensure we have covered all the issues and the advice is consistent with that offered for similar proposals.

You may wish to amend your proposals to deal with any planning issues we identify. We want to work collaboratively so at the end of the process you have a good understanding as to whether the proposals would comply with relevant planning policies and a planning application could be supported in principle. If we conclude that the proposals conflict with adopted planning policies and are unlikely to be supported, we will tell you at the earliest opportunity and provide clear reasons to help you decide whether to proceed with a planning application.

The Council must meet certain national targets for the speed of decisions on planning applications and we need to use our resources appropriately. We may decline to accept amendments to applications after submission if you have not previously sought pre-application advice or if our advice has not been followed.

Our pre-application advice is based on the information provided. It is provided in good faith, but it cannot be binding on the Council as a Local Planning Authority when assessing and determining a formal planning application.

Community engagement

National Planning Guidance says that engagement with the local community on major development or schemes that can have a significant impact on a local area is good practice.

The Council's [Statement of Community Involvement](#) strongly supports pre-application engagement with the local community. It encourages developers to consider new or innovative ways of involving residents, interest groups and businesses. We will provide advice on community engagement as part of the pre-application advice

Introductory meetings for larger scale major developments

We now offer introductory meetings with senior managers for larger scale, major developments, where the principles of a proposal can be discussed prior to arranging more detailed pre-application meetings. This service can be beneficial for developers who are considering acquiring a site and want to explore initial ideas and understand how policies

will be applied or are new to development in Tower Hamlets. It will also be suitable for major regeneration proposals and we can help identify other key Council services and partners who may need to be involved, beyond the planning authority. We do not normally appoint a case officer at this stage and the service is not suitable for discussing detailed or technical issues. Please see scale D7 and E7 in the fee schedule.

London Legacy Development Corporation

In Fish Island and parts of Bromley by Bow, the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) is the local planning authority. The LLDC can provide pre-application advice for proposed development in their planning area. It is often helpful to also discuss your proposals with the Council as we will be asked to provide comments to the LLDC at the application stage. Pre-application meetings on LLDC schemes can be arranged and will be charged at the appropriate *follow up meeting fee* for scales B to E.

Further information

For more information contact can be made using the [Planning free advice form](#) on our pre-application page of website or by contacting our customer service team on 020 7364 5009.

Tower Hamlets pre-application advice charges

With effect from 11 April 2022

Scale A

Scale A covers the duty planner, householder, and small business service.

Types of Scale A development

This service is suitable for the following types of development:

Householder developments (i.e.affecting a single dwelling)

Advice on permitted development rights

Extensions or change of use to non- residential buildings,including small businesses involving up to 150sqm of floorspace

Changes to shopfronts including signs and adverts attached to shops or business premises

Plant or machinery on commercial premises

Improvements or alterations to community facilities

Advice on whether planning permission will be required to replace external cladding materials

Scale A Service Standards

- Drop-in meeting – week-day mornings 9.00am – 1.00pm at the Town Hall reception, Mulberry Place. Although no appointment is needed, this is subject to availability so please check before attending.
- Telephone conversation with a planning advisor
- Optional written confirmation letter or e-mail. Please see our fees table - charges A1 and A2)
- Optional site visit. This is subject to availability and falls under charge A3 on our fees table
- Optional full pre-application meeting - falls under charge A4

Table of Scale A service level fees

A0. Duty Planner – general planning advice	Free service
A1. Confirmation of advice letter (planning only)	£89.00
A2. Confirmation of advice letter for properties in conservation areas or works affecting listed buildings	£175.00
A3. Officer site visit (in addition to scale A1 or A2 confirmation email/letter)	£95.00
A4a. Householder, small business or community facilities pre- application meeting.	£270.00
A4b. Advice on replacement or alterations to external cladding	

Tower Hamlets pre-application advice charges

With effect from 11 April 2022

Scale B

Scale B covers minor development.

Types of Scale B development

This service is suitable for the following types of development:

Development involving creation of 1-9 new dwellings;

New buildings, extensions or changes of use over 150 and less than 1,000 sq. metres (any use class);

Telecoms masts and equipment;

Free standing advertisements, signs and hoardings.

Scale B Service Standards

- Meeting with a planning officer and other specialist officers.
- Optional follow up design and technical meetings.
- Site visit
- Formal advice letter
- Confirmation of likely CIL and planning obligations
- Confirmation of application submission requirements.

Table of Scale B service level fees

B1. Initial meeting and written advice	£1,600.00
B2. Additional follow-up meeting(s) with written advice	£970.00
B3. Advice on discharge of conditions, or amendments to a permission	£970.00

Tower Hamlets pre-application advice charges

With effect from 11 April 2022

Scale C

Scale C covers small scale major development.

Types of Scale C development

This service is suitable for the following types of development:

Proposals involving the creation of 10-34 dwellings;

New buildings, extensions or changes of use 1000-4,999 sq. metres (any use)

Scale C Service Standards

- Meeting with a planning officer and other specialist officers.
- Optional follow up design and technical meetings.
- Site visits
- Formal advice letter(s)
- Confirmation of likely CIL and planning obligations
- Confirmation of application submission requirements
- Presentation to the Conservation and Design Advisory Panel (CADAP) – if appropriate.
- Advice on pre-application community engagement.

Table of Scale C service level fees

C1. Initial meeting and written advice	£4,155.00
C2. Additional follow-up meeting(s) with written advice	£2,600.00
C3. Advice on discharge of conditions, or amendments to a permission	£2,600.00

Tower Hamlets pre-application advice charges

With effect from 11 April 2022

Scale D

Scale D covers large scale major development.

Types of Scale D development

This service is suitable for the following types of development:

Proposals involving 35-149 dwellings; New buildings, extensions or changes of use 5,000-14,999 sq. metres (any use); Advice on reserved matters.

Scale D Service Standards

- Establish a multi-disciplinary development advice team
- Scoping / general principles meeting with a senior planning manager and development team.
- Design principles meeting
- Optional follow up design and technical meetings.
- Pre-application advice report or letter
- Confirmation of likely Planning Obligations, including financial contributions
- Confirmation of likely CIL liability
- Agree application timeframes and draft Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)
- Presentation to the Conservation and Design Advisory Panel (CADAP), if appropriate.
- Presentation to Development or Strategic Development Committee, if appropriate
- Confirmation of application submission requirements.
- Advice on pre-application community engagement.

Table of Scale D service level fees

D1. Initial meetings (up to two – e.g. design principles and pre-application programme, plus attendance at GLA pre-app. meeting) and written advice	£8,115.00
D2. Additional meeting(s) with written advice	£4,875.00
D3. Advice on discharge of conditions or amendments to a planning permission	£4,875.00
D4. Advice on Environmental Impact Assessment Screening or Scoping	£4,875.00
D5. Pre-application viability review	Recover consultants' costs + 10% administration.
D6. Community Forum set up and facilitation	£2,170.00
D7. Introductory "in principle" meeting with Director of Planning and/or Head of Service	£2,650.00

Tower Hamlets pre-application advice charges

With effect from 11 April 2022

Scale E

Scale E covers strategic development proposals.

Types of Scale E development

This service is suitable for the following types of development:

- Proposals involving 150 or more dwellings;
- New buildings, extensions or changes of use or more than 15,000 sq. metres (any use);
- Development that meets any of the other definitions for applications of Potential Strategic Importance (PSI) in the current Mayor of London Order
- Local Plan site allocations
- Site wide masterplans
- Advice on reserved matters following an outline permission

Scale E Service Standards

- Establish a multi-disciplinary development advice team
- Scoping / general principles meeting with a senior planning manager and development team.
- Design development meeting
- Attendance at joint GLA pre-application meeting (GLA may apply their own charges)
- Optional follow up design and technical meetings. Pre-application advice report or letter
- Confirmation of likely Planning Obligations, including financial contributions
- Confirmation of likely CIL liability
- Agree application timeframes and draft Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)
- Presentation to the Conservation and Design Advisory Panel (CADAP), if appropriate.
- Presentation to Development or Strategic Development Committee, if appropriate
- Confirmation of application submission requirements.
- Advice on pre-application community engagement.

Tower Hamlets pre-application advice charges

With effect from 11 April 2022

Table of Scale E service level fees

E1. Initial meetings (up to two e.g. design principles and pre-application programme plus attendance at GLA pre-app meeting) and written advice	£18,880.00
E2. Additional meeting(s) with written advice	£5,040.00
E3. Advice on discharge of conditions or amendments to a planning permission	£5,040.00
E4. Advice on Environmental Impact Assessment Screening or Scoping	£5,040.00
E5. Pre-application viability review	Recover consultants' costs + 10% administration.
E6. Community Forum set up and facilitation	£2,520.00
E7. Introductory "in principle" meeting with Director of Planning and/or Head of Service	£3,000.00