

Provision of Initial Pre-application advice by Historic England to places of worship from 1st July 2017

Historic England introduced an Enhanced Advisory Service in 2015 that maintained our free Initial Pre-application advice service of up to 15 hours. Once the 15 hours of advice had been given, Extended Pre-application advice would be available on a cost-recovery (not for profit) basis, if further advice was required.

Some faith groups expressed concern about the fairness of including travel time in the 15 hours, but to date no place of worship has been charged for cost-recovery on Extended Pre-application advice. All have successfully received pre-application advice from Historic England within the free 15 hours or were exempt from charging because the buildings in question were identified by Historic England as being Heritage at Risk.

Nevertheless, we have taken all feedback seriously and obtained the Government's permission to modify the service. From 1st July 2017, the Initial Pre-application advice service will offer one free cycle of Initial Pre-application advice to prospective applicants for listed building consent issued by local authorities, listed places of worship consent under the Ecclesiastical Exemption Order 2010, planning permission affecting designated¹ heritage assets (or undesignated heritage assets of archaeological interest in Greater London²), and scheduled monument consent. If a site visit is needed travelling time will now be included as part of the free service cycle.

This means places of worship, whether under the Ecclesiastical Exemption or not, will continue to have two opportunities to consult with Historic England without charge while in the process of developing projects:

1. As proposals are explored and developed, before ideas are fixed or the proposals are finalised, they can ask for Initial Pre-application advice, which will include a review of submitted information, possibly a site visit, and an advice letter. It is a local decision whether or not a site visit or meeting is required to fully understand the proposals. Historic England staff will determine this based on the initial information provided.
2. When applicants are ready to make a formal application to the local authority or the relevant denominational advisory body³ for permission to go ahead with the works, and have a full set of information ready, there is a further opportunity to get free

¹ The pre-application advice service covers proposals where we would be statutory consultees should an application be made. See <http://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/charter/when-we-are-consulted/proposals-for-development-management/>

² Except for the City of London & Southwark who have their own in-house archaeology advisers. Searches of the Greater London Historic Environment Record for commercial purposes are chargeable separately; please refer to the Greater London Historic Environment Record Access and Charging Policy.

³ For Roman Catholic, United Reformed, Methodist and Baptist Union churches, the appropriate determining Advisory under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Historic Churches Committee, Listed Buildings Advisory Committee).



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advice from Historic England. This is known as Formal Pre-application advice that provides a clear statement of our view on the proposals for which permission is sought, not the start of fresh discussion!

If one cycle of free Initial Pre-application advice is not sufficient, there is an opportunity to purchase additional input prior to the formalisation of proposals through our Extended Pre-application advice service. This continues to be available after 1st July on a full cost recovery (not-for-profit) basis, as before.

Once an application is formally submitted to the local authority or relevant denominational committee further advice can be required from Historic England by the authority as a statutory advisor on planning applications. This advice is also offered without charge.

Buildings on the Heritage at Risk Register will continue to receive Extended Pre-application advice without cost recovery, even if more than one cycle of advice is necessary. Places of worship that are currently in the process of receiving Pre-Application advice from Historic England will be entitled to continue on the basis of one free cycle of advice; they will individually be notified of the change of approach as appropriate.

For further information from 1st July please see <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/enhanced-advisory-services/> or, if you have any other queries, contact me, diana.evans@historicengland.org.uk.

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