

AM 629/22

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 14 JULY 2022

REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR WRITTEN PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Report by: Steve Avery, Executive Director

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Authority introduced a charging regime for providing formal pre-application advice in October 2016 to help cover the cost of providing the Authority's pre-application service. There have since been four reviews of the scheme, the last being at the Authority meeting on 25 March 2021, when it was agreed to increase pre-application charges to their current levels, generally in line with inflation.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek the Authority's approval to marginally increase the discretionary pre-application charges - to take effect from 1 August 2022.

2. Charges for pre-application advice

- 2.1 Charges for pre-application advice only apply to written enquiries received by the Authority. From 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 we received 207 written enquiries and a total pre-application fee income of £22,626. This was lower than in previous years (see table below) although planning application numbers remained relatively constant over the same period. As always, we need to strike the right balance between cost recovery and not wishing to discourage applicants from seeking pre-application advice. To this end, our 'duty officer' service (which is primarily aimed at dealing with informal planning enquiries from members of the public) remains free of charge and is currently made available on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

	No. of written pre-app enq's	Total pre-app fees
2021/22	207	£22,626
2020/21	311	£30,969
2019/20	292	£30,299
2018/19	288	£28,210

3. Proposed new charges for written pre-application advice

- 3.1 For comparison purposes, the pre-application charges of constituent and some neighbouring authorities, including the South Downs National Park Authority, are attached as annex 1. There are variations between all authorities as might be expected of a discretionary charge but it does show that our charges are broadly comparable and in some cases, marginally higher than other authorities.

3.2 The table below sets out the current schedule of pre-application fees charged by the Authority and the corresponding proposed fee that would take effect from 1 August 2022.

Type of Enquiry	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Householder	£70	£75
Single or replacement dwelling	£135	£150
2 - 5 dwellings	£265	£285
6 -10 dwellings	£700	£750
Non-residential or commercial (up to 500 sq.m)	£250	£265
Non-residential or commercial (500 – 1000 sq.m)	£475	£500
Changes of use	£135	£150
Listed buildings and advertisements	£55	£60
Major development Minerals and waste	25% of application fee	
Other building operations	£65	£70
Formal Tree enquiries	£65	£70
Legal enquiries	£65	£70

3.3 Until now, we have exempted certain types of development from pre-application charges and these include:

- Affordable housing
- Commoners dwellings
- Agricultural buildings (including field shelters) and new agricultural workers' dwellings
- Proposals made by, or on behalf of, a Parish or Town Council, Local Authority or County Council
- All other types of development which are exempt from paying a planning application fee

3.4 It is proposed to continue to apply these exemptions except in the case of affordable housing schemes of six or more dwellings. These schemes typically involve quite detailed pre-application discussions and so it is now proposed to charge a fee of 50% of the equivalent pre-application fee for open market housing, which would be £375. Pre-application discussions on smaller rural exception sites would continue to be free of charge as we would not wish to discourage smaller schemes coming forward.

4. Recommendation

That the Authority approve the proposed increase in fees for written pre-application advice, as detailed above, to take effect from 1 August 2022.

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Papers: NFNPA/509/16, NFNPA/522/17, NFNPA/PDCC 255/18, NFNPA 572/19, AM 586-21