

## Development Advisory and Assessment Policy

<b>Date Adopted:</b>	{Insert Date Adopted}
<b>Council or Corporate Policy</b>	Council Policy
<b>Responsible Group:</b>	Development Assessment and Regulatory Services
<b>References &amp; Legislation:</b>	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

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# 1 Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to deliver an improved upfront Development Application (DA) process for Council's customers. The policy will do this by:

- Providing skilled, customer-focussed services at the pre-lodgement stage.
- Offering better and more efficient lodgement and post-lodgement processes.
- Reducing distractions at the assessment phase to streamline the process overall.
- Facilitating innovation and continual improvement in applications.

Inner West Council will continue to assess applications based on their merit and having regard to the provisions of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, Local Environmental Plans and Development Control Plans as well as other relevant environmental planning instruments, codes and policies.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- a) Support continuous improvement of the delivery of the development assessment services to all customers involved in the development application process.
- b) Achieve and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency in the assessment and decision making processes; to increase the focus of applicants on the provision of quality, complete and meritorious applications as well as reduced assessment times.
- c) To increase collaboration between Council and applicants for better outcomes overall for the local government area.

# 2 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition (with examples if required)
DA	Development Application

# 3 Policy Implementation

## 3A Pre-Lodgement

Delivery of a customer focussed development application service within reasonable timeframes is only possible when applicants furnish appropriate, complete information at the time of lodgement. Providing skilled customer support at the pre-lodgement stage facilitates this.

Services associated with Development Assessment include:

- **Advisory:** skilled professional planners in a dedicated pre-lodgement team made available to customers during business hours to respond to queries and provide detailed advice regarding applications before they are lodged.
- **Education:** Regular free information seminars conducted to provide information about the development application process and related services. These seminars are public, however reservations are required. Information regarding the development application process will also be provided on Council's website.
- **Guidelines:** detailed guides, fact sheets and checklists provided online, and in hard copy at Council, for customers to consider and complete prior to lodgement. The guides and checklists will provide details for applicants on what information Council requires to accept an application. Applications will not be accepted for lodgement if they are inadequate in information, incomplete, or the required fee is not paid in full.

Local Environmental Plans and Development Control Plans will also be freely available on Council's website, with hard copies available at Council (for a fee).

- **Formal feedback:** site-specific advice provided for applicants who seek formal, paid pre-lodgement meetings. Detailed written feedback will be provided subsequent to these meetings.

***All applicants are strongly encouraged to utilise this service.***

This enables applicants to discuss development concepts with dedicated pre-lodgement professionals to obtain guidance regarding the key considerations related to the development.

Concept plans are required to be provided with an application for formal pre-lodgement advice. Once plans have been received, Council will contact the applicant with a meeting appointment. The application will also be referred to other specialists within Council, such as engineers and heritage advisors, and be reviewed in detail. Detailed written advice will be issued by a Council officer subsequent to the meeting.

- **Amendments:** customers provided with the opportunity to amend applications following guidance from Council planners, enabling them to lodge complete, final applications.
- **Design advice:** experienced staff available when the planning context is complex or when customers are seeking innovative outcomes.

The benefits of the improved pre-lodgement services will include dedicated, skilled customer support, the opportunity to refine applications prior to lodgement, and subsequent more rapid assessment of lodged DAs that have already received substantial input.

### **3B Lodgement**

Lodgement officers will review applications and checklists provided at the pre-lodgement stage to ensure completeness prior to accepting applications for lodgement.

For electronic lodgement, detailed guidance will be available on the website about the specific requirements and specifications.

Applications that are unclear, illegible or fail to provide required information will be rejected pursuant to Clause 51 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*. An application that has been rejected is taken to have never been made all documentation submitted to council will be returned to the applicant.

Customers will be advised at lodgement that amendments to plans are strongly discouraged, and may not be possible, once the process has commenced.

Full application fees as calculated by Council are required to be paid at this stage.

### **3C Post-lodgement**

A seamless and efficient process will underpin the quick allocation of applications to a dedicated planning officer.

Notification of neighbours will occur simultaneously.

Should applications be found to be deficient once assessment has commenced, provision will be made for further information to be provided only where this is minor and can be easily and rapidly submitted, typically within 14 days. Where major deficiencies are identified, the applicant will be invited to withdraw the application so that the matters raised can be addressed in full. In the event that the application is not withdrawn it may be refused.

By limiting requests for further information, distractions within the assessment process will be reduced and the process streamlined overall.

#### 4 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in March 2018, if not prior.

Further policy improvements will be issued to address subsequent stages of the development assessment process.

#### 5 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1	(the date the policy takes effect)	Group Manager Development Assessment and Regulatory Services	First Version

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