How to submit your application

Advice note six: Preparation and submission of application documents

The Planning Inspectorate and nationally significant infrastructure projects

The planning process for dealing with proposals for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) was established by the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). The PA2008 process, as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013, involves an examination of major proposals which exceed the thresholds set out in sections 15-30 of the PA2008 relating to energy, transport, water, waste and waste water, and business and commercial. Fundamentally, the PA2008 process places emphasis on opportunities for people to have their say before a decision is made by the relevant Secretary of State.

The Planning Inspectorate carries out certain functions related to national infrastructure planning on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Status of this advice note.

Experience to date has shown that applicants and others welcome detailed advice on a number of aspects of the PA2008 process. This advice note forms part of a suite of such advice provided by the Planning Inspectorate.

It has no statutory status.

This version of this advice note supersedes all previous versions.

Please note: This advice note refers to a document which can be viewed at: http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/advice-notes
Introduction

The purpose of this advice note is to provide detailed advice on how application documents should be prepared, organised and submitted to the Planning Inspectorate\(^1\). Applications that are poorly organised and presented could be at greater risk of not being accepted for examination.

Applicants should also refer to the statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and other relevant advice notes published by the Planning Inspectorate, all of which are available on the National Infrastructure portal: http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legal-aid-and-advice/

Applicants are strongly encouraged to hold pre-application discussions with the Planning Inspectorate about how their application information should be prepared and submitted well in advance of formal submission. The Planning Inspectorate has introduced a number of improvements to its free pre-application service for applicants. These improvements are consolidated in a ‘Prospectus for Applicants’ which is available on the National Infrastructure portal: http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/pre-application-service-for-applicants/

Once an application has been submitted and accepted, the opportunity for applicants to submit any additional or amended information will be constrained within examination procedures. Importantly, the Secretary of State will be unable to accept post-submission changes to applications where those changes would result in a materially different scheme. Therefore, applicants need to ensure that their proposals are sufficiently developed and consulted upon prior to formal submission to the Secretary of State, taking full account of relevant legislation and guidance.

Standard application form

The ‘development consent application form’ is a prescribed form. The application form can be found on the National Infrastructure portal: http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/submitting-an-application/

The form includes guidance as an interactive feature and should be completed in full, electronically. If photocopied after completion, at least one original printed and signed form should be clearly identified and submitted along with the application for development consent.

Detailed guidance has been published by DCLG to accompany the prescribed form. The DCLG guidance refers specifically to each section of the development consent application form and can be viewed as ‘help text’ on each section of the electronic form. It is also available as a standalone document via the National Infrastructure portal and DCLG websites.

Copies of the application

The applicant is required to submit its full application in both electronic and hard copy format. Whilst the Planning Inspectorate encourages electronic working, the submission of hard copy documents and plans...
is required in order to ensure the smooth running of the examination process.

Applicants should agree with the case manager how many paper and electronic copies of the application should be submitted as this depends on the scale and complexity of the project. Usually two paper copies of the full application submission are required along with three electronic (eg DVD, memory stick) copies. Following the acceptance of an application, further paper and/or electronic copies of the application may be requested depending on the number of Inspectors, assessors or legal advisors that are appointed to the case. The applicant may also be requested to provide further copies of the entire application or copies of particular individual documents at any point throughout the pre-examination and examination stages.

Completed applications should be made to the following address, within the working hours of 9am - 5pm, Mondays to Fridays (excluding UK public holidays):

The Planning Inspectorate,
Major Applications and Plans Directorate,
Temple Quay House,
Temple Quay,
Bristol
BS1 6PN.

Applications received after 5pm will be treated as if they were received on the following day.

Each paper copy of the application should be provided as an individual package with the documents organised in the order set out in Appendix 1 of this advice note. It is essential that the electronic copies are provided in accordance with the procedure set out in this advice note to ensure consistency and compatibility with the Planning Inspectorate’s electronic system.

Order of application documents

The order, indexing and filing of submitted application documents is important to ensure that large volumes of application information can be easily navigated and retrieved. An index and organisational structure for documents is set out in tabulated form in Appendix 1 of this advice note. This structure should be applied to both the electronic and hard copy versions of the application. If any prescribed document type is included within another document, please make clear in which document it is located; including the relevant reference, page, paragraph, and/or appendix numbers.

Organisation of electronic information and file indexing

Electronic copies of the application documents need to be prepared as set out in Annex 1 of this advice note to ensure compatibility with the Planning Inspectorate’s electronic system. This preparation enables efficient upload onto the Planning Inspectorate’s systems and the National Infrastructure portal.

Appendix 2 of this advice note provides a structured electronic application index for arranging the application documents. The application index should identify all documents submitted with the application, and critically should provide a plain English description of the information comprised within each document. All of the information provided in the electronic index will be vital to both the quantitative and qualitative check of the submission, and the navigation of published application documentation on the National Infrastructure portal.
A copy of this index will also serve as a reference document. Therefore, the paper copies of an application should be organised in the same order as the electronic version.

Size of documents and summaries

The documents for each application will vary greatly in volume depending on the complexity of the scheme and the particular issues arising from the proposals. Some documents, such as application forms, are only a few pages, whilst others, such as the environmental statement, are likely to be particularly large documents.

Applicants are encouraged to think carefully about the size of documents submitted. Duplication and superfluous content should be avoided. Each document submitted with the application that exceeds 1,500 words should include a summary of the key issues contained within it. A summary should be no longer than 1,500 words; or 10% of the original document size.

Summaries should clearly and accurately highlight the main points, and direct the reader to the evidence on which they are based. They should not introduce any new or different information to that which is included in the main document, or go beyond the scope of the text they summarise. Good summaries of complex information will help make the salient points clearer to a broad readership.

Electronic copies of the application will be uploaded to the National Infrastructure portal and should therefore be optimised for web viewing and should not exceed 50MB per document.

Referencing and heading of plans, documents and photographs

File referencing for each plan or document submitted with the application should include:

- the scheme name;
- a document or plan title;
- a unique plan or document reference number;
- the appropriate Regulation 5(2)\(^2\) paragraph number to which the document relates;
- the date of production of the plan or document;
- the author(s); and
- a chronological note of any revisions made to the plan or document including the revised plan or document number.

Any photographs should be correctly labelled, annotated and dated. The location at which photographs have been taken should be identified on a map. Specifications of the camera and type of lens used must also be provided. Photographs that could be used to identify a person who has not consented to their image being published will not be able to be considered as part of an application, and will be returned to the applicant.

Format of documents

In preparing application documents, applicants should follow the advice set out below to ensure consistency in the way that applications are presented. This will aid the

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\(^2\) The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

The identification and navigation of material and will be of benefit to all parties throughout the application process:

- Each application document must be paginated and paragraphs must be numbered. The paragraphs within appendices should also be numbered.
- Written documents should, as far as possible, be printed on both sides of each page in order to reduce the overall bulk of the application and resources used.
- Electronic documents should have a maximum file size of 50MB each and wherever possible should be in PDF format.
- Each document should contain a table of contents setting out chapter or topic headings, unless it comprises a short statement of no more than two A4 pages.
- Where the document comprises a plan or plans, these must be clearly labelled in the bottom right hand corner with ‘title page’ information. A list of revisions should be produced so at any stage it is easy to identify the latest version of the plan or document.
- A glossary should be included for each written document in order to provide clarification of meaning for all readers (including the general public). Larger documents such as the environmental statement should include a clearly referenced bibliography as well.
- The main body of text in reports should have a minimum font size of 12pt using a recognisable and clear font such as Arial or Verdana (for further information refer to Royal National Institute for the Blind’s clear print design guidelines).
- Any references made to relevant documents (eg a National Policy Statement, development plan or other document which are to be relied on) should be made to the specific passage, policy or relevant part of the document. Links to entire documents are usually unhelpful, and the need for clarification may cause delays in the process.
- In all but exceptional cases, video or audio information should not be submitted as it will not be certain that all interested parties involved will have the appropriate equipment to view the information. Applicants are strongly recommended to consult with the Planning Inspectorate before the submission of such information.

The draft Development Consent Order

If the draft development consent order (DCO), as is usually the case, includes ‘legislation provisions’ that eg apply, amend or exclude other statutory provisions³ it must be made in the form of a validated Statutory Instrument (SI). The SI template is publicly available from the Office for Public Sector Information (OPSI), which contains essential formatting for SIs, and this must be followed by applicants. Applicants will need to obtain access for DCO drafting purposes to the online SI template and associated validation system. The Planning Inspectorate case manager will fill in the relevant application form on behalf of the applicant and submit it to the National Archives. Please contact the Planning Inspectorate in case of any difficulty in obtaining access to the template. Further

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³ The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
advice on DCO drafting and formatting will be published in October 2014 as part of an advice note on DCO drafting.

The environmental statement

The Planning Inspectorate welcomes the submission of environmental statements (ES) that are proportionate to the scale and complexity of the environmental impact assessment undertaken. It is nevertheless appreciated that ESs for NSIPs will in many instances be large documents comprising several volumes, chapters, tables, figures, annexes and appendices. It will assist the processing of NSIP applications therefore if the following could be considered during the preparation of ESs:

- A comprehensive, standalone contents document will greatly assist the reader in locating relevant environmental information. The contents document should list and number all the volumes, chapters, tables, figures, annexes and appendices presented as part of the ES.
- The electronic version of the contents document should provide hyperlinks to the chapters, tables, figures, annexes, and appendices listed within it.
- The contents document should detail all of the documents that are intended to be read in conjunction with and cross-referenced to it (e.g., Code of Construction Practice, Construction Environmental Management Plan, Habitats Regulation Assessment etc).
- Electronic versions of the ES chapters, tables, figures, annexes, and appendices should be named so that their subject matter can be determined from the title without having to open the document.
- The PDF version of the ES provided with the electronic application documentation should be saved in a format which will allow the Planning Inspectorate to copy and paste from it i.e., not password protected.
- Effective cross-referencing should reduce the need for repetition in ESs, leading to a more proportionate presentation of issues. Further advice on this issue is contained in DCLG’s Application form guidance, available on the National Infrastructure portal: http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/guidance/

Applicants should check carefully before they submit their documents that the description of the proposed development is the same within the ES and any other relevant reports, for example Habitats Regulations Reports. The description of the development should also be consistent with that set out in the draft DCO and associated documentation. Applicants should also ensure that all surveys required to be carried out to establish baseline conditions, and to complete the assessment of likely significant effects, are completed before the submission of the application, and reported in the ES.

Whilst most of the application documents are required to be made publicly accessible and will be published on the National Infrastructure portal, there are some circumstances where it will be appropriate for information to be kept confidential. In particular, this may relate to information about the presence and locations of rare or sensitive species where disturbance, damage, persecution or commercial exploitation may result from publication of
the information. Examples include badgers, rare birds and plants. Where documents are intended to remain confidential the applicant should provide these as separate paper and electronic documents with their confidential nature clearly indicated in the title, and watermarked as such on each page. The information should not be incorporated within other documents that are intended for publication or which the Planning Inspectorate would be required to disclose under the Environmental Information Regulations 2014.

Applicants should note that surveys and background data which are referenced within the environmental statement or Habitats Regulations Report should be appended or annexed to the respective document, or be published elsewhere. If surveys and data that are relied upon are not provided, or published, then the applicant may be asked to provide them.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations require that the competent authority (in this case the relevant Secretary of State) before authorising a project likely to have a significant effect on a European site ‘must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for that site in view of that site’s conservation objectives’. Anyone applying for development consent for a NSIP must provide the competent authority with such information as may reasonably be required ‘for the purposes of the assessment’ or ‘to enable them to determine whether an appropriate assessment is required’. Applicants are advised to refer to the Planning Inspectorate’s Advice Note 10: Habitats Regulations Assessment for further details of information which should be submitted with a DCO application in this respect.

Scale of plans and drawings

Any plans, drawings or sections should be consistent with the requirements set out in The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 i.e no larger than A0 size, showing the direction of North, and for onshore development drawn to an identified scale no smaller than 1:2,500. Greater flexibility is provided for the scale of plans for offshore developments to avoid pages of maps showing empty sea.

Applicants are encouraged to discuss plan scaling with the Planning Inspectorate in advance of the submission of the final application documents. The scale used for each plan, drawing or section should ensure

4 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) (The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (Offshore Marine Regulations) will apply beyond UK territorial waters (12 nautical miles). These Regulations are relevant when an application is submitted for an energy project in a renewable energy zone (except any part in relation to which the Scottish Ministers have functions). For ease of expression, both sets of regulations are covered by the term “Habitats Regulations” in this advice note.

5 Regulation 61(1) of the Habitats Regulations 2010 (as amended) and Regulation 25(1) of the Offshore Marine Regulations

6 Regulation 61(2) of the Habitats Regulations 2010 (as amended), Regulation 25(2) of the Offshore Marine Regulations, and the APFP Regulations paragraph 5(2) (g)
that each clearly and accurately portrays the proposals. A scale bar should also be included on each plan in order to prevent any ambiguity when dimensions or distances are measured on any copies of the plans, or electronically. Applicants should note key dimensions and measurements on each plan, drawing or section (e.g., showing proposed distances from a proposed building to the boundary of the site or the heights of key buildings within a scheme).

Linear schemes may require a sequence of drawings to show the full extent of the proposals. Where sequenced drawings are provided, a key plan and sequence notation should also be provided.

Appendices

Appendices are useful for setting out in an ordered and readily identifiable form factual, technical and other material upon which the main body of information is based. Applicants should ensure that appendices are of direct relevance to the application proposals.

Appendices should be referenced and indexed and may be separately bound where appropriate. Annotated section dividers should be used to enable quick and easy retrieval of information. It is important that the relevance of appendices is clearly explained in the document to which they relate.

Data protection and privacy

As application documents will be published to the National Infrastructure portal, applicants should avoid the inclusion of any personal data relating to individuals in the documents they submit; in particular the consultation report. The Planning Inspectorate must ensure that it complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 when handling personal information and must redact personal details prior to publication. We follow protocols set down by the Information Commissioners Office, further details of which can be found at www.ico.gov.uk. Please contact the National Infrastructure case team for further information and advice on this matter.

Applications in Wales

In accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Planning Inspectorate has a Welsh Language Scheme which has been approved by the Welsh Language Board. For proposals affecting Wales, we strongly urge applicants to provide appropriate application documents in English and Welsh. Applicants are encouraged to liaise with the relevant local authority about which particular application documents should be made available in the Welsh language. Providing translations of application documents where appropriate is the responsibility of the applicant.

Application acceptance checklist

To help decision-making on whether or not applications are of a satisfactory standard to be accepted for examination, the Planning Inspectorate has produced an ‘Acceptance of Applications Checklist’ based upon the criteria set out in s55 of the PA2008. In line with improvements to the Planning Inspectorate’s pre-application service, the format of the checklist has been refined. A copy of the new checklist is provided at Appendix 3 of this advice note. Applicants may find it helpful to refer to the checklist in preparing their applications for submission. Please note that the completion of this checklist by the applicant should
not however be seen as a guarantee that
the application will be accepted as this is
a matter for the Planning Inspectorate to
consider on behalf of the Secretary of State.

**GIS shapefile**

In order to assist in reviewing the adequacy
of pre-application consultation, including
the identification of prescribed consultees,
applicants are requested to provide the
Planning Inspectorate with a GIS shapefile of
the land over which authorisation is sought
within the application. It would be helpful if
this shapefile could be sent to the Planning
Inspectorate’s Environmental Services Team
(EnvironmentalServices@pins.gsi.gov.uk)
at least 2 weeks in advance of the formal
submission of the application. It should
comply with the following requirements:

- The shapefile should be of polygon
geometry type, and consist of one or
more polygon features representing the
site boundary.
- For each area of land a single, valid, ESRI
shapefile should be provided, consisting
of one of each of the following files: *.prj,
*.dbf, *.shp, *.shx (Please note that the
four files in bold are mandatory. No other
files should be contained within the *.zip
file).
- The shapefile submitted should be in the
British National Grid (OSGB1936) format.
- Any shapefile attribute table data should
be deleted as this is not required to
generate the shapefile and will minimise
upload time to our GIS system.
- The shapefile should be provided as a
*.zip file using the default WinZip settings
(i.e. no encryption, normal compression
etc). No other files should be contained
within the *.zip file.

**Paying the application fee**

A fee must be paid at the same time
that an application is made and further
fees are charged at different stages in an
application’s consideration. The Planning
Inspectorate encourages the payment of
fees via electronic transfer rather than by
individual cheque payment where possible.
Payment of application fees should be made
to the Planning Inspectorate’s bank account.
A payment sheet containing the details is
available on request. Please note that the
Planning Inspectorate will be unable to raise
an invoice for the fee required to accompany
an application. Full details of all of the fees
payable are set out in the Regulations.

Remittance notes and payable orders should
be sent to:

Planning Inspectorate,
Finance Room 4/03,
Temple Quay House,
Temple Quay,
Bristol
BS1 6PN

**Pre-application service for applicants
and input from other parties**

We encourage applicants to engage fully
with the Planning Inspectorate throughout
the pre-application process, and to assist
this engagement our pre-application
service is consolidated in a ‘Prospectus for
Applicants’ which is available on the National
planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-
The service outlined in this prospectus is optional, free to use and is designed to help applicants in planning and carrying out their pre-application duties.

As part of the pre-application service, and to help prepare the application documentation, we encourage applicants to submit a draft application and supporting documents to the Planning Inspectorate. The Planning Inspectorate will be able to provide applicants with non-binding advice as to whether the documents have been prepared to the necessary standards. Feedback on draft documents will usually be provided at a meeting between the applicant and the Planning Inspectorate, offering an opportunity for applicants to talk through their proposed application documentation.

Applicants may also wish to submit parts of the application documentation to the relevant local authorities and any other parties with whom consultation is on-going.

This will ensure that relevant bodies are aware of the nature of the exercise that is being undertaken and enable them to engage with the applicant at an appropriate time, should they wish to do so.

The applicant is encouraged to ensure that there is a dialogue with the Planning Inspectorate through the allocated case leader to ensure that application information is prepared and presented effectively. This will help applications to be assessed as efficiently as possible and ensure that the accessibility of information to all parties is optimised.

If you are unsure as to who your appointed contact is please telephone 0303 444 5000 for further information.

What happens next?

Provided the applicant agrees, the Planning Inspectorate will publish the application for development consent with all associated documentation on the National Infrastructure portal as soon as practicable after its receipt. The Planning Inspectorate, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, has a period of 28 days, starting on the day after it receives the application, to decide whether or not to accept the application for examination. The applicant will be notified of the decision to accept the application or, where the application has not been accepted, the applicant will be given reasons why it has not been accepted.

If and when an application is accepted applicants are required, in accordance

9 The Secretary of State decides whether or not to accept an application in accordance with s55 of the Planning Act 2008. Acceptance means that an application proceeds to be considered at examination. It does not make any decision on the outcome of the DCO application at this stage.

8 Note that any advice given will be without prejudice to the formal decision of the Secretary of State on the acceptance of an application under s55 of the PA2008.
with s56 of the PA2008, to notify each of the prescribed persons and bodies and publicise the accepted application. This involves inter alia making the full application, including all documents and information accompanying the application, available to each person notified of the accepted application. Applicants should also be aware of the additional publicity, consultation and certification requirements for accepted applications involving an environmental impact assessment. At least one electronic or hard copy public inspection copy should also be made available at a location or locations in the vicinity of the proposed development.

10 Regulations 13 and 14 of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2009 (as amended)
Appendix 1: Suggested order of information submitted with application

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Document type</th>
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| Application form                      | • Completed and signed form
                                               • Copies of newspaper notices                                                |
| Plans/Drawings/Sections               | • Location plan(s) (o)
                                               • Land plan(s) (i) (including plans showing land proposed to be extinguished and special category land)
                                               • Works plan (j)
                                               • Access/Rights of way plan (k)
                                               • Site layout plan(s) (o)
                                               • Elevation drawings (o)
                                               • Floor plans (o)
                                               • Access/Parking/Landscaping (o)
                                               • Drainage/Surface water management (o)
                                               • Other detailed plans/sections (o)
                                               • Plan(s) of statutory/non-statutory sites or features (nature conservation, habitats, marine conservation zones, water bodies etc) (l)
                                               • Plan(s) showing statutory or non-statutory historic or scheduled monument sites (m)
                                               • Plan showing any Crown land (n)
                                               • Charts for marine schemes (o)                                               |
| Draft development consent order       | • Draft proposed order (b)
                                               • Explanatory memorandum to draft proposed order (c)                         |
| Compulsory Acquisition information   | • Statement of reasons (h)
                                               • Funding statement (h)
                                               • Book of reference (parts 1 to 5) (d)                                       |
| Reports/Statements                    | • Consultation report                                                          |
                                               • Flood risk assessment (e)
                                               • Assessment of nature conservation effects (l)
                                               • Assessment of historic environment effects (m)
                                               • Environmental protection information (f)
                                               • European site appropriate assessment report (g)
                                               • Details of other consents and licences
                                               • Details of associated development (with references to documents)           |
| Environmental impact assessment & habitat regulations information | • Environmental statement (ES) (a)
                                               • ES technical appendices (a)
                                               • Non technical summary (a)
                                               • Screening opinion (if applicable) (a)
                                               • Scoping opinion (if applicable) (a)
                                               • Publicity requirements (a)                                                |
| Photographs                           | • Photographs and photomontages (q)
                                               • Plan identifying locations and directions of photographs (q)
                                               • Index of photographs (q)                                                  |

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1 An indexed electronic table will be provided on request to applicants to assist in this process

2 Regulations 5, 6 and 7 of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 set out the statutory requirements for what must accompany a development consent application. Where applicable, the letters in brackets following each document type refer to the particular document requirement within regulation 5(2).
### Further information

The Planning Inspectorate, Major Applications and Plans Directorate, Temple Quay House, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN

Email: NIenquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk  
Telephone: 0303 444 5000  
Web: http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Document type</th>
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| Other media                                        | • Model information (q)  
• Any other media information (q) |
| Additional information for specific Offshore generating station (p): types of infrastructure | **Offshore generating station (p):**  
• Details of proposed route for offshore cables  
• Safety zone statement  
**Non offshore generating station (p):**  
• Statement of responsibility for designing and building the connection  
**Highway or railway development (p):**  
• Levels/depths/heights of proposed works  
• Cross sections  
• Drainage outfall details  
**Harbour facilities (p):**  
• Statement(s) on why DCO is necessary |
| Pipelines (p):                                      | • Name and owner  
• Measurements of pipeline  
• What will be conveyed by the pipeline  
• Any grant of rights in land or consents that are required |
| Hazardous waste facility (p):                      | • Statement of purpose and annual capacity/final disposal/recovery |
| Dam or reservoir (p):                              | • Recreational amenities |
| Other documents                                    | • Any other document not listed above which the applicant chooses to support the application (q) (e.g. documents to meet the requirements of a National Policy Statement, planning statement, design and access statement, sustainability appraisal, health impact assessment, travel plan, code of construction practice, carbon economy report) |

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3 This may include information that the applicant would normally want to submit for the development proposal or that which has been suggested or asked for by respondents to pre-application consultation and publicity and which the applicant wishes to include.