

6.2 Planning advice

We have a statutory planning role, both advising on local plans and in responding to consultations on individual planning applications.

Increasingly, our customers tell us that our advice is most valuable at the early stages of proposals, advising both strategically and at pre-application, to avoid unnecessary cost and delays later in the process. In order to maintain this service into the future, we need to recover our costs for doing so.

Our standard service, consists of two stages:

1. the preliminary opinion: a free service for all developments, irrespective of scale and complexity, funded through our grant-in-aid from Defra rather than charges income - this outlines the issues, relevant to our role and function that will need to be considered as part of the development proposal, and identifies the necessary information required to enable us to provide a substantive response to the subsequent planning application
2. a voluntary bespoke charging agreement where we can provide more detailed technical advice about the proposal: our charged advice is provided through a formal agreement made up of an offer letter, a programme of advice and standard terms and conditions - we charge an hourly rate to cover our costs in providing that advice, since each individual agreement will vary in the amount of time and resource required to provide our technical advice

Proposal

We propose to increase the hourly rate from £84 to £100 to ensure that we continue to recover our full costs.

Since we first started using the £84 hourly rate, we now have a better understanding of the division of work within the grades of staff and our various business functions that contribute to this work. We have reviewed our activities and cost base for the people involved in delivering this work, and calculated that we should instead be charging £100 per hour to recover our full costs.

We propose to continue to develop and market this service, offering detailed bespoke spatial planning advice at all key phases of development. This includes (but not exclusively) strategic advice to developers, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, Enterprise Zones and to those involved in the discretionary phases of the Local Plan process.

In all cases, our service will be voluntary; we will not impose a charged service on any developer.