



Planning Performance Framework

Annual Report 2013 - 2014

Introduction

The 2013-14 year has been a challenging one for Stirling Council's Planning Service. Of prime importance was the need to progress the Council's first Local Development Plan through to adoption, something that had been highlighted as a priority in last year's PPF. The Plan went through the examination stage relatively easily with no hearing or enquiry sessions, further information was provided to the DPEA as required and the Examination Report was published in March. Unfortunately, the Report was not as clear cut as had been hoped and this created difficulties in navigating a course to obtain Council approval. I am pleased to say that at the point of writing, the Council now has an adopted Local Development Plan which is a significant step forward.

The Development Management team have also faced challenges in maintaining the good progress made in terms of speed of decision making and performance generally, as evidenced in last year's Planning Performance Framework. In such a small team, any drop in staff resources for a few months can have an impact on workload and this is evident in terms of some of the performance timescales for last year. Nevertheless, I am pleased to report that there are several areas where improvement is evident, such as householder applications, local developments, overall approval rates and the percentage of delegated applications which are all better than last year's figures and rate well against national averages.

In terms of customer service and continuous improvement, whilst it did not prove possible to implement some of the improvements highlighted in last year's Framework document, the Planning Service was engaged in a detailed Public Service Improvement Framework process lasting several months as well as an internal Audit process focussing on the Enforcement team. These processes were useful in highlighting both strengths and weaknesses in the Service and provided guidance on implementing further improvements to the current ways of working that we have. One of these is obtaining and using feedback from customers to fine tune our processes and overall service and it is hope that this will feature more in next year's Framework document.

Moving forward, 2014-15 will prove an equally challenging year as the Council re-shapes it's structure and management teams with the Planning service becoming part of a new 'Infrastructure Delivery' service. The Planning Performance Framework will no doubt reflect the changing priorities of the planning service within the new structure and I look forward to the next year's document providing an insight on how the planning service is working with other services and external agencies to deliver development on the ground within the Stirling Council area.

Kevin Robertson
Head of Economy, Planning and Regulation



PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK
ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

1. National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

Key Outcomes	2013/14	2012-2013
Development Planning:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> age of local/strategic development 	Structure Plan 12yrs (LDP approved Aug 2014 see note below)	Structure Plan 11yrs
<i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development plan scheme on track? (Y/N) 	N (see note below)	Y (September 2013)
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective Land Supply: years supply 	4.7 years (June 2013)	2.5 years (June 2012)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective housing land supply 	2182 units	1483 units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> housing approvals 	363 units	328 units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective employment land supply 	55.05 ha	47.7 ha
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> employment land take up 		
Development Management		
Project Planning		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice 	28%	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan 	None	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> percentage planned timescales met 	N/A	N/A
Decision-making		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> application approval rate 	96.3	94.4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> delegation rate 	82.3	75.7%
Decision Making Timescales		
Average number of weeks to decision:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major developments 	30.5	14.9

• Local developments (non householder)	9.5	10.9
• Householder developments	7.4	8.7

Enforcement

• Time since Enforcement Charter published/ Reviewed (months) <i>Requirement: review every 2 Years</i>	23 months (due Oct 2014)	12 months
• Number of breaches identified/resolved	127/75	132/79

Development Planning

Examination into the Local Development Plan took place between July 2013 and March 2014. The Council received the DPEA Report on 7th March. A Report was prepared for the Council meeting in June to approve the Plan in line with the Development Plan Scheme. However, due there was a need to obtain clarification from the DPEA on several apparent contradictions in the Report which proved difficult to resolve. Furthermore, representations were received from House builders/landowners threatening legal action to prevent adoption of the Plan and the Council deferred approval of the Plan in order to take legal advice. The Local Development Plan was subsequently approved by Council in August and the Plan has been submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval. The anticipated date for adoption of the Plan is therefore October 2014. No legal challenge is anticipated.

Despite strong project management throughout the process of preparing the Plan by officers, the production of the LDP has been delayed by a desire on the part of Elected Members to introduce an additional 'Draft Proposed Plan' stage in 2012 which added approximately 12 months to the timescale and latterly, the threat of legal action by aggrieved parties which forced the Council to delay approval of the Plan by 2 months.



Effective Land Supply

The effective housing land supply figures are based upon the June 2013 Housing Land Audit. This Audit was not agreed with House builders as this was undertaken following the start of the LDP Examination process and before the Examination Report was produced and all parties agreed to await the outcome of the LDP Examination Report. Although, the eventual Examination Report concluded that the Council did have an effective 5 year supply of land, this was based upon the earlier 2012 Audit plus LDP allocations. The 2013 Audit figures do show that only a small shortfall currently exists and work is currently taking place on analysing the results of the 2014 HLA.

The effective employment land supply is based upon the 2013 Employment Land Audit and includes the Proposed Local Development Plan allocations up to 2019 plus consents over the period. The take up of employment land is not measured.

Development Management

Pre-application discussions have shown a 3% increase over the previous year which can be attributed to better recording by officers and also a greater awareness/need for pre-application discussion. A large number of applications still have no pre-application discussion although this tends to be 'householder' type applications.

Despite an increase in the number of major development applications in 2013/14 (6) compared to the previous year (2), there has no real appetite shown by developers to enter into processing agreements despite the issue being raised. The average time taken to determine these applications has increased as a result of issues particular to each application and the time taken to conclude legal agreements which has affected timescales.

The percentage of applications approved has increased for the second year in a row, highlighting the Service's approach to trying to work with applicants to secure improvements to applications that can enable them to be approved. This can be at the expense of overall speed of decision making, but previous feedback from Agents Forums has shown that applicants are happy for decisions to take longer if it will secure an approval at the end of the process.

Decision making timescales for 2013/14 have varied with the average number of weeks to decision for local developments (non-householder) increasing slightly to 11.8 weeks from 10.9 weeks in 2012/13. This is still lower than 13.2 weeks in 2011/12 and lower also than the national average of 13.1 weeks for 2013/14. Although this figure has increased, this should be set against an overall Local Development average of 9.5 weeks which is below the national average of 10.6 weeks for 2013/14.

Householder developments have reduced to an average of 7.4 weeks from 8.7 and 9.1 in 2012/13 and 2011/12 respectively highlighting an example of continuous improvement in this area following targeted improvement actions such as better caseload management and changes to the scheme of delegation.

The percentage of applications delegated to officers has increased substantially from 75% in 2012-13 to 82% in 2013-14 due to less applications being referred to Committee by Elected members and also as a result of changes to the scheme of delegation which removed the need for certain applications to be placed on the weekly Planning Schedule.



Part 2. Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Open for Business

- The Economic Development Service and Planning Service operates under one Head of Service for Economy, Planning and Regulation. This is designed to ensure that the objectives of the planning and economy services are more closely aligned and that any planning issues surrounding applications for economic development can be managed in a holistic manner.
- The post of Business and Economy Officer has been created within the Economy, Planning and Regulation Service in order to research and develop local economic policy and strategy and to oversee the delivery of the Council's Economic Strategy. It is anticipated that the post holder will work closely with the Planning Service in relation to emerging policy and applications with a significant economic impact.

Case Study – Holistic approach to economic development/investment

The Business and Economy Officer, with the involvement of Planning and other Council Services, has developed a Stirling City Strategic Infrastructure Plan which is aimed at growing and sustaining the local economy. This will provide a prospectus for the City which would be used to promote opportunities for public and private sector investment. Delivery of these projects will utilise funding from both public and private sources and liaison will take place within the Cities Alliance to develop funding/investment models to fund new infrastructure.

The City Strategic Infrastructure Plan is closely aligned to key developments proposed in the LDP such as Durieshill and South Stirling gateway transport improvements, business development at Kildean and link road through to Bridge of Allan and increased city centre living. The LDP implementation plan and Strategic Infrastructure Plan will be taken forward jointly with a view to ensuring that infrastructure is in place to support key developments within the city.

<http://minutes.stirling.gov.uk/pdfs/finance%20%26%20economy/Reports/FE20140327Item12StrategicInfrastrPlan.pdf>

- Planning Officers work with Economic Development colleagues on the maintenance of Employment sites register/vacant and derelict land register and liaise with Economic Development colleagues when dealing with inward investment enquiries for sites/premises in the Council area.

Case Study – Holistic approach to economic development/investment

The Council's Economic Development team highlighted an enquiry from a high profile Scottish cycle wear company wishing to establish a PR/product testing base within rural Stirling linked to a home/office for the Company directors. Whilst local job creation was limited, locating a base for this global brand within the Stirling Council area was seen by economic development colleagues as a significant coup for the Council area.

The proposal did not initially fit with planning policy concerning development in the countryside and the economic benefits to the area were not explicit. However, through discussion and refinement of the proposals with the applicants, a scheme was developed which better met the aims and objectives of planning policy and allowed consent to be granted for both the product testing base and the home/office.

The project's Architect, Eric Strickland, from McKenzie Strickland Architects stated "Pre-application discussions with Stirling Council were useful in highlighting the company background, rationale for the project and the intended building designs. It was clear at that stage that compliance with planning policy could be an issue for elements of the proposal. However, during the application process, the planning team were prepared to be flexible and to consider amendments to the proposal and suggested planning conditions which would ensure compliance with policy.

We are extremely grateful that Stirling Council saw the 'bigger picture' of this application and granted planning consent last year, as a result, a major global brand leader in cycling equipment, based in Scotland, will have a presence in the Stirling area."

- Identification of new employment land and safeguarding of existing employment sites carried out as part of LDP process.
- The Development Management team operate a single point of contact/case officer for all applications, direct dial and e-mail contact details are provided in all correspondence and applicants are encouraged to enter into pre-application discussion at an early stage in the process. Senior Planning Officers are allocated to the more complex/larger scale applications.
- Information to support potential applicants for planning permission is available through the Council's website including online submission of applications, public access to planning applications, Development Advice Notes, forms etc
<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/services/business-and-trade/planning-and-building-standards/planning-applications-warrants-and-certificates/planning-applications>
- Commercial awareness of staff is developed through ongoing dialogue with the development industry and at training events targeted at this issue.
- The Planning website has been updated to give greater prominence to encouraging pre-application discussions and the number of pre-application discussions has increased since last year. The use of pro formas to aid pre-application dialogue and exchange of information had been highlighted in last year's PPF as a service improvement for this year, however, this has taken longer to put in place than envisaged and it is anticipated that this service will now be available by the end of this (calendar) year.
- The availability of Processing Agreements to aid the determination of 'Major Development's is highlighted on the Planning website together with the standard template produced by Scottish Government.
<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/services/business-and-trade/planning-and-building-standards/planning-applications-warrants-and-certificates/processing-agreements>
- In Pre-application discussion with prospective applicants, officers offer this service but despite this, the take up of Processing Agreements has not occurred. The Council does not receive a high number of major applications. There were 6 major applications received in 2013-14 and applicants did not wish to enter into Processing Agreements for these applications.
- There are currently a number of major developments at the pre-application stage where officers are in discussion with developers about processing agreements. Information on the successful use of these will be included in next years PPF.
- With the approval of the Local Development Plan, the statutory Supplementary Guidance relating to Developer Contributions – SG16 now assumes greater

importance. This Supplementary Guidance supports Primary Policy 3 and Policy 3.3 in the LDP' and is located on the Planning website. The SG has been prepared in accordance with Circular3/2012 on planning obligations and as statutory SG has been through extensive consultation.

(http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy,-planning-and_-regulation/sg-august-2014/sg16-developer-contributions-august-2014.pdf.)

- Officers have been referring applicants to these requirements in the determination of applications and in pre-application discussion. This Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions sets out the types and thresholds of development where financial contributions will be requested, the level of contributions and the range of purposes for which contributions will be sought. It is intended to provide a transparent, equitable, consistent and accountable approach to negotiating and securing developer contributions and provides a single point where information on the need for potential contributions can be obtained early on in the planning process.

Case Study – Proportionate requirements for Contributions

Negotiations with a developer for a large mixed use development in Stirling highlighted that contributions were required for education, affordable housing and city transport strategy amounting to c.£1 million pounds. The developer stated that the scale of contributions, when combined, threatened the viability of the development and requested that contributions be reduced to a more proportionate level. The developer provided further financial information to demonstrate non viability and discussions internally between the various services determined that the level of contributions could be reduced for education and transportation, whilst an amended form of on-site affordable housing was agreed.

Paul Scott, the Planning Consultant for the developer stated “
"BDW Trading Ltd and Elphinstone Land Ltd (in administration) worked closely with Stirling Council's Planning Department in 2013 to secure a Section 75 Agreement for affordable housing, education and off site transportation contributions in connection with a residential-led mixed use development at Kildean in Stirling. Recognising the long history of stalled proposals for the redevelopment of the former auction mart site, and the urgent need to accelerate the delivery of housing land in the Stirling Housing market Area, Stirling Council did agree to a reduced financial contribution in terms of education provision to ensure that the proposals still had a chance of being delivered in a recovering market."

High Quality Development on the Ground

- The Approved LDP provides a clear policy context for placemaking and quality design and includes specific policies entitled 'Placemaking', 'Site Planning' and 'Design Process' highlighting the significance of these issues in achieving high quality development on the ground.
- Over 70 pieces of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SG) have been produced in association with the Approved LDP, the majority of which are aimed at improving the quality of development, which will support the Proposed LDP. This can be broken down into;
 - 35 Policy Guidance documents – these support specific policies in the Plan.
 - 25 Conservation Area Appraisals/Statements
 - 13 Site Development Frameworks/Masterplans/Briefs
- A key document in encouraging high quality development on the ground is the City Centre Development Framework(<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/documents/temporary-uploads/economy,-planning- and -regulation/supp-guidance-sept-2012/sq08/sq08-city-centre-development-framework.pdf>) This piece of supplementary guidance identifies key development sites and sets design principles for development, establishes a series of next steps and further work required and identifies linkages and the need for synergy with other key Council strategies and projects.
- A major development of 64 social rented houses is being pursued by the Council's Housing service for a key development site in the City Centre. The planning team's Urban Designer and Planning/Conservation officers provided design comments as part of lengthy consultation process which also involved the local community councils. This resulted in a reduction in storey height and amendments to the detailing of facades, the use of materials and proposed ground floor shop frontages. The development is starting on site this month.
- The Planning service can draw upon expertise in urban design, conservation and landscape to ensure that new developments are of a high quality design.

Case Study – Negotiated Design Improvements. Comments from the Council's Urban Designer on a planning application.

The proposal involved a residential development of 28 units of mixed tenure. The site is prominent and sensitive, situated on the edge of the settlement of Strathblane with a significant frontage on one of the main approaches into the village. Discussions with the applicant at both the pre-application stage and through the formal planning application process achieved a number of important design changes to the scheme finally approved.

Key amongst the revisions secured surrounded the site's frontage with the main road. Following discussions changes were made by the applicant, which ensured that the development as a whole was orientated towards this street. Furthermore, alterations to the design of houses at key plots and proposed boundary treatments ensured that the proposal presents an appropriate 'gateway' into the village, and reflects the historic pattern of development along this street.

A second key revision secured was the move away from an initial proposal to provide two cul-de-sacs to serve the development; one intended to serve the private units, and the other the affordable element of the development. Instead revisions were achieved which resulted in the introduction of a continuous loop road, designed as a shared surface, with two access/egress point along the main road. This allowed for the establishment of a single street design through the development, offered an increased degree of cohesion and permeability throughout the site, and provides linkages and integration between housing tenures.

A final key revision secured the increase in the variety of size and type of units within the private 'offer' and which included the introduction of semi-detached units. Visual integration and cohesion was secured by ensuring that a design approach was adopted which promoted a continuity in the use of materials, architectural features and quality of landscaping throughout the development, irrespective of tenure.

- The Development Management team always attempt to improve the quality of submissions and improve the quality of what is being built. Attached is a quote from an applicant;

"XXX - many thanks for that and for your assistance throughout our project. We are delighted with how it has turned out, and a large part of that is down to your agreeing to the contemporary/traditional mix in the design. We even had a neighbour stop and say it has enhanced the local area from an architectural perspective .."



Certainty

- Availability and encouragement of Pre-Application discussion is highlighted on Council Planning webpage. Pre-application discussions have shown a slight increase on the previous years figure and now indicate that around 28% of all applications have been the subject of some form of pre-application discussion.
- The DPEA's Examination Report on the Proposed Local Development Plan was issued to the Council in March. The policies proposed in the Plan remain largely as submitted and decisions on planning applications are now being made in accordance with the Proposed LDP. (The LDP has now been approved by Council and submitted to Scottish Ministers – August 2014)
http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy.-planning-and.-regulation/ldp-final/mod-ldp-august-2014/decision-notice-18_08_2014.pdf
- Pre-application enquiries are circulated to other Services as relevant and their views included in the response back to the prospective developer. This ensures that issues are flagged up early in the process, as is the need for any relevant information to be supplied with the application. Furthermore, pre-application discussions with applicants involve other services as appropriate to ensure that all issues are discussed at the outset.

Case Study – Pre-Application Certainty

Previous involvement with a Masterplan for the former Stirling Infirmary site has continued into consideration of the Permission in Principle application for re-development of the site. Early discussion and review of the proposals allowed the application to be progressed smoothly through the system and issues, such as the level of car parking provision, explored and resolved.

Ged Hainey, from Ryden, who acted as property advisers to the Health Board stated; *"This large and complex proposal involved extensive pre-application consultation with the Council's planning service and negotiation through the planning application process. Given the very sound working relationships between all stakeholders a progressing agreement was not considered necessary. Throughout the process, we found the Council planning officers to be very accessible and proactive which helped facilitate the timely determination of the planning application"*

- The Council is considering a more formal pre-application process for Major Developments which would involve a fee. A fixed timescale for responses and comments from external agencies would be agreed. The response would cover conformity with policy, design issues and anticipated levels of contributions and highlight any further information which should be submitted with an application.
- Extensive consultation has been undertaken with key Government agencies including SEPA, SNH and Transport Scotland in the preparation of the Local Development Plan to ensure that proposals within the Plan will be deliverable. Following adoption of the Plan, it is proposed to set up an Infrastructure Working Group to ensure that the Action Programme accompanying the LDP is being monitored and constraints to development can be overcome. The work of this Group will complement the work being undertaken as part of the City Strategic Infrastructure Plan.
- The Development Plan Scheme has been updated (September 2013) and is in place. A further update is proposed for October 2014.
- An extensive amount of Supplementary Guidance is available on line to ensure that prospective applicants have access to all the available advice and guidance which should be taken account of in their application. A link to the Supplementary Guidance

is part of the Planning Applications webpage and prospective applicants are encouraged to view this prior to submitting an application.

- In 2013-14, the Planning Service determined 722 applications. No applications were approved which were deemed to be contrary to the Development Plan and only 1 application was determined contrary to officer recommendations and overturned by the Planning and Regulation Panel. This amounts to 0.13% of all decisions.
- Ongoing training of staff is carried out to ensure that they are fully aware of legislative changes and current planning issues.

Case Study – Pre-Application certainty

The University of Stirling was proposing to make a major investment in new and upgraded student accommodation within the Campus which sits within a Historic and Designed Landscape. The original campus was developed in accordance with an overall design philosophy which the University were keen to fit in with whilst accommodating an increased level of accommodation.

Working to a tight timescale for implementation of the scheme, pre-application discussion with the University and their architects, involving Historic Scotland also, focussed on the design context, scale, massing and external finish of the proposed accommodation. Photo montages were sought and sample panels were produced which provided comfort over the eventual height and finish of the accommodation, which was crucial to its successful integration into the campus. Confirmation that the details were satisfactory to the Council and Historic Scotland provided comfort to the University that the application would proceed without concerns over design. The application was determined within 2 months and the first phase of the new accommodation is under construction'.

Karen Plouvier, Stirling University's Estates Manager said “*The University for Stirling took the decision that it needed to make a major step change in the quality of residential accommodation provided and that this would involve replacing some of the original buildings which dated to the late 1960s and early 1970s with new state of the art accommodation which meets today's students aspirations. The campus is said to be the most beautiful in Europe, is a designated historic landscape, includes and is overlooked by a number of significant listed buildings and benefits from an excellent original masterplan which achieved a coherence between the architecture and landscape. It was known from the outset that the development, which would include the creation of just under 800 bed spaces in four locations, would require a major planning application. Our local Planning Department provided us and our architects with excellent advice and support during the pre-application phase both in terms of design considerations but also by participating in informal discussions with Historic Scotland. This, without doubt, added value to the design process but also meant that the formal planning process was quite straightforward. This enabled work to start just 4 months after the planning application was approved'*



Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

- A Planning training session was held for new Community Council Members following recent elections in order to bring them up to speed with Planning legislation, practice and procedure. The session was well attended and positive feedback was provided on the day from those attending.
- The Development Management team operate a single point of contact/case officer for all applications, direct dial and e-mail contact details are provided in all correspondence and applicants are encouraged to enter into pre-application discussion at an early stage in the process.
- Consultation with external agencies on planning applications is carried out electronically without the need to send letters/copies of plans. A link to the online planning system allows agencies to access plans and all correspondence. Consultation replies are also received electronically which assists in speeding up the consultation process.
- A Local Agents/Architects Forum is normally held annually to discuss current issues, service delivery etc. No meeting was held in 2013 due to other consultations taking place in other parts of the service but it is planned to hold a meeting in October 2014 now that the LDP has been approved.

- Consultation was undertaken with the community of Thornhill over a proposed Conservation Area for the village. This took the form of two public meetings at which a range of views were expressed. These views were taken into account in the drafting of a Report to Council which sought approval for the designation of a Conservation Area.

- For 2013-14, it was intended that the Development Management Customer Survey, previously done every two years, would move to a link to a survey added to correspondence with both applicants and objectors which would enable feedback to be given on an ongoing basis and allow a more responsive approach to be taken to resolve any issues. Due to difficulties with obtaining corporate assistance in pulling this together, its implementation was delayed and has only recently gone live. No meaningful results have been received but it is hoped to report more fully on this in next year's PPF.
- Despite the absence of a more formal survey process, participants in the planning process are able to submit their comments to the planning service via the online planning portal and via the planning e-mail address. A number of comments have been received regarding the difficulty of navigating the online planning application system and viewing documents online, in particular pages not being set up for viewing on tablets. These issues have been referred to the IT team and resolution and for 2014-15, the Council is upgrading its online system which should address these issues.

Autumn 2013 | Issue 6

Planning News

Introduction

This newsletter series provides news and information on both national and local planning matters. Issue 6 focuses on the progress of the Local Development Plan and Development Management issues including the recent increase to planning application fees in Scotland, and details of recent planning applications submitted to Stirling Council.

Stop Press!

Did you know that the Planning Service has moved offices? In June of this year the Planning Service moved to the Municipal Buildings on Corn Exchange Road, Stirling. For any planning enquiries, please contact us at our new address.

Planning Service
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Municipal Buildings
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Working towards the Proposed Local Development Plan - Examination underway

Stirling Council is preparing a new Local Development Plan that will shape the use and development of land in the area for the next 20 years. In October 2012, we published and consulted on the Proposed Local Development Plan. The next stage in the process was to prepare to submit the Proposed Plan to the Scottish Government for Examination; this took place in June, and on the 22nd July 2013 we received notification that the Examination had commenced.

An Examination is required by law where there are unresolved objections made by the public and other stakeholders to the Proposed Plan during the consultation process. We received 875 valid representations, resulting in around 2000 unresolved objections, therefore an Examination was required. We grouped and summarised these under a relevant issue relating to the Proposed Plan, and presented this summary on a standard form called a Schedule 4; alongside Stirling Council's response to the representations. You can find all of the information that we submitted, including Schedule 4s, at the following link: www.stirling.gov.uk/localdevplan.

The Examination is being carried out on behalf of Scottish Ministers by appointed persons called Reporters, and is a two-stage process. The first stage involves the Examination of conformity with the Participation Statement to ensure that the consultation on the Plan has been carried out in accordance with our stated intentions. Stirling Council has passed this stage in the Examination. The next stage is the Examination of issues raised in the unresolved representations. The Reporters' task is to reach conclusions on each of the issues presented in the Schedule 4s, and then to make recommendations as to whether any changes are required to the Plan prior to it being adopted by Stirling Council. When the Examination is concluded, the Reporters will produce a report detailing their conclusions and recommendations on each of the issues. The recommendations in the report will be largely binding. We will then modify the Plan to incorporate the recommendations, and adopt the Plan. It is estimated that the Examination will be concluded in 6 to 9 months, with the Plan being ready for adoption by the Council in mid 2014.

A more detailed guide to the Examination process can be found here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0029/002996862.pdf>

Timeline

- Publish Proposed Plan: Sep 2012
- Consultation on Proposed Plan: Oct-Nov 2012
- Submit Proposed Plan to Ministers: Jan 2013
- Examination of Plan: Jul 2013 - Mar 2014
- Publish Modified Proposed Plan: May 2014
- Adoption of Plan: June 2014
- Monitoring and Review of Plan: Ongoing 2014-2019

Visit stirling.gov.uk/planning phone 01786 233660 email planning@stirling.gov.uk
write to: Economy, Planning & Regulation, Municipal Buildings, 8-10 Corn Exchange Road, Stirling, FK8 2HU

- Some complaints have been received over the timescale for phone calls to be returned and responses to enquiries provided. These concerns are a reflection of the high workload being experienced by officers and the difficulty in maintaining good customer service whilst also seeking to meet determination targets. Nonetheless, these issues have been highlighted and staff reminded of the need to ensure timely responses.
- The Council has a formal complaints procedure in place and people who are unhappy with the service provided are directed to the procedure on the Council website. In 2013-14, only 8 complaints were received, two of which were referred to the SPSO. One was in relation to the Council's property naming process and was partially upheld, the other is still to be determined. As a result of the SPSO's findings, an amendment has been made to the naming process to ensure that the names of individual properties cannot be duplicated.
- Planning Newsletter published November 2013.
- Rolling programme of frontline planning staff undertaking Institute of Customer Service (ICS) award scheme.

Efficient and Effective Decision Making

- Monthly reports on planning application performance against agreed targets submitted to the Council's Environment and Housing Committee as part of the 'Stirling Performs' performance reporting framework.
- A Report on the Planning Service (Development Management) performance for 2012 discussed at Environment and Housing Committee in June 2013. The Report highlighted that the Service was performing well against agreed targets and provided useful contextual information on the operation of the Development Management process which the Committee found informative and useful.
- Planning Panel and Local Review Body meetings are timetabled monthly with scope for 'special' meetings of the Planning Panel to be convened in response to certain circumstances.
- The E-Planning system is fully embedded allowing submission and payment of applications on-line. Currently averaging around 45% of applications being submitted online
- Dedicated Planning Administrators fully trained and responsible for validation of applications thus freeing up officer time to concentrate on dealing with applications
- Planning application files are marked with target timescales for determination and officers are able to generate reports from Uniform systems setting out current application workload and timescales
- Progress meetings are held every two weeks with the Development Management team to monitor progress of applications against timescales. Officers are required to report on reasons for delays on applications going over the 2 month determination period and this is discussed at catch up meetings with the DM Principal Planner/team leader.
- During 2013-2014, the Service has made efforts to remove a number of 'legacy' cases which have been in the system for some time. This has resulted in 10 applications being either refused or withdrawn following discussion with the applicants. 15 remain undetermined and efforts will be made in 2014-15 to reduce this number further.
- The Local Development Plan's statutory Supplementary Guidance – Developer Contributions (para 5.3), states that local developments subject to S75a Obligations will now be subject to a 6 month timescale for completion following a minded to approve decision and 12 months for Major Developments. This is intended to reduce the number of 'legacy' cases, the majority of which are a result of a failure to conclude legal agreements.

http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy,-planning-and-regulation/sg-august-2014/sg16-developer-contributions_sep-2014.pdf

Effective Management Structures

- The structure of the Economy, Planning and Regulation Service provides for close liaison between Planning, Building Standards, Environmental Health, Licensing and Economic Development. Monthly meetings ensure exchange of information.
- The Head of Service actively participates in the Local Development Plan Member/Officer working group to provide a senior officer presence and to ensure that political objectives are reflected in the Plan making process.
- The Chief Planning Officer role provides for overarching management of both the Development Management and Planning and Policy functions to ensure co-ordinated and consistent response to development applications. Monthly meetings are held with the respective team leaders of the Development Management and Planning and Policy teams to review performance and discuss current workload issues
- Strong collaborative working with other Council Services through the Local Development Plan process. In 2013-14,
- Management team are the subject of '360 degree' feedback from their direct reports and other colleagues as part of the Council's leadership development programme. Results from the process show a high level of confidence in the manager's leadership abilities.
- Annual 1-2-1 and Personal Development Plan meetings held for all Managers/team leaders to allow feedback
- Joint working with Clackmannanshire Council on provision of Archaeological advice for planning applications.

Financial Management and Local Governance

- Monthly budget outturns are produced by the finance team to enable Managers to monitor income and expenditure
- Planning administrators check the required application fee and contact applicants within 2 working days if the fee is incorrect
- Bi-monthly meetings held with the Service accountant to ensure that budgets are on track and fee income is monitored.
- The Development Management and Planning and Policy teams have adequate staff and financial resources to undertake statutory requirements. Budget allocations can be shifted between teams to take account of resource pressures as they arise.
- Senior staff have completed procurement training to ensure that commissioning of consultants is carried out in accordance with procurement law and procedures.

Culture of Continuous Improvement

- Annual performance review and development (PRD) carried out for all staff in order to discuss objectives, personal performance and learning needs and opportunities. PRD's are recorded and passed to HR.
- Personal Development Plan's (PDP's) are prepared as part of the PRD process and are aligned to continuous professional development training and staff are matched to training opportunities as they appear, in line with their PDP.
- In 2013-14, the Planning service undertook a Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) process which measures the service's performance against a number of key indicators. The process was led by an internal facilitator and involved a process of self assessment involving a number of planning officers, team leaders and the Chief Planning Officer. Incorporated within the self assessment model are tests against the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) and Investors in People (IiP) standards, as well as against the Council's statutory obligations in relation to Best Value. The service was assessed against a model of excellence based on 9 criteria, covering what the service does by way of policies, practices and guidance and the results it achieves in terms of outputs and outcomes. The service scored highly in relation to leadership, service planning and service processes but highlighted areas for improvement in community and customer results, largely due in part to a failure to evidence feedback from the wider community and users of the planning system. The Report is not yet publicly available but an Improvement Plan is currently being drawn up for implementation in 2014 onwards.
- In 2013-14, the Planning Enforcement team was the subject of an internal audit. This was part of the Council's programme of reviews for the Economy, Planning & Regulation Service. The Audit considered the arrangements for monitoring and managing planning enforcement in the Stirling Council area and identified the officers involved, records completed and duties undertaken, including receipt of complaints, investigatory work, and outcomes such as formal Notices and appeals. The Audit recognised the following areas of good practice;
 - the Planning Enforcement officers demonstrated strong awareness of current legislation, the powers available to them, and the requirements of the Council as a Planning Authority;
 - the Council's approach to resolving issues through negotiation rather than to 'punish mistakes' is demonstrated through the number of formal Notice appeals registered online by the Directorate for Planning & Environmental Appeals and,
 - recommendations arising from a Planning Enforcement Scrutiny Review in 2002 were found, during this audit, to have been addressed, for example through the development of the Planning Enforcement Charter and introduction of the Uniform system.
- In 2013-14 7 members of staff attended 8 training courses covering issues such as Project Management, Biodiversity and Trees, Landscape and Ecology etc
- Benchmarking of the Planning service's activities takes place informally through attendance at the HOPS Development Management Sub Group and the Development Plans Sub Group. Attendance at the recent Improvement Service Benchmarking session highlighted the different approaches to issues such as pre-application charging, protocol for submission of amended schemes and schemes of delegation. In relation to this Council's relatively poor level of delegated decision making, useful information was provided on how other authorities deal with Listed

Building applications in their scheme of delegation which will be of use in looking at how this could be adopted in Stirling.

- Management team are subject of '360 degree' feedback from their direct reports and other colleagues as part of the Council's leadership development programme. Feedback was also sought from external bodies. Results from the process show a high level of confidence in the manager's leadership abilities.
- The wider Council Management team have been engaged in an ongoing Leadership Development process since 2012. The Head of Economy, Planning and Regulation and the Chief Planning Officer have both been engaged in this process and have used this process to reflect on particular issues or challenges within the Planning Service with a view to improvements to service delivery.
- Internal Planning Service Performance Framework developed and approved by Committee outlining 22 performance measures covering processes, people, finance and customers with a focus on continuous improvement and customer satisfaction. The Planning Service Improvement Framework is embedded into the Council's 'Covalent' performance monitoring system and allows for continual scrutiny by Elected Members. The Council's Environment and Housing Committee monitor the performance of the Planning Service monthly.
- The Council's Environment and Housing Committee considered a Report on Planning Performance in 2012-13 which highlighted the Service's performance against key performance indicators and showing limited benchmarking against other Councils and the Scottish average. No Report was requested in 2013-14.
- The production of a Development Management Charter was not achieved in 2013-14 due to other priorities and work commitments. It remains on the work programme for completion in the year 2014-15.

3. Supporting evidence

Part 2 of this report was compiled, drawing on evidence from the following sources:

- Stirling Council Local Development Plan
<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/services/business-and-trade/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/local-development-plan>
- Stirling Council Annual Housing Land Audit
<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/services/business-and-trade/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/planning-monitoring/housing-land-audit>
- Stirling Council – City Strategic Infrastructure Plan
<http://minutes.stirling.gov.uk/pdfs/finance%20%26%20economy/Reports/FE20140327Item12StrategicInfrastPlan.pdf>
- Stirling Council Statutory Supplementary Guidance
<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/services/business-and-trade/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/local-development-plan/statutory-supplementary-guidance>
- Planning Service Performance Report
<http://minutes.stirling.gov.uk/pdfs/environment%20%26%20housing/Reports/EH20130606Item14PlanningServicePerformance.pdf>
- Scottish Government Planning Authority Performance Statistics

4. Service Improvements: 2014-2015

In the coming year we will:

- Develop an Implementation Plan arising from the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) process for the Planning Service and begin to implement changes to the planning service.
- Implement a more formal Pre-Application advice service utilising a pro-forma for potential applicants to submit to the Council as well as introducing a similar arrangement for responses to be provided. This should ensure a better exchange of information and provide greater transparency for applicant and planning authority alike.
- Continue to reduce the number of 'legacy' applications in the planning system by reviewing the case and instigating contact with the applicant with a view to bringing the application to a conclusion.
- Monitor S75a Obligations to ensure that outstanding cases are resolved within 6 months in line with new Supplementary Guidance/Policy.
- Investigate the use of 'social media' as a means of ensuring that our customers are more aware of current planning issues, significant planning applications in their area.
- Continue dialogue with neighbouring authorities on benchmarking of the planning function in association with the Improvement Service and independently, in order to identify and learn from best practice and implement this where possible.
- Develop and publish a Development Management Charter.
- Formally adopt the Local Development Plan and integrate the new policies including statutory and non statutory Supplementary Guidance into the planning decision making process to provide certainty, enable quality decisions and improve the environment.
- Begin an early review of the Local Development Plan in order to ensure the maintenance of a 5 year effective supply of housing land.
- Continue to provide a formalised structure via the Personal Review and Development (PRD) process to ensure that staff have the appropriate training and skills to meet the requirements of a modernised planning system

Delivery of our Service Improvement Actions in 2013-14

Service Improvements	Complete?
<p>Undertake the public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) process for the Planning Service.</p> <p>PSIF self-assessment process undertaken and Report on findings produced. Improvement Plan now being produced.</p>	In part
<p>Undertake an internal audit of the Planning Enforcement function to ensure that legislative requirements are being met and Council policy adhered to.</p> <p>Audit process undertaken and Report submitted to Council. Audit Report finds that the Enforcement function is carrying out its functions in accordance with legislation and Council policy.</p>	Yes
<p>Implement a more formal Pre-Application advice service using pro-formas for both applicant and officer response.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken to identify examples of good practice from other Council's, however, due to other work pressures this has taken longer to put in place than envisaged and it is anticipated that this service will now be available by the end of this year.</p>	No
<p>Continue to reduce the number of 'legacy' applications in the planning system.</p> <p>Further efforts have been made to reduce the number of legacy cases following on from last year. In 2013-14, 20 legacy applications, which were over 1 year old were removed from the planning system.</p>	Yes
<p>Investigate the use of 'social media' as a means of ensuring greater customer/community awareness of the planning process.</p> <p>It has not been possible to progress this initiative in 2013-14 due to competing priorities for the planning service. It remains as an action to pursue for 2014-15 but will also rely on corporate support for implementation.</p>	No
<p>Carry out dialogue/benchmarking with neighbouring authorities in order to identify and learn from best practice.</p> <p>Benchmarking has taken place through the Improvement Service's Benchmarking Group and useful information exchanged on other authorities policies and procedures. In addition to this, benchmarking has taken place with other authorities over the implementation of the High Hedge legislation with standard letters etc developed by one authority being used as a template for others.</p>	Yes
<p>Develop checklists for key planning issues to assist applicants and officers in the quicker processing of applications.</p> <p>Work on this issue had begun but it was quickly decided that there was insufficient resource to do this while the preparation of the LDP and Supplementary Guidance was ongoing. The objective of the checklist has been largely fulfilled by the supplementary guidance which provides a comprehensive set of guidance notes for prospective applicants to consider before submitting an application.</p>	Yes
<p>Develop and publish a Development Management Charter</p> <p>It was not possible to produce this in 2013-14 due to the other priorities of the Planning Service. It remains as a Service Improvement for 2014-15.</p>	No
<p>Put in place an up to date Development Planning Framework for the Council area.</p>	Yes

The LDP Examination Report was received from the DPEA in March 2014 and Reported to Council in June 2014. The Plan subsequently received Council approval in August 2014.	
<p>Continue to provide a formalised structure via the Personal Review and Development process (PRD) to ensure staff have the requisite skills etc</p> <p>PRD 's undertaken for all planning staff for 2013-14 and training/development needs identified.</p>	Yes

**PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK
OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

Decision-making timescales

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
Without Legal Agreement	4	23.3
With Legal Agreement	2	45.0
MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
All Major Developments	6	30.5
Minerals	0	-
Housing	2	28.5
Business and Industry	3	28.9
Waste Management	0	-
Electricity Generation	0	-
Freshwater Fish Farming	0	-
Marine Finfish Farming	0	-
Marine Shellfish Farming	0	-
Other Developments	1	39.6
LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
Without Legal Agreement	616	9.1
With Legal Agreement	14	26.7
LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
All Local Developments	630	9.5
Local: Less than 2 months	489	6.4
Local: More than 2 months	141	20.2
Local Developments (non-householder)	308	11.8
Local: Less than 2 months	209	6.6
Local: More than 2 months	99	22.7
Householder Developments	322	7.4
Local: Less than 2 months	280	6.3
Local: More than 2 months	42	14.4
Housing	114	14.7
Local: Less than 2 months	64	7.1
Local: More than 2 months	50	24.4
Business & Industry	78	9.6
Local: Less than 2 months	60	6.3
Local: More than 2 months	18	20.6
LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
Minerals	0	-
Waste Management	1	6.6

Electricity Generation	10	21.9
Freshwater Fish Farming	0	-
Marine Finfish Farming	0	-
Marine Shellfish Farming	0	-
Other Developments	87	9.0
Telecommunications	8	6.6
AMSCs (under 2 months)	10	13.5
OTHER CONSENTS	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
Listed bldg.+con.area consents	52	20.4
Advertisements	33	6.0
Hazardous substances consents	0	-
Other consents and certificates	11	8.9
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
Local Developments Subject To EIA	0	-
AMSCs (Subject to EIA)	0	-
APPLICATIONS SUBJECT TO	Total number of decisions	Average time (weeks)
Planning/Legal Agreement	17	29.9
Local Review	7	10.4

PROCESSING AGREEMENTS	Total number of decisions	% within agreed timescales
All Processing Agreements	0	-
Major applications	0	-
Local Applications	0	-
EIA developments	0	-
Other consents	0	-

APPLICATIONS APPROVED / DELEGATED	Percentage
Percentage of Applications Approved	96.3%
Percentage of Applications Delegated	82.3%

LOCAL REVIEWS and APPEALS	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld (%)
Local Review	7	85.7%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	9	55.6%

ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY	Number
Cases Taken Up	88
Notices Served	10
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0
Prosecutions	0

Context

In general, planning application performance has stayed consistent with last year's figures with indicators such as householder determination times, local development determination times, percentage of applications approved and applications delegated all showing improvement but set against a drop in relation to Major Developments and Listed Building Consents.

The only marked variation is in relation to Major Developments which increased from 2 in 2012-13 to 6 in 2013-14 with a corresponding increase in the average time take to determine these. In general terms, the time taken is a reflection of the issues particular to each application which required discussion, negotiation and in some instances further consultation. In addition to this was the issue of legal agreements in two of the developments which extended the time scale. The implementation of a 6 month cut off as outlined in Supplementary Guidance should go some way to addressing this issue going forward.

The Development Management team continues to perform well despite the relatively small size of the team which, as reported previously, can be stretched during periods of staff absence and involvement in Planning Inquiries. This was the case in early 2014 which has had an impact on determination times. Whilst, the average number of applications per officer remains around 155 application per annum mark, the reality is that with one Senior officer working part time and therefore dealing with less applications, a greater number has to be shared out to other officers. In 2013-14, at least two officers dealt with over 170 cases per annum.

WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Planning Service			1	1

		DM	DP	Enforce- ment	Other
Managers	No. Posts	1	1		
	Vacant				
Main grade posts	No. Posts	4.65	3	2	2.6
	Vacant	0.35			
Technician	No. Posts		3		
	Vacant				
Office Support/Clerical	No. Posts	5.2			
	Vacant				

TOTAL	16.2	7	2	2.6
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Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

Staffing profile	Number
Under 30	2
30-39	7
40-49	8
50 and Over	4

Committees & site visits (3)	No. per year
Full Council committees	-
Planning Committees	10
Area Committees (where relevant)	N/A
Committee site visits	8
LRB (4)	8
LRB site visits	5

Budgets	Budget	Costs		Income (7)
Planning Service		Direct (5)	Indirect (6)	
Development Management	385000	489231	151568	439821
Development Planning	552740	570400	16300	23800
Enforcement	Inc with DM above	-	-	-

Notes on Completion:

- 1 In relation to service structure, 1st tier post holders are Chief Executives, 2nd tier are Directors, 3rd tier are Heads of service and 4th tier are managers.
- 2 Managers are those people who are responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.
References to committees also include National Park Boards. Number of site visits are those cases where were visits carried out by committees/boards
- 3
- 4 This related to the number of meetings of the LRB, application numbers going to LRB are reported elsewhere.
- 5 Direct staff costs covers gross pay, including overtime, national insurance and the superannuation contribution. The appropriate proportion of the direct cost of any staff member within the planing authority concerned spending 30% or more of their time on planning should be included in costs irrespective of what department they are allocated to. (For example: Legal advice, Adminstration; Typing)
Exclude staff costs spending less than 30% of their time on planning.
- 6 Indirect costs include all other costs attributable to determining planning applications. Examples (not exhaustive) are:
 - Accommodation
 - Computing Costs
 - Stationery
 - Office machinery/Equipment
 - Telephone charges
 - Print

- Advertising
- T&S
- Committees
- Elected Members' expenses
- The relevant apportionment of Support Service costs

7 Income - include planning fees for applications and deemed applications. (exclude income from property and planning searches)

Further Information

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