

Major Pre-Application Guidance

Please note that the following interim guidance relates to major developments. We have separate advice notes for householder pre-application advice and local development pre-application advice. If in doubt, please refer to [Circular 5/2009 \(Hierarchy of Developments\)](#) or contact your local planning [office](#). Please note that this is interim guidance and that a final guidance document will be uploaded in due course.

What is a major application?

Please note that the following guidance note related to works which involve major development as defined within [Circular 5/2009 \(Hierarchy of Developments\)](#). This includes, but is not limited to, housing developments for 50 or more homes, larger commercial or retail development, certain waste, water, transport and energy related building works. All development listed within [Schedule 1 of the Environmental Impact Assessment \(Scotland\) Regulations 2017](#) is major development.

What is pre-application advice?

Pre-application advice is a non-statutory procedure provided by Aberdeenshire Council. It is intended to guide and inform your development proposals before you submit a formal planning application. It provides an opportunity for you to discuss your proposals with a Planning Officer before going to the expense of having detailed drawings and specifications prepared by an architect, (or other design professional). Where it is considered necessary, a Planning Officer may arrange a formal meeting to discuss the proposal with you as well as relevant consultees.

For clarity, the service provided through pre-application advice is not and does not replace the need for any masterplanning process which a site may be subject to. Further information on [masterplans](#) can be found on the Council website. The pre-application service does not form part of any pre-application consultation which must be undertaken by applicants for major development as set out in [Circular 3/2022 \(Development Management Procedures\)](#).

What are the benefits of undertaking pre-application advice?

- A more structured process, with advice provided within agreed timescale
- Early identification and understanding of relevant policies and implications for the development
- Feedback and/or discussion from consultees which should result in less potential for conflicting advice
- Identification of any potential problems with a proposal's feasibility
- Early identification of any required specialist input
- Assistance with technical, legislative and procedural issues at the earliest possible stage
- Alignment with masterplanning process (where applicable)
- Pre-application meeting(s) where required
- Greater certainty and quicker determination of the planning application

- Improvement in the overall quality of planning applications
- Improvement in the quality of the final development

What do you need to submit as part of your pre-application advice request?

The following guide outlines what information we would expect as essential and desirable.

Essential:

- A completed major development pre-application form
- A clear description of the proposed development
- The address of the application site
- A location plan to clearly identify the location and dimensions of the site.
- Proposed site layout plan which outlines the application site in red, including a north point (dimensions to be shown or to scale, preferably at 1:500 or 1:200)
- North point
- Include access to the public road

Desirable:

- An ordnance survey based location plan which outlines the application site in red (scale preferable to 1:2500 or 1:1250) and additional land owned in blue
- Proposed development layout plan and site sections
- Elevational drawings
- Drainage provision (if applicable)
- Photographs of the site
- A Design Statement

Delays may occur if essential information is missing from your request. Invalid requests that do not meet the minimum requirements will not be progressed unless all the requested information has been submitted.

Advice the service will provide

Main Issues:

Site history and constraints
Layout, Siting and Design
Amenity
List of key documents/info
Consultees

Types of Information:

Relevant planning history and specific constraints identified on the site.
Feedback upon proposed layout, siting and design, including public open space and if appropriate, materials.
Who may be affected by the proposals in terms of neighbouring amenity
Information and documents that have been identified to be required to be submitted as part of your application.
Feedback from consultees in relation to proposed development.

Advice the service will not provide

- The [Pre-Application Consultation](#) (POAN) process is separate.
- The pre-application process is separate to the [masterplanning](#) process.
- EIA screening and scoping requests are considered outwith this process.

What communication and advice can you expect?

For major development enquiries, the initial stage of the pre-application enquiry process will involve establishing and communicating the principal matters within a written response, incorporating feedback from consultees. The written response will include any information requirements to be submitted with any subsequent application and identify specific matters raised either by the case officer or consultees which are considered to merit further round table discussions.

Any specific information that needs brought to our attention, or issues that you want included in your response should be highlighted as part of your pre-application advice submission. The Planning Service will undertake a site visit as part of the enquiry process.

The Planning Service are seeking to provide a more tailored approach to facilitating pre-application enquiry meetings. It is recognised that there is value in holding a meeting for pre-application enquiries for a major development when specific matters have been highlighted by the case officer, and or consultees within the initial written response. Where the Planning Service consider that a meeting would add value this will be communicated and arrangements will be put in place. Meetings will be at the discretion of the Service and not all meeting requests will be accommodated. In most instances it is envisaged that meetings will be arranged virtually through MS Teams.

Further communication relating to the proposal may be provided afterwards at the discretion of the Planning Officer who has dealt with the request. Should you seek comments upon an amended proposal it may be necessary to submit a new pre-application request.

Processing timeline for your pre-application enquiry

The Planning Service will endeavour to send a formal response within 30 working days of the request being validated. This is considered to be a realistic timescale and agents are requested to make clients aware this is to be expected. The potential need for further information or a site visit may mean that an extension to these timescales will be needed in order to ensure the best possible response. Should such an extension be necessary, you will be contacted by the Planning Officer.

Disclaimer

All pre-application advice is given strictly without prejudice to the eventual decision of Aberdeenshire Council on any formal planning application. Every effort will be made to provide you with accurate professional advice, however, this cannot be guaranteed to cover all matters that will be considered in a formal application and the Council is not bound by this advice in the event of submission of a formal application. It should be appreciated that in addition to carrying out technical consultations, neighbours and other members of the public have a right to make representations on formal applications. Such representations and consultation responses will be fully taken into account when Aberdeenshire Council determines a formal planning application.

Freedom of Information

Your details will not be made public unless subject to and in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 or the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004.

Data Protection

The information held with your submission will be managed by the Council in accordance with the principles set out in the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. For further information on how we use your information, who we share this information with and how long we keep information is detailed in our [Privacy Notice](#).

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