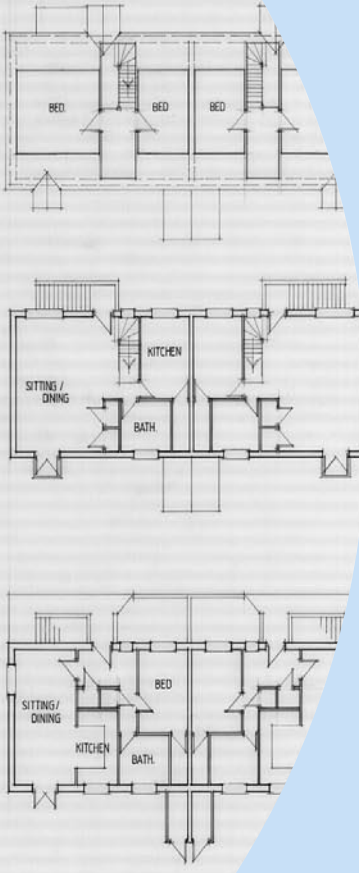




Development Services – Planning Charter





Introduction

The Town and Country Planning system is designed to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest. It is the means by which we enhance and protect our environment whilst at the same time allowing the development necessary for our economic and social well-being to take place in an acceptable manner. The development control process seeks to ensure that these aims are achieved through the submission and determination of applications for planning permission for development.

This Charter is intended to set out the aims and objectives for the Planning Service and in particular to ensure that a high standard of service is provided to all those who are involved in the development control process.

Why do we need Development Control?

Development Control makes sure that the development and use of land is appropriate for its purpose and location, and that the local community is not adversely affected. Its purpose is to:

- control the use of land and buildings for the benefit of the whole community;
- minimise any harm to the environment from pressures for change; and
- give local people a say in what happens in their area.

Most new buildings, alterations to existing buildings and changes in the use of land or buildings need planning permission. Our job is to provide the right balance between encouraging development which provides homes, jobs and

services while protecting the character of our towns, villages and countryside. In making a decision on an application, we always take into account the views of those people likely to be affected by the development. The applicant has a right of appeal against a refusal of permission and third parties can challenge the Council's decision by judicial review.

What we offer...

We aim to provide a responsive and effective Development Control Service to the applicant/ agent and also to those likely to be affected by development proposals. At the same time we will work to protect and improve the District's environment.

For the applicant and/or agent we will:

- by letter or meeting, as appropriate, encourage and provide pre-application guidance and advice on development proposals including the appropriate required fee;
- Register and acknowledge receipt of planning applications within 3 working days where applications are received complete, giving the name of the Planning Case Officer;
- where applications are not complete for registration we will advise on the necessary amendments within 5 working days;
- seek to raise the quality of development in terms of design, layout and landscaping and will negotiate, where appropriate, to improve submitted proposals;



- decide applications in accordance with Council policies set out in the statutory Development Plan;
- suggest modifications which might be made to overcome objections to the proposal;
- provide the appropriate Planning Committee date, except when the application is to be determined under powers delegated to Officers;
- copy or summarise objections and supporting letters or documents to the Planning Committee;
- determine the application as quickly as possible. Our target is to decide 60 % of major applications in 13 weeks, 65 % of minor applications in 8 weeks and 80% of all other applications including householder applications in 8 weeks. If it takes longer than this, we will, in discussion, explain the reason for any delay and indicate the likely decision date;
- issue decision notices within 2 working days of the decision being made; and
- advise applicants on how to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate when applications are refused.



For our other customers we will:

- publicise planning applications in the local press and on site for major developments, departures from statutory policies and applications in conservation areas and affecting listed buildings and individually notify adjoining people who in the judgement of the inspecting Planning Case Officer might be affected so they have the opportunity to comment and have their views considered before making the decision;

- allow not less than 21 days from the date the application was publicised, for the receipt of letters of support or objection;



- make planning applications available for inspection at the District Offices during office hours and at Town and Parish Councils on request and online on our web-site;
- When applications are decided by the Planning Committee, summarise the main points of all letters of support or

objection in the Committee report, and offer the opportunity to address the Committee in person.

- Where applications are decided by officers the main points of all letters of support or objection will be carefully considered and summarised before a decision is made
- decide applications in accordance with Council policies set out in our statutory Development Plan;
- make all planning application files available for inspection;
- provide informal advice on how to make your views known on a planning issue;
- reply to letters within 10 working days;
- return telephone calls within 1 working day;
- deal with enquiries in a helpful and courteous manner.

How to help us to help you...

- If you are making a planning application, we can deal with it more efficiently if you discuss your proposal with us beforehand;
- It is important that any letter requesting pre application advice must contain sufficient information to enable the

planning officer to understand exactly what is being proposed – the more information that can be provided the greater the certainty that can be provided.

- If you have held pre-application discussions please indicate in your application who you spoke to and include a copy of any relevant correspondence.
- Ensure that you follow the guidance for submitting a planning application, including fees, the number of sets of application forms required and any supporting information.
- make sure that the application plans are accurate and clear and show the site in relation to adjacent properties; and
- always quote the application number and site address when you telephone or write to us.
- It is always advisable, especially on complex issues for applicants to engage their own professional advisors when submitting planning applications

If things go wrong - Enforcement...

Sometimes development is carried out without planning permission, or which does not comply with conditions of a permission. The Council will endeavour to monitor ongoing development to ensure that breaches of planning control do not occur. Where possible, the Council will seek to resolve such breaches quickly and through negotiation. Most cases will be resolved without the need of formal action.



However, instances will occur where the Council will consider taking enforcement action to resolve a particular problem.

If we are made aware, or become aware of enforcement problems we will:

- deal with all enquiries in a helpful and courteous manner;
- visit the site within 3 working days for urgent cases and 10 days for non-urgent cases, or immediately for very urgent cases;
- advise on the next steps to be followed within 15 working days of first enquiry, which may include the likely procedures to be taken but could include, for example, the need for further investigations or further monitoring of a situation;
- serve appropriate Notices to address unauthorised development, proportional and expedient to the harm caused;



- seek planning applications for development where this would enable the control of development to be best achieved and where such development would otherwise be likely to be in accordance with the Development Plan;
- or
- in appropriate cases confirm that no further action need be taken justifying and explaining this decision clearly to all interested parties.

Landscaping and trees...

The Department also has responsibility for looking after the District's Trees and providing advice for landscaping new development. The Council can protect trees by making Tree Preservation Orders, where these may be under threat and/or are of special amenity value to the area. The Council also considers requests for the carrying out of works to trees in Conservation Areas and through a specialist advises on the health and safety of protected trees and/or proposed works to such trees. The specialist also advises on Council owned trees and Highway trees in the towns.

We aim to provide an effective advisory service and we will:

- provide advice on proposed tree works to protected trees before any application is submitted;
- in appropriate cases protect trees through Tree Preservation Orders;
- respond to emergency requests for tree protection or safety works as quickly as we can, but within 2 working days wherever possible;
- deal with applications for tree work as quickly as possible. Our target is to decide 100% within 6 weeks;
- reply to letters seeking advice within 10 working days;
- return telephone calls within 1 working day; and
- deal with all enquiries in a helpful and courteous manner.



How to get help & advice...

If you wish to obtain advice you can do so in one of the following ways:

Write to Development Services
 The Grange, Nutholt Lane,
 Ely, Cambs
 CB7 4PL

Or phone 01353 616202 or 616241

Further information, including the Local Plan, supplementary planning guidance and planning application forms can be downloaded directly from our web site at

<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/>

If things go wrong...

If you are not happy with the service you have received, please let us know without delay so that we can try and put things right. Speak to the person who is dealing with your case, or write to:

David Archer

Executive Director Development Services (at the above address)

Your complaint will be acknowledged in 2 days and investigated with a reply in writing within 10 working days or such other extended period as may reasonably be required depending on the complexity of the case. A leaflet describing our complaint procedure is available from the Council Reception

