

Proposal for Skills and Backlog Funding.

Section 1: information about the local authority

1. Please provide the name of the main point of contact.

Gary Guiver

2. Please provide the job title of the main point of contact.

Director of Planning

3. Please provide the email address of the main point of contact.

gguiver@tendringdc.gov.uk

4. Which local authority is submitting this proposal?

Tendring District Council.

5. Please select your region. (Drop down options: East Midlands, East of England, London, North East, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, Other).

East of England

6. What type of authority is the applicant? (Drop down options: County council, District / borough council, London borough, Unitary authority, Mayoral combined authority, National park, Development corporation, Other).

District Council

7. Are you submitting a bid on behalf of a group of two or more local authorities? (Drop down options: Yes or No).

No

8. If you selected 'yes' for question 7. Please state the names of these local authorities.

N/a

9. Has this application been approved by the authority's Section 151 Officer (or deputy)? For joint submissions, please reply for the lead council / applicant. (Drop down options: Yes or No).

Yes

10. Please state the type of support you are bidding for: backlog funding, skills funding, or both. (Drop down options: Backlog funding, Skills funding, Both).

Skills Funding

11. If you have applied for both kinds of funding, which would you prioritise? (Drop down options: Backlog funding, Skills funding).

N/a

Section 2: planning application backlog funding – Not applicable

With reference to questions 12-21 please see guidance, in particular, the section entitled 'PS1, Questions 1 and 2' which provides information about the types of applications that should be included. If you are applying on behalf of a group of two or more local authorities, please provide total figures for the group, rather than for the individual local authorities.

12. How many live (undetermined) planning applications (outstanding decisions including conditions) do you have overall? Please only state the number and provide this in numerical figures. Also, please only include applications that have been validated and exclude any that have been determined, withdrawn, called in or turned away. You may find it helpful to draw on the most recent published planning applications data which includes information about the number of applications that are 'on-hand', by local authority, both at the beginning of January 2023 (based on information provided by each local authority (column K)) and at the end of March 2023 (based on information provided by each local authority and also subsequent calculations by DLUHC (column M)).

13. Following on from question 12, please provide the date on which this data was extracted.

14. As a comparison, please provide the same data requested for question 12 for 5 years before the extraction date. Again, please only state the number and provide this in numerical figures.

You may find it helpful to draw on the historic planning applications data (see link below) which includes information about the number of applications that are 'on-hand', by each local authority at that time, both at the beginning of January 2018 (based on information provided by each local authority (column I)) and at the end of March 2018 (based on information provided by each local authority and also subsequent calculations by DLUHC (column K)). Information at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/historical-and-discontinued-planning-live-tables>, 'Historical live tables, January to March 2018, Table 133'.

15. To help to understand the breakdown of question 12. How many 'major' planning applications do you currently have outstanding? Please only state the number and provide this in numerical figures. Also, please only include applications that have been validated and exclude any that have been determined, withdrawn, called in or turned away. If the data is not available, please give your best estimation.

16. Following on from question 15, please provide the date on which this data was extracted.

17. To help us understand the breakdown of question 12, how many 'minor' applications do you currently have outstanding? Please only state the number and provide this in numerical figures. Also, please only include applications that have been validated and exclude any that have been determined, withdrawn, called in or turned away. If the data is not available, please give your best estimation.

18. Following on from question 17, please provide the date on which this data was extracted.

19. To help us understand the breakdown of question 12, how many 'other' applications do you currently have outstanding? Please only state the number and provide this in numerical figures. Also, please only include applications that have been validated and exclude any that have been determined, withdrawn, called in or turned away. If the data is not available, please give your best estimation.

20. Following on from question 19, please provide the date on which this data was extracted.

21. In numerical figures, please provide an estimation of how many applications have been received but have not yet been validated.

22. What are the causes of the backlog? Select as many options that apply. (Drop down options: staffing levels, budget levels, adequacy of income to cover costs, Pandemic, increase in applications over time, increase in complexity or scale of applications, increase in stakeholder interest in decisions, lack of timely responses from statutory consultees, poor quality / invalid applications, IT systems, other).

23. Following on from question 22, please explain further and state how long this has been building (250 words maximum).

24. Please explain why this backlog cannot be resolved by current available resources (100 words maximum).

25. What impact is this backlog having on wider planning functions? (250 words maximum).

26. What is the total cost of your proposed approach to clearing the backlog? (Please use this numerical format and ensure you use a '£' sign: £100,000).

27. How much funding is your local authority / group of authorities requesting from the Planning Skills Delivery Fund to deliver the proposal (allocations up to £100,000 per authority)? Again, please use the numerical format presented in the question and ensure you use a '£' sign.

28. Following on from question 27, please provide a suitable breakdown and justification for the level of funding you are requesting (250 words maximum).

29. How will this funding be used to address the backlog? (Drop down options: Appointment of consultants, Appointment of temporary staff, Other).

30. Please set out the expected outcomes from the provision of potential support from the PSDF and the intended benefits of those outcomes (250 words maximum).

31. Please specify how development management performance will continue to be monitored within your local authority, how this links to the PSDF funding requested and who will be responsible for monitoring (150 words maximum).

32. Please set out the type of caseload you would allocate to the additional resource (e.g. major applications, minor applications, other applications), the expected number of planning applications you expect to be cleared as a result and in what timescale the work will be undertaken in (250 words maximum).

33. How will any benefits be sustained beyond the period for which any PSDF funding is available? (100 words maximum).

34. What are the biggest risks to this proposal and how do you propose to mitigate them? (200 words maximum).

35. Have you already or are you planning to engage the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) in a peer review of your development management services and do you have an improvement plan in place? (Drop down options: Already engaged, with improvement plan in place. Planning to engage and set up an improvement plan. No engagement planned, and no improvement plan in place, Other).

36. Do you agree to participate in a learning programme aimed at sharing insight and best practice arising from use of the PSDF (Drop down options: Yes / No).

37. Please confirm your proposal will not give rise to any subsidy control issues. (Drop down options: Our proposal will not give rise to any subsidy control issues, Our proposal will / may give rise to any subsidy control issues).

38. Have you undertaken a Public Sector Equalities Duty assessment for your proposal? (Drop down options: Yes, No).

39. Are you also applying for skills funding? (Drop down options: Yes, No).

Section 3: skills funding

40. Which planning specialism are you seeking to procure resources for? Select as many that apply. (Please note, separate funding is available for support on nutrients). (Drop down options: transport planning, urban design, strategic planning, conservation, heritage, landscape, ecology, minerals and waste, viability assessment, other).

Urban Design, Transport Planning, Conservation, Heritage, Landscape, Ecology

41. Following on from question 40, what are the reasons for choosing this / these specialisms? Is it to address an existing skills gap, prepare for the introduction of planning reform, or both? (Drop down options: Addressing the skills gap, Prepare for the introduction of planning reform, both).

Both

42. Following on from question 41, please provide an explanation of the reason for choosing the specialism(s). If this is to address an existing skills gap, please explain why this gap cannot be addressed by current available resources and the impact this is having on planning outcomes. If this is to prepare for the introduction of planning reform, please explain which element of the reform(s) (350 words maximum).

We face critical planning challenges. Many initial planning applications are of poor quality, leading to either refusal of meritorious proposals or lengthy negotiations, straining our resources and breaching statutory timelines.

The reluctance of developers and applicants to use our pre-application advice service, primarily due to fees and perceived lack of clarity in specialist areas, exacerbates this issue. Consequently, they often bypass this step, hindering the planning process.

Additionally, pre-application work is inadequately prioritised due to heavy workloads during application determinations, missing opportunities for early improvements and reinforcing the perception of poor value.

National policy emphasises pre-application engagement's importance. To address these challenges and improve planning outcomes, we've initiated a project to enhance Tendring's pre-application service. We're exploring collaboration with Essex County Council to streamline and strengthen our offerings. The objectives are:

Ensure consistent advice to developers to encourage engagement.

Promote sustainability, beautiful design, and biodiversity net gain.

Elevate the profile of pre-application work.

Monitor its impact on subsequent planning applications.

To support this initiative, we'll allocate initial resources to create a dedicated role within the Planning Service. Once proven successful, the service is expected to become self-sustaining through pre-application fees. We will upskill existing officers to enable more positive contribution to the service.

This strategic focus on pre-application engagement aligns with current challenges and upcoming reforms, promising a more efficient and effective planning process benefiting developers, the community, and planning outcomes.

43. What is the total cost of the proposal? (Please use this numerical format and ensure you use a '£' sign: e.g. £100,000).

£44,000.00

44. How much funding is your local authority / group of local authorities requesting from the Planning Skills Delivery Fund to deliver the proposal (allocations up to £100,000per authority)? Again, please use the numerical format presented in the question and ensure you use a '£' sign.

£44,000.00

45. Following on from question 44, please provide a suitable breakdown and justification for the amount of funding you are requesting. (250 words maximum).

- 1) The cost of a full time officer to support pre application work and coordination for one year to enable sufficient time to establish successes. Given on costs, the cost would be £34,000.00
- 2) Training of specialisms for specific officers and team as a whole. £10,000.00

46. Please set out the level of resource this funding would provide including number of officer hours, the number of weeks and the timescale within which the work will be undertaken.

This would provide 52 Weeks, 37 hours per week as a full time position. The remaining training monies would be spread across 11 planning officers and 3 validation officers to be spent within 6 months, but available courses or length may exceed this timeframe.

47. Please set out the expected outcomes from the provision of potential support from the PSDF and the intended benefits of those outcomes. (250 words maximum).

Expected Outcomes:

1. Enhanced Pre-Application Service: We anticipate a significant improvement in the quality and effectiveness of our service. Driven by increased expertise, streamlined processes, and better coordination of engagement.
2. Higher Rates of Pre-Application Engagement: Notable increase in the number of developers seeking pre-application advice. Leading to more well-prepared and higher-quality planning applications.
3. Consistency and Quality: Enable us to maintain consistency in the advice provided to developers across various specialisms. This consistency will be underpinned by rigorous quality standards, ensuring that developers receive valuable guidance and recommendations.
4. Sustainable and Beautiful Design: By promoting sustainable principles and beautiful design early in the planning process, we anticipate more development proposals aligning with these objectives.

Intended Benefits:

1. Improved Planning Outcomes: By addressing the skills gap in pre-application engagement, it will streamline the planning process, reduce delays, and increase successful planning applications.
2. Efficiency and Cost Savings: By identifying and resolving issues at an early stage, we can reduce the time and costs associated with amending planning applications further down the line.
3. Community Well-Being: The focus on sustainable principles and beautiful design will contribute to creating developments that are more in harmony with their surroundings. This will enhance the quality of life for residents and contribute to the well-being of the local community.

In summary, a more efficient, effective, and sustainable planning process. The intended benefits encompass improved planning outcomes, cost savings, community well-being, and alignment with evolving planning regulations, ultimately serving the best interests of all stakeholders involved.

48. Please select whether this proposal will support plan-making, decision-taking or both. (Drop down options: Plan-making, Decision-taking, Both).

Decision-taking

49. Following on from question 48, please provide further details about how the proposal will support these activities. (250 words maximum).

The improvement to pre application engagement and priority will improve decision taking by ensuring improvements to:-

- The quality of the application received to enable quicker and better informed decisions by planning officers.
- Less amendments and need for additional information requests
- Reduced refusals based on need for amendments and additional information
- Reduced number of planning conditions
- Reduction of workload as some applications will not be forthcoming given the pre application advice and improved trust in the value of that advice.

50. How will any benefits be sustained beyond the period for which any PSDF funding is available? (100 words maximum).

Increased capacity of paid service will allow sufficient funding to sustain role.

51. What are the biggest risks to this proposal and how do you propose to mitigate them? (200 words maximum).

There may be resistance to the introduction of a new role and changes in pre-application processes from existing stake holders. Mitigation: Stakeholder, Clear Communication.

Relying on future self-funding through pre-application fees may not be sufficient to sustain the role. Mitigation: Explore additional funding sources or contingency plans in case self-funding falls short.

Despite efforts to improve pre-application engagement, developers may continue to avoid seeking advice. Mitigation: Outreach and Promotion, Establish a feedback mechanism to gather input from developers about their experiences with the pre-application process and make continuous improvements based on their feedback.

52. Do you agree to participate in a learning programme aimed at sharing insight and best practice arising from use of the PSDF? (Drop down options: Yes / No).

Yes

53. Please confirm your proposal will not give rise to any subsidy control issues. (Drop down options: Our proposal will not give rise to any subsidy control issues, Our proposal will / may give rise to any subsidy control issues).

Our proposal will not give rise to any subsidy control issues

54. Have you undertaken a Public Sector Equalities Duty assessment for your proposal? (Drop down options: Yes / No).

No