

Key Agency Statement – Pre-application Engagement



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Introduction

This joint statement sets out the principles governing the Key Agencies' commitment to effective and timely pre-application engagement with planning authorities and developers in relation to developments of national and major significance.

The Key Agencies include:

Architecture and Design Scotland	Forestry Commission Scotland	Historic Environment Scotland
Scottish Enterprise	Scottish Environment Protection Agency	Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Water	SportScotland	Transport Scotland
VisitScotland		

Other Agencies may participate in the Group's activities depending on the subject matter.

Early Engagement

The benefits of early engagement are a key feature of Scottish Government's Planning System. This forms a common thread running through the planning system from early engagement in the Local Development Plan preparation, through to improvements in Pre-application consultation as part of Development Management. Effective early engagement allows for a more transparent planning and decision making process, early identification of issues and early Key Agency involvement. This joint statement re-affirms how the Key Agencies will help to meet the ambitions for an efficient, inclusive Scottish planning system.

Circular 3/2013 (as amended) stresses that "Both pre-application consultations with the community and pre-application discussions with the planning authority and statutory consultees are intended to add value at the start of the development management process. They should improve the quality of the proposal and allow prospective applicants the

opportunity to amend their emerging proposals in light of community, statutory consultee and planning authority opinion.” This policy is further reinforced in Circular 1/2017 on Environmental Impact Assessment.

Scottish Planning Policy 2014

Scottish Planning Policy (Principle Policies – Development Management) states (para. 35)–

“To support the efficient and transparent handling of planning applications by planning authorities and consultees, applicants should provide good quality and timely supporting information that describes the economic, environmental and social implications of the proposal. In the spirit of planning reform, this should be proportionate to the scale of the application and planning authorities should avoid asking for additional impact appraisals, unless necessary to enable a decision to be made.”

More specifically, within the policies on Supporting Business and Employment, it states (para. 106):

“Efficient handling of planning applications should be a key priority, particularly where jobs and investment are involved. To assist with this, pre-application discussions are strongly encouraged to determine the information that should be submitted to support applications.”

A Plan-led System

We are committed to collaborative approaches to preparing development plans, led by planning authorities, and involving all stakeholders. The main basis for plan-led development management is the Local Development Plan. We will use the LDP and the policies in the SPP as the basis for any pre-application discussions.

Principles of Efficient and Effective Pre-application engagement

This statement specifically addresses Major and National Developments dealt with by the Town and Country Planning System, but its guiding principles are relevant to agency involvement in other consent procedures, such as Energy Consents. The statement is not intended to be a set of fixed rules. Instead, it is a commitment by the statutory agencies to effective engagement and a set of overall principles to guide good practice. Where an agency is a non-statutory consultee, the same principles apply but may be subject to resource constraints.

We will:

1. encourage early engagement with planning authorities and developers
2. attend early meetings with the planning authority and developer to discuss a proposal and how it will be taken forward
3. commit the resources necessary to input into effective early engagement
4. engage in both formal processing agreements and informal pre-application engagement arrangements
5. work together to identify solutions, where possible to any perceived problems encountered, where possible
6. develop a good understanding of the nature of the proposed development and the developer’s aspirations

7. identify as early as possible any insurmountable barriers to the development or potential major risks associated with it
8. encourage developers to work with us in an open and constructive way
9. support planning authorities to lead and co-ordinate pre-application engagement
10. assist planning authorities to determine which Key Agencies should be involved
11. explain clearly what information we require to provide robust advice
12. work together to ensure consistency in advice
13. ensure the amount of information requested from developers will be proportionate to the proposal.

To achieve these principles, we have an expectation that planning authorities and developers will give adequate notice of meetings, allow time for effective engagement and provide the necessary information for us to be able to contribute.

Key Agencies – Further Advice

Further advice on each of the key agencies can be found by clicking on the relevant logo below. This includes, where relevant, links to our service level statements on engaging with the planning system.

Architecture & Design Scotland

Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

