



PLANNING COMMITTEE

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| Subject: | Pre-Application Advice – Scale of Charging |
| Date: | 18 October 2016 |
| Reporting Officer: | Phil Williams, Director of Planning and Place |
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| Is this report restricted? | No |
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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report |
| | <p>This report addresses the opportunity for a Local Planning Authority (LPA) to apply a reasonable charging mechanism for pre-application discussions (PAD)s.</p> <p>The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) Planning for Sustainable Development - September 2015 - recognises that PASs are “fundamental to ‘front loading’ the new development management system. This front loading will help all parties, both to prepare an application to a high standard and to establish an agreed course and timetable for determining a development proposal”.</p> <p>Development Management Practice Note 10 - Pre-Application Community Consultation recognises that the pre-application discussion process is not a statutory requirement and is optional. However, by facilitating effective and meaningful pre-application discussions, a Council can ensure that opportunities to work collaboratively with applicants and to improve the quality of developments are maximised.</p> <p>Many LPAs, including UK Core Cities utilise this approach for strategic, major, and other forms of development.</p> |
| 2.0 | Summary of Main Issues |
| | <p>Belfast is facing an unprecedented level of growth where the development pipeline includes very significant commercial and employment generating developments. The City Council is committed to encouraging quality developments in the capital city of Northern Ireland.</p> <p>To support applicants investing in such developments the Council needs to provide certainty and sufficient resources to ensure that planning applications for large scale or complex proposals are dealt with in a timely manner.</p> <p><u>Benefits of Pre-Application Discussions</u></p> <p>The benefits of pre-application discussions have already been recognised by applicants in the processing of planning applications. Engaging in the pre-application process can help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential policy constraints and other material issues which need to be |

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| | <p>addressed at an early stage in the process;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate discussions with key consultees (where appropriate) at an early stage, especially where an environmental statement is likely to be required; • Identify related technical issues and allow for discussion with a view to resolving such matters. • Ensure that engagement with appropriate stakeholders takes place at an early stage in the planning process; • Offer an opportunity for informed amendments and improvements to be made to schemes prior to formal planning applications being submitted, thereby potentially reducing the time taken for an application to move through the planning system; • Improve the content and quality of planning applications; • Enhance the quality of a development scheme; • Speed up the statutory decision making process; and • Ensure active case management. <p><u>Summary of Pre-Application Discussions</u></p> <p>The pre-application process relies on a constructive approach from applicants and the Council, or the Department as may be the case. Spending time exchanging information or discussing plans during the critical period when proposals are being developed and are therefore capable of change allows for a collaborative way of working to solve problems, enhance sustainability and quality and better ensure financial viability. As such, whilst non-statutory, pre-application discussions are a central part of a positive and proactive planning system.</p> <p>The Scale of Charges for a number of LPAs is listed in Appendix 1.</p> |
| 4.0 | Recommendations |
| | <p>That the Planning department investigates a Scale of Charges for Pre-Application Discussions to establish a formal charging framework, commensurate with other Core Cities in the UK.</p> |
| 5.1 | Documents Attached |
| | <p>The Scale of Charges for a number of LPAs is attached at Appendix 1.</p> |