Practice Note for meetings with Planning Applicants

Context
The City of London is frequently praised for facilitating property development through its responsive planning service. Developers, architects and consultants value the ability to meet planning officers in pre-application meetings to discuss their schemes and achieve a recommendable formal planning application. This process reduces uncertainty for the developer and allows the planning authority to influence the form of the development to mitigate its impact upon its surroundings and the wider City. The importance of pre-meetings is recognised in the NPPF and their role will also be influenced by the Localism Act. By building upon our current practices we will provide a reliable and consistent service for applicants.

This Practice Note sets out the key points which we will observe when setting up and conducting meetings with prospective planning applicants. These arrangements must meet the needs of our customers while making efficient use of our resources and provide better coordination across the organisation. Our revised procedures may be perceived as reducing flexibility towards applicants but they will provide more certain advice and reduce the possibility of confusion or frustration at a later stage.

Procedure for dealing with chargeable pre-application meetings

The initial contact
When a request for a meeting is received it must be established whether this is a pre-application meeting to discuss a development proposal or other type of planning discussion.

Pre-application meetings should be arranged through Toni or Amy depending on whether Peter or Annie is involved.

If the proposed meeting is a true pre-application meeting the applicant will submit the pre-application form/necessary docs and the cheque.

On receipt of these Peter and/or Annie will decide whether they need to be involved in the case. If either do then the appropriate Assistant Director will advise Toni who will be the Case Officer and the Design Officer. If neither Peter nor Annie need to be involved the case will be allocated in the same way via Amy.

Development Management officers (including Archaeology and Access)/Environmental Enhancement/Local Transportation/Environmental Services/Policy will hold regular slots in their diaries twice weekly (date/time to be arranged) for an internal pre-meeting (officers only preparatory meeting) on the pre-application meeting requests received.

The Case Officer's Role

The Case Officer:
- Will manage the case.
- Will review the case documents.
- Will distribute appropriate information to *all* teams, advising them that Case X is to be discussed on date Y.
- Will advise the applicant when their project will be discussed – within 5 days unless further information is required.
- Will relay what further information is required, if applicable, to the developer and will advise that the proposal will be discussed at the next meeting within 5 days of the receipt of the further information.
- Will advise Toni/Amy who is to attend the pre-application meetings.

Pre-meeting
The Case Officer:
- Will lead the discussion and will record the relevant issues, our policy position and any further work needed before the meeting with the applicant.

- Will follow a procedure note to ensure consistency and avoid oversights (to be prepared see below)

If there are no pre-application cases to discuss the meeting slot will be vacated.

At the pre-meeting it will be agreed who will be represented at the pre-application meeting. Usually initial views on potential issues will be relayed by Peter and/or Annie/the Case Officer/Design Officer with further meetings on detailed matters being held subsequently. It would be helpful if the Development Engineers were the normal channel for highway matters unless very significant highway issues are raised.

If there is any disagreement as to who should attend a meeting it will be agreed by the relevant Divisional Directors.

Immediately following the pre-meeting the Case Officer will tell Toni/Amy which officers will attend the pre-application meeting. This stage will be postponed if further information is required from the developer before a decision can be made as to who should attend the pre-application meeting.

Toni/Amy will offer meeting dates to the developer.

Pre-application meeting
It is essential that the relevant issues and the points agreed at the pre meeting are those conveyed to the applicant at the pre-application meeting.

Subsequent discussion
Subsequent discussions on the project should follow the same process. The Case Officer will normally attend every meeting but it may not be appropriate in every case.(eg – archaeology or other specialist meetings).

The developer will submit a further form/docs/cheque, the Case Officer distributing the information, further information requested from the developer if necessary and the pre-meeting will be used to brief on any subsequent pre-application meetings that have occurred.

Recording meetings
File notes of the matters discussed and agreed at both the pre-meeting and the pre-application meeting will be made by, or on behalf of, the Case Officer and anyone else who has held ‘specialist’ meetings. These meeting notes will be placed on an agreed part of the W drive, with restricted access if necessary, and the dataset will be upgraded to include dates of the pre-meetings. Recording meetings will be increasingly relevant with the growing requests for FOI’s and the Localism Act requirements

Where appropriate, written advice will be provided to developers within 10 days of the pre-application meeting signed off as per the pre-application form.

Development of procedure notes
A checklist has been prepared to be compiled by the Case Officer prior to the meeting using information supplied by the relevant offices.

The pre application meeting form has been amended.