

Planning Services – 2013 Customer Satisfaction Survey Supplementary Report No.4 Comments

This report summarises comments from the Planning Services 2013 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

Customers were given the opportunity to add comments associated with various questions as well as make general comments and observations at the end of the survey. Some comments have been associated with other reports as follows and are not duplicated in this report;

- All comments related to Planning Committee or their meetings are to be found in Supplementary Report No. 1
- All comments related to the web-site, web-pages or Internet service are to be found in Supplementary Report No. 2
- All comments related to training are to be found in Supplementary Report No. 3
- All comments made by Staff are to be found in Supplementary Report No. 5

Table A below details the number of comments received.

Comments received against each of the questions have then been grouped into suggested topic areas although this is subjective and down to the authors interpretation. Additionally some comments may relate to more than one topic area.

- In total **588 comments** were received. During analysis these may have been split into additional comments where the topic areas clearly differed within the comment.
- Additional to the **169 comments** related to 'things that we do well', **twelve** other comments were recognised as compliments

Table A. Number of comments received.

		Consolidated		Parish/Tn Council		Councillors		Enforcement		Policy		Applicants		Miscellaneous	
*Does not include Planning Committee Visitor surveys		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Surveys issued*		1042		37		47		100		225		537		96	
respondents*		212	20%	16	43%	22	47%	18	18%	48	21%	86	16%	22	23%
COMMON SURVEY QUESTIONS															
7A. Which sections of the Planning Services web pages are most useful to you....	DNA	138	65%	7	44%	14	64%	16	89%	29	60%	57	66%	15	68%
	No. of comments	113	53%	13	81%	11	50%	2	11%	26	54%	45	52%	16	73%
7B. Which sections of the Planning Services web pages are unhelpful to you....	DNA	189	89%	16	100%	22	100%	18	100%	39	81%	76	88%	18	82%
	No. of comments	28	13%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	12	25%	12	14%	4	18%
16A. Is there anything that you think that we do particularly well?	DNA	129	61%	12	75%	13	59%	9	50%	33	69%	52	60%	10	45%
	No. of comments	114	54%	6	38%	15	68%	15	83%	17	35%	52	60%	9	41%
16B. If you had to prioritise any areas for improvements to Planning Services what would they be?	DNA	115	54%	6	38%	9	41%	10	56%	26	54%	54	63%	10	45%
	No. of comments	164	77%	14	88%	23	105%	13	72%	30	63%	52	60%	32	145%
18. Any additional comments	DNA	113	53%	5	31%	13	59%	8	44%	22	46%	53	62%	12	55%
	No. of comments	153	72%	19	119%	12	55%	16	89%	41	85%	51	59%	14	64%
PARISH COUNCIL (and some COUNCILLOR / P.C. MEETING VISITOR) SPECIFIC QUESTIONS															
24B. What if anything would you change in respect of Planning Committee Reports	DNA	24	11%	9	56%	15	68%								
	No. of comments	13	6%	6	38%	7	32%								
VISITORS to PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING SPECIFIC QUESTIONS															
25. Any additional comments related to Planning Committee meetings	DNA	5	2%												
	No. of comments	3	1%												
Average number of respondents leaving comments		76	36%	7	44%	8	41%	6	56%	18	54%	28	38%	9	41%
Average number of respondents not leaving comments (DNA)		137	65%	9	57%	14	59%	12	44%	30	46%	58	62%	13	59%
Total of all comments left / Ratio against number of respondents		588	277%	58	363%	68	309%	46	256%	126	263%	212	247%	75	341%

** DNA = Did not answer

Note: *Planning Agents (A) : Subset from all groups = 36 responses out of 212 = 17%*

Things that we do well

1.0 We asked all respondents to tell us what they thought we did well. Some chose to highlight negative elements that they considered we did well. These are identified *in italic* at the end of the list. (Q.16A)

Grouping	Comment
Access	access to planning details in Faversham
Access	access to plans at the office
Access	Availability of Officers
Access	Full application details placed in Council offices in Sheerness can be reviewed at length and leisure. This is most necessary
Access	Very accessible and contactable (Please keep it that way in Swale)
Comms	(x3) Communication with me (when problems arise) / Keeping me informed
Comms	Ability to speak to planners - very important
Comms	Advice and information well delivered
Comms	certain officers (happy to discuss) are good communicators & give good advice
Comms	communicate when promised
Comms	communication
Comms	communication was very good on a recent application
Comms	communication with chief officers and councillors is very good
Comms	don't lie
Comms	General advice well balanced
Comms	give advice / explain why we cannot give certain advice
Comms	Good and consistent advice
Comms	Good clear information
Comms	Good guidance advice
Comms	good sensible committee reports
Comms	Great over the phone advice and support
Comms	Listen to customers (But do not always act)
Comms	Listening
Comms	listening and giving advice
Comms	phone advice
Comms	tell like my view mattered
Comms	you are very attentive
Comms	You listen
Conservation	Conservation issues
Conservation	suggestions offered by Conservation Officer
Consult	consultation with Parish Council is good
Consult	consulting residents on nearby planning applications
Consult	consulting the public
Decisions	Fairness of decisions
Decisions	making the right decision
Emails	prompt reply to emails
Emails	replying to emails
Emails	respond to emails

Enforcement	Deal with planning enforcement
General	achieve targets
General	caveat planning advice responses
General	Correct approve / refuse advice to members
General	Correctiveness
General	Detail
General	FOI's
General	generally we meet performance targets
General	Holding regular Swale Development Group meetings
General	I like the help desk at the office
General	information available
General	majority of applications determined in 8/13 weeks
General	meeting general planning application targets
General	Meeting targets
General	notices of planning applications posted on street furniture
General	performance within statutory time limits
General	Planning training sessions very informative
General	recent Design Panel was good quality
General	Relevant hand-outs at planning meeting
General	Site visits
General	stick to time limits for pp
General	We do astonishingly well with a limited resource across the piece
General	well considered applications
General	work within advised guidelines
Pre-app	pre-application advice
Service	(x2) Helpful and accessible
Service	(x3) Formal advice / detail / explanation
Service	Advice good
Service	After planning advice
Service	Answering phones, emails and acknowledging enquiries (x4)
Service	Approachable
Service	Attitude
Service	being helpful
Service	called me back with updates
Service	customer service
Service	Dealing with complex enquiries
Service	determine applications on time
Service	Difficult to identify - Most things are done fairly well
Service	Duty Officer available all day, 5 days a week, helpful, comprehensive customer service, brilliant (x7)
Service	easy access to a planning officer, easy to see someone, face to face contact and advice (x6)
Service	Environmental people were extremely helpful
Service	Flexible
Service	for the little that I have used your services they appear to function as I expected
Service	Found service very good, quick and efficient

Service	friendly helpful staff who are always willing to help
Service	Friendly personal contact
Service	Good customer service
Service	good officers
Service	good reception and duty planner system
Service	guidance
Service	helpful
Service	helpful friendly advice
Service	helpful service
Service	Informing, discussing and advising on any potential concerns with an application
Service	Initial response - generally good
Service	keep applicants fully informed
Service	knowledge on answers
Service	making personal contact and explaining any queries
Service	Most Officers do their utmost to assist with enquiries in a helpful manner
Service	Planning Officers are very helpful and knowledgeable
Service	polite
Service	polite enough
Service	polite to customers - phone enquiries
Service	Politeness
Service	proactive staff when determining an application
Service	Professional advice
Service	Professional advice provision
Service	Professional attitude of Officers, Planning Policy Officers, Head of Planning
Service	professional manner of staff
Service	prompt response
Service	prompt response once application is made
Service	Provide relevant advice when required
Service	Providing a duty planning officer - being available for discussion
Service	providing clear advice
Service	quick response
Service	Rapid response
Service	Reply promptly to correspondence
Service	reply to letters promptly
Service	respond to customers in a timely fashion
Service	respond well / clearly
Service	responding to enquiries
Service	responding to enquiries
Service	responding to enquiries within deadlines
Service	Responding to queries
Service	responding to the public
Service	return phone calls
Service	Speed of dealing with applications
Service	staff are very helpful
Service	staff friendly, polite, professional

Service	staff try to help as much as possible
Service	Telephone is usually answered promptly
Service	Updating on-line mapping service
Service	Very good service from the planning service desk
Service	Very obliging dept.
Service	visit for planning when you say you will promptly
Service	Working to timescales
Service	you notify all who may be inconvenienced by the proposed development and keep informed of progress
Website	Information displayed on internet is good
Website	website well laid out
	<i>can be very helpful but this is uncommon</i>
	<i>completely disregarding views and wishes of rate payers</i>
	<i>Disregard of any objections that go against their recommendations!</i>
	<i>Don't listen or offer help or suggestions</i>
	<i>employing non-local planners</i>
	<i>Following the rules showing no discretion</i>
	<i>Ignoring local opinion</i>
	<i>Long reports</i>
	<i>Make mistakes</i>
	<i>none</i>
	<i>nothing</i>
	<i>Overriding the elected representatives and promoting their own agenda i.e. by calling in decisions</i>
	<i>Promoting the schemes of political pressure groups such as Farmers Union and Gypsy /Travellers</i>
	<i>publishing incorrect and disturbing information</i>
	<i>Reduce the quality of the area in which I live</i>
	<i>Refuse planning applications instead of granting permission</i>
	<i>zilch</i>
	<i>zippo</i>

Priorities for improvements

2.0 We asked all respondents to tell us what areas they thought we should prioritise for improvement. (Q.16B)

* Who made the comment (Where identified) = Agent, Parish, Visitor, Staff, Councillor, Business User

* Grouping	Comment
Comms	better communication between architect, structural engineer & planning - before and after planning
B Comms	clear up language used within rulings to ensure info is clear
A Comms	clearer reasons
C Comms	Communication
P Comms	Communication with more junior officers who are difficult to contact is not very good
Comms	contact us more (NO CONTACT AT ALL)
A Comms	Don't repeat conditions when they are covered in the application
B Comms	Eliminate the "in-house" jargon
P Comms	keep applicants updated (some staff do this but others don't)
Comms	Keep the person informed
Comms	keep us informed
Comms	Learn to précis
P Comms	Less use of acronyms - what is familiar to planning officers is not necessarily so to others
Comms	Reasons for any conditions imposed
A Comms	review application and wording of conditions
A Conservation	conservation advice
C Conservation	Is there any way to communicate with property owners in conservation areas and CA (sp?) article 4 areas that they have particular restrictions? Could this be done alongside the annual council tax notification?
A Conservation	response from part time Conservation Officer
P Consult	Continue to ask Parish Councils views they know the area best
Consult	Give more time for local people to comment at meetings for major applications
Decisions	accept that there are valid objections to your preferred outcome
C Decisions	Better pointing to decisions of similar ilk in the area, either refused or allowed
Decisions	decision time
Decisions	Decisions come at max of time never earlier
A Decisions	discussions rather than rejection and resubmission
Decisions	improve the area in which I live by not granting permission for poor applications that affect the lives of the local community
Decisions	Quicker reporting of decisions on web page
Emails	reply to emails
Emails	Write a subject line in the emails that you send out
C Enforcement	(x3) Better enforcement which may mean more staff on the team / They seem to take forever
B Enforcement	Check planning applications design details with what is built on site. I've come across several applications where there are obvious differences
P Enforcement	Enforcement seems slow and weak on occasions

P	Enforcement	Increase enforcement
P	Enforcement	more willingness to tackle enforcement matters
	Enforcement	not leave the job of investigating and reporting to neighbours and individuals
	Enforcement	Parts of the Borough are blighted by poor quality development and it is clear that a robust system for ensuring that planning permissions are complied with is NOT in place. E.g. landscaping not maintained - Sainsbury's Sittingbourne, thistle hill minster
	General	Don't always put site notices close enough to sites - Have found several in incorrect places e.g. Preston Street, Faversham
	General	employ local planning officers so that they are affected by the decisions they make
	General	Employ planning officers within - and are residents of Swale
	General	Fire the entire staff and replace with robots
P	General	have a log in section for parish clerks to go on-line and check applications / objections
	General	Move office out of town, too congested
P	General	Periodically visit parish council meetings or invite members to swale house to discuss important issues
	General	re-think your whole setup
A	General	rigid view of essetics [aesthetics?]
A	General	Some means of access to similar projects for comparisons and establishing planning precedents and decisions
A	Mapping	The Planning map is very useful but a little dated and clunky when compared to others. Local view used by Canterbury is much better
A	Policy	application of planning policy uniformly
	Policy	Ensure local planning regs also correspond to national regs
	Policy	extensions should match existing building and not be different as Swale wants it to be
A	Policy	Reduce Local List requirements
	Policy	St/+ (sp?) info on strategic imperatives being imposed, if any
A	Policy	Update your SPG's from 1993
	Pre-app	nothing gets done about our request
A	Pre-app	Pre-application advice should be binding. We have had a few applications where the advice has been over-ruled and a refusal received. No point in paying for advice that is not adhered to.
	Service	[Telephone] call backs never come
	Service	Acknowledgement and feedback
P	Service	Admin does not confirm SAFE RECEIPT of planning comments. This leaves me wondering if they have received important information and if it has been passed to the Case Officer/ To date, it is a minor gripe but it could have implications
A	Service	answering phones
	Service	Be friendly and straight forward in e-mails and letters
	Service	be honest
A	Service	be less bureaucratic
A	Service	be more proactive/helpful
A	Service	Be more realistic on local requirement
A	Service	common sense
A	Service	contact kept up to date so we can keep clients in the loop at all times
B	Service	Deal with applications quicker
A	Service	Dealing with mistakes
	Service	don't give false information over the phone

	Service	Explanation of process applicants need to follow after receiving planning permission
	Service	Give consistent advice when dealing with queries relating to commercial development
	Service	I would have liked it dealt with a lot quicker
C	Service	If possible response to residents' concerns - Speedier
	Service	improve access to the service on the telephone
	Service	inspect when promised
A	Service	lack of knowledge
P	Service	lack of local knowledge, too few planning site visits
A	Service	Officers should work in office full time - not part time
	Service	Old furniture and improve environment of service areas. Would bring level of environment into 21st century & apply that to the standard of professional staff in place
A	Service	putting the client first
	Service	Quicker and more reliable response when a message is left for a phone call to be made
A	Service	Register apps more quickly
	Service	respond by letter / call / in person
	Service	response BEFORE application is made
	Service	Response times in Development Management
	Service	return calls
	Service	return calls when promised
P	Service	return phone calls
	Service	Send the enquiry to the right department
	Service	service seems to be target orientated rather than balancing a performance culture with a focus on design quality.
	Service	To ensure that planning applications are correct and accurate when first submitted and not rely on the public to identify inaccuracies
	Service	Updates, feedback....
	Service	When highways got involved we then had a 6 week delay
	Service	wider distribution
P	Service	You should supply case officer contact details direct line / mobile / email

Additional comments

3.0 At the end of the survey we gave all respondents the opportunity to add any other comments

* Who made the comment (Where identified) = Agent, Parish, Visitor, Staff, Councillor, Business User,

* Grouping	Comment
*Plan App	Re [Personal issues with planning consent opposite her property]: <input type="text"/> Claims Planning have over years changed it from trees to garages, then to industrial and now to houses. Unhappy that no-one is listening to her objections: [TP - Given her Ward Councillor contact details following her telephone call]
*Plan App	RE Q16: OBJECTIONS - Swale housing development. Concern was provision of extra water supply. This issue was excluded from consideration. It remains an issue. Traffic flow from Garden Hotel Boughton remains a concern. Raised twice in comments to planning application. Objections to access arrangements for construction via Gas Lane in Boughton were badly treated. The above issues are the basis for the opinions expressed elsewhere
P Comms	Re Q9: DECISIONS - Often decisions miss deadlines yet the applicant is not informed
P Comparison	Q17 : Ashford Borough Council has excellent lists of applications
P Comparison	Q17 :Dealing with other authorities - We have dealt with Maidstone and they appear to be better resourced
Comparison	RE Q17 COMPARISON - Swale are better than Maidstone - Impossible (Really!) to speak directly to an officer at Maidstone Council
A Comparison	RE Q17: COMPARISON - Access to Officers is much better than others
A Comparison	Re Q17: COMPARISON - Canterbury were very easy to deal with. Less red tape
P Comparison	RE Q17: COMPARISON - KCC seem to want to work closer with Parish Councils (than Swale)
Comparison	RE Q17: COMPARISON - Kensington & Chelsea used to have more detail re existing/proposed/revised drawings when people look up applications on-line
Comparison	RE Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are better than Dover District Council
A Comparison	RE Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are better than some possibly, not quite as good as others but that could be me!!
Comparison	RE Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are better than Tower Hamlets - Atrocious!
A Comparison	RE Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are proactive, engaging, other authorities don't get as involved. This leads to planning refusals that could have been avoided
Comparison	Re: COMPARISON - Swale are better - Folkestone - poor links
Complaint	RE Q12: COMPLAINTS - Councils initial response was poor and the response from the Chief Executive of Swale did not answer the complaint until I urged him to do so in a second or possibly third letter
A Complaint	Re Q12: COMPLAINTS - I have never had a need to complain to anyone in Planning at SBC. Always kind and attentive and they know what they are talking about. Overall, very good service indeed
C Complaint	Re Q13: COMPLAINTS - Yes I have complained and did not get satisfaction through the council internal structure but did subsequently win two appeals against the Council. This cost me money time and effort.
Complaint	Re: COMPLAINTS - We have been to Sittingbourne office to make our complaints. Nothing has been done and nobody has contacted us about the complaint either by phone or letter

	Compliment	ACCOMPANYING LETTER:I was given assistance by [redacted] to fill in the application form. He also put me in touch with [Planning Officer name] who couldn't have been more helpful....I can only say that I was impressed by the service given by your planning officers and thank you for the positive help which I received.
	Compliment	My dealings have been with Planning Officer [name] whom I have found to be superb
	Compliment	Overall pleased with Swales planning department. Many thanks
	Compliment	Planning Officer [name] was very helpful, particularly with pre-application advice and I am grateful to him for his support
B	Compliment	RE Q11: GUIDANCE - Duty Officer (name) was very helpful
	Compliment	RE Q9: PERFORMANCE - Contact with 'duty' planning personnel to chat about a proposed bungalow extension. Excellent advice given, photocopies of my design made and later discussed by planning dept. 2 months later received a phone call to discuss proposal. Very helpful 'on duty' instant advice. Has given me confidence in the service Planning Dept. provide.
B	Compliment	RE Q9: PERFORMANCE RATING: Staff are always friendly and polite and have never make any mistakes in my case
	Compliment	Re: DECISIONS / WEBSITE – Considering the number of applications they handle and the variation in knowledge of those applying, not to mention the awkward squad, I think the staff do a pretty good job. It requires careful oversight by Councillors to ensure that the service is even handed, transparent and polite.
	Compliment	RE: General - We have always been happy with any contact with the council. The staff are always as helpful as their positions allows....We are pleased with the outcome....there seemed more behind this application than was stated on plans???
A	Compliment	RE: PERFORMANCE - A good planning service, 'old school' officers are experienced, sensible, reasonable and pro-active. Admin are cheerful and helpful. I am less concerned (not concerned) about how quickly decisions are made but the quality of the outcome is of paramount importance. Swale has struck the right balance here.
	Compliment	We would like to say that the staff we spoke to were very amicable and able to answer our queries and kindly sent application form for planning, which we found more understandable than on-line. Also we would like to make a request for parking more centrally to the town for elderly residents.
P	Conservation	Re Q1: CONSERVATION - I was not allowed to discuss my application with the listed building Officer. This needs to change. A more pro-active approach might lead to fewer failed planning applications
	Conservation	RE Q1: CONSERVATION - Worked with Cons. Officer on Undesignated Heritage for Creek - Very helpful
	Conservation	RE Q14: CONSERVATION - Contact from Conservation Officer was very slow when asking for pre-application advice. Request for on-site meeting was refused and Planning Officer came out instead. This added considerable time to preparing the application
P	Consult	CONSULTING: Where there are fundamental differences of opinion between SBC and Parish Councils I think it would benefit by having a meaningful discussion about the differences
P	Consult	DECISIONS - Planning Officers recommendations should be advised to Parish Councils concerned before the decision is made. Parish Councils should be given a little more time for consideration of applications (monthly meetings can miss deadlines) Whilst Planning Services tend to work in accordance with policies and guidelines and consultation is carried out, the views of the local communities are not given adequate weight in the decision making process. It often appears that consultation is a minor part of the process...[repetition] Planning notifications should be sent to P.C's whose

		areas are affected by the application, not just within those boundaries it is located.
	Consult	FEEDBACK - Planning applications that I commented on over a year ago are still on-going. I check the website regularly in the hope that there will be decisions made. My comments appear to be ignored.
P	Consult	RE CONSULTATION: It would be most helpful if the 21 day consultation period could be extended. Most PC's only meet once month therefore period has usually expired when the next meeting is due and the councillors are not able to comment on the app.
	Consult	RE CONSULTATION: We live in a democracy but S.W.B. Planners completely ignore the residents views in favour of "The Big Boys" and push through applications that do not "Make Swale A Better Place" because the applications bring only noise pollution and turn what is deemed as a poor quality area to an even poorer quality by applicants who live outside the area, do not create employment for locals and only interested in making more money Why was I not sent a copy of this survey? I had to go in person to get it
	Consult	RE Q1: CONSULTATION - A community wide consultation towards a Parish Design Statement was designed to inform Planners but Swale responded to changes in central guidance by removing the community input from formal inclusion in the (Lynsted & Kingsdown) Planning process. This behaviour destroyed a democratic statement's value overnight.
	Consult	RE Q1: CONSULTATION - Overall, disappointed in handling of the PYO & Bearing Fruits campaign. It was very clear that the compilers/consultants did not appreciate or understand the local views, issues, geo & social constraints on the area. Nor was there any indication of what, if any, higher authority direction was being given. The result is a general opinion that local reasoning and argument is being ignored and local council are making significant long term planning decisions with a tactical and short term outlook. Sorry, not a good impression of local government in action!
	Consult	Re Q1: My organisation made extensive comment in 2012 on the consultation for the core strategy, while receipt of that comment was acknowledged by email, no further information or engagement has ever been received
	Consult	RE Q12 (?) CONSULTATION - Public consultations ignore opinions of local residents
	Consult	RE Q15: CONSULTATION - Recent debates about Swales homebuilding assumptions had the APPEARANCE of consultation but the relevant decision making meetings were taken 'in camera' - so challenges for your maths, made by CPRE, were effectively ignored or invisible
	Consult	RE Q17: AUTHORITY COMPARISON - We work with groups across Kent to develop planning guidance democratically underpinned. You ALL abandoned these documents.
	Consult	RE Q9: PERFORMANCE - I found the opinions given to me in regard to public consultations varied with the person I spoke to and were later not reflected in formal papers
	Consult	Re: CONSULTATION - Get someone out of there office to do a site meeting and take on board the damage they are permitting to take place to the surroundings and peoples environment
	Consult	Re: CONSULTATION - Why does Swale appear to take so little notice of local objections
	Consult	RE: CONTACT FEEDBACK - I contacted you about planned housing/industrial development in [redacted] No idea what's happening as no feedback / consultation since.

	Decision	Existing Chalet bungalow has flat dormer roofs which need to be extended. Your personnel made that impossible because they did not like flat roofs, despite flat roofs being shown on the national info. Pamphlet provided by yourselves. Your staff seem to be confused by the illustration on the front cover of the swale info pamphlet
	Decision	I Find that some of the decisions made indicate that the officer who was concerned has little knowledge of the area. I am particularly thinking of a hand car wash application at [redacted] The reason for refusing it was that it would be out of keeping with the rural area and environment. This -with a garage, a large retail food outlet, accessory (sp?), wine warehouse, fish shop etc., etc. It makes one wonder what the real reason was
	Decision	I live near to a proposed residential building site. Over the past several years a number of planning applications have been made, passed & not acted upon. Some of these have been OK most has been awful, where no consideration has been made for location of local design or needs. The last application was accepted for planning and it was a good plan but nothing has happened yet
A	Decision	In a recent planning application to convert [sp?][sp?] we satisfied all criteria yet the application was refused due to an opinion by the planning officer. The house could have been extended under PD + then application made to convert but client felt the proposal was adequate. We are now going to appeal
B	Decision	JUDGEMENTS: I believe your officers are not good at taking considered decisions based on real assessments - They look at guidelines and apply them out of context.
	Decision	Re Q12: COMPLAINTS - Why is there no appeals process to your decisions (If they can be called decisions)!!
	Decision	RE Q16: IMPROVEMENTS - Practice Localism. Allow Committee (elected members) to make decisions based on local residents' views. SBC are already aware of my previous comments made.
P	Decision	Re Q9: DECISIONS - Planning Officers should be careful not to impose their own subjective views. The Local Plan does not define the criteria by which such decisions are made
A	Decision	The desire by all D.C.O.'s to refuse applications should be terminated in favour of "looking to grant permission"
	Document	My only niggle was the amount of copies of application and plans required at time. I was unable to submit electronically
	Document	One thing I would like to see is that when the letter is sent to me telling me that a particular application has been granted/not granted, a short, concise, plain language explanation of WHY should be added. It would not take many words and I am sure not add to the workload. I certainly will not go to the planning website which in my estimation is useless
P	Document	RE ONLINE SERVICES: Comments made by post or hand are not displayed on-line. Because of this, when checking application the Parish Council are not in possession of full facts unless they call into SBC offices. All items received should be scanned and displayed on-line to enable everyone to make an informed decision.
P	E-consult	Re Q8 ONLINE PLANNING SERVICES - As a PC Clerk it would be very helpful if clerks had a direct login to planning applications in their Parish. This would enable them to view all the paperwork and allow them to log comments made by public. Planning Officers could log into the plan app and have up-to-date comments to allow them to make informed decisions.
	Email	EMAIL - I wrote to the department by email over a week ago - still no response!
P	Email	Re Q9: RESPONSE TIMES - Staff often do not respond to emails on time and I have to write reminders

	Email	RE Q9: SERVICE - I emailed you on 15/5/12 and had a standard reply another email was sent from [name] on 16/5/12 asking me for my address - although what relevance this had apart from sending me this survey. I am still waiting for a reply from [name] as per her email dated 17/5/12 informing me she was on holiday and would reply on her return. She must be having a year off as I have never had a reply!!
P	Enforcement	I have been consistently fobbed off over a local enforcement matter. I am a very experienced chartered town planner and local Councillor. This is very unsatisfactory and discourteous.
	Enforcement	POLICY / ENFORCEMENT? - There is not enough enforcement of rules relating to Planning
P	Enforcement	Q1: ENFORCEMENT - [redacted] we have been in contact with SBC on several matters. Some have been dealt with well and some haven't. We have a continuing problem with a derelict site. We did not feel that the enforcement team were offhand. Some members of the public and some Parish Councillors still feel that more action should be taken in respect of the [site]
P	Enforcement	RE GENERAL: Public sector staff are working in extreme conditions against a sea of change in planning policy (NPPF) etc. SBC officers have heavy caseloads and limited resources and should be congratulated on the high quality service they do their best to provide. On a more negative note, enforcement continues to be an issue particularly for [redacted] relating to Gypsy and Traveller Policy constraints etc. This is an area we need to improve our partnership work on. (This is not a reflection of staff but on resource and system limitations)
	Enforcement	Re Q1: ENFORCEMENT - A person carrying out a car repair business from home
	Enforcement	Re Q1: ENFORCEMENT - Enquiring after buildings erected without planning permission at edge of woods, mobile home, poly tunnels + storage of apple crates. Council visited site which required planning permission but no feedback since 2012
	Enforcement	Re Q1: ENFORCEMENT - I recently contacted the planning office to ask about works taking place at a nearby house. The office confirmed that there was no planning application or approval and asked me to submit an enforcement complaint. I was uneasy about this as it implied that my name and address would be associated with the complaint because the enforcement officer would be "representing me". I expected the council to investigate the enquiry without submitting a formal complaint and naming names.
	Enforcement	Re Q1: ENFORCEMENT - My complaint was for the noise/dust/construction of 11 houses on a field directly behind our house in [redacted] We had one visit from a lady who agreed 'yes the houses are close' and 'oh dear'. That was that. On follow up with another call I was just snubbed with a few words to say never mind 'all is legal' I'm sure with the building of the houses, despite my complaints/some of which I still have. - no follow up call / no letter / no person calling to check my worries / concerns. Not happy!
	Enforcement	Re Q12: COMPLAINT/ENFORCEMENT - We asked for help and they said they needed proof, but over our allotted 3 months they couldn't be there to get proof
C	Enforcement	Re Q13: ENFORCEMENT - Planning Enforcement needs more feedback to Councillors and Parishes.
P	Enforcement	RE Q16: IMPROVEMENTS - [redacted] is happy overall with the day to day contact with Swale planning officers who do try to be helpful. However we are dissatisfied with the level of support we receive when pointing out matters of planning conditions that are not being adhered to. There seems to be a lack of follow-up investigations and little willingness to tackle the enforcement of planning conditions. We are concerned about the lack of enforcement of planning conditions and would like to see a tighter more transparent and easier to understand policy put in place.

P	Enforcement	Re: ENFORCEMENT - Lack of understanding of Enforcement and timescales involved - also public perception of above.
B	General	GENERAL: Take a look at our High St - It is failing and more shops are empty - Why? Because of 1. Restrictive parking. 2. Overzealous and commissioned traffic wardens. 3. Restrictions on improving shop fronts resulting in NO IMPROVEMENTS AT ALL. 4. Stupid 20min allowance on high st parking forcing customers to go elsewhere. 5. Decision makers who do not live in Swale and who tend to be uninterested in somewhere they don't live.
	General	I don't always agree with the Planning Officers recommendation (sp?) are sure they are made in good faith - though possibly some aspects of planning law or regulations may be overlooked. This could be because of the intense pressure on staff
	General	It would help if Planning Officers actually lived in the area for which they are responsible. They would then see the full impact of some of their decisions. Our area has been devalued to an enormous extent by decisions which the planning officers obviously wanted to push through contrary to the wishes of the Councils Planning Committee and local residents. Big business rules to the detriment of the community in one case.
	General	RE ?? - The Planning Officers could learn from an area such as Woodbridge in Suffolk where new developments have been done in a traditional style and the high street thrives because it has charm. Where is the charm in Sittingbourne?
	General	RE ??? If there are common applications (42, 46, 47 & 48 Woodside) is it worth inspecting those that haven't applied!
A	General	RE Q17: COMPARISON - Swale are better than Maidstone, Medway & Ashford. ****Respondent included letter with a number of comments that will be recorded separately - Note this should be read only in the full context of the comments summarised here for reference only****: TARGETS - Over the last 18m something of a "targets culture" seems to have developed. 'Less Senior Officers' tend to take a tick box approach to the processing of planning applications
		OWNERSHIP - Again 'less senior officers' tend not to take ownership of their planning permissions in the sense that conditions recommended by others are not evaluated by officers
		CONDITIONS - Far too many conditions are imposed....hold up developments....
		DISCHARGE OF CONDITIONS -This is doubling the time required to secure planning permission and is holding up economic development.
		CONSERVATION - There is reluctance amongst planning officers to moderate...he is merely a consultee
		ENFORCEMENT - ...vis a vis employment uses has not reflected Government advice...
		SECTION 73 APPLICATIONS - Swale does not operate this procedure correctly...
C	General	RE Q8: PERFORMANCE (?) - I am always critical: I do genuinely feel that the Planning Dept. gives me every consideration with one exception. The Annual Tour of the Borough: We need to examine the cock ups and failures - [redacted] most notably and this they have refused to do for past 3 YEARS. Most annoying so I will not be attending again.
	General	Re Q9: Doesn't have a q. that covers my complaint
	General	RE Q9: GENERAL RATING - Whilst I generally believe the staff work hard and do their best I do feel some members of the Planning Team are too fixed on the past and not the present.
	General	RE Q9: SERVICE RATING [CUSTOMER REQUESTED ADDITIONAL EMAIL DISCUSSIONS AS COMMENTS TOO EXTENSIVE FOR DOC - NB NEGATIVE]
	General	Re SURVEY? - This consultation paper has not been widely publicised or distributed

		thereby limiting its response. It should be on the planning section of the Internet. The Planning Officer.
	Policy	My major concern is the councils commitment to build vast amount of homes without fully appreciating the impact that these developments have on the already overburdened local services. You appear to bend over backwards to appease the developers rather than take account of the concerns of the residents such developments affect
	Policy	RE Q1: POLICY - Planning Dept. are somewhat 'hamstrung' by changing policy! E.g. Bearing fruits, south-east gateway, central Gov. changing policy despite local consultation
	Pre-app	1. Pre-App (email) absolutely useless & 2 applications - Response from 1st verged on the rude - meeting with CO&PO before 2nd; response was slow after meeting and once I got stroppy 2nd app dealt with promptly (Apps made by my architect)
	Pre-app	2. Pre-App useless, response from 1st app was rude and ill explained. Useful suggestion from meeting but CO subsequently changed his mind so a slightly different plan was sent in 2nd app and response recognised. I would not do anything daft.
	Pre-app	3. Seems to be no recognition that people with listed buildings not concerned about preservation & heating (sp?) for the building they are guardians of
	Pre-app	This customer sent an extensive two page letter, summarised as follows: [PART 1] Re Q1 PRE-APP ADVICE - We were led to believe that ...informal advice and negotiations would enable us to make an application that was likely to succeed...The Planning Officer had a fixed and impractical idea of what would be suitable and after many months...we abandoned the idea on what we still consider is a reasonable and sympathetic proposal . We were actually advised to make an application which we knew would fail in order to start the appeal process. We still consider this is unreasonable, unhelpful and possibly unprofessional approach.
B	Service	As a result of Officer (admitted) mistake, our application cost a further £736 - committed so proceeded. No apology received. Jobs worth. Next development of factory now moved outside Swale as result taking 25 jobs. Advised my company and suppliers not to do business in Swale
	Service	As you are aware we are not happy with Swale Planning department (or parts of it) but as I will need to use them in the future would rather talk to you than put anything in writing....
	Service	Letter to A. Kara RE... [redacted] I wasn't impressed with the way my telephone query was dealt with: I was told there was no file on this field...However not long after that I attended a meeting of the local Residents Association at which plans were on view indicating proposals for housing development. The [redacted] seemed (I found it difficult to make sense of the maps) to be part of one of the areas where development is proposed. Whilst I appreciate that sometimes it is desirable - from your point of view(!) - to be 'economical with the truth', I suggest that an honest, straightforward response to a question is more likely to inspire confidence than what comes across as fobbing off.
P	Service	RE Q12: COMPLAINT - Have had to chase things in the past only to find that something hasn't been done which will hold the application up. If I had been told it could have been dealt with quicker
A	Service	Re Q12: COMPLAINT - I made an objection on behalf of local residents and found an application was at best wrong and at worst a lie. I re-drew a section to prove a serious overlooking problem. You gave it planning permission and told me that you had phoned the applicants architect who said "the drawings were accurate" which was good enough for you to award consent!! So why bother

	Service	Re Q12: Complaints - I do not get feedback from my letters
	Service	Re Q15: SERVICE - When we contacted planning over 18m ago we had a very good service. That was for permission to build. This is a very different request.
A	Service	RE Q16: IMPROVEMENTS - The application submitted as noted above, was not validated. We resubmitted accordingly. Your over the phone help was excellent. We resubmitted via the planning portal. In-between the application fee changed. It was dealt with adequately in an appropriate time frame however could be much improved. Letters received were accusatory that we submitted the wrong fee when we paid twice and were owed a refund. We were also expecting a call back to confirm which didn't materialise - A letter was sent some time later.
P	Service	Re Q16: IMPROVEMENTS - The Parish Council Planning Committee responses sometimes contain questions which are frequently not answered. It would be good if this could be addressed
	Service	Re Q16: IMPROVEMENTS - The Planning Office has frequently used wrong addresses on applications, and on occasions refused to correct them.
A	Service	RE Q16: PROCESS - Planning use rejection of plans and resubmission as a way of meeting time deadlines, this involves far more work and aggravation for architects and clients. Simple discussion and amendment are quicker and more satisfactory. Swale is well known for this 'trick'
A	Service	RE Q9 & 15: SERVICE - I contacted your office to get general advice on your interpretation of a permitted development matter. I was told that the only way of getting this information was to submit a LDC application for this particular item. For the information I was after this was an unacceptable response. Council's should be able to offer general advice on matters irrespective of whether it applies to a particular property or not. Your comments on this matter would be appreciated
P	Service	RE Q9: PERFORMANCE - Had to chase a planning application to be signed off. If I hadn't it would have gone past the decision date
	Service	Re Q9: RATING - Why are animals and anti-social people treated more fairly by the council than decent residents. Why do you always stoop to the lowest common denominator. No wonder Faversham looks worse than a third world slum.
	Service	RE WEBSITE (?) - Incorrect information regarding my home is available on the Internet. Despite assurances to remove it and confirmation that it had been removed - To date it is still on the Internet. 6th May 2013
	Service	RE: COMMUNICATION - I phoned the Planning Dept. about storage units being used as a garage and I was told I would be phoned back. I never was. I phoned back 3 times to be told on the third call that the unit had permission to service ice cream vans so that was the answer. There is now an application going through to change the storage units to garage and retail. This happened about 18 months ago. I did not complain to the planning dept. but I did bring it up at a council [parish??] meeting.
	Service	Re: GUIDANCE - We were told to deal with our problem on line. We cannot
P	Service	Re: OBJECTIONS - How do PC know if all objected applications go to Planning Committee?
	Service	Re: OVERALL - No trust in planning. Please phone <input type="text"/>
A	Service	The planning process is overly bureaucratic and therefore appears to attract bureaucrats into it's service which is a negative situation although I do appreciate the Planning and Dev. Control are necessary. Ideally Planners should seek to be enabling and helpful as they are perceived to be negative and pedantic
	Service	This customer sent an extensive two page letter, summarised as follows: [PART 2] Re Q9: CONTACT WITH PLANNING SERVICES ...unanswered emails, unreturned phone calls, difficulty with maintaining consistent contact.....Inconsistent advice from different

		officers, our research justification was ignored, giving us the impression that the planning officers personal views and prejudices overrode national and local precedents...We were misled. We were given examples to guide us, which were exactly what we were proposing yet the PO then advised that a comparable design would be unacceptable, contradicting his own guidance
	Service	We made the choice to be a computer free household and therefore require access to plans to view at [redacted] Last time we tried to view a planning application the plans were not available even tho' the local press was saying they could be viewed at [redacted] This delay gave us less time to study, digest, discuss and write the necessary letter to yourselves.

REPORT END