

Planning Performance Framework

Annual Report 2014 - 2015



Introduction



Last year's Planning Performance Framework outlined a lot of good work done by the planning service in terms of maintaining and improving on performance and also driving forward continuous improvement within the Service. In 2014-15, I am pleased to say that this theme has continued with progress being made by the planning service to maintain and in some cases, improve on the performance of last year and to implement a number of improvements.

Of prime importance has been the adoption of the Local Development Plan which was a key performance marker for the Council to achieve and for the first time in these Framework documents, I am pleased to say that the Council now has an up to date Development Plan. Supplementary Guidance is also in place which provides further certainty and clarity for the development industry and the action programme provides a road map for taking forward the implementation of the Plan.

In terms of planning applications, the planning service has maintained a high level of performance and it is pleasing to see that the performance figures are consistent with and in some cases, better than the Scottish average in a number of areas.

It has not all been plain sailing, however, and there have been a number of areas where performance has not been as good as anticipated and certain improvement actions have not been able to be progressed. Performance on handling Major Developments and Legacy cases has been disappointing and it is clear that further work needs to be done to ensure that the number of applications delegated to officers is increased through a change to the scheme of delegation. In terms of customer service, actions in improving our contact with customers have faltered and work is already underway on re-focussing this for the coming year.

2014-15 was a year of considerable upheaval for the Council and the planning service also as a comprehensive Management and Service re-structure was undertaken with a new Chief Executive, Directors and Senior Managers appointed to take forward this new management structure. For the planning service, this has also meant a change in leadership and change in office location. The planning service has also had some significant work pressures to deal with, such as the legal challenge to the adoption of the LDP, the Dart Energy Public Inquiry, the costing of the planning system exercise carried out by the Improvement Service and the submission of major applications for quarrying, housing and leisure developments. In such circumstances, it is not always possible to achieve everything that was set out, but I believe the planning service deserves great credit in maintaining a high level of performance in its core areas of business.

It has been a busy year for the planning service and 2015-16 looks like it will be an equally challenging year as the new LDP moves through the Main Issues Report stage and further planning applications are submitted arising from the adopted LDP. As the new Director for Corporate Services, I look forward to taking these issues forward and reporting on progress in next years' Performance Framework document.

Gerard O'Sullivan
Director of Corporate Services



PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015



1. National Headline Indicators (NHI's)

Key Outcomes	2014-15	2013/14
Development Planning:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> age of local/strategic development plans(s) (<i>requirement – less than 5 years</i>) 	6 months	Structure Plan 12 yrs Local Plan 7 yrs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N) 	Y	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y-earlier/Y-later/N) 	N	Y- later
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were development plan scheme engagement/ consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N) 	N/A	N/A
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established Housing Land Supply 	7905 units	7496 units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Year Effective Housing Land Supply 	2374 units	2182 units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 year Housing supply target 	2303	2265*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Year Effective Housing Land Supply 	5.2 Years	4.8 years*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing approvals 	492 units	412 units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing completions over last 5 years 	1531	1496
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketable Employment Land 	47.05 Ha	47.75ha
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Land take up during reporting year 	0 ha	0 ha

*For the housing supply this is based on the old Structure plan Housing Land Requirement where no Housing Supply Target was set.

Development Management

Project Planning

• percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	30%	28%
• number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	One	None
• percentage planned timescales met	N/A	N/A

Decision-making

• application approval rate	96.3	96.3%
• delegation rate	77.5	82.3%

Decision Making Timescales

Average number of weeks to decision:

• Major developments	97.3	53.9
• Local developments (non householder)	11.8	12.9
• Householder developments	7.5	7.4

Legacy Cases

• Number cleared during reporting period	3	10
• Number remaining	19	15

Enforcement

• Time since Enforcement Charter published/ Reviewed (months) <i>Requirement: review every 2 Years</i>	8 months	23 months
• Number of breaches identified/resolved	142/49	127/75





Development Planning

The Stirling Local Development Plan was adopted in October 2014. The Council agreed to an early review of the Plan and its Spatial Strategy relative to the housing land requirement for the Stirling Core Area. This was in response to an acknowledged shortfall in the housing land requirement arising from the Examination Reporters' Recommendation for an additional 5% flexibility and any additional shortfall arising from the assessment of the 5-year effective land supply in the Council's 2014 housing land audit.

The Development Plan Scheme was published in September 2014 and work on the new Plan commenced in October 2014 with early engagement with elected members, key stakeholders, including Scottish Government, on the content of the Plan and a 'call for housing sites' process. Over 70 sites were submitted for consideration which have been considered through a detailed site assessment process.

The Council undertook an assessment of the existing Plan relative to the new SPP introduced in June 2014. The need to identify 10-20% generosity in the housing land requirement and changes to a number of other policy areas has also prompted an early review of the Plan.

In order to inform the new LDP, an update to the Housing Need and Demand Assessment is required. A full review was not possible, as to do so would significantly delay the publication of the Main Issues Report. On the advice of the Centre for Housing Market Analysis, a mini-review was produced which concludes that little has changed in local housing market dynamics since 2011, providing reassurance that Stirling Council's estimate of housing need and demand, as set out in the 2011 HNDA, remains valid for the new Plan.

In April 2015, the Council agreed to consult on new planning guidance for wind energy developments including a spatial framework. Consultation ended on 6 July and a spatial framework is anticipated to be in place by September 2015 to comply with the Scottish Government Reporter's requirements.

At the time of writing, the Main Issues Report (MIR) has been agreed by the Council along with all its supporting documents. The MIR focuses on key changes required to the Plan which includes revisions to the housing land requirement, including the identification of new housing sites, and updates to the wind energy developments policy. A number of other issues are also highlighted including proposed changes to the housing in the countryside policy. The MIR will be published for consultation purposes in August 2015 and consultation will run for a total of 10 weeks until 9 October 2015.

Effective Land Supply

The 2014 Housing Land Audit was agreed with Homes for Scotland in November 2014. Only one site was in dispute and not agreed. At June 2014, the position with the effective housing land supply is that there is a 4.9 years effective supply (when measured against the housing land requirement of the adopted LDP) and 5.2 years supply (when measured against the housing supply target). Annual housing completions 2010 to 2014 have averaged 305 units per annum whereas programmed completions 2014 to 2024 are an average 514 units per annum. The review of the Plan seeks to identify further housing land allocations for the period beyond 2017, which could result in an average 493 to 522 units required per annum.

Development Management

Pre-application discussions have shown a slight increase over last year, however, as with previous years, the majority of applications would appear to be being submitted with no pre-application discussion. Whilst this is largely the case with 'householder' type applications, it is considered that a true picture is not being shown with regard to local developments in particular. At the present time, officers are supposed to manually recording these for uploading into Uniform and this may not be being rigorously carried out. An improvement action for this coming year is to ensure that all forms of



pre-application discussion, including phone calls, are properly recorded. The tick box on the planning application form provides an opportunity for these to be recorded on Uniform.

Historically, Stirling Council does not receive a large number of **major development applications** in comparison with other authorities. This last year has seen only 4 major developments and even then, decisions made were on applications that has been submitted for some time. One application in particular has skewed the performance figures in this respect and led to an inflated average decision timescale for this development type. If this application alone is stripped out, the performance on the remaining major housing applications is 17.1 weeks, compared with the Scottish average of 54.1 and the previous year's figure of 28.5 weeks.

This '**legacy case**' was for a business development on the edge of Stirling, which involved complex negotiations and discussion with other agencies. Despite the application being 'minded to approve' in 2011, the applicants failed to progress the legal agreement for a number of years although there was correspondence with them in this intervening period. The Council decided not to move towards refusal of the application given the overall potential benefit to the local economy of the proposal and instead, allowed the determination timescale to extend. Although this has led to a significant increase in the average timescale for this application type, it was considered that the overall potential benefit to the local economy was such that the application should not be refused.

With regard to other legacy cases, unfortunately, progress has not been as good as the previous year, with only 3 being cleared and the number outstanding increasing slightly as applications come within the time period. Whilst this has largely been down to resources, steps have been taken to contact the applicants, where possible, with a view to seeing this number decrease dramatically in the coming year. This is an improvement action for 2015-16.

The number of **major development** applications determined in 2014/15 (4) has been less than the previous year (6) and again there has no real appetite shown by developers to enter into processing agreements. As reported last year, processing agreements are highlighted on our website and officers are instructed to raise this matter, however, the feedback we are receiving is that these are not considered necessary for the type of developments that are being proposed. Two of the four major developments were Matters Specified by Condition applications with a more limited scope of issues to be considered and limited consultations to be carried out, meaning that there was less impetus for a processing agreement to be entered into.

Decision making timescales for 2014/15 have stabilised relative to the previous year with the average number of weeks to decision for **local developments (non-householder)** decreasing slightly to 11.8 weeks from 12.9 weeks in 2013/14 and this is lower than the national average of 12.9 weeks.

Householder developments are at a similar level to last year with an average time of 7.5 weeks compared to 7.4 in 2013/14. The current average is on a par with the national average for this development type and serves to highlight that the continuous improvement in this area following targeted improvement actions in previous years has maintained the performance levels on this development type from the previous year.

The **percentage of applications delegated to officers** has unfortunately fallen back to levels identified in 2013/14 despite actions to take applications off the weekly planning schedule and onto the delegated list. Discussions with other authorities through benchmarking has highlighted that this may be as a result of this Council's approach towards Listed Building application and related householder applications which progress through the weekly planning schedule and are therefore not delegated to officers to determine. The original reason behind this was to ensure that applicants retained a right of appeal to Scottish Ministers in the event of refusal which would not have been possible through a delegated decision. This issue will be discussed with the Council's legal service to ensure that processes are in line with other authorities and is an improvement action for the 2015/16 Performance Framework.

The **percentage of applications approved** has remained at the same level as the previous year and currently sits above the national average (93.9%).



Part 2. Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Open for Business

- As highlighted in the introduction to last year's PPF, a re-structuring of the Council's management and service structure took place in the second half of 2014. The result is that the planning function is now located within a new 'Infrastructure Delivery' Service, highlighting the importance of planning in seeking to deliver new infrastructure and economic development. Responsibility for the delivery of the previously reported City Strategic Infrastructure Plan now rests within this new service.

Whilst progress on this has slowed as a result of the re-structuring process, this has in part also been due to re-focussing of the Council's efforts to take infrastructure delivery forward by the formation of a 'City Commission' made up of Council officials and representatives of local businesses whose role it will be to help facilitate and deliver economic development within Stirling. Moving forward, it is proposed that the Implementation Plan in the LDP and the City Strategic Infrastructure Plan will come together under one working group responsible for securing investment and ensuring the delivery of key infrastructure projects identified in these documents.

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

In association with infrastructure delivery, the Council has commissioned SLR Consultants to prepare a City Development Framework for Stirling. The Framework will outline the vision, masterplan and priority projects to promote economic growth and development across the city, as well as the high level business case for establishing future feasibility and funding packages that would drive its physical and social transformation. A number of 'signature' projects aimed at key economic sectors that have been identified as weak sectors in comparison to other towns and cities. SLR are tasked with taking these projects as step further, and developing concept sketches for the projects, and masterplans which the planning and transportation teams will have input into.

<http://minutes.stirling.gov.uk/PDFs/Scouncil/Agendas/CouncilAgenda.pdf>

- In line with legislative requirements, an Action Programme has been produced which supports the delivery of the LDP and sets out the actions and partnerships that are necessary to implement the strategy of the Plan. http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy.-planning- and -regulation/approved-ldp/action-programme-december-2014.pdf
- Planning Officers actively maintain the Employment sites register/vacant and derelict land register and liaise with Economic Development when dealing with inward investment enquiries for sites/premises in the Council area. <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/planning-and-the-environment/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/planning-monitoring/employment-land-audit-1>
http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy.-planning- and -regulation/emp-land-audit/vacant-derelict-land-2014-red.pdf

- Officers are currently working with economic development colleagues on the production of a guide to planning aimed at small businesses who are looking to set up in the area. The guide will provide some basic advice on planning issues and provide pointers to where further information can be obtained from within the planning service.
- Identification of new employment land and safeguarding of existing employment sites are now identified in the adopted Local Development Plan providing potential investors with a clear view of potential investment locations.
- 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 slightly 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 been put on hold as there was uncertainty over the value of such an approach which could be too cumbersome and inflexible, particularly where smaller applications are concerned. The principle of doing this will be kept under review, however.
- 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>

Case study - Use of Processing Agreements

Following the Council decision to accept the DPEA's Examination Report into the Local Development Plan, officers began discussions with landowners agents over a potential application for a major development of c600 houses, new primary school etc on the edge of Stirling. Given the scale and complexity of the proposal and the need to consult with a wide body of agencies whose views would all have to be co-ordinated, officers suggested that a processing agreement should be entered into to ensure a project managed approach to this sizeable application.

At the inception meeting, key information requirements were set out and a broad timescale for issuing and receiving consultations was discussed as well as key milestones in the process. Throughout the process, regular meetings have been held between officers and the landowners agents. The process has been iterative, with a flow of information between parties and inevitably, this has resulted in timescales slipping from initial targets. However, due to the process, both parties have been aware of the reasons behind this and deadlines have been amended accordingly. The application has not yet been determined.



The applicants Agent, Mark Richardson from Ristol Consulting said about the process;

I confirm that my town planning practice entered into a processing agreement with Stirling Council on behalf of an applicant in 2014, to assist the management of an EIA schedule 2, major planning application, reference 14/00595/PPP.

Stirling Council's management of the processing agreement has been efficient, transparent and constructive. The process has been particularly helpful in scoping technical issues, co-ordinating statutory consultee responses and facilitating an understanding by all parties of the programme and sequence of events to progress the application. This has been relevant for the proposed development in that it has involved an EA and multiple agency involvement.

- There are currently a number of major developments at the Proposal of Application stage where officers are in discussion with developers about processing agreements. Information on the successful use of these will be included in next year's PFF.
- With the adoption 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 refer 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.

Corporate Operations





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 Adopted LDP, the majority of which are aimed at improving the quality of development, which support the LDP. This can be broken down into;
 - 37 Supplementary Guidance documents – these support specific policies in the Plan.
 - 26 Conservation Area Appraisals/Statements
 - 13 Site Development Frameworks/Masterplans/Briefs
- 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 at Randolph Road, Stirling for Cala Homes.

Proposals involved the redevelopment of a Brownfield site for residential use. The site is afforded a particularly prominent position within the surrounding streetscape, with a 'public' frontage onto three streets. The established character of the surrounding area is of the surroundings, and to use this as a basis to inform their proposals. This was taken on board by the applicant, and the resultant proposals were reflective of key components of the character of the surrounding area. In terms of general site layout, this included, building sizes, orientation, and spacing; plot sizes and building lines; and the definition between public and private space and front and rear gardens through the use of differing boundary treatments.

Furthermore, in terms of building design detailed architectural details proposed such as hipped roofs, prominent chimney features, overhanging eaves and a vertical emphasis to fenestration all were reflective of the built features found within the vicinity. The proposed use of a mix of hedging and walling as boundary treatments was consistent with the wider streetscape and will help assimilate the development into its surroundings.

Following discussions, the revised submission included an updated Design and Access Statement. This included a section outlining the analysis carried out in respect of the context of the site. This allowed the applicant to better explain their proposals, and demonstrate their understanding and consideration of the context of the site. The revised proposal was approved, attracted fewer objections, and the submission of letters of support. The development is now almost complete and makes a positive contribution to the surrounding area .

- The Development Management team always attempt to improve the quality of submissions and improve the quality of what is being built.



Case Study – Negotiated Design Improvements

An application had been submitted for 4 large house plots in a rural location, however, the proposal was deemed to conflict with published guidance in relation to the design and layout of rural developments and the applicant had been advised that the application was likely to be refused.

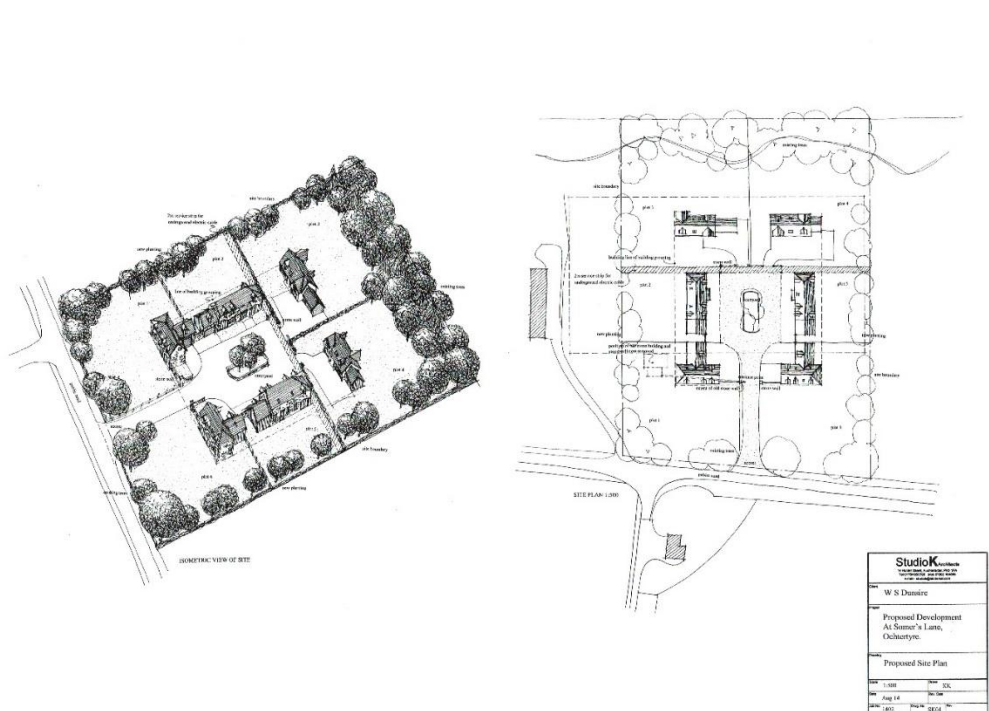
Further discussions were held on an alternative layout which involved an increase in the number of units, but in a different layout, reflecting a steading type development as opposed to large individual plots. Officers worked with the applicant and his architect to refine elements of the design and reach agreement on types of materials etc. The end result was a negotiated solution with an improved design and layout, reflecting planning guidance and making a positive contribution to the rural area.

The applicant provided the following comments on the process;

“I just wanted to write to you to thank you and your team for the assistance and advice with our planning application for our development at Ochertyre.

Although the initial scheme was not well received, the guidance and round table discussion has resulted in a much improved layout which is sympathetic and sits well within it's environment.

Without you and your team's proactive engagement, this much needed development of high quality family homes in the countryside would not have gone ahead which would have been a missed opportunity. I also wanted to let you know that one of the direct impacts this has had is that we have had to hire two additional joiner apprentices with the confidence of knowing that we had work to sustain them. Thanks again for your help in this matter.”



- Applications for housing in the rural area are assessed against Supplementary Guidance which provides detailed guidance on the issues which prospective applicants should consider when submitting applications for new housing development in the countryside. In the last year, the Council considered 55 applications for housing in the countryside totalling 79 units and this guidance is therefore extensively used in both pre-application discussion and in the determination of applications http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy,-planning- and -regulation/approved-ldp/sg-teith-house-jan-2015/sg10-housing-in-the-countryside_feb-2015.pdf

An example of a house approved under the Housing in the Countryside Guidance:





Certainty

- The Local Development Plan and related Supplementary Guidance was adopted by the Council in September 2014 meaning that the Council now has an up to date Development Plan upon which decisions on planning applications can be made.
<http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/planning-and-the-environment/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/local-development-plan>
- Following the adoption of the Local Development Plan, the Council has moved quickly to address issues concerning uncertainty over the availability of a 5 year effective land supply by embarking on a 'review' of the Local Development Plan, focussing largely on housing land issues. A Development Plan Scheme, outlining the timescale for this was approved by Council in September 2014 and a 2 year timescale is envisaged given the more restricted terms of reference for the Plan. The Plan will also include a revised spatial framework for wind energy developments, which the Examination Report stated was required in order to comply with SPP.
- The Development Plan Scheme has been updated (September 2014) and is in place. A further update was approved in June 2015.
- Availability and encouragement of Pre-Application discussion is highlighted on the Council's Planning webpage. Pre-application discussions have shown a slight increase on the previous years figure and now indicate that around 30% of all applications have been the subject of some form of pre-application discussion. <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/planning-and-the-environment/planning-and-building-standards/planning-applications-warrants-and-certificates/planning-applications>
- 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 such as Housing and Education, to ensure that all issues are discussed at the outset.

Case Study – Pre-Application Certainty, Residential Development

This proposal involved a residential development of 167 units at Kildean, Stirling. The site is located immediately adjacent to the new Forth Valley College complex, on the western edges of Raploch, within the Kildean river loop. The site forms part of a wider LDP site, allocated for a mix of uses, and for which a Development Framework exists. Planning permission 'In Principle' was granted for a range of uses on the site, including residential in January 2014.

Following this, Barratt Homes approached Officers seeking to take forward detailed proposals for the residential element on the site. Prior to the submission of any planning application, a series of pre-application discussions were undertaken with Officers in relation to the proposals. These discussions helped secure the adoption of a design approach that limited the number of cul-de-sacs, and that was relatively permeable for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists. Furthermore, it adopted an approach to car parking which saw the use of a mixture of on-street, rear parking courts, and private driveways, intended to reduce the visual dominance of cars within

the streetscape, and be reflective of key principles within Designing Streets.

Moreover it ensured that the potential for future linkages into the wider site were built in to the development layout, and met the approved Development Framework aims in this regard. Importantly, through these discussions, and various iterations of the plans, it secured a layout where the orientation and positioning of buildings was well considered. Particularly, it ensured that the streets are both well contained and overlooked by buildings, and that areas of significant open space (such as the area around the river cliffs and northern landscape belt utilised for SuDS) were integrated into the development, maximising opportunities for natural surveillance of these spaces.

Negotiations through the planning application process itself also secured a number of additional improvements to the scheme, such as a better entrance to the site, improved landscaping proposals and better detailed design of rear car parking courts/

- 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. <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/planning-and-the-environment/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/local-development-plan/statutory-supplementary-guidance>
- One impact of the housing in the countryside policy which was introduced by the Council in 2009, has been a gradual increase in new house plots in certain dispersed rural settlements. As a result of monitoring of new rural housing, Officers recognised that there had been a dramatic increase in new house plots in Blairhoyle, near Thornhill and if this was allowed to continue unchecked, could result in a detrimental impact on the character of the area. In line with SG 36, Small Settlements, an exercise was undertaken last year to identify defensible limits to the growth of Blairhoyle that would provide clarity and certainty to both local people and potential applicants over future housing development. (The Small Settlement Guidance for Blairhoyle was approved in May 2015) http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy,-planning- and -regulation/approved-ldp/sg-teith-house-jan-2015/blairhoyle-small-settlement-proposals-may-2015-red.pdf



- The Stirling Council area has a large number of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and the planning service's Conservation Officers spend a lot of time with prospective applicants providing advice and guidance on historic environment issues.

Case Study – Pre-Application Certainty, Listed Building Consent

Early last year, the planning service was contacted by the Ministry of Defence Estates Dept regarding re-development of parts of the Queen Victoria School, a boarding school for MOD personnel's children. The proposals that they had in mind were radical, involving the demolition of a number of buildings and the introduction of new modern teaching blocks in close proximity to the A Listed Buildings.

Early engagement with the MOD's team identified the main issues of concern and a common understanding of the approach needed to preserve the setting of the existing Listed properties. Working over a series of meetings, which involved Historic Scotland also, the architects engaged by the MOD produced a revised Development Masterplan for the Queen Victoria School, which was supported by the Conservation Officer and Historic Scotland Inspector. A Proposal of Application Notice has been submitted and an application due soon.

Mark Limbrick from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation provided this comment on the process;

"The discussions and collaboration facilitated by Stirling Council with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation has provided an excellent basis for joint working to bring forward proposals for the Queen Victoria School, Dunblane.

The Council has been responsive and helpful on pre-application discussions which have materially assisted in the development of proposals to meet the long term needs of the School in the context of the significant heritage value of the site."

- The adopted LDP has identified a location for major housing growth on the south side of Stirling to meet the area's housing land requirement. A requirement of the Plan is that a Masterplan should be prepared for the whole site in advance of or alongside planning applications. Due to the different landownerships across the site, it became apparent that a lack of co-operation between the landowners was not going to deliver a Masterplan and that consequently, there would be no cohesive plan for the whole site to guide development and ensure continuity. The Planning Service has therefore acted pro-actively to fill this void by preparing a Masterplan in house, in consultation with the landowners. Further detail on this will be included in the next PPF report.





Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

- Feedback on the previous consultation exercise in preparing the adopted LDP has been analysed and used to inform the current engagement strategy on the Main Issues Report. The figure below summarises the key points from the analysis.



- 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. A meeting was arranged for October 2014, however, this had to be cancelled as only one person had confirmed their attendance. Following this, a quick phone round revealed that a number had just forgotten, others failed to respond but were going to turn up anyway and others found that the daytime arrangement did not suit them (previous meetings had been held in the evening). A number also expressed the view that the meetings would benefit from a 'refresh' and perhaps didn't achieve much. An improvement action for 2015-16 is to re-focus the purpose of the Forum meetings and to highlight certain areas of Council activity where users could feel that they can have a more positive input.
- As part of the process of defining new settlement boundaries for the 'small settlement' of Blairhoyle, consultation was undertaken with the local residents of the area. In line with the procedure used in the Local Development Plan, individual household were 'neighbour notified'. The Community Council and local Councillors were consulted and a public meeting was held. The views expressed through this process were taken into account in the drafting of the Supplementary Guidance. The response from the local community was positive, both in

terms of the process and the outcome of the exercise.

http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy,-planning- and -regulation/approved-ldp/sg-teith-house-jan-2015/blairhoyle-small-settlement-proposals-may-2015-red.pdf

- In the latter part of 2014, a customer survey of the Development Management service using an online 'SurveyMonkey' approach was trialled for a short period. However, there was limited feedback from this and a review of this approach was undertaken with a view to producing a more simplified format for the questionnaire along the lines used by other authorities. This new questionnaire is currently under development and will be rolled out in 2015-16.
- 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. As highlighted above, a number of comments have been received regarding the difficulty of navigating the online planning application system and viewing documents online. Due to these concerns, a new software package was purchased and installed which addressed these issues. From an internal process point of view, this new system has also simplified the scanning and importation of material into the Uniform system which will improve the back office function.
- Following the introduction of the new High Hedge legislation, a dedicated webpage was set up to provide information and guidance on the process to prospective applicants. This included guidance notes, links to the application form for download and also links to the initial legislation. <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/planning-and-the-environment/planning-and-building-standards/planning-applications-warrants-and-certificates/high-hedges>
- Following the ending of support of the OLDP function, the planning service undertook to produce a new online mapping tool which allows users to search for Development Plan information using a map based tool. This is now available on mobile devices also. <http://my.stirling.gov.uk/maps/ldp?theme=MyStirling>
- 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 2014-15, only 1 formal complaint was received in connection with the processing of a planning application
- A Planning newsletter was produced in Autumn 2014
http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/temporary-uploads/economy,-planning- and -regulation/newsletter/newsletter-no-7-autumn-2014.pdf





Efficient and Effective Decision Making

- The overall performance of the Planning service in 2014-15 compares well with the National Average in a number of areas and shows an improvement in performance compared with last year also. These figures are highlighted in Appendix 1.
- During 2013-2014, the Service had made good efforts to remove a number of 'legacy' cases which have been in the system for some time, resulting in 10 applications being either refused or withdrawn following discussion with the applicants. Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to maintain that performance and only 3 legacy cases have been removed during 2014-15 period. Efforts will be to monitor progress on this issue more closely in 2015-16 and this will be an improvement action for this period.
- 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. This enables Elected Members to view and, if necessary, ask for update reports if there are issues or performance trends that they are concerned with. No such reports were requested in 2014-15.
- 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 highlighted both on the Council Homepage and the planning webpage. The system is fully embedded allowing submission and payment of applications on-line. Around 45% of applications were submitted online in 2014-15 which compares with a similar level achieved last year.
- 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.
- A new appointments system was introduced in 2014-15 whereby specific slots in the week were set aside for planning officers to hold meetings with applicants, agents, residents etc This has enabled officers to manage their time more efficiently and to plan their working week more effectively.
- 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.
- 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 future 'legacy' cases, the majority of which are as 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 management and service structure within the Council has been radically re-shaped in order to better focus activities and priorities towards achieving the Council's Corporate objectives, one of which is achieving sustainable economic development. As part of this re-structure, the Planning service has been included within the Corporate Operations 'directorate' and specifically within the Infrastructure Delivery team, recognising the role planning plays in the delivery of infrastructure development which in turn can support economic growth. Planning now sits with Transportation, Asset Management and Sustainability in the new Infrastructure Delivery team which is led by a Senior Manager. A new business plan and objectives for the team are currently in the process of being formulated.
- 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 continues to take place in both pre-application consultation/discussion on planning applications and in joint working on development frameworks and planning briefs.
- The Council 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 (PRD) meetings held for all Managers/team leaders to allow feedback. The PRD process has recently been re-vamped to focus more on the behaviours of Council employees and on Customer Service.
- Joint working with Clackmannanshire Council on the provision of Archaeological advice for planning applications. This arrangement has now been extended into a formal agreement with North Lanarkshire Council to provide Archaeological advice on planning applications and development plan policy as required.



Financial Management and Local Governance

- Monthly budget outturns are produced by the finance team to enable Managers to monitor income and expenditure. Greater scrutiny is now taking place on budget outturns in order to predict likely levels of under or overspend with a view to managing budgets better.
- A holistic approach to budget management has recently been introduced whereby underspends (income above target) in one part of the planning service can be re-directed to another in order to finance specific projects or commissions.
- Fee income from planning applications has exceeded budget targets over the last two years, in part due to the increase in planning fees. This additional income has been used to help commission consultants to assist in a number of planning application assessments where current Council resources were not available.
- 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. Time recording is utilised to provide Management with a picture of how much time is being spent on particular areas of work.



Culture of Continuous Improvement

- 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 service scored highly in relation to leadership, service planning and service processes. An Improvement Plan was produced at the end of 2014 to guide a number of improvement actions and these are also included in this years' Service Improvement Plan outlined within this document.
- 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. The PRD process has been reviewed and greater emphasis given to the need to focus on behaviours and customer service.
- 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 2014-15 officers from the planning service attended the following training courses/CPD :
 - Minerals Planning - Exchanging Good Practice
 - SP=EED Verified by Planning Aid Scotland
 - Sustainable Design and Development
 - Heat Map Training
 - Flood Risk Management Workshop
 - Social Media for Planners
 - Drawing Skills (Scottish Govt and Princes Trust)

Officers also attended the following Forums;

- Local Authority Urban Design Forum
- Development Plans Forum
- A&DS Design Skills Symposium Follow-up
- Habitats Regulations Forum

In addition, there was specific IT training given on Microsoft Excel and IDOX Uniform and Access

- An improvement action from last year was to investigate the use of social media for forthcoming development planning exercises. Staff attended a seminar on the use of social media and discussions are currently taking place on how this can be rolled out using a 'Planning blog' for the forthcoming year.
- 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 Improvement Service session in relation to the implementation of the new High Hedge legislation was invaluable in raising awareness of the likely issues which could arise from High Hedge applications. The information gained help guide the Council's approach to implementing the new legislation and in setting a fee. Following on from this, there was inter authority co-operation in circulating standard letters which other authorities could use for their own purposes which greatly eased the burden of implementing this legislation at such short notice.
- Benchmarking from the HOPS Development Management sub group has provided an example of a shorter, more simplified version of a customer survey using 'SurveyMonkey' which it is proposed to use for the coming year.
- 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.

- 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 production of a Development Management Charter was not achieved in 2014-15 due to other priorities such as the management re-structure, office move and other work commitments. It remains on the work programme for completion in the year 2015-16.



3. Supporting evidence

All sources of evidence used to compile Part 2 of this report are included as hyperlinks in the main body of the document. In addition to this, evidence was also drawn from the following sources:

- Stirling Council Key Priorities
<http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/council-and-government/council-information-performance-and-statistics/key-priorities>
- Stirling Council Performance Management Framework
<http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/council-and-government/council-information-performance-and-statistics/council-performance-indicators>
- Stirling Council Improvement Plan 2013-16
http://www.stirling.gov.uk/_documents/chief-executive-office/performance-and-research/annual-reporting/stirling-council-improvement-plan-2013-2016final.pdf
- Stirling Council Local Development Plan
<http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/planning-and-the-environment/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/local-development-plan>
- Stirling Council Annual Housing Land Audit
<http://my.stirling.gov.uk/services/business-and-trade/planning-and-building-standards/local-and-statutory-development-plans/planning-monitoring/housing-land-audit/housing-land-audit-2014>
- 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: 2015-2016

In the coming year we will:

- Progress the new Local Development Plan through the Main Issues Report stage in line with the approved Development Plan Scheme
- 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.
- Utilise 'social media' by linking into the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts and introduce a 'planning blog' in order ensure that our customers are more aware of current planning issues, consultations and 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.
- Use experience from other authorities to amend the Scheme of Delegation to ensure that a greater number of applications are delegated to officers and thus improve the performance indicator relative to the number of applications determined which were delegated to officers
- Develop and publish a Development Management Charter.
- Review and re-introduce an online customer survey of Development Management on all relevant correspondence
- Ensure all pre-application discussions are properly recorded in the Uniform system
- Hold awareness-raising sessions at team meetings covering customer feedback, corporate policies, corporate terminology, key links between plans and strategies and work force planning.
- Review purpose and content of annual Agents Forum in consultation with users and arrange meeting
- 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 2014-15

Service Improvements	Complete?
Develop and Implementation Plan arising from the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Improvement Plan produced and actions are being worked through.	Yes
Implement a more formal Pre-Application advice service utilising a pro-forma for potential applicants This proposals was reviewed and there were doubts as to the value of this approach which was considered to be too cumbersome and inflexible, particularly in respect to smaller applications which could be dealt with more easily via e-mailed responses. The principle of implementing such an approach will be kept under review.	No
Continue to reduce the number of legacy applications in the planning system. Only 3 legacy application were cleared in the last period compared with the previous years' figure of 10.	In part
Monitor S75a obligations to ensure that outstanding cases are resolved within 6 months in line with new Supplementary Guidance The new Guidance came into force in September 2014 and to date there have been no new S75a obligations which have fallen into this category	Ongoing
Investigate the use of 'social media' as a means of ensuring greater customer/community awareness of the planning process. Officers have attended a training session on the use of social media and discussions held with the Council's communications team on linking in with the Council's Facebook and Twitter account. A template for a 'planning blog' page has been produced.	Yes
Carry out dialogue/benchmarking with other planning authorities in order to identify and learn from best practice. Benchmarking has taken place through the Improvement Service's Benchmarking Group and useful information exchanged on other authorities policies and procedures. The HOPS DM sub group has provided useful examples of good practice which have been utilised	Yes
Develop and publish a Development Management Charter. It has not proved possible to take this forward due to other competing demands. This remains an action for 2015-16.	No
Formally adopt the Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance The LDP was formally adopted by the Council in September 2014.	Yes
Begin an early review of the Local Development Plan in order to maintain a 5 year effective land supply The Council agreed to commence work on a new Plan in September 2014. A Development Plan scheme was approved also	Yes
Continue to provide a formalised structure via the Personal Review and Development process (PRD) to ensure staff have the requisite skills etc PRD 's undertaken for all planning staff for 2014-15 and training/development needs identified.	Yes

Appendix 1

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OFFICIAL STATISTICS 2014/15

Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

	Total number of decisions	Average Time (weeks) 2014 - 2015	Average Time (weeks) 2013 - 2014
Major Developments	4	97.3	53.9
Local Developments (Non-Householder)	276	11.8	12.9
Local: Less than 2 months	174	6.6	6.6
Local: More than 2 months	102	20.6	22.7
Householder Developments	303	7.5	7.4
Local: Less than 2 months	253	6.1	6.3
Local: More than 2 months	50	14.7	14.4
Housing Developments			
Major	1	17.1	28.5
Local Housing Developments	130	15.3	14.7
Local: Less than 2 months	65	6.7	7.1
Local: More than 2 months	65	23.9	24.4
Business & Industry	67	8.1	9.6
Major	1	259	28.9
Business & Industry (Local)	67	8.1	9.6
Local: Less than 2 months	51	6.6	6.3
Local: More than 2 months	16	12.8	20.6
OTHER CONSENTS			
Listed bldg.+con.area consents	61	14.0	20.4
Advertisements	31	6.2	6.0
Hazardous substances consents	0	-	-
Other consents and certificates	13	6.0	8.9
EIA Developments	0	-	-
Planning/Legal Agreement			
Major: Average Time	1	259	45.0
Local: Average Time	5	87.2	26.7
Local Reviews	5	18.6	10.4

Enforcement Activity	2014 -15	2013-14
Cases Taken Up	142	127
Breaches Identified	92	84
Cases Resolved	98	75
Notices Served	11	10
Reports to the Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

Decision Making: Local Reviews and Appeals

Type	Total No of Decisions	Original Decision Upheld			
		2014-15		2013-14	
		No	%	No	%
Local Reviews	5	3	60	6	86
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	6	3	50	5	55

Context

In general, performance on planning application determination timescales has improved in comparison to last years' figures and also compares favourably with the Scottish average, matching and in many instances, bettering, the national figure. The main exception to this is in relation to Major Developments where the performance figure has been skewed by the abnormal length of time taken in relation to one particular application. As outlined earlier in the PPF, a decision was taken to continue with the application rather than refuse this given the importance to the local economy. Dialogue was continuing albeit that this was sporadic and was also in part due to the need for the applicant to conclude negotiations with other agencies. Performance has stayed consistent with last year's figures with indicators such as householder determination times and local development determination times all holding up well

The Development Management team continues to perform well despite the relatively small size of the team. The workload on officers (c155 applications per officer) is still considered to be comparatively high in comparison with other authorities having reference to the costing the planning service carried out by the Improvement Service.



WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

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

		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				
	No. Posts	5.2			

Office Support/Clerical	Vacant				
TOTAL		16.2	7	2	2.6

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	1
30-39	8
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 Planning Service	Budget	Costs		Income (7)
		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.
- 3 References to committees also include National Park Boards. Number of site visits are those cases where visits were carried out by committees/boards
- 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 planning 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, Administration; 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

Please contact:

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Corporate Operations

Stirling Council

Teith House

Kerse Road

Stirling

FK7 7QA

Telephone: 01786 2 33660

E-mail: planning@stirling.gov.uk

www.stirling.gov.uk/planning



If you need help or this information
supplied in an alternative format
please call 0845 277 700.

