

# South Hams District Council



## ‘Sounding Board’

### Survey 4: Development Control

**MARKETING MEANS**

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## Summary

This survey was undertaken as part of the fourth using the permanent sample of the ‘Sounding Board’. The analysis of this survey is based on 599 responses from the Sounding Board, or 77% of the panel as it currently stands.

The South Hams District Council Development Control Section sought the views of Sounding Board members to determine the levels of satisfaction of residents and attitudes towards building development in the District. The survey was designed partially to complement the BVPI planning applicants survey, and so some of the attitudinal questions have remained the same.

## Results

- Less than half the respondents (44%) said that there had been a planning application by a third party that had had an effect on them or their local area.
- About a half of those who had been affected (49%) said that the type of application was ‘a private household planning application’, with a fifth (20%) saying ‘... residential development’ and another fifth saying ‘business or industrial...’.
- A third of those who said they had been affected (34%) said they had lodged an objection with the Council, with a further 8% indicating they had made some sort of other enquiry.
- Nearly three quarters of respondents who had contacted the Development Control Section (71%) agreed overall (‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’) that ‘the Council dealt promptly’ with their queries, and over half (52%) agreed overall that the Council kept them ‘informed about the particular application’. However, less than half the respondents who answered this section agreed overall that they understood ‘the reasons for the decision made on the application’ (44%) or felt they were ‘treated fairly’ and their ‘viewpoint listened to’ (46%).
- When compared to the levels of agreement with these four statements given by planning applicants in the 2001 BVPI survey, there are some noticeable differences. Although the statement ‘the Council dealt promptly with my queries’ achieved very similar levels in both surveys, the other three statements had far lower proportions of respondents agreeing overall than did so in the 2001 BVPI survey.
- Just under half of the respondents who had not objected or queried an application (49%) said it was because they were ‘happy with the application as it stood’, but an equal number said either that they ‘thought the decision had already been made...’ (39%) or that they ‘thought the Council would not listen to me’ (10%).
- The majority of respondents (60%) indicated that they thought that building development was generally ‘...in keeping with the distinctive environment...’.

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Levels of agreement for the other two statements were much lower, with only 34% saying they agreed overall that ‘the views of local people are usually taken into account...’ and 31% that ‘developments allowed are consistent with the Council’s own policies’

- Over half (58%) indicated that they thought the standard of building in the District had ‘stayed the same’ in the last 5 years, with just under a quarter (23%) saying they thought it had ‘improved’
- Overall satisfaction with the Development Control Section (‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’) was relatively low at 29%, with 17% saying they were dissatisfied overall. The highest number of responses were for ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ (45%), with a further 9% saying they don’t know.
- When compared to the levels of satisfaction of planning applicants in the 2001 BVPI survey, there are, again, some noticeable differences. Overall satisfaction was much higher for this group, at 84%.
- There were some significant differences found between men and women, with men being more likely to say they were satisfied with the overall service than women.
- There were also differences found between those who had had an objection or query and felt that they had been listened to and those who did not, with the second group being far more likely to say they are dissatisfied with the service.

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## **1.0 Introduction / Background**

This survey was undertaken as part of the fourth using the permanent sample of the 'Sounding Board'. There were four services being assessed in the survey:

- Council Priorities
- Housing Renewal
- Development Control
- Dog Services

This particular report presents the results for Development Control.

## **2.0 Method & analysis**

The survey was sent by post to the panel. Panels tend to gain a much higher response level than usually obtained from postal surveys with no reminder (70%+ compared to 20 to 30%).

A freepost reply envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire, together with a letter detailing how the panel would be informed of the results.

The responses were processed and analysed by Marketing Means.

All questions were cross-tabulated by personal characteristics (such as age, gender, disability, number of cars in household) to check for differences in replies, but only significant differences have been highlighted in this report.

All figures in this report have been rounded.

## 3.0 Response

The analysis of this survey is based on 599 responses from the Sounding Board or 77% of the panel as it currently stands (774 – Sounding Board is due to be refreshed in September).

The final number of responses received from the Sounding Board was 604 or 78%, however these additional 5 responses were not entered for this analysis because they were returned beyond the closing date.

### 3.1 About respondents

The data collected from respondents is important in determining how representative the responses are of Sounding Board.

#### 3.1.1 Economic activity

The response was broadly representative of the ‘Sounding Board’ panel, with the exception of:

- Full-time students responded less well (this is also reflected in the age groups) – 50% responded, compared with the overall response rate of 74%
- The response rate for ‘homemakers’ was slightly higher than would be expected, at 84%

#### 3.1.2 Age (next birthday)

The table below shows that compared to the Sounding Board panel:

- Those under the age of 24, and over the age of 85, responded less well than other age groups (44% and 45% response rate respectively)
- Those belonging to the 55-64 and 65-74 year old age groups responded slightly better than other age groups at (78% and 73% response rate respectively)

	Sample		Sounding Board		Variance
	Number	%	Number	%	%
<24	26	4%	59	7%	-3%
25-34	42	7%	58	7%	0%
35-44	138	21%	174	21%	0%
45-54	150	23%	191	23%	0%
55-64	125	19%	152	18%	+2%
65-74	94	15%	116	14%	+1%
75-84	64	10%	88	10%	0%
85+	4	1%	11	1%	-4%
	643	100%	1069	100%	0%

### **3.1.3 Gender**

In terms of gender there was no significant difference in the percentage of men (72%) and women (74%) who responded.

There was, however, a difference in gender response rates between age groups. The majority of respondents under the age of 55 were women, whereas the majority of respondents aged 55 and above were men. This difference was most pronounced in the under 35 and 85 plus age groups.

### **3.1.4 Disability**

Response rates were identical for those who reported a disability (74%) and for those who did not report a disability (74%).

### **3.1.5 Ethnicity**

Nine people reported that they had an ethnic origin other than ‘White, British’, five of whom responded to this survey (56%).

### **3.1.6 Socio-economic grouping**

The response rate was lowest in relation to the group coded as ‘never worked / long-term unemployed’. This is mainly due to the poor response rate of many of our younger panel members who were also classed as students.

Across the board response rates varied between 71% and 87%, with the highest response being recorded from the ‘routine occupations’ group.

## 4.0 About Development Control

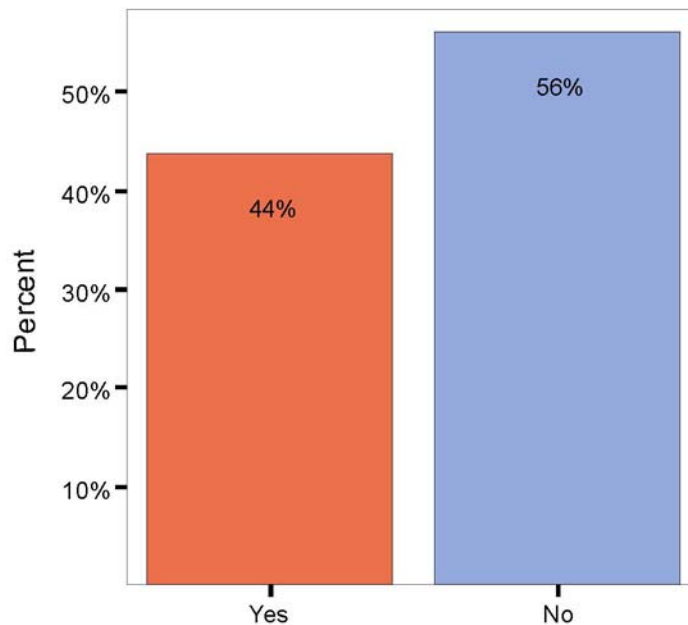
The South Hams District Council Development Control Section sought the views of Sounding Board members to determine the levels of satisfaction of residents and attitudes towards building development in the District. The survey was designed partially to complement the BVPI planning applicants survey and so some of the attitudinal questions remained the same.

### 4.1 Third party planning application that has affected the respondent

The first question asked respondents to say whether there has been a planning application by a third party in the past 2 years that they considered to have had an effect on them or their local area.

Less than half the respondents (44%) said that there had been a planning application by a third party that had had an effect on them or their local area.

A planning application by a third party



Planning application that has affected respondent

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	193	32%	<b>44%</b>	44%
No	247	41%	<b>56%</b>	100%
Total	440	73%	<b>100%</b>	
Did not answer	159	27%		
Total	599	100%		

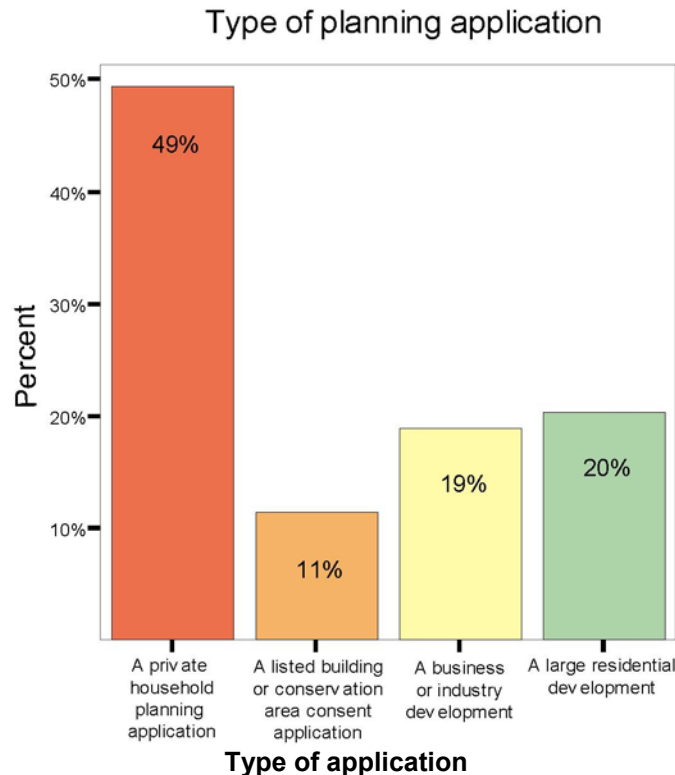
#### Differences by demographic groupings

There were no apparent differences between age groups, gender or socio-economic group in the responses.

## 4.2 Type of application

Those who said ‘yes’ to the first question were then asked what the application was for. Four possible responses were given which were: ‘a private household planning application’; ‘a listed building or conservation area consent application’; ‘a business or industrial development; or ‘a large residential development’.

About a half of those who had been affected (49%) said that the type of application was ‘a private household planning application’, with a fifth (20%) saying ‘... residential development’ and another fifth saying ‘business or industrial...’.



	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A private household planning application	104	17%	<b>49%</b>	49%
A listed building or conservation area consent application	24	4%	<b>11%</b>	61%
A business or industry development	40	7%	<b>19%</b>	80%
A large residential development	43	7%	<b>20%</b>	100%
Total	211	35%	<b>100%</b>	
Did not answer	388	65%		
Total	599	100%		

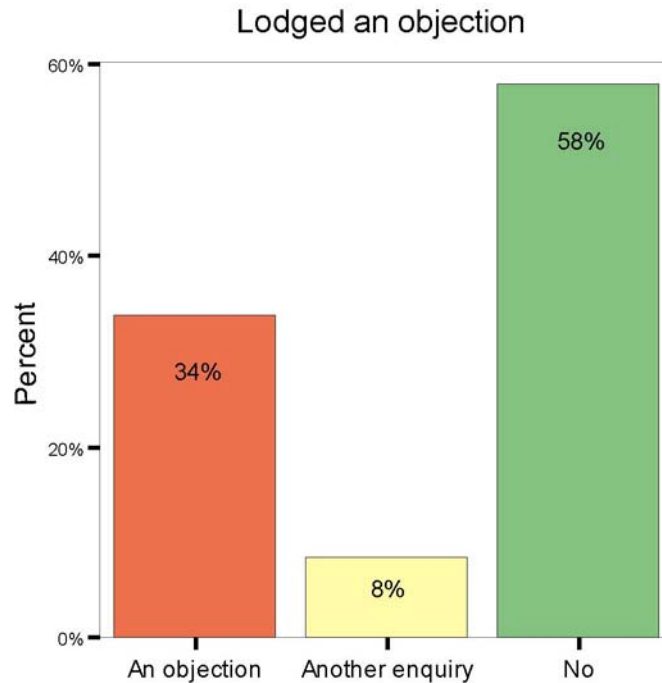
### Differences by demographic groupings

Again, there were no differences by the main demographic groups.

### 4.3 Lodged an objection

Those who were affected by a planning application were then asked whether they had lodged an objection, or made another enquiry, with the Development Control Section.

A third of those who answered this question (34%) said they had lodged an objection with the Council, with a further 8% indicating they had made some sort of other enquiry.



Lodged an objection

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
An objection	73	12%	<b>34%</b>	34%
Another enquiry	18	3%	<b>8%</b>	42%
No	125	21%	<b>58%</b>	100%
Total	216	36%	<b>100%</b>	
Did not answer	383	64%		
Total	599	100%		

#### Differences by demographic groupings

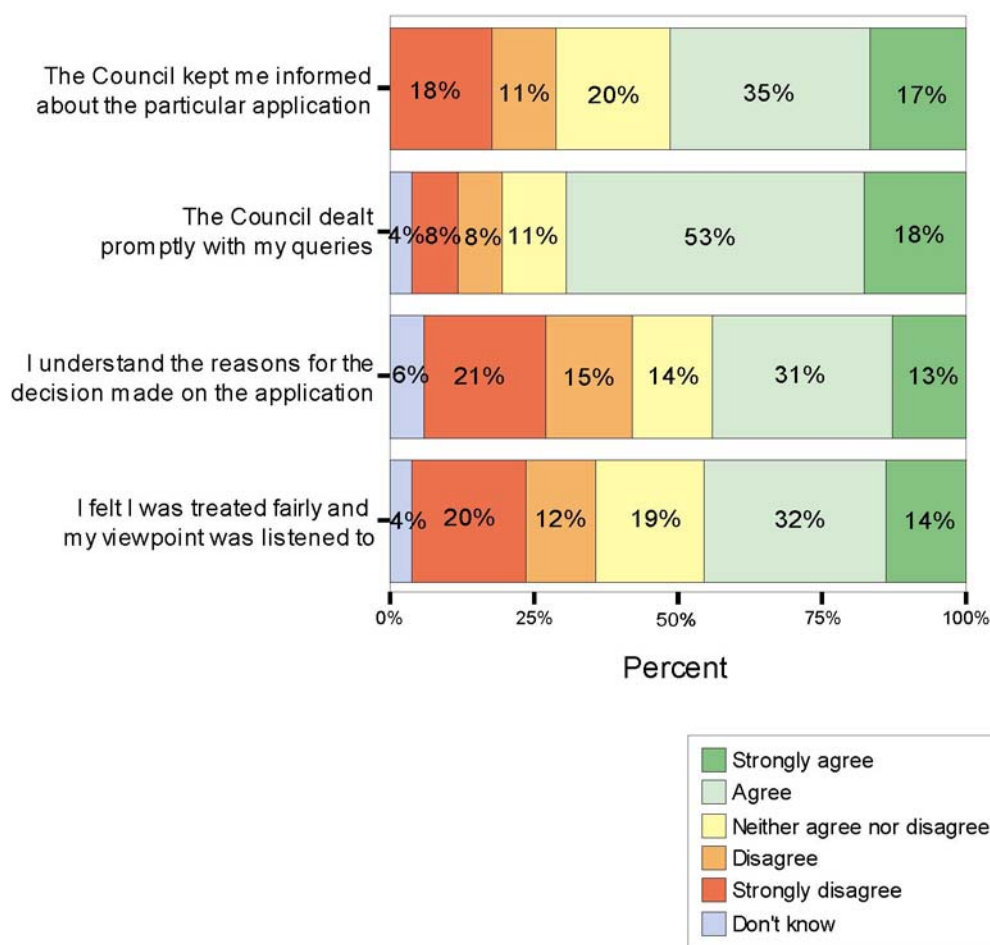
There were no significant differences by age, gender or socio-economic group between those who did and those who did not lodge an objection.

## 4.4 The Council's handling of a query or objection

Those who had contact with the Development Control Section were given four statements regarding the Council's handling of the query or objection. These statements are the same as four of those on the BVPI survey regarding an individual's planning application.

Nearly three quarters of respondents (71%) agreed overall ('agreed' or 'strongly agreed') that 'the Council dealt promptly' with their queries, and over half (52%) agreed overall that the Council kept them 'informed about the particular application'. However, less than half the respondents who answered this section agreed overall that they understood 'the reasons for the decision made on the application' (44%) or felt they were 'treated fairly' and their 'viewpoint listened to' (46%).

The Council's handling of the query or objection



### Differences in comparison to planning applicants – BVPI survey 2001

When compared to the levels of agreement with these four statements given by planning applicants in the 2001 BVPI survey, there are some noticeable differences. Although the statement 'the Council dealt promptly with my queries' achieved very similar levels, the other three had far higher proportions of respondents agreeing overall than those objecting or querying a third party application (see tables, page 12).

Again, there were no differences found when analysed by demographic groups.

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**The Council's handling of the query or objection**

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
The Council kept me informed about the particular application	14	17%	29	35%	17	20%	9	11%	15	18%	0	0%
The Council dealt promptly with my queries	14	18%	42	53%	9	11%	6	8%	6	8%	3	4%
I understand the reasons for the decision made on the application	10	13%	25	31%	11	14%	12	15%	17	21%	5	6%
I felt I was treated fairly and my viewpoint was listened to	11	14%	26	32%	15	19%	10	12%	16	20%	3	4%

**The Council's handling of the planning application BVPI survey 2001**

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		It does not apply	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
The Council kept me informed about the particular application	112	25%	248	56%	37	8%	20	4%	7	2%	21	5%
The Council dealt promptly with my queries	93	20%	237	52%	59	13%	43	9%	10	2%	10	2%
I understand the reasons for the decision made on the application	110	24%	266	59%	37	8%	20	4%	15	3%	4	1%
I felt I was treated fairly and my viewpoint was listened to	102	23%	227	50%	58	13%	25	6%	22	5%	16	4%

## 4.5 Why no query or objection lodged

Those respondents who were affected but who did not lodge an objection were then asked why they had not done so. They were given four possible responses: 'happy with the application as it stood'; 'did not know that I could'; 'thought that the Council would not listen to me'; and 'Thought that the decision had already been made / waste of time'.

Just under half of the respondents (49%) said it was because they were 'happy with the application as it stood', but an equal number said either that they 'thought the decision had already been made...' or that they 'thought the Council would not listen to me'.

### Why didn't you lodge a query or objection?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Happy with the application as it stood	53	9%	<b>49%</b>	49%
Did not know that I could	2	0%	<b>2%</b>	50%
Thought that the Council would not listen to me	11	2%	<b>10%</b>	61%
Thought the decision had already been made / waste of time	43	7%	<b>39%</b>	100%
Total	109	18%	<b>100%</b>	
System	490	82%		
Total	599	100%		

### Differences by demographic groupings

There were no significant differences by age, gender or socio-economic group.

## 4.6 Attitudes towards development control in the South Hams

Respondents were then asked to state their level of agreement with a series of three statements about building development in the South Hams. These dealt with the broader issues of whether development is ‘in keeping with the distinctive environment of the District’, ‘the views of local people are taken into account’ and are ‘consistent with the Council’s planning policies’.

The majority of respondents (60%) indicated that they thought that building development was generally ‘...in keeping with the distinctive environment...’. Levels of agreement for the other two statements were much lower, with only 34% saying they agreed overall that ‘the views of local people are usually taken into account...’ and 31% that ‘developments allowed are consistent with the Council’s own policies’. 19% said they ‘didn’t know’ whether they were consistent’.

### Attitudes towards development control in the South Hams

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Don't know	
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %
Building development allowed generally in keeping with the distinctive environment of the District	75	17%	192	43%	75	17%	65	14%	28	6%	16	4%
The views of local people are usually taken into account when decisions are made	43	7%	157	27%	139	24%	133	23%	67	12%	41	7%
Developments allowed are consistent with the Council's own planning policies	30	5%	151	26%	195	34%	62	11%	23	4%	109	19%

### Differences by demographic groupings

There were no significant differences by age, gender or socio-economic group.

## 4.7 Standard of building in the South Hams

The questionnaire then asked if people thought the standard of building in the South Hams had improved or got worse in the last 5 years.

Over half (58%) indicated that they thought the standard had 'stayed the same' in the last 5 years, with just under a quarter (23%) saying they thought it had 'improved' and a fifth (19%) saying they thought it had 'got worse'.

### Standard of building on the South Hams over the last 5 years

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Improved	132	22%	<b>23%</b>	23%
Stayed the same	333	56%	<b>58%</b>	81%
Got worse	106	18%	<b>19%</b>	100%
Total	571	95%	<b>100%</b>	
Did not answer	28	5%		
Total	599	100%		

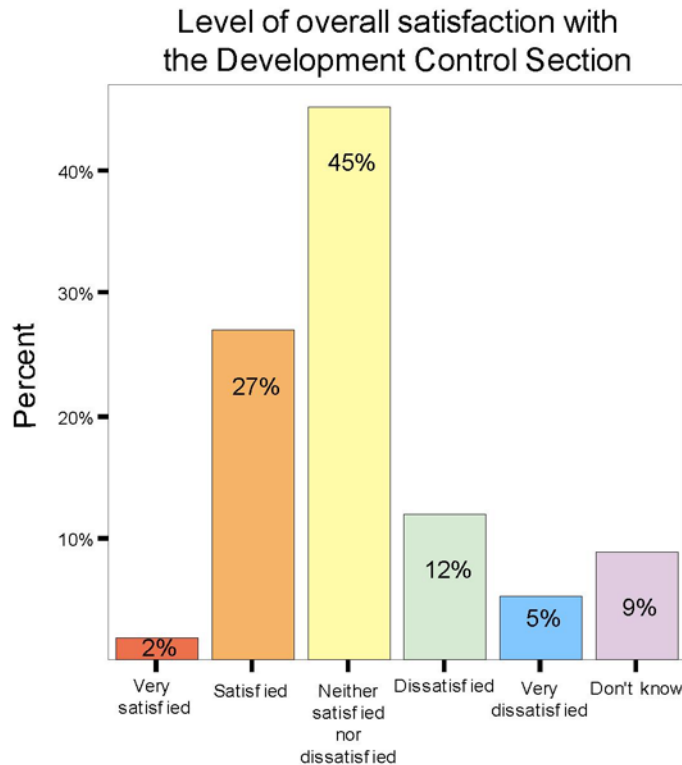
### Differences by demographic groupings

There were no significant differences by age, gender or socio-economic group.

## 4.8 Level of satisfaction with the Council's Development Control Section

Finally, respondents were asked to say how satisfied they were with the Development Control Section with regards to planning in the South Hams.

Overall satisfaction ('very satisfied' or 'satisfied') was relatively low at 29%, with 17% saying they were dissatisfied overall. The highest number of responses were for 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (45%), with a further 9% saying they didn't know.



### Level of satisfaction with the Council's Development Control Section

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very satisfied	10	2%	2%	2%
Satisfied	144	24%	27%	29%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	242	40%	45%	74%
Dissatisfied	64	11%	12%	86%
Strongly dissatisfied	28	5%	5%	91%
Don't know	47	8%	9%	100%
Total	535	89%	100%	
Did not answer	64	11%		
Total	599	100%		

### Differences in comparison to planning applicants – BVPI survey 2001

When compared to the levels of satisfaction of planning applicants in the 2001 BVPI survey, there are, again, some noticeable differences. Overall satisfaction was much higher for this group at 84%. Part of this may be accounted for by people who have not had any contact with the Development Control Section saying that they were ‘neither...’ whereas all those who had a planning application would have had contact.

#### Level of satisfaction with the service – Planning Applicants BVPI survey 2001

	Count	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very satisfied	235	<b>49%</b>	49%
Fairly satisfied	166	<b>35%</b>	84%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	36	<b>8%</b>	91%
Fairly dissatisfied	30	<b>6%</b>	97%
Very dissatisfied	13	<b>3%</b>	100%
Total	480	<b>100%</b>	
Did not answer	4		
Total	484		

### Differences by demographic groupings

There were some differences found between men and women, with men being much more likely to say they were satisfied with the service than women.

There were also differences found between those who had had an objection or query and felt that they had been listened to and those who did not, with the second group being far more likely to say they are dissatisfied with the service.

#### Level of satisfaction with Development Control - by Gender

		Level of satisfaction							Total
		Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied	Don't know		
Gender	Male	#	3	80	108	21	15	15	242
		%	<b>1%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	Female	#	7	60	121	43	13	32	276
		%	<b>3%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Total		#	10	140	229	64	28	47	518
		%	<b>2%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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**I felt I was treated fairly and my viewpoint was listened to - by Level of satisfaction with Development Control**

		Level of satisfaction						Total
I felt I was treated fairly and my viewpoint was listened to		Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied	Don't know	
Strongly agree	#	1	6	3	0	0	0	10
	%	10%	60%	30%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Agree	#	1	6	14	3	0	1	25
	%	4%	24%	56%	12%	0%	4%	100%
Neither agree nor disagree	#	0	2	8	3	0	1	14
	%	0%	14%	57%	21%	0%	7%	100%
Disagree	#	0	1	3	3	2	1	10
	%	0%	10%	30%	30%	20%	10%	100%
Strongly disagree	#	0	0	2	3	9	2	16
	%	0%	0%	13%	19%	56%	13%	100%
Don't know	#	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
	%	0%	33%	33%	0%	33%	0%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>78</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>100%</b>