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## Practice Guide

# Realising the potential of pre-application discussions

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# 1 Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 The Welsh Government's planning policy, contained in Planning Policy Wales encourages local planning authorities and applicants to discuss proposals before a planning application is formally submitted. Planning Policy Wales (Edition 4, February 2011, paragraph 1.3.8) states that, "Well-managed pre-application discussions are an important part of the planning process. They can improve the quality of applications and help reduce the time taken to deal with a formal application".
- 1.2 Pre-application discussions can help prospective applicants (which may include individuals, householders, businesses and developers) understand the application process. Discussions can identify the relevant planning policy framework against which a proposal would be assessed and specify the information that would be required to support a planning application. Early discussions offer the opportunity for informed amendments and improvements to schemes prior to the submission of a formal application. They can also help identify community groups, consultees and other stakeholders that are likely to be involved in the application process. These discussions can result in a better planning application and deliver a higher quality development.
- 1.3 Research, commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2010 - "Study to Examine the Planning Application Process in Wales" - recommended the production of a practice guide for pre-application discussions<sup>1</sup>. Part of the Welsh Government's response to the report's recommendation is this Practice Guide, which takes account of existing successful approaches in Wales and elsewhere.

## Purpose of guidance

- 1.4 The guidance, prepared in conjunction with the Planning Officers' Society Wales, is intended to assist local planning authorities and applicants but will also be useful for local members, communities, consultees and other stakeholders involved in the planning application process.
- 1.5 Most local planning authorities already operate a pre-application process and this document will provide those authorities with good practice principles that can be incorporated into their existing service. For other local planning authorities, the advice in this guidance will provide the framework for introducing a new service.

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<sup>1</sup>Welsh Government (June 2010). Study to Examine the Planning Application Process in Wales. [web-link  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/planningresearch/planningappprocess/papers/planningappstudy/?lang=en>

### **Scope of guidance**

- 1.6 This document relates to discussions about planning applications, but many of the principles can be applied to other types of local planning authority pre-application discussion. For example its principles could be applied to discussions about listed building or advertisement consent.

## **2 The Benefits of a Pre-Application Service**

2.1 Pre-application discussions are discretionary and most local planning authorities in Wales choose to provide a service.

2.2 Benefits of a pre-application process can include:

- establishing the information required to support applications in order to avoid incomplete application;
- identifying the relevant current and emerging planning policy framework;
- identifying potential difficult issues early;
- reducing the number of refusals;
- reducing the number of appeals;
- reducing the number of pre-commencement conditions;
- saving resources;
- establishing timescales and administrative procedures;
- reducing conflict by increasing awareness of development proposals and providing the opportunity for early community engagement; and
- improving consistency, certainty and speed for users of the planning system.

2.3 Pre-application discussions rely on a constructive approach from applicants and local planning authorities. There are benefits to all parties. For example a local planning authority should welcome the opportunity to improve a proposal prior to submission and a developer can save time and money by being fully informed before submitting an application. Ultimately a good pre-application service can make an area more attractive to investment. Both local planning authorities and developers can take practical steps to realise the benefits of pre-application discussions; many of these steps have been included in checklists within section 5 of this document.

2.4 Evidence from the 2010 research report, “Study to Examine the Planning Application Process in Wales”, indicates that, whilst a number of local planning authorities have a good service in place, the benefits of a pre-application service are not fully realised for the following reasons:

- discussions tend to be undertaken in an improvised ad hoc way;
- there is often a lack of consistency in advice given at pre-application and then at the subsequent application stage;

- discussions may not be entered into, or are entered into late, in the preparation of a proposal;
- the engagement of third parties can be limited and when they are engaged their response may not be timely or constructive; and
- there may be a lack of clarity about a local planning authority's pre-application discussion service and what is offered.

2.5 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has noted the following examples of issues that can form the subject of complaints to his office in relation to pre-application advice:

- the provision of incorrect, misleading or incomplete planning advice before the submission of an application;
- the lack of a system for ensuring that advice was properly recorded; and
- not making it clear that advice was informal and did not commit the Council to a particular decision in the future.

2.6 The aim of this document is to address the above issues and concerns in order to support the pre-application process and secure clear, consistent, and accurate pre-application advice. It describes a number of key principles that should guide pre-application discussions, identifies the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and outlines a number of tools and processes that could be used to facilitate the pre-application process.

### **3 Providing a Pre-application Service**

3.1 The Welsh Government expects local planning authorities to offer a pre-application service and adopt some key principles. Local planning authorities should:

- provide a pre-application service statement to advise how enquiries will be dealt with and indicate the likely timescale for response. The pre-application service statement should also define the type and level of information that will be expected from pre-application submissions, which should reflect the complexity and potential impact of a proposal. The service statement should be publicly available and included on the local authority's website;
- provide a standard pre-application submission form and guidance note;
- clearly state that all pre-application advice is provided on an informal basis, without prejudice to the determination of a formal planning application;
- provide a written response to pre-application enquiries that identifies the planning policy framework and any other material considerations against which the proposal would be considered;
- formally record all pre-application discussions and advice, this information should be recorded and linked to the relevant parcel of land or property in order to inform subsequent planning history searches - this will assist the provision of consistent planning advice by local planning authorities. Local planning authorities should adopt a standard protocol for recording pre-application queries and discussions, with copies of meeting notes made available to the applicant; and,
- aim to ensure continuity in officer involvement but when this is not possible, effective record keeping of pre-application discussions will facilitate consistency in planning advice.

#### **Status of pre-application advice**

3.2 All parties should note that, whilst every effort should be made by the local planning authority to provide advice on the acceptability of a proposal in principle, this advice can only be given on an informal basis, without prejudice to any future decision of a Local Planning Authority.

3.3 Developers and applicants should be aware that information related to pre-application discussions may be subject to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The Act and the Regulations provide for some exemptions from the need to disclose commercially sensitive information and in cases where applicants consider that specific



information is exempt from the requirements of the Act or the Regulations, the justification for their position should be provided to the local planning authority.

### **Charging for pre-application advice**

- 3.4 Subject to certain conditions, the Local Government Act 2003 provides local authorities with the ability to charge for discretionary services. As such, local planning authorities are able to charge for pre-application advice. If a local planning authority chooses to charge, a clear charging schedule should be included in the pre-application service statement, with fees proportional to the type of development proposal being considered. However excessive charges may act as a disincentive for applicants; local planning authorities may consider that householder development and some minor development proposals should be exempt from any fees.

### **Proportionality**

- 3.5 Local planning authorities are expected to offer a pre-application service for all types of development proposals, regardless of complexity. However the type of pre-application service offered by the local planning authority will inevitably reflect the nature of development proposed and the likely impacts generated.
- 3.6 Applicants involved in householder or some minor development may have limited experience of the planning system. Written guidance, published on the authority's website, can help applicants with such development proposals and the Planning Portal ([www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)) is also a useful resource for applicants. However, in all cases, applicants should be able to make an appointment with a planning officer - and this may be of particular value if the applicant has limited knowledge of the planning system - in order to discuss pre-application proposals. Local planning authorities may consider operating a drop-in service for householder and other minor developments.
- 3.7 Section 4 of this guidance note discusses a number of pre-application processes and tools which will be more appropriate for larger, more complex developments – the schemes that are likely to generate more significant impacts and require the involvement of a number of stakeholders and officers.

### **Consistency**

- 3.8 It is important that the planning advice provided by local planning authorities is consistent as it will be used by applicants to inform their development proposals. Consistency, and the effectiveness of pre-application discussions, can be improved if local planning authorities ensure that officers are sufficiently experienced to conduct negotiations and provide advice. Whilst resource issues are acknowledged, local planning authorities should also seek to provide continuity in officer involvement so that any related planning applications are dealt with by the same officer.

- 3.9 It is important that local planning authorities ensure that pre-application discussions are recorded, and linked to the relevant parcel of land or property in order to inform future site searches. This will assist local planning authorities in providing consistent advice to applicants.

#### **Effective pre-application discussions**

- 3.10 For pre-application discussions to be effective, it is important that applicants seek a dialogue with the local planning authority at the early stages of a development project. Early discussions provide the opportunity for meaningful dialogue between relevant parties and can also facilitate improvements to schemes prior to submission of formal applications.
- 3.11 Whilst issues of commercial confidentiality are recognised, applicants will need to supply adequate information of sufficient quality to the local planning authority in order to receive a helpful, informed response.
- 3.12 Advice provided by local planning authorities should be clear, correct and comprehensive. Applicants should expect to receive a written response to their pre-application submission which identifies the relevant planning policy framework and any other planning considerations. Local planning authorities should advise applicants on the key issues that a pre-application proposal may raise and identify any fundamental, in principle, concerns. In cases where planning advice does change, for example between pre-application and application stage, a reasoned explanation should be provided.
- 3.13 A pre-application service statement from the local planning authority will provide applicants with a written understanding of the level of service that can be expected. Applicants should address the requirements of the local planning authority's pre-application submission form and should note that pre-application discussions can only address the planning merits of a proposal.

#### **Involving other stakeholders**

- 3.14 Pre-application discussions can often benefit from the timely and constructive involvement of other interested parties. However it is acknowledged that the involvement of other stakeholders in the pre-application process can be resource intensive and this approach is most likely to be appropriate and effective for more complex schemes that generate a wide range of planning issues and potentially significant impacts. For reasons of confidentiality, the developer will need to agree to the involvement of other stakeholders in the pre-application process. The following groups are of particular importance:

##### Local communities

- 3.15 Applicants may wish to discuss development proposals with local communities or the representatives of local communities, which may include community and town councils, prior to the submission of a formal planning application in order to gain an understanding of local

concerns. Early discussions with local communities can, potentially, allow any concerns or issues to be addressed or mitigated in any formal planning application. The developer is responsible for arranging any pre-application community consultation.

#### Consultees

- 3.16 The involvement of statutory consultees can be beneficial at the pre-application stage, particularly when considering more complex, technical proposals that could result in significant impacts. Local planning authorities should direct applicants to contact relevant statutory consultees and when the participation of statutory consultees in pre-application meetings is appropriate, it should be coordinated by the local planning authority. It is important that sufficient information is provided by developers in order to ensure a meaningful response from a consultee.

#### Local authority services

- 3.17 Where appropriate, other local authority service areas should be involved in pre-application discussions. Service areas such as economic development, transportation, housing, environmental protection, drainage, nature conservation, education and recreation etc. can provide important information to developers which can help assist and inform the application submission.

#### Local authority members

- 3.18 The Localism Act 2011 encourages local members to engage in open debate with their local communities about council business. The Act introduces provisions to clarify the rules on “predetermination” and confirms that decision-makers will not be taken to have had (or to appear to have had) a closed mind when making a decision just because they had indicated a particular view previously. The Act is clear that local members should play an active part in local discussions and should not be liable to legal challenge as a result. However planning applications will still have to be determined in accordance with the development plan “unless material considerations indicate otherwise” - the abolition of predetermination does not remove that legal obligation. Local members will still need to be open-minded in determining planning applications.
- 3.19 There is no statutory requirement for local planning authorities to actively seek the engagement of local members directly in pre-application discussions. However local planning authorities should brief and update local members on significant development proposals in their constituency.
- 3.20 Where local members seek active engagement in pre-application discussions, their involvement will need to be considered against the local authority’s Code of Conduct.

- 3.21 It will be important for local authorities to provide regular training events for local members, including members of planning committees. This is of particular importance following local elections and when there is a change to the composition of committees.

### **Co-ordination with other consents**

- 3.22 Welsh Government land use policy supports local planning authorities working in parallel with other environmental consenting regimes<sup>2</sup>. Effective pre-application involvement of relevant stakeholders can help facilitate parallel working and bring benefits; for example it may help prevent contradictory conditions being imposed on different consents and offers an opportunity to identify when the parallel submission of related non-planning consents is desirable. Local planning authorities should also use pre-application discussions to identify other consents, for example listed building consent, conservation area consent and hazardous substances consent which may be required in addition to any planning permission.

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<sup>2</sup>Welsh Government (Edition 4, 2011) Planning Policy Wales, paragraph 13.1.3. [web-link <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en>]

## **4 Processes and Tools for Pre-application Discussions**

- 4.1 This section of the guidance provides a brief description of some of the processes and tools that can be used for pre-application discussions.
- 4.2 Local planning authorities should consider incorporating these processes and tools into pre-application discussions but they will not necessarily be appropriate for all types of development proposal and their use will be at the discretion of the local planning authority, taking into account the scale and complexity of the proposed development. For example, the multidisciplinary approach outlined below will evidently be most suitable for larger, more complex schemes.
- 4.3 It is recognised that applicants proposing householder or some minor developments may not have experience of the land use planning system and will require a pre-application service that is relevant to their needs. Although supplementary guidance notes, such as Householder Design Guides, may be helpful for such applicants, they are likely to require direct contact with a planning officer.

### **Development briefs and supplementary planning guidance**

- 4.4 A development brief (area vision or a masterplan etc) for a site and other supplementary planning guidance notes are useful documents produced by local planning authorities and should be read by applicants before any pre-application discussions take place. Local planning authorities may produce site-specific briefs or masterplans, which will identify the planning principles against which development proposals on a particular site will be assessed. Other supplementary planning guidance will provide advice on a range of issues such as design, parking standards and open space.
- 4.5 The main drawback in the use of these documents is the time and resources that are required before adoption. They may be too inflexible for many pre-application discussions.

### **Design and access statements**

- 4.6 Design and access statements need to be submitted with most planning applications; further advice is provided in Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2009). Pre-application discussions provide an excellent opportunity for the local planning authority and applicant to discuss the required content of design and access statements.

### **Multidisciplinary teams**

- 4.7 An approach taken by some local planning authorities in Wales is to use multidisciplinary teams for pre-application discussions (often referred to as the Development Team approach). This can bring together a range of interested parties and officers from a variety of service areas - for example, conservation, ecology, economic

development, transport and housing. The team approach is particularly useful for more complex development proposals. Applicants need to ensure that when they enter pre-application discussions with a Development Team, they are supported by appropriate professional expertise in order to allow informed discussion of key issues.

### **Agreeing application information**

- 4.8 One key objective of the pre-application process is the submission of a valid planning application. Standard validation requirements for planning applications have been introduced in Wales through the standard application form (1APP) and are detailed in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 (SI 2012/801 W.110)<sup>3</sup>.
- 4.9 Pre-application discussions also provide an opportunity for the local planning authority to identify any technical information or documentation, which may be required in order to support an application.
- 4.10 A common source of delay in determining planning applications is negotiating the content of planning obligations. The principles of a planning obligation should be established through pre-application discussions. Ideally discussions should facilitate the submission of a draft section 106 agreement or heads of terms with the planning application. Standard templates and model agreements can all be usefully discussed within pre-application discussions. A locally developed planning obligations guide may also be particularly useful at the pre-application stage. Where appropriate the community infrastructure levy should also be discussed with developers.

### **Other approaches**

- 4.11 The Design Commission for Wales provides a free design review service, which allows early consultation with its independent expert panel<sup>4</sup>. The Commission also publishes case studies and produces good practice guides on design related issues, which may be useful for pre-application discussions.
- 4.12 The Planning Advisory Service in England has published a practice guide entitled: “Constructive Talk: investing in pre-application discussions” (May 2007)<sup>5</sup>. Although the document provides guidance for local planning authorities and stakeholders in England, it contains a number of best practice procedures and practices which are relevant in a Welsh context.

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<sup>3</sup>[web-link <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2012/801/introduction/made>]

<sup>4</sup> Design Commission for Wales (January 2011), Design Commission for Wales: A Guide to the Design Review Service. [web-link [http://dcfw.org/publications/view/a\\_guide\\_to\\_the\\_design\\_review\\_service/](http://dcfw.org/publications/view/a_guide_to_the_design_review_service/)]

<sup>5</sup>Planning Advisory Service (May 2007). Constructive Talk, Investing in Pre-Application Discussions. [web-link [www.pas.gov.uk/pas/aio/39020](http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/aio/39020)]

## **5 Checklists for Planning Authorities and Applicants**

5.1 There are many actions that local planning authorities and applicants can take to maximise the benefit of pre-application discussions; these have been developed into checklists and are set out below. Not all the points listed below will be appropriate for all forms of pre-application proposal and their relevance will be related to the impact and complexity of the development.

### **5.2 Those seeking advice on development proposals can:**

- contact the local planning authority at the earliest opportunity. Applicants should seek advice well in advance of submitting a planning application so that any feedback can be taken into account prior to the submission of a formal planning application;
- obtain information from the local planning authority website. Identify and look at the development plan for the area and any other relevant documents such as supplementary planning guidance notes. Undertaking this research will allow applicants to enter pre-application discussions in an informed way;
- promote the benefits of their proposal. For example developers should identify and promote the economic value of their proposal and indicate how social and environmental issues have been addressed;
- consider who will be affected by the proposal and how negative impacts can be minimised;
- bring as much information to pre-application discussions as possible. This will allow for a more detailed and informed response from the local planning authority;
- keep in mind that the advice provided will not bind the council to a particular decision;
- seek professional advice early and coordinate this advice, recognising that some development proposals may require specific expertise in areas such as ecology, the built environment, transport etc.;
- where necessary, directly involve consultees early, including bodies such as the Design Commission for Wales, allowing them to give a full response with sufficient time to inform any subsequent planning application; and,

- when the application is submitted, indicate that pre-application discussions were undertaken – the name of the planning officer who gave advice would be useful. The applicant should also identify how the issues raised by the local planning authority and other stakeholders during the pre-application process have been addressed.

### 5.3 **Local planning authorities can:**

- publicise their service as widely as possible at their office, on websites, in libraries etc, and ensure that all material is accessible, can be understood by the public and highlights the value and availability of discussions;
- consider how to offer a proportionate and accessible service. Consider providing a basic drop in service to deal with requests from householders, an appointment based planning surgery for larger proposals or a series of meetings incorporating multiple disciplines for a major and complex proposal;
- offer a private meeting room if requested;
- make information available to those preparing a proposal, including making available planning history and plans;
- where relevant, proposals should be processed through the local planning authority's PADHI package to provide early advice on any likely concerns from the Health and Safety Executive relating to hazardous substances;
- ensure that planning officers are familiar with the area they cover and ideally know the development site. Officers should have an appropriate level of experience in order to provide satisfactory advice on development proposals;
- aim to ensure continuity of officer involvement throughout the planning process and in any event, ensure that there is consistency in advice between the pre-application stage and the determination of the planning application;
- offer site meetings, a site meeting should be arranged where it would offer clear benefits to the discussion of the application;
- consider offering a Development Team approach where officers from a range of local authority services could be made available. This could include conservation, transport, trees, building regulation and others;



- give an indication of whether the application is likely to be determined by a planning committee or under delegated powers;
- make developers aware of freedom of information requirements and explain how matters of commercial confidentiality will be dealt with; and,
- ensure that records are kept of discussions - records should be linked to the relevant parcel of land or property in order to inform subsequent planning history searches - this will assist the provision of consistent planning advice.

## 6 Sources of Further Information and Advice

### Welsh Government policy and guidance

- 6.1 Further information and advice on pre-application discussions is contained in Welsh Government policy and guidance. The following documents provide specific advice on pre-application discussions:
- *Planning Policy Wales (Version 4 February 2011)*  
Paragraph 1.3.8 provides general encouragement for pre-application discussions. It also identifies a number of areas where pre-application discussions are particularly beneficial, including: design (paragraph 4.10.13); wildlife, landscape and countryside issues (paragraph 5.5.1); and telecommunications (paragraph 12.13.6).
  - *Technical Advice Note 5 Nature conservation and planning (2009)*  
Section 4.2 notes the importance of pre-application discussions for nature conservation and Table 4.1 identifies who should be consulted.
  - *Technical Advice Note 8 Renewable Energy (2005)*  
Paragraph 6.1 recognises the importance of pre-application discussions to the integration of renewable energy in proposed developments.
  - *Technical Advice Note 12 Design (2009)*  
Paragraph 3.6 and Figure 2 - Pre-application discussions are identified as key to creating a pro-active planning system and preparing design and access statements. Paragraphs 6.10, 6.11 and A4.6 emphasise the importance of pre-application discussions in developing design and access statements. Paragraphs 5.6.1 and A3.9 highlight the importance of pre-application discussions in relation to the historic environment and access interests.
  - *Technical Advice Note 15 Development and Flood Risk (2004)*  
Paragraphs 11.4 and 11.5 encourage pre-application discussions involving the environment agency / appropriate drainage body, local planning authorities and developers.
  - *Technical Advice Note 19 Telecommunications (2002)*  
Paragraphs 53 and 66 identify pre-application discussions as beneficial for telecommunication applications. Discussions are encouraged with local resident groups, Community Councils and amenity bodies who maybe interested in telecommunications development (paragraph 51). In appropriate circumstances discussions with highway authorities, Cadw and the Countryside Council for Wales are encouraged (paragraph 52).
  - *Technical Advice Note 22 Planning for Sustainable Buildings (2010)*

Figure 17 contains advice on undertaking pre-application discussions.

- *Welsh Government Circular 00/2012 Guidance for Local Planning Authorities on the Use of the Standard Application Form (“1APP”) and Validation of Applications.*
- *Welsh Assembly Government Circular 30/2007 Planning for Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites*  
Paragraph 38 identifies pre-application discussions as particularly important to avoid misunderstanding and subsequent problems over planning permission for Gypsies and Travellers. Annex C paragraph 4 gives advice to local planning authorities on issues to consider in giving pre-application advice on Gypsy and Traveller planning applications. Annex D Paragraphs 2-5 gives detailed advice to Gypsies and Travellers on what to consider before making a planning application.
- *Welsh Office Circular 11/99 Environmental Impact Assessment*  
Paragraph 14 identifies the benefits of undertaking environmental impact assessment in combination with early pre-application consultations with local planning authorities.
- *Welsh Office Circular 10/99 Planning requirements in respect of the use of non-mains sewerage incorporating septic tanks in new development*  
Paragraph 10 advises pre-application discussions between developers, the local planning authority, Environment Agency and sewerage undertakers where the use of non-mains sewerage is proposed.
- *Welsh Office Circular 61/96 Planning and the historic environment*  
Paragraph 6 advises early consultation, by developers and authorities, on development proposals which would affect historic sites.
- *Welsh Office Circular 60/96 Planning and the historic environment: Archaeology*  
Paragraph 11 advises early consideration and discussions to identify if archaeological remains are likely to be present at a site.
- *Welsh Office Circular 35/95 Conditions*  
Paragraph 7 identifies the importance of pre-application discussions in reducing the need for conditions, discussing the terms of conditions and ensuring that they are tailored to a particular application.
- *Welsh Office Circular 22/87 Contamination*  
Paragraph 12 identifies the usefulness of informal discussions in drawing to the attention of developers the potential for contamination.

- *MPG 2 1988 Applications, permissions and conditions*  
Paragraphs 5 and 6 give advice on pre-application discussions for mineral planning applications.
- *Practice Guidance: Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (February 2011)*  
Paragraphs 20.6 - 20.10 give advice on the role of pre-application discussions in renewable and low carbon energy development.
- *Delivering affordable housing using section 106 agreements: Practice Guidance (July 2008)*  
Section 5.2 of this document provides advice on pre-application discussions and their importance in negotiating affordable housing requirements.

### **Other sources of information and advice**

6.2 A range of other sources of information and advice are available, the following are particularly useful:

- *Design Commission for Wales* <http://dcfw.org/>  
The Design Commission for Wales offers a design review service which can be particularly beneficial in developing proposals prior to the submission of an application.
- *Planning Aid Wales* <http://www.planningaidwales.org.uk/>  
Planning Aid Wales is an independent registered charity. They offer free, professional and impartial advice and support on all aspects of land use planning in Wales. They may be able to offer advice at the pre-application stage. They have published a 'Public guide to the land use planning system in Wales' which describes how pre-application discussions fit within the wider planning process.
- *Planning Officers Society Wales*
- *Planning Portal* [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)  
The Planning Portal provides information on the planning system in Wales.
- *RTPI Cymru* [www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi\\_cymru/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru/)  
The Royal Town Planning Institute promotes planning as a profession and builds links with other built environment professions and organisations throughout Wales.

6.3 Outside Wales information has been published by a variety of organisations, some of which can be usefully applied in a Welsh context:

- *Planning Advisory Service* <http://www.pas.gov.uk/>

The Planning Advisory Service is an English body which has provided advice on pre-application discussions much of which can be applied in Wales. They have also published a best practice guide entitled 'Constructive talk: effective pre-application discussions'

- *Planning Officers Society* <http://www.planningofficers.org.uk/>  
The Planning Officers Society is an organisation that has published a guidance note on providing pre-application advice Future of Planning portfolio of advice notes No. 8 Pre planning application consultation best practice 3 October 2010. They have also published: Practice Guidance Note No. 3: Councillor involvement in pre application discussions 30 June 2008.

There is a separate Planning Officers Society for Wales .

- *National Planning Forum* <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk>  
This is an English organisation representing a cross section of organisations with an interest in town and country planning. They have published a document entitled: Good Practice Note No. 2 Pre-application advice for town and country planning (2005).
- *Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE)*  
Biodiversity Toolkit: an on-line resource aimed at helping users to incorporate biodiversity into the planning system and new development  
[http://biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/stylesheet.asp?file=131\\_welcome\\_to\\_the\\_biodiversity\\_toolkit](http://biodiversityplanningtoolkit.com/stylesheet.asp?file=131_welcome_to_the_biodiversity_toolkit)

## Complaints

- 6.4 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales can look at complaints that relate to incorrect/misleading/incomplete pre-application planning advice that may have caused significant problems for applicants. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales "Planning Application Factsheet" provides further guidance and information.  
(<http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk/>)

## Other stakeholders

- 6.5 The following links, which is not exhaustive, to other stakeholders who may be involved in the planning application process may also be useful:
- Environment Agency Wales. <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/>  
  
Includes guidance on flood risk, environmental constraints and a "Guide for Developers" that details environmental issues that should be addressed in development projects.
  - Historic Wales. <http://jura.rcahms.gov.uk/NMW/start.jsp>

Provides a link to a portal that allows simultaneous searching of hundreds of thousands of records relating to archaeological monuments, historic buildings and artefacts held by different organisations across Wales.

- Wales Biodiversity Partnership  
[http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/legislation\\_guidance-20.aspx](http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/legislation_guidance-20.aspx)

Includes checklists for local planning authorities and developers in respect of their duties under biodiversity legislation.