

T: 01495 355001

E: committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk



Our Ref./Ein Cyf.
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.
Contact:/Cysylltwch â:

THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Iau, 8 Mehefin 2023 Dydd Iau, 8 Mehefin 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

PWYLLGOR CRAFFU CYNLLUNIO

A meeting of the Pwyllgor Craffu Cynllunio will be held in O Bell yn Defnyddio Microsoft Teams on Dydd Iau, 15fed Mehefin, 2023 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

Pages

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais am hynny.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn unrhyw ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb.

3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

Derbyn unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau.

4. **MEYSYDD AR GYFER SESIYNAU GWYBODAETH A HYFFORDDIANT AELODAU**

Trafod unrhyw feysydd ar gyfer sesiynau gwybodaeth a hyfforddiant aelodau.
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6. **ADRODDIAD CEISIADAU CYNLLUNIO** 5 - 34

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7. **GWYBODAETH PERFFORMIAD CHWARTEROL RHEOLI DATBLYGU** 35 - 40

Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Datblygu a Stadau.
8. **CYNLLUN DIRPRWYO – PWYLLGOR CYNLLUNIO** 41 - 50

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9. **DEALL LLESIANT CYNLLUNWYR YNG NGHYMRU AC ADRANNAU RHEOLI DATBLYGU YN Y DEYRNAS UNEDIG** 51 - 130

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10. **DIWEDDARIAD APÊL CYNLLUNIO: 2 STRYD Y FARCHNAD, ABERTYLERI, NP13 1AH.** 131 - 136

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11. **DIWEDDARIAD APÊL CYNLLUNIO: 7 BEAUFORT TERRACE, BEAUFORT, GLYNEBWY,** 137 - 142

Ystyried adroddiad yr Arweinydd Tîm Rheoli Datblygu.
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13. **RHESTR CEISIADAU A BENDERFYNWYD DAN BWERAU DIRPRWYEDIG RHWNG 4 EBRILL 2023 A 29 MAI 2023** 147 - 156

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EITEM EITHRIEDIG

Derbyn ac ystyried yr adroddiad dilynol sydd ym marn y swyddog priodol yn eitem eithriedig gan roi ystyriaeth i'r prawf budd cyhoeddus ac y dylai'r wasg a'r cyhoedd gael eu heithrio o'r cyfarfod (mae'r rheswm am y penderfyniad am yr eithriad ar gael ar atodlen a gedwir gan y swyddog priodol).

14. **ACHOSION GORFODAETH A GAFODD EU CAU RHWNG 23 CHWEFROR 2023 A 25 MAI 2023** 157 - 162

Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Datblygu.

To: L. Winnett (Cadeirydd)
P. Baldwin (Is-gadeirydd)
Councillor C. Bainton
J. Holt
Councillor E. Jones
L. Parsons
Councillor D. Rowberry
Councillor C. Smith
M. Day
W. Hodgins
Councillor G. Humphreys
Councillor J. Morgan, J.P.
Councillor J. Thomas
D. Wilkshire

All other Members (for information)
Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officers

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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Report to	The Chair and Members of Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing
Report Subject	Planning Applications Report
Report Author	Team Manager Development Management
Report Date	2nd June 2023
Directorate	Regeneration & Community Services
Date of meeting	15th June 2023

Report Information Summary

1. Purpose of Report	
To present planning applications for consideration and determination by Members of the Planning Committee.	
2. Scope of the Report	
Application No.	Address
C/2022/0265	1 Cross Brook Cottages, Trefil, Tredegar
C/2023/0060	Unit 21, Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Abertillery, Blaina. NP23 3JW
3. Recommendation/s for Consideration	
Please refer to individual reports	

Planning Report

Application No: C/2022/0265	App Type: Full
Applicant: Mr Ian Morris 1 Cross Brook Trefil Tredegar NP22 4ER	Agent: Mr Ian Morris 1 Cross Brook Trefil Tredegar NP22 4ER
Site Address: 1 CROSS BROOK COTTAGES TREFIL TREDEGAR	
Development: To retain the development of the new house as built, renovation of existing outbuilding into garage with room above and replacement parking.	
Case Officer:	Jane Engel

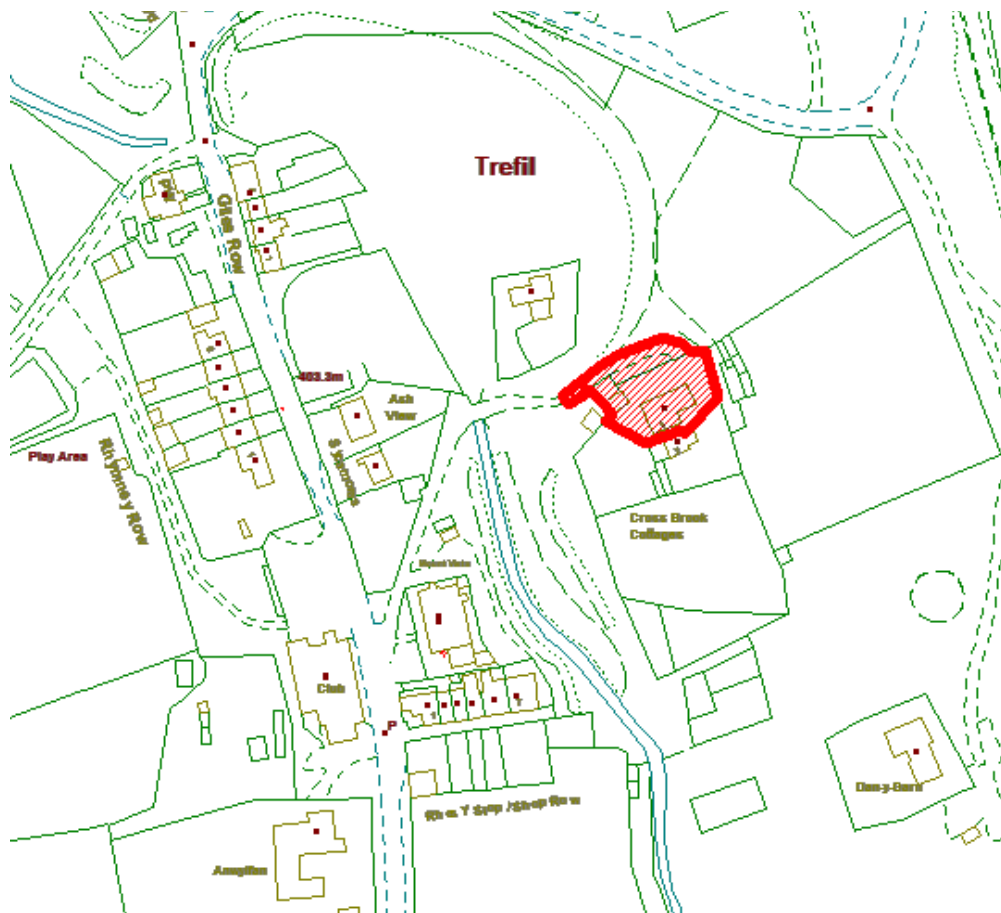


Figure 1 Application Site

1.0 Background, Development and Site Context

- 1.1 The application site is a detached property which is located to the east of residential properties on Trefil Road with access via an unclassified lane.
- 1.2 A planning application was received for the property in 2015 (2015/0181 refers). The site lies outside the settlement boundary as defined by the Local Development Plan. Without any agricultural, forestry or rural enterprise justification the development was considered contrary to planning policy. Additionally, there were concerns that the scale of the development was such that it was considered to be uncharacteristic of its rural location. The application was reported to planning committee with a recommendation that the application be refused.
- 1.3 Following a site meeting Members decided to the approve the application and planning permission was granted for the house in September 2015. The permission also included the removal of an outbuilding to facilitate the provision of a parking area for the development. The permission included a condition requiring the parking areas to be provided prior to the occupation of the dwelling.
- 1.4 The house has been constructed and occupied. However, following an enquiry from the owner in relation to making alterations to the outbuilding it was noted that the parking area had not been provided as indicated on the approved plans.



Figure 2. The existing outbuilding and the dwelling as constructed.

- 1.5 The owner was advised, they could either implement the permission as approved and provide the required parking provision which would remove the breach of planning or apply to retain the development with alternative parking provision and proposed alterations to the outbuilding.

- 1.6 The owner subsequently submitted the current application to retain the house as built, provide alternative parking provision to the rear of the property, and make alterations to the outbuilding to provide a garage with room above. The works to the outbuilding consist of the provision a roller shutter door, rendering of the front elevation to match the house and cladding of the remaining elevations with wood(elder). The roof will be finished with slate to match the house and it is proposed to insert two velux windows on the front roof slope. In addition is it proposed to insert a window in the western elevation of the outbuilding.
- 1.7 The site lies outside the settlement boundary. Although a precedent has been set by the original approval for a dwelling on site, the scheme of delegation is such that any decision on the application must be taken by planning committee.

2.0 Site History

	Ref No	Details	Decision
2.1	C/2014/0348	The demolition of the existing semi-detached cottage and associated out buildings and the construction of a new detached two storey house	Withdrawn 22/1/15
2.2	C/2015/0181	The demolition of the existing semi-detached cottage and associated out buildings and the construction of a new detached two storey house	Approved 24/9/15
2.3	C/2016/0260	DoC 3 demolition method statement	Approved 4/10/16
2.4	C/2016/0261	DoC 2 programme of building recording and analysis, 4 drainage scheme, 5 site investigation, 7 walls fences & 8 landscaping scheme	Approved 7/11/16
2.5	C/2017/0155	NMA to make changes to proposed materials	Approved 13/6/17
2.6	C/2018/0034	Application for the NMA of condition 1 of C/2015/0181 - revised plans to omit the sun lounge at the rear and alter the rear elevation to enclose the dining/kitchen area.	Approved 15/2/18

3.0 Consultation and Other Relevant Information

3.1 Internal BG Responses

Service Manager Infrastructure:

Highways:

The three car parking spaces are to be fully constructed and retained thereafter.

Drainage:

No objections to this application in relation to surface water and land drainage.

Ecology:

Following the submission of a preliminary roost assessment which confirmed that the outbuilding was not being used by bats, there are no objections to the proposed development.

External Consultation Responses

Town / Community Council:

No objections

Welsh Water:

No objection

Public Consultation:

~~Strikethrough to delete as appropriate~~

- 1 letters to nearby houses
- 1 site notice
- 1 press notice
- website public register of applications
- ward members by letter
- all members via weekly list of applications received.
- ~~other~~

Response:

None received at the time of preparing my report.

The application has been advertised in the press as a departure to the development plan due to its location outside the settlement boundary. Should any representations be received before planning committee these will be reported verbally.

4.0 Planning Policy

4.1 Team Manager Development Plans:

- 4.2 The site lies outside the settlement boundary identified through policy SB1 of the Local Development Plan (LDP). The aim of the policy is to prevent inappropriate development in the countryside.
- 4.3 In the absence of any specific policies which deal with development in the countryside, the LDP relies on national guidance set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 11) to control any development outside the settlement boundary.
- 4.4 Paragraph 3.60 states that development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access, habitat, and landscape conservation. Infilling or minor extensions to existing settlements may be acceptable, where they meet a local need for affordable housing, or it can be demonstrated that the proposal will increase local economic activity. However, new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development in development plans must continue to be strictly controlled. All new development should be a scale and design that respects the character of the surrounding area.
- 4.5 Paragraph 4.2.23 states that infill and windfall sites can make a useful contribution to the delivery of housing. Proposals for housing on infill and windfall sites within settlements should be supported where they accord with the national sustainable placemaking outcomes.
- 4.6 Policy DM8: Affordable Housing Exception Sites of the Blaenau Gwent LDP supports paragraph 3.60 of PPW and sets out the circumstances when affordable housing development for local needs will be permitted.
- 4.7 Although the 2015 approval for the dwelling was contrary to Officer's recommendation, the development has now already been carried out, albeit not strictly in accordance with the approved plans.
- 4.8 LDP Policies:
Adopted Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) 2012
SP1- Northern Strategy Area – Sustainable Growth and Regeneration
SP4- Delivering Quality Housing
SP5- Spatial Distribution of Housing
SP10- Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment
DM1- New Development
DM2- Design and Placemaking
DM7- Affordable Housing Exception Site
DM16- Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerow Protection

SB1- Settlement Boundaries
M1- Safeguarding of Minerals

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Access, Car Parking and Design (March 2014)

Model Design Guide for Wales Residential Development (March 2005)

Under the provisions of the 2015 Planning (Wales) Act, any development plan adopted prior to 4 January 2016 will remain the LDP for determining planning applications until replaced by a further LDP. Therefore, the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Local Development Plan up to 2021, which was adopted on November 2012, remains the extant statutory development plan for the area beyond the specified 2021 plan period.

National Planning Policy and Technical Advices Notes (TANs)

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 11)

Future Wales: The National Development Plan for Wales 2040 (February 2021)

5.0 Planning Assessment

5.1 Principle of development

5.2 Future Wales - the National Plan 2040 was published on the 24th February, and therefore is relevant to this application as it now forms part of the Development Plan. The specific purpose of Future Wales is to ensure the planning system at all levels is consistent with, and supports the delivery of, Welsh Government strategic aims and policies. The relevant policies in relation to this development are Policies 1 and 2. Policy 1 promotes continued growth and regeneration in the area. Policy 2 supports a rich mix of residential, commercial and community uses within close proximity to each other and to create activity throughout the day to enable people to walk and cycle rather than being reliant on travelling by car. Being mindful of the nature of the proposal and its location, the application is considered compliant with these policies.

5.3 Paragraph 3.60 of PPW states that development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access, habitat, and landscape conservation. Infilling or minor extensions to existing settlements may be acceptable, where they meet a local need for affordable housing, or it can be demonstrated that the proposal will increase local economic activity. However, new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development in development plans must continue to be strictly

controlled. All new development should be a scale and design that respects the character of the surrounding area. Being mindful of the previous planning permission for the site, the alterations proposed as part of this application are considered compliant with this policy.

- 5.4 With regards to the LDP, the site lies outside the settlement boundary and as advised by the planning policy manager the provision of a new dwelling in the open countryside must be strictly controlled. As outlined above, the original planning application for the dwelling was considered contrary to planning policy and officers recommended refusal of the application. However, Members overturned this recommendation and approved the application, this set a precedent for a dwelling to be constructed in this location.
- 5.5 The current application seeks to retain the dwelling as approved previously with alternative parking arrangements and alterations to the outbuilding.
- 5.6 In strict planning policy terms, the retention of the dwelling remains contrary to planning policy. However, the fallback position must be considered in this case; the dwelling itself has been built in accordance with the original approval apart from the parking provision. If this current application were to be refused the applicant could simply implement the previous permission in full by removing the outbuilding and providing the parking areas as previously approved.
- 5.7 Given the original application has positively established the principle of residential development, and that permission has been implemented and the applicant's fallback position outlined above, it is considered unreasonable to recommend refusal of the principle to retain the dwelling in this instance.
- 5.8 Amenity
The property is a detached double fronted dwelling sited to the east of Trefil Road. The dwelling is finished in render and has a slate roof and I consider its appearance to be acceptable. Concerns were raised by officers at the time of the original application regarding the scale of the rear projection. However, it is noted that a subsequent non-material amendment application removed the rear sunroom which has alleviated some of these concerns.
- 5.9 It is acknowledged that the dwelling is larger than the neighbouring cottage. However, the relative position of the dwellings is such that that it is considered that the dwelling as built has limited impact upon the residential amenity of this neighbouring property and does not result in any loss of privacy, overshadowing or resulting in an overbearing impact.

- 5.10 The proposed alterations to the outbuilding, to include rendering and cladding the external elevations, reroofing and the insertion of a roller shutter door to the front are considered in keeping with the host dwelling and would ensure the structure appears as a subservient, ancillary out-building. It is considered the works proposed would little impact upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring dwelling.

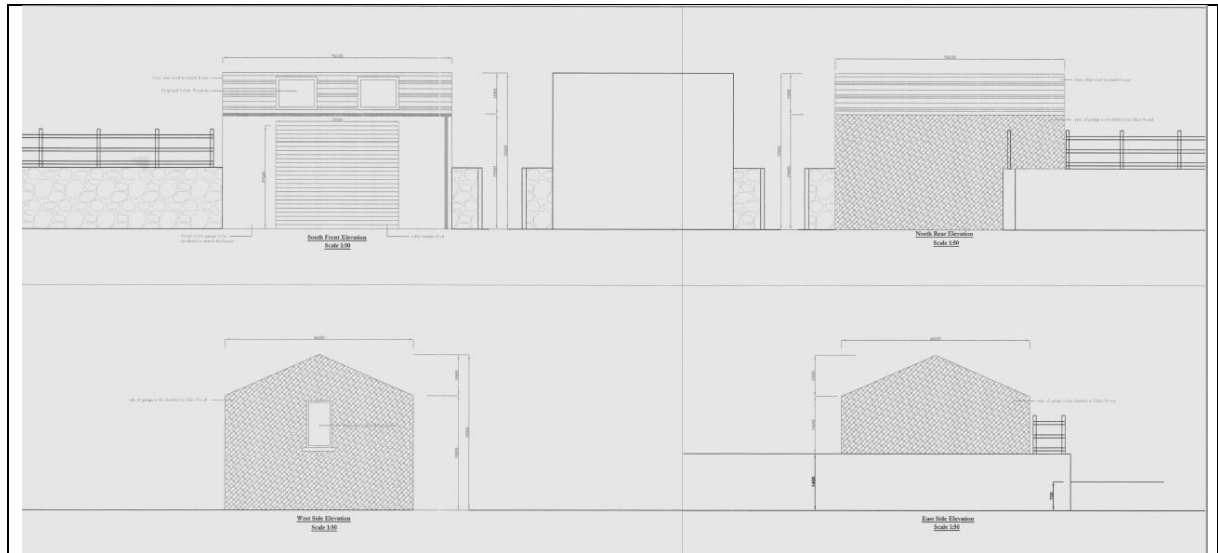


Figure 3 Outbuilding

- 5.11 Highways and Parking
The plans submitted detail the provision of three parking spaces to the rear of the dwelling. Following consultation, the Council's Highway Manager has confirmed that the replacement parking area is acceptable and has raised no objections to the proposal.



Figure 4 Parking Arrangements

5.12 Ecology

The bat survey which accompanied the original planning application, identified that the outbuilding was being used as a bat roost. However, an updated survey report has been sought to support the current application. The report, by I&G Ecological Consulting Ltd, concludes that there is no evidence of the building being used by bats. Following consultation, the Council's Ecologist has accepted the findings and has raised no objection to the proposal.

5.13 The submitted survey report makes several recommendations for ecological enhancement. I propose that these measures be secured by condition should Members approve the application before them.

6.0 Legislative Obligations

6.1 The Council is required to decide planning applications in accord with the Local Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The planning function must also be exercised in accordance with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to ensure that the development and use of land contributes to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

6.2 The Council also has obligations under other legislation including (but not limited to) the Crime and Disorder Act, Equality Act and Human Rights Act. In presenting this report, I have had regard to relevant legislation and sought to present a balanced and reasoned recommendation.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

7.1 The creation of a new dwelling within the countryside is contrary to planning policy. However, the fall-back position relative to the current proposal is such that it would be considered unreasonable to refuse the current application. Therefore, having regard to all relevant matters I consider the current application acceptable and recommend approval of the application.

7.2 On the expiry date of the press notice and should no issues be raised that have not been considered within the report, it is recommended that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following condition(s):

1	The development shall be completed in full accordance with the following approved plans and documents: House elevations: Drawing No: 302A <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ground Floor Plan Drawing No: 301B• Floor Plans Drawing No: 201C
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed Outbuilding Drawing No: IM 102 date July 2021 • Parking Details IM 103 Dated July 2021 • Site location Plan • Bat Survey Report I&G Ecological Consulting Ltd <p>Reason: To clearly define the scope of this permission.</p>
2	<p>The parking areas as indicated on the approved plans shall be shall be provided within three months of their approval and retained for their designated purposes at all times.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the parking needs of the development are adequately met.</p>
3	<p>The ecological mitigation measures as outlined in the submitted Bat Survey Report shall be implemented within 3 months of the works to the outbuilding being completed.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure adequate ecological mitigation measures are undertaken.</p>
4	<p>The finishes to the outbuilding hereby approved shall be applied within 3 months of it being brought into beneficial use.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.</p>
5	<p>No surface water and/or land drainage shall be allowed to connect directly or indirectly with the public sewerage network.</p> <p>Reason: To prevent hydraulic overloading of the public sewerage system, to protect the health and safety of existing residents and ensure no pollution of or detriment to the environment.</p>

8.0 Risk Implications

8.1 None

Planning Report

Application No:	C/2023/0060	App Type:	Full
Applicant:	Mr Dominic Connor Blackwood Engineering Ltd Blaina Enterprise Centre Unit 21 Rising Sun Industrial Estate Blaenau Gwent Blaina NP13 3JW	Agent:	Salt Consultancy Mr Tom Griffin Suite 17 Business Development Centre Main Avenue Treforest Industrial Estate CF37 5UR
Site Address:			
Unit 21, Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Abertillery, Blaina. NP23 3JW			
Development:			
The erection of a manufacturing building which extends at the rear of the existing main building and wraps around the building to increase manufacturing footprint, upper-level storage facility with goods in/out yard space and subsequent perimeter landscaping with additional car parking			
Case Officer:	Helen Hinton		



Figure 1 – Site location plan

1.0 Background, Development and Site Context

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of extensions located to the rear and side of the existing main building to increase manufacturing footprint, upper-level storage facility with a goods in/ out yard space, additional car parking and perimeter landscaping at Unit 21 Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina.
- 1.2 The proposed extensions would wrap around northern-western (side) north-eastern (rear) and south-western (side) elevations of the existing building. Cumulatively the extensions would measure 165m wide and at their greatest 68m deep. The development would comprise various extensions of both single and two storey form. At its greatest the development would have a maximum height of 9.8m (the same height as the existing building on site).
- 1.3 Two additional metal flue stacks are also proposed in the rear roof plane of the main existing building to serve the enlarged manufacturing and spray booth areas. These would have a maximum height of 11.20m and would match the four existing flues already on site.



Figure 2- Proposed layout. Existing buildings shown in blue, proposed extensions in red.

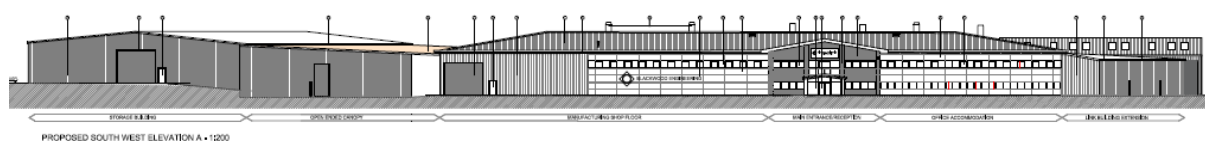


Figure 3- Proposed front elevation.

- 1.4 Externally the building extensions would be finished with Kingspan vertical profile composite cladding finished in a light grey colour. The external material of the existing buildings would also be upgraded to match the extensions, with the main office/ visitor entrance finished with a dark grey coloured silicone render.



Figure 4- Proposed front elevation.

- 1.5 As specified above, the works would be positioned to the side and rear of the main existing building with car and HGV access gained from the main industrial estate to the south-west. A total of 60 car parking spaces to include dedicated enhanced access and ultra-low emission vehicle parking, separate motorcycle and pedal cycle parking would be provided to the front of the building. A separate HGV access, parking and turning area would be provided to the north-west of the development. A waste management area would be provided to the north-west of the HGV facilities. Areas of landscaping would be retained and enhanced in the northern most part of the site and along the eastern boundary.
- 1.6 38 employees currently work from the site, and it is anticipated that this would increase to 60.
- 1.7 The application site is a roughly triangular shaped, enclosed parcel of land extending to 2.3 hectares. The site is set over two levels.
- 1.8 The lower level consists of the main manufacturing buildings – a larger steel portal frame building with hipped roof, which is visible from the main estate road, that also accommodates office spaces on both the ground and first floor level, and a smaller detached steel portal frame building located on the eastern side of the site. To the front of the main building there is an employee and visitor car park containing 51 spaces. The perimeter of the site is bound by metal palisade fencing supplemented by trees and vegetation in varying forms.



Figure 5- Existing front elevation



Figure 6- Existing rear elevation



Figure 7- Existing detached building in south-eastern corner of the site and open air storage

- 1.9 The lower and upper levels are split by a covered culvert passing through the site from east to west. The levels are demarked by the existing palisade fencing, change in levels and single access ramp. The upper level comprises an area of floodlit hardstanding, used for external

storage and goods in/out. To the north of the upper level there is a green space segregated by fencing and the east features manmade embankments with trees and vegetation with several residential dwellings beyond which back onto the site.



Figure 8- Existing good in/ out access with adjacent external storage area and dwellings to the rear of the site.

- 1.10 In terms of context, the application site is located roughly centrally within the industrial estate with other industrial and/ or commercial buildings to the north, south and west. Several residential dwellings are located to the east (rear) of the site.
- 1.11 In addition to the drawing pack the application is supported by:
- Design and Access Statement (DAS)
 - Phase 1 and 2 Geotechnical reports which include gas monitoring data
 - Drainage CCTV survey report
 - Cola Mining Risk Assessment
 - Transport Assessment
 - Draft Travel Plan
 - Arboricultural Report
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal; and
 - Energy Statement.
- 1.12 As the application proposes development with a cumulative floor area more than 1,000 square metres, in compliance with the definition given in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, the application is deemed to be a major development. The applicant has therefore undertaken a pre-application consultation (PAC) prior to the submission of the planning application with the summary report submitted for consideration.

2.0 Site History

	Ref No	Details	Decision
2.1	C/2012/0467	Retention of exhaust stack and storage unit	Approved 07/02/2013
2.2	C/2016/0133	Application for removal of condition 10 of planning permission C/1997/0317 (no materials, products or refuse of any kind shall be stored in the open on the site)	Approved 02/06/2016
2.3	C/2016/0343	Proposed change of use from vacant land to storage & display facility including boundary fence and new access	Approved 24/07/2017
2.4	C/2017/0021	Steel framed wood store and dry goods store.	Approved 12/05/2017
2.5	C/2017/0065	Extend site storage area (retention)	Approved 12/05/2017
2.6	C/2017/0345	Provision of 13 No. lighting columns (8 of these columns to include CCTV unit and horn speakers)	Approved 27/07/2018
2.7	C/2021/0001	Installation of 2no external exhaust stacks to serve 2no internal spray booth ovens.	Approved 05/03/2021
2.8	C/2021/0070	Application for Discharge of Conditions: 2 (Noise impact assessment report and 3 (Odour management plan) of planning permission C/2021/0001 (Installation of 2 no. external exhaust stacks to serve 2 no. internal spray booth ovens).	Discharged 31/03/2021
2.9	C/2022/0068	Removal of 2no existing external wall exhaust stacks and install 4no. External roof exhaust stacks to serve internal spray booth ovens	Approved 11/05/2022

3.0 Consultation and Other Relevant Information

3.1 Internal BG Responses

3.2 Service Manager Infrastructure:

3.3 Highways:

No objections subject to conditions requiring all parking and operational services areas to be provided prior to beneficial occupation of the extensions and retained as such thereafter.

3.4 Drainage:

No objections in principle. The works will require SAB approval and Ordinary Watercourse Consent.

- 3.5 **Ground Stability:**
No objections in principle, subject to the submission of an intrusive investigation report, the details of which must be submitted before development commences on site. *(This report has now been received and is subject to further consultation. A verbal update will be provided at Committee)*
- 3.6 **Landscape and Green infrastructure:**
A tree protection plan, arboricultural method statement, and an arboricultural Implications assessment should be submitted in support of the proposal.
- 3.7 **Ecology:**
No objections subject to the submitted PEA and Ecological Enhancement Plan being approved documents.
- 3.8 **Service Manager Public Protection:**
A verbal update will be provided at Committee.
- 3.9 **External Consultation Responses**
- 3.10 **Town / Community Council:**
No objections.
- 3.11 **Natural Resources Wales:**
Advice provided and conditions recommended regarding the submission of a Preliminary Risk Assessment, a remediation strategy and Unsuspected Contamination.
- 3.12 **Welsh Water:**
Advice provided and conditions recommended with regards to foul and surface water disposal, the location of apparatus within the site and the potential need for an upsized potable water connection.
- 3.13 **Western Power and Wales and West Utilities:**
Advice provided with regards to apparatus within the vicinity of the site.
- 3.14 **Coal Authority:**
No objections subject to conditions requiring the submission of an intrusive site investigation report and gas monitoring details plus a validation report to confirm all necessary remediation works have been

undertaken, prior to works commencing on the construction of the extensions.

3.15 Wales Biodiversity and Reporting Database:

Hedgehogs and various birds have been reported within 150m and 500m of the application site.

3.16 **Public Consultation:**

- 3.17
- 36 letters to nearby premises
 - site notice
 - press notice
 - website public register of applications
 - ward members by letter
 - all members via weekly list of applications received

3.18 Response:

No objections or representations have been received.

4.0 Planning Policy

4.1 Team Manager Development Plans:

4.2 Local Development Plan (LDP) Policies:

- SP1 Northern Strategy Area – Sustainable Growth and Regeneration
- SP7 Climate Change
- SP8 Sustainable Economic Growth
- SP10 Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment
- DM1 New Development
- DM2 Design and Placemaking
- DM4 Low and Zero Carbon Energy
- DM10 Use Class Restrictions – Employment
- DM14 Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement
- DM15 Protection and Enhancement of the Green Infrastructure
- DM16 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerow Protection
- EMP2 Employment Area Protection
- SB1 Settlement Boundaries

4.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Access, Car Parking and Design (March 2014)

- 4.4 Under the provisions of the 2015 Planning (Wales) Act, any development plan adopted prior to 4 January 2016 will remain the LDP for determining planning applications until replaced by a further LDP. Therefore, the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Local Development Plan up to 2021, which was adopted on November 2012, remains the extant statutory development plan for the area beyond the specified 2021 plan period.
- 4.5 National Planning Policy and Technical Advice Notes
- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040
 - Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11, February 2021)
 - Technical advice note (TAN) 4: retail and commercial development
 - Technical advice note (TAN) 11: noise
 - Technical advice note (TAN) 12: design
 - Technical advice note (TAN) 23: economic development

5.0 Planning Assessment

5.1 Principle of Development

- 5.2 Future Wales - the National Plan 2040 was published on the 24th February, and is therefore relevant to this application as it now forms part of the Development Plan. Policies 1 and 33 support sustainable growth in all parts of Wales with Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys identified as one of three National Growth Areas. Opportunities and growth in strategic economic and housing growth; essential services and facilities; advanced manufacturing; transport and digital infrastructure will be supported. Policy 2 seeks to support a rich mix of residential, commercial and community uses within close proximity to each other, to create activity and sustainable development. Being mindful of the nature of the proposal and its location, the application is considered compliant with these policies.
- 5.3 Subsection 5.4 of Planning Policy Wales, (ed 11 February 2021), advocates the allocation of land for economic development purposes to support the growth in output and employment within Wales. Paragraph 5.4.4 specifies that wherever possible, planning authorities are encouraged to support developments which generate economic prosperity and regeneration with sites identified for employment use in a development plan protected from inappropriate development.
- 5.4 With regards to the Local Development Plan, the application site is located within the settlement boundary (Policy SB1) and forms part of

the Rising Sun Industrial Estate which is designated as a primary site in the employment hierarchy and protected as an employment area (Policy EMP2.10).

- 5.5 Policy DM10 - Use Class Restrictions, seeks to protect existing employment designations from non-employment uses, with criterion 3 specifying that proposals seeking to provide B1, B2 and B8 uses, suitable sui generis uses and ancillary facilities or services to existing and proposed employment uses will be supported.
- 5.6 Given the position of the site within the designated industrial estate and protected employment area, the proposed expansion of the existing B2 use, together with an associated storage area, is considered compliant with Policies EMP2 and DM10. The principle is therefore considered acceptable in land use terms, subject to the application satisfying a number of material considerations considered below.
- 5.7 Layout, Scale and Appearance
- 5.8 The current works are sought to support and implement Blackwood Engineering's growth strategy by increasing throughput capacity and providing the necessary facilities to support the business's expansion.
- 5.9 The proposal would increase the existing manufacturing footprint on the lower level from approximately 3400sqm to 6800sqm. The upper-level storage building which has an area of approximately 2400sqm, seeks to manage current external storage constraints and to enhance storage facilities for outward bound goods.
- 5.10 With regard to layout, the scheme has been designed in such a way as to expand on existing manufacturing spaces and connecting existing buildings for manufacturing flow. The office spaces would remain at the west (front) side of site in the existing main building which does and would act as the principle elevation, helping to maintain an active elevation with the estate road. See figure 2 above.
- 5.11 Although the area of the works proposed are substantial, it is considered that the site is large enough to accommodate the development and all the infrastructure indicated.
- 5.12 In terms of design, although sizeable, it is considered that the extensions would be utilitarian in form and would complement the existing hipped portal frame structure, with the ridgeline and eaves height of the main

building replicated, including on the upper-level storage section. On balance, it is considered that the offset position of the front elevations of the extensions, their positioning to the side and rear of the existing building and the use of simple external material palette would emphasise the developments ancillary nature, whilst the renovation of the main office building would ensure this aspect remains the visually dominate feature in the street scene.

- 5.13 Given the form, scale and external finish proposed, relative to the wider industrial estate context, it is considered that the extension works proposed would not have such an impact on the character and appearance of the area or wider landscape to warrant refusal of the application. The provision of additional buildings may also reduce visual impact by removing the open-air storage yards.
- 5.14 Although cumulatively the works would be substantial it is considered that the resulting building would be in commensurate with the area of the application site whilst the design and external finish would be in keeping with the overall character and appearance of the wider estate and schemes recently approved in the area. It is considered that the design and layout has due regard to reducing opportunities for crime and making provision for people with special access requirements with level thresholds and accessible internal facilities. As such, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with requirements of Policies DM1 and DM2 of the LDP and the aforementioned SPG in relation to design and placemaking matters.
- 5.15 Sustainable Design
- 5.16 Policy DM4 seeks to encourage major development proposals to incorporate renewable and/or low carbon technologies into their development scheme and requires the submission of an Energy Statement. The purpose of the latter is to examine the potential for energy generation from renewable and/or low carbon sources and to set out how the proposal can make an appropriate contribution.
- 5.17 The energy statement submitted in support of the application confirms that the development will seek to reduce the energy consumption on site by installing solar panels on and around southern roof planes, maximising natural light fall through the insertion of clear panels in the northern roof planes, making use of LED, passive infrared sensors and zonal lighting, utilising thermally efficient materials and construction

techniques and by providing a layout that promotes ease of vehicular and pedestrian movement and sustainable drainage.

- 5.18 Although not accessible by train and therefore reliant on HGV for the transportation of components to and from site, the development is within walking and cycling distance of Brynmawr, Nantyglo, Blaina and parts of Abertillery in terms of staff movements. The nearest bus stop is located 500m to the south-east of the site on High Street.
- 5.19 Based on the above, it is considered that the proposal will enable the beneficial use of under-utilised, allocated employment land within the urban area helping to reduce pressure on green field sites, reduce urban sprawl and promote a more sustainable pattern of development. It is considered that opportunities have been taken to reduce energy demand and consumption and incorporate low carbon technologies into the design of the proposal. The application is therefore considered compliant with the requirements Policy DM4.

5.20 Amenity

- 5.21 Being mindful of the application site's location within the established industrial estate in conjunction with the policy allocation, the use of the premise for B2 uses with ancillary storage class is considered compatible with the immediate area. However, there are several dwellings to the rear of the site, with the nearest being a recently approved dwelling on land adjacent to 168 near High St Blaina (application C/2022/0233 refers) which would be positioned approximately 35m to the east.



Figure 9- layout and distances to be maintained.

- 5.22 It is inevitable that, because of scale and positioning, the extensions, particularly the storage building, would be visible from the rear elevations and gardens of the dwellings to the rear of the site. However, these dwellings have been or will be developed at a level approximately 3m higher than the application site.

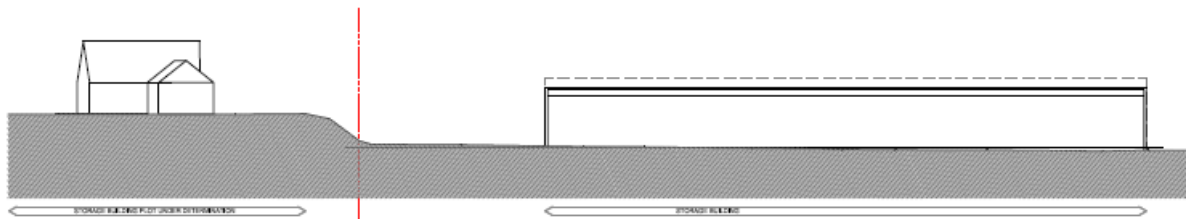


Figure 10 – Proposed section of proposed storage building relative to the existing dwellings to the rear of the site.

- 5.23 Given the maintenance of the existing ridge height across the site, the distances maintained, the orientation of the development and existing and proposed landscaping (as indicated on figure 8), it is considered that the impact of the development would not be so overbearing or generate such an increased level of overshadowing or loss of light to warrant refusal of the application on such grounds.
- 5.24 Following direct neighbour notification and the erection of site notices outside the site and along High Street to the east, no public objections or representations have been received.
- 5.25 A response is awaited from the Council's Specialist Environmental Health Officers. A verbal update will be provided to Members at Committee. It is noted that the Officer raised no objection to the scheme when reviewed at the pre-application stage, subject to conditions with regards to noise emissions, in the interests of protecting the residential amenity of those living closest to the site.
- 5.26 Given the factors detailed above, subject to conditions relating to noise generation, it is considered that the proposal meets the requirements of Policy DM1 in respect of amenity related matters.
- 5.27 Highways and Parking
- 5.28 The application site is well located in terms of both the local and strategic highway network with the internal estate roads providing direct access onto the A467.

- 5.29 The site is currently served by two accesses, one in the south-western part of the front boundary which serves the offices and car park and a separate goods in/ out access in the north-western part of the boundary, leading to an on-site turning and parking area capable of accommodating HGV vehicles. These would be maintained as part of the works. The wider industrial estate already benefits from pedestrian pavements as access alongside the western boundary. An enlarged parking area capable of accommodating up to 60 spaces, with 6 dedicated ULEV spaces, 3 enhanced access spaces, motorbike parking and pedal cycle storage would be provided to the front of the site. See figure 2 above.
- 5.30 A Transport Statement and Framework Travel Plan have been submitted in support of the application.
- 5.31 The Statement provides a 5-year summary of the accident records on the highway network closest to the site, congestion analysis of the roads local to the site and trip generation assessment. It is concluded that highway safety is not an area of concern, and the network has capacity to accommodate the increased traffic flows generated by the proposal.
- 5.32 Following consultation, the Team Manager – Built Infrastructure has confirmed that that he agrees with the conclusions of the Transport Assessment and the methodology of the submitted draft Framework Travel Plan. As a result, no objections are raised to the application subject to the imposition of conditions requiring all vehicle parking, cycle storage and operational service areas to be provided prior to the first beneficial occupation of the extensions and a full/ final travel plan being submitted. Given the scale of the development and the potential congestion and highway safety issues that could occur if such facilities were not provided promptly, the conditions requested are considered necessary and reasonable in the interests of sustainability and the highway safety. Subject to the imposition of the conditions, the application is considered compliant with LDP Policy DM 1 (3 a, b, c, d, & e).
- 5.33 Ground Stability and Contamination
- 5.34 Part of the site and proposed development is within a High-Risk Coal Field Area as defined by the Coal Authority. In response the application is supported by a Coal Mining Risk Assessment and a phase 1 Geo-

technical report, which seek to establish and clarify the risk of ground instability and contamination associated with previous mining activities.

- 5.35 Following consultation, the Coal Authority have raised no objection to the details submitted, subject to a condition requiring the submission of an intrusive site investigation report and details of any remediation works and/or mitigation measures to address land instability, prior to the commencement of development. This request has been seconded by the Council's Geo-technical Officer and Natural Resources Wales who have also requested the submission of contamination and ground gas summary results.
- 5.36 Following review of the consultation responses, the Agent has commissioned the intrusive site investigation works with the subsequent reports and data received by the Council on the 19th April and 23rd May 2023. The reports are currently the subject of consultation with the Coal Authority, Natural Resources Wales and the Council's Geo-Tech Team. A verbal update of any subsequent responses will be provided at Committee.
- 5.37 In the interim, being mindful of the initial responses received, it is considered that conditions requiring the submission of additional intrusive and verification reports demonstrating compliance with the approved remediation strategy could be added to any grant of consent. Subject to the imposition of these conditions the application is considered compliant with the relevant criteria of LDP policy DM1.
- 5.38 Ecology and Landscaping
- 5.39 Although the works would take place on brownfield/ previously developed land, there are areas of scrub, woodland, and hedgerows within the boundaries of the site. The Wales Biodiversity and Reporting Database also confirms there are species of conservation concern within 150 and 500m of the site. As a result, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and arboricultural reports have been sought in support of the application.
- 5.40 The PEA submitted concludes that site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory designation and is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on amphibians, reptiles, badgers, dormice, hedgehogs, riparian mammals or invertebrates. Although the proposal would result in the loss of small areas of scattered trees within the car park and would introduce lighting which could spill on to roosting, foraging or commuting habitat, deterring

bats and birds, mitigation measures are proposed in compensation. These have been detailed on an Ecological Mitigation, Enhancement and Management Plan and lighting strategy submitted as part of the application. The developer will also be required to provide betterment for biodiversity, ecology, and amenity as part of the surface water management techniques to be secured as part of the SAB process.

- 5.41 Following consultation, the Council's Ecologist has confirmed that she agrees with the findings of the report and the mitigation measures, recommendations and further biodiversity enhancement measures recommended. Provided these are successfully implemented there should be no long-term negative impacts to key protected species.
- 5.42 With regards to tree loss the applicant has submitted an arboricultural report and a proposed layout plan indicating general tree and landscaping information. Following consultation, the Council's Arborist has requested additional information, to include a Tree Protection Plan, Arboricultural Method Statement and Arboricultural Implications Assessment, be submitted in support of the proposal.
- 5.43 Following review, the Agent has advised that whilst they acknowledge the request, given the submitted report advises the works would have limited or no impact on the existing features and the initial low risk posed, it is requested that such matters be secured by condition.
- 5.44 Being mindful that the trees on site are not protected, and the indicative details supplied which confirm the retention of woodlands and hedgerows within the site, the request to secure the details by condition is reasonable in this instance.
- 5.45 Subject to the imposition of such conditions, it is considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the ecological interests of the site or surrounding area, and the proposal is compliant with the relevant requirements of LDP Policies SP10, DM1 DM2 and DM14.
- 5.46 Drainage
- 5.47 The proposed development is situated outside of a defined phosphate sensitive area and benefits from an existing foul and potable water connections. Following consultation, Welsh Water have provided details with regards to apparatus within the vicinity and boundaries of the site and advised that the developer may need to seek an upsized potable

water connection. Although discussions about this matter are ongoing, they do not prevent the current application from being determined.

- 5.48 From 7th January 2019, all applications where the construction area is 100m² or more, require Sustainable Drainage Systems for surface water (SuDS), to be designed and built in accordance with the statutory standards. Local Authorities are required to discharge their functions as a SuDS Approving Body (SAB) and approve SuDS schemes prior to the commencement of construction works.
- 5.49 Although details of the surface water drainage solutions, have not been submitted as part of the planning application, such matters are reviewed and determined by Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Approval Body. The proposed development's surface water drainage scheme will therefore be assessed under this separate regulatory regime and due regard will be given to the impact on the surrounding natural environment as part of this process. The developer is aware of the requirement.
- 5.50 As the site is crossed by a culvert, the design of the storage building has been amended to prevent encroachment into the easement. Following consultation, the Council's Drainage Engineers have confirmed that works within the easement and provision of an access over the culvert will require Ordinary Watercourse Consent. The development has been made aware of this requirement.

6.0 Legislative Obligations

- 6.1 The Council is required to decide planning applications in accord with the Local Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The planning function must also be exercised in accordance with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to ensure that the development and use of land contributes to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.
- 6.2 The Council also has obligations under other legislation including (but not limited to) the Crime and Disorder Act, Equality Act and Human Rights Act. In presenting this report, I have had regard to relevant legislation and sought to present a balanced and reasoned recommendation.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

- 7.1 Conclusion

- 7.2 In summary, although the proposed development would be significant in scale and form, it is considered that the proposal would provide opportunities to enhance economic development, business growth and employment in the area is compliance with National Policy with the intensified use of the site for general industrial (B2) and ancillary storage (B8) being compliant with allocations and policies of the Local Development Plan.
- 7.3 In terms of the material considerations discussed above, it is considered that sufficient information has been submitted, or could be secured by condition, to ensure the development does not have a detrimental impact on the area. The application is therefore considered to be compliant with the relevant policies of the Blaenau Gwent Local Development and it is recommended that planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following condition(s):
- 7.4
1. Time limit full
 2. Approved plans
 3. Phase 2 intrusive geotechnical report and gas monitoring
 4. Verification report demonstrating completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy
 5. The rating level of the noise emitted from (Fixed Plant and equipment (mechanical and electrical), manufacturing process, the loading and unloading of goods, mobile plant and vehicles) located at the site must not exceed the existing background level at any premises used for residential purposes when measured and corrected in accordance with BS 4142: 2019.
 6. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) Hours of construction, dust suppression
 7. Drainage and potable water connection strategy
 8. All parking and operational service area provisions, to include cycle parking provision, being fully provided prior to beneficial completion of the development and retained there-after.
 9. Submission of a full travel plan.
 10. A tree protection plan,
 11. Arboricultural method statement,
 12. Arboricultural Implications assessment
 13. Landscape implementation and maintenance
- 7.5 Advisory Notes:

1. As of 7th January 2019, all construction work in Wales with drainage implications, of 100m² or more, is now required to have Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage on-site surface water. The developer is advised to contact the Councils SuDS Approving Body to determine whether the works hereby approved require consent. Further information is available via:

<https://www.blaenaugwent.gov.uk/en/resident/drainage-flooding/permission-for-drainage/>

2. Need to secure ordinary watercourse consent.

8.0 Risk Implications

8.1 No risks identified

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Report to:	Chair & Members of Planning Committee
Report Subject:	Development Management Quarterly Performance Information
Report Author:	Service Manager Development & Estates
Directorate:	Regeneration and Community Services
Date of Meeting:	June 2023
Key Words:	Performance Management Speed and quality of decision making Welsh Government Performance Monitoring

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Every local planning authority in Wales collates performance information regarding the speed and quality of decision making on all types of planning and related applications. This is submitted to Welsh Government on a quarterly basis.
- 1.2 Welsh Government publishes this data on its website. It is a useful source of comparative information where the Council can not only scrutinise its own performance, but benchmark the data against the 25 other Local Planning authorities (22 unitary authorities and 3 National Parks)
- 1.3 It is usual practise to present a quarterly performance report to Planning Committee to update Members on the most recent performance. This usually contains the performance league tables. However, Welsh Government has not published any data for over a year. The latest data WG has published was on 24th March 2022 and related to Q3 October to December 2021. [LINK to Data](#)
- 1.4 This Q3 data for October to December 2021 was reported to Planning Committee on 28th July 2022. [Link to report](#) (item 10 page 99). I will not repeat that data here but for Members convenience the headline findings were as follows:

- 1.5
- i. We decided **84%** of applications “in time”. This compared to an all-Wales average of 79% and placed us in 10th position of the 25 authorities ranked in order.
 - ii. On average, it took **88** days to decide each application against an all-Wales average of 108 days. This placed us in 11th position.
 - iii. **80%** of applications in this quarter decided by Planning Committee were contrary to officer recommendation. The Wales average was 8%. We were 24th in the table with just one other Welsh Council performing worse.
- 1.6 This report now picks up the data where this previous report ended i.e. Q4 21-22, Q1 22-23, Q2 22-23 and Q3 22-23. The following data therefore covers the dates January 2022 to December 2022.
- 1.7 It is only possible to examine our performance return in isolation. Where possible, I will refer to historical trends to put the data into context given the absence of all Wales data.

2.0 Content of the Report

- 2.1 This report will examine the usual three indicators:
- 2.2 Applications determined in time - the speed of determining all applications “on time”. This is defined as within the 8-week target period or longer time that may be agreed with the applicant/agent.
- 2.3 Average Time – the average time (in days) taken to determine all applications.
- 2.4 Quality of decision making – decisions taken by Planning Committee that are contrary to the recommendation of its officers.

3.0 Performance Information

3.1 Applications Decided in Time

3.2

Period	BGCBC % decided in Time	Wales Average
Q3 – Oct to Dec 2021	84%	79%
Q4 – Jan to March 2022	93%	--
Q1 – Apr to June 2022	99%	--
Q2 – July to Sept 2022	93%	--
Q3 – Oct to Dec 2022	95%	--

- 3.3 Commentary: The post covid period has seen a steady and consistent improvement in performance. Whilst it is not possible to benchmark this data across other Authorities, the returns are all 90%+ which is where we would expect to be given historical data.

3.4 This indicator is directly linked to the next one which is average number of days taken to decide each application. If we can reduce the average time, it will reflect positively on this indicator also.

3.5 **Average Time to Decide Each Application**

Period	BGCBC Average No of Days	Wales Average
Q3 – Oct to Dec 2021	88 days	108
Q4 – Jan to March 2022	69 days	--
Q1 – Apr to June 2022	82 days	--
Q2 – July to Sept 2022	70 days	--
Q3 – Oct to Dec 2022	73 days	--

3.6 **Commentary:** The data for the period October to December 2021 was skewed due to staff being seconded to other duties. As we emerged from Covid, the backlog of work was beginning to be addressed. Since that time, performance has improved.

3.7 An examination of pre-Covid performance shows that in terms of average number of days, we regularly returned between 60-70 days and the Team are striving to return to this range of performance.

3.8 One note of caution; the service is currently in the process of procuring new back-office software. This will improve the service in terms of web presence (online publication of planning applications for example) and reducing the bureaucratic processes at the front end i.e. registration/validation and consultation processes.

3.9 However, this requires significant impact of resources to “cleanse” all of our data. This is to allow for all our historical records back to 1974 to be migrated to the new system. One planning officer is now seconded full time to these duties. We are again procuring external support via a planning consultancy to compensate for this loss of capacity, but this will inevitably impact performance until the exercise is complete.

3.10 **Decisions by Planning Committee Contrary to Recommendation**

Period	% of decisions by Plan Comm contrary to Officer Rec.	Wales Average
Q3 – Oct to Dec 2021	80%	13%
Q4 – Jan to March 2022	43%	--
Q1 – Apr to June 2022	17%	--
Q2 – July to Sept 2022	17%	--
Q3 – Oct to Dec 2022	0%	--

3.11 **Commentary:** Members may be aware that this is an indicator that has long been a cause for concern. The fact that Planning Committee takes a different view to officers is not in itself an issue. Provided that any decision is based upon material planning considerations and these are fully recorded, then this demonstrates due process has been followed.

- 3.12 However, the sheer volume of “overturns”, coupled with a relatively poor appeal record in recent years which has resulted in a number of costs awards for what the Inspector has recorded as “unreasonable behaviour” amounted to concern both within the Council and externally with Wales Audit Office. Not only were we consistently below the Welsh average, but we were also in the bottom two performing authorities in many quarters.
- 3.13 The trend leading up the period up to March 2021 resulted in a trend of 25%, 33%, 40% and then 80%. However, since that time, the indicator has steadily improved.
- 3.14 The two returns of 17% in the table above were as a result of 1 decision from a total of 6 decisions by Planning Committee in each quarter respectively.

4.0 Evaluation of Performance and Conclusions

- 4.1 Given the issues faced by the service over the period in question, the performance returns are acceptable. I am confident that as the service returns to a semblance of normality, the percentage of applications determined in time and average number of days will stabilise and once the work on the software migration is complete, we should start showing improvement.
- 4.2 In conjunction with the software migration, we are also reviewing key internal policies and all correspondence. This will require an investment of time, but it is timely and necessary.
- 4.3 A key task is to review the scheme of delegation. There are two reasons to do this now. Firstly, it is some time since the last review and legislative changes in the meantime require the existing scheme to be updated. Secondly, it is necessary in the interest of efficient decision making as recently highlighted by Wales Audit Office. Their final report will be reported to Planning Committee when it is published.
- 4.4 In reviewing documents, the Enforcement Policy will also be reviewed. Performance indicators for this service area are more prone to fluctuation than planning applications. With only two enforcement officers and each case unique, it is common for even some relatively simple cases to take months (or longer).
- 4.5 We are still carrying a backlog of cases from Covid. Whilst the planning application process continued as best we could during lockdown, both enforcement officers were seconded to other emergency duties associated with the pandemic. Until we clear these cases, performance will continue to suffer. However, we will take the opportunity during the review the policy, examine the service and set new meaningful targets.
- 4.6 Finally, it is pleasing to note the decisions taken by Planning Committee contrary to officer recommendation has shown improvement over the 12-month period.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 No decision is required. Planning Committee is invited to scrutinise the performance returns and officers will address any issues or questions at the meeting.

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Agenda Item 8

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Planning Committee**

Date of meeting: **June 2023**

Report Subject: **Scheme of Delegation - Planning Committee**

Portfolio Holder: **Chair of Planning Committee and
Cabinet Member Place and Regeneration**

Report Submitted by: **Service Manager Development & Estates**

Reporting Pathway						
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
✓		✓			✓	Constitutional Working Party and Planning Committee

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To review the scheme of delegation for decision making in Building Control and Planning insofar as it relates to the remit of Planning Committee.

2.0 Scope and Background

2.1 The scheme of delegation is an important document. It sets out which decisions are made by Planning Committee and those made at officer level. It is a living document and good governance requires the Council to review its operation to ensure the service operates efficiently.

2.2 The scheme of delegation was last reviewed in 2010 though revisions were made in the operation of planning enforcement in the intervening period. A more comprehensive review is now timely.

2.3 To reinforce this point, the planning service has recently been the subject of a Wales Audit Office review. The scheme of delegation was highlighted as an area in urgent need of further consideration. This is a point I will pick up later in the report.

2.4 The scheme of delegation forms part of the Council's constitution. Any changes will therefore require Council approval. It is the intention to present the suggested changes first to Planning Committee and incorporate any comments/revisions before reporting to the Council.

2.5 The suggested changes to delegation in this report fall into three categories.

- i. Updates to reflect legislative changes since the last review.
- ii. Additions identified as omissions in the previous version.
- iii. Changes to the scheme in the interests of efficient decision making.

3.0 **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1 - Do nothing.**

Members are asked to consider the scheme of delegation as it currently operates. If they are of the opinion that no change is required, the scheme will continue to be applied as currently written.

3.2 **Option 2 – Approve the changes set out in this report (preferred option)**

I have attached the suggested new scheme of delegation for Members information. The document includes 12 amendments which are highlighted and numbered for ease of reference. I will deal with each in turn. Issues raised in discussions with WAO are included in the proposed changes.

3.3 **Revision 1 – Addition of Preliminary Advice Service**

The preliminary advice service is one which has grown in importance since the last review. There are two schemes in operation: the statutory service which applies to all of Wales. Secondly a locally adopted scheme which provides a more detailed service and covers 99+% of enquiries we receive.

3.4 This is an important fee generating service; it provides service users with information such as the planning history of a site, confirmation whether planning permission is required, what information will be necessary to be submitted with an application and a view on whether a development is likely to find favour. The advice given is the officer's professional view and not binding on the Council.

3.5 **Revision 2 – Addition of Consultation by Neighbour Council**

We are frequently consulted by neighbouring Councils on planning applications that have cross boundary implications. In the main, these are dealt with at officer level though there is provision within the scheme for reporting to Planning Committee if a scheme raises issues of wider public interest.

3.6 **Revision 3 – Addition of cases where s106 is required.**

Section 106 agreements are not limited to major schemes but are sometimes required on relatively minor schemes. Further, existing legal agreements often require amendment. As the previous scheme of delegation was silent on the issue, all these applications are currently required to be presented to Planning Committee. It is proposed that officers can decide applications where a s106 is required unless other provisions in the delegation document dictate otherwise such as Member call in, or if it relates to a major residential application or the case is deemed to be of wider public interest.

3.7 **Revision 4 – Addition of s70A Powers**

Following a refusal of planning permission, it is open to an application to re-submit the application incorporating changes to overcome the reasons for previous refusal.

3.8 The Planning Acts provide the power to refuse to register a subsequent second application if no meaningful attempt is made to revise the scheme to address the reasons for refusal in what may be an attempt to obtain planning

permission for essentially the same scheme. This is a rarely used power, but it is important given the timescales involved that a quick decision is made where this provision may apply. The right to submit an appeal is unaffected.

3.9 Revision 5 – Amendment to Major Applications

Under the present scheme of delegation, all major applications are currently required to be reported to Planning Committee. Our experience is that applications that fall into the major category often do not raise issues of wider concern. A good example is large commercial/industrial buildings on our industrial estates where it is an extension to an existing use. Where consultees have not raised concern, the public are supportive (or silent) and Ward Members content with the details, presenting these to Planning Committee introduces unnecessary delay.

3.10 The proposal is therefore to amend this category to require only major residential schemes to Planning Committee. I can reassure Members if the scheme involves a new industrial process that raise wider issues, then the application would be reported to Committee.

3.11 Revision 6 – Amendment to Departures

It is appropriate for Planning Committee to consider applications where a recommendation to approve an application that is against a policy in the LDP. However, there are often cases where this a minor and justified departure from adopted policy. An example of this is the issue of non-retail uses in Brynmawr Town Centre. Planning Committee made a number of decisions in recognition that the retail policy from a plan adopted in 2012 was out of date and no longer applicable. Yet every similar application that came forward subsequently was required to be presented to Members as the previous scheme of delegation did not provide flexibility.

3.12 It is suggested that the new scheme provides for officers to assess each case and come to a view on the nature and materiality of the departure and have regard to relevant issues such as recent decisions taken by Planning Committee. Minor and justified departures from the LDP could therefore be decided at officer level provided a strong and compelling case is made.

3.13 Revisions 7 – Addition of Non-Domestic Renewables

With the rise in this type of application, a new category has been added. This would provide for minor or non-controversial schemes such as solar panels on roofs to be delegated. However, larger schemes would be considered on their merits and the appropriate mechanism to make a decision agreed with the Chair.

3.14 Revision 8 – Addition of Local Impact Reports (LIR)

These are submitted in lieu of Development of National Significance (DNS). They are factual reports only and decided by an independent Inspector. The timescales for replying are extremely challenging given the monthly committee cycle. Failure to respond results in the loss of the significant fee. It is therefore proposed that the factual LIR response is delegated to officers.

Members are free to submit their own views on the merits of the DNS scheme direct to the Inspector provided they comply with the DNS timetable.

3.15 Revision 9 – Amendment to Member Call in.

Members are notified of planning applications in two ways. Firstly they receive notification individually of all applications in their ward. Secondly via the weekly list of all applications received across the Borough.

3.16 Any Member can call in any application provided they do so in writing and provide justification for the call in which must be based on relevant planning issues. The reason for this caveat is that the case officer can address the specific concerns in her/his committee report. Members are also reminded that this must happen within 21 days of the lists being published; this deadline has not previously been uniformly applied but going forward it will be.

3.17 The key change here is that once a written call-in request is received, it can only be approved by the Chair. This is to avoid unnecessarily placing items on the agenda where the reasons for call in are vague or deemed to relate to non-planning issues.

3.18 For the avoidance of doubt, the practise of pre-notifying members of a delegated refusal will stop. It was never written into the scheme of delegation. It developed though custom and practice. It introduces a further step for the case officer to negotiate when the opportunity for Members to express their views or call in the application has already been given via the initial 21-day notification.

3.19 Revision 10 – Applications made by Officers or Members

Some Council's require applications submitted by officers or Members to be presented to Planning Committee. This can also apply to close relatives. This provision does not currently apply in Blaenau Gwent.

3.20 The merits of either approach can be legitimately argued. In our case, we took the view that officers and Members should neither be advantaged or disadvantaged by virtue of their position and their application should be treated on its planning merit regardless of the identity of the applicant.

3.21 However, in the interests of transparency and picking up a likely recommendation of WAO in the recent audit that was discussed in interviews, it is proposed to change this provision meaning that any application made by an officer of the Development & Estates team, an officer directly involved in the process such as a highways or environmental health officer, or an elected Member will now be presented to Planning Committee.

3.22 I am concerned that to require all officers of the Council to be subject to this provision places an obligation of the planning case officer to establish the identity of the applicant (and their relations) in an organisation with thousands of employees. All in the context of the identity of a planning applicant not being material to the planning merits in 99.9% of cases. The proposed change in my opinion achieves a sensible balance.

- 3.23 Revision 11 – Addition of Extensions of Time
The culture of the service is always to negotiate amendments to make a scheme acceptable (or improved) rather than issue a refusal. Whilst this process often takes longer than the target 8 weeks, it provides a better service for customers and will often require an extension of time to be agreed with the applicant. If they do not agree, we can proceed to determine with the information before us at that time.
- 3.24 For completeness, this process has been added to the scheme of delegation and is proposed as an officer rather than Committee function given it is usually an administrative task.
- 3.25 Revision 12 – Responding to WG Consultations
It is common for Welsh Government to consult with stakeholders where there is a pending change to policy (e.g. Planning Policy Wales or TAN's), regulations and primary legislation. The nature of the consultation exercise is technical in nature and may raise Borough specific issues e.g. the TAN 15 flooding consultation. Whilst these can be reported to Planning Committee retrospectively and Councillors may respond directly to WG in their capacity as an elected Member, it is proposed that officers be empowered to provide a professional view on the merits of any changes on behalf of the Council.
- 3.26 Revision 13 – Addition of RIPA Authorisation
It is open to a number of services within the Council to carry out covert surveillance where there is a suspected breach of the appropriate law/regulations. This is under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).
- 3.27 Wherever possible, the planning enforcement service avoids the use of RIPA and is very rarely used. Instead, we will notify a landowner that a breach is suspected and a site will be monitored i.e. overt or open surveillance. In our experience, notifying a landowner that a site will be monitored often results in a positive outcome. However, on rare occasions RIPA will need to be invoked. The Council has an adopted policy which requires an independent senior officer outside of the service to review the application for authorisation. This process will remain unchanged but is included for transparency.
- 4.0 **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
The report deals with governance arrangements for decision making. Indirectly this relates to the aims of these corporate documents by providing for an efficient and responsive service.
- 5.0 **Financial Implications Against Each Option**
No direct impact other than a related point picked up at 6.2
- 6.0 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**
- 6.1 It has been a concern for some time that Planning Committee are considering minor and householder applications that would be better decided at officer

level. This would be a quicker outcome and allows for Committee time to be devoted to more important and strategic decision making.

6.2 A number of the refusals issued by Planning Committee (contrary to officer recommendation) have resulted in appeals. Not only does this generate additional work for which there is limited capacity, the Inspector has awarded costs against the Council for unreasonable and unsubstantiated refusals. Conversely, a significant number of permissions issues against officer advice has undermined a number of adopted policies in the LDP.

3 The intended outcome of this revised scheme of delegation is that in future, we only present householder and minor applications to Planning Committee on an exception basis to mitigate this risk, speed up the process and improve the consistency of decision making.

6.4 I am mindful of the perception that Members may feel disenfranchised from the decision-making process. This perception is based on a misunderstanding of the role of Planning Committee. It is quasi-judicial and in most circumstances the outcome of an application should be the same given that the merits of a scheme are assessed against the same policies and principles.

7.0 **Legal**

The scheme of delegation forms part of the Constitution. It will require Council approval. Every Authority operates a different scheme to suit local circumstances. In preparing this report, I have reviewed the delegation arrangements in a number of other Welsh Councils.

8.0 **Human Resources**

No direct implications. However, fewer applications being presented to Committee will help reduce the time taken to decide applications and lessen workload demanded by the Committee cycle and report writing.

9.0 **Supporting Evidence**

9.1 I have compared our level of delegation against some neighbouring Councils. Unfortunately, Welsh Government have not published any comparative performance data for Wales for over a year. The latest data I can find is therefore for Q3 - October to December 2021. The data reveals the following:

9.2

Council	% Planning decisions under delegated powers
Blaenau Gwent	89%
Merthyr	100%
Caerphilly	98%
Torfaen	93%
Monmouthshire	95%

9.3 It is evident that our level of delegation is lower than our neighbours. Whilst not in itself a bad thing, this does support my view (shared by WAO) that not only is performance affected, but the agenda is also taken up by applications

that would be delegated elsewhere and therefore decided quicker. As a small authority, the proportion of minor and household applications is higher than in larger authorities, yet our Planning Committee continues to hear a greater proportion of cases.

- 9.4 The changes proposed are intended to increase this level of delegation to at least the low 90% in the interests of service efficiency. This may on occasion result in the cancellation of some Committees if suitable applications that meet the terms of the scheme are not ready to be presented.
- 9.5 One of the KPI's used by WG is the average number of days taken to decide applications. Speed of decision must be weighed against other measures of quality of service but it must be remembered that every applicant desires a speedy decision. This enables other aspects of a project to be planned such as buying materials, instructing contractors/builders and dealing with utilities.
- 9.6 The most recent published data reveals we take on average 88 days to decide each application. This compares favourably against an all-Wales average of 108 days and ranks us 11th out of 25 local planning authorities. However, 88 days (or over 12 weeks) is longer than the target of 56 days (8 weeks). Ideally, the average time taken should be reduced by at least 2-3 weeks.
- 9.7 The constraints of the Committee cycle mean that any application on the agenda is already over 8 weeks before it is considered. Upon receipt, every application usually takes a week to validate and register, then is the subject of consultation and publicity for at least 3 weeks. Committee meets once per calendar month (excluding May and August) with the deadline for reports typically 10 days prior. If any negotiation is required with the applicant/agent, this means a delay of at least a month which pushes up our average time taken indicator.
- 9.8 It is important for service users that we bring this figure down. The quickest Council was Merthyr who only took 55 days on average. It is no coincidence they delegated 100% of applications in that quarter. I am not proposing 100% delegation but a more reasonable and efficient use of resources and a compromise position where more straightforward applications are not placed on the Committee agenda.
- 10.0 ***Expected outcome for the public.***
Quicker and more consistent decision making.
- 10.1 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
This report seeks to update a document in need of review. It was also highlighted in recent discussions with WAO. Their final report is imminent.
- 10.2 I have discussed the issue with the Chief Legal Officer and key staff in the Planning Team.

- 10.3 It has also been discussed at length with the Chair of Committee and agreed to form part of a suite of documents that require updating.
- 11.0 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
Expectations of the service continue to increase. Having an efficient service with quick decision making is key to homeowners and businesses alike. Increasing the scheme of delegation is part of this process.
- 12.0 ***Preventative focus***
To avoid unnecessary and avoidable delays in dealing with planning applications.
- 13.0 ***Collaboration / partnership working.***
N/A
- 14.0 ***Integration (across service areas)***
N/A
- 15.0 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
No implications.
- 16.0 ***Monitoring Arrangements***
The service will monitor the impact of any change via KPI's.

Scheme of Delegation

Building Control	
Function	Delegation
Determination of Building Regulations applications	Service Manager Development & Estates
All enforcement matters including procedures concerning Dangerous Structures	Service Manager Development & Estates
Fee setting	Service Manager Development & Estates
Planning	
Function	Delegation
Screening and scoping opinions relating to Environmental Impact Assessment	Service Manager Development & Estates
¹ To offer professional planning advice under the local or national scheme for preliminary planning advice. Includes responding to pre-application (PAC) consultations for DNS.	Service Manager Development & Estates
² Consultation by neighbouring Local Planning Authority	Service Manager Development & Estates
Determination of all planning and related applications unless otherwise specified in the scheme of delegation. This shall include TPO, listed buildings, adverts, lawful development certificates, CAAD, CAC, s73, discharge of conditions, non-material amendments, prior notifications, reserved matters and hazardous substances consent. ³ To include cases where s106 obligations are applicable.	Service Manager Development & Estates
⁴ To decline to entertain an application when s70A of the Act applies	Service Manager Development & Estates
Major ⁵ residential applications of 10 or more units or site area 0.5ha or more.	Planning Committee
Approval of applications that are deemed to be a ⁶ material departure from the Local Development Plan.	Planning Committee
⁷ Applications for non-domestic renewable energy schemes (solar, hydro and wind) which give rise to concerns of noise, visual impact or other material concerns.	Planning Committee
⁸ Local Impact Report relating to Development of National Significance	Service Manager Development & Estates
<i>(Note: Members wishing to express a view on the merits of a scheme to submit representations direct to the Inspector by the prescribed deadline)</i>	

Applications in the opinion of the Service Manager are of wider public interest. Planning Committee

Where a Member submits a written request (within 21 days of application appearing on the published weekly list) citing material planning reasons that an application be heard at Planning Committee. Planning Committee
⁹ (Subject to call in request being approved by the Chair)

¹⁰ Applications submitted by an Officer of the Development & Estates team, an officer directly involved in the planning process or an elected Member of the Council (or on land/buildings in their ownership). Planning Committee

¹¹ To agree extensions of time on planning and related applications Service Manager Development & Estates

¹² To respond to consultations from Welsh Government on changes to policy, regulations and primary legislation. Service Manager Development & Estates

Planning Enforcement	
Function	Delegation
The service of a planning contravention notice (or other requisition for information), enforcement notice, breach of condition notice, s215 notice or enforcement under advertisement regulations.	Service Manager Development & Estates
Determination that no further action be taken where it is considered no breach or that it is not expedient to take enforcement action.	Service Manager Development & Estates
In emergencies, the service of a stop notice or injunction.	Service Manager Development & Estates (in consultation with Chair and Chief Legal Officer)
To instigate proceedings for non-return or non-compliance with a notice.	Service Manager Development & Estates
Cases which in the opinion of the Service Manager are of wider public interest given the circumstances of the case.	Planning Committee
¹³ RIPA Authorisations	Appropriate authorised officer signatory

Note: where authority is delegated to the Service Manager, this may be cascaded to other officers within the Team commensurate with seniority and experience.

Agenda Item 9

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Planning Committee**

Date of meeting: **15th June 2023**

Report Subject: **Understanding the well-being of Planners in Wales and Building Control Departments in the UK**

Report Submitted by: **Service Manager Development Services & Estates**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
X								Planning Committee

1. Purpose of the Report

To make Members aware of two recent reports that have been published by The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and Local Authority Building Control (LABC). These are the professional organisations representing planning officers and building control officers respectively. The reports examine the well-being of professionals working in their respective fields.

2. Scope and Background

Both Planning and Building Control play crucial roles in delivering a wide range of valuable outcomes such as addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies, economic development and supporting communities across Wales.

However, it is widely recognised that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and Building Control Departments, along with the wider public sector, are struggling to meet expectations with constant legislative and regulatory changes, recruitment challenges and trying to manage the well-being of their workforce.

In response to this, two important pieces of work have recently been commissioned which look at understanding the well-being of Planners and the current state of the Building Control Workforce. These documents respectively are called ‘The Big Conversation’ and ‘Building Control Workforce Insights’.

Full copies of both reports and the RTPI Wales follow up report are appended for Member’s information.

The Big Conversation

In 2022, RTPI Cymru set out to identify the issues facing the profession in trying to deliver the planning system. It was in direct response to a request by the Minister for Climate Change to understand the well-being of planners in Wales operating under challenging circumstances. The Big Conversation set out to better

understand the pressures being faced and undertake a health check of the profession in Wales.

Planning Departments in Welsh Councils have seen significant reductions in budgets along with reduced resources to other public services. Through a survey and roundtable discussions, they set out to better understand where the pressures are and how this is affecting those working in the system. They wanted to learn about good practice which is being used to address issues and possible action which could assist in relieving pressures.

The Big Conversation is focused on the well-being of those working in and delivering the planning system; it is not a review of the planning system or its policies. However, it does reflect on changes which could support the well-being issues identified and explore ways to alleviate pressures.

Headline Findings

- As previously identified by Audit Wales and Senedd Cymru's Public Accounts Committee, the workload of LPA's has increased alongside significant budget cuts. The Big Conversation found high levels of planners being overstretched in their work and this was having an impact on their well-being. 61% of all respondents reported being overstretched at least several times a week, 74% of LPA officers felt overstretched; 21% of all respondents felt they were overstretched all of the time.
- The need for planning to become more resilient as a profession was identified and particularly the resilience of planning officers in relation to handling difficult situations and high expectations.
- Whilst the Big Conversation identified weaknesses, it is also clear that services continue to be delivered and planners take pride in their role and value what they are delivering.
- A wide variety of issues were identified as the reason for the increase in workload. Reoccurring themes include staff resources and recruitment difficulties linked to pay and rewards, the expectations of developers, their agents, the public and politicians and the broadening of planning and process requirements.
- Availability of other specialist officers including ecologists, highways and drainage officers, was also identified as having an impact on workload. Staff resource issues of Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) were also raised as impacting on the delivery of services. There was also a suggestion that the private sector was under pressure, and this was resulting in poorer quality designs and applications, further impacting on the workload of LPAs.

- A lack of investment in digital resources to support planning delivery and a move to hybrid and remote working were also raised as factors.
- There were notable levels of abuse, partly encouraged through social media reported by those working in planning as well as intimidation, raising safety issues. The increasing levels of formal and informal complaints is having an impact on workload and time resource.

RTPI Cymru recognises that fully addressing the shortfall in investment and budgets for planning at the current time is not straightforward and there is a need to consider wider additional solutions. Those proposed are centred around:

- Increasing public sector resources to support planning.
- Improving the understanding of planning to support engagement and appreciation by others of the role of planning. This included providing better information for the public, but also targeting senior officials in local authorities, politicians and other public sector bodies.
- Exploring opportunities to grow the profession and encourage new entrants, as well as providing skills training across the profession.
- Investment in digital planning.
- Although the Big Conversation was not a review of the planning system itself, there were suggestions for amendments to the operation of the system to alleviate pressures. Regional planning was suggested as a way of sharing evidence gathering and pooling specialist resources.
- Finally, sharing good practice was an area raised which to provide a source of learning and development for individuals and organisations.

Following the publication of the report in January 2023, RTPI Cymru produced a follow-up paper (also appended) which provided their response to the findings and what they are committing to offer (tailored to Wales) in terms of support and upcoming plans. The RTPI confirmed they will also be encouraging other bodies to respond to the findings.

In terms of support the RTPI have confirmed that they will:

1. Provide well-being support for their members by partnering with Health Assured to provide help with mental wellbeing, legal advice and counselling (amongst other things).
2. A trust to provide support to families in financial hardship.
3. Undertake regular Member Surveys
4. Campaign for Chief Planners in every local authority (akin to other statutory roles such as s151 officer) whose key role should be to provide advice to the

local authority on spatial and place-based implications of decisions and investments.

5. Continue to engage with the Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW) to discuss issues and provide a Team-Wales approach to delivering a positive planning system in Wales.
6. Strive to improve perceptions of planning by developing communication strategies. This includes the public and politicians.
7. 'Grow our Own' by promoting careers in planning and working closely with Cardiff University. Look to set up recognised Apprenticeships
8. Share learning from digital planning strategies pursued elsewhere and will encourage Welsh Government to embark on such investment. This is a plan to use data and technology to transform the planning system and put data at the heart of decisions to create and shape great places.

What does this mean for Blaenau Gwent Planners?

This report was a refreshing read for the Council's Planners in that staff were reassured they aren't alone in terms of the daily pressures they face, particularly in terms of acknowledging workload and lack of specialist consultees.

Providing a resilient planning system requires all the constituent parts to be working efficiently particularly in a small authority like Blaenau Gwent. Unlike larger Council's, we do not enjoy the benefit of dedicated appeals officer, s106 officer, specialism in key areas like listed buildings or urban design/placemaking or a dedicated GIS officer. This places greater pressure on case officers who are unable to specialise in any particular area of work.

The planning system is reliant on input from a number of other professionals, and it should also be noted the pressures faced by key officers in other Departments. There are single points of failure in many areas and these officers also have responsibilities above and beyond their input into the planning system.

With regard to this point, I would specifically highlight highways, ecology, rights of way, trees and environmental health as key players. Their input as consultees on planning applications is required to enable planning officers to deal with the day-to-day case work. There is little resilience in the system meaning that staff absences or priorities to other work results in understandable delays for which the planning system is often blamed. This compounds the pressure on planning officers.

The Development Plans team comprises of just three officers; the smallest in the region. This presents its own challenges in terms of delivering the replacement LDP. Members will also be aware that in the near future, the region (via the CJC) will be faced with preparing a Strategic Development Plan (SDP). The means of delivering the SDP is yet to be agreed but it is going to be extremely challenging for the team to deliver on both fronts as well as fulfilling other responsibilities such as advising on policy matters to the planning applications team.

The RTPI have made it clear that all relevant bodies need to be looking at how the well-being of planners can be improved, their commitment on how to assist has already been set out above.

The findings of the report should be acknowledged by the Council and measures need to be embraced to ensure workload is effectively managed. Staffing levels and structures must be appropriate to meet a demanding workload, the team need to feel valued, their pay must fairly reflect their roles and responsibilities and that staff must receive the necessary support needed to constantly adapt and adjust to change.

It is also paramount that the team is future proofed in terms of succession for when older members of the team retire, or other members of the team leave for career opportunities. Training is key in achieving this along with ensuring that any recruitment opportunities that may arise within Blaenau Gwent are attractive to potential employees.

The Service Manager is working closely with the Corporate Director and Team Manager Development Management to ensure appropriate steps are being taken to achieve the above and is also working with OD in contributing to a departmental workforce plan.

The introduction of new I.T. software will revolutionise the way we work, making the process more efficient and easing some pressure in terms of workload. It will also increase our web presence and make us more visible for the public which may help in terms of perception and understanding of the role of a planner.

The Team also works very closely with other Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to discuss common issues and share and embrace new/improved working practices. Cumulatively, LPA's have a good working relationship with Welsh Government and meet twice a year to discuss common issues.

LPAs across Wales are all on a journey for change and Blaenau Gwent LPA is no exception. Some of the issues in tis report are already being addressed including revising many work practises which are currently being discussed with the Chair and will be brought to Members attention in the coming months.

Building Control Workforce Insights

This report was written by Kinetiq on behalf of LABC. They are a company that examines workforces and looks at ways to harness the energy of the workforce to achieve a sustainable, high performance work climate.

Kinetiq examined a number of critical questions about the state of the Building Control workforce in the UK:

- What is the overall composition of the workforce?
- How do employees perceive their working environment?

- What factors influence them to remain engaged with their work and 'minded' to stay with their organisations?

They used these questions help to inform a national debate about the health of the building control profession as it adapts to the imminent introduction of the Building Safety Act which is designed to ensure consistency across the building control profession and drive-up standards.

This new Act sees the creation of the Building Safety Regulator (BSR), headed up by the Chief Inspector of Buildings, who will be responsible for the oversight of Building Control Bodies (BCB's). The new regime will see the introduction of a register for all building control professionals undertaking restricted activities and / or functions and the new Operational Standard Rules.

Headline Findings

- The UK Building Control workforce is, predominantly white, male dominated and an ageing but experienced workforce.
- The best things experienced by the profession were feeling valued, job autonomy, work life balance and strong managerial support who are trying to raise the profile of building control.
- The most difficult challenges were identified as lack of resources and the sheer volume of work and the unrealistic expectations of staff, staff retention and the cost of living.
- The employing organisation "personality" was considered both positively and negatively. Some examples of the positive language used to describe the organisation was supportive, honest, caring, hardworking, diligent, helpful, committed, inclusive, fair, approachable and ambitious. Some examples of the negative language used were that the organisation is challenging, disorganised, slow, chaotic, outdated, slow, wounded, aging and old fashioned, dysfunctional, painful and overworked.
- Recruitment process issues were identified as having financial constraints, applicants had a lack of experience and that pay and benefits package isn't attractive.
- The new Registration Process will bring new challenges in terms of policy, process and procedures behind the process and ensuring the necessary support, training and development would be in place.
- In terms of workplace experience, the survey responses received were as follows:

The report concludes that the need to address the issues identified above is amplified by the age profile of the workforce. It is recognised that effective recruitment is required to offset the large proportion of the workforce that could be expected to leave through natural retirement in the coming years.

The need to obtain registration to practice under the new Building Safety Act, arguably adds further challenges to retaining the right people. In essence, recruitment into the profession is hampered by a lack of suitably qualified applicants.

Financial constraints are a contributing factor, potential applicants compare their expected overall financial package with opportunities elsewhere in the 'broader careers market'. The achievement of registration was also seen as a context for an enhancement to pay and conditions, in line with greater responsibilities.

What does this mean for Blaenau Gwent Building Control Department?

Members may be aware that within the last 2 years the Council's Building Control Section has suffered in terms of retention and recruitment of experienced staff.

Whilst the team is now at full capacity, the range of experience and knowledge varies considerably which has a significant impact on the team in terms of workload. This is exacerbated by the introduction of ever changing legislative and regulatory processes, in particular the Building Safety Act.

The results of the Kinetiq survey/report have been considered by the Council's Building Control Team and they are of the view that this is a fair representation of the way they feel.

Accordingly, it is vitally important that the Council seeks to ensure that considering the enforced changes coming into effect that the team feel valued, that their pay fairly reflects their roles and responsibilities and that they receive the necessary support needed to adapt and adjust to change.

It is also paramount that the team is future proofed in terms of succession for when older members of the team retire, or other members of the team leave for alternative opportunities. Training is key in achieving this along with ensuring that any recruitment opportunities that may arise within Blaenau Gwent are attractive to potential employees.

One of the key challenges is salary. Building Control competes with the private sector for work. Historically this Council has secured a high proportion of work from Approved Inspectors as the private sector has concentrated efforts to secure work in more lucrative areas like the M4 corridor. However, two things have changed in recent years:

Firstly, as build rates have improved in the valleys, there is a growing presence of AI's who are commonly used by national housebuilders rather than LABC services.

Secondly, with the shortage of new graduates entering the profession, AI's have been successfully employing local authority BCO's offering significantly higher salaries and benefits packages such as company cars, health insurance and professional fees paid as part of the contract of employment. Along with neighbouring authorities we have lost experienced staff to the private sector and replacing staff is proving extremely difficult. During the crisis in the Department

last year, it was only possible to recruit via an agency and staff costs were upwards of £55 per hour.

Again, the Service Manager is working very closely with the Building Control Team Leader to ensure appropriate steps are being taken to achieve the above and is also working with OD in contributing to a departmental workforce plan.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Note the content of the report and endorse the measures set out to protect well-being of staff, staff retention and building resilient teams.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The outcome of both pieces of work that were undertaken is that well-being at work amongst planners and building control officers in the public sector is suffering due to a number of factors. This view is shared by the staff in the Planning and Building Control Sections within the Council.

The well-being of staff is a key priority within the Council and the endorsement of the recommendations set out will ensure the Council is delivering in terms of its responsibilities and commitment to staff in protecting their well-being and staff retention. In retaining staff, we build stronger teams to deliver corporate objectives in a timely manner.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

We need to ensure that staff retention issues are addressed. Recruitment of experienced staff is difficult as well as the disruption caused by vacancies, the knock on stress for retained staff and of course the cost of recruitment is avoided where possible.

We need to ensure that all roles are paid competitively with other Council's and the competitive market within which they operate. This will entail Job Evaluation where required which could result in additional staffing costs.

There will be a cost in sourcing relevant training. This cost can be reduced by Training the Trainer.

5. ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

N/A

5.3 ***Legal***

N/A

5.4 ***Human Resources***

N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 Reports attached.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

None.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

N/A, this report is for information only and will be presented to the Planning Committee.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The discussion papers suggest measures that will future proof forward planning for both the Planning Department and Building Control.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Acknowledging the pressures being faced is the first step to addressing the underlying causes.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The services continue to collaborate with key partners through forums such as Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW), South East Wales Policy Group (SEWSPG), all Wales development Management Group and LABC.

We also work closely with other authorities more directly such as the LABC partnership scheme and with planning, we procure listed building advice from Mon CC.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The resilience of the planning and building control services is key to delivering these aspirations.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)***

N/A – no decisions required.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

Formal 1-2-1's on a quarterly basis

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- a. The Big Conversation
- b. RTPI Response to the Big Conversation
- c. Building Control Work Insights

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RTPI Cymru
Royal Town Planning Institute
Sefydliad Cynllunio Trefol Brenhinol

**RTPI
Research
Paper**

**JANUARY
2023**

THE BIG CONVERSATION:

**The well-being of planners and the impact
on the planning system in Wales**



RTPI champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. We have over 27,000 members in the private, public, academic and voluntary sectors and over 1,300 members in Wales. Using our expertise and research we bring evidence and thought leadership to shape planning policies and thinking, putting the profession at the heart of society's big debates. We set the standards of planning education and professional behaviour that give our members, wherever they work in the world, a unique ability to meet complex economic, social environmental and cultural challenges.

Acknowledgements

RTPI Cymru is grateful to everyone who engaged in the Big Conversation and shared their views and experiences.

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Executive Summary

Planning plays a crucial role in delivering a wide range of valuable outcomes – addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies, economic development and supporting communities across Wales. However, it is widely recognised that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), along with the wider public sector, are struggling to meet expectations and unlock the value planning has to offer with the current investment.

Responding to a request by Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change, to understand the well-being of planners in Wales operating under challenging circumstances, RTPI Cymru has explored the issues, impacts, causes and potential solutions to support the profession deliver the planning system in Wales, through the Big Conversation. The Big Conversation aims to better understand the pressures being faced and undertake a health check of the profession in Wales; it provides a detailed evidence base on which to take action. It provides indicators of action which could be taken by a range of stakeholders.

The Big Conversation is focused on the well-being of those working in and delivering the planning system; it is not a review of the planning system or its policies but does reflect on changes which could support the well-being issues identified and explore ways to alleviate pressures.

RTPI Cymru recognises that fully addressing the shortfall in investment and budgets for planning at the current time is not straightforward and there is a need to consider wider additional solutions.

As previously identified by Audit Wales and Senedd Cymru's Public Accounts Committee the workload of LPAs has increased alongside significant budget cuts. The Big Conversation found high levels of planners being overstretched in their work and this was having an impact on their well-being. 61% of all respondents reported being overstretched at least several times a week, 74% of LPA officers felt overstretched; a staggering 21% of all respondents felt they were overstretched all of the time.

The need for planning to become more resilient as a profession was identified and particularly the resilience of planning officers in relation to handling difficult situations and high expectations.

Whilst the Big Conversation identified weaknesses, it is also clear that services continue to be delivered and planners take pride in their role and they value what they are delivering.

A wide variety of issues were identified as the reason for the increase in workload. Reoccurring themes include staff resources and recruitment difficulties linked to pay and rewards, the expectations of developers, their agents, the public and politicians, the broadening of planning and process requirements.

Availability of other specialist officers including ecologists, highways and drainage officers, was also identified as having an impact on workload. Staff resource issues of Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) were also raised as impacting on the delivery of services. There was also a suggestion that the private sector was under pressure and this was resulting in poorer quality designs and applications, further impacting on the workload of LPAs.

A lack of investment in digital resources to support planning delivery and a move to hybrid and remote working were also raised as factors.

There were alarming levels of abuse, partly encouraged through social media, reported by those working in planning, as well as intimidation, raising safety issues. The increasing levels of formal and informal complaints is having an impact on workload and time resource.

A range of solutions were proposed which are centred around increasing public sector resources to support planning, improving the understanding of planning to support engagement and appreciation by others of the role of planning. This included providing better information for the public, but also targeting senior officials in local authorities, politicians and other public sector bodies. Exploring opportunities to grow the profession and encourage new entrants, as well as providing skills training across the profession were also suggested. Investment in digital planning is an area which needs addressing. Although the Big Conversation was not a review of the planning system, there were some suggestions for amendments to the operation of the system to alleviate pressures. Regional planning was suggested as a way of sharing evidence gathering and pooling specialist resources. Finally, sharing good practice was an area raised which to provide a source of learning and development for individuals and organisations.

This report of the Big Conversation will be provide to Welsh Government for their response. The RTPI is also able to respond to some of the issues and provide support and we will be responding through our own action plan.

1. Introduction

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Responding to a request by Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change, to understand the well-being of planners in Wales operating under challenging circumstances, RTPI Cymru has explored the issues, impacts, causes and potential solutions to support the profession deliver the planning system in Wales, through the Big Conversation. The Big Conversation aims to better understand the pressures being faced and undertake a health check of the profession in Wales; it provides a detailed evidence base on which to take action. It provides indicators of action which could be taken, not just by the RTPI, but also Welsh Government and other stakeholders.

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The Big Conversation is focused on the well-being of those working in and delivering the planning system; it is not a review of the planning system or its policies but does reflect on changes which could support the well-being issues identified and explore ways to alleviate pressures.

2. Methodology / What we did

The principal source for investigating the issues has been through a survey. The survey explores the experiences of working in the planning system today and was aimed at the whole profession.

The aim was to have a wide response across Wales, different sectors and parts of the profession, and also those that are not RTPI members. It was promoted to all RTPI members in Wales via e-mail and in our e-bulletins. Targeted e-mails were also sent to PEDW, Welsh Government, planning consultancies, and POSW (Planning Officers Society for Wales) to encourage engagement.

The survey was supplemented by roundtables and discussions with planners across Wales, including Young Planners Cymru.

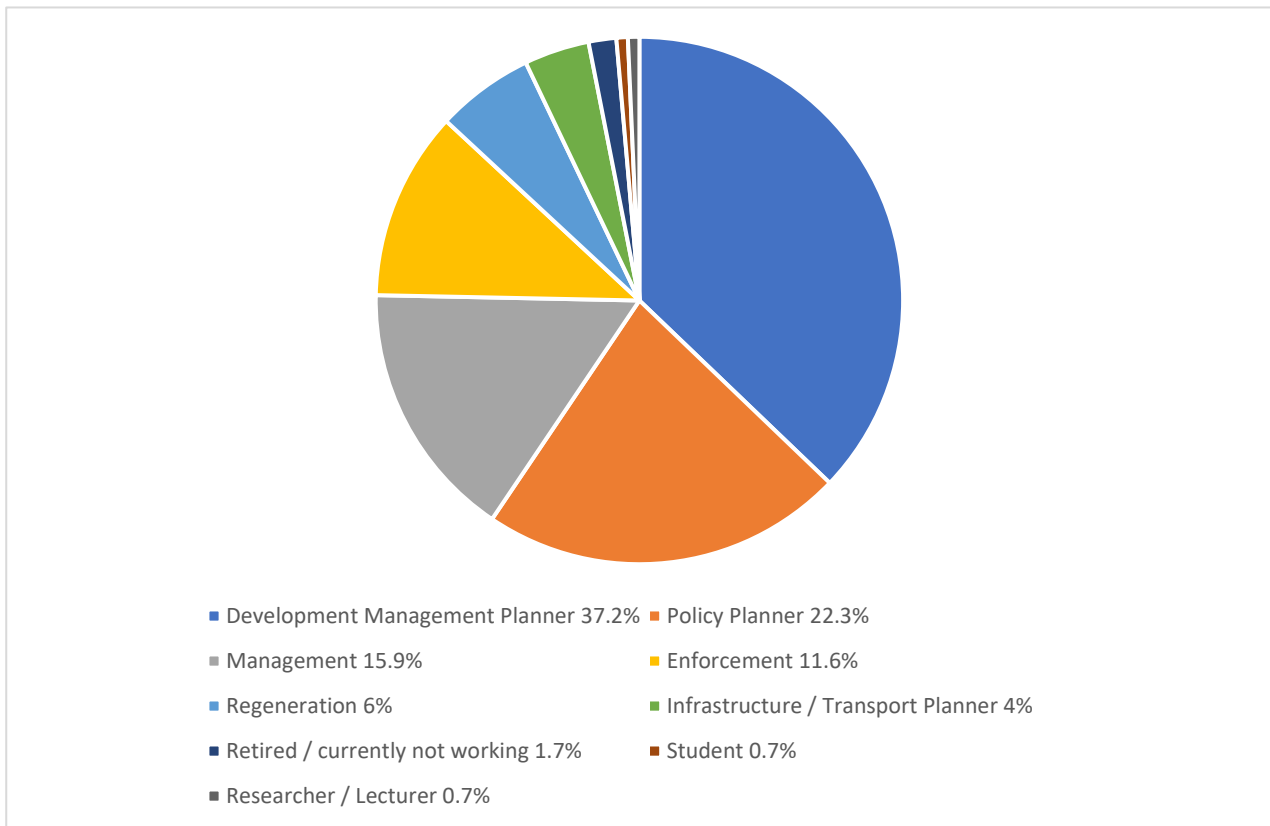
The survey, which was available in Welsh and English, ran from the beginning of August until the 9th September. We had a very good response to the survey and incredibly valuable information has been shared.

The response rate can be summarised as follows:

- Total of 209 responses (7 in Welsh)
- The average time taken to respond was around 40 minutes, demonstrating the effort responders put into their responses
- 18% of respondents were not RTPI members (reaching beyond the RTPI membership)

- 15% of our members in Wales have responded – this is a high rate compared to other surveys we have run and other similar surveys
- This rises to 21%, if you take out those members not currently working such as students and retired members (it is less relevant for them).
- 23% of respondents are in the private sector, 63% in Local Planning Authorities, 9% in other public sector, 3% 'other' (mainly third sector) and 2% not working, which reflects the RTPI membership.
- The geographic spread of responses is in line with the general population. (18% all-Wales, 11% Mid Wales, 20% North Wales, 37% South East Wales, 14% South West Wales).

In terms of roles, the spread of respondents was as follows:



The response rate gives us confidence that the survey results are reliable and representative.

We also note a meeting of the Executive Board of Wrexham County Borough Council held on 8th March 2022, discussed a Planning Performance Review¹ undertaken by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) with support from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). This report was commissioned in response to concerns raised by Elected Members and some local residents regarding the Council's performance in the area of planning. We have reflected on the key findings of this report where it provides evidence for the Big Conversation also.

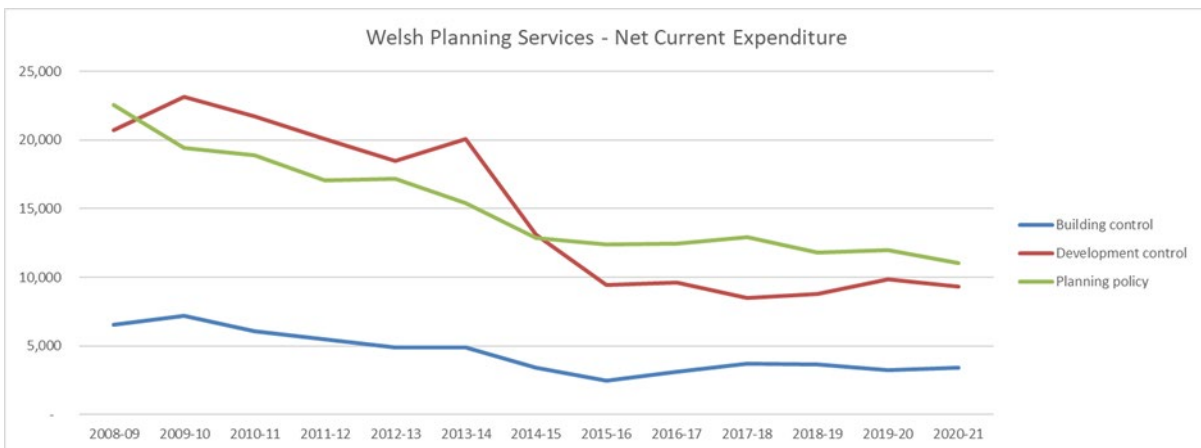
¹ <https://moderngov.wrexham.gov.uk/documents/s24598/Item%2011.pdf?LLL=0>

3. Background

For the planning system in Wales to fulfil its statutory duties and deliver quality placemaking there is a critical need for more investment. LPA departments are significantly underfunded, and research shows that planning services are suffering most severely of all local government services due to budget cuts.

In 2019, Audit Wales published a report on a national review of the planning system in Wales. The review focused on all key functions of LPAs - planning policy, development control, and building management. Overall, the review highlighted a planning system that was struggling to deliver against the ambitions of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and to implement national policy. Specifically in terms of development management, the review found that capacity was stretched, planning authorities were struggling to deliver key functions, and there was limited progress on improving resilience.

Analysis by Audit Wales² shows that “*all planning services – policy, development and building control – have, since 2008-09, seen significant cuts in expenditure with budgets having fallen by 50% in real terms, considering inflation. Net expenditure has fallen from £45 million in 2008-09 to £22.8 million in 2017-18. The biggest cut has been to development control budgets where spend has reduced by 59%.*”



Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament's Public Accounts Committee published its report into The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales³ in June 2020. The report stated:

“Our overall conclusion is that Planning is critical but at present it is not able to deliver the aspirations of the Planning, Environment and Well-being of Future Generations Acts because of reductions in resources.”

The Committee reached the same conclusions as the Auditor General for Wales and the issue that planning services are not adequately resourced to undertake their important role. This is a critical issue and has increased in importance in the response needed to address the economic and

² https://audit.wales/sites/default/files/planning-services-2019-full-report-english_5.pdf

³ <https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s102542/Committee%20Report%20-%20Effectiveness%20of%20Local%20Planning%20Authorities%20in%20Wales%20June%202020%20PDF%201196KB.pdf>

place-based inequalities caused and highlighted by the pandemic. The lockdown situation has also drawn wider attention to the positive value of our local areas and communities, lower levels of pollution and the benefits of walking and cycling. Planning can help retain and embed these benefits.

RTPI Cymru welcomed the Committee's attention to the need to raise the status of and recognising the central importance of planning to the well-being of future generations.

3.1 Recent RTPI research outside Wales

3.1.1 Scotland

RTPI Scotland its published analysis⁴ of resourcing in the Scottish planning service in 2022. This reflects the position that planning authorities' budgets have diminished in real terms by 38% since 2009. The key findings are:

- The planning service is the one of the most severely affected of all local government services in terms of budgets with a reduction of 38% since 2010;
- A quarter of planning department staff have been cut since 2009;
- Planning application fees do not cover the costs of processing planning applications;
- The new Planning Act has introduced 49 unfunded duties to local authorities which could cost between £12.1m and £59.1m over ten years to implement;
- It is estimated that over the next 10 to 15 years the planning sector will have demand for an additional 680 - 730 entrants into the sector; and
- The planning workforce has both demographic and succession challenges in the short, medium and long term.

3.1.2 Enforcement in England

In England, at the request of the UK Government's Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities the RTPI published research⁵ in 2022, with the aim of attaining a clearer understanding of what is happening on the ground with planning enforcement.

The research highlighted a crisis in planning enforcement with unmanageable workloads and insufficient staff, leading to an inability to meet public demand.

3.2 Opportunities and Challenges

We asked what the greatest opportunities and challenges were for the profession and planners in Wales, we have summarised these below to help set the context for the Big Conversation.

6.1 Opportunities

Planning in Wales has the opportunity to create positive and proactive change and to encourage better quality design and more environmentally conscious construction.

⁴ www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2022/december/resourcing-the-planning-service-key-trends-and-findings-2022/

⁵ www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2022/november/planning-enforcement-resourcing/

To become recognised as the leaders for promoting and delivery of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and raising the planning profile.

Welsh Government Ministers value the contribution planning makes to their agenda.

Having a new younger workforce will bring a new dynamic.

To deliver fantastic schemes, homes, communities, improve infrastructure, better communities, provide jobs.

6.2 Challenges

Under-resourced LPAs including the recruitment and retention of competent officers, making it attractive to young people and salaries.

Raising climate change / nature recovery to the top agenda in national and regional policy.

Raising the profile of the profession especially with local politicians and elected representatives who do not understand the planning system and do not seem to value it and the negative press.

Passing experience on to young colleagues.

Consistency of decision making and improving development.

Stakeholders too unaccountable for their actions and implications it has on the planning process.

Public perception of what the role is and this insufficient interest in people joining the profession and maintaining a career in planning.

The 'drifting of knowledgeable and experienced staff into the private sector'.

4. How is your well-being?

At the heart of the Minister's request for the Big Conversation was the well-being of those delivering the planning system.

“To identify actions to protect and strengthen the profession to be able to carry out the vitally important work we ask of it.” Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change

Respondents shared with us their experiences and clearly set out the challenging environment they are operating in.

“Last two years [during the pandemic] have been extremely challenging and have left their psychological scars.”

The survey found high levels of planners being overstretched in their work and this was having an impact on their well-being. 61% of all respondents reported being overstretched at least several times a week, 74% of LPA officers felt overstretched; a staggering 21% of all respondents felt they were overstretched all of the time. Just 9% of respondents do not feel overstretched and a further 6% who whilst overstretched, liked it that way.

“A combination of a reduction in staff, an increase in unnecessary correspondence, unnecessary workload / complexity in some simple processes.”

“I can’t really express how difficult planning is as a career at the moment. It used to be enjoyable and now it feels like walking through treacle (even for applications which should be simple), due to ridiculous decisions being made by local authorities (largely councillors, not officers) and Welsh Government.”

In the current situation with the cost of living crisis etc. concern was raised which will not be exclusive to the planning profession:

“The worry of paying for the bills and working is overbearing at times.”

The need for planning to become more resilient as a profession was identified and particularly the resilience of planning officers in relation to handling difficult situations and high expectations.

5. Findings

The effects of the budget cuts and impact on those working in planning in Wales are multi-faceted, and we set out the principle ones raised in the Big Conversation here.

5.1 Workload

“There is a desperate need for solutions to address workload issues.”

The majority of respondents reported an increase in their workload and remit in the past two years. The survey reports to significant periods of time where most respondents are unable to carry out their work. The majority of LPA respondents (74%) feel overstretched several or more times a week. This is less of a case with those in other sectors, especially private consultancy respondents who mostly felt overstretched on an occasional basis. Predominantly respondents aged between 45 and 64 years’ experience being overstretched all the time, which is more than other age groups; this may be down to experience and more senior roles which have increased responsibilities or wider portfolios.

The data clearly shows those working in enforcement are most likely to feel overstretched all of the time (37.1%), followed by Development Management Planners (29.2%) then Management (27.1%).

North, South East and South West Wales respondents saw the highest number of those who are overstretched all the time. Whereas those in Mid Wales had a doubling of the percentage of respondents seeing an increase in the past six months. It is to be noted that all Regions across Wales are overstretched at least occasionally and often more frequently.

Across all sectors, it can be seen that there are significant periods where there is not enough time to carry out workloads. 20% of LPA respondents never have enough time and 50% have significant periods where there is not enough time.

There seems to be a common pattern that the workload has increased over the past two years for about 60% of the respondents. This points towards the pandemic and the recovery, on top of periods of austerity and public sector budget constraints.

There is also a clear lack of sufficient time for Welsh Government bodies to carry out their work. The capacity of the Planning Directorate of Welsh Government was highlighted as an issue, with a reduced number of staff and impacting on the ability to support the system in terms of policy updating and supporting the roll-out and implementation of planning. This is impacting on all others involved in delivering planning services.

“Really, for private sector planners, the main issue ... is workload which is being compounded at the moment because there simply aren't enough planners. Recruitment is an absolute nightmare.”

An issue raised across public sector respondents:

“It is so frustrating to feel unable to deliver that [effective LPA] service. It's not what any of us want.”

A wide variety of issues have been raised regarding the reason for the increase in workload. The reoccurring themes, are:

- Staff resources
- Operational issues
- Public expectation
- Broadening of planning
- Process requirements
- Politics

Across the majority of responses and discussions to the Big Conversation, there was an overarching need identified for a great deal more resources to address the issues.

“The cuts over the past decade have had a detrimental effect on the sector”.

“Demands on the sector continue to increase, and public and developer expectations are very high”.

“There is little recognition for the enormous commitment conscientious officers give”.

“The sector is in very bad shape – this is not sustainable at all”.

Many private sector respondents felt that resourcing LPAs would be a solution to their workload issues.

“It has become increasingly difficult to speak to Local Authority planners and to get a useful response from them. This impacts on my work and how we in the private sector are viewed by clients as they don't believe us when we say that we can't get a response or have a conversation.”

“Better resourced and staffed local authorities, with a better customer facing culture, more communicative, accessible and constructive will reduce wasted time and stress for me and less despair and despondency among clients.”

There were also many positive viewpoints, such as:

“I work with a fantastic team so it would have to be a very interesting and well paid role for me to consider leaving.”

The report for Wrexham Council⁶ also highlighted the need for a review of staff resources:

“Financial pressures over recent years have led to reductions in staffing levels in the normal establishment. Furthermore, in common with many authorities, Wrexham has experienced problems in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly suitably qualified planning officers. This has meant that staff have been working under significant pressure and where staff have changed roles to deal with peaks in workload, the problems have been exacerbated by a lack of continuity.”

5.2 Workforce / Employment

The lack of staff resource was consistently raised by most respondents as a reason for an increase in workloads, compounded by the need to cover vacant posts and sick leave.

An important factor is to recognise the wider picture of ‘resources’ and the interlinked issues of budgets, skills, experience, salaries, training, and career progression opportunities in relation to recruitment.

5.2.1 Recruitment

Recruitment is a significant challenge across the board. Recruitment of talented people is challenging in Wales given the smaller pool of planners, there is a lot of competition and *“we are seeing a merry-go-round in both public and private sectors”* *“which creates an unsettled work environment”*.

We are “carrying a number of vacancies and recruiting the right officers is proving very difficult”.

There is also an identified need for more experienced and specialist staff.

Those with temporary contracts in their structure point to some flexibility but also the inability to renew temporary contracts would have a significant impact on delivery. There is also a risk that temporary employees could be lost if they were to look for permanent posts elsewhere.

Responses indicated that smaller planning teams, with less capacity to cover sickness and vacant posts etc. are finding themselves particularly stretched in terms of staffing and workload, with the added difficulties of recruiting in rural areas of Wales. There is also little scope for career progression in these instances.

The need for Welsh language as an essential requirement for post holders is an issue compounding recruitment of planners in a number of areas across Wales.

⁶ <https://moderngov.wrexham.gov.uk/documents/s24598/Item%2011.pdf?LLL=0>

5.2.2 Pay and Rewards

Salaries were regarded as not competitive enough to attract the right talent needed, and *“compared to other professions, ... particularly in Wales, which may be giving rise to issues of recruitment.”*

A particular issue was raised in relation to local government salaries which are assessed through a standardised Job Evaluation process. This restricts the opportunity to enhance salaries to make them competitive and attractive to potential candidates. There were several recent cases highlighted where no candidates applied for posts.

A problem specific to planning recognised by respondents across all sectors was that *“We deal with a lot of controversial things in planning.” In local government “There are officers who are project managers who don't deal with [controversial matters] and are paid a similar amount.”* It was considered that commitment and expertise are not fairly re-numerated. There appears to be little incentive for people to become Chartered and hold the benefits that come with a professional.

5.2.3 Career Changes

It appears that most people are looking to stay in their job or a planning role, however around 10% are looking to move out of planning. LPAs have the highest percentage of respondents looking to exit the planning sphere (15%), as well as the highest percentage of those who are looking for another job in planning (24%). However, it is to be noted that there is a strong majority amongst all sectors intending to stay in their current role (89.4%), which is positive.

Those in enforcement work were the majority looking to move outside of planning 14.3%, followed by development management, planning policy and regeneration.

5.2.4 Employer Support

There is acknowledgment from LPA respondents overall of support from employers (Somewhat - 65%), However, only a third of Development Management Planners and Enforcement Officers believe they have the right support. 64% of private consultancy respondents believe they have enough support.

All age groups experience relatively similar levels of support; although those in the 18-24 and 55–64 year-old groups reported the highest number indicating they do not receive the right support (21 and 25% respectively).

5.2.5 Training and development

Training was considered an issue for both the private and public sectors. One LPA respondent felt *“Inappropriate training – with not enough focus on design skills and [perhaps an] increase in agents who are not architecturally trained.”* Another respondent noted, *“I have no specialist training and would fail under cross examination at appeal.”*

Support for training and development has reduced and is impacted on time to attend and reduced budgets, including for travel if a face-to-face option, which gives other benefits than on-line training with the opportunity for wider exchange of experience and discussion.

Mentoring from senior members of staff was highlighted as a benefit, particularly for new members of teams. Informal advice and support from experienced colleagues was highlighted as a good way forward, however new working patterns and the volume of work makes it difficult to adopt a mentoring relationship between more and less experienced colleagues.

5.2.6 Wider Staff Resources

Although the need for additional qualified planners (at all levels) is critical, one of the biggest issues currently relates to 'supporting functions' and their own inability to source and retain staff, notably biodiversity and drainage. Like planning, these critical functions are similarly under-resourced and lack sufficient training pathways to ensure that LPAs can support the delivery of quality development quickly.

“Priorities of disciplines that the planning service rely upon are not always responding to planning consultations.”

One LPA respondent noted that when the new TAN15 comes into force, new duties will be difficult to assess without specialist input e.g. surface water drainage plans. Biodiversity / ecology and flooding / drainage were seen as the most difficult specialist issues needing resourcing. However, closely behind is Impact Assessment and viability.

The importance of adequate resources to support statutory consultees and other organisations and services that work closely with planning was also identified as needing to be addressed. The need for high quality, timely input from specialist and statutory consultees came out strongly and relates back to the issue of resources for planning and support services.

“Performance relies on the speed of our consultees such as Highways and Ecology and these local authority departments are also struggling with resources and recruitment which means that they cannot respond quickly or in full and this impacts on LPA services both in terms of the ability to provide timely and informed decisions and the perception of the planning process by customers.”

Contributions from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) were raised in particular, as well as other stakeholder / statutory consultees. Engagement from NRW was reported as poor, often rejecting paid for requests for advice or discussion, and significant inconsistencies between advice across Welsh regions.

The need for Cadw to offer a formal advice service during the determination of Listed Building consents applications and planning applications which may affect a heritage asset in the same way NRW provide advice to LPAs, was also raised.

Legal support for LPAs was raised as an issue:

“Lack of appropriate legal support in planning ranging from planning obligations delivery to expert advice / guidance on legal matters / case law interpretation.”

Other local government services were also highlighted as impacting on planning services indirectly. For example, the capacity of HR Departments to support recruitment exercises and one case noted the time delays caused by Welsh translation, indicating that the wider support system also needs resourcing. The issue of Welsh translation was raised specifically in relation to Local Development Plan (LDP) drafting: *“Welsh translation is now on our risk register for the delivery of the LDP within the necessary timescales.”*

“The need to have every technical document which informs the evidence base translated into Welsh is having negative impacts on delivery and lead-in timescales, particularly with the need to front-load to get to Preferred Strategy. With the best will

in the world, there are only a finite number of Welsh translators who can handle technical planning documents and they are being pulled in a number of directions.”

5.3 Understanding of Planning and its Services

Better understanding that planning is not just a 'tick box' exercise by those outside the profession is essential. It was suggested there needs to be acknowledgement that planning is a profession with necessarily high standards and an appreciation of the complexity of its processes. Understanding of the wider beneficial impacts of good planning would bring benefits to local authorities, businesses and communities.

5.3.1 Media

The impact of the UK Government's perceived lack of value of planning was raised by private and public sector responses; it was felt that planning was used as a “*political football*” and this is captured by the UK media and the messaging is then picked up by the public in Wales, even though the planning system is devolved and operates differently.

It was suggested that local media needed to be better informed on planning, as current reporting “*tends to stir up misconceptions*”. The problem “*is the constant undermining and criticism of the profession by media, politicians, celebrities on TV. etc at every opportunity*”.

A number of respondents highlighted the need for the RTPI to be more proactive with the media to support planners and “*speak out for us*”. It was suggested that other professions are more vocal than the RTPI on these issues.

“We are a very insular profession often talking largely to ourselves. We need to be more vocal and take steps to spread the positive message. This message needs to be spread with both politicians and non-politicians.” There is a “**big role for the RTPI who are noticeably quieter and less impactful than other similar professional bodies.**”

5.3.2 Corporate Public Sector Understanding

Particularly in LPA responses there was a need identified for wider appreciation and understanding of planning services by senior management in local authorities. “*There is no corporate awareness of the complexity of planning and the pressures which the sector and those who operate in this sector.*”

“At the top level, there is sometimes a lack of understanding of just how difficult a work area planning is - there is a perception that lots of issues and negative feedback from outside the organisation means that the planning service is failing - but nothing could be further from the truth.”

“The pressure to be helpful and 'developer-friendly' inevitably leads to some compromises regarding professional ethics. Balanced views are not always presented to committee or within reports.”

“There is a lack of recognition across the wider organisation of what planning is, planning does and the benefits of good planning.”

Planning services are often described as a barrier, a problem, or as an obstacle to be overcome.

“This is disheartening, demotivating and whether intentional or not at times actively undermining. This wider recognition and support would make a huge day-to-day difference.”

5.3.4 Members and Politicians

Local politics was raised in relation to workload, indicating there was more political interest in minor policy areas. While it equally reads like good practice in supporting the planning process through democratic engagement; this constructive political engagement could be more efficiently embedded into the early stages.

There was a need identified for politicians to understand the complexity of the system and the impact they can have on timescales for developments.

Respect for officers by councillors was another issue raised by several respondents. This is not relevant to all Authorities, but some referred to *“appalling treatment from elected members”* and *“unreasonable and unrealistic demands of Councillors”* with *“Officers frequently reduced to tears”*. Some referenced the loss of staff *“mainly and largely due to the parochial and appalling treatment of members and the inertia of monitoring officers”*.

Consideration of ways to improve the working relationship between members and officers would be helpful, but resources are so stretched that good practice may be difficult to embed and put into practice. Controversial Local Development Plan (LDP) consultations or applications were put forward as an example where this would be beneficial. It was asked if more controversial consultations and development would be better managed and communicated to the public with more staff and / or with a better working relationship with Members.

The report for Wrexham Council⁷ identified that behaviours at Planning Committee “are in the most part appropriate but there is a general acceptance that relationships between some Councillors and officers have deteriorated.”

5.3.4 Public expectation

The public’s expectation of planners and the system is considered by many respondents (mainly LPA respondents) to have risen and attitudes changed towards planners. The expectation from the public is that planners should / must respond immediately.

“The main negative is the relentless complaints and criticism from the public - often vitriolic and personal. ‘Thank you’ from senior management and Councillors helps, but ultimately the current situation with the public makes it a thankless task and pretty depressing.”

“People’s expectations to respond immediately to emails and the volume of emails is unsustainable and prevents me from getting any work done.”

5.3.5 Developers and Other Built Environment Professionals

There was a clear message of need for other professions to see the bigger picture to achieve better outcomes for competing consenting regimes. Planning is frequently, and not always fairly, blamed for holding projects up or for being bureaucratic.

⁷ <https://moderngov.wrexham.gov.uk/documents/s24598/Item%2011.pdf?LLL=0>

Developer expectations of when applications should be determined is a regular source of pressure. Expectations need to be managed but it is not uncommon for developers to approach line managers / senior officer / politicians to influence the timescales.

Some identified there was a need for clients to be advised their expectations and timescales are not always reasonable, and they are not the only client, and it is important to provide all the information required as early as possible in the process.

5.4 Delivering Planning Services

The Big Conversation is not intended as a review of the planning system or policy, but is concerned with finding opportunities for relieving pressures and enabling the system to work more efficiently and effectively to deliver outcomes and support those delivering the system.

“We believe that Welsh Government’s planning policy is far superior to that in England, but there is a need for policy to move up a gear quickly in terms of responding to the climate and biological emergency.”

Comments on resources are closely linked with operational issues, such as ways of working and roles. Many of the operational issues are interlinked, impacting on each other and other areas. For the purposes of this ‘operational issues’ include planning administration, communication, ways of working, digital planning and IT i.e. the issues which impact on the day to day running of the service or business.

LDP drafting, adoption and decision making within LPAs is considered to be slow, however one respondent noted that:

“A high approval rating and appeal-winning are not necessarily evidence of commitment to improve the environment for all”.

An over-reliance on external consultants to undertake regulation work was highlighted as not always the most cost-effective approach and the money may be better invested on developing staff resources.

Some referred to too much reliance on specific individuals within the team to plan, manage and deliver, which can be beyond their responsibilities *“This causes anxiety and resentment.”*

Time availability is an important point to consider. *“Time to think about casework, to negotiate better outcomes and work together to deliver best practice”* were echoed across a number of respondents.

“...for staff, it's about having discussions about caseloads, understanding priorities and having reasonable targets to achieve rather than staff feeling overwhelmed and keeping that to themselves. Ways of working, increasing staff, technology etc. can help but not having enough time is about time and work management.”

5.4.1 Development Management

A small few felt there were little or no issues / gaps in LDP or National planning policy affecting the development management process.

“There are some gaps, but generally it is okay. Would prefer resources put into day to day running of system rather than tinker further.”

Areas of need identified were more in relation to understanding and applying policy.

Where issues or gaps were raised, there was a re-occurring environmental theme. Although the topic areas were largely environmental, these were broad and varied in themselves, ranging from phosphates to sustainability appraisal. These specialist issues were highlighted as difficult to address for public sector bodies, including LPAs, and also the private sector.

Equally, viability also came up throughout the responses.

“Viability assessments via the District Valuer delay applications for months ... We need a fundamental review.”

“Developers only have a short-term view of viability and do not have a full appreciation of whole life costing. Designs are therefore often biased towards lowest construction costs, which often means much higher whole life costs. This leads to a direct conflict when measuring LDP decisions against the Well-being of Future Generations Act.”

“Better powers to meet the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act. Stakeholders are simply proposing bat boxes as part of any new development as a way to 'enhance' the development biodiversity; whereas more powers need to be conferred on tree, hedge, habitat planting and connectivity so as to enhance the sites naturally through actual habitat implementation and / or bolstering / connecting existing, rather than 'unnaturally' (man-made bat box, which can be nothing but 'box-ticking' when there is no habitat for the bats to use).”

The Section 6 duty to enhance biodiversity has been raised as not being supported by planners. Although this was also linked to the lack of availability of specialist ecology input. Typically costs of implementation will be argued in terms of viability.

There is a “general lack of ecological expertise and understanding of the Resilient Wales Goal in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Mitigation to development is not monitored and generally doesn't happen to result in a net loss of biodiversity. There is no integration or consideration of nature-based solutions. Even when SuDS are implemented, the planting has little ecological value as consultants lack the skills / willingness to adapt planting regimes. Many opportunities to incorporate biodiversity by design are missed as those in the third sector that can advise are not consulted.”

The issues of flooding, drainage and phosphates were also repeatedly raised by both public and private sectors and the impact this is having in progressing development designs, applications and evidence gathering.

“Sustainability appraisal is a typical and consistent item not covered enough in terms of training / outcomes and skills. This tool is key to delivery against wellbeing goals and quite often outsourced / not integrated into plan and evidence like flood risk and climate change does influence plan development.”

This was echoed by:

“Sustainability - it’s become so complex and there aren’t the tools to make assessments.”

Some agents feel unable to respond to requests for information, and the time involved, by LPA officers, to justify items for neighbour amenity.

In summary, the topics **most** raised as having an impact on resources are:

Water based topics	Natural Environment topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SABs and SuDS, in particular SAB process issues. Some referred to <i>“excruciatingly difficult to progress in line with planning timescales.”</i> • Phosphates and nutrient neutrality; • Uncertainty around TAN15 and placemaking; • Green infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecology – There appears to be capacity issues in relation to ecology. <i>“We haven’t managed to employ an Ecology Officer for months.”</i> • Trees – planting, aftercare and on-going maintenance; • Landscape specialists, visual impact, and cultural heritage, Loss of best and most versatile land
Broader topics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viability • Impact assessment (equality, Welsh Language Assessments); • Minerals; • Quality of design skills – <i>“generally poor on applications”</i> • Renewables; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net zero; • Transport and highways – still very much focused on car-based solutions; • Conservation heritage; • One planet development; • Understanding infrastructure and service capacity.

There was a difference of opinion between some sectors, illustrated by these quotations:

“Achieving a high quality of design in a protected landscape - agents submit the cheapest form of design possible, which is harmful to the landscape quality. Negotiating redesign to bring up the quality of the scheme is incredibly time consuming. My job does not allow me this time” versus **“onerous councils who drag feet”**.

A respondent noted:

“Developers are rarely open book and this can result in severe grind for major applications (and more minor applications in our case), as it is often central to proper consideration of development impacts and mitigation.”

The quality of applications submitted was raised a number of times,

“An obvious solution is to increase local government staff / resources, but also the standard of planning applications is generally low – which makes our job more difficult.”

One respondent felt it was an issue of more training,

“many applications could be improved on in design terms but Development Management are on the backfoot once an application is registered and feel they cannot go back to improve on design standards.”

Quality and standards were raised as a factor in increasing workloads. The lower quality of schemes being submitted including drawings, design, and agents not front-loading applications lead to lots of inaccuracies and negotiating on the design within the application process.

Better understanding of the LPA process and what is required at each stage and to process applications was suggested. It was noted *“the private sector are busy, but application quality is suffering because of this”*; a message that resonates with other comments throughout the survey.

“The problem is more that LDPs are far too detailed to the extent that development management is becoming a box ticking exercise. Officers (and Inspectors) are losing the skills / do not have confidence to take a more balanced approach to decision making.”

Administration

Operational and smarter working was discussed throughout the survey responses, including the role of planning administrators and technicians.

A common theme was the amount of administration being carried out by qualified planners. This was raised by both the public and private sectors. Administrative staff can be a more efficient way of undertaking the background checks, managing applications through the system and sending out communications etc. It is important to recognise that planning teams are set up differently across Wales, some with large administration teams, others with smaller or no administration teams.

The survey highlighted that the deletion of administrative posts has placed more pressure on officers and technical staff and this may be part of the cause of the increase in workload for planning officers. Many respondents felt this has risen significantly.

Minerals and Waste Specialisms

It is important to also recognise the issues impacting on minerals and waste planners, one respondent commented,

“There has been an increase in DNS (Developments of National Significance) and NSIP (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) / DCO (Development Consent Order) projects which we are increasingly dealing with Also, the demand for aggregate minerals have increased with a number of sites needing large extensions which is resulting on additional demands on the small service.”

Timescales

Greater consistency and timeliness was an issue raised by private sector respondents, as a way of better supporting them. *“Planning departments do not work to planning timescales,”* whereas statutory undertakers and other public services plan through different processes and different timescales, for example water companies work on five years.

Welsh Government's annual capital projects were raised as influencing workloads. The timetable for implementing capital programmes and grant awards often do not take account of the design and planning timescales and frequently planning processes are put under pressure to meet tight timetables and are blamed if not met.

5.4.2 Policy

There is common trend amongst all sectors that a majority of respondents believe there are changes needed to be made to the LDP process to bring forward efficiencies. In particular, there seems to be a lack of sufficient access to external specialist support.

In relation to the LDP process, one private sector respondent commented,

“As private planners we are often asked to contribute [to LDP process], and we do. The LDP is a larger document which takes months / years to prepare and then the public / consultants / groups are asked to comment. It takes a long time to read, familiarise / absorb / think about and comment on. Could maybe general policies be separated from maps to break down the consultation process and develop policies and maps in tandem? [The] Public are generally interested in what is proposed in their area i.e. the maps. Please note all this contribution by private planners is at our cost!”

Another perspective given was:

“There have been major challenges in moving LDP review forward at my authority. Delays have been caused by the Covid pandemic (we had to review the whole plan evidence base and make changes to some parts of it, as well as preparing a Covid impact assessment), the NRW phosphates guidance (a really difficult issue to address, one we are still working on and that will take a long time to resolve), the revision to TAN 15 (again, requiring a lot more work, although the reasons for the revision are understood), the need to also work with other authorities on a regional basis on SDPs, linked to the establishment of the CJsCs. We also have the possibility of more guidance on phosphates / nitrates / nutrients in general in prospect for the marine elements of SACs.”

Evidence gathering is considered time consuming and asked if it could be better supported with digital planning and possibly more support research staff, or better data sharing with other services. One respondent explained that communities often want more information at the early stages and that information is not necessarily available; it takes time to engage and explain this.

5.4.3 Regional Planning

“Space to get on with the SDP [is needed] - you cannot mandate collaboration. We were making great progress until Welsh Government mandated everything and required CJsCs (but without thinking through the tax and funding and governance arrangements - more unintended consequences). Now we've ground to a halt.”

Joint working

It was suggested there is a need to increase working in partnership with other local authority departments, particularly in regard to specialist advice re highways / ecology / conservation.

“Sharing knowledge / experiences is good and is achieved in the forums that we have set up.”

One respondent clarified,

“It’s not so much the lack of expertise which is evident but access to that expertise in a timely manner to support the development sector” “Staff are stretched too thinly which requires expertise to be bought in for policy development.”

Other specialist policy areas listed in responses are set out below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing need - more consistent and clear forecasts • Population forecasts and analysis • Welsh language and culture • <i>“Resources in Lead Local Flood Authorities have dropped significantly in recent years, with removal of ring-fenced funding”</i> • Place making • Strategic and site viability assessments. Viability and keeping this up to date through the LDP process was considered a challenge • Gypsy and Travellers • Phosphates, including the need for baseline data sets, which are not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minerals viability • Heritage and conservation • Trees, including arboriculture and urban forestry • SuDS • Energy policy • The role of smaller scale agriculture in reducing carbon emissions • Water/Electricity capacity • Welsh language • Climate change and net zero • Carbon emissions and efficiency • Health impact • Transport
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“Front loading the policy process is great in theory but impossible to achieve without significant resources up front. The time taken to progress means that studies need updating all the time which is hugely frustrating and adds to the overall cost. Policy teams generally aren’t set up for this sort of working. It would be better to have flexible resources to have a large team available for the initial evidence gathering stage and then reduce to a core team for the remainder of the process. We have also had significant issues with site proposers unwilling to invest in viability assessments, surveys and masterplans prior to any form of certainty as previously provided by the Deposit Plan.”

There was private sector frustration around general LDP issues, suggesting that *“confidence in LDPs is an all-time low.” “LDPs are often poorly drafted with inconsistent use of key decision-making policy tests. Welsh Government and PEDW need to take a lead on ensuring consistency.”*

5.4.4 Rural planning issues

There is a general feeling that much recent policy has been designed for urban settings, but the context in rural areas is different where public transport is limited, viability is lower, and building

firms are smaller. The ability to deliver the ambitions of Future Wales and Planning Policy Wales is more challenging in rural areas, for example housing sites of fewer than ten homes (considered large by local standards).

Rural planning teams also struggle with more requirements to deliver a sound plan, such as Health Impact Assessments (HIAs), Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMAs), Landscape assessments, Seascape capacity, Green Infrastructure Assessments (GIAs) etc. It was considered that:

“much of this documentation is overkill for the type of settlements we are trying to support and deliver housing for demonstrating a distinct lack of rural proofing and simply creating more work for consultants as a small team of less than a handful of planners simply can’t deliver this work and don’t have the specialisms to do so - even if we had a budget we are unable to recruit”.

In specific reference to rivers, it was highlighted

“solutions are being sought at a catchment level, but there is not necessarily consistency over solutions and cross-border approaches. A nation-wide approach bringing in the rural land-use sector would be extremely helpful.”

5.5 Role and Purpose of Planning

Respondents noted not only a rise in public expectation, but also in Government / political ambition and additional areas of work that planning, and planners must cover. These were seen by some as ‘extra’, going beyond planning, rather than part of a progressive and proactive planning system. This was framed in the wider issue of diminishing resources and capacity:

“There has been a need for the policy planners to get involved in lots of other work areas - decarbonisation, climate change adaptation, energy planning, etc. It is great to be a part of this, but it brings immense workload pressures.”

“The problem is that the LDP / national policy actually covers too many issues, some of which arguably fall outside of the scope of planning. It seems that planning has become a catchall to address all of society's ills, adding more and more considerations in the determination of planning applications. This ‘mission creep’ dilutes the value of planning as a discipline and further burdens officers in dealing with applications.”

Several subject areas were listed as being an add-on to planning, or a subject that was increasing planners’ workload. These included:

- Climate change (recognising the climate and nature crisis)
- Biodiversity
- Sustainability
- Well-being
- Active travel
- Increase number of assessments

- Phosphates
- Flooding
- Farming and food enterprises
- Covid-19 (impact at the time and ongoing issues)

“We need to look at how complex and multi-faceted the planning system has become. Individual aspects of the planning process are all in and of themselves important but collectively have moved us a long way from the core idea of 'land-use management'.”

A need to further strengthen the plan-led approach was raised:

“Stronger in implementing the plan-led approach ... Housing in unsustainable locations and out of town retail are two common examples that will be permitted every week across the county.”

5.6 Digital Working

Responses highlighted a significant shortfall in the digital support for facilitating planning in LPAs. Many comments referred to a *“bodged”* set up or *“not fit for purpose”*. *“IT systems are slow, over complicated and some basic functions cannot be done easily.”* A significant amount of time is spent doing manual intervention on IT systems⁸.

The report⁹ on Wexham’s service reported:

“The current back office software is outdated and lacks the functionality of a modern system, this leads to significant inefficiencies in the process and makes workflow management difficult.”

Issues around file sizes able to be accommodated on IT platforms were reported as a common problem.

A shortfall in both LPA and Welsh Government websites was also highlighted. This links with the need identified for better information for the public and non-planners to have better and easier access to information to understand planning policy and processes.

⁸ The most common services referred to in the responses included:

- Idox – process driven software that underpins the management of planning & building control, environmental health and licensing procedures.
- Uniform – a platform with a range of core modules and related applications which provides case management software.
- Web APAS – search engine for planning complaints, pre applications and applications etc.
- Acolaid – an integrated suite of spatially enabled land and property solutions for local authorities and used by over 70 UK authorities.
- Lle – serves as a hub for data and information covering a wide spectrum of topics, but primarily around the environment.

⁹ <https://moderngov.wrexham.gov.uk/documents/s24598/Item%2011.pdf?LLL=0>

Provision of online shared data were highlighted as a weakness.

“Mapping available to LPAs such as ecological mapping / hot spots not publicly available. This can delay the identification of issues. Better access may smooth process / save resources for all. Clear route finding to the information also. Easily done through a website which is regularly updated.”

An example of a good resource was suggested as: [SSSI detail \(naturalengland.org.uk\) https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UK11081](https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UK11081)

It was reported that platforms e.g. MS Teams have brought benefits and improved communications. Some reported that whilst virtual planning committees had some benefits, they were also very stressful to run.

One respondent usefully framed the need for improved digital planning as part of a wider picture of keeping up with change:

“I would say digital stability, as trying to keep up to date with constantly changing systems is a big challenge. Constant change is also a feature of the legislative and policy context in Wales - there is a lot happening and it is sometimes difficult to keep on top of it all.”

5.7 Hybrid / remote working

A cumulation of factors including technological advances and a desire to reduce commuting, accelerated by the pandemic, has led to a shift to working from home. Welsh Government are encouraging a policy of remote working where workers can choose their place of work – their central workplace, their home, or a workspace close to their home: *“We now want to work with organisations to support a long-term shift to more people working remotely.”*¹⁰ This shift to a hybrid approach is being explored globally and will take time to find the new balance.

From the Big Conversation responses, it is clear that morale is affected both ways, it all depends on the individual. The responses were clear that the preference to work in the office or from home is very personal, and this is also true of managers which influence the experience of teams.

The majority of respondents reported working from home at least on an occasional basis, through to mainly working from home. The reasons for this were principally based on personal choice to meet own preferences and needs, such as care responsibilities or to overcome long commutes.

There were mixed views as to the productivity and work benefits of working from home / working from the office. However, there was a widespread view that not having teams regularly in the office was detrimental to new colleagues, particularly those starting out in their career. *“The greatest disadvantage of home-working is the genuine loss of opportunity for less experienced staff to benefit from knowledge transfer from more experienced colleagues.”*

¹⁰ www.gov.wales/remote-working-policy

“I worry that the future generation of planners will not be able to develop the same knowledge and skills as their predecessors who learned through osmosis in an office environment.”

One private consultancy member noted the difficulties of *“mentoring someone properly from a distance to help them learn on the job, especially when it comes to site visits and more complicated schemes.”* One trainee respondent shared their ‘fear’ of lone site visits in a rural area because there were not enough staff resource to enable someone to accompany them.

The survey data implies working from home / hybrid working does not have a direct correlation with the frequency of being overstretched. Neither does the data support the assumption that working from home would mean less support available – in fact respondents working from the office seem to have less of the right support (25% of those working from the office), this may be because of the working practice of managers and colleagues; however, the majority were positive about the support they received.

An issue raised linked to not working at the office is the availability of officers (internal and external) and a knock on to communications. This was also reported as a benefit to working away from the office, giving the opportunity to work with minimal distractions. Some reported issues associated with being able to have responses to quick questions or soundings when people are working from home, and what could have been a short five minute informal chat, instead resulted in increased e-mail traffic and responses taking far longer and becoming formalised.

Silo working was reported as more prevalent than ever before, even in the same teams.

“If you're alone at home a small easy question for a colleague can become a really big deal. Dealing with the nasty calls or emails is also more challenging because you're on your own when you're at home. Best practice is picked up when you hear general chatter, a quick question can take hours/days to resolve as you try and book availability with the person that can help (used to be a walk across the office). Paperless is all well and good but it means hours on end of staring at screens instead of being able to review paper copies, look at plans properly.”

“WFH has damaged my mental health, made me feel divorced from colleagues and divorced from the community we are supposed to serve. Work is much less efficient, less wholesome, less dynamic, less fun and less rounded than before. 'Meetings' are tiresome, less enjoyable and much less gets taken from them. Some people are very overworked, some people doing very little. The WFH agenda has also exacerbated inequality and set back the climate change agenda (impact on public transport and heating / lighting 50 individual homes rather than 1 large office room). It has made me go from generally enjoying my job to at best tolerating, at worst hating it.” Although others felt they had **“made a huge reduction to [their] carbon footprint.”**

“Work is much more isolating, especially for young planners without having the advantage of an office environment.”

“There is a greater chance of being misunderstood or missing important information when working from home.”

“Looking for a new job because with WFH the planning profession feels divorced from the communities we serve and public sector planning is now much less dynamic and enjoyable than before.”

While others have seen more positive outcomes:

“Further encouraging hybrid working - this has been seen to improve staff morale, productivity and reduced sickness levels.”

One respondent highlighted a desire to return to the office, but this was going to be difficult because there had been a reconfiguration of the employer’s estate leading to a reduction in the availability of desks to accommodate everyone.

Further in-depth analysis would be needed to draw reliable conclusions on ways of working impact on delivery and it may be some time before post-pandemic patterns of working settle down, in order to provide a definitive evaluation. However, there is a clear need to support those new into a position or in the early stages of their career and put in place regular team support.

5.8 Public Engagement

“Customers are far more abrasive, disgruntled and aggressive since the pandemic.”

This drew out a considerable number of issues resulting in time spent dealing with negative engagement and wasted resource. A key factor underpinning this is a lack of public understanding of the scope and role of the planning system and is linked to the public’s expectation. This was also reported as an issue with others working in the built environment. Community groups may lack the capacity to deal with the complexities of planning. There is a clear need to invest in improving messaging and access to clear and tailored information.

“Officers’ reports are too long and detailed because of a fear of Judicial Review. Serial objectors are given too much weight, especially for issues that are not relevant to planning. Some legislation e.g. the Advert regulations are too complex.”

There was clear evidence that LPAs and government bodies experience a considerable amount of abuse or negative incidents: 48.8% reporting occasional incidents and 16% regularly. Welsh Government respondents have also clearly experienced such abuse and incidents (30%).

As expected, because of their role, those in enforcement endure the most amount of abuse with 23.5% reporting regular incidents, followed by management (reporting 17% regular incidents). Moreover, 40% across all sectors experience abuse or negative incidents occasionally. Only around 10-15% of respondents never experience abuse or negative incidents.

One respondent succinctly said what is felt by many planners: *“Planning always attracts criticism”*, whether for approving or not approving a scheme or similarly for what is included or not included in a plan.

48% of all respondents see abuse or experience negative incidents occasionally or more. Both men and women reported experiencing the same level of abuse and negative incidents – potentially proving that abuse / negative incidents are sector / role inflicted. About half of all ages experience abuse occasionally but 19% of 35-54 experience abuse regularly. North Wales respondents reported the most regular abuse (21.4%) followed by South West Wales (13.3%).

This negative impact has been exacerbated by working from home, with no immediate support available from colleagues to diffuse negative experiences.

Serious concern has been raised by incidents where officers have been physically intimidated. A number of situations have been drawn to our attention where officers have been followed and intimidated. One even reported they had been approached by the Police, who had recommended security cameras and panic buttons.

Whilst it is accepted LPAs should provide a good service, there is a severe lack of resourcing, which leads to weaknesses in delivery (varying across LPAs and between services), and this leads to complaints, which in turn take further resource away from delivery and a spiral is set in motion. Some LPA officers said they regularly spent 50% of their time dealing with complaints of varying forms, diverting them away from service delivery. It was felt *“there is a general lack of understanding of how under resourced LPAs are.”*

“It is not a case of just not doing the cases when you physically don’t have enough time in the week to do the work, it is being bombarded by hostile and aggressive phone calls and emails from people in the queue - they don’t know they’re in the queue, and they don’t understand you as an individual officer have 1.5 people’s workloads you are expected to deliver, and they are the third person who has called to abuse you today. They expect you are sitting around ‘twiddling your thumbs’ not processing their application because you are a public sector lazy employee.”

5.8.1 Pre-application Community Consultation

The Pre-application Community Consultation (PACC) process was intended to provide a process to promote good practice and ease the planning process. However, responses highlighted it as an area which should be reviewed to provide a more meaningful engagement mechanism for communities which could result in improved developments and a smoother application and help overcome community disenfranchisement.

The process

“is well-intentioned but of little value in practice. Good advice is offered in the 2017 Best Practice Guidance¹¹ but in our experience little or nothing more than the minimal statutory requirement is met by developers.”

“We have found that PACCs late in the process have done little more than forewarn us of a coming application to which we are likely to make similar representations. We doubt whether any stakeholder in the process sees significant value in the minimal statutory requirement.”

5.8.2 Social Media

Social media was highlighted as an excellent tool to raise awareness, however it added a further complexity for planners. It was suggested that social media is now the only way to engage with the public. There is good practice on using social media to engage with the public on plans and individual schemes and more awareness and learning from this practice should be shared.

¹¹ <https://gov.wales/planning-major-developments-guidance-pre-application-consultation>

The survey reported the negative impact of social media, with 58% of respondents saying social media had, at least somewhat, had an effect on their well-being. Many regarded social media to have given the public the ability to express their opinions without any recourse (insults and abuse) which impacts planners' wellbeing. It was reported that it creates an environment for misinformation and for negative campaigners to skew discussions.

“The workload has increased massively as well as having fewer staff. We have a bigger and more complex caseload than ever, with more objections, FOIs, complaints and Member enquiries than ever to consider and respond to (due to social media).”

6. Suggested Solutions

The survey invited respondents to put forward solutions to issues raised and these are set out here. Inclusion here does not necessarily indicate agreement or ability to implement by the RTPi or Welsh Government.

6.1 Public Sector Resources

The need for more resources for planning was raised by most respondents as the main solution to workload issues. The term resources will have different meanings for different respondents, some provided a detailed explanation on this while others just referred to the need for resources. For the purpose of this summary, 'resources' are taken to include staffing (recruitment and retention), training, funding, salaries, time to carry out the job properly, IT and digital planning.

One respondent proposed a:

“consensus statement with a range of organisations, unions, LPAs, third party / regulatory bodies on how far short resources are across the industry ... making it clear that Brexit, Covid and huge new environmental requirements have tipped the balance for a service already hampered by generational under funding.”

6.1.1 Fees

There was a clear call to review planning application fees and the ring fencing of LPA budgets to deliver services, to accept with any increase of fees the service needs to visibly improve.

“Applicants pay fees to have their applications dealt with efficiently, not to fund all other Council departments. DM departments are critically under resourced as a consequence of application fees being funnelled to other services.”

There is a *“need to look at full cost recovery. The planning application fee for a single dwelling for example is a fraction of the cost of the overall project.”*

6.1.2 Local Planning Authorities

“Assisting LPAs would help the private sector directly.”

More staff / resource-funding / capacity was the main suggestion set out by respondents across the board. This includes funding to adequately staff planning teams, recognising the desperate

need for graduates, experienced planners and specialist planners and the need for these to be accessible. The survey results suggest that since the pandemic LPA officers appear less visible and accessible to those trying to engage with planning. However, the survey also suggests that LPA officers are struggling to cope with constant emails and sometimes difficult applicants. This is a desperate situation which requires attention before worsening.

Linked to this, is the call from LPAs for more respect for the role and the decisions, both from the public and also support internally within LAs. More corporate support was called for in this regard.

The role of planning administration was raised in relation to this question and the opportunity for more support for planners on validation etc.

Smarter working through the process was suggested to support the private sector. One respondent suggested team approaches to big applications and accessible / contactable LPA officers, was repeatedly raised.

6.1.3 Other supporting specialisms and Statutory Consultees

Resources for statutory consultees and other services was also repeatedly raised, in particular the need for more highways officers and ecologists, and more resources for Welsh Government, NRW and PEDW. Improved and more timely responses were called for from statutory consultees and better advice and communication with Welsh Government.

Better communication should be championed with the aim of improving relationships across all stakeholders was suggested.

A need to examine the role of specialist bodies was recommended, including the Design Commission for Wales (DCfW), NRW, and Planning Aid Wales. With a view to understanding and exploring the role they can play in supporting LPAs at key stages and if they can be resourced in a way that allows greater support at key stages to individual LPAs.

Healthcare needs are outside the scope of the LPA and rely solely on third party information being readily available in order to assess need. It was suggested local health boards need to allocate resources for this engagement.

Access to specialist and experienced staff was identified as a need:

“Consultees being contactable and willing and able to attend in-person meetings, organise a round table discussion to discuss difficult issues; avoid default statements.”

6.2 Professional collaboration / communications

A private member offered a solution to workload issues in the form of better communication between sectors:

“...I believe that improved and better communication between agents and planners is extremely beneficial to both. I am aware that planning authorities can be very defensive about forums but explaining the planning legislative context for example as to why things are asked for, what is new, etc. I always think is worthwhile and helps avoid conflict. It should also be a way to receive feedback - both ways. ... The

'them and us' attitude of some planning authorities have displayed during the pandemic period has done nothing to assist the planning process and break down barriers."

A collaborative proactive approach with developers / private sector and a better understanding of both 'sides' was raised, with suggestions including: developers better engaging with pre-app, better integration with the third sector, shared services across Wales (in particular environmental services) and sharing of best practice.

Better collaboration and working together was called for, including communication, expectation, constructive comments from LPA that help identify solutions etc. which will help improve quality in the process, was raised as an important issue. A need was identified for better engagement between stakeholders early in the application process.

"More collaboration between private consultants for clearer voices on issues - the public sector has a voice through POSW."

Improved contact with Welsh Government was raised. One respondent asked about the relationship between Welsh Government and the private sector, and if they have access to Welsh Government notifications, as LPAs do.

"Build in planning at the early stages of any land-use focused work. Endless examples of planning being considered at the last minute and inevitably posing questions it is too late to answer. Planning is then a problem."

6.3 Growing our own

Some pointed to working collaboratively with Cardiff University to encourage placement and graduate applications.

The introduction of trainee a scheme could pay dividends in future in terms of succession. Mentoring of staff was also suggested as a helpful way of investing in staff.

Creating a career graded post was something one LPA planning manager was hoping to be able to pursue as a possible future solution to recruitment. More and better career opportunities / development to make positions more attractive could help with the retention of staff, which is an issue being raised throughout the survey.

One respondent questioned whether planning related subjects are still attractive to students. A lack of appropriate applicants / candidates when recruiting reflects the need for close working with universities and the education sector, RTPI etc.

Another respondent felt apprenticeships or graduate funding could support the planning system, asking *"Why is the apprenticeship route in England not available in Wales? We urgently need extra staff. Can Welsh Government look at supporting funding for graduates to undertake planning masters?"*

The creation of *"nationwide placement schemes for all planning positions, part funded in order to allow opportunity, experience ... etc."* was another solution put forward to increase capacity in the future.

6.4 Training

The need for training was repeatedly raised as a solution, including the regular provision of training for LPA Members as well as officers, along with shared learning across Wales. One respondent felt that training was needed, rather than being 'self taught'. Established regional and national working groups could help to support or develop this solution further.

A suggestion for management training was made, alongside more resources, to help managers support their staff in managing their workload and time more effectively moving forward.

Training was also raised for statutory consultees and private sector consultancy / agents (to drive up application quality) and elected members.

There was a strong environmental theme to the training needs identified across responses, for example HRA was one of many matters raised in relation to training.

6.5 Public Engagement

Support / awareness for the profession - constantly being bashed in local media as corrupt or worse when in effect (particularly locally) the decisions they are most cross about are made at committee level.

The effectiveness of the PACC requirements should be reviewed with the aim of ensuring earlier community consultation, and the involvement of the Design Commission for Wales, in many major development proposals. The 2017 guidance on Adding Value remains a sound basis for progress but it was suggested that a statutory means of enforcing it is needed. This would enable the opportunity to harness any relevant expertise in the community without undermining the LPA role.

There was an identified need to create some form of accountability to manage social media. Best practice on managing abuse is needed and to be upheld by employers.

“All planning officers by default should be given training in how to negotiate aggressive confrontation, unhappy customers, how to de-escalate aggressive telephone calls, as this is as much a part of the job requirement as the interpretation of legislation / processing of applications etc.”

6.6 Politicians and Planning Committees

There were some detailed suggestions for addressing the operation of planning committees, including introducing a minimum of 12 members on Planning Committee; rules for no Councillor in Wales to sit for more than two consecutive terms. It was also suggested that support is required for politicians to make decisions at the CJC level.

The need for training and support for members was raised to help Members understand complex issues relating to LDP and development proposals.

6.7 Digital Planning

Consistent IT solutions were suggested as a solution to workload issues, which could allow for better joint working or joint evidence base in the future.

An overarching message was the need for “*digital stability*” to overcome the time and resultant challenges associated with constantly changing systems. There were many suggestions for potential digital solutions. However, the overarching need is to identify a route map and have investment across Wales in a new digital approach.

One respondent called for “*funding support to update policy IT systems (1995 access database currently used to deliver LDP).*”

6.8 Changes to Planning System

We are clear the Big Conversation is not a review of the planning system, except where it could offer a positive outcome to address the well-being of those working in it. Many broad solutions to workload were put forward in relation to regulations affecting the implementation of the planning system and policy of specific subject areas, and these are summarised below:

- TAN15 Drainage Statement being made a planning validation requirement;
- Take some things away from planning and into building regulations;
- Simplify policy, there is too much focus on impact assessments;
- Make processing applications simpler;
- More specialised expertise involved in updating legislation, TANs and Policies etc.

Some respondents felt that the 8 / 13 week target deadlines were out of date and needed reviewing and a suggestion to remove the planning application refund provisions. This could build in realistic performance management and incentives, as well as help to manage expectations. A move to a focus on outcomes, not timescales was called for.

There are plans¹² to bring forward a Planning Consolidation Bill which will assist in being clear of the planning law in Wales, which is currently spread over a number of different Acts. However in the short time it was suggested that an up to date version of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order be made available to overcome the time needed to clarify some of the less common uses more easily and present the various changes in a consolidated format.

A review of S106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to address the significant delay and time resources was called for. This included the need for training and funding for officers with expertise in viability to be embedded in planning teams. This is an issue that erodes CIL/S106 contributions and thus should be given more attention. A national approach should be undertaken to viability as a whole, ensuring it is flexible to allow for local circumstances. It was also suggested there was a need to remove the pooling of contributions.

While there are some comments about specific stages in the process, for example:

“Remove the Preferred Strategy Stage and revert to the Draft plan stage.” “Remove requirement for evidence base to be translated.”

¹² www.gov.wales/the-future-of-welsh-law-accessibility-programme-2021-to-2026-html

One respondent suggested better programme management of LDPs; others called for the removal of the 'drop dead date'. The Candidate sites process was raised as time consuming and impact assessments were also highlighted, with respondents finding them onerous.

There were a significant range of answers to whether there were policy development issues which could be addressed by changes to national policy. Some stand out responses are listed below – although the range was exceptionally broad.

“Although an overarching approach is needed, each area is different and has its own characteristics and issues, as well as its own political approach, so it isn't a one size fits all matter. In addition to this, areas should be different and not all uniform.”

“There needs to be more joined up thinking on certain issues - SuDS, planting, biodiversity, landscape, ecology etc can work cohesively to provide numerous solutions through individual actions.”

Phosphates and drainage have made the system complex – *“The Planning system reflects political agenda (which itself is not a problem) but does not have the tools to implement - for example phosphates needs leadership not a vacuum / debate - everything just stalls.”* The SAB function should be brought under planning or more resource provided to allow them to deal with both statutory processes.

“More guidance on how to approach SuDS through the planning process and more thought needed in terms of how planning and SAB integrate with each other.”

6.9 Regional Working

Progressing smart regional working was repeatedly raised as a solution, with wide support for the establishment of SDPs. Alongside this was a suggestion for a reduction of the burden of the evidence base of LDPs and SDPs, which currently tend to have small teams and limited specialisms which often means there is no other option than to outsource. However, others added caution to regional working and commissioning which helps but does not necessarily make the process any quicker because managing consultants is a time consuming process. It was suggested that resources could be maximised by pursuing SDPs and prepare LDP 'lite'.

“Where a piece of work is outsourced due to a lack of resourcing rather than technical need you lose that internal skill and knowledge base.”

A regional environmental advice service was suggested, as was joint services for other specialist services such as conservation and minerals. This could provide more staff, in particular specialist officers, creating more capacity and capability in the system.

“Better resourcing in specialist areas is a solution, but there are known recruitment issues for people with the right skills.”

“The approach currently taken is to work collaboratively with other Local Planning Authorities in the region, also with key organisations such as Welsh Government, NRW and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. Where budgets allow, we use external commissions to get the expert inputs we need on specialist topics, but budgets will only stretch so far.”

6.10 Sharing Good Practice

Despite the focus in this report on the difficulties of delivering the planning system principally because of shortfalls in resources, it is clear that there is good work taking place and the planning system is functioning. One respondent highlighted the need to:

“shout about the good things too and ensure positive examples and best practice are shared as widely as possible.”

7. What next?

The findings from the Big Conversation will be provided to the Minister for Climate Change, in response to her request in June 2022.

We appreciate that the issues raised are not solely for Welsh Government to respond to. We will be sharing the findings more widely and encourage others to respond to the clear evidence from this work.

The RTPI will publish its own action plan to respond to the issues raised by the Big Conversation for Wales. We also recognise that many of the issues raised are experienced across the UK and Ireland and are not unique to Wales and so we will consider this in our response to this valuable evidence.



RTPI Cymru
Royal Town Planning Institute
Sefydliad Cynllunio Trefol Brenhinol

For more information about RTPI Cymru's policy work

www.rtpi.org.uk/policyandresearchcymru

RTPI - Royal Town Planning Institute

walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk

Royal Town Planning Institute,
Studio 107, Creative Quarter, Morgan Arcade
Cardiff CF10 1AF

41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL.

Registered Charity in England (262865) & Scotland (SC037841)



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RTPI Cymru Response to the Big Conversation

RTPI Cymru responded to the Minister for Climate Change's, Julie James MS, request to better understand the well-being of planners in Wales in the context of restricted budgets. To explore the issues, RTPI Cymru launched the Big Conversation with the profession in Wales during 2022, which had a very good response.

The report of the findings was published in January 2023, and this follow-on paper provides the initial response by the RTPI of what we are able to offer and upcoming plans, tailored to Wales. The RTPI will also be encouraging others to respond to the findings, where they are best placed to.

1. Introduction

In our Corporate Strategy the RTPI commits to be the leading advocate campaigning for well-resourced, effective planning functions that support the outcomes local communities want to see. This underpins the heart of the reason for the Big Conversation – planning services in Wales need more investment and support to enable them to deliver.

Our response to the specific issues raised through the Big Conversation are set out below and we will raise the profile of the findings with stakeholders across Wales to encourage them to also take action to address the issues raised.

2. Support for RTPI Members

2.1. Well-being support for RTPI Members

The RTPI has partnered with Health Assured to provide a comprehensive and trusted well-being service to all members. From 18 January, RTPI members will have access to 24/7, 365 well-being and legal advice helplines, providing counselling support, legal guidance and more.

We will also sign post members to the RTPI's mental health hub, which provides a variety of resources for members to support them: www.rtpi.org.uk/new/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hub/

2.2. RTPI Trust

The RTPI Trust is a registered charity, independent from the RTPI. It exists to provide support to members of RTPI and their families who are in genuine financial hardship. We will promote RTPI Trust with support for individuals, we will also consider proposals to the Trustees to support members. www.rtpi.org.uk/about-the-rtpi/rtpi-trust/

2.3. RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct

A review of the RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct is underway to provide members with clear guidance on how to operate. The Code of Conduct is available here: www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/professional-standards/code-of-professional-conduct/

We will promote the RTPI's accompanying Probity Practice Advice Note: [Probity and the Professional Planner](#) to give members support

2.4. Member Survey

Our member survey to be undertaken in 2023 will explore in further detail member requirements. We will also be undertaking an update to the State of Profession Report, providing further evidence. The Planner Magazine will also be launching its own well-being survey of planners across the UK in January.

2.5. Chief Planning Officers

We will continue to campaign for Chief Planning Officers in every local authority. In Scotland, this has been successful through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which introduced a provision where each planning authority in Scotland must have a chief planning officer. The key role of the Chief Planning Officer should be to provide advice to the local authority as a whole on the spatial and place-based implications of decisions and investments in the short, medium, and longer term.

2.6. Engagement

We will continue to proactively engage with and support the Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW). We will also scope out a Wales Planning Consultants' Grouping to enable information sharing and engagement.

We will scope out and propose to Welsh Government the establishment of a Planning Stakeholder Group for Wales. The aim will be to establish a high-level stakeholder group of key organisations to discuss issues and provide a Team-Wales approach to delivering a positive planning system in Wales.

3. Perceptions of Planning

We will use and promote the Planning for Tomorrow's Environment resources to support understanding of planning and what it can deliver. planningfortomorrow.rtpi.org.uk

RTPI Cymru will develop a Communications strategy, for engaging with the media in Wales on Welsh planning topics.

We will continue to participate in cross-professional networking to promote an improved understanding of planning including Constructing Excellence Wales, the Cross-Party Group on Construction, the Built Environment Alliance Cymru and with individual professional bodies, including the Royal Society of Architects Wales (RSAW) and RICS Wales.

We will use the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence to capture good practice and promote and share this with different audiences and to celebrate strong planning.

4. Growing our own

The 'pipeline' of planners is an important part of the solution to addressing some of the issues faced by the profession in Wales. We will implement a programme to promote planning as a career, as well as promoting the value of Chartered Planners.

4.1. Promoting planning as a career

We will promote the website Planning Your World to open up the world of planning careers www.planningyourworld.org.uk

The RTPI will work with Cardiff University to consider opportunities for promoting planning as a career and explore the opportunities for studying planning through the medium of Welsh.

We will embark on a programme of careers promotion with schools and colleges, including identifying areas and themes of those under-represented from the profession, such as those from deprived communities, or from Black and Asian communities or Welsh speaking or those from rural areas. This will include working with Techniquet on delivering town planning days with schools.

4.2. Apprenticeships and Routes to being qualified

The RTPI will further discuss the opportunity for the introduction of planning Apprenticeships with Welsh Government either at Level 4, the Chartered Planner Apprenticeship or both.

We will also explore bursaries as a way of supporting new planners.

The RTPI will promote the use of planning placement students from RTPI accredited courses, as a way of employers growing their own, through sharing our experience as well as from other employers.

4.3. Chief Planners of Tomorrow

We will promote the Chief Planners of Tomorrow initiative to encourage development and raise aspirations in the profession. www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/networks/rtpi-young-planners/chief-planners-of-tomorrow/

5. Public Engagement

We have an on-line learning tool to support planners on how to champion the planning profession through press and social media. Telling the Planning Story is available from RTPI Learn.

The RTPI will also be launching a Welfare and abuse programme in 2023, this will include developing social media guidance to support planners use and manage social media to its best effect.

5.1. Politicians

Following the local government elections in May 2022, RTPI Cymru published its asks of members www.rtpi.org.uk/media/11631/planning-for-local-communities-may-2022.pdf We will continue to promote these and seek ways of promoting understanding of planning with politicians. As part of this we will investigate with the WLGA an event to explore planning with lead politicians involved in planning under the PiPN banner in Wales.

We will explore other training offers to support Council Members and Planning Committee Members.

We will develop a programme to promote knowledge and understanding of the RTPI and planning with Senedd Members.

6. Digital Planning

The RTPI is in a position to share learning from digital planning strategies pursued elsewhere and will encourage Welsh Government to embark on such investment.

The RTPI has been supporting Scottish Government's Digital Strategy for Planning¹ which was published in November 2020. This is a plan to use data and technology to transform the planning system and put "Data at the heart of decisions that create and shape great places in Scotland." In 2021, they launched a 5-year digital planning programme that will introduce new systems and services, underpinned by a commitment of £35 million.

www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/november/transforming-planning-places-and-scotland-summary-of-findings/

"Launching the programme means that we have completed our initiative assurance activities and the programme has been certified as ready to get underway. We can now begin to develop and deliver new systems and services."

7. Further activities

This report is the initial response to the findings of the Big Conversation; RTPI Cymru will continue to develop its activities in response to the Big Conversation and work with others to support the profession.

The full report can be read at: www.rtpi.org.uk/BigConversationWales

17th January 2023

¹ **Transforming Places Together: digital strategy for planning** – "This strategy defines a long-term strategic direction for how Scotland's planning system will digitally transform, embracing the opportunities new digital technologies and data present. It sets out what we intend to deliver, why this is needed and the benefits this transformation will bring." [Transforming Places Together: digital strategy for planning - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Building Control Workforce Insights

Written by the Team at Kinetiq
Lead Researcher: Dr Martin Reddington

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- The Employment Deal			
- Survey Questions			
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1.Executive Summary

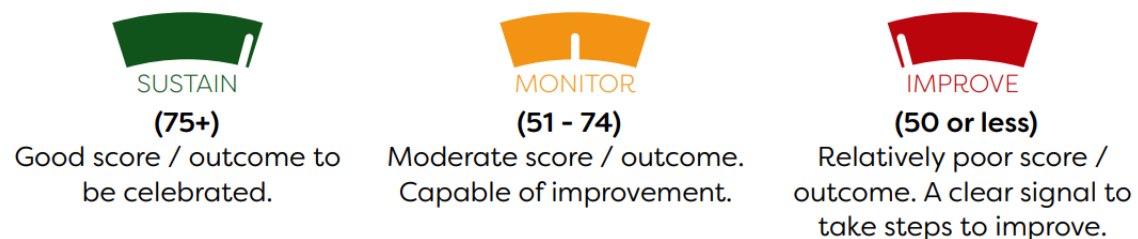
This timely report examines a number of critical questions about the state of the Building Control workforce in the UK:

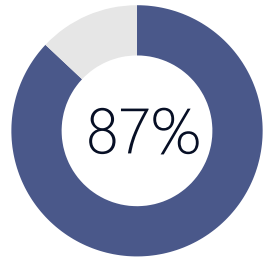
- ▶ What is the overall composition of the workforce?
- ▶ How do employees perceive their working environment?
- ▶ What factors influence them to remain engaged with their work and 'minded' to stay with their organisations?

These questions help to inform a national debate about the health of the profession, as it adapts to the imminent introduction of the *Building Safety Act*, designed to ensure consistency across the building control profession and drive-up standards. This new Act sees the creation of the *Building Safety Regulator (BSR)*, headed up by the Chief Inspector of Buildings, who will be responsible for the oversight of *Building Control Bodies (BCB's)*. The new regime will see the introduction of a register for all building control professionals undertaking restricted activities and / or functions and the new Operational Standard Rules underpinned by Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

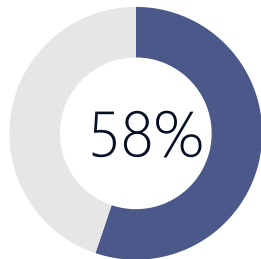
The ordering of the information reflects that of the research questions. In each case, the insights are grouped in terms of the national (overall) picture. The main body of the report is set out in an easy-to-read format, with maximum use of graphics to provide at-a-glance presentation of the data.

Throughout the document, you will see many questions whose answers are colour-coded. The mean values are calculated using the techniques in Appendix 1 and are grouped into the three main categories detailed below:

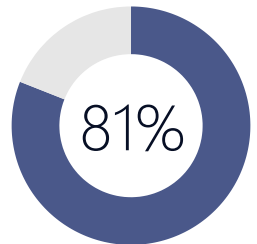




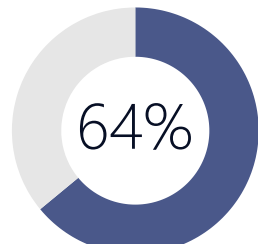
White



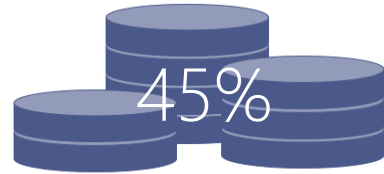
15-25 Years+ Length of Service



Male



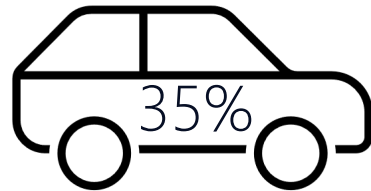
Aged 45+



£30k-45k Salary



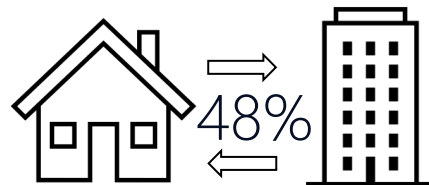
Pension Scheme



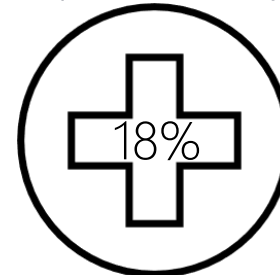
Car Allowance



Annual holiday (Up to 30 Days)

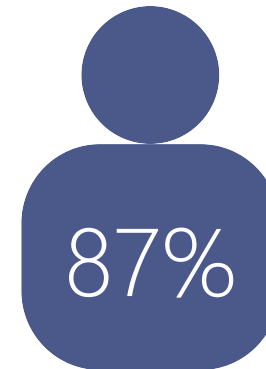


Flexible Working

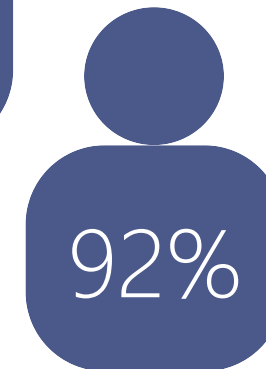


Healthcare

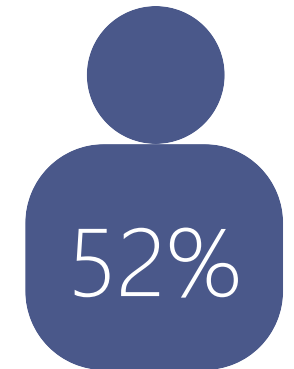
1172
Total Responses



Full Time



Permanent



Building Control Surveyor

Analysis of the free text responses collected from the survey reveal a number of themes, summarised below. More detail can be found on pages of this report.

Best Thing

- ➔ Feeling Valued
- ➔ Job Autonomy
- ➔ Work/Life Balance

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Biggest Challenges

- ➔ Lack of Resources
- ➔ Staff Retention
- ➔ Cost of Living

Organisation Personality

Positive:
Supportive
Honest
caring

Negative:
Challenging
Disorganised
Slow

Recruitment process Issues

- ➔ Financial Constraints
- ➔ Lack of Experience
- ➔ Pay and Benefits

Challenges to registration

- ➔ Support
- ➔ Training/Development
- ➔ Policy/Procedures/Processes

This report establishes new data regarding the state of the Building Control workforce in the UK: In essence, it reveals a predominantly white, male dominated and ageing but experienced workforce. It also reveals the *best things* (such as feeling valued, work/life balance) experienced by the profession, and the most *difficult challenges*, (such as recruitment and registration).

The need to address these is amplified by the age skew in the workforce. Effective recruitment is required to offset the large proportion of the workforce that could be expected to leave through natural retirement in the coming years. And the need to obtain registration to practice under the new Building Safety Act, arguably adds further challenges to retaining the right people.

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Respondents' views expressed via free text responses have been thematically analysed and summarised in the main body of this report. In essence, recruitment into the profession is hampered by a lack of suitably qualified applicants. Financial constraints are a contributing factor – potential applicants compare their expected overall financial package with opportunities elsewhere in the 'broader careers market'.

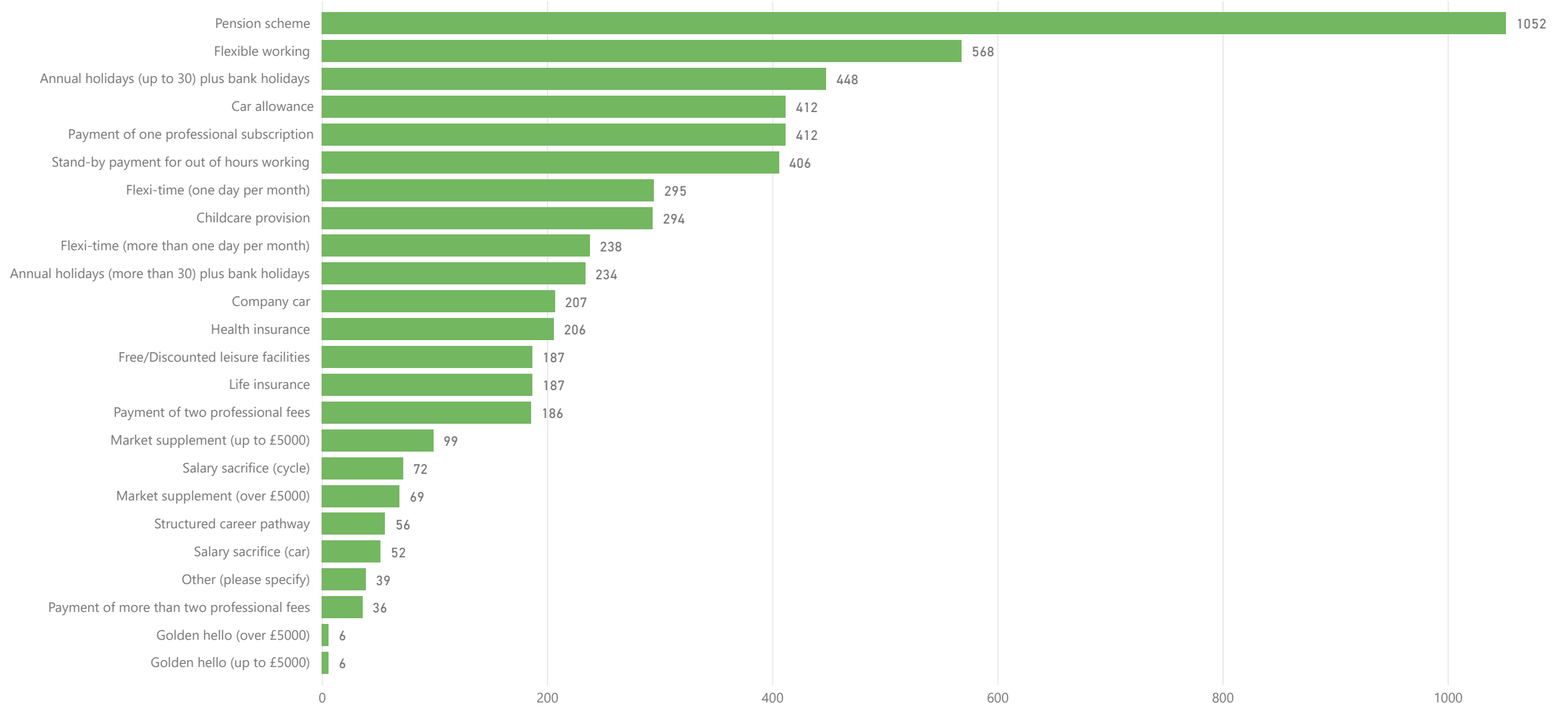
The need to obtain registration to practice is recognised by those considering joining the profession but arguably more keenly experienced by those already in post. Respondents reported concerns about the level of support they were already receiving or expected to receive in relation to preparing for and undertaking the 'onerous' registration process. The achievement of registration was also seen as a context for an enhancement to pay and conditions, in line with greater responsibilities.

These concerns are reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, in the body of evidence collected about the workplace experience (the employee experience), which provides a personal relationship dimension that cannot be ascertained from census-type data alone.

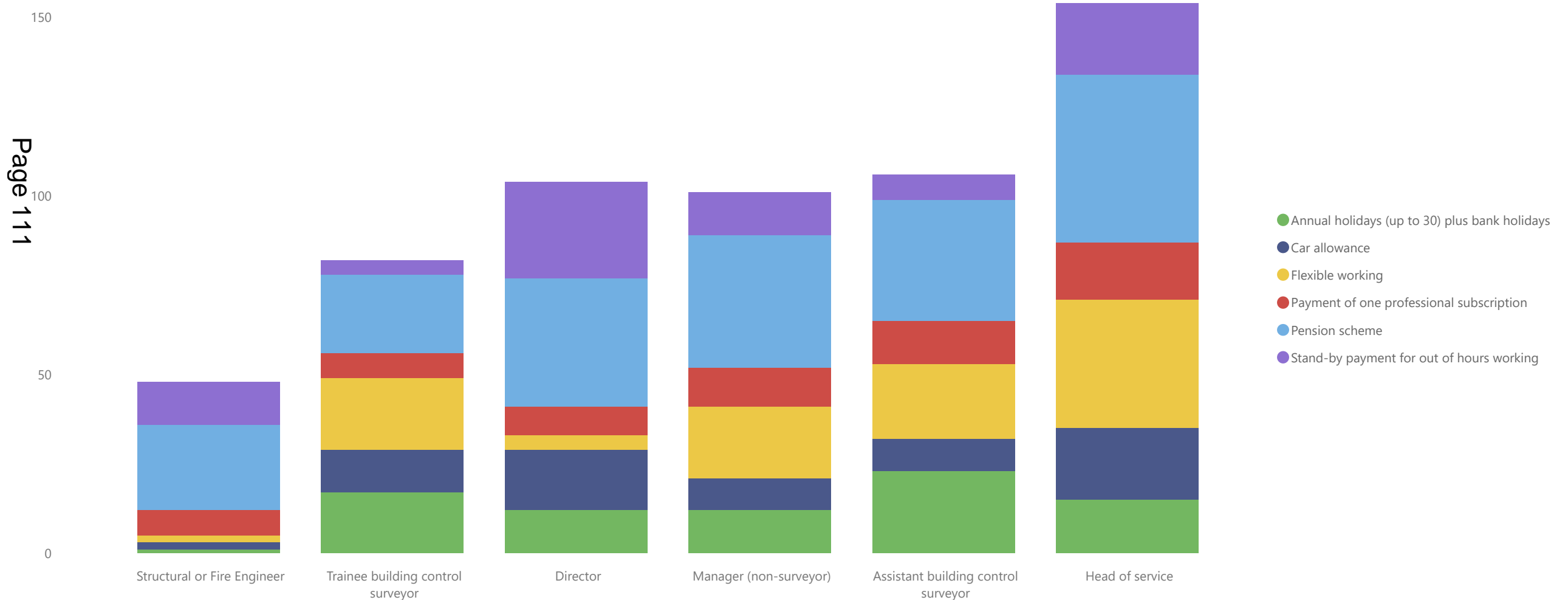
The insights reveal that the most *potent driver or predictor of employee contribution* or engagement in the workplace is the *level to which employees perceive their job is secure*. This can be boosted by a sense of feeling valued in the workplace and an employer's investment in training and development.

In terms of *encouraging employees to stay in their organisations*, the most potent driver or predictor is *advocacy* - the extent to which employees speak well of their organisation both inside and outside. Employees who demonstrate high levels of advocacy feel that their contributions in the workplace are matched or 'balanced' by contributions from their employer. Satisfied employees comment about their employer treating them well – such as good pay and benefits, including access to health and wellbeing services, role autonomy and good relationships with their supervisor/manager. Dissatisfied employees remark about senior management failing to engage with issues like pay, pensions and workload, which can lead to burnout.

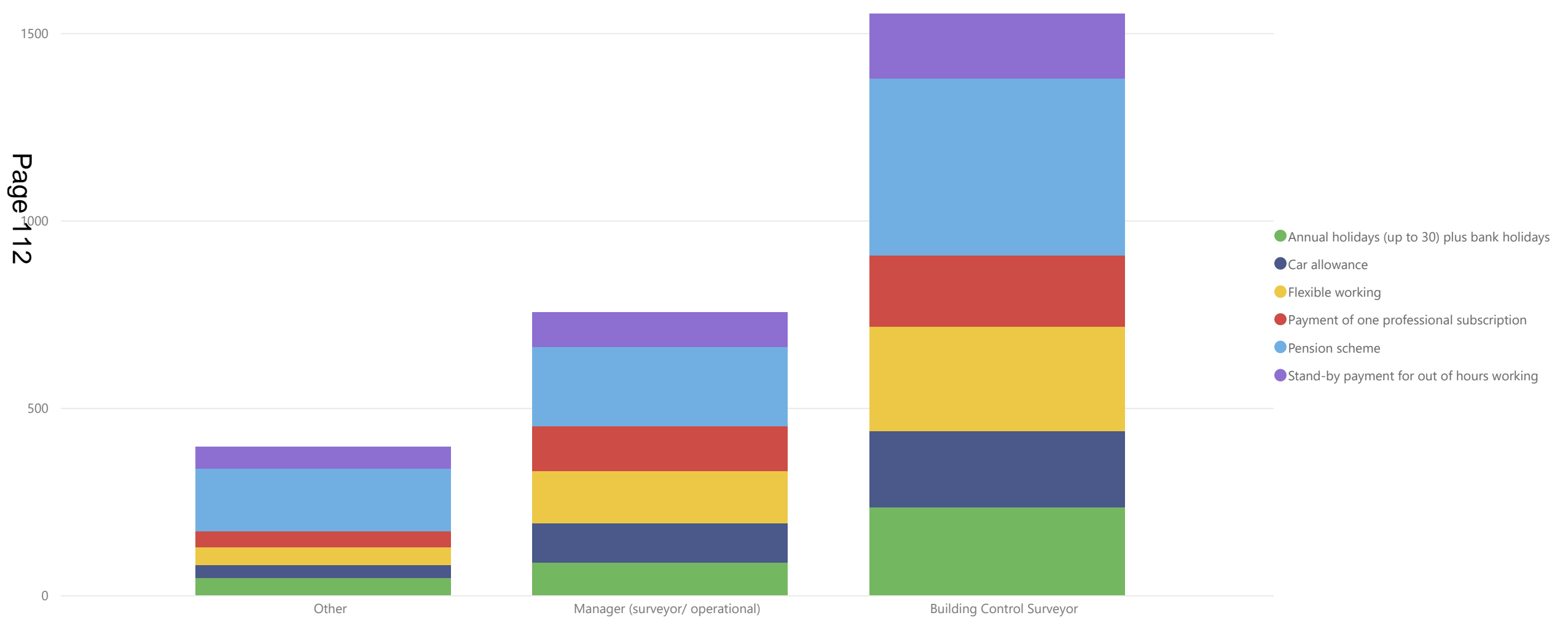
Employers should take note of these findings and look at the overall *employment relationship*. Concerns about pay can be offset by a commitment to training and development, job security and workplace autonomy. It is genuinely understood that organisations who offer such things and continually strive to improve will be more resilient in the face of challenges. They will create working environments that encourage good levels of sustainable employee contribution - employees giving their best each day – whilst also retaining staff.



Top Six Benefits (by frequency)

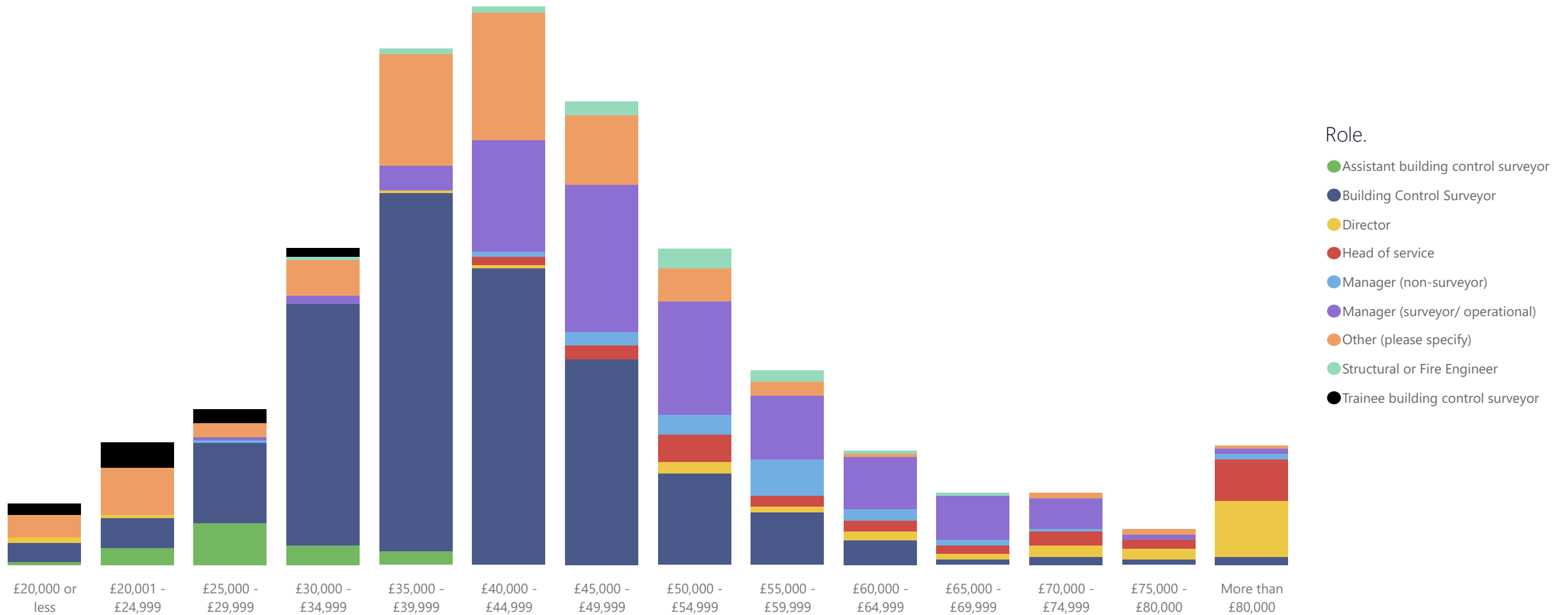


Top Six Benefits (by frequency)

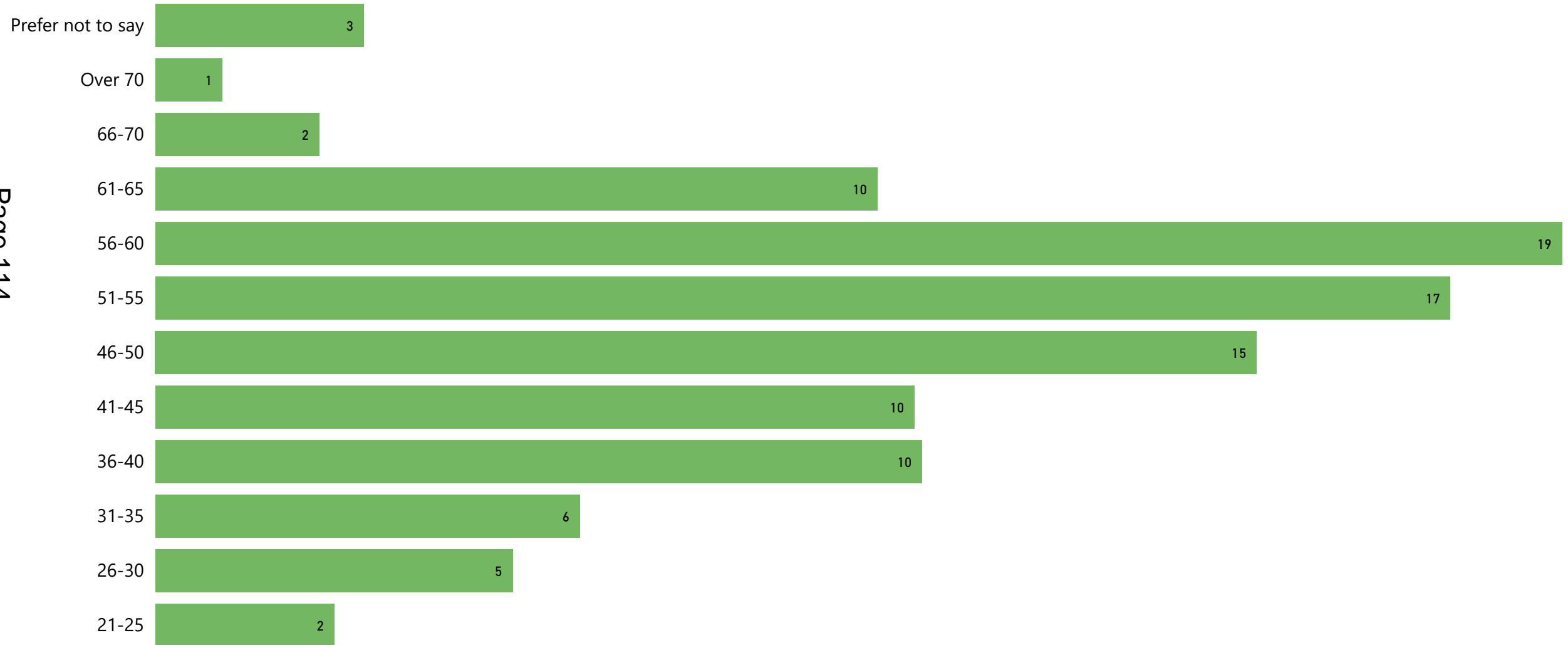


Salary Comparison by Employment Type

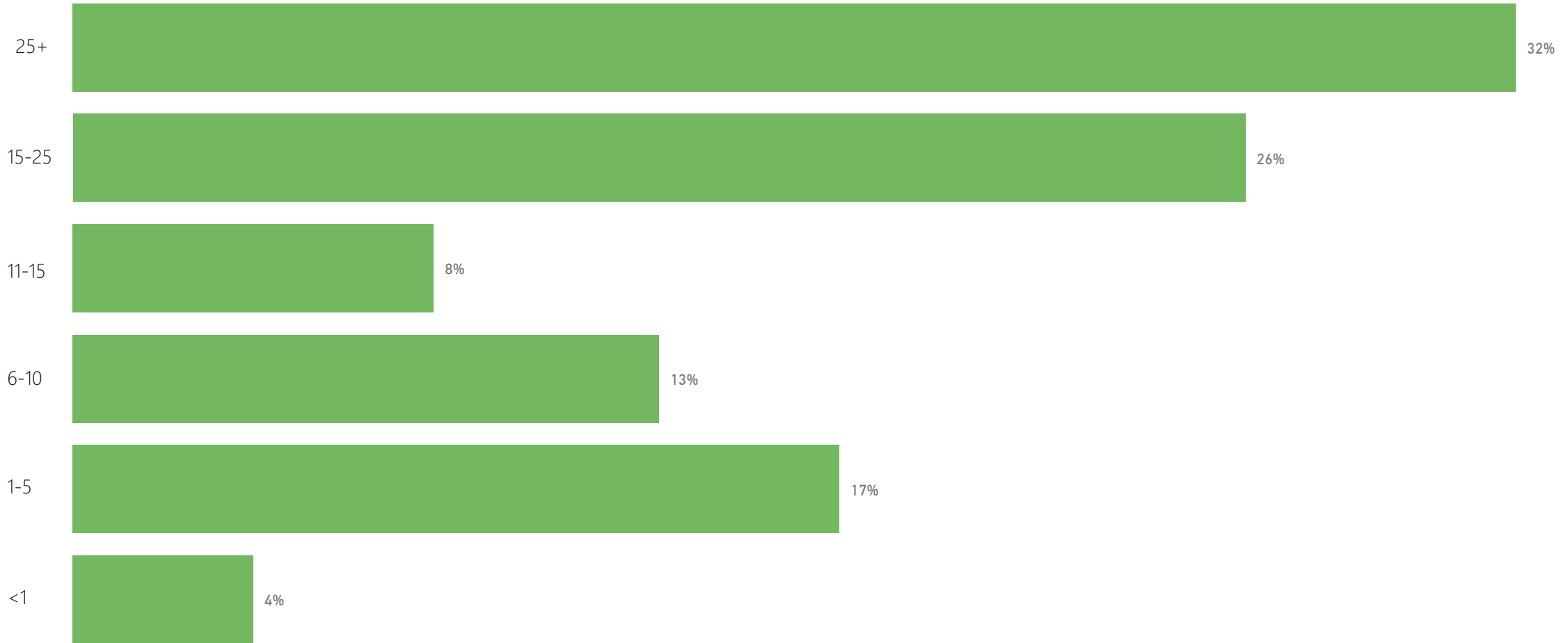
Page 113



Age of Workforce (%)



Length of Service (years)



4.Sentiment Analysis

Survey respondents were invited to express their views via free text to a number of key questions, a selection of which are set out below:

- 1) What is the best thing about working for your organisation?
- 2) What is the biggest challenge you are currently facing at work?
- 3) If your organisation came to life as a person, what word would you use to describe it?
- 4) What issues have you faced during the recruitment process?
- 5) What challenges do you think you will face in ensuring your staff will obtain registration?

The free text responses were analysed and sentiment weighted and in each case key themes emerged, based on the frequency of the narratives. These are now set out with accompanying free text examples, that represent the essence of the theme.

Theme

Feeling Valued

Feel valued by Building Control Management (and by relevant other management in some respects). If any issues, encouraged to engage and help sought, especially with excessive workload at times.

Job Autonomy

Freedom and the sense of responsibility I am given without being micromanaged

Level of Support

I am supported by and generally my employer treats employees decently

Work/Life Balance

Good flexible working hours and can work from home regularly

Management

I have a good manager who has raised the profile of building control within the organisation and in difficult times has improved the service we provide.

Theme

Lack of Resources

Lack of staff or time to complete the work within the timeframes and to the best standard

Training&Development

Trying to complete training, carry out inspections and learn everything as quickly as possible, which sometimes feels a bit overwhelming, basically juggling so many balls and trying not to drop any.

Volume of Work

Coping with workload and meeting the expectations of users of their service

Staff Retention

Lack of funding and investment in the people which will affect retention and therefore employment

Cost of Living

Cost of living impacting my mental health.

Survey respondents were given an opportunity to sum up the atmosphere of their working environment by answering the question, 'If your organisation came to life as a person, what one word would you use to describe it?' The figures below depict 'word clouds' of the most common responses, both positive and negative.

Natural Language Analysis - Most Frequent Positive Responses



Natural Language Analysis - Most Frequent Negative Responses



Theme

Financial Constraints

Financial constraints have stopped recruitment

Lack of Applicants

Lack of interest/available candidates in team leadership roles

Lack of Experience

No suitably experienced applicants

Pay and Benefits

Difficulty finding qualified and competent surveyors for the salary offered

Policy/Procedures/
Processes

When external recruitment has been carried out, numbers of applicants has been low, completion of application forms has been of poor quality... and candidate has not met expectations.

Theme

Training/Development

Standard of training and motivation of an ageing work force some although capable will retire

Support

Confidence and focus. BC officers need more guidance and help on how to become validated

Lack of Resources

The challenge will be having enough staff at the required level due to poor terms and conditions.

Pay and Benefits

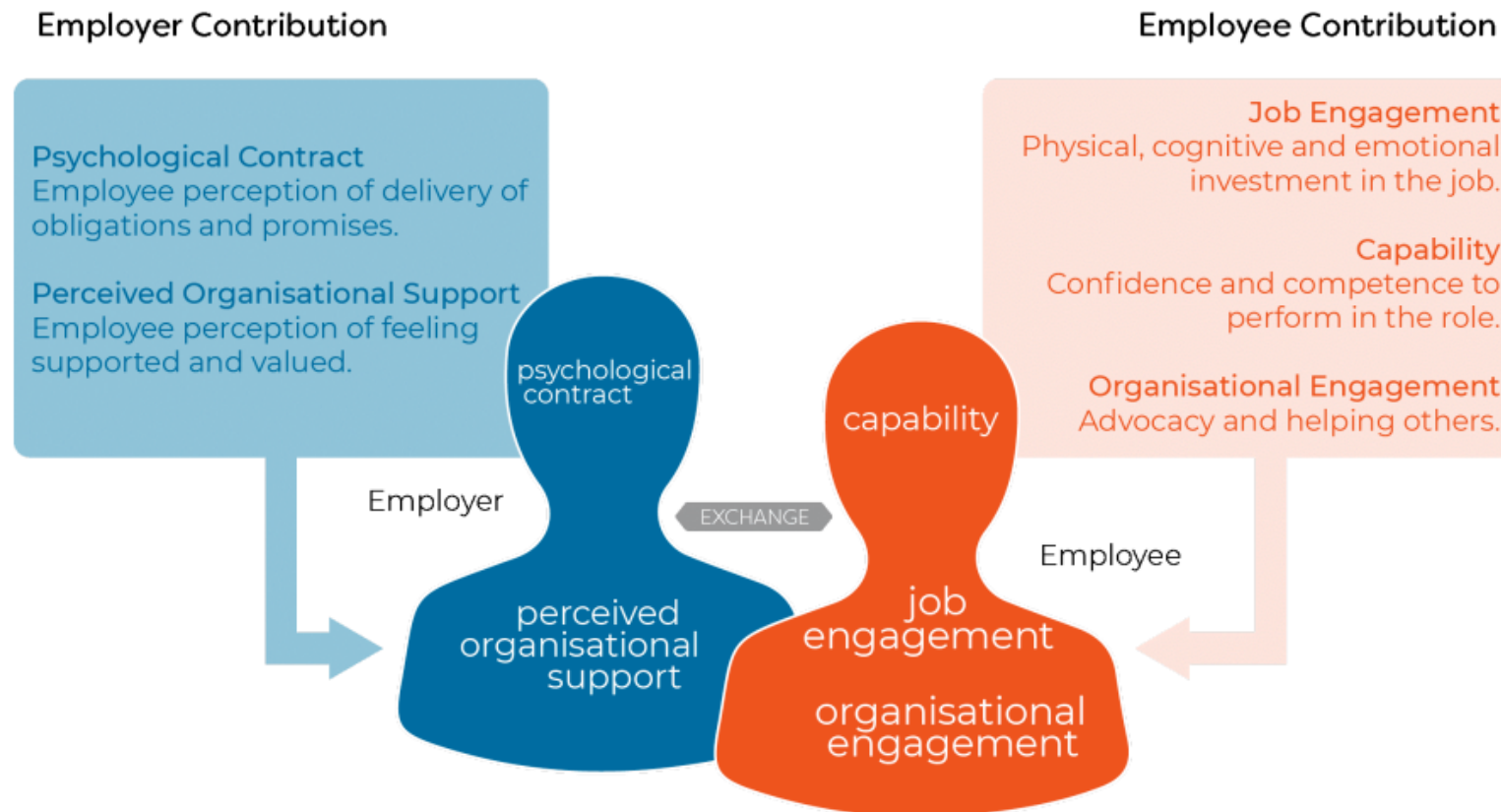
The wages we are offering against the responsibility they will have



Policy/Procedures/
Processes

Some have decided that they will stop working in BC industry, others feel the validation process is too onerous, current JD's do not reflect the competency requirements.

5. Workplace Experience

The workplace experience is represented by the Social Exchange model shown below. A variety of contributions are measured that allow a sense of how employees perceive their working environment and their overall satisfaction with the 'deal' - how what they are expected to contribute compares with their employer. The values of the main contributions, and associated job pressure and workplace tension, are shown on the next page.



	Mean%	
● I am confident carrying out my role	89	 SUSTAIN (75+) Good score / outcome to be celebrated.
● I often 'go the extra mile' to get my job done	93	
● I feel a sense of pride about my job	86	
● I feel secure in my job	76	
● I feel my pay and benefits are reasonable for what I do	41	 MONITOR (51 - 74) Moderate score / outcome. Capable of improvement.
● I feel my pay and benefits are reasonable in comparison with other employee groups in the sector	39	
● My line manager recognises that speaking openly about problems in the workplace provides an opportunity to improve things	75	
● My employer invests in building my capabilities through learning and development	70	
● My employer provides me with good prospects for career progression	60	
● My employer values my accomplishments at work	65	
● My employer demonstrates a genuine concern for my well-being	66	
● There is a 'no blame' culture - mistakes are talked about freely so we can learn from them	70	
● I would recommend my employer to a friend	67	
● I am often required to do more with fewer resources*	79*	
● Overall, I am satisfied with my employment 'deal' - what my employer provides for me and what I am expected to provide in return	54	
● I feel empowered to challenge dutyholders for non-compliance	71	
● As I currently see things, I do not intend to leave my current employer within the next three years	55	
● As I currently see things, I do not intend to leave the building control profession within the next three years	60	Note: (*) means reverse logic i.e. high score is poor
● As I currently see things, I do not intend to leave my employer within the next 12 months	68	

Key: ● Employee ● Employer ● Workplace Tension ● Overall Satisfaction

Key driver analysis of the statistical data reveals the following *drivers or predictors* of *employee contribution* (investment of effort, skill and emotional commitment) and *desire to stay* (mindedness to remain with their organisations or the profession). More information about these can be found in pages 22 and 23

Employee Contribution

- 1) I feel secure in my job
- 2) Overall, I am satisfied with what my employer provides for me and what I am expected to provide in return
- 3) There is a 'no blame' culture - mistakes are talked about freely so we can learn from them
- 4) My employer invests in building my capabilities through learning and development
- 5) My employer values my accomplishments at work

Desire To Stay

- 1) I would recommend my employer to a friend
- 2) Overall, I am satisfied with what my employer provides for me and what I am expected to provide in return
- 3) My employer provides me with good prospects for career progression
- 4) My employer demonstrates a genuine concern for my wellbeing
- 5) I feel secure in my job

Key Drivers

Page 125

1. Job security is the most potent predictor of employee contribution. A good perception of job security will encourage engagement of employees, whereas a poor perception will do the opposite, and fuel workplace tensions and job pressure.
2. The second most potent factor concerns satisfaction with the employment 'deal' – the contributions provided by the *employer* and what *employees* are expected to provide in return. This represents the overall perception of the balance of contributions – a sense of fairness in the workplace.
3. The third most potent factor affecting employee contribution centres on the presence of a 'no blame' culture, where mistakes are talked about freely so that employees can learn from them. This describes a workplace environment in which employees can explicitly surface tensions, with good intent, in the knowledge that this is seen as an opportunity to improve things.
4. The investment in improving the skills of employees through learning and development provides the fourth most potent predictor of employee contribution. Offering employees developmental opportunities to enhance their skills and capabilities is a signifier of their value to the organisation. In response, employees will be encouraged to respond with higher contributions.
5. The fifth most potent factor in predicting employee contribution concerns an organisation's acknowledgement of employee achievements. This key driver captures the extent to which employees believe the organisation values their contributions. When employees are valued and recognised for their efforts, they feel encouraged to reciprocate by way of their own contribution.

I feel secure and not excessively pressurised by current management.

Introduction of new regulatory framework & requirement for BCOs to be registered practitioners is an unfair imposition & one which many are extremely unhappy with, not enough hours in the day - no motivation to "go the extra mile" as it is never recognised.

We cannot recruit new staff to such a difficult and highly technical job with threats of jail if you make a mistake, apprentices try it and leave after a short time to do general practice surveying or less challenging roles.

My top managers, my line manager are very helpful and supportive, providing us with any available training to deliver a good service and for my own personal development.

My line manager is very helpful and supportive and values my contribution at work.

Key Drivers

1.

Advocacy – speaking well of an organisation both inside and outside – is an employee’s response to the overall perception of their workplace experience. This was the Key Driver with the greatest impact on employees' desire to stay within their organisations.

2.

The second most potent factor concerns satisfaction with the employment 'deal' – the contributions provided by the *employer* and what *employees* are expected to provide in return. This represents the overall perception of the balance of contributions – a sense of fairness in the workplace.

3.

The third most potent predictor of an employee's desire to stay in their organisation concerns their career prospects: Having clear, transparent processes for accessing high quality professional development opportunities, both inside and outside the organisation.

4.

The extent to which employees feel the organisation genuinely cares about their welfare provides the fourth most important predictor of employee retention within an organisation. These considerations can create a trusting, supportive work climate helping employees to perform better.

5.

The fifth and final Key Driver which impacts upon an employee's willingness to remain part of their organisation is about Job Security. A good perception of job security will encourage engagement of employees, whereas a poor perception will do the opposite, and fuel workplace tensions and job pressure.

I enjoy the job itself, the varied nature of it. I also have colleagues that I like working with and would recommend to others.

We have excellent remote working solutions, good flexi-time, good leave, and are supported when needed

I was interested in buildings and construction, which is why I joined. Progression in my career has now stopped.

Resources can sometimes be an issue and impact my wellbeing, but recently these problems have been overcome with good team collaboration and help

I like the element of security provided by my employer, and I value benefits such as sick pay, compassionate leave, flexibility, etc.

Appendix 1 - Survey Methodology

The quantitative (numeric) data was exposed to a variety of statistical analysis techniques:

- Cronbach's Alpha – a test for internal consistency and reliability of the responses.
- Test for Significance – a formal procedure for assessing the confidence of claims made from the analysis of the data
- Multiple Regression - a formal procedure to predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables. This is the basis of key driver analysis.

The results for the rateable items were calculated using mean values, as illustrated on the next page. The thematic analysis of the qualitative data (free text) was conducted individually then collectively by the research team. Numeration (i.e. the frequency in which a theme appears within the data) was used to pull together the final set of themes, since numeration is one way of indicating their relative importance (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) and is widely used by researchers where this type of evidence is a significant source. The other technique used was sentiment weighting. Employees' responses to the free-text questions were analysed using NVivo (a qualitative software analysis package), which helped to identify and extract opinions, emotions and attitudes from the qualitative data.

The research team were then able to blend statistical and free-text data to provide an enriched interpretation, with the relative importance of the different themes revealed when matched with the key drivers.

Appendix 1 - Survey Methodology

Example Survey Question					
I feel a sense of pride about my job					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
100	75	50	25	0	
Respondents 1	✓				
Respondents 2				✓	
Respondents 3			✓		
Respondents 4	✓				
Respondents 5		✓			
Respondents 6			✓		

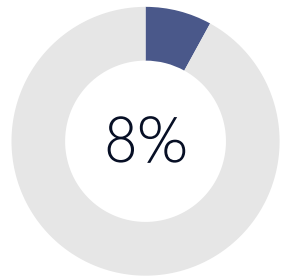
Total = 350

Divided by the total number of respondents

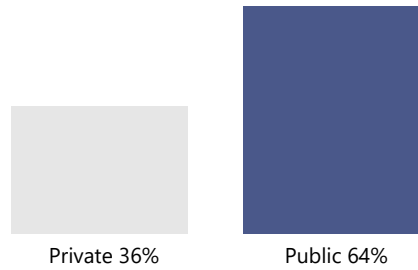
(6)

$350/6 = 58$ (rounded)

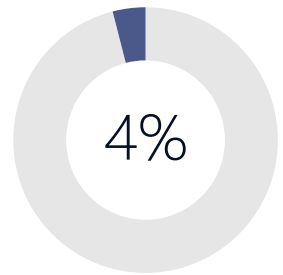
Appendix 2 - Additional Demographic Data



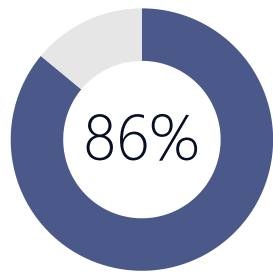
With Disability



Survey Responses

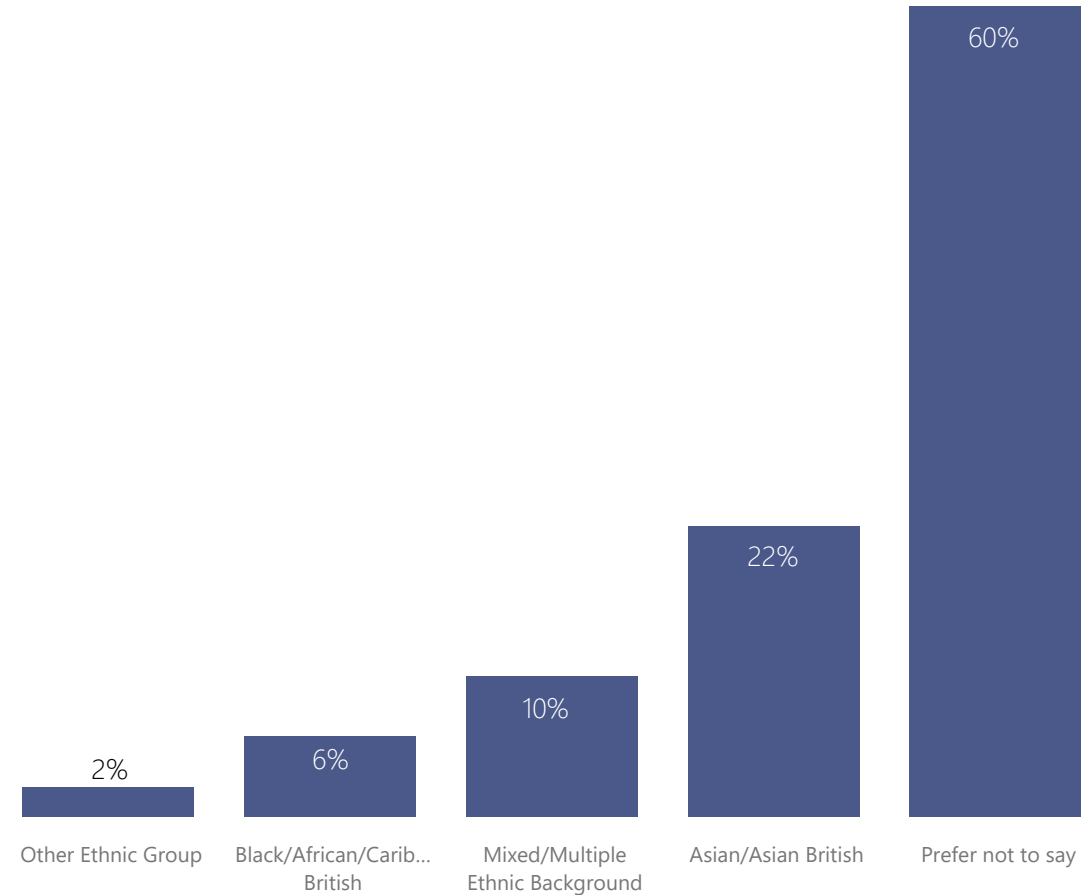


Disability limits Day-2-Day activity



Heterosexual

Percentage by Ethnicity (Non White)



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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Report to	The Chair and Members of Planning
Report Subject	Planning Appeal Update: 2 Market Street, Abertillery, NP13 1AH.
Report Author	Joanne Clare
Directorate	Regeneration and Community Services
Date of meeting	15th June 2023

1. Purpose of Report	
1.1	To advise Members of the decision of the Planning Environment and Decisions Wales (PEDW) in respect of a planning appeal against the refusal of planning permission (Ref: C/2022/0199). The development was for the conversion of dwelling into 2 no. apartments.
1.2	The application was refused by delegated powers on 31 st August 2022.
2.0 Scope of the Report	
2.1	The application was refused on the grounds that the lack of parking provision proposed would have a detrimental impact on the safe, effective, and efficient use of the highways network.
2.2	The property is a two-storey dwelling on the corner of Market Street and King Street, Abertillery. The property is in a dense, built-up area that is characterised by a mix of uses including commercial and residential. The property is outside of but adjacent to Abertillery town centre boundary.

- 2.3 The Inspector determined that the main issue to be considered is the effect of the proposal on highway safety, having regard to the demand for car parking.
- 2.4 Whilst noting the Council's reference to the on-street parking pressures within the vicinity of the appeal property and the extensive use of the existing car parks, the inspector noted that the appeal proposal would be modest in scale that would not result in any material change to existing car parking.
- 2.5 The inspector concluded that the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on highway safety, having regard to the demand for car parking. The proposal would comply with the relevant accessibility criteria in Policy DM1 of the Blaenau Gwent LDP.
- 2.3 The Inspector accordingly ALLOWED the appeal.

3. Recommendation/s for Consideration

- 3.1 That Members note for information the appeal decision for planning application C/2022/0199 as attached at **Appendix B**.



Appeal Decision

by I Stevens BA (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Decision date: 19/05/2023

Appeal reference: CAS-02200-P7H1Q9

Site address: 2 Market Street, Abertillery, NP13 1AH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Louis Lattuca against the decision of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
 - The application Ref C/2022/0199, dated 13 July 2022, was refused by notice dated 31 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is conversion of dwelling into 2 no. apartments.
 - A site visit was made on 5 May 2023.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for conversion of dwelling into 2 no. apartments at 2 Market Street, Abertillery, NP13 1AH, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref C/2022/0199, dated 13 July 2022, subject to the conditions set out in the schedule to this decision letter.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on highway safety, having regard to the demand for car parking.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a two-storey dwelling on the corner of Market Street and King Street. The property is in a dense, built-up area that is characterised by a mix of uses including commercial and residential. In planning policy terms, the property is outside of but adjacent to the Abertillery town centre boundary as defined in the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP), adopted in November 2012.
4. It is proposed to convert the existing dwelling into two apartments, with two bedrooms in the ground floor apartment and three bedrooms in the first-floor apartment. The Council's Access, Car Parking and Design Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) (March 2014) advises on car parking provision in new developments, using the number of bedrooms as a guide to determine the number of spaces required. It is noted that the relevant parking

standards are framed as maximum figures which should be applied flexibly to the circumstances in which a proposal is located, in accordance with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11 (February 2021) and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18: Transport (March 2007).

5. Based on the recommended standards, the proposal would require five car parking spaces in total. However, the guidance also explains that a reduction in standards is permitted where a development can show its sustainability credentials. Sustainability points can be applied to schemes that meet different criteria including their walking distance to local facilities, access to and frequency of public transport in the area, and cycle routes.
6. The Council's highways officer advises that with the sustainability criteria applied, each apartment would still require the provision of one car parking space. I note that the existing three-bedroom property has no parking spaces. the proposal would therefore in effect create the additional need for one parking space, based on the standards.
7. The Council's objection to the scheme is based on the lack of any car parking spaces in an area of limited off-street parking. I saw there are double yellow lines along Market Street, in front of the appeal property and other dwellings on the opposite side of the street. Much of King Street has double yellow lines on both sides, although there are designated parking bays at intervals along the highway. The nearest parking bays have 30-minute parking restrictions during the daytime between Monday and Saturday, with no return within an hour.
8. My attention is drawn to three car parks located near to the appeal site. One is located further down King Street, another is located along Market Street, and the other car park is located on Mitre Street. I visited each car park and saw that the King Street and Mitre Street spaces allow vehicles to park for up to 24 hours in any given period, with no return within an hour. The Market Street car park is adjacent to a cultural and conference centre, where a sign advises that parking is allowed between 0900 and 1900 Monday to Saturday unless otherwise required by the centre.
9. At the time of my site visit, during a weekday late morning, I observed that the car parks were well used, with several comings and goings, although some spaces were available at Market Street and Mitre Street. I also saw that some vehicles were briefly parked on double yellow lines along the one-way Market Street near to the appeal site. There were some available unrestricted on-street parking spaces in front of dwellings along one side of Cross Street, opposite the appeal site.
10. I can see that, at times, there may be competition for parking spaces between residents, workers, and visitors to the town centre. Notwithstanding these pressures, it was also evident that the area is one where increased car ownership over time has impacted on the finite road space available, with consequential impacts for on-street parking. As a result, the Council has applied parking restrictions in the surrounding area to the appeal site and residents may have to park away from their homes on occasions. In higher density living and working environments such as Abertillery town centre, lower parking standards are not unusual. In any event, options are available nearby on certain streets and within designated car parks which allow for up to 24 hours of parking.
11. Moreover, it is recognised that the appeal property is in a sustainable location, as it is within walking distance of the town centre and its local facilities. Public transport options are also available nearby, with bus services stopping along High Street. Future occupiers would be aware that they would not have access to on-site vehicle parking, although spaces may be available nearby that allow for parking over varying time periods. They would choose to buy or rent the properties with these factors in mind, recognising its

sustainable location. Those factors may prevent or discourage some future occupants from living at the properties.

12. There is little evidence that the modest scale of the proposal would result in any material change to existing car parking conditions to the extent that it would cause harm to highway safety. While the Council refer to on-street parking pressures within the vicinity of the appeal property, given that parking restrictions are in place, planning decisions can only be reasonably based on the premise that the laws and restrictions in respect of vehicle parking will be enforced by the relevant authorities. In the circumstances I have described, several on-street and off-street parking opportunities exist to cater for the needs of future occupants.
13. I conclude that the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on highway safety, having regard to the demand for car parking. The proposal would comply with the relevant accessibility criteria in Policy DM1 of the Blaenau Gwent LDP.

Conditions

14. I have considered the conditions recommended by the Council in the light of advice in Welsh Government Circular 016/2014 'The Use of Planning Conditions for Development Management'. In addition to the standard conditions, I agree that a biodiversity enhancement condition is necessary as set out in national and local planning policy.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.
16. In reaching my decision, I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I consider that this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives.

I Stevens

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development shall begin not later than five years from the date of this decision.
Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
- Drawing number: 22-071/P/01 – Site location plan
 - Drawing number: 22-071/P/04 – Ground floor plan as proposed
 - Drawing number: 22-071/P/05 – First floor plan as proposed
 - Drawing number: 22-171/P/06 – Elevations as proposed
 - Drawing number: 22-171/P/07 – Site plan as proposed

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved documents, plans and drawings submitted with the application.

- 3) No development shall take place until a scheme for biodiversity enhancement has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, in accordance with Future Wales Policy 9.

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Report to	The Chair and Members of Planning
Report Subject	Planning Appeal Update: 7 Beaufort Terrace, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale,
Report Author	Helen Hinton
Directorate	Regeneration and Community Services
Date of meeting	15th June 2023

1. Purpose of Report	
1.1	To advise Members of the decision of the Planning Environment and Decisions Wales (PEDW) in respect of a planning appeal against the refusal of planning permission (Ref: C/2022/0047). The development was for a two storey rear extension to provide kitchen, bedroom and ensuite and change of use to bed and breakfast.
1.2	The application was refused by the Planning Committee on 16 th June 2022.
2.0 Scope of the Report	
2.1	The application was refused as it was considered that the mass, size, scale and positioning of the proposed rear extension would have an overbearing impact and generate an increased level of overshadowing and loss of light detrimental to the residential amenity of those living closest to the site.
2.2	The property the subject of the appeal is a two storey, single fronted, mid terrace dwelling with existing single storey half width rear extension, positioned on the western side of Beaufort Terrace and adjoining the Badminton Club

- 2.3 The Inspector determined that the main issue to be considered was the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of No. 9 Beaufort Terrace with regard to outlook and daylight.
- 2.4 The inspector noted that the appeal proposal would be significantly larger than an existing single-storey extension on site that would be demolished as part of the proposal and that the additional increase in scale would form a substantial structure running close along the shared boundary with No 9 Beaufort Terrace.
- 2.5 The inspector concluded that, due to the extensions size and positioning, the significant depth and two-storey height of the extension would have a material overbearing effect on the occupiers of No. 9 when viewed from the nearest ground-floor windows and when using their rear amenity space. Furthermore, given the orientation of dwellings, there is a strong likelihood that the proposal would result in a significant diminution of daylight in the ground-floor rooms of No. 9 nearest to the boundary, over and above that which currently exists.
- 2.3 The Inspector accordingly DISMISSED the appeal.

3. Recommendation/s for Consideration

- 3.1 That Members note for information the appeal decision for planning application C/2022/0047 as attached at **Appendix A**.



Appeal Decision

by I Stevens BA (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Decision date: 26-04-2023

Appeal reference: CAS-02154-J7Z8W1

Site address: 7 Beaufort Terrace, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale, Blaenau Gwent, NP23 5NN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Andrew Nicholas against the decision of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
 - The application Ref C/2022/0047, dated 17 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 16 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is two storey rear extension to provide kitchen, bedroom and ensuite and change of use to bed and breakfast.
 - A site visit was made on 21 March 2023.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs has been made by Mr Andrew Nicholas against Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of No. 9 Beaufort Terrace with regard to outlook and daylight.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a two-storey mid-terrace dwelling located along a predominantly residential street. No. 5 Beaufort Terrace adjoins the appeal site to its south and forms part of a commercial premises at the end of the terrace. No. 9 Beaufort Terrace is a residential property which adjoins the appeal site to its north. The terrace properties back onto an access lane and have consistent depths to their rear amenity spaces. Several properties along the terrace have one and two-storey rear extensions and separate single-storey outbuildings within their amenity spaces.

5. Alongside the change of use to a bed and breakfast, the proposal would demolish an existing single-storey extension adjoining over half the width of the property's rear elevation. A two-storey extension would be built along most of the rear elevation, projecting out about 6m from the property. The extension would have a mono pitch roof reaching a ridge height of about 7.95m and eaves height of about 5.6m.
6. A single-storey flat-roof addition to No. 5 occupies most of its rear amenity space. Submitted plans indicate that the appeal proposal's extension would adjoin a first-floor rear extension proposed to No. 5. To the north of the appeal site, No. 9 has a single-storey rear addition which adjoins its boundary with No. 11. It has a window and door on its side elevation facing the side wall of the existing extension at the appeal site. A ground-floor opening on the rear elevation of No. 9 is located between its rear addition and the appeal site.
7. The appeal proposal would be significantly larger than the existing single-storey extension. The additional increase in scale would form a substantial structure running close along the shared boundary. It would be set down only marginally from the ridge height of the appeal property. Due to its size and position, the significant depth and two-storey height of the extension would have a material overbearing effect on the occupiers of No. 9 when viewed from the nearest ground-floor windows and when using their rear amenity space.
8. With the rear doorway of No. 9 facing the appeal proposal, occupiers would emerge from their property and see the tall, blank expanse of the proposal's side elevation, at close range. Whilst I recognise there is already a sense of enclosure in the amenity space and in views from the ground-floor windows, the proposal would exacerbate this by extending deeper and taller than the existing addition. The impact of the proposal on the outlook from a first-floor rear elevation window at No. 9, which appears to serve a habitable room window, would not be significant given it would only have a peripheral impact in views to the immediate south.
9. The proposed two-storey extension would be positioned to the south of No. 9. Given the trajectory of the sun, the form and scale of the extension would likely result in an overshadowing effect to the rear of the adjoining property, harmfully affecting occupants' use of their amenity space. The appellant's desktop daylight and sunlight assessment refer to a minor incursion of the 45-degree line from the nearest first-floor window at No. 9, which is based on guidance that is intended to help assess likely effects on nearest habitable room windows of adjacent properties. I recognise the '45-degree rule' can be a useful guide. However, it is not determinative, and any assessment should still be based on each proposal and their individual contexts. While the assessment conclusions are noted, they only address the nearest first-floor window and not the ground-floor rear elevation window. The assessment's conclusions of impacts on the rear garden at No. 9 are also not clear. Given the orientation of dwellings, with No. 9 to the north, there is a strong likelihood that the proposal would result in a significant diminution of daylight in the ground-floor rooms of No. 9 nearest to the boundary, over and above that which currently exists.
10. The appellant contends that the proposed extension would improve the outlook from neighbouring properties looking at the north elevation of the commercial premises adjacent to No. 5. Nevertheless, while the Council does not raise any specific objections to the proposal in terms of its impact on the wider character or appearance of the area, such factors do not mitigate the harm that would be caused to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. The use of matching materials to those on external elevations of the appeal property would do little to overcome the harm that I have identified.

11. Although no neighbour objections have been received to the proposal, it has little relevance to the requirement to consider the effects of proposals on current or future occupiers of neighbouring properties, with regard to the development plan. Having observed other two-storey additions to the rear of some properties along the terrace, I do not regard them as examples that would justify the identified harm in this case.
12. I acknowledge that the proposed development would form part of a wider project at the nearby commercial premises and would provide some economic benefits. Whilst mindful of references to the proposed extension at No. 5 which would provide two storeys adjacent to the appeal site, I have no evidence of any planning permission having been granted for that scheme and in any event, it does not alter my decision that the appeal proposal would be harmful for the reasons given. I have considered the proposal against relevant planning policies and its likely long-term impact for existing and future occupiers. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the living conditions of occupiers at No. 9 Beaufort Terrace, with regard to outlook and daylight. This is contrary to the amenity-related criteria in Policy DM1 of the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan, adopted in November 2012.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.
14. In reaching my decision, I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I consider that this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives.

I Stevens

INSPECTOR

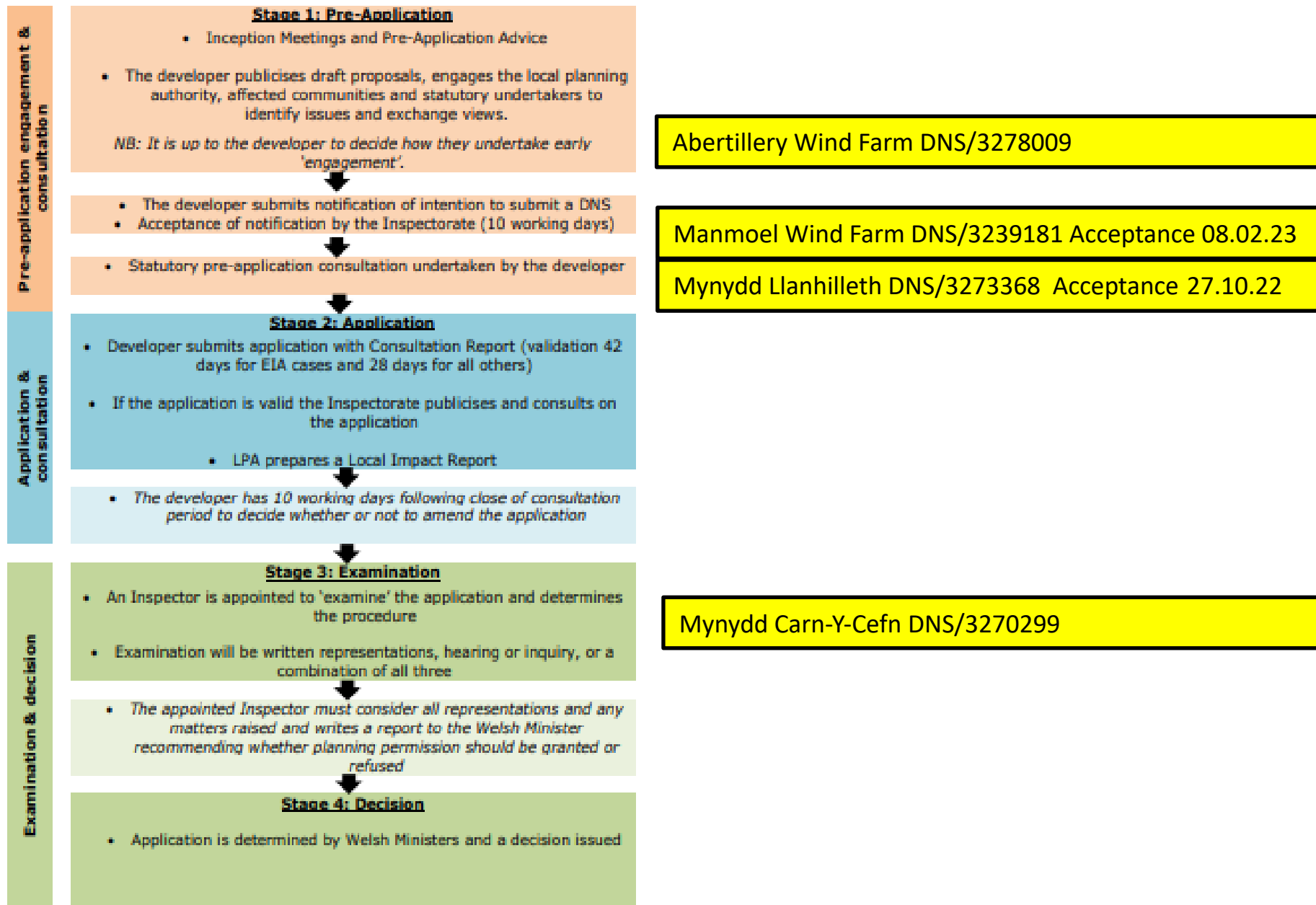
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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Report to	The Chair and Members of Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing
Report Subject	Appeals, Consultations and DNS Update June 2023
Report Author	Service Manager Development & Estates
Report Date	31st May 2023
Directorate	Regeneration & Community Services
Date of meeting	15th June 2023

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members in relation to planning appeals, live DNS cases and status update of anticipated DNS schemes.
2.0	Present Position
2.1	The attached list covers the “live” planning appeals and Development of National Significance (DNS) caseload. It also provides information of the status of anticipated DNS schemes.
3.0	Recommendation/s for Consideration
3.1	That the report be noted.

	Application No Appeal Reference Case Officer	Site Address	Development	Type Procedure	Sit Rep
1	CAS-02154-J7Z8W1 (C/2022/0047) Helen Hinton	7 Beaufort Terrace Beaufort Ebbw Vale NP23 5NN	Proposed two storey rear extension to provide kitchen, lounge, bedroom, bathroom and ensuite and change of use to bed and breakfast	Planning Appeal Written Reps	Appeal Dismissed – see attached report
2	CAS-02200-P7H1Q9 (C/2022/0199) Joanne Clare	2 Market Square Abertillery NP13 1BD	Proposed conversion of dwelling into 2no. apartments	Planning Appeal Written Reps	Appeal Allowed – see attached report
3	CAS-02310-J7Y5T0 (C21/082) Paul Samuel	Underhill, Hawthorn Road, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5HS	Unauthorised raised decking and timber building	Enforcement Appeal Written Reps	LPA written statement submitted
4	CAS-02311-Z4L0N4 (C21/082) Paul Samuel	Underhill, Hawthorn Road, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5HS	Unauthorised change of use of land	Enforcement Appeal Written Reps	LPA written statement submitted

Developments of National Significance (DNS) – Status Update



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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Report to	The Chair and Members of Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing
Report Subject	List of applications decided under delegated powers between 4th April 2023 and 29th May 2023.
Report Author	Business Support Officer
Report Date	30th May 2023
Directorate	Regeneration & Community Services
Date of meeting	15th June 2023

1.0 Purpose of Report
1.1 To report decisions taken under delegated powers.
2.0 Scope of the Report
2.1 The attached list deals with the period 4 th April 2023 and 29 th May 2023.
3.0 Recommendation/s for Consideration
3.1 The report lists decisions that have already been made and is for information only.

Application No.	Address	Proposal	Valid Date Decision Date
C/2022/0117	The Willows Club Church Street Tredegar	Demolish existing social club and erect (2 x pairs) of semi-detached, 3 bed dwellings with off road parking.	04/07/22 20/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0065	19 Larch Lane Bedwellty Gardens Tredegar	Application for Lawful Development Certificate for a proposed single storey rear extension.	16/03/23 21/04/23 Lawful Development Certificate Granted
C/2022/0336	Cwm Telephone Exchange Brook Place Cwm Ebbw Vale	Provision of secure storage area within the yard of Cwm Telephone Exchange plus the installation of two, 3m containers to house materials and equipment in support of the local telecoms infrastructure network.	09/12/22 25/05/23 Approved
C/2022/0282	Land adjoining Greenfield Cottages Golf Road Nantyglo Gwent	Outline application for 4no dwellings with parking provision and vehicle access from Golf Road.	17/04/23 02/05/23 Withdrawn

C/2022/0221	Land west of Ty Bryn Club Rassau Road Rassau Ebbw Vale	Construction of private residential dwelling (outline).	02/08/22 21/04/23 Refused
C/2022/0199	2 Market Street Abertillery	Proposed conversion of dwelling into 2no. Apartments.	14/07/22 19/05/23 Approved by PEDW
C/2022/0165	Land at Waun Y Pound & College Road Ebbw Vale	Discharge of condition 5 - SI Remediation and verification of planning permission C/2019/0005 Residential development of 277 units, including associated works.	09/06/22 24/04/23 Condition Discharged
C/2022/0263	Land off Marian Close Tredegar	Detached dwelling and garage.	09/09/22 20/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0067	144 King Street Brynmawr	Retention of off road parking to front of property and proposed associated works.	17/03/23 09/05/23 Approved

C/2022/0228	Plot adjoining Nant Farm Road near Cwm Cottage Road Abertillery	New 2-bed bungalow including access, services and landscaping.	11/08/22 21/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0069	Bryn Oyre Upper Coedcae Nantyglo Brynmawr	Proposed alterations and extension to outbuilding.	13/03/23 05/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0066	1 Woodville Road Cwm Ebbw Vale	Rear second storey extension over existing single storey rear annexe.	16/03/23 18/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0002	Glyncoed Primary School Badminton Grove Ebbw Vale	Application for discharge of condition 8 - A plan indicating the position, design and materials of all boundary treatments, bin stores & cycle parking. Condition 9 - Full details/samples of all external facing, roofing materials and finishes of hard landscaping, and condition 10 - details of ground preparation, planting plans, species for all soft landscaping, maintenance details and a phased timescale of implementation of planning permission C/2021/0274 (New Primary School and Childcare Facility with External Play Areas, Recreational Spaces and Other Associated Infrastructure).	04/01/23 28/04/23 Condition Discharged

C/2023/0054	Pentwyn Cottage Railway Terrace Trefil	Replace existing side extension with new two-storey extension and provision of front porch, canopy and external alterations.	01/03/23 12/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0073	47 Lakeside Way Nantyglo Brynmawr	Proposed loft conversion with front and rear dormers. Extension to garage. Change of use of parcel of land to form extension to residential curtilage and re-positioning of boundary wall.	29/03/23 04/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0028	14 Beaufort Road Tredegar	Two storey rear extension and alterations to roof of existing single storey rear extension.	03/02/23 18/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0027	40 Harford Street Sirhowy Tredegar	First floor extension over previously built ground floor extension.	31/01/23 27/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0075	55 Waen Fawr Waun Ebbw Road Nantyglo	Single storey rear extension.	29/03/23 04/05/23 Approved

C/2023/0077	120 Emlyn Avenue Ebbw Vale	Proposed two storey side house extension, front porch and creation of parking space.	30/03/23 23/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0081	Former Hospital Development Site Park Row Tredegar	Application for Non-material amendment of planning permission C/2020/0095 (Reserved matters application relating to access (revised from that approved under outline planning permission), landscaping appearance, scale and layout of planning permission C/2020/0037 (Demolition of Tredegar Health Centre, partial demolition of Tredegar General Hospital and erection of new Class D1 Health and Wellbeing Centre) for the substitution of finishes to retaining walls.	30/03/23 12/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0022	43 Heolgerrig Abertillery	Demolition of existing conservatory and replacement extension.	31/01/23 18/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0039	Fairholme Bryngwyn Road Beaufort Ebbw Vale	Conversion of existing dwelling, back to two properties, 3 bedroom and 1 bedroom, including construction of a porch.	13/02/23 26/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0037	1 Hill Crescent Brynmaur	Proposed two storey side house extension and front porch. New vehicular gates and crossover with drop kerb.	10/02/23 13/04/23 Approved

C/2023/0023	Site of Former Sheltered Housing at Glanffrwd Court and adjacent land at Cae Melyn and Rhiw Wen Glanffrwd Terrace Beaufort Ebbw Vale NP23 6JA	Application for Discharge of Condition 7 (Construction Method Statement) of planning permission C/2019/0346 (Affordable housing development of 23 dwellings including new access road, landscaping & associated engineering & drainage work).	01/02/23 04/04/23 Condition Discharged
C/2022/0311	Land formerly 39 & 40 Queen Street Nantyglo Brynmawr	Application for Variation of Condition 10 (extend life of permission) of planning permission C/2017/0296 (Pair of semi-detached houses).	19/04/23 10/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0072	5 Mill Street Blaina	First floor rear extension.	27/03/23 04/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0074	52 Windsor Road Brynmawr	2 storey side extension.	29/03/23 04/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0048	2 The Walk Ebbw Vale	Application for Discharge of Conditions 3 (details bat & bird mitigation), 4 (amalgam trap) and 5 (details of compressor units) of planning permission C/2022/0270 (Change of use from retail unit to health care (dental surgery)).	27/02/23 02/05/23 Condition Discharged

C/2023/0042	The Bungalow Windsor Road Brynmawr	Conversion of loft with Hip to gable roof extension, dormer extension, front porch and associated works.	17/02/23 11/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0046	5 Griffiths Square North Avenue Ashavle Tredegar	First floor bedroom extension and alterations.	21/02/23 24/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0052	Former King Street Baptist Church King Street Abertillery	Application of Discharge of Conditions: 3 (Historic Building Recording), 5 (Scheme of sound insulation works), 6 (Visibility splays), 7 (details bat boxes or bat bricks), of planning permission C/2022/0230 (Change of use & conversion of former Baptist church to provide 5 No. 2 bedroom flats, plus onsite parking & amenity area).	27/02/23 22/05/23 Condition Discharged
C/2023/0068	12 King Edward Road Brynmawr	Single storey flat roof extension to the rear of the property.	15/03/23 19/05/23 Approved
C/2023/0051	36 Adam Street Abertillery	Application for Lawful Development Certificate for proposed single storey rear extension.	28/02/23 14/04/23 Approved

C/2023/0071	The Talisman Market Square Brynmawr	Application for Non-material amendment of planning permission C/2018/0144 (Extension and alterations to provide longer restaurant on ground floor, guest accommodation to first floor and residential accommodation to second floor) - amendment to first floor plan affecting internal layout of bedroom walls.	24/03/23 17/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0020	Former Darlingtons Opticians 8 & 8a Market Street Ebbw Vale	Change of use from A2 to A3 including basement, annexe, ground and first floor with external alterations to rear.	24/01/23 14/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0044	53 Golwg Y Mynydd Nantybwh Tredegar	Application for Variation of Condition 2 (Approved plans) of planning permission C/2021/0336 (Demolition of lean-to garage and new double storey pitched roof extension to side with lean-to porch to front) to increase width of extension.	20/02/23 11/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0050	Tryfan Cwm Cottage Road Abertillery	Single storey extension.	23/02/23 19/04/23 Approved
C/2023/0094	Ty Canol Cwm Farm Road Six Bells Abertillery	Application for Lawful Development Certificate for proposed increase in size of the existing boot room and access to the property, and provide a wet room.	25/04/23 24/05/23 Lawful Development Certificate Refused

C/2023/0093	Ty Canol Cwm Farm Road Six Bells Abertillery	Application for Lawful Development Certificate for proposed construction of a single storey side extension to include two en-suites and a walk-in wardrobe.	25/04/23 22/05/23 Lawful Development Certificate Granted
C/2023/0089	Plots 42 & 43 Beech Tree Crescent Tanglewood Blaina	Application for Non-material amendment of planning permission C/2018/0251 (Construction of 2 no. x 4 bedroom detached dwellings) for alterations to external appearance of both houses, alterations to landscaping and rear balconies.	20/04/23 11/05/23 Approved

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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