**Pre-application Advice Process and Charges – Community Infrastructure**

**Background**

Essex County Council (ECC) welcomes and encourages early discussion with developers and applicants prior to the submission of a planning application to a district or borough or city council. Pre-application discussion results in better quality applications which stand a better chance of a successful outcome and helps speed up the decision making process after submission.

**Benefits of Pre-application Discussions**

Pre-application advice provides developers/applicants with:

* an understanding of how the latest national and local guidance and policies will be applied to the community infrastructure (education et al) aspects of the development
* an understanding of impacts on community infrastructure; the level of any financial mitigation or works that will be sought and the suitability of any land required (in particular for schools)
* the potential for reducing the time that professional teams spend working up the proposals
* an early indication of those proposals that may be completely unacceptable from the County Council’s point of view
* written confirmation of the advice on community infrastructure issues that should be taken into consideration when submitting a subsequent application.

**The Pre-Application Procedure**

The developer/applicant will be asked to submit the following information and agree the relevant pre-application fee for the required level of pre-application advice from the Infrastructure Planning Team:

* Site plans, including location, proposed access arrangements and illustrative layout of proposals.
* Site address and postcode.
* Development description including details of uses and size of commercial units, number/type of dwellings.
* Confirmation of the existing use of the site, including planning application history, where appropriate.
* Details of any land offered for education or community use including, where appropriate, a completed site suitability checklist and supporting evidence.
* Any other information critical to the consideration of the proposal at this pre-application stage.

When the developer/applicant has provided the County Council with sufficient information to undertake an initial assessment for pre-application advice, and paid the relevant fee as set out in the table below, the Infrastructure Planning team will consider the information submitted and attend a meeting with the developer/applicant and /or consultants if necessary. A response summarising the main issues will subsequently be sent. If additional written advice, a meeting, or a site visit is required, further charges will then be incurred.

Charges will be made in line with the charging schedule below. The charge will be made in addition to any other charges that may be made for other Essex County Council services. Payment of the fee must be received in advance.

**Response times for pre-application advice**

Written responses will be sent to the developer/applicant within 20 working days of receipt of the request for information and the pre-application fee. If a meeting is required a response will be sent within 10 working days of the meeting.

**Pre-Application charges for Community Infrastructure Advice (education et al)**

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| **Service** | **Cost** |
| Written Pre-Application Advice | £160 + VAT\* per enquiry |
| Attendance at a meeting by a senior officer | £87.55 + VAT\* per hour  |
| Attendance by additional ECC senior officer(s) at a meeting to provide specialist advice | £87.55 + VAT\* per hour |
| Advice from Infrastructure Planning Officer on contribution costs only | £56.65 + VAT\* per hour |

*\*VAT which will be charged at the appropriate rate at the time the service is provided.*

Please note that travelling time will be charged at the same hourly rate if the meeting is held outside of County Hall (Chelmsford). If following a meeting written confirmation of the advice given (including checking the accuracy of minutes) is required, this work will be charged as written pre-application advice and is in addition to the fee charged for attending the meeting.

Where advice is provided regarding the level of developer contributions that may be sought, all figures are provided on a ‘without prejudice’ basis and are subject to relevant indexation over time. Please note in particular that school place forecasts are updated on a termly basis, thereby potentially altering the advice that may be given when a planning application is made.

**Notes:**

Written responses will not be advice to the developer on how to secure planning permission for the proposals. The response will provide an indication of how the County Council, as consultee on community infrastructure matters, is likely to view the proposals when submitted on a formal basis.

Any pre-application advice is provided without prejudice to the County Council’s final formal response on any future planning application. The final decision on any planning application will be taken by the planning authority, not by the County Council as consultee.