

Planning Annual Performance Report (APR) – 2016-17

PREFACE

This is our second Planning Annual Performance Report (APR) that provides information on how Conwy County Borough Council have performed during 2015/16. It demonstrates how Conwy has performed against various indicators, identifies what it had done well so that this can be shared with others, and identifies what steps might be taken to address areas of performance in need of improvement.

During the last year we have continued to deliver high quality services and improvements to meet the needs of our residents and customers. This report demonstrates the positive impact that our work is having on communities. It is a recognition of our continuous improvement and success in working together to improve performance across many areas.

However, improvement is an ongoing process and there are areas where we need to do better. The report is clear on what those improvement priorities are going forward. To which will provide our direction of travel over the next few years.

There are challenging times ahead and we know we must be more innovative, creative, and flexible, to respond effectively. By focusing our priority on providing high quality services, we aim to continue to deliver better outcomes for people and communities across the County Borough of Conwy.

CONTEXT

Conwy County Borough is centrally located in North Wales. The County Borough has an area of 113,000 hectares. The size of the resident population in Conwy County Borough at 30 June 2015 was estimated to be 116,200 people. Since 2005 the population of Conwy County Borough has increased by 3,850, which is 3.4% About 38% of its area and 4% of its population are within the Snowdonia National Park.

Conwy County Borough is an area of outstanding landscape ranging from extensive sandy beaches and headlands to sheltered valleys, open moors and rugged mountains. Not surprisingly, its economy relies heavily upon tourism. Rural areas and their communities are dependent on agricultural and forestry activities, even though these sectors do not provide a high level of direct employment.

The narrow coastal belt contains over 85% of the County Borough's population with Llandudno and Colwyn Bay as the two main settlements in terms of population numbers. Rural Conwy is an attractive, mainly agricultural area with limited alternative employment and few development pressures. Its population is widely dispersed and is predominantly Welsh speaking. The main settlement in terms of population numbers is the market town of Llanrwst.

Development Plans

The Conwy Local Development Plan (2007 – 2022) was adopted on 24th October 2013 and provides the planning framework for the County Borough outside of the Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA).

The adopted LDP sets out the key challenges facing Conwy and identifies the Vision, Objectives and the Spatial Strategy for development in the area over the Plan period. It provides a practical and detailed basis for the control of development and use of land, seeks to protect the natural and built environment and provides incentive to developers and investors through the allocation of land for a diverse range of uses. In delivering the LDP, it is supported by a number of adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance documents, Site Development Briefs and supporting evidence base.

The Council's 2016 LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) concludes that a small number of triggers have been met that now require intervention and review of the LDP. The triggers relate mainly to the Council's requirement to maintain a 5 year housing land supply as per Technical Advice Note 1 (TAN1). The AMR proposes an early review of the LDP as a result, which is 12 months earlier than the statutory 4 year review period. The proposed review detailed in the AMR is subject to a formal Review Report and agreement of the Welsh Government.

Place and fit within the community strategy and/or wider strategic and operational activity of the authority.

The Conwy LDP and supporting vision and objectives has been informed by a hierarchy of documents, including the Council's 'One Conwy' Community Strategy, Corporate Plan and Service Plans. The LDP themes and direction look to contribute positively to the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan outcomes.

The Council are now progressing greater integration between the production of the Wellbeing Plan, LDP Review and Place Plans.

Existing and previous major influences on land use (e.g. heavy industrial, agricultural, energy, transport).

Previous land use pressures have predominantly focussed on housing, general industry, agriculture, retailing and tourism. Whilst the picture looking forward is looking similar, the demand in the economic sectors is changing more so towards higher value office space to meet public service and high tech industries. Land allocated in the current Plan focuses predominantly on the economic, housing, tourism and renewable energy sectors, with new arising need being identified for retailing, smaller general industry units and lands to meet the needs of gypsy and travellers.

In line with the key spatial strategy components of the LDP, development and growth is promoted through the Urban Development Strategy Area (UDSA) which directs approximately 85% of new development to either within or adjacent to existing urban settlements on green and brownfield land along the coastal belt and the inland market town of Llanrwst. These locations are accessible to key facilities and services, are closely linked to employment areas and are supported by a strategic road and rail network. They form the predominant population areas in need of Affordable

Housing for Local Need (AHLN), and they fully utilise the Wales Spatial Plan strategic hub of Conwy, Llandudno, Llandudno Junction and Colwyn Bay.

However, land capacity in such sustainable locations is likely to be a constraint in formulating and reviewing LDPs in the future. The County is constrained by high flood risk levels along the northern coastal corridor, particularly to the east of the County, and topography and landscape quality to the south.

The Plan Area benefits from attractive rural and coastal attributes which support a thriving tourism industry and provide a valuable leisure and recreation resource for residents. Policies within the LDP aim to protect and enhance the character of the countryside, landscape, built environment and the rich biodiversity and geological assets.

The Plan Area contains diverse, high quality landscapes and areas of visual quality from the open moor land of Hiraethog to locally significant spaces around towns and villages. The western boundary of the Plan Area adjoins the Snowdonia National Park. There are two Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and seven Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which lie partly, or totally, within the Plan Area. SPAs and SACs are of international importance and consequently the European Directives and national policies afford them very high protection. Such sites have been assessed through the Habitats Regulations in preparing the adopted LDP, however, there remains pressure on such landscapes from various development proposals, mainly associated with renewable energy scheme. As such, the LPA has adopted the Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment SPG.

The LDP also seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity on sites of national importance (for example, Sites of Special Scientific Interest). Sites of local importance (such as Local Nature Reserves and Wildlife Sites) are not protected through national policies, but are recognised in the LDP due to their local importance. 'Biodiversity in Planning' SPG has been adopted to assist the policy.

There are 25 Conservation Areas in the Plan Area, with 1436 listed buildings, 24 of which are Grade 1, 70 Grade II* and 1342 Grade II which are vulnerable to development pressure. Through the LDP there is a need for development to take into account the historic built environment, and ensure that design and build quality will help protect, maintain and, where appropriate, improve on this quality in Conwy. As such further SPG documents have been prepared, including 'Buildings and Structures of Local Importance' SPG, Conservation Areas SPG, Enabling Development SPG and Conservation Area Management Plan SPGs for both the towns of Conwy and Llandudno with other drafts being prepared.

The Plan Area covers an area of 1,130 sq. km. with an estimated resident population of approximately 111,700 people. The urbanised settlements of the Plan Area, predominantly along the narrow coastal belt, houses around 85% of the overall population, with the remaining 15% falling within rural settlements. Around 4% of the population of Conwy CBC reside in the Snowdonia National Park, which is located outside of the Plan Area. The coastal town of Llandudno represents the largest populated area (20,000 inhabitants), closely followed by Conwy (14,200 inhabitants), Abergele (10,000 inhabitants), Colwyn Bay (9,700 inhabitants) and Towyn & Kinmel Bay (7,800 inhabitants), all of which are served via excellent road and rail transport links and well

established public transport services. The remaining, predominantly inland, rural area contains a number of locally important main villages and hamlets offering key facilities and services.

The LDP was based on population and household data, and population and household projections available at the time of drafting. The LDP assumes a population growth by around 7,850 from the start of the plan period to its end in 2022.

Population and household projections for the LDP were based upon the methodology adopted by WG for 2008-based local area projections of population and household numbers, and used the same official data sources as the WG projections. The projections produced for the LDP varied from the official 2008-based WG projections in using a longer historical population trend from 2009. Having had regard to all these factors, the LDP promotes a sustainable level of growth consisting of between approximately:

- 6,520 new housing units with a 10% contingency level of up to 7,170 new housing units to reflect natural population change, household size change and net in migration
- 2,350 new jobs with a contingency level up to 2,585 new jobs to reflect natural population change, household size change and net in-migration.
- 1,800 jobs with a contingency level up to 1,980 new jobs to contribute to reducing out-commuting levels.
- 1,875 new affordable housing units (1,000 from new build).

In September 2016, the WG released a new set of 2014 based population projections for Wales. Household projections are also due in early 2017. The projections, which the WG has stressed should not be used in isolation, indicate a fall in the number of new dwellings required per annum from previous projections. This is the case for all majority of Welsh authorities. This has stemmed, to a certain extent, from a change in household formation in addition to reduced population projections. This will need to be given further consideration and form part of the evidence base used to inform the LDP review process.

With regards to the new figures, they are very different to 2008 based projections that informed the currently adopted LDP, and this has caused some concern.

It is the nature of projections that they only take what has happened in the past and see what would happen if those trends continue. And if the period from which the trend is measured is anomalous, it may not give the full picture. They present only one possible picture of the future – and we can even influence that future by our own decisions. Approval for the development of employment land could attract workers and their families to the area, for example.

We must also bear in mind that the detailed and complex strategies laid out in the LDP were based on a wide range of impact assessments, consultations, research studies, statistical data analyses and policy priorities, of which the household projections form only a part. A shift to the new 2014-

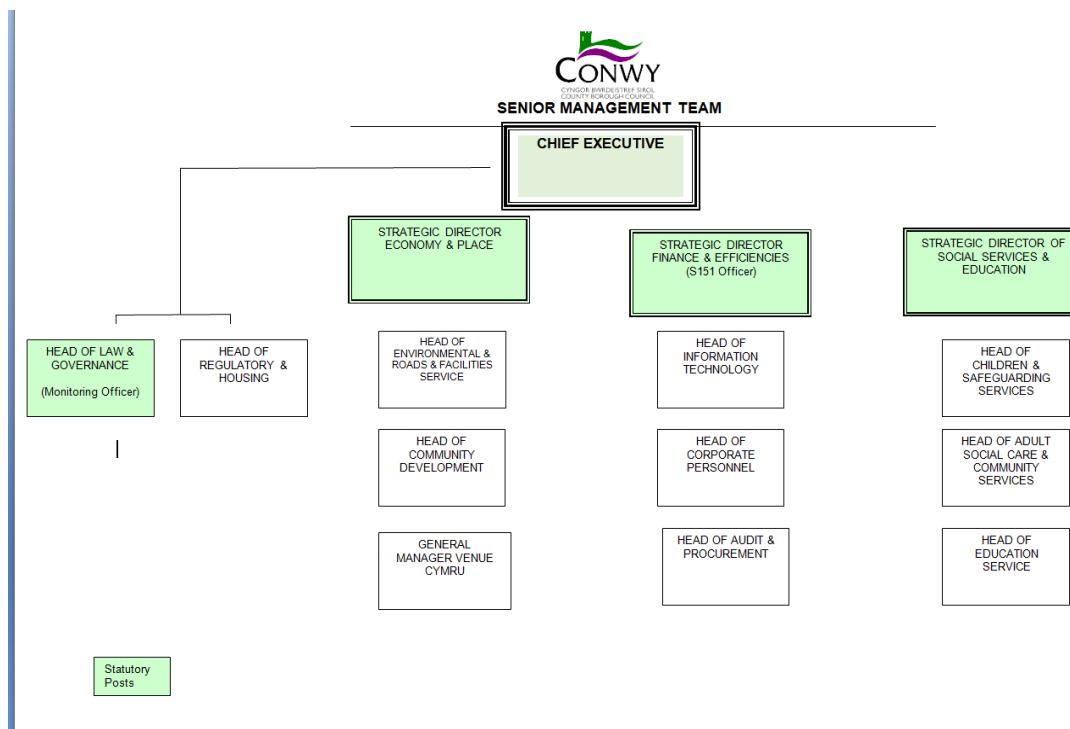
based projections for dwelling requirements would require a recalibration of many other targets and policies within the larger Plan.

Clearly, there is a need to consider the new 2014 based projections as part of the evidence base in reviewing the LDP.

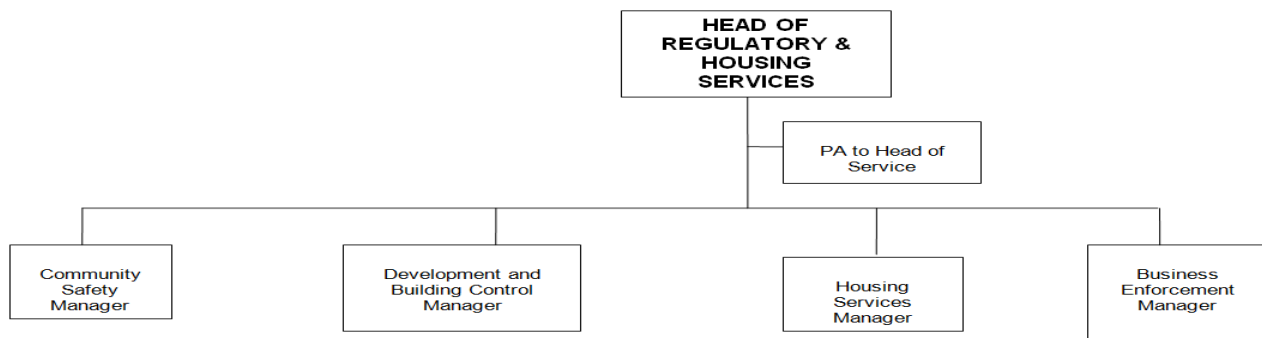
PLANNING SERVICE

The Planning Service is divided into two areas, Development Management and Strategic Planning Policy Services, each are managed by a different Head of Service.

Conwy's Management Structure



Regulatory and Housing Structure



Development and Building Control

The Development and Building Control section comprises of Development Management, Planning Enforcement, Conservation, Tree protection, Building Control and Local Land Charges. This section sits within Regulatory and Housing Services and the Head of Service reports directly to the Chief Executive. The Development Management team are responsible for handling planning applications, planning appeals, breaches of planning control investigations and they also deal with a high volume enquiries which relates to pre-application and permitted development enquiries.

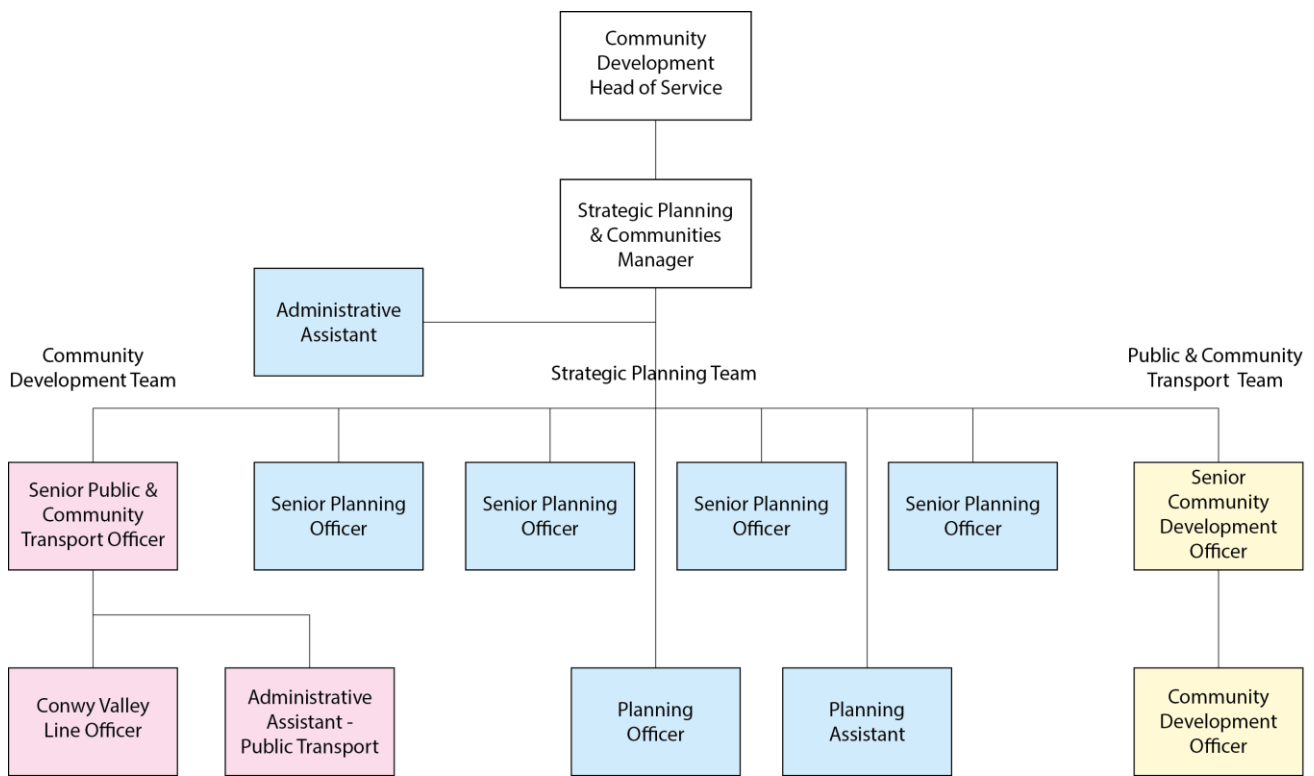
As well as planning functions (excluding planning policy) the Development and Building Control Manager is responsible for managing 31 staff including Building Control and Local Land Charges, with administration and support staff reporting directly to the Development and Building Control Manager.

Development Management (DM) currently has a budget for 2 Principal Officers in Development Management. This is split into area teams (East and West) and within each team there is a Senior Officer, and 2 Planning Officers. There is also a part time Senior Officer who deals with applications in both teams and workload is generated based on demand in each team. There are also 2 administrative support posts (who also deal with Conservation), 2 technical/registration officer posts and 1 Modern Apprentice.

The Planning Enforcement Team consists of a Principal Officer, one Senior Enforcement Officer and 2 part time Enforcement Officers. The Principal Officer also line manages the Conservation Officer, Tree Officer and 1 part time admin support officer.

At times due to work load demands both Planning Enforcement and Development Management share workload and duties where appropriate, to ensure that the service remains efficient and flexible.

Strategic Planning and Communities Structure



Strategic Planning Policy Services

Strategic Planning Policy Services (SPPS) are not currently co-located in the same building/town as the Development and Building Control Section, although there are future plans to locate both services in the same building. The SPPS consists currently of 12 staff members – 1 x SPP Manager, 4 x Senior SPP Officers, 1 x SPP Officer, 1 and 1 x SPP Administrative Assistant. The Service has increased to 12 staff members following the arrival of 1 x Principal Community Development Officer, 1 x Rural Community Development Officer, 1 x Community Transport Officer, 1 x Community Rail Officer and 1 x Community Transport Administrative Assistant.

SPPS provides a Strategic Planning Policy support within Community Development Services, which is managed by the Head of Community Development Service, who reports directly to the Strategic Director for Economy and Place. The section have recently undergone a re-structure and this now includes the Community Development and Community Transport functions. This structure helps with the formulation of place plans as we review the LDP.

Links with other Council projects

There are a number of wider corporate priorities that impact upon the planning service which the Planning Service is involved with and this includes:

Service improvement

The authority strives for continuous improvement and each Service has to report and participate in mid year and yearly performance reviews.

Estate Management

In response to budget pressures, and a wider desire to use our assets responsibly, the Council is undergoing a process of reviewing its estates portfolio and looking at ways to operate more efficiently and improve service for customers, such as consolidating staff services onto fewer sites. The planning service plays a key role in enabling best use of/return from those assets.

As part of this exercise both Development Management and Strategic Planning Policy have been involved in discussions regarding the development of new office accommodation in the centre of Colwyn Bay could potentially result in decommissioning up to thirteen existing offices and reduce the Council's footprint by 30%.

Strategic Sites Development Team

The Strategic Sites Development Team has been set up to look at key sites within the County. The Development Team consists of a range of key officers within the authority and on occasion these meetings are attended by Welsh Government officials. The aim of the group is to develop an action plan and provide advice to assist in the deliverability of key sites coming forward.

Modernisation Programme

There are changes being implemented to the way Conwy operates by rolling out "Conwy workwise". The Corporate plan objective is *"We will endeavour to improve service and meet our saving targets by modernising the way we work and reviewing where we work from (office accommodation)."* Various changes are being implemented and this also includes a modernised website and a shift in developing more electronic systems to provide a more efficient and effective service.

Development Team

For complex or major applications the service provides a facility for pre-applications enquiries to be considered as part of a round table meeting with key consultees. This has helped build positive relationships with everyone involved in the process and helps all parties to understand each other's objectives and priorities.

Development viability advice service

In addition to the pre-application service, this facility is in place to discuss the viability of a proposed development scheme and provide developers with a formal response detailing the level of planning obligations that would be required to support a planning application as per the Council's adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Guidance (e.g. Affordable Housing, Open Space, Education, etc.). The Strategic Planning Policy Service use a recognised Development

Viability Appraisal Toolkit to assess a schemes viability having considered various costs and revenue. It is not mandatory for developers to use the service. However, the service will create greater certainty for developers in progressing schemes and planning applications.

Budgets

The chart below provides information over a 5 year period income which has increased particularly in the last year. All the budgets predominantly relate to staff costs. This can be linked in part to the adoption of the LDP and submission of major applications. In addition the fee increase in 2015/16 and new application types is also attributable.

Planning Application Fees – Income against Budget						
Operating budget	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Budgeted income	574,340	599,340	578,990	658,900	676,965	692,490
Actual income	475,000	475,000	420,000	420,000	420,000	588,000
	381,914	451,088	417,813	483,725	449,410	463,319

Land Charges Fees – Income against Budget						
Operating budget	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Budgeted income	139,790	139,790	158,540	161,850	153,630	177,680
Actual income	142,250	142,250	154,000	154,000	153,630	177,680
	163,169	160,623	145,129	189,144	194,673	194,549

Building Control fees – Income against Budget						
Operating budget	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Budgeted income	338,580	315,460	306,700	302,440	301,380	339,710
Actual income	240,000	229,260	216,740	212,530	235,330	265,040
	220,722	179,687	226,654	245,500	227,737	242,199

Planning Policy						
Operating budget	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
	256,000	256,000	528,660	264,000	272,320	319,000

The Planning Policy Service budget is predominantly staff related and as such staffing is under pressure as we are required to find savings year on year. A new 2016 Business Case is currently being considered by the LPA to undertake the review of the LDP. As the Service now included Public and Community Transport and Community Development, there are new pressures arising to cut public transport services (e.g. bus contracts) in making savings required for the Council.

Budget reductions and the prospect of change means that many Services across the Council are currently re-organising, transforming and losing posts. The Chief Executive has recently conducted a review of senior management arrangements within the Council; prompted by the need to identify savings in the current financial climate and also to ensure that management

arrangements remain fit for purpose. Further restructures are likely as the authority strives to deal with the financial efficiency savings in an efficient and effective manner.

Within Regulatory and Housing Services there has been a great deal of change within this Service and a restructure has recently taken place which has resulted in a number of posts at varying levels being made redundant. Within Development and Building Control a number of key officers who have left or retired in recent years have not been replaced. A number of administrative and support posts have also been lost. In other sections such as Planning Enforcement and Development Management some officers have reduced the hours that they work by up to 50%.

There is a constant need to ensure that the service remains fit for purpose but equally, in the current difficult financial climate, there is a need to make efficiency savings. Collaborative working is being developed with Minerals and Waste planning applications and policy advice being provided by the North Wales Minerals and Waste Service operated by Flintshire CC. North Wales Planning Officers Group has also identified areas where collaborate working can be developed and scoping exercises and discussions are taken place around Natural Environment in-conjunction with Natural Resources Wales and Built Heritage functions, with input from Cadw.

The Strategic Planning Policy Service underwent a Peer Review in 2012 involving the Welsh Local Government Agency, Welsh Government and experienced Peers. The review resulted in a number of recommendations for the Service, including better ways of working, efficiencies and LDP progression. The Service has since been subject to a review and restructure, resulting in efficiency savings overall, but a more focussed Service in delivering an up-to-date Planning Policy Framework for Conwy. The new proposals to bring in Community Development Officers will further strengthen the team and assist greatly in delivering planning reform.

Staff resources

Staff resources have significantly depleted in areas such as Planning Enforcement, Conservation and Administration, although there has been relatively little change in Development Management. Within the reporting period the service offered by Planning Enforcement has been affected and the team are only able to deal with customer driven complaints, with little or no proactive work being carried out which can effect customer's expectations. Over the last year there has been particular strain on the Planning Enforcement Service due to long term sickness of officers within the team. Maintaining the level of public and customer expectations is challenging but staff have adapted to the changes and demands upon them by being more flexible in their approach

Other key posts such as the Senior Landscape Officer post has not been replaced but there is a risk to the authority of not having this post on the structure and collaborative options for Landscape advice are being explored. In 15/16 the Planning Enforcement generated £28,734 income arising from the submission of retrospective applications.

Staff development and training is a corporate priority and training needs and development is being dealt with through the PDR process. There are a range of Corporate training courses being provided but Planning Officers are being encouraged to look at free training opportunities provided by the RTPI to ensure that they manage to the necessary CPD to maintain their essential professional accreditation. Planning Committee members also receive regular training updates.

Funding the LDP review to adoption is a significant cost and has required a business case to support. As set out in the Council's 2015 and 2016 Annual Monitoring Report and as advised by Welsh Government, the increased planning application fees should be accompanied by improved planning services, including ensuring LDP adoptions and reviews. However, as a result of WG changes there has been a significant increase in procedures and new application types such as the discharge of condition applications, living decision notices, etc. and as a result the Council have had to adopt to new procedures for dealing with these changes and this has increased their workload, which has put a strain on the team particularly the "front end" - administrative process. It is therefore too early to say if the increase can be put towards the LDP review costs. This will need reviewing as we progress.

YOUR LOCAL STORY

Subject to starting the review of the LDP, work continues within the SPPS in ensuring an up-to-date Planning Policy framework for Conwy. A programme management structure has been put in place to deliver the Service and its work areas. The LDP Programme Board acts as the overarching management board, which is chaired by the Council's Corporate Director for Economy and Place. In anticipation of the Review, an LDP Task and Finish Group and Sub Groups are being formulated to oversee the review process.

A programme of work for preparing supplementary planning guidance documents and site development briefs is in place, with various subject areas having been adopted since the introduction of the LDP (refer to www.conwy.gov.uk/ldp). In anticipation of the review and to inform the AMR, the team are continually working on updating evidence base and monitoring (e.g. employment land review, retail study, JHLAS, open space assessment, community facilities assessment, housing mix assessment, etc).

The SPPS have now progressed the Community Infrastructure Levy via the political process, with adoption planned for mid 2017. To date this has involved the gathering of evidence and preparation of an Infrastructure 123 List and viability Assessment. The Service is working with Denbighshire County Council Policy Service to align work areas, undertake joint Examination in Publics and make efficiency savings.

Following a successful Welsh Government grant application, SPPS are also project managing the procurement and site delivery for a new gypsy and traveller residential site in Conwy. This has involved working in partnership with Cartrefi Conwy and the Gypsy and Traveller Residents Association. The construction has now finished and the gypsy and traveller community is living on site.

The Service continues to also undertake the general work areas, including responses to planning applications, consultations, enquires, attending meetings and committees, but also is now starting to work at a greater community level having considered the implications of the Planning Act 2015. The Service are currently leading on the preparation of the Abergele Placemaking Plan, with the objective of rolling out the approach to other settlements within the County Borough. We are

working closely with Planning Aid Wales and Welsh Government with regards to Place Plans and the approach.

Annual Monitoring Report

The Conwy LDP was adopted in October 2013. The statutory review period is October 2017. However, as a result of the 2016 AMR (attached) an early review of the LDP is proposed, mainly as a result of a declining 5 year housing land supply situation from 4.0 years in 2015 to 3.7 years in 2016. The review is subject to a formal Review Report and Welsh Government approval. The Council has established a Task and Finish Group and Sub Groups in preparation of the review.

Other key issues relate to a lack of affordable housing and employment delivery in line with strategy. However, having considered various factors, including significant contextual changes from a national, regional and local level, together with the LDP policy monitoring analysis, the 2016 AMR triggers a review.

Workload

The table below shows that planning applications over the last 3 years:

Year	No. of Applications Received
Apr 2013 to Mar 2014	846
Apr 2014 to Mar 2015	882
Apr 2015 to Mar 2016	900

Generally applications levels haven't changed significantly although there has been an increase in applications recorded recently. Caseloads for a DM planning officer are roughly in the region of 40 applications at any given time. The Senior Officers deal with approximately 25 applications and around 10 applications for a principal officer but this is dependent on complexity and other service demands. This is in addition to providing pre application and permitted development advice, defending appeals and covering a duty officer service on a rota basis.

Case loads for the Enforcement Team are not comparable as the Enforcement Officers tend to have a higher caseload. This is because some enforcement cases can be closed following an initial assessment or visit site visit if no breach is found. However other cases can take far longer to deal with if they are complex or an enforcement notice is served and an appeal lodged, and/or if the matter needs to be referred to the Court etc.

Administrative/support staffing levels have decreased significantly in the last 2-3 years, professional staffing levels within Development Management has also decreased with more staff working part-time. Whilst the authority is able to provide a good service, there are strains on resources at the "front end" of the process and at times of leave or sickness this does put a significant strain on the Service to meet determination deadlines.

Due to efficiency savings/cuts specialist positions have been lost in Landscape and Conservation. The North Wales Planning Officers Group are looking at regional collaboration for both Natural and Built heritage. Whilst this is an early stages, this is seen as positive way forward

Planning Policy workloads continue to concentrate on site development briefs, evidence monitoring and preparation, Community Infrastructure Levy, developer negotiations, site development viability appraisals, supplementary planning guidance and early work related to the LDP review.

We have introduced charging for pre-application advice and we are working towards charging for Tree and Conservation Officer advice will also be implemented shortly. A Section 106 monitoring group has been set up to ensure that any monies required by Planning agreements are received on time. A Section 106 Protocol has also been adopted to ensure monies received benefit local communities. The 106 Monitoring Group comprises key stakeholders to ensure that the money is used in priority areas. In due course their role will encompass CIL. Additionally, the Policy Service promote a Viability Appraisal Service, which is proving every worthwhile in ensuring deliverable developments and planning obligation negotiations.

Currently Conwy has a housing land supply of 3.7 years and it is unlikely that there will be a 5 year supply until the LDP is reviewed which is likely to take a few years to go through the review and adoption process. This places significant pressure on the authority to deal with speculative type major applications on unallocated sites outside the settlement boundary.

The Planning Policy Service will be preparing a statutory Delivery Agreement for the review process, which will take into account resource implications (staffing and financial). A reduction in staffing to deliver the review and overall Service will place significant risk and pressure on the Service to plan for our statutory requirements under the new Planning Act 2015, there is an additional requirement to prepare Place Plans throughout the County Borough, which involves significant community engagement. This is likely to place pressure on the community development and planning officers as we go through the review process.

Since July 2013 all Planning Applications and representations submitted in connection with these applications are available to view on our website. This provides a more transparent service to the Public. It also allows applicants, members of the public and consultees etc to be able to access the information quickly and to comment on any new information that comes forward. It has reduced demand on Planning Officers to respond to update requests from the public and agents.

In March 2016, Welsh Government has introduced a Statutory pre-application process, this works well, in addition with major or complex applications we have operated, for a number of years, a development team approach which enables key stakeholders in the planning process an opportunity for early engagement with the developer.

The authority has also recently introduced a Local Validation List for major applications. This will come into effect on 1st January 2017. This will front load the planning application process and ensure that all the correct documentation and supporting information is submitted at an early stage in the planning process and inform applicants as to what is expected with certain types of application to help avoid refusals and speed up the application process by avoiding unnecessary delays. Having all the information at an early stage will cut down the need to defer the application as it waits for applicants and agents to prepare outstanding information.

The “development team approach” has been in operation for a number of years and is advocated in the LDP as an approach that is carried out at Conwy. This approach works well with good customer feedback. Co-ordinated input from key stakeholders is crucial to an effective planning process.

As well as moving forward with pre-application advice charging, agents forums will be arranged in the near future to discuss key concerns about the Planning process with agents.

A review of the LDP will commence shortly and work continues within the SPPS in ensuring an up-to-date Planning Policy framework for Conwy. A programme management structure has been put in place to deliver the Service and its work areas. The LDP Programme Board acts as the overarching management board, which is chaired by the Council’s Corporate Director for Economy and Place.

A programme of work for preparing supplementary planning guidance documents and site development briefs is in place, with various subject areas having been adopted since the introduction of the LDP (refer to <http://www.conwy.gov.uk/ldp>). In anticipation of the review and to inform the AMR, the team are continually working on updating evidence base and monitoring (e.g. employment land review, retail study, JHLAS, open space assessment, community facilities assessment, housing mix assessment, etc).

The SPPS are progressing the Community Infrastructure Levy via the political process and will be seeking to adopt the CIL by mid 2017. To date this has involved the gathering of evidence and preparation of an Infrastructure 123 List and viability Assessment. The Service is working with Denbighshire County Council Policy Service to align work areas, undertake joint Examination in Publics and make efficiency savings.

Following a successful Welsh Government grant application, The SPPS are also project managing the procurement and site delivery for a new gypsy and traveller residential site in Conwy. This has involved working in partnership with Cartrefi Conwy and the Gypsy and Traveller Residents Association. The construction period has now completed and the families are living on site.

In assisting the delivery of the LDP growth strategy, the Service have also established an LDP Site Project Team, where developer pre-application meetings are encouraged. In addition, a new charging schedule for undertaking Development Viability Appraisals has been introduced, providing developers with the opportunity to discuss viability issues early in the process, which in turn has proved successful in providing developers with certainty in progressing applications. Further guidance is currently being rolled by the Service to encourage delivery of the growth strategy, including a Site Allocations Prospectus, Speculative Development Guidance Note, Employment Land Delivery Protocol and a web-based Submit a Site Form.

The Service continues to also undertake the general work areas, including responses to planning applications, consultations, enquires, attending meetings and committees, but also is now starting to work at a greater community level having considered the implications of the Planning Act 2015. The Service are currently leading on the preparation of the Abergele Placemaking Plan, with the objective of rolling out the approach to other settlements within the County Borough. We are

working closely with Planning Aid Wales and Welsh Government with regards to Place Plans and the approach.

Local Pressures

Following the adoption of TAN1 methodology to calculate land supply on the residual method only (rather than completions method, as previously) Conwy has found itself with a land supply of 3.7 years, which is below the required 5 years. As a result speculative applications have been submitted.

In response Conwy has prepared various supplementary planning guidance documents and development briefs to provide greater certainty to developers. Furthermore, a specific Speculative Development Guidance Note has been prepared which promotes a proactive and supportive approach for developers in bringing forward non-allocated sites in response to a lack of a 5 year supply. Conwy is also undertaking housing market testing of the area and has prepared development sites prospectuses to promote the sites allocated in the LDP.

Service improvement.

Although Conwy performs well, there is room for improvement particularly around determination periods for Major planning applications. However it needs to be recognised that there is need for quality rather than speed in some instances, and if there is room for negotiation to improve an application there is seen as good practice and is supported by applicants and developers.

There has been an improvement in some areas since last year and it is envisaged that the changes to the planning system as part of the Planning Act such as the Pre-Application Consultation and with the introduction of the authority's Local Validation List it is considered that this will improve the efficiency and speed of the planning application process.

In addition, all major applications are determined by Planning Committee and report writing deadlines and a monthly committee cycle can all add to the delays in determining applications. There is a need for continued member training and awareness of the pressures facing on the planning system.

Conwy does perform well in areas but in particular it is not that there is up to date LDP, Conwy performs well with defending appeal. There is also a process for speaking at Planning Committee and there is a duty officer available during working hours to deal with enquiries.

The speed and quality of some types of consultation responses still remains an issue. Although some improvement have been made through improved communication with consultees as well as training them in the use of planning conditions. It was identified in a recent Service Performance Review that this needs to continue to improve the efficiency of the system.

Performance Framework.

On the basis of the performance indicators currently set, the Authority is performing well. Against the national benchmarks, Conwy compares poorly in relation to those indicators that assess the

time and speed taken to determine major applications although in other areas Conwy performs generally well.

A review of Planning Enforcement processes is needed and there is a need to prioritise workloads around dealing with proactive work which may add more value to the Planning system. However this is not a reflection on performance as the indicators shows that the team performs well.

WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

In 2015-16 we conducted a customer satisfaction survey aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the year.

The survey was sent to 324 people, 12% of whom submitted a whole or partial response. The majority of responses (56%) were from local agents. 28% were from members of the public. 15% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused. Generally Conwy performs well with many of results exceeding the Welsh Average.

We asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the planning service. They were given the following answer options:

- Strongly agree;
- Tend to agree;
- Neither agree not disagree;
- Tend to disagree; and
- Strongly disagree.

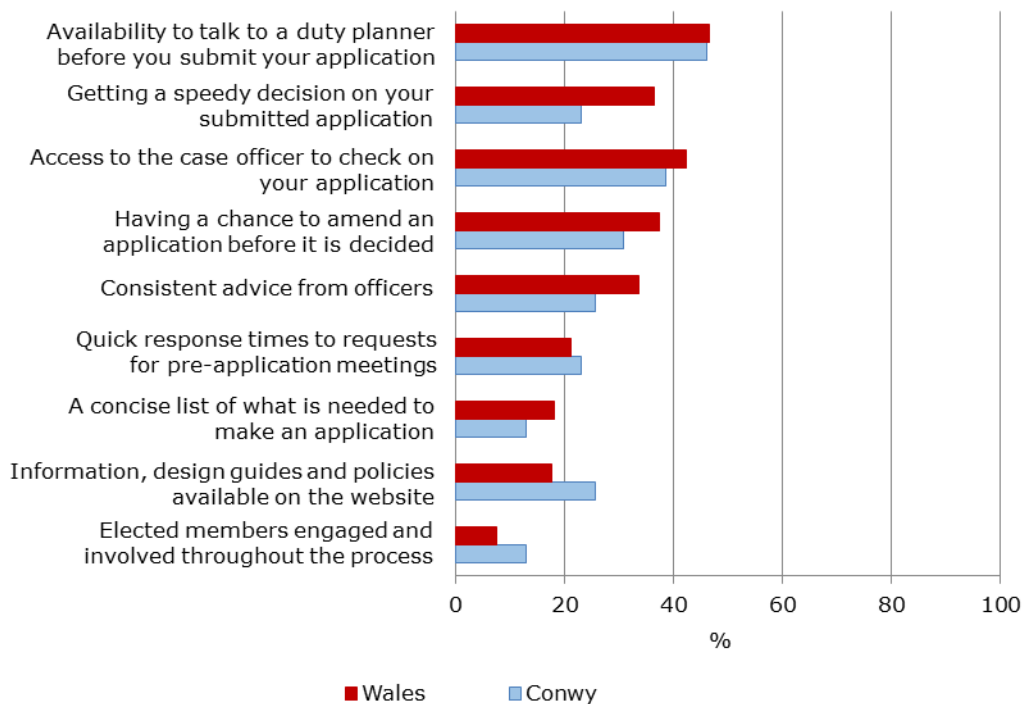
Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents that selected either ‘tend to agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ for each statement for both our planning authority and Wales.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement, 2015-16

	%	
Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	Conwy LPA	Wales
The LPA enforces its planning rules fairly and consistently	53	47
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	48	58
The LPA gives help throughout, including with conditions	52	49
The LPA responded promptly when they had questions	59	58
They were listened to about their application	58	57
They were kept informed about their application	53	49
They were satisfied overall with how the LPA handled their application	68	61

We also asked respondents to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. Figure 1 shows how often each characteristic was selected as a percentage of the total number of selections. For us, 'the availability to talk to a duty planner before submitting an application' was the most popular choice.

Figure 1: Characteristics of a good planning service, Conwy LPA, 2015-16



Comments received include:

- Very efficient and professional service by all the planning team at Conwy CBC
- I found the help I received was excellent and cannot think of anything more that they could have done to improve my experience.
- Clear and quick. Formatting issues with digital submission slowed process though.

OUR PERFORMANCE 2015-16

This section details our performance in 2015-16. It considers both the Planning Performance Framework indicators and other available data to help paint a comprehensive picture of performance. Where appropriate we make comparisons between our performance and the all Wales picture.

Performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:

- Plan making;
- Efficiency;
- Quality;
- Engagement; and
- Enforcement.

Plan making

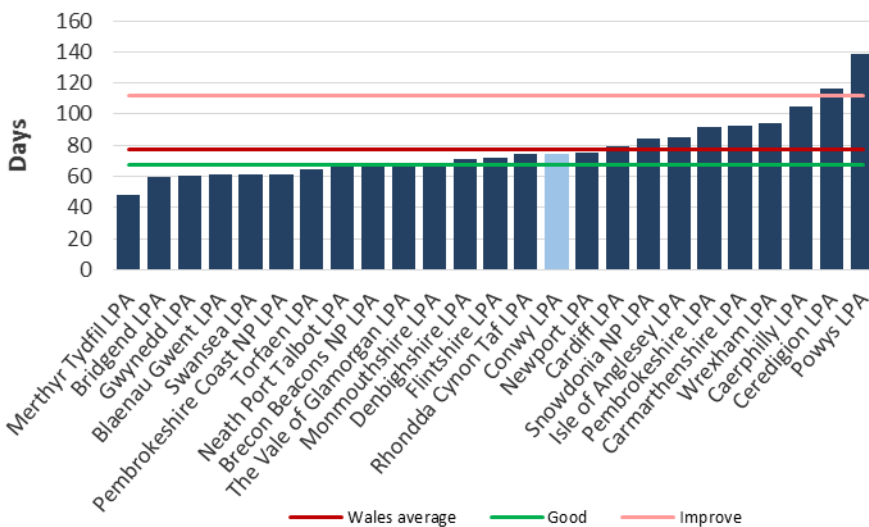
As at 31 March 2016, we were one of 22 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. We are required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report in October 2016. This document has been prepared and is attached.

During the APR period we had 3.7 years of housing land supply identified, making us one of 17 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply.

Efficiency

In 2015-16 we determined 799 planning applications, each taking, on average, 74 days (11 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 77 days (11 weeks) across Wales. Figure 2 shows the average time taken by each LPA to determine an application during the year.

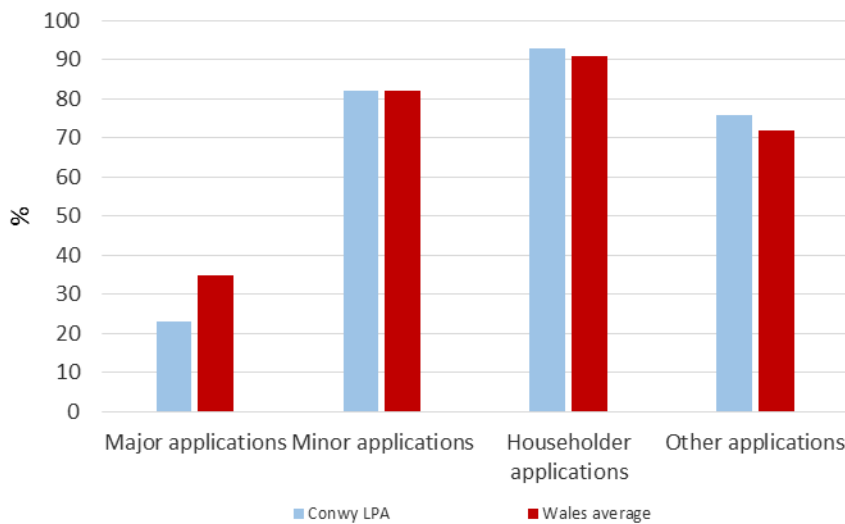
Figure 2: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2015-16



78% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This compared to 77% across Wales, but was below the 80% target. Only 8 out of 25 LPAs met the 80% target.

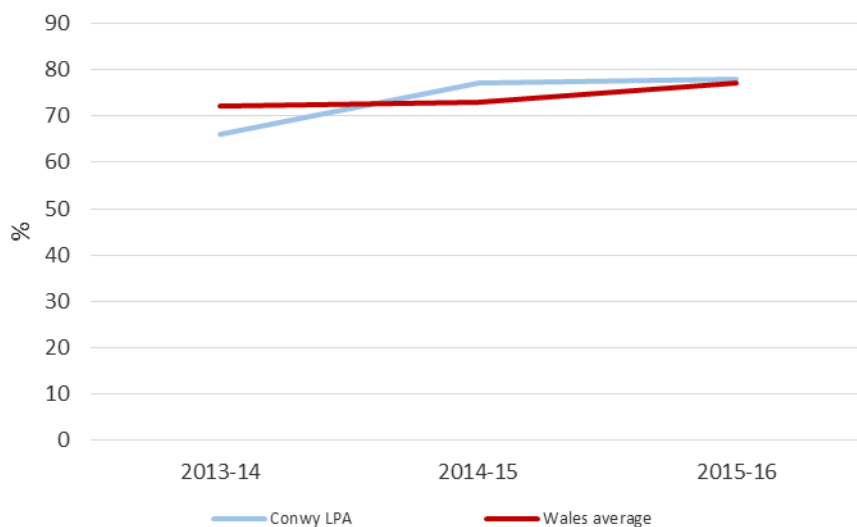
Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 93% of householder applications within the required timescales.

Figure 3: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales, by type, 2015-16



Between 2014-15 and 2015-16, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales increased from 77%. Wales also saw an increase this year.

Figure 4: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales



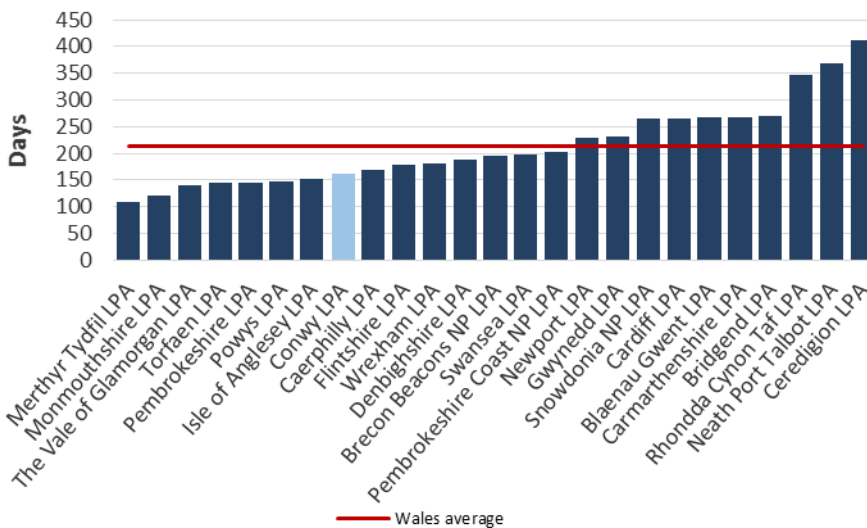
Over the same period:

- The number of applications we received increased;
- The number of applications we determined decreased; and
- The number of applications we approved decreased.

Major applications

We determined 35 major planning applications in 2015-16, 3% (1 application) of which were subject to an EIA. Each application (including those subject to an EIA) took, on average, 161 days (23 weeks) to determine. As Figure 5 shows, this was shorter than the Wales average of 213 days (30 weeks).

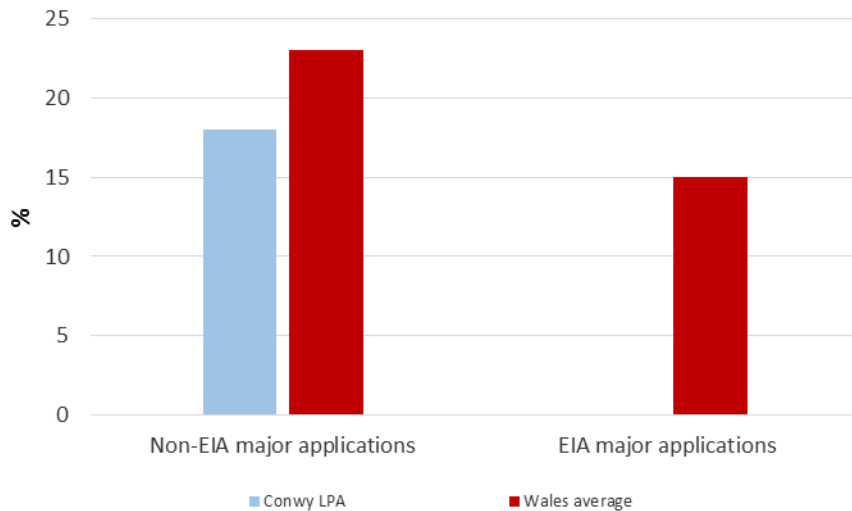
Figure 5: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2015-16



23% of these major applications were determined within the required timescales, compared to 35% across Wales.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales by the type of major application. 18% of our ‘standard’ major applications i.e. those not requiring an EIA, were determined within the required timescales during the year.

Figure 6: Percentage of Major applications determined within the required timescales during the year, by type, 2015-16

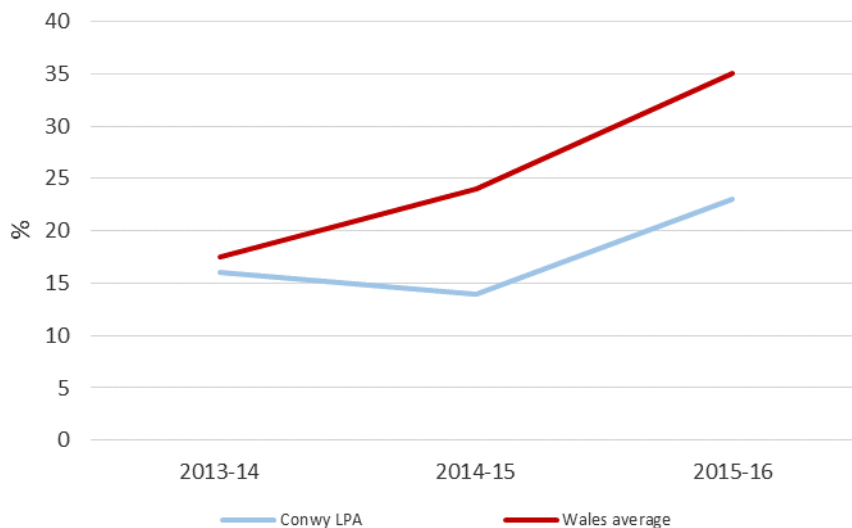


In addition we determined 2 major applications that were subject to a PPA in the required timescales during the year.

Since 2014-15 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had increased from 14%. Similarly, the number of major applications determined increased while the number of applications subject to an EIA determined during the year decreased.

Figure 7 shows the trend in the percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales in recent years and how this compares to Wales.

Figure 7: Percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales



Over the same period:

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales stayed the same at 82%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 95% to 93%; and

- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales increased from 68% to 76%.

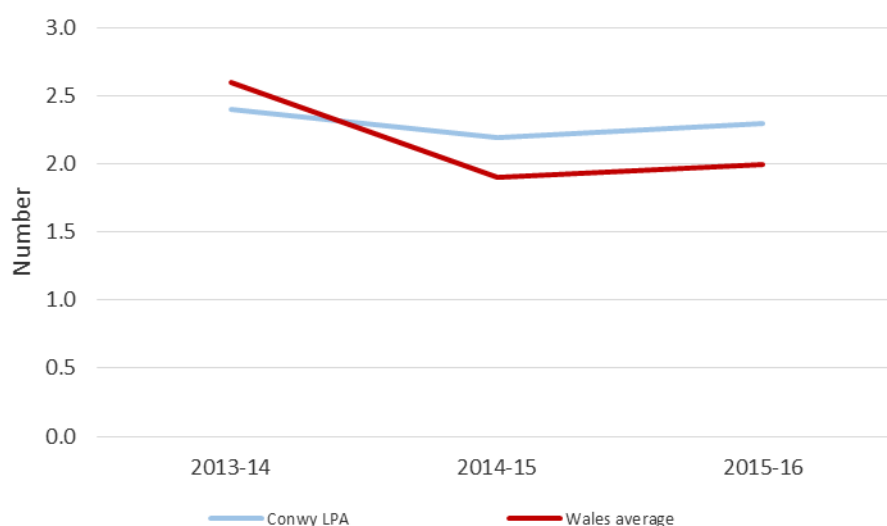
Quality

In 2015-16, our Planning Committee made 57 planning application decisions during the year, which equated to 7% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales 7% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee.

5% of these member-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 9% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 0.4% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.6% across Wales.

In 2015-16 we received 20 appeals against our planning decisions, which equated to 2.3 appeals for every 100 applications received. Across Wales 2 appeals were received for every 100 applications. Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2014-15 and how this compares to Wales.

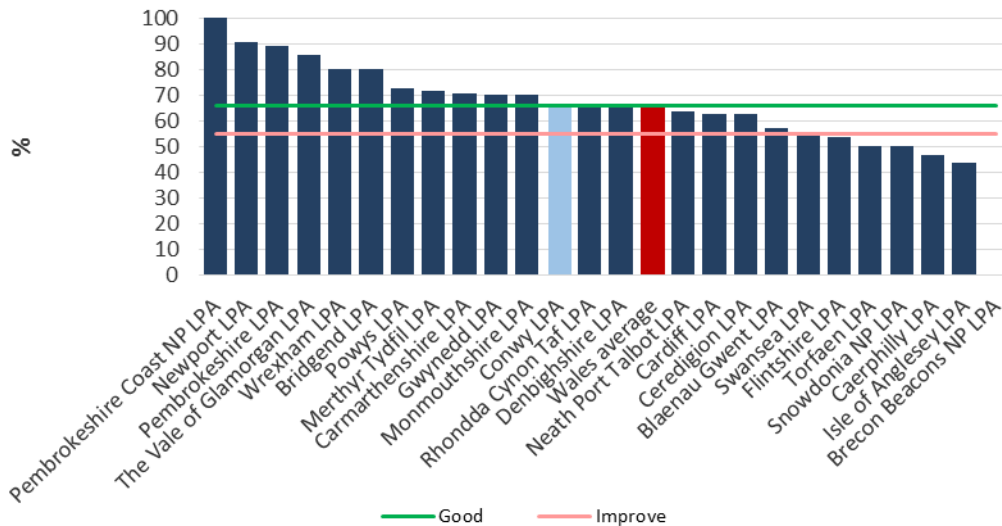
Figure 8: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications



Over the same period the percentage of planning applications approved stayed the same at 92%.

Of the 15 appeals that were decided during the year, 67% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was higher than the percentage of appeals dismissed across Wales as a whole and we were one of 14 LPAs that reached the 66% target.

Figure 9: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2015-16



During 2015-16 we had no applications for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld.

Engagement

We are:

- one of 24 LPA's that allowed members of the public to address the Planning Committee; and
- one of 20 LPA's that had an online register of planning applications.

As Table 2 shows, 48% of respondents to our 2015-16 customer satisfaction survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application.

Table 2: Feedback from our 2015-16 customer satisfaction survey

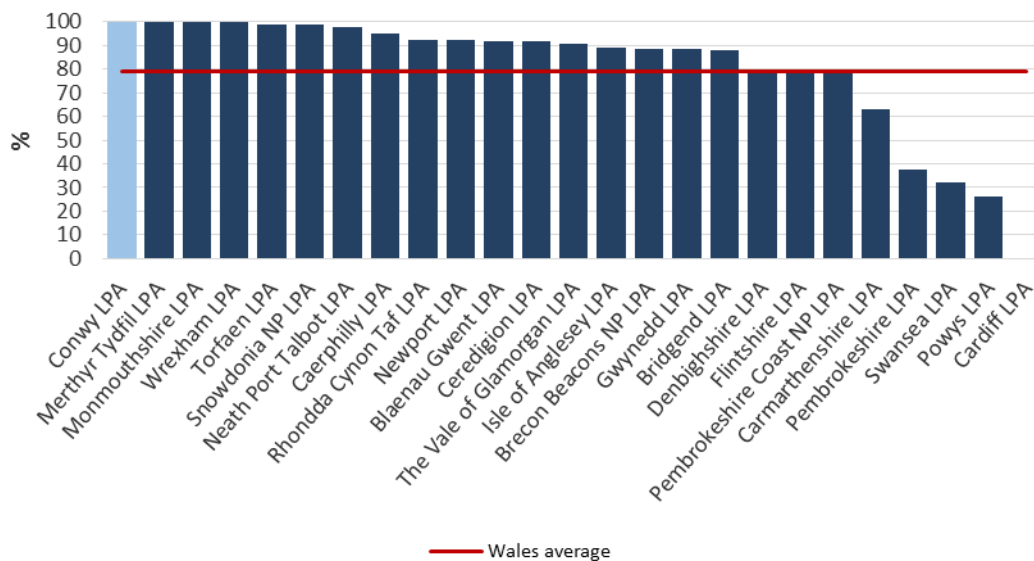
	%	
Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	Conwy LPA	Wales
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	48	58
They were listened to about their application	58	57

Enforcement

In 2015-16 we investigated 58 enforcement cases, which equated to 0.5 per 1,000 population. This was the third lowest rate in Wales. We took, on average, 13 days to investigate each enforcement case.

We investigated 100% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 79% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 10 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPA's.

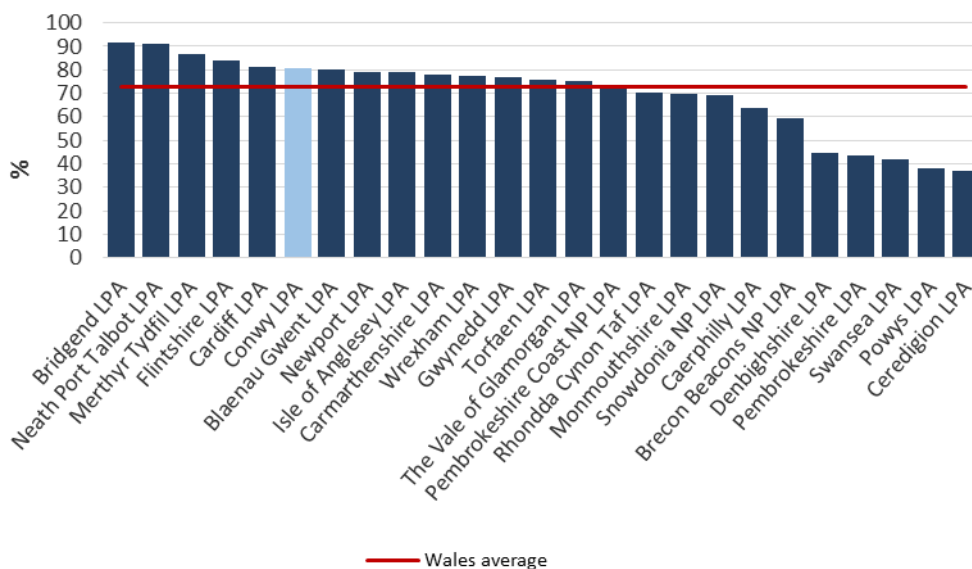
Figure 10: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2015-16



Over the same period, we resolved 63 enforcement cases, taking, on average, 194 days to resolve each case.

81% of this enforcement action was taken within 180 days from the start of the case. As Figure 11 shows this compared to 73% of enforcement cases resolved within 180 days across Wales.

Figure 11: Percentage of enforcement cases resolved in 180 days, 2015-16



ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5		<5
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	60.1-79.9	<60
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	<67	67-111	112+
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	<5	4.9-8.9	9+
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55.1-65.9	<55
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No

WALES AVERAGE	Conwy LPA LAST YEAR	Conwy LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
47	N/A	N/A
Yes	N/A	Yes
4	5	4
35	14	23
213	378	161
77	77	78
77	82	74
9	8	5
67	83	67
0	0	0
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	-	Yes

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content)?	Yes	Partial	No
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application granted within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)?	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to take enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set

WALES AVERAGE	Conwy LPA LAST YEAR	Conwy LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
79	86	100
88	No Data	13
73	No Data	81
210	No Data	194

SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

Indicator	01. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
A development plan (LDP or UDP) is in place and within the plan period	N/A	No development plan is in place (including where the plan has expired)
Authority’s performance	Yes	
Conwy currently has an adopted LDP.		

Indicator	02. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
The LDP is being progressed within 12 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed within between 12 and 18 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed more than 18 months later than the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement
Authority’s performance	N/A	
Not applicable. LDP adopted.		

Indicator	03. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	
“Good”		“Improvement needed”
An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared
Authority’s performance	Yes	
<p>The first LDP Annual Monitoring Report was submitted on 31st October 2015. The 2016 Report is attached.</p> <p>The 2016 AMR identifies areas where triggers have been met and as such recommends a formal review.</p>		

Indicator	04. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	
“Good”		“Improvement needed”

The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5 years		The authority has a housing land supply of less than 5 years
Authority's performance	4	
<p>The lack of a 5 year housing land supply as identified in the 2016 JHLAS has triggered a proposed review of the LDP. In the meantime, the LPA has taken a positive and proactive approach to ensuring that mechanisms are put in place to contribute to the shortfall.</p> <p>The LPA has prepared various supplementary planning guidance documents and development briefs to provide greater certainty to developers. Furthermore, a Speculative Development Guidance Note has been prepared which promotes a proactive and supportive approach for developers in bringing forward non-allocated sites in response to a lack of a 5 year supply. The LPA is also undertaking housing market testing of the area and has prepared development sites prospectuses to promote the sites allocated in the LDP.</p> <p>Whilst a significant amount is being put forward by the LPA to encourage housing development, the level and capacity of the local house builders is clearly insufficient to deliver the required housing level. Greater incentive is required in the sector to encourage the larger house builders to return to the area, of which the documents highlighted above will assist.</p>		

SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

Indicator	05. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked
Authority's performance	23%	
<p>We determined a total of 35 major applications, since last year our performance has increased from 14%. This is due to a number of factors which include committee report writing deadlines, the determination period is set at 8 weeks and when dealing with complex applications that have not been through the pre-application enquiry process this can take longer to deal with, if issues arise during consultation process.</p>		

Indicator	06. Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked
Authority's performance	161	
<p>The authority takes on average, 161 days (23 weeks) to determine applications, this is far shorter</p>		

than the Wales average of 213 days (30 weeks).

Indicator	07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 60% and 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period
Authority's performance	78	
Performance has increased from last year by 14% and Conwy currently sits just above the Welsh average. With only a limited number of authorities achieving more than 80%.		

Indicator	08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 67 days	Between 67 and 111 days	112 days or more
Authority's performance	74	
The average time taken to determine has dropped slightly since last year but this is still better than the Welsh average of 77 days. However, Conwy considers that speed does not always equal quality and recognises that at times it is better to negotiate on an application to achieve a better outcome/design and this can sometime take longer to achieve.		

SECTION 3 - QUALITY

Indicator	09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 5% of decisions	Between 5% and 9% of decisions	9% or more of decisions
Authority's performance	5	
57 applications were determined by Planning Committee with 5% of decisions being made contrary to officer advice. This compared to 9% across Wales. Members continue to receive regular training and updates to ensure that they have the relevant skills and knowledge to determine applications.		

Indicator	10. Percentage of appeals dismissed	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"

More than 66% (two thirds) of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Between 55% and 66% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Less than 55% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal
Authority's performance	67	
The authority still maintains a good level of service at defending appeals		

Indicator	11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
The authority has not had costs awarded against it at appeal	The authority has had costs awarded against it in one appeal case	The authority has had costs awarded against it in two or more appeal cases

Authority's performance	0
N/a	

SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT

Indicator	12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

Authority's performance	Yes
The authority has for a number of years allowed members of the public the opportunity to address Planning Committee and has adopted a procedure for speaking at Planning Committee.	

Indicator	13. Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
Members of the public can seek advice from a duty planning officer		There is no duty planning officer available

Authority's performance	Yes
Although the authority does not have a dedicated officer responsible for providing advice, this	

role is shared amongst all the Planning Officers on a rota basis.

Indicator	14. Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access track their progress (and view their content)?	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
All documents are available online	Only the planning application details are available online, and access to other documents must be sought directly	No planning application information is published online

Authority's performance	Yes
Since 2013, the authority has placed all new planning applications and associated correspondence on its website.	

SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT

Indicator	15. Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	100%
This is a new indicator and the authority was only able to partially report on this indicator due to the time taken to change back office systems. However these results shows, even with diminished, staffing levels that the performance has been maintained.	

Indicator	16. Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked
Authority's performance	13	
This is a new indicator and the authority was only able to partially report on this indicator due to the time taken to change back office systems. However these results shows, even with diminished, staffing levels that the performance has been maintained.		

Indicator	17. Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application granted within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked
Authority’s performance	81	
See above comment		

Indicator	18. Average time taken to take enforcement action	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked
Authority’s performance	194	
This is a new indicator and the authority was only able to partially report on this indicator due to the time taken to change back office systems.		

SECTION 6 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

The purpose of the Sustainable Development Indicators is to measure the contribution the planning system makes to sustainable development in Wales.

The Sustainable Development Indicators will be used to measure the progress against national planning sustainability objectives, set out in Planning Policy Wales, and can be used to demonstrate to our stakeholders the role and scope of the planning system in delivering wider objectives. The information will also be useful to local planning authorities to understand more about the outcomes of the planning system and help inform future decisions.

Authority’s returns	
the authority has for some time been able to provide a “full” return	

Indicator	SD1. The floorspace (square metres) granted and refused planning permission for new economic development on allocated employment sites during the year.
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Granted (square metres)

Authority's data	2,464
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Refused (square metres)

Authority's data	0
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Indicator	SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.
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Granted permission (number of applications)	
Authority's data	11

Granted permission (MW energy generation)	
Authority's data	34

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Indicator	SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.
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Market housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	401

Affordable housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	65

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Indicator	SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.
------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that DID NOT meet all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission

Authority's data	6
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that did not meet all TAN 15 tests which were REFUSED permission on flood risk grounds

Authority's data	13
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that MET all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission

Authority's data	98
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Indicator	SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land during the year.
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Previously developed land (hectares)	
Authority's data	15

Greenfield land (hectares)	
Authority's data	45

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Indicator	SD6. The area of public open space (ha) that would be lost and gained as a result of development granted planning permission during the quarter.
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Open space lost (hectares)	
Authority's data	0

Open space gained (hectares)	
Authority's data	0

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Indicator	SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.
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Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)	
Authority's data	1,071,535

Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)	
Authority's data	0

A Section 106 monitoring group has been up to review payments and to ensure that they are being spent in the right areas.