Value My Land

Maximising Returns for Landowners

Planning Application Costs for Development Land

A Practical Guide for Landowners

How statutory fees, planning advice, design, surveys, legal work, later approvals and funding arrangements shape the complete cost of pursuing planning permission.

Value My Land

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What Does a Planning Application Cost Include?

The fee paid to the local planning authority is only one part of the cost of seeking planning permission. A development-land budget can also include planning advice, design work, measured surveys, specialist technical reports, project management, legal work and the cost of responding to matters raised after submission.

The total depends on the application route, scale and complexity of the development, the site's constraints, the evidence required by the planning authority and the way the project is funded. A small application can still require substantial work where access, drainage, ecology, heritage or title issues must be resolved.

A low statutory fee does not necessarily mean a low-cost planning route. The complete budget is determined by the work needed to prove that the proposal is lawful, acceptable and deliverable.

Why is the statutory fee only part of the cost?

The authority fee pays for the application to be processed and determined. It does not prepare the scheme or prove that it is acceptable. The applicant must normally commission the plans, reports and professional work needed to define the proposal, satisfy validation requirements and address the planning issues raised by the site.

- Planning-policy review, strategy, pre-application advice and project management
- Concept design, masterplanning, drawings and measured or topographical surveys
- Access, drainage, ecology, landscape, heritage, utilities, ground and other technical evidence
- Section 106, CIL, legal costs, conditions, reserved matters and later approvals
- Amendments, resubmission, appeal, delay, finance, VAT, disbursements and contingency

How should the budget be structured?

Initial planning review → critical constraints → route and scope → design and surveys → application fee and submission → determination → obligations, conditions, implementation or appeal

Read the full online Planning Application Costs Guide

Why Early Budgeting and Route Selection Matter

A planning budget should be prepared after the development objective and likely application route have been reviewed, but before detailed design and a full survey programme are commissioned. Starting without a clear strategy can lead to duplicated reports, redesign, invalidation or expenditure on a proposal that is not supportable.

Cost planning should be staged. Early work should test matters capable of changing feasibility, such as planning policy, lawful access, ownership, flood risk, drainage, ecology, development capacity and infrastructure. Later commissions can then respond to the evidence rather than relying on assumptions made at the outset.

Start with the planning route

Full, outline, Permission in Principle and prior approval routes require different information and create different later stages. The least expensive first application is not automatically the least expensive route overall. Reserved matters, technical details consent, conditions and legal obligations must be included when alternatives are compared.

Sequence decisive evidence

Obtain the information most likely to change the planning conclusion before refining the complete scheme. Seasonal ecology, traffic counts, utility responses and intrusive ground work may also need early programming even where the detailed report is commissioned later.

Allow for later stages and uncertainty

A positive committee resolution may still require a Section 106 agreement and further negotiations before permission is issued. Conditions, amendments, additional information, appeal risk and programme delay can all create cost after the initial submission. A realistic contingency should reflect those uncertainties.

Do not commission every survey before the planning route is clear. Test decisive constraints first, then allow the design, evidence and appraisal to develop together.

The Main Cost Components at a Glance

The complete planning budget normally combines statutory charges with professional, technical, legal and commercial costs. The balance varies from site to site: on constrained development land, the survey and consultant package can materially exceed the application fee.

Statutory Application Fee The nationally prescribed charge calculated by application category, site area, floorspace, number of homes or another fee basis.	**Planning & Project Management** Policy review, route selection, pre-application work, statements, consultant coordination, negotiation and management through determination.
Design & Drawings Capacity testing, masterplanning, architectural and engineering plans, parameter drawings, sections, schedules and design-and-access material.	**Technical Reports & Surveys** Topography, highways, drainage, ecology, landscape, heritage, utilities, ground, contamination, noise, air, trees and other evidence triggered by the site.
Legal & Later Approval Costs Section 106, authority legal fees, CIL advice, conditions, reserved matters, technical details consent, amendments and other implementation work.	**Risk, Delay & Contingency** Additional information, redesign, seasonal surveys, resubmission, appeal, finance, holding costs, VAT, disbursements and programme uncertainty.

What should be included in the first budget?

- The proposed application route, development description, site area, floorspace or number of homes
- The current national fee, any exemption or concession and separate local pre-application charges
- Planning, design, engineering, survey, valuation, legal and project-management appointments
- VAT, disbursements, application-platform charges, authority legal costs and monitoring fees
- Section 106, CIL, biodiversity, infrastructure and other development-cost assumptions
- Conditions, reserved matters, technical details consent, amendments, resubmission and appeal risk
- Programme, seasonal survey windows, finance, holding costs, contingency and authority delays

The purpose of budgeting is not to commission every possible report immediately. It is to identify the decisive issues, define clear scopes, sequence expenditure and keep enough contingency for justified change.

How Statutory Planning Fees Are Calculated in England

Planning application fees in England are set nationally and are subject to annual indexation. The examples below reflect the schedule effective from 1 April 2026. The precise calculation depends on the application category, site area, gross floorspace, number of dwellings and whether a relevant exemption, concession or previous payment applies.

1. Full residential applications — Fewer than 10 homes: £610 for each dwelling. Between 10 and 50 homes: £659 for each dwelling. More than 50 homes: £32,578 plus £196 for each home above 50, subject to the national maximum.

2. Outline residential applications — Below 0.5 hectares: £610 for each 0.1 hectare or part. From 0.5 to 2.5 hectares: £659 for each 0.1 hectare or part. Above 2.5 hectares: £16,291 plus £196 for each further 0.1 hectare or part, subject to the maximum.

3. Permission in Principle — The application fee is £531 for each 0.1 hectare, or part of 0.1 hectare, within the application site. Technical Details Consent is a separate later application and should be included in the total route budget.

4. Other development and changes of use — Non-residential buildings may be charged by floorspace, some operations by site area, changes of use by dwelling number or a fixed amount, and prior approval routes have their own fees.

5. Later applications — Reserved matters, applications to vary conditions, discharge of conditions and lawful-development certificates have separate rules. Their professional work and later implementation costs should also be budgeted.

6. Check immediately before submission — Verify the current regulations, indexed schedule, fee calculation, exemptions, concessions and any earlier payment. Pre-application advice, specialist authority services, legal work and submission-platform charges are separate.

These examples reflect the national schedule effective from 1 April 2026. Planning fees are indexed annually and the current calculation should always be verified before submission.

Check Current Planning Fee Guidance

Planning Advice, Design and Technical Evidence

The professional team should be proportionate to the site and stage. Early advice is most valuable where it prevents the wrong application, an unrealistic layout or premature technical work. Each appointment should state the scope, output, fee basis, assumptions, exclusions, meetings, revisions and authority for additional work.

Planning Strategy & Policy
Review the development plan, planning history, need, settlement relationship and whether an application, Call for Sites or longer-term route is proportionate.

Concept Design & Masterplanning
Test capacity and prepare drawings that respond to access, drainage, ecology, landscape, heritage, infrastructure and market requirements.

Pre-Application Advice
Authority meetings or written advice can identify issues and information needs, but do not guarantee validation, officer support or permission.

Topographical & Measured Surveys
Provide reliable levels, boundaries, features, buildings and utility information for design, drainage, visibility and engineering work.

Access, Transport & Highways
Assess junction feasibility, visibility, traffic, walking, cycling, parking, servicing and any off-site works or third-party land.

Flooding, Drainage, Utilities & Ground
Investigate flood routes, SuDS, foul drainage, network capacity, contamination, mining, geology, noise, air and other engineering constraints.

Ecology, Landscape, Trees & Heritage
Map habitats, protected species, biodiversity, views, settlement character, arboriculture, archaeology and heritage significance and mitigation.

Application Management & Validation
Coordinate forms, fees, certificates, plans, reports, local validation requirements, consultation responses, amendments and committee material.

Technical reports can form the largest part of the planning budget. The strongest programme commissions evidence that answers the authority’s likely questions and allows the design, capacity and development appraisal to be updated together.

Obligations, Conditions and Appeal Costs

The budget should extend beyond validation. A positive resolution may still require legal work, technical approvals and payments, while refusal may lead to amendment, resubmission or appeal.

1. **Section 106 and legal work** — Obligations may require negotiation, valuation input, authority costs and solicitors for the relevant parties.

2. **Community Infrastructure Levy** — Liability depends on the charging schedule, use, floorspace, indexation and any relief. Notices and timing matter.

3. **Conditions and discharge** — Drainage, ecology, contamination, materials and highways conditions can require more design, reports and fees.

4. **Reserved matters and technical details** — Outline permission and Permission in Principle both require later applications before development can proceed.

5. **Amendments and resubmission** — Revised plans, reports and professional time may be needed during determination or after refusal.

6. **Appeals** — Written representations, hearings and inquiries can require expert evidence and legal representation. Not every refusal should be appealed.

7. **Programme and holding costs** — Survey seasons, utility responses, committee dates, legal agreements and conditions can affect finance and sale timing.

A positive resolution can still require legal, technical and statutory expenditure before permission is issued or development can begin.

Read: Section 106, CIL and Development Land Value

Read: Planning Conditions and Development Land Value

Who Pays the Planning Application Costs?

Responsibility for planning costs depends on the commercial arrangement. The documents should state who appoints advisers, approves scopes and budgets, owns and may rely on reports, bears abortive expenditure and recovers any approved costs from a future transaction.

A third party funding the application does not remove the cost from the development appraisal. It changes who carries the upfront risk, who controls the process and how expenditure is treated when the land is acquired or sold. Landowners should compare control, timing, deductions and net proceeds as well as the headline funding offer.

The main funding routes include:

- Landowner-funded application — The owner pays the professional, statutory and legal costs and retains direct control, but carries the risk if the outcome is delayed, refused or less valuable than expected
- Conditional contract — The purchaser may fund planning before a compulsory sale once an agreed condition is met; the application standard, satisfactory permission, deductions and longstop require careful drafting
- Option agreement — The developer commonly funds work in return for a right, but usually not an obligation, to buy; valuation, discount, cost deductions, extensions and assignment are important
- Promotion agreement — The promoter funds and manages the agreed planning strategy at its own cost and risk and then markets the land, recovering the agreed fee and permitted costs from sale proceeds
- Developer or purchaser due diligence — Further costs can arise after permission while a buyer tests conditions, obligations, title, infrastructure, capacity and implementation risk
- Shared or multi-owner site — Collaboration or equalisation arrangements may be needed to allocate planning expenditure, infrastructure land, decisions and sale proceeds fairly

Compare control, risk and the net landowner outcome

The strongest route depends on the site and the owner’s objectives. Independent legal, valuation and tax advice should be obtained before entering an arrangement that grants control over the land, permits costs to be deducted or commits the owner to a future sale.

Funding by another party is not cost-free. It changes who carries the upfront risk, who controls the process and how expenditure affects the eventual landowner receipt.

How to Build and Manage a Proportionate Planning Budget

A live planning budget should record the approved scope, committed expenditure, invoices, forecast to complete, VAT, disbursements and contingency. It should distinguish the national application fee from professional estimates and identify which figures are fixed, capped, hourly, provisional or dependent on survey findings.

Budget control works best when expenditure follows decision gates. The team should know which question must be answered before the next stage is authorised, how a changed design affects previous reports and whether additional information will improve planning prospects, protect capacity or reduce implementation risk.

Use clear scopes and staged decision gates

Start with the planning route and decisive constraints, prepare comparable written scopes, programme seasonal work, coordinate assumptions and authorise variations in writing. Maintain one budget so that duplicated appointments, unapproved changes and omissions are identified early.

Review cost alongside land value

The cheapest scheme is not always the best landowner outcome. Reducing evidence or development capacity may lower the immediate budget but create refusal, delay, redesign, weaker marketability or a lower residual land value. Planning, design, infrastructure and valuation assumptions should be reviewed together.

A cheaper application is not necessarily the best outcome if it reduces capacity, delays the programme, weakens the permission or lowers the net land value.

Read About Funded Land Promotion

How Value My Land Can Help

Value My Land can review the land, planning policy, access, visible constraints, likely application route and broad evidence requirements before substantial expenditure is committed. The objective is to determine whether an immediate application is justified, whether further investigation should be staged or whether a longer-term Local Plan strategy is more appropriate.

Initial Planning & Land Review
We assess location, policy, planning history, access, visible constraints, development capacity and whether further expenditure appears justified.

Route, Cost & Funding Strategy
We compare the likely application or Local Plan route and explain whether direct funding, a sale arrangement, option or promotion may be appropriate.

Consultant Team & Written Scopes
We identify the specialists needed, prepare coordinated briefs, compare quotations and ensure the evidence answers the decisive planning questions.

Budget & Programme Management
We stage commissions, track approved and forecast expenditure, programme seasonal work and review changes against planning risk and land value.

Application & Planning Management
We coordinate design, reports, submissions, validation, consultation responses, amendments, obligations, conditions and appeal advice where justified.

Promotion, Marketing & Sale
Under an agreed promotion route, we fund the work at risk and prepare the planning and technical package for competitive developer marketing after success.

Promotion Agreements

Where we enter into a Promotion Agreement, we fund and manage the agreed planning and consultant work at our own cost and risk. The strategy can include Local Plan promotion, applications, technical reports, negotiations, conditions, appeals and preparation for a competitive land sale where appropriate.

The landowner retains ownership and remains involved in key decisions. Following a successful outcome, approved promotion costs and our agreed fee are paid from the sale proceeds in accordance with the agreement. If the agreed promotion is unsuccessful, the planning expenditure risk is carried by us rather than invoiced to the landowner.

Request a Free Planning Cost and Land Review

Should You Fund the Planning Application Yourself?

If you own land and would like to understand the likely planning route, principal cost drivers and whether a landowner-funded application or funded promotion strategy may be appropriate, contact Value My Land for a free, no-obligation initial review.

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Delivering Sustainable Development

Further reading: Planning Applications | Section 106 & CIL | Planning Conditions | Promotion Agreements

valuemyland.com/planning-application-costs-development-land