

**BASSETLAW DISTRICT COUNCIL  
MAJOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS: CHANGES TO PROCEDURES  
INTERIM NOTE FOR APPLICANTS: MARCH 2006**

## **Background**

The Council is undertaking a review of its planning procedures relating to major planning applications. Incremental changes are being made to improve procedures to ensure planning decisions can normally be made within 13 weeks (or 16 weeks for those major applications requiring an Environmental Impact Statement). Once all the necessary changes have been made the Council will produce a note for applicants setting out the procedures. This is likely to be a Supplementary Planning Document and include validation procedures in line with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's report on Best Practice Guidance on the Validation of Planning Applications of March 2005. Meanwhile the Council will be following the advice contained in that document relating to validation. The approach Planning Officers dealing with your application will take will follow the procedures outlined in the Interim Note for Applicants: March 2006. As part of its review the Council is looking at its existing Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing, on Open Space and its Procedures on Planning Obligations as well being involved with Nottinghamshire County Council about changes to their planning obligations.

## **Pre-Application Discussions**

Against this background of change you are strongly advised to contact the Planning Service for pre-application discussions so that you are appraised about the latest policies and procedures relating to your proposed application. We will aim to arrange a meeting with an experienced planning officer about your proposals within 12 working days of the receipt of your first contact with us. The nature of preliminary enquiries will vary and a meeting will not necessarily be appropriate if the enquiry can be dealt with by phone or correspondence. If you are at the stage of preparing preliminary plans sending copies to the Council not less than 5 days before a meeting is helpful and is likely to make a meeting more constructive. Preliminary enquiries will be kept confidential if you require this. Otherwise we may give early warning of forthcoming proposals to other consultees and Councillors.

Council officers will be as helpful as possible with advice and informal views but none of their advice should be construed as making any commitment as to a particular decision at any stage.

Initial advice will be based on the information you supply and may be offered without a site visit. The main aim of the first meeting will be to assist you with identifying all the information required for your submission. The type of supporting information will depend on the scale, nature and impact of your development and the characteristics of the site and its surroundings. It could include any of the items specified in the ODPM Best Practice Guidance on Validation. Some major applications may require an Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

## **Planning Obligations**

By the time you submit your application you must provide details of the planning obligations you intend to accompany the proposal. Planning Officers will provide advice and contacts with other Council and Nottinghamshire County Council Officers who can give you detailed advice prior to submission. We are preparing standard pro-formas to assist with preparing legal agreements and will expect you to provide certain details (e.g. name of your solicitors, evidence of title) to help progress legal agreements concurrently with your application. Unilateral undertakings providing the required obligations with appropriate inflation adjustments and trigger points for discharge may be suitable.

## **Number of Copies**

Major applications are often sent to a large number of consultees. You will be expected to supply sufficient copies of the application, plans and supporting information to enable the Council to undertake its consultations. You should discuss the number required prior to submission. At least 8 copies will be required.

## **Validation**

We will aim to check your application for completeness within 5 working days of its receipt and then inform you about any further requirements for validation. Failure to specify your proposed planning obligations or to provide sufficient copies of the application for consultation will delay validation.

## **Consultation**

We will aim to have only one formal consultation period on your application. This emphasises the need for all information to be available before processing, as it is vitally important that the public and other consultees have access to this at the commencement of consultation. In some cases it may be appropriate to have some public consultation prior to submission. Details of arrangements can be agreed at the pre-application stage.

## **Processing your Application**

An identified case officer will handle and co-ordinate your application.

Between 5-7 weeks after your application is validated you may receive a review of progress. This may include an informal and without prejudice opinion from the planning officer about the likely outcome of your application. Planning issues are sometimes finely balanced, in which case you will be informed that the likely outcome remains uncertain. This timing is related to the end of the consultation period and will be taken as the last opportunity to identify any further information needs arising from that consultation.

Making a decision within the time limits does not offer much scope for submitting further information or amendments. Any requested must always be submitted within 10 working days. If further issues and information needs identified make it likely that the time period will be exceeded you may be invited to withdraw your application and re-submit within 12 months without any further planning fees, provided the re-submitted proposal is sufficiently similar.

## **The Decision**

The Council's Planning Committee is likely to be involved in making the decision. The Committee report is available 5 working days before the date of the Committee. You will be sent a copy of the report on your application and information about arrangements for addressing the Committee in the separate leaflet on Speaking at Planning Committee. You can also view the report on the Council's website, [www.Bassetlaw.gov.uk](http://www.Bassetlaw.gov.uk) (go to the Planning On Line pages via the Environment heading on the home page).

If your application is approved subject to a legal agreement, this must be signed before the expiry of the 13 week or 16 week time scale. Failure to complete the agreement may result in refusal of the planning application, notwithstanding any Committee resolution to approve.