

## 32. ECO-INFORMATION PRELIMINARY APPLICATIONS

**Adopted: 26/04/02**

### **WHAT IS A PRELIMINARY APPLICATION?**

A Preliminary Application is an application made to Council prior to submitting a formal Development Application seeking guidance from Council on whether the design proposed complies with Council's policy and is likely to be supported. It can be cost saving by identifying issues to be addressed by this application and usually speeds up the subsequent application processing.

Preliminary Applications are particularly useful for larger and/or complex applications although generally more information needs to be provided with such applications. Council staff are always willing to provide general planning advice, but when an enquiry requires review and assessment of plans, field visits or significant research, a Preliminary Application may be useful.

Preliminary Applications, however, cannot be used to negotiate variations to Council's Policies. Variations to Council's policy can only be considered as part of a formal development application. Preliminary applications allow for early consideration of a development proposal by Council's internal assessment panels where appropriate, but decisions cannot be appealed to full Council or the Land and Environment Court.

Support of a Preliminary Application does not confer Council's development consent to the proposal.

### **WHY DOES COUNCIL ACCEPT PRELIMINARY APPLICATIONS?**

The advantage of a Preliminary Application to an applicant is that it provides, in writing, a list of where the proposal (to the level of detail provided) varies Council's policies and standards. It also provides a checklist of material that will need to be provided with an application. This in most cases speeds up final assessment and helps establish whether the application has particular issues (eg. designated, integrated etc).

While Council staff are always willing to provide general planning advice this formal method of providing feedback on proposals to applicants prevents the Development Advisor or other staff becoming bogged down at the counter for long periods providing "off the cuff" planning advice on proposals without having visited the site and being afforded the time to consider the proposal and carry out a more thorough assessment. This system also allows the opportunity to obtain

feedback from the assessment panels on whether the proposal is considered worthy of Council's support.

This system also provides Council with a record of the proposal as submitted and formally records Council's response to a proposal to reduce ambiguity over the advice given anytime in the future.

### **HOW DO I LODGE A PRELIMINARY APPLICATION? HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?**

There is no formal application form for a Preliminary Application. Application usually takes the form of a letter requesting consideration of a proposal. Sufficient plans and documentation should accompany the letter to enable assessment of the proposition. Preliminary Applications can be lodged by mail or over the counter at any of Council's offices and have a small processing fee.

### **WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A PRELIMINARY APPLICATION?**

This will vary depending upon the nature of the proposal, but generally:

- The property owners consent to the lodging of the Preliminary Application
- A site plan drawn to scale with a clearly identified north point
- A covering letter/statement of environmental effects outlining the proposal
- A floor plan and elevations drawn to scale

The greater the detail contained in the Preliminary Application the more thorough an assessment may be made and the more guidance offered. It should be remembered and stressed that Preliminary Applications cannot be used to negotiate variations to Council's policy. Requests for variations to Council's policy can only be conducted as part of a formal development application.

### **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO GET A DECISION? WHAT WILL COUNCIL'S COMMENTS COVER?**

A decision in writing will be returned to the applicant in around 3-4 weeks. During this time a site inspection is carried out, the proposal is assessed against the relevant policy and the proposal may be referred to Council's Development Assessment Panel for comment.

The written reply will include a statement indicating where the Preliminary Application does not comply with relevant policy and a conclusion on whether the Preliminary Application is supported in its current form. This reply will only indicate where the application fails to comply with policy but will not attempt to redesign the proposal in order to achieve compliance. In addition, a list of information that should be lodged with the application will be provided. Council's comments in relation to Preliminary Applications should be taken as a guide only and should not be construed as a definitive assessment of a formal development application.



## **WHO CAN I CONTACT TO DISCUSS PRELIMINARY APPLICATIONS?**

For further information regarding Preliminary Applications you can contact Council's Customer Service Unit on 4350 5555.



## **WHO ASSESSES PRELIMINARY APPLICATIONS?**

Generally Preliminary Applications are assessed by the Development Advisor based at the Customer Service Counter and then presented to the Development Assessment Panel for their comment.

Preliminary Applications assessed by other planning staff are those that involve major applications where their evaluation in the early stages will assist the final processing of the full development application. Preliminary Applications involving major proposals will be allocated to the responsible planner in the relevant processing by the Development Assessment Panel and will generally involve such items as major subdivisions, large medium density developments and high rise developments.

At the end of this process, you can make a decision as to whether to proceed to an application, comply with Council's requirements or redesign. Repeated preliminary's are not recommended.