

APPENDIX D

Service / New Charge

Enhanced planning service aimed at minor applications (including changes of use), householder planning applications and lawful use/discharge of condition applications. This would be a 'fast track' service for the customer from receipt of the planning application through to a decision. It is proposed that certificate of lawful use applications and discharge of planning applications also fall within the offering.

The idea came about during the Covid Pandemic when householders in particular wanted to gain their consent quickly to enable them to develop their homes. The Local Authority grant 88% of its applications which is in-line with the England average of 86%.

The service would be split into two services.

First Class (Castle Class)

Householder/Minor applications – from receipt of application to determination within 4 weeks

Certificate of Lawfulness/Discharge of condition - from receipt of application to determination within 4 weeks

Business Class (Ashton Class)

Householder/Minor applications – from receipt of application to determination within 5 weeks

Certificate of Lawfulness/Discharge of condition - from receipt of application to determination within 5 weeks

The enhanced services would need to be paid at the time of the submission of the application, and the applicant or agent will need to inform the Council upon submission and payment of the application. Each request will be assessed individually by either the Planning Applications Manager or a Principal Planning Officer before the application can be considered to utilise the fast-track route. It is assumed that only valid applications on submission could qualify for this route.

Charging Policy

The proposed charging will be on a fair charging basis, we would be seeking to maximise income within an appropriate fee structure as highlighted above. The Council is a monopoly supplier of the service as only the Local Authority can determine a planning application but the above rates we consider

Comparative Information

Few councils offer such a service and there is no up-to-date comparison data available. However, several local authorities who manage to retain a stable staffing base are beginning to offer fast-track or 'premium' services for those applicants who require a faster-than-usual decision.

Financial

Information Required	Description
Level of charge	<p>We would propose to charge the following</p> <p>First Class (Castle Class) - £500</p> <p><u>Householder/Minor applications</u> – from receipt of application to determination within 30 days.</p> <p><u>Certificate of Lawfulness/Discharge of condition</u> - from receipt of application to determination within 30 days.</p> <p>Business Class (Ashton Class) - £400</p> <p><u>Householder/Minor applications</u> – from receipt of application to determination within 37 days</p> <p><u>Certificate of Lawfulness/Discharge of condition</u> - from receipt of application to determination within 37 days.</p>
Start date	April 2025
Budgeted income	It is unknown at this stage as it depends on marketing the proposal together with ensuring the developer community are aware. We envisage it could bring in £15,000 per year .
Surplus/deficit as a percentage of cost	N/A
Surplus/deficit per usage	N/A

Impact Assessment

The only impact will be competing priorities of workload for the case officers and ensuring applications are validated and assigned to the nominated case officer on the same day to enable the process to work. None of this is particularly challenging as long as the appropriate communication is put in place.

The fast-track service is dependent upon the DM Planning Applications staffing resources remaining stable, to enable delivery against the timescales.

Impact on Other Areas

The concept of offering fast-tracked services is one that it is beginning to become more prevalent in those authorities where staffing resources are stable.

A fast-tracked decision does not guarantee that permission would be granted. Each planning proposal would continue to be considered on its own merits and consequently any misrepresentation that a faster service would 'buy' a permission is not accepted.

If the proposal is accepted the Service will ensure that the appropriate checks and balances are carried out. This will include a check by the Planning Applications Manager or a Principal Planning Officer to review the application at receipt, to see whether it is suitable for this route.

The DM Service will also monitor the enhanced service's effectiveness for the first 12 months, including the speed of decision; the outcome of the decision; and whether the data for 'outcome of decision' is consistent with the outcome of non-enhanced planning applications. The current benchmark for decision-making is that approximately 88% of all applications are approved or accepted (often following amendments).

Method of Collection

The payment would be collected at the time of submission of the application, and the applicant would need to call or email the planning service with details of the planning portal reference. The payment would be in addition to the statutory planning application fee. For a householder planning application for example the fee would be £500 plus the fee of £258 returning £758.

Alternatives

The alternative is to do nothing and not offer the service. We appreciate that for the majority of applicants they will not use the service. For some, such as home movers or those that wish to have a decision within a short space of time it would appeal.

Consultation

National fees are prescribed by Government. Local authorities have powers to levy fees for additional or fast-tracked services.

The local planning authority would ensure that there is sufficient notification during the lead-in to the introduction of the service. This would include coverage on the council's website and direct notification to local agents and architects.

The introduction of the enhanced services would not affect service users who choose not to use the service.