

Report for Resolution

Report to Executive
10 March 2010

Report of Head of Planning and Regeneration

Subject Planning Service Standards

7

Purpose

To agree to service standards for the planning service and charging for pre-application planning advice. Subject to approval the standards will be implemented and monitored from 1 April 2010 and charging for advice would apply to all new queries from that date.

Recommendations

- 1) That the service standards for the planning service (set out in Appendix 1) be agreed, published on the web site and made available to planning customers.
- 2) That the proposals for pre-application advice and charging in appendix 2 be approved,
- 3) That the Director of Regeneration and Development be delegated authority to agree minor changes to service standards and pre-application charging in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable City Development.

Financial Consequences

The level of service proposed in the service standards can be delivered from within the current resources of the planning service. It is difficult to predict how much revenue will be generated by the introduction of charging for pre-application advice. However, for budget setting purposes an income of £10,000 has been assumed.

Risk Assessment

The need to develop and publish service standards for planning was identified by the Audit Commission in their 2008 Inspection of Planning Services. Failure to respond to the Audit Commission recommendations and revise the interim service standards previously published poses reputational risks to the Council.

Introducing charging for pre-application planning advice does run a risk of adverse reaction from the development industry and potentially deterring investment in the City. However, the practice of charging is becoming increasingly common in other authorities and the nature of the regime being introduced is aimed at providing an improved service. The level of charge set and the service standard provided can be reviewed in the light of customer feedback. The scheme of charging is designed to minimise impact of householders and small business and in relation to

major developments cost incurred will only be a tiny fraction of the overall cost of development.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to directly achieve the corporate objective to “implement the Planning Improvement Plan, including improving customer service” as well as indirectly other corporate objectives:

- Produce a programme to improve the accessibility of our services
- Implement corporate customer care standards for all services, including contracts

Executive Members: Councillor Morrey - Sustainable City Development
Councillor Brociek-Coulton – Residents and Customer Care

Ward: All

Contact Officers

Graham Nelson

01603 212530

Background Documents

Audit Commission report of Inspection of Planning Services (July 2008)

Planning Service Interim Service Standards published August 2009

Report

Background

1. At its meeting on 8th July 2009 Executive agreed to publish interim service standards for the planning service. The service standards were subsequently published and came into force from 1st September and are attached as Appendix 4. The proposed, revised, service standards are attached as Appendix 1.
2. The July report made clear that the service standards were proposed on an interim basis and would be reviewed following completion of customer satisfaction survey work being undertaken as part of the Planning Improvement Plan. This work was necessary in order to respond fully to the Audit Commission recommendation following their 2008 inspection of Planning Services that the customer focus of the planning service should be improved by “Developing and promoting service standards that reflect the needs of users across all service elements and monitoring them to ensure they are met”.
3. The revised service standards have been developed through the Planning Improvement Plan Board. In addition to the results of the planning customer satisfaction survey undertaken in Autumn 2009 there is considerable further information that has also been taken into account in writing the revised standards. This includes:
 - feedback on the operation of the service standards from both staff and customers since they were introduced in September 2009;
 - information of the level of take up of planning surgery sessions introduced in September 2009;
 - results from the consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement;
 - Ongoing complaints monitoring;
 - Revised enforcement standards arising from initial phases of the enforcement project as part of the Planning Improvement Plan;
 - Revised corporate template for service standards in line with the approach taken towards the development of the housing service standards.
4. Additionally the views of the members of the Planning Applications Committee and relevant Portfolio Holders have also been sought regarding the content of the revised service standards.
5. Furthermore as part of the transformation proposals consideration has been given to the introduction of discretionary charging for pre-application planning advice. This matter was discussed as part of the charging review undertaken by Scrutiny Committee last year and a full report of possible options was presented to the meeting on 10th December. A charge related to the scale of the proposal and based on the statutory, nationally applied, planning application fees was preferred as this is easily understood by the development industry and relates, in general terms, to the amount of work to respond to the query. Scrutiny

committee endorsed the suggested introduction of charging.

6. The detail of the proposed charging mechanism is set out in Appendix 2. Relevant information about the options considered in relation to charging and further information about other authorities that already do it is attached as Appendix 3.

Appendix 1

Norwich City Council Proposed Planning Service Standards 1st April 2010

Planning services – what we do

The planning service makes high quality, sustainable and appropriate development possible in Norwich as well as maintaining and improving the city's natural and built environment by:

- determining all forms of planning and other related applications
- delivering a Local Development Framework and planning policy
- protecting and enhancing conservation areas and listed buildings
- providing general planning and related advice to the public
- making and reviewing tree preservation orders
- dealing with tree applications
- dealing with planning appeals
- planning enforcement

Our customers

Our customers include people applying for planning permission or making comments on applications or plans, businesses, councillors, other services within the council, statutory bodies and interest groups. More indirectly everyone who lives in, works in or visits Norwich is affected by the outcome of the planning service.

Our responsibilities to you

When dealing with planning issues there are some things we can and cannot take into account. How we do this must be open to public scrutiny. Whenever and however you contact us, we will:

- listen
- treat you with dignity, courtesy and respect for your confidentiality
- provide easily understood information when you need it
- give you our names
- tell you what we are doing and why
- provide the best possible service and take the time to get it right first time, every time
- respect you and respond to differing needs because of age, disability, ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

Your responsibilities to us

We would like you to:

- provide us with the information we need and inform us if it changes
- let us know if you cannot attend an appointment
- show us respect and courtesy.

Measure of success

Positive customer feedback.

Method of monitoring

Customer satisfaction surveys. Learning from feedback we have received through the comments, compliments and complaints process.

How we will respond to you – our service standards

When you phone us, we will:

- answer your call as quickly as possible
- respond to telephone messages within one working day

Letter and email

If you contact us by letter or email, we will:

- answer your letter or email within 10 working days; or
- send an acknowledgement within five working days providing a date when a detailed response will be given by.

There are separate service standards regarding pre-application advice

Visit us

- We aim to see you within 5 minutes;
- If you need more detailed help we will make an appointment for you to see someone.

Visit you

If you request a home visit because of disability, we will:

- visit you at home at a mutually convenient time
- show you council identification when visiting you.

Measure of success

Positive customer feedback. Time periods for acknowledgment and responses.

Method of monitoring

Customer satisfaction surveys. Learning from feedback we have received through the comments, compliments and complaints process. Sample survey of correspondence responses

Planning applications

When you submit a planning application or an application to discharge a planning condition we will:

- register it, acknowledge it and let you know who will be dealing with your application within five working days; or
- if the application is invalid we will let you know what you need to do within five working days.

After an application is formally registered we will decide it as quickly as we can. We aim to decide:

- minor applications within eight weeks;
- major applications within 13 weeks.

If we cannot meet these targets we will let you know why.

Once a planning decision has been taken we will:

- issue a decision letter within three working days of the decision date, unless a planning obligation remains to be signed;
- notify those who have made a representation, within three days of the decision

We will also:

- publish on our website a list of planning applications that we have received and decisions we have made weekly;
- provide full details of conditions on a permission or reasons for refusal at our offices and on our website;
- continue to maintain and update the planning services website to keep users informed about our service and any changes to procedures;
- regularly review our approach to keeping people informed about planning applications – click here for more information. Alternatively visit the 'Planning – what happens to a planning application?' page in the A-Z of services section of our website: www.norwich.gov.uk

Measure of success

Meeting targets set in relation to the speed of dealing with planning applications. We aim to deal with 80% of major applications within a 13 week period, 83% of minor applications and 92% of all other applications within an 8 week period.

Method of monitoring

National Indicator 157

Pre-application advice

We encourage people to contact us before submitting planning applications. The details of the various services we offer at pre-application stage are described in the appendix.

Complaints

Planning enforcement

If you complain about someone breaching planning rules we will assess and classify the urgency this within a day. We will acknowledge your enquiry within five working days and advise you of progress within 15 working days.

Service complaint

The Council has a corporate complaints policy – click on “complaints” on our website. If you are unhappy with our service we would like to know as complaints help us to improve our services. If you do want to complain we will:

- acknowledge your complaint within five working days;
- give you a full response within 10 working days.

Website

If you want to use our website at www.norwich.gov.uk we will:

- aim for the site to be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- give you the chance to view and comment on current planning applications and consultations online;

Other useful information

Visiting us at City Hall

Planning reception

Planning reception, on the second floor of City Hall, is open from 8.45am to 5pm Monday to Friday. On Wednesdays the reception is open until 6pm. Here you can:

- view details of planning applications which are being dealt with or have been determined
- view planning decision notices and Section 106 agreements (planning obligations)
- pick up the forms you need to apply for planning permission and find out basic information about the planning service
- drop off completed forms and applications.

Building Regulations

Building Control services, including all aspects of the Building Regulations are provided on behalf of the council by CNC Building Control. Please contact them direct if you have any queries:

CNC Building Control
Thorpe Lodge
1 Yarmouth Road
NORWICH
NR7 ODU
t: 01603 430100
e: enquiries@cncbuildingcontrol.gov.uk
f: 01603 430541

For more information about building control in Norwich and applications forms for work visit the CNC Building Control website. www.cncbuildingcontrol.gov.uk

If you wish to contact us please:

Visit our website at
www.norwich.gov.uk

telephone
0344 980 3333 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

minicom
01603 212587 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

fax
01603 213015

email
planning@norwich.gov.uk

Write to:
Planning Services
Norwich City Council
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH

Visit us at:
Planning reception
(8.45am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, 6pm on Wednesdays)
2nd Floor
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH

Appendix 2

Pre-application planning advice

The Council strongly encourages developers and agents to engage with the planning service at an early opportunity. This will give you the best information on which to base your proposal and enable any planning application that is subsequently made to have the best chance of success. However, it will not be possible to provide a high quality advice service in all cases unless additional resources are available.

All applications

We will provide a basic level of pre-application advice free of charge on all types of application within 20 working days of the registration of your proposal. Registration only occurs when sufficient information has been submitted to enable a proper response to be made, e.g. there may be a need to clarify the nature of the proposal or where the site is located.

This free service will provide a written response on development proposals which is intended to give you pointers towards published information to enable you to “self –serve”:

- What is required to make the proposal valid;
- The statutory fee required;
- Basic information on planning policy considerations;
- Further contact points for any specialist advice that may be required.

This will help you to make a well informed choice on how to prepare your application and what information to include.

The 20 working day period will not apply to Environmental Impact Assessment screening and scoping opinions to which statutory time periods apply

Advice in person

Additionally, staff are available during normal office opening hours (0845 – 1700) and later on Wednesdays until 1800 to give general guidance on, for example:

- planning applications received (explanation of plans to neighbours);
 - householder extensions and alterations;
 - shopfronts;
 - minor alterations, extensions or changes of use;
 - advertisements; and
 - general guidance on the application process.
- general guidance on the policies, and other documents, that are relevant, but not specific advice on the acceptability, or not, of a particular proposal

The officers present will not be able to answer questions about the likelihood of a particular proposal receiving planning permission, or the need for a planning application as they will often have to research planning history and may need to seek specialist advice e.g. highways or design. In some cases it may be easier for the questions to be set out in a standard form which will be available at reception.

No appointment will be necessary, but no more than 10 to 15 minutes will be available for general queries. In cases where people have difficulty in getting to City Hall due to disability, staff will assist by telephone and home visits where necessary. Appointments for those unable to get to City Hall during normal working hours will also be arranged where practicable.

Householder and small- scale proposals

In addition there is an additional service available free of charge for householder applications and other small scale proposals for proposals, change of use or new buildings or extensions (not exceeding 200 sq.m. gross floor area), advertisements, or shopfronts. A formal response in writing will only be given if there has been a written enquiry and will take place within 20 working days.

This advice will cover in addition to the “self-serve” advice as listed above;

- an assessment against planning policy
- further contacts for any specialist advice that may be required
- what changes may be needed to make the application acceptable
- an opinion on the acceptability, or not, of the proposal
- an opinion on the recommendation likely to be made by officers

If a site visit and/or subsequent meeting is requested by the applicant or agent following written response or advice given, then these elements only will be charged at flat fee of £50 for each meeting and £100 if the meeting takes place on site. Any meeting or site visit would not last more than an hour and will not take place until after payment has been received.

Comprehensive pre-application advice for larger proposals

For all commercial or residential developments (other than those specified above) there are likely to be benefits for the applicant to have far more comprehensive level of planning advice before the formal submission of an application. This should enable you to submit an application that enables as quick and trouble free route through the formal planning process as possible. Advice will vary depending on the nature of the scheme but will include all key issues including transportation and highways, environmental health etc. and will suggest changes that you may need to make to make a proposal acceptable. The Council is not resourced to provide such a service free of charge at present and therefore a charge will need to be made.

The response will include:

- What will be necessary to make an application valid;
- The statutory fee required;
- An assessment against planning policy;
- Further contact points for any specialist advice that may be required;
- What changes may be needed to make the application acceptable;

- An opinion on the recommendation likely to be made by officers;
- Advice on the quality of any community consultation already undertaken and what further consultation would be desirable;
- The relevant comments of all relevant internal specialisms within the Council (e.g. transportation, environmental health, design and conservation);
- The views of key external agencies (e.g Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, County Council) or advice on any key external specialists to contact;

Additionally, where appropriate, arrangements will be made for the proposal to be considered by the local design review panel, or at pre-application stage by Planning Applications Committee. Scheme promoters will be able to attend such meetings and full reports back will be given.

The charge and the nature of this service will depend on the scale of the particular development proposed and will be 20% of the normal planning application fee (plus VAT) subject to a minimum level of £250 + VAT.

In cases where an outline application is proposed but there is considerable detailed information as part of the query, such as design briefs, then the pre-application fee would be more appropriately based on 20% of the “full” fee.

Within 5 working days of payment of the appropriate fee and submission of sufficient information and plans (registration date) an officer will be named and assigned to the case and the application and fee acknowledged. Under normal circumstances it will be expected that this officer will remain the case officer responsible for handling any future planning application through to determination. There will be a full response within 25 working days of registration.

In all cases where a payment has been made you will also be entitled to meet with the case to discuss the advice issued and seek clarification on matters raised. This meeting would not be expected to exceed an hour in most cases.

We would be happy to continue to assist your preparations by commenting on further changes to your scheme before it is formally submitted. However if there are substantial changes or a new proposal then a further fee would be payable at the relevant 20% rate.

Complex and very large proposals

However, there may be occasions where specific proposals are of such a scale and complexity that a very significant input of officer time and Council resources would be required to provide comprehensive and productive pre-application advice. On such occasions, it is proposed that the pre-application fee payable for that advice is negotiated and agreed with the applicant or agent prior to the start of the process at the discretion of the Head of Planning in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder. This would be similar to a Planning Performance Agreement for an application and where both the Council and developer agree a timetable and resource input over an extended period.

Examples of this type of development would be complex city centre mixed use schemes or large developments on brownfield land where there is little or no development at present.

There will be a need for an initial inception meeting. When necessary, it will be agreed and will normally take place within 15 working days of the payment of the appropriate fee. The meeting will be with the allocated case officer (and on occasions other senior officers depending on the complexity of the case) to discuss the pre-application process and the timetable that will be worked to.

In all cases where charges will be made they will be less than costs incurred by the Council in providing the advice.

Exceptions to charging

Advice relating to:

- Charitable, religious, community and voluntary organisations for developments providing services to the local community and with a turnover of less than £100,000 per annum;
- Council proposals where it is the body proposing and implementing works (but not developments by potential commercial developers or RSLs on Council owned land).
- Maintenance of listed buildings that would not require listed building consent or planning permission
- Works to a listed building that only require listed building consent
- Works to trees

Refunds for poor service

If the Council fails to meet the performance standards listed above in respect of paid pre-application advice and there is no fault or delay caused by the applicant then 50% of any fee paid will be refunded.

It should be stressed that although all advice will be issued in good faith it cannot constitute a formal decision of the Council and will not, in any way prejudice the Council's consideration of any subsequent application. The nature of advice given will be considered relevant to any subsequent planning application so will be in the public domain at that time although it is likely to have to be made available if a relevant Freedom of Information request is made.

Appendix 3

Relevant Extracts from Scrutiny Committee Report of 10th December

Background

The Local Government Act 2003 provides authorities with a power to charge for discretionary services, including the provision of pre-application planning advice. This potentially allows authorities to recover, at least some of, the costs incurred in providing advice in advance of submission. As a general rule, income raised must not exceed the cost of providing the service.

Scrutiny Committee agreed the principle of charging on 15th October, 2009 and asked the Director of Regeneration and Development to consider the options for pre-application planning advice.

Charging now occurs in an increasing number of councils across the country with many others intending to introduce such charges. A survey in "Planning" magazine in February, 2009 (see Appendix C-1) identified 38 such councils who charged for advice and this number will have increased since then. Breckland are likely to introduce charges soon and other recent newcomers have been South Cambridgeshire and Northampton.

There is a need to consider the types of application that may be charged and the amount of the charge, together with the desirability of ensuring that key groups are able to access advice without charge. In addition charges need to be reasonable and be commensurate with the scale of the development proposed and the workload involved.

Fee levels

A variety of mechanisms are used by others for charging for pre-applications. The broad options are:

- a) flat fees;
- b) a fee based on a percentage of the statutory application fee; or
- c) a charge based on actual costs incurred.

Flat fees.

Difficulties of utilising a flat fee is setting it at a suitable level that is appropriate for developments ranging from a few houses to a large and complex mixed use development. Very different levels of resource input would be required from the Council and it is difficult to set a fee high enough to cover costs involved in the larger cases whilst not dissuading applicants from using the service for smaller developments. Setting up a series of charges would be complex to set up and for the public to understand. It is not considered that this forms a sensible basis for charging.

Percentage fee.

Charges for planning applications are subject to statutory charges fixed by central government. Current charges are listed at Appendix C- 3

Using a percentage of the statutory fee has advantages in that there would be a good relationship to the scale of the works proposed, it is a well understood

concept to the development industry and agents and would be relatively simple to operate. However using a percentage based system does result in small applications, such as for one or two houses, would only be asked to pay a small fee when the work involved is likely to be significant. Therefore a minimum figure may need to be introduced.

Actual costs and time expended

Fees based on actual costs would be difficult to set up as there is no time recording system set up in planning at present. This would need substantial investment in IT or new working practices. The applicant would be unclear what charges would be incurred as he would be reliant on estimates from officers (also involving additional time and resourcing issues). This could result in delays before formal advice could be released until outstanding charges have been paid. However this method may be more appropriate for the submission of revised schemes as specified above when a repeat full fee is difficult to justify as the additional work from council staff may be relatively modest in amount.

Proposal

It would appear that a percentage of the statutory planning fee would be most appropriate for most cases and be the simplest to set up and manage.

The survey of councils in Planning magazine in Feb 2009 (Appendix C-1) showed a great variety of charging methods being used across the country.

Initially it is proposed that fees be set at 20% of statutory fees, but subject to a minimum fee of £250 even if the fee payable would be nil (unless expressly excluded from charging as specified below)

The effect of a 20% charge is illustrated below for both residential and commercial schemes and can be compared with other Councils listed in Appendix C-1:

Residential development

300 dwellings £8,302

40 dwellings £3,350

9 dwellings £603

Commercial development

6,000sq.m. £3,913

1,500 sq.m. £1,340

900sq.m. £804

Appendix C-1

Planning magazine article 5th Feb 2009 pp16-17

Local Authority	Residential			Commercial	
	300 Homes	40 Homes	9 Homes	6,000m ²	150,000m ²
Barnet	£2,935.00	£2,935.00	£646.00	£2,935.00	£1,468.00
Bexley	£1,977.00	£1,977.00	£665.00	£1,977.00	£1,977.00
Bournemouth	£1,380.00	£1,380.00	£345.00	£1,380.00	£600.00
Brent	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	£1,500.00
Bromley	£1,150.00	£1,150.00	£0.00	£1,150.00	£1,150.00
Cotswold	£1,150.00	£1,150.00	£0.00	£1,150.00	£1,150.00
Croydon	£1,175.00	£1,175.00	£587.50	£1,175.00	£1,175.00
Dartford	£293.75	£293.75	£205.60	£293.75	£293.75
East Hampshire	£110.00	£110.00	£55.00	£110.00	£110.00
East Hertfordshire	£500.00	£500.00	£250.00	£500.00	£500.00
Epping Forest	£1,725.00	£1,725.00	£0.00	£1,725.00	£1,725.00
Gravesham	£1,005.00	£1,005.00	£335.00	£1,005.00	£1,005.00
Hammersmith and Fulham	£2,415.00	£2,415.00	£1,207.00	£2,415.00	£2,415.00
Haringey	£4,000.00	£2,000.00	£600.00	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Haverling	£1,320.00	£1,320.00	£660.00	£1,320.00	£1,320.00
Hertsmere	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£500.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
Hillingdon	£3,000.00	£1,800.00	£900.00	£3,000.00	£900.00
Kettering	Above £2,500*	£1,500.00	£750.00	Above £2,500*	£1,500.00
Kingston-upon-Thames	£2,500.00	£1,500.00	£750.00	£2,500.00	£1,500.00
Leeds	£2,300.00	£2,300.00	£0.00	£2,300.00	£2,300.00
Maidstone	£287.50	£287.50	£0.00	£287.50	£287.50
Mid Sussex	£112.50	£112.50	£112.50	£112.50	£112.50
Middlesborough	£345.00	£345.00	£80.50	£345.00	£345.00
Newham	£3,000.00	£1,500.00	£750.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
North Hertfordshire	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	£0.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Reading	£1,000- £2,000	£300 - £600	£200 - £400	£600.00	£300 - £600
Richmond-upon-Thames	£2,530.00	£2,530.00	£632.50	£2,530.00	£1,380.00
Sevenoaks	Above £293.75*	£293.75	£117.50	Above £293.75*	£293.75
South Hams	Above £2,350*	£2,350.00	£1,762.50	Above £2,350*	£2,350.00
South Tyneside	£352.50	£352.50	£117.50	£352.50	£352.50
Southwark	£2,870.00	£1,752.00	£1,092.00	£1,752.00	£1,752.00
St Albans	£600.00	£600.00	£250.00	£600.00	£600.00
Taunton Deane	Above £201*	£201.00	£138.00	Above £201*	£201.00
Uttlesford	£489.36	£489.36	£244.69	£489.36	£489.36
Watford	£1,000.00	£500.00	£250.00	£1,000.00	£500.00
Wellingborough	£1,403.90	£569.98	£123.33	£834.76	£834.76
Welwyn Hatfield	£1,020.04	£1,020.04	£500.00	£1,020.04	£766.56
Westminster	£2,937.00	£2,937.00	£1,468.75	£2,937.00	£2,937.00

* Negotiable



NORWICH
City Council



Planning interim service standards





If you would like this information in another language or format such as large print, audio cassette or Braille please phone the number below:

Polish

Jeśli pragną Państwo otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym języku lub formie, np. w dużym druku, na kasecie audio lub alfabetem Braille'a, prosimy o kontakt pod poniższym numerem telefonu:

Portuguese

Se pretender uma cópia desta publicação num idioma ou formato alternativo como letra de imprensa, cassete áudio ou Braille, contacte por favor o número abaixo:

Lithuanian

Jeigu pageidaujate šią informaciją gauti kita kalba arba kitu formatu, pvz., stambiu šriftu, garso kasete ar Brailio raštu, prašome paskambinti žemiau nurodytu telefono numeriu:



0344 980 3333



info@norwich.gov.uk

Planning services – what we do

The planning service makes high quality, sustainable and appropriate development possible in Norwich as well as maintaining and improving the city's natural and built environment by:

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- give you our names
- tell you what we are doing and why
- provide the best possible service and take the time to get it right first time, every time
- respect you and respond to differing needs because of age, disability, ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

Your responsibilities to us

We would like you to:

- provide us with the information we need and inform us if it changes
- let us know if you cannot attend an appointment
- show us respect and courtesy.



How we will respond to you – our Interim service standards

Telephone

If you contact us by telephone, we will:

- answer 85 per cent of all telephone calls in person
- respond to telephone messages within one working day.

Letter and email

If you contact us by letter or email, we will:

- send you an acknowledgment in five working days
- answer 90 per cent of all letters and emails fully within 15 working days or explain why this is not possible.

Visit us

- We aim to see you within 10 minutes.
- If you need more detailed help we will make an appointment for you to see someone.

Visit you

If you request a home visit because of limited mobility, we will:

- try and see you within five working days
- show you council identification when visiting you.

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If we cannot meet these targets we will let you know how long it will take.

Once a planning decision has been taken we will:

- issue a decision letter within three working days of the decision date, unless a planning obligation remains to be signed
- notify neighbours or people who have made a representation within three days of the decision.

We will also:

- publish a list of planning applications that we have received and decisions we have made weekly
- make these available at our offices and on our website
- continue to maintain and update the planning services website to keep users informed about our service and any changes to procedures
- regularly review our approach to keeping people informed about planning applications – [click here for more information](#). Alternatively visit the 'Planning – what happens to a planning application?' page in the the A-Z of services section of our website: www.norwich.gov.uk

Complaints

Planning enforcement

If you complain about someone breaching planning rules we will assess this within a day. Depending on whether the breach is classed as high, medium or low, we will come back to you in one to five working days.

Service complaint

If you are unhappy with our service we would like to know as complaints help us to improve our services. If you do want to complain we will:

- acknowledge your complaint within five working days
- give you a full response within 15 working days.

Website

If you want to use our website at www.norwich.gov.uk we will:

- aim for the site to be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- give you the chance to view and comment on current planning applications and consultations online
- let you know if we find out there is a problem with the site.

Other useful information

Before submitting a planning application

We encourage people to contact us before submitting planning applications. Pre-application advice is free of charge.

For relatively straightforward applications, we will provide a written response within 15 working days of receiving written, basic information including sketch plans. This should cover:

- details of validation requirements and the fee needed to support the application
- basic written information on planning policy considerations
- further contact points for any specialist advice that may be required.

This period will not apply to environmental impact assessment screening and scoping opinions. Statutory time periods apply.

For larger or more complicated applications different standards will apply. Please contact us to discuss your needs.

Visiting us at City Hall

Planning reception

Planning reception, on the second floor of City Hall, is open from 8.45am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Here you can:

- view details of planning applications which are being dealt with or have been determined
- view planning decision notices and Section 106 agreements
- pick up the forms you need to apply for planning permission and find out basic information about the planning service
- drop off completed forms and applications.

More detailed advice

If you need specialised advice on making planning applications, design or planning policy issues, you can either write to us or attend a planning surgery. Surgeries guide householders and small businesses on the need for planning permission and offer general advice. They take place on Tuesdays from 9.30am to 1pm and Thursdays 3pm to 6.30pm at planning reception. You will be able to have a 15 minute appointment to discuss your proposals. Officers will be able to give advice on matters including:

- explaining planning applications which affect you
- householder extensions and alterations
- shop fronts
- minor alterations, extensions or changes of use
- advertisements
- general guidance on the council's policies and standards.

Planning enforcement

There are three levels of priority that we use in assessing a possible breach of planning control. These are:

- High priority: loss or damage to irreplaceable assets such as listed buildings or protected trees, serious effects on highway safety, unauthorised demolition of buildings.
- We will acknowledge complaints within one working day of receipt.
- We will investigate all complaints and advise complainant and contravener of the next steps to be taken within two working days.
- Medium priority: significant impact on residential amenity, impact on important townscape or landscape.
- We will acknowledge complaint within five working days of receipt.
- We will investigate all complaints and advise complainant and contravener of the next steps to be taken within 10 working days.
- Low priority: development that may not need planning permission, development that may receive planning permission anyway.
- We will acknowledge complaint within five working days of receipt.
- We will investigate all complaints and advise complainant and contravener of the next steps to be taken within 20 working days.

Building regulations

Building Control services are provided on behalf of the council by CNC Building Control. Please contact them direct if you have a query regarding the building regulations:

CNC Building Control

Thorpe Lodge

1 Yarmouth Road

NORWICH

NR7 ODU

t: 01603 430100

e: enquiries@cncbuildingcontrol.gov.uk

f: 01603 430541

For more information about building control in Norwich and applications forms for work visit the CNC Building Control website.

If you wish to contact us please:

telephone

0344 980 3333

(8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

minicom

01603 212587

(8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

fax

01603 213015

email

planning@norwich.gov.uk

Write to:

Planning services

Norwich City Council

City Hall

Norwich

NR2 1NH

Visit us at:

Planning reception

(8.45am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

2nd Floor

City Hall

Norwich

NR2 1NH

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