

# Plans Panel Annual Report 2015-16



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## Introduction

Welcome to the 2015-16 Plans Panel Annual Report. This is the first time a report has been prepared covering the work of the three Plans Panels and the Development Plan Panel and this report provides Council and members of the public the opportunity to review last year's activity within the remit of the Panels and highlights some of the key achievements in the work towards helping deliver Council priorities.

The pace of change brought about by the Government's planning reform agenda has not slowed down; new legislation, changes in policy and the focus on the expeditious delivery of housing has brought about some challenges in 2015-16. The Plans Panel are committed to delivering housing and new development, whilst retaining the focus on building strong and vibrant communities with the emphasis on good place making. The Council's ambitious Core Strategy target of 66,000 new homes has seen a number of new housing developments come forward and the Panels have given approval for over 2,000 new homes in 2015-16. The Panels have also supported schemes to help deliver strong growth in the commercial and retail sectors; Leeds is the largest centre outside London for financial and business services, digital, creative, publishing and broadcasting. It has the second highest concentration of knowledge intensive jobs and is the third largest manufacturing centre by local authority area. Plans Panels play a part in the delivery of schemes to attract this investment to the City.

The role of the Plans Panels is essential; Plans Panels are the shop window to Leeds and Panels will continue to debate, discuss and determine applications on schemes where the elected members of this Council can add the most value. It's essential therefore that those members have the correct training and are equipped to carry out this important role; in the past year Panel members accessed the core training as well as participating in additional training. However, the Council's budgetary pressures may have an impact on the support and delivery of the Plans Panels and so going forward it is essential that officers and members and communities work well together to deliver the growth needed in Leeds. The challenge for the Chairs is to ensure that expeditious decisions are taken by Panel, unnecessary delay is avoided, the right applications are being heard by the City and two area Panels and to focus on those applications where the Panel input makes a difference.

It's imperative too that local communities continue to help shape the places where they live, work or study. Therefore it's important to recognise the work of the Joint Member Officer Working Group and the Joint Plans Panels in taking forward improvements to the way Plans Panels run and operate, so that Panels are customer focussed as well as delivery focussed and provide the opportunity for local communities to play their part in the planning process.

We anticipate a further busy year ahead, but take this as a continuing positive sign of sustained and good growth in Leeds.

**Cllr Richard Lewis, Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning**

# **Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel contribution to the delivery of Council priorities**

## **Planning and the Plans Panels**

**Providing enough homes of a high standard in all sectors – delivery of housing growth and promoting the Leeds Standard for Leeds' own housing stock**

**Supporting communities, raising aspirations – by creating vibrant and cohesive neighbourhoods**

**Supporting economic growth and access to economic opportunities – by expeditious delivery of planning proposals, encouraging businesses to Leeds**

**Providing skills programmes and employment support – through planning obligations in s106 agreements**

**Enhancing the quality of our public realm and green spaces through planning obligations in s106 agreements and through the Community Infrastructure Levy**

**Providing an inclusive, accessible range of transport options - promoting use of cycles, public transport and connectivity**

# Summary of work 2015-16

## Work of the Plans Panels



37 meetings



197 items



144 applications for determination

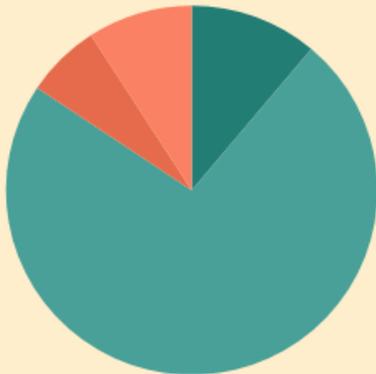


127 decisions



4 contrary to the officer recommendation

## Workload breakdown



■ Pre-application present..(11.13%) ■ Determinations (144)(73.22%) ■ Position statements (13)(6.52%)  
■ Appeals reports and oth..(9.13%)

# Determining

**2.2%**

**of the total number of planning applications received in 2015-16**

## Housing growth



**Approval for over 2,000 new homes throughout the City**

## Type of applications going to the Plans Panels

Total of 64 Major schemes

34 Major residential schemes (10 dwellings or more)

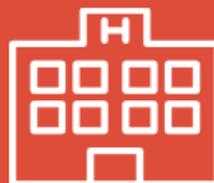
23 minor residential schemes- (up to 9 dwellings)

12 major and minor retail schemes

19 other major schemes

18 Household applications

3 Office schemes



## Significant applications approved by Plans Panel in 2015-16

- Tower Works Globe Road Mixed use three-phased development of 160 dwellings, 1,495sqm of A2, A3, A4 or D1; and new public realm
- Outline approval for the master plan at Quarry Hill
- City Reach Kirkstall Road Leeds LS3 Outline application for mixed use development comprising residential (C3/C4), student accommodation (C3/C4), A1-A5, B1, D1 and D2 units, public open space, landscaping, pedestrian river bridge, alterations to site access and highway improvements
- Tyersal Lane Tyersal BD4 Residential development of 270 houses with associated roads, sewers and infrastructure
- Sandbeck Lane Wetherby LS22 7TW, Residential development of 111 dwellings
- Horsforth Campus Calverley Lane Horsforth Leeds LS18 Outline application for residential development of up to 72 dwellings, associated access, landscaping and open space
- Low Fold South Accommodation 312 dwellings including new open space and associated works
- Land Off York Road, Killingbeck Bridge And Selby Road Leeds LS14 Outline application for commercial A1/A3/A5 units



# Development Plan Panel

The Development Plan Panel is an Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations to both the Executive and Council regarding the Authority's Unitary Development Plan and the Local Development Framework.



## 6 meetings in 2015-16

Consideration of planning application decisions in the context of emerging plans

Site Allocations Plan publication draft in relation to employment, retail and green space

Consideration of the responses to the public consultation Aire Valley Action Plan

Site Allocations Plan and Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan in relation to supporting the housing delivery programme for older people

Site Allocations Plan – Leeds Bradford International Airport Employment Proposals

Update on the legislative and policy approach to allocating sites for Travelling Show People and from Gypsies and Travellers

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update 2015

# Reflecting on the year- service improvements

## Work of the Joint Plans Panel

The Joint Plans Panel is a meeting of the three Plans Panels and meets twice a year to discuss matters relating to development management, planning policy and government initiatives. The meetings are a way of sharing information, obtaining member views and reporting on the performance of the service in the most efficient way. Items covered in 2015 include:

- Annual buildings at risk report
- Use of travel plans in planning
- Public speaking protocol
- Annual performance report
- Housing and Planning Bill
- Changes to permitted development rights
- Member notification of planning applications

## Joint Member Officer Working Group

The Joint Member Officer Working Group was reinstated in 2015-16. This is a cross party group of Plans Panel Chairs, Plans Panel members, Chair of the Development Plan Panel, Executive Member for Regeneration, Transport and Planning and council officers who meet to discuss matters relating to the efficient working of the Plans Panels and improvements to processes and procedures.

## Member notification of planning applications

Earlier in 2016, the Joint Plans Panel agreed the recommendation made by the Joint Member Officer Working Group that all ward members should register on Public Access in order to receive information on new planning applications and appeals within their ward. Training has been given to the Group Support officers to help members register and set themselves up on Public Access. This means members have access to the most up to date information on proposals and appeals whenever they need it.

## Learning from enforcement and appeal outcomes

Almost 10% of the items taken to Panel in 2015-16 were reports on the progress on key enforcement cases, outcomes of appeal decisions where Panel had refused an application, or where an application was appealed for non-determination. Reflecting on appeal decisions is particularly important to the work of the Panels; it ensures that any common themes are highlighted and measures put in place to mitigate the risk of appeals occurring on similar grounds. There is a careful balance to be made between refusing an application with the risk of a subsequent appeal and maintaining quality, without being unreasonable.

In the forthcoming year a Plans Panel review tour of past applications is planned. This will allow members to look at developments they approved, which have now been constructed.

### **Public speaking protocol**

An issue arose at the North and East Plans Panel, which highlighted that some types of items requiring a decision were not covered by the public speaking protocol. To ensure transparency and probity in dealing with matters at Panel meetings, the service felt this needed addressing in terms of adopting a consistent approach and took the opportunity to review the whole of the protocol. The Joint Member Officer Working Group undertook work on behalf of the Joint Plans Panels and made recommendations in three areas; increased speaking time on matters for determination or on any matter requiring a decision to four minutes, reducing the time for pre-application presentations to 10 minutes and introduce a new speaking opportunity on position statements for both the applicant or supporters and a ward member or their nominated representative. The Joint Plans Panel at its meeting in January 2016 agreed the recommended changes.

### **Member training**

In order to sit on the Plans Panels, members must complete mandatory training; 100% of Plans Panel members completed the training in 2015-16. The annual update session informs members of new legislation, latest developments and focusses on key planning issues. This provides Plans Panel members with the latest knowledge and information to support their decision making.

For members who are new to the Plans Panels additional support is provided. This comprises an induction session with a planning officer who describes the Plans Panel process and provides information on the current protocols which underpin the work of the Plans Panels.

A further member training session was provided in February 2016 on health and planning, where the contribution of development management in combatting health inequalities was considered.

### **Viability Assessments**

Viability assessments are becoming increasingly important factor in determining whether a proposed development is able to go forward. In 2015-16 significant work has been carried out to support members in their understanding of the viability assessment process. A workshop was organised for Plans Panel members and was facilitated by ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications), with representatives from the volume housebuilding industry and the District Valuer (DV), who in Leeds carries out the majority of viability assessments. The session was well attended and members had significant opportunity to discuss the methodology and process with the DV and particularly with the volume house builders. Further work is ongoing in consultation with the Joint Member Officer Working Group to consider the feasibility of viability assessments being heard in public as part of the Plans Panel meeting, rather than in camera as they are currently now. This will provide additional transparency in the planning process.