

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION SCREENING

Introduction

All proposals falling within the classes of development defined as National or Major require pre-application consultation (PAC) to be carried out between developers and communities. The requirement for PAC applies to:

- applications for planning permission;
- applications for planning permission in principle;
- applications for approval of matters specified in conditions.

In most instances it will be obvious whether a proposal falls under the definition of what is a National or Major development and in such cases, applicants must follow the PAC process before submitting a planning application. It is open to prospective applicants to proceed with the PAC without seeking a formal view from the Council where they are content that PAC is required.

Where prospective applicants are uncertain as to whether the proposal is a National or Major development they may apply to the Planning Authority for a formal opinion. The benefit of obtaining such an opinion is that it will provide some clarity early in the pre-application process of the steps to be followed and avoid any unnecessary or unexpected delay later. Where the Planning Authority have provided an opinion confirming that a proposal is not considered to be in a class of development that requires PAC, the opinion is valid for 12 months providing that the proposals are not significantly altered within the intervening period.

Screening Process

Prospective applicants seeking an opinion from the Planning Authority on whether a proposal is a National or Major development should go through a screening process. This involves the submission of a “pre-application screening notice” which requires to be accompanied by sufficient information to enable the Planning Authority to reach a view on the need for PAC. The notice must contain the following information:

- applicants name, address and contact information
- the site address
- a description of the development to be carried out (this should include sufficient detail to identify the nature and scale of development proposed)
- a plan showing the outline of the site to which the development relates (this should include sufficient information to clearly identify the site). The plan should be to a known scale and be ordnance survey based.
- a statement as to whether a screening opinion or screening direction has previously been issued on the need for EIA in respect of the development (whether the proposals were previously screened as Schedule 1 development).

A Pre-Application Screening Notice is available on our forms page.

Timescales

Once a prospective applicant has submitted a notice, it will be checked to ensure that the correct level of information has been submitted. If the information is complete, the Planning Authority has 21 days from the receipt of the notice to provide an opinion – this is referred to as a “screening statement”. If the information is incomplete or insufficient, the Planning Authority can request within 21 days further necessary information to enable it to reach a decision. Upon receipt of further information, the Planning Authority has 21 days to issue the screening statement.

Post Screening

Where the Council has issued a screening statement indicating that PAC is not required, the related planning application must be submitted within 12 months for the statement to remain valid. Applications received outwith the period would require to be screened afresh. Applications submitted without the necessary PAC, where it ought to have been carried out, will not be determined. In accordance with the regulations, the Planning Authority will decline to determine applications to which the PAC requirements apply and where applicants have not complied with the requirements.

Where a screening statement has been issued indicating the PAC is required, or where the prospective applicant has undergone PAC without prior screening, there is no time limit on the length of time between the commencement of PAC and the submission of a related planning application.

It is recognised that following a screening statement being issued by the Planning Authority that proposals may then alter in form and content. In such circumstances, it will be for the Planning Authority to determine whether the related planning application still falls within the general description upon which a screening statement was previously issued.

There may be other circumstances where the need for a new or further screening statement may be uncertain, for example applications for full planning permission following an application for permission in principle which was the subject of PAC, repeat applications, renewal applications or applications to amend conditions attached to permissions which were previously the subject of PAC. In such circumstances, the Planning Authority will exercise judgement over whether the new or amended proposals remain within the terms of the description in the original proposal and the PAC previously undertaken. It will also take into account the time that has elapsed since the initial PAC in reaching a decision on the need for further PAC to be carried out. Applicants should contact the local planning office to ascertain the need for PAC where there is any doubt over the requirements to be met.

If PAC is required then at least 12 weeks before an application is submitted you will be required to submit a Proposal of Application Notice.

Further information on this process is available in the guidance on PAC - Proposal of Application Notice.