

Evidence, Engagement and Consultation Summary

Ref no. P1 Charge for amendments to planning applications

Description of proposal

Title for consultation: Charge for amendments to planning applications

Minor, small major and major developments require planning permission for which applicants must pay a fee. Planning fees in England are set nationally by the government. Fees are used to offset the costs of the planning application service. Once a planning application is submitted, we are not legally obliged to accept any amendments to plans or documents. In order to offset the cost of carrying out additional work we are proposing to introduce amendment fees.

Estimated Net Saving / new income 2025/26

£50,000 (new income)

Summary of evidence, engagement and consultation

64 people commented on this proposal. The proposal received strong support:

- 77% fully support
- 21% support but with concerns / amendments
- 11% do not support
- 13% don't know.

Comments in relation to how the proposal might affect them included:

A few respondents felt that large developments could afford to pay higher fees, while others suggested that clients should be allowed a certain number of free amendments before being charged and that fees might discourage developers.

“Client should be given at least two chances to change plans for free and then be charged the third time they need to make an amendment.”

“If you want to encourage regeneration and development in the Borough which adds significant value to residents, why would you want to make the planning process expensive when costs tend to rise by 20% on average. Planning needs to be efficient with a quick turnaround. By adding charges this will still not happen, it appears as if developers are being penalised as opposed to encouraged during this process.”

Some comments highlighted the importance of ensuring that planning applications are thoroughly checked and that the process should not be made expensive to encourage development and regeneration.

“Ensure that future planning applications are stringently checked.”

One respondent had concerns about potential conflicts of interest if the council requests amendments and then charges for them.

“Amendments can be requested by the Council so I don't agree that there should be charges for this. There could be a conflict of interest with the council requesting amendments on an application because the applicant could see it as a way of making income.”

A number of comments indicate that some respondents had misunderstood the proposal, with some thinking it related to individual homeowners /residential applications.

Alternative suggestions included:

- Increase amendment fees even further as the proposed fees are considered very conservative.
- Charge more for planning generally - those who can afford it should pay more to avoid cutbacks elsewhere.
- Implement fines for those who exploit loopholes in the planning process before development is complete.
- Higher fees for commercial applications. Increase fees for building firms while keeping domestic fees unchanged.
- Premium fee for prompt planning officer visits. Charge more for immediate visits, with fees decreasing over time.
- Sell of the Saddlers Centre to offset the deficit.

Overall opinion from engagement and consultation

Respondents support this proposal.

Justifiable action from the evidence, engagement and consultation suggested in the Equality Impact Assessment

A – No major change required

Mitigating actions required, if proposal approved

NA

People potentially negatively affected, if proposal approved

NA

Response from Walsall Council on Proposal Ref P1

Following consideration of consultation feedback and equality impact assessment, Cabinet intend to implement the proposal.