



# Planning Pre-Application Advice – Major Schemes & Design

Guidance  
Note

updated  
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## Introduction

To help deliver the sustainable development sought by the NPPF, the District Council encourages full pre-application discussions. There is a charge for such advice and the full details of the advice format and relevant charges can be found at:

[Pre-application advice – Rother District Council](#)

Any pre-application meeting(s) is at the discretion of the Council. For larger, more complex or strategic schemes, it is strongly recommended that you enter into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA). Rother's PPA Charter can be found via this link:

[Planning Performance Agreements](#)

**This note advises developers on the Council's expectations regarding the design process at pre-application stage for major schemes, to ensure that early and proactive engagement and meaningful discussions can help lead to the high quality design solutions required by the NPPF, supported by the National Design Guide**

[National design guide.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## Information for pre-application submissions

To be able to give meaningful advice, the Council will need to receive clear plans and supporting information of the intended proposal, in advance of any meeting(s). Prior sight of the proposal will allow council officers time to assess the submitted information; considering national and local policies and any other material considerations.

Although plans (layouts, site sections and streetscenes) are likely to form the early basis for a pre-application dialogue, it will not be possible for council officers to comment effectively on layouts and designs without some understanding of the design process that has preceded the layout and the initial decisions. This should normally take the form of a draft Design & Access Statement, which should:

- **demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that account into context, and**
- **explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development proposal**

The pre-application work will inform the final D & A statement explaining the evolution of the proposal, particularly with any significant scheme. Guidance on Design & Access Statements can be found at [GUIDANCE NOTES FOR \(rother.gov.uk\)](#)

## Local Policy Context

Before submitting schemes for pre-application advice, applicants will be expected to have had regard to all relevant policies in the Core Strategy, DaSA and Neighbourhood Plans (where applicable). Policy **EN3 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy** and the list of Key Design Principles related to this policy provides a useful structure and framework through which to develop a draft design and access statement.

For schemes located in or adjacent to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty regard should also be paid to the advice in the HW AONB Housing Design Guide. [High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide – Rother District Council](#) The Guide aims to give succinct, practical and consistent advice to set clear design expectations for new housing development within the High Weald AONB, to help to ensure higher quality and landscape-led design that reflects intrinsic High Weald character, and is embedded with a true sense of place, without stifling innovation and creativity.

## Pre-application Design Considerations

A range of material (site survey work, photographs, plans, sections, streetscenes, sketches and precedent imagery) should be presented for pre-application discussion and during the process, including information describing:

- **The constraints and opportunities of the site, and context appraisal.**  
This should include (where relevant to the site) such matters as preliminary arboricultural and ecological surveys, topographical information, existing neighbouring buildings, flood risk constraints and SUDs requirements, all of which will inform the design strategy.
- The rationale behind the design decisions taken on matters such as
  - **character for the development,**
  - **place-making principles,**
  - **landscape impact, (including on site landscape features, and impact on landscape character, for which a draft LVIA may be helpful)**
  - **layout and disposition of development on the site,**
  - **access and circulation, (including street hierarchies and footpaths),**
  - **parking strategy**
  - **the public realm strategy,**
  - **definition of private and public space,**
  - **scale, mass and street scene**
  - **building appearance**

With **larger or more significant schemes**, we would expect the initial pre-application submission to concentrate on the earlier, more strategic items of the above list, i.e. basic layout principles with regard to context analysis, character and place-making intentions, and subsequent pre-application discussions to be an iterative process, potentially including small design workshops with ourselves, focussing on design development of the scheme, finishing with consideration of more detailed aspects, prior to submission of a formal application.

## Pre-application advice from other relevant bodies

At the planning application stage major schemes are likely to involve external consultations with a number of parties.

In particular, the **Local Highway Authority (ESCC)**, **Lead Local Flood Authority (ESCC)** and the **Environment Agency** are likely to be significant parties to the planning process. These organisations offer chargeable pre-application advice. Prospective applicants may wish to contact these parties separately, but it will generally be more beneficial for officers from these bodies to be party to any meeting with the council's planning officers so that any pre-application discussions can be as comprehensive as possible. We will, if possible, be happy to coordinate such liaison.

## Design Panel

For significant major schemes the **Design South East Design Review Service** may be used and the developer will be expected to pay for this service.



## Other Useful Information

### National and Local List of Planning Application Requirements (Validation List)

The Council's Validation adopted list can be found at [Rother Planning Validation Checklist](#). Reference should be made to this document in advance of any pre-application meeting to identify the specific information requirements relating to the proposal.

### Assessment of Significance

Applications relating to heritage assets (designated and non-designated) will require an assessment of the significance of such asset(s). As with the Design Access Statement, work relating to the Assessment of Significance should be undertaken at the earliest stage, as this initial work is likely to inform any detailed plans, or any preliminary layouts.

Guidance on the Assessment of Significance can be found at [https://www.rother.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Assessment\\_of\\_Significance\\_-\\_Guidance\\_Notes.pdf](https://www.rother.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Assessment_of_Significance_-_Guidance_Notes.pdf)

