

AM 677-24

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 21 MARCH 2024

REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR WRITTEN PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Report by: Steve Avery, Executive Director

Summary:

This report seeks Members' approval to increase the Authority's discretionary pre-application charges with effect from 1 April 2024.

Recommendation

- i. That the Authority approve the proposed increase in fees for written pre-application advice, as detailed below, to take effect from 1 April 2024; and;**
- ii. That in subsequent years the pre-application fees are increased annually in line with inflation.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Authority first introduced charges for pre-application advice in 2016 to help cover the cost of providing the Authority's pre-application service. There have since been five reviews of the scheme, the last being at the Authority meeting on 14 July 2022 (AM 629/22), 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 following the recent increase in the regulatory planning application fees - to take effect from 1 April 2024. Thereafter it is proposed that pre-application fees are increased annually in line with inflation (in much the same way as now applies to nationally set planning application fees).

2. Charges for pre-application advice

- 2.1 Charges for pre-application advice only apply to written enquiries received by the Authority. We receive some 250 chargeable pre-application enquires each year and these typically generate an annual fee income of £25,000. 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.

3. Proposed new charges for written pre-application advice

3.1 There are variations between local planning authorities in the amount charged for pre-application advice (as might be expected of a discretionary charge) but having looked at the fees charged by neighbouring authorities, our charges are broadly comparable, as detailed in the attached table at Annex 1.

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 April 2024. The relevant planning application fee is also shown.

Type of Enquiry	Current Preapp Fee	Proposed Preapp Fee	Planning Application Fee
Householder	£75	£90	£258
Single or replacement dwelling	£150	£185	£578
2 - 5 dwellings	£285	£355	£578 per dwelling
6 -10 dwellings	£750	£935	£578 per dwelling
Non-residential or commercial (up to 500 sq.m)	£265	£330	£293 up to 40sqm, £578 per 75sqm thereafter up to 1,000sqm
Non-residential or commercial (500 – 1000 sq.m)	£500	£625	£578 per 75 sqm
Changes of use	£150	£185	£578
Listed buildings and advertisements	£60	£75	Listed Buildings exempt Adverts £165 or £578
Major development Minerals and waste	25% of application fee	25% of application fee	Variable
Other building operations	£70	£85	£293 per 0.1 hectare capped at £2,535
Formal Tree enquiries	£70	£85	-
Legal enquiries	£70	£100	-

3.3 The Authority exempts certain types of development from pre-application charges and these include:

- Rural exception sites (affordable housing) - five or less dwellings
- 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.
- 3.5 In the case of affordable housing schemes of six to 10 dwellings, it is proposed that we continue to charge a fee of 50% of the equivalent pre-application fee for open market housing.

4. Recommendation

- iii. That the Authority approve the proposed increase in fees for written pre-application advice, as detailed above, to take effect from 1 April 2024; and;
- iv. That in subsequent years the pre-application fees are increased annually in line with inflation.

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Annex 1: Pre-application fees comparisons

Papers: AM 629/22