

Shaping Growth in Dacorum



Planning Performance Agreements (PPA)

July 2022



Dacorum is open for business

As part of our wider transformation programme, we are constantly looking at the services we deliver for our customers. We recognise that our customers want quick, predictable planning decisions from a well-resourced, professional and dedicated team of planning and development professionals.

We are proud to adopt an open for business approach. We want to quickly approve first-class proposals that enhance our local area, provide homes, infrastructure and jobs whilst incorporating high-quality design and great place making. We also want to secure the necessary resources to enable us to deliver this service.

What is a Planning Performance Agreement?

As part of our transformed planning service we are strongly encouraging applicants with larger and/or complex schemes who wish to progress their schemes quickly to enter into Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs).

A PPA is a project management tool in which parties come together to agree the timescales, actions and resources for handling particular planning applications. They are voluntary agreements between a Local Planning Authority (LPA) and an applicant with the purpose of delivering high-quality, sustainable development based on a clear vision and development objectives.

PPAs can cover the pre-application and application stages but may also extend through to the post-application stage and include the discharge of planning conditions. They can be particularly useful in setting out an efficient and transparent process for determining large and/or complex planning applications. They can also help to bring together other parties such as statutory consultees.

PPAs can be used to secure the right level of resource at the right time and provide applicants with a greater level of certainty over timescales and the efficiency of the LPA. Ultimately, they lead to faster decisions being made and allow developers to start on site quicker. By working effectively together from an early stage, parties are more likely to align their briefs, work collaboratively and focus on producing high-quality development within a specified timeframe.

For us a PPA is the ideal way to secure the resources needed to help you get to site quickly.

“ PPA’s are intended
for large complex schemes
and speed up the process ”





Policy context

The [Government's Department for Levelling Up](#) has explained how pre-application engagement by prospective applicants offers significant potential to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system and improve the quality of planning applications and their likelihood of success. It has highlighted PPAs help to manage the process and agree any dedicated resources for progressing the application.

The National Planning Policy Framework also explains the importance of positive, proactive and creative decision making. Paragraph 46 recognises the valuable role of PPAs, stating:

“Applicants and local planning authorities should consider the potential for voluntary planning performance agreements, where this might achieve a faster and more effective application process. Planning performance agreements are likely to be needed for applications that are particularly large or complex to determine.”

What is included in our PPA Service?

We pride ourselves on being flexible and creating an approach that suits your needs. We also want to make sure that you see the value added in using this service. That is why we are keen to discuss your requirements and tailor the PPA to your specific needs.

Some of the aspects that could be included in the PPA include:

- Premium communication service
- Guarantees on response times
- Commitment on decision times
- Flexible draw down of fees
- Fast track service for condition discharge
- Access to specialist advice to speed up consultee responses
- Assistance with other services we offer for example, street sweeping, management companies, grounds maintenance, building control, audio studies, contaminated land, etc.

Please note that the above PPA components should be agreed at the inception meeting with the LPA. We will provide a PPA template and format as part of the process.

Discharge of condition applications can often lead to delays. The PPA process will allow us to commission third party consultants to quickly deal with these types of application. Securing additional resource for your project will not disadvantage other planning applications currently with us. However, this service will accelerate your application and allow us to bring in additional staff to ensure that your project is well resourced.

Expectations of the developer

We will expect the developer to approach any proposal in an open, collaborative and creative manner. The developer will be expected to employ high-quality staff and consultants with sound expertise in delivering sustainable communities. All projects will be delivered through a robust project management process and, as with ourselves, the applicants will be expected to do their best to meet agreed timetables.

Differences between Pre-Applications and PPAs

We offer a [pre-application advice service](#) to all applicants wanting to discuss anything from small household extensions through to major developments. We encourage applicants to use this service prior to submitting an application to proactively discuss the acceptability of the scheme and reduce the likelihood of it being invalid. This subsequently saves time and money and enables speedier decisions to be made.

We use PPAs to speed up and/or provide increased certainty to the planning application process for applicants. It moves the emphasis of the planning process away from arbitrary deadlines, towards a structured timetable and negotiated solutions that are agreed by both parties. We can involve the [local community](#), consultees and Councillors in decisions if required. Our PPA service also offers other benefits, including:

- Reduction in the risk of an invalid planning application
- Early identification of site-specific issues and advice on how to address them
- Quicker decisions on applications
- Higher level of certainty

- Overall cost savings
- Collaborative working and greater communication
- Effective engagement with the local community
- Project management with dedicated Council resources to provide consistency
- Realistic and predictable timescales
- Bespoke advice from the key consultees
- Advice on the most appropriate community/design review panels to engage with; and
- Agreement to a longer determination period beyond statutory timeframe if appropriate.





When can a PPA be submitted?

PPAs can be used at any stage of the planning application process – pre-application stage, during the determination period and post decision.

What does it cost?

The cost of a PPA is dependent on the scale of the application, the resources required and input from officers for the project. The fee will cover our costs for providing the advice or seeking external advice for technical and/or legal aspects of the project.

The assessment of the resources needed may result in the need for additional expertise or temporary staff, which would be funded by the fee. Importantly, any fees paid do not directly fund the person or people involved in the project.

Where a planning application for a major development is submitted without a planning PPA, it will be handled within existing workload of the team, without dedicated resource.

Please email ppa@dacorum.gov.uk to discuss fees in more detail.

Simple or Complex PPA?

We consider PPAs most effective on large, complex schemes. However, we do offer simple PPAs and pre-application advice for smaller schemes. The table below sets out the differences between the options.

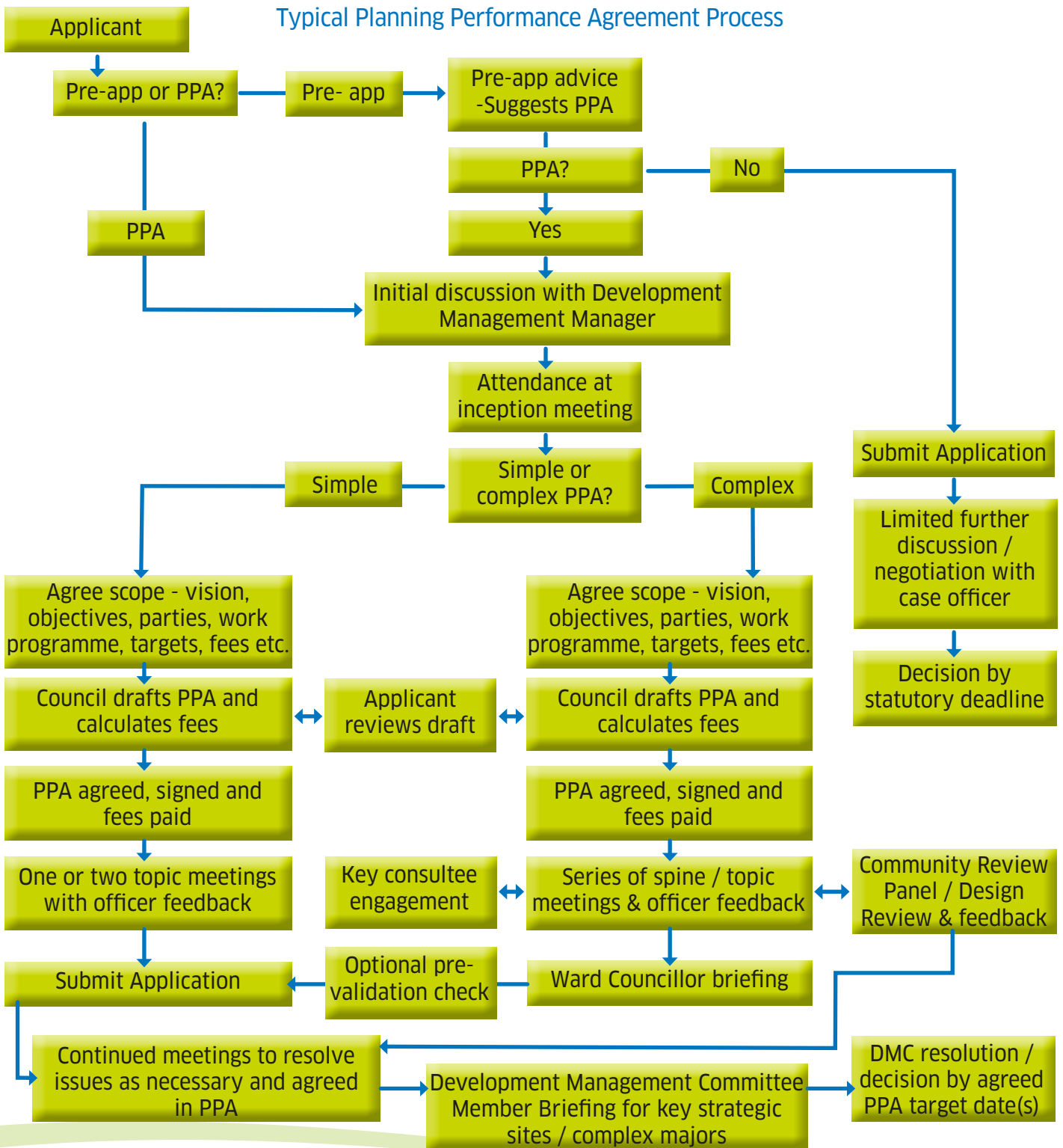


| Pre application advice | Simple PPA | Complex PPA |
|---|---|--|
| One-off opinion on a scheme at that time | Engagement on targeted issues arising from a proposal | Continuous engagement on a proposal in a project management approach |
| No amended plans accepted or continuous negotiation | A limited number of amended plans accepted as scheme evolves | Amended plans welcomed as scheme should evolve throughout process |
| No consultation with consultees in most circumstances | Consult consultees (relevant statutory and non-statutory) | Consult consultees (relevant statutory and non-statutory) |
| One follow-up meeting only | Several focused meetings covered by upfront fee | Numerous meetings as needed, covered by monthly fee and reviewed bi-monthly |
| Follow-up meeting should only be to clarify initial advice | Meeting on all key planning considerations | Meeting on all key planning considerations |
| No engagement with local community | No engagement with local community | Advocate presenting to Community Review Panel and/or holding community consultation events. Opportunity for member briefing |
| One-off summary pre-application response in writing then pre-application is closed | Summary response on main planning considerations, set out in most useful format for applicant | Agree notes and actions from meetings in a mutually beneficial way to progress the scheme |
| List of documents expected as per the validation checklist | List of documents expected as per the validation checklist | List of documents expected as per the validation checklist. Pre-submission validation check if included within fee |
| Good for householder proposals or simple commercial proposals | Good for simple major development and for extending/reducing statutory timescales | Good for large, complex major development proposals. |
| One-off payment based on scale and scope of proposal | Upfront inception fee and hourly fee based on officer time and involvement from other parties | Upfront inception fee and hourly fee based on officer time and involvement from other parties. Potential fee for pre-submission for pre-validation check |
| Pre-application added to the queue of pre-applications, expected response times 20 or 30 days depending on scale/scope of proposals | Timescale agreed between parties | Timescale agreed between parties |



How does the PPA process work?

The flow-chart below outlines a typical PPA process, with key parts of the process in red. The specific arrangements of each PPA will be arranged and agreed on an individual PPA basis, based on the scale and complexity of the PPA to ensure that the best possible outcome is secured.



Community engagement

As set out in our [Statement of Community Involvement \(SCI\)](#), we are committed to consulting and listening to the views of local residents and businesses to inform our decisions so they have a meaningful opportunity to influence development in our area. The type of consultation that is appropriate before applications are made will vary depending upon the scheme but could include public exhibitions and meetings, surveys of opinion and consultation with other key local groups. We will expect the developer to carry out the consultation but can advise on the most appropriate methods for doing so and the groups they may wish to consult.

Councillor involvement

We encourage our councillors to engage as part of the consultation process on PPA schemes in agreement with the Lead Planning Officer. Where appropriate, a briefing will be held with the appropriate committee and/or the councillors within whose electoral ward the PPA scheme is situated. Councillors, including those on the Development Management Committee will be supported by officers to be sure they adhere to the Code of Conduct for Members.

Community Review Panel

We advocate the use of our [Community Review Panel](#) for major or controversial schemes. The panel plays an independent, advisory role which helps to ensure that new developments are of the highest possible design quality, and meet the needs of people living, working and studying in the area, now and in the future. The panel meets once a month to discuss development proposals and give its views. Each of these discussions is turned into a formal report and feeds into planning decisions. The panel's recommendations are taken seriously as a formal part of the planning process. Each session costs £4,000 plus VAT.

Design Review Panel

We advocate the use of independent Design Review Panels on large-scale schemes or highly constrained schemes where it is considered this would be useful. These should be commissioned by applicants with the support of officers.

Contact us

If you have any questions regarding the PPA process, please feel free to contact the PPA Team by emailing ppa@dacorum.gov.uk or calling 01442 228 308.

“PPAs identify site-specific issues and how to address them”

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