



# Pre-Application Survey – Analysis & Review

23 April to 23 May 2018

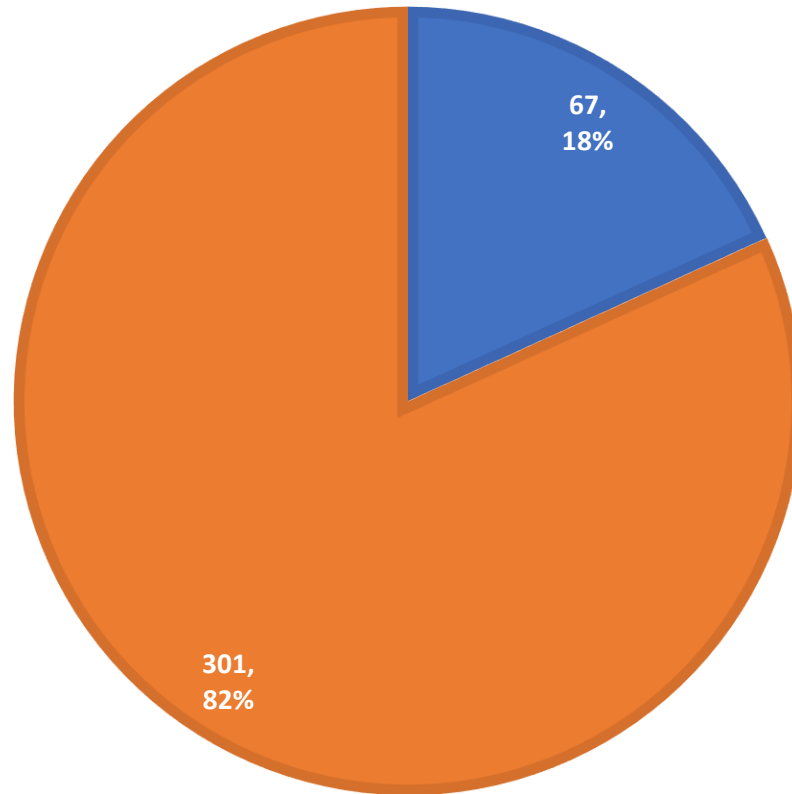


- **This survey was conducted to assist with the ongoing improvement of our planning pre-application advice service.**
- **All responses were anonymous and no personally identifiable information was collected.**
- **Survey was sent to 368 customers who had used our planning pre-application service since it went live in July 2017.**

# Pre-App Survey Responses



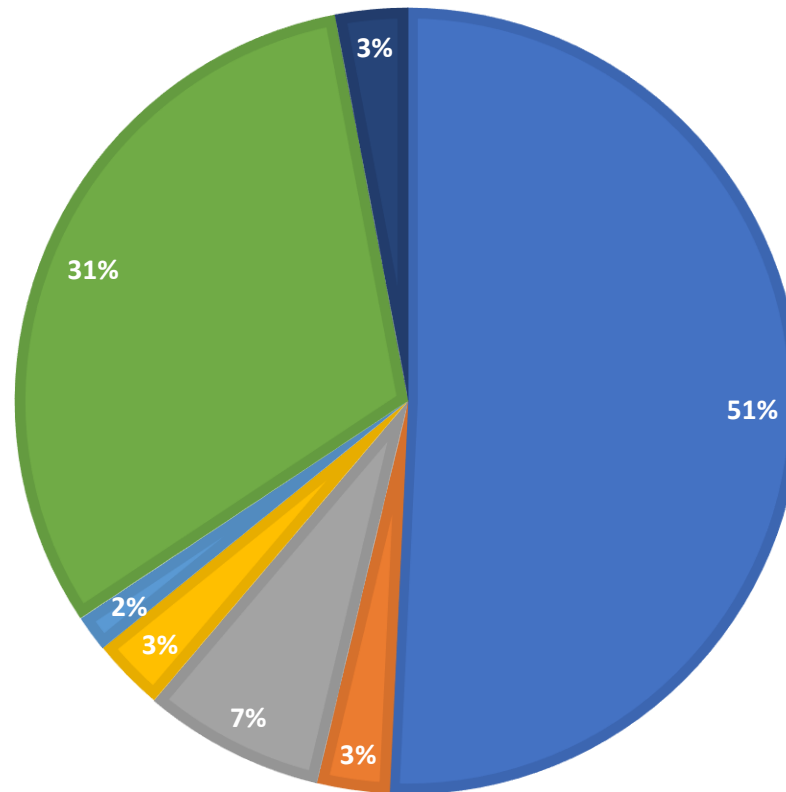
■ Response ■ No Response



# Background of respondents



■ Householder ■ Housebuilder ■ SME ■ Commercial ■ Parish ■ Professional Agent ■ Other

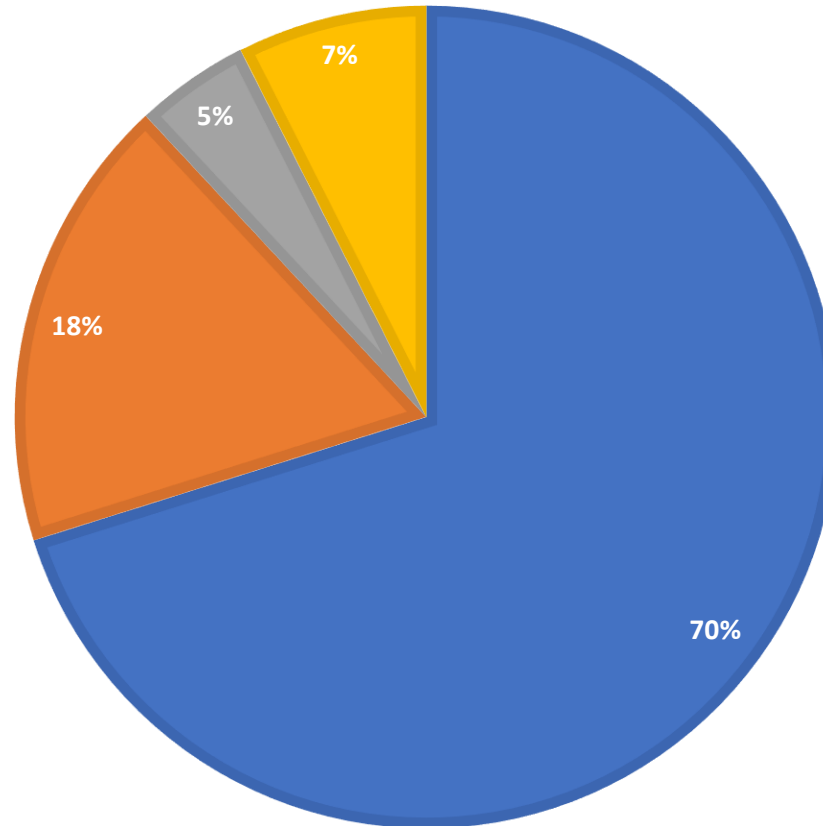


| Q1 | Householder | Housebuilder | SME | Commercial | Parish | Professional Agent | Other |
|----|-------------|--------------|-----|------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
|    | 34          | 2            | 5   | 2          | 1      | 21                 | 2     |

# Method of Pre-App Enquiry



■ Online ■ Email ■ Letter ■ Other



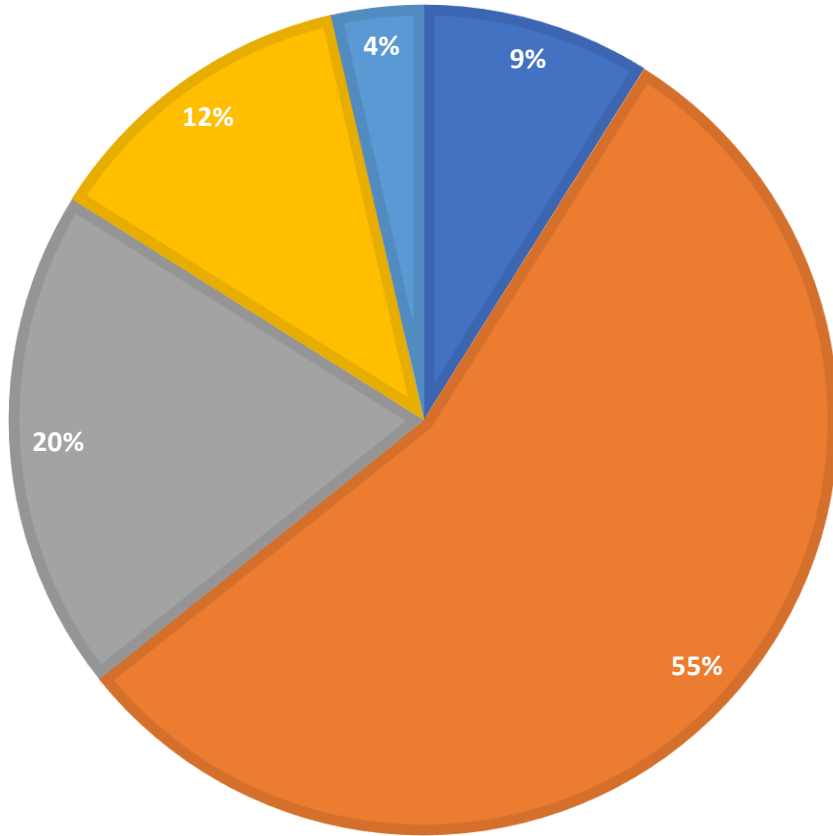
88% were via electronic means

| Q2 | Online | Email | Letter | Other |
|----|--------|-------|--------|-------|
|    | 47     | 12    | 3      | 5     |

# Statement: "The Council website was easy to navigate"



■ Strongly Agree  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Neither Agree or Disagree  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Strongly Disagree



64% responded "Strongly Agree" or "Agree"

## Comments:

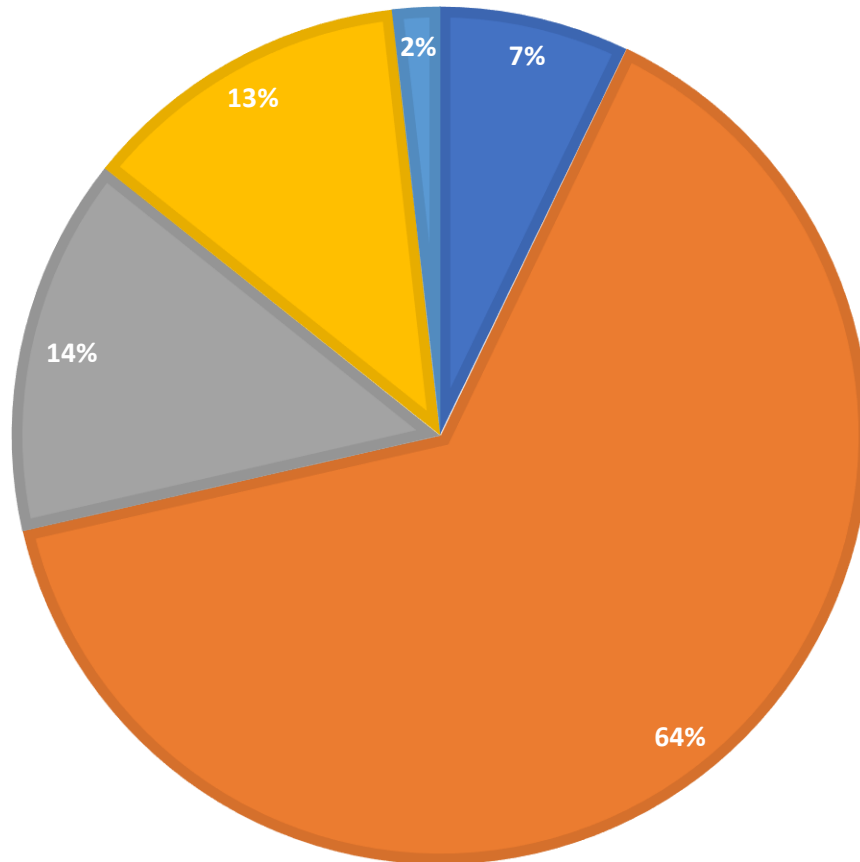
- Finding specific forms is difficult
- It was not easy to find Listed Building route
- The form software didn't work with one browser

| Q3A | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|----------------|-------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------|
|     | 5              | 31    | 11                        | 7        | 2                 |

# Statement: "Our website clearly explained the pre-app process"



■ Strongly Agree  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Neither Agree or Disagree  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Strongly Disagree



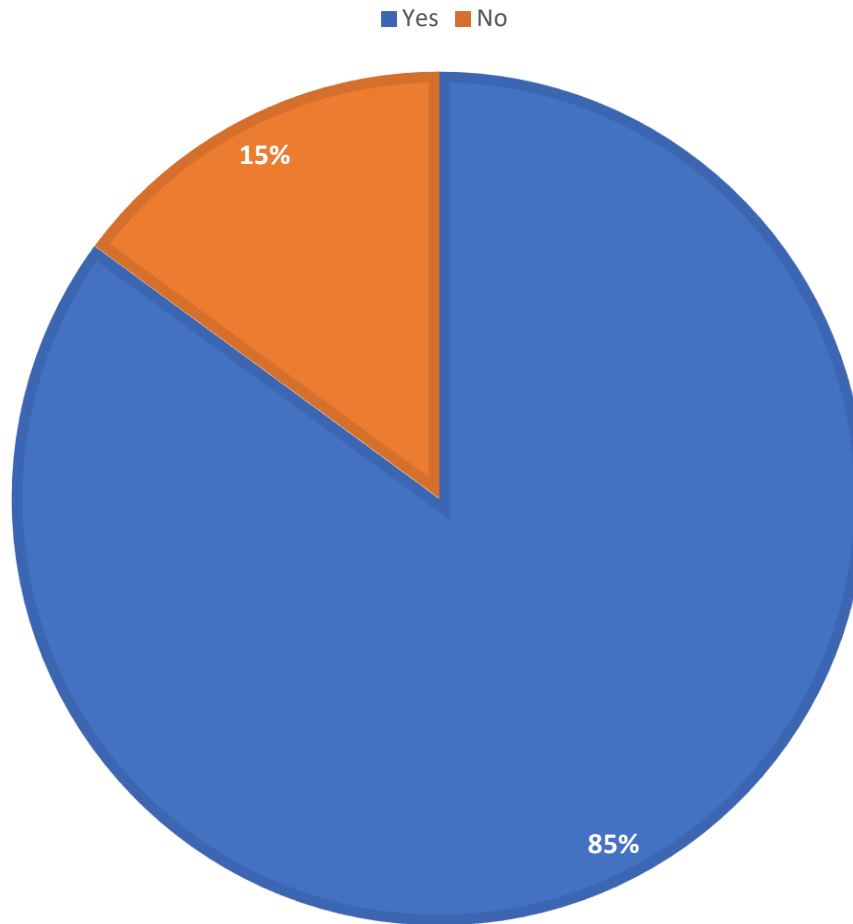
71% responded "Strongly Agree" or "Agree"

### Comments:

- "A bit of information overload"
- "In general it does [clearly explain the process], although there could be more information about what to expect during the process"

| Q3B | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|----------------|-------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------|
|     | 4              | 36    | 8                         | 7        | 1                 |

# “Was your pre-app enquiry registered in good time?”



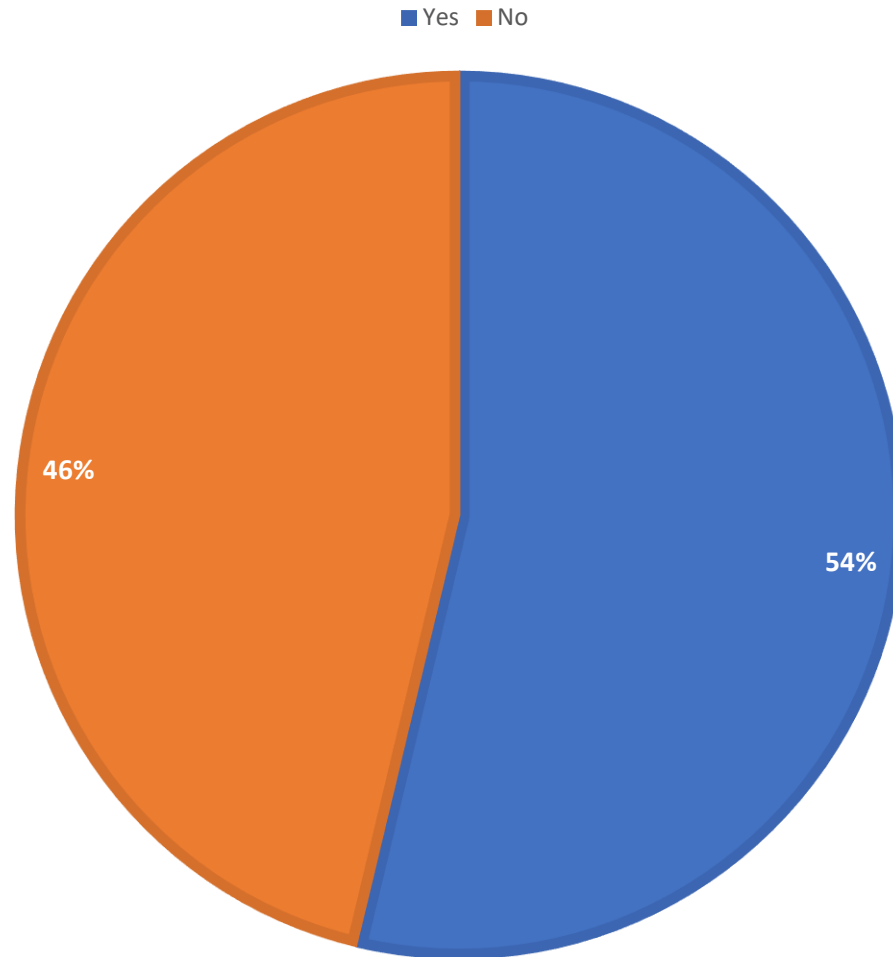
| Q4 | Yes | No |
|----|-----|----|
|    | 57  | 10 |

## Comments:

- “Sometimes the response is quite slow”
- “Received written advice 2 weeks after target”
- “Issues with payment online”
- “Had apologies from staff referring to their workload as a reason for the delay in responses”
- “Application lost in house”
- “No it took nearly 4 weeks when it was supposed to take 2! This was only approved after I kept chasing..”
- “Needed an extension due to delayed response”



“Did you submit a planning application following our pre-app advice?”

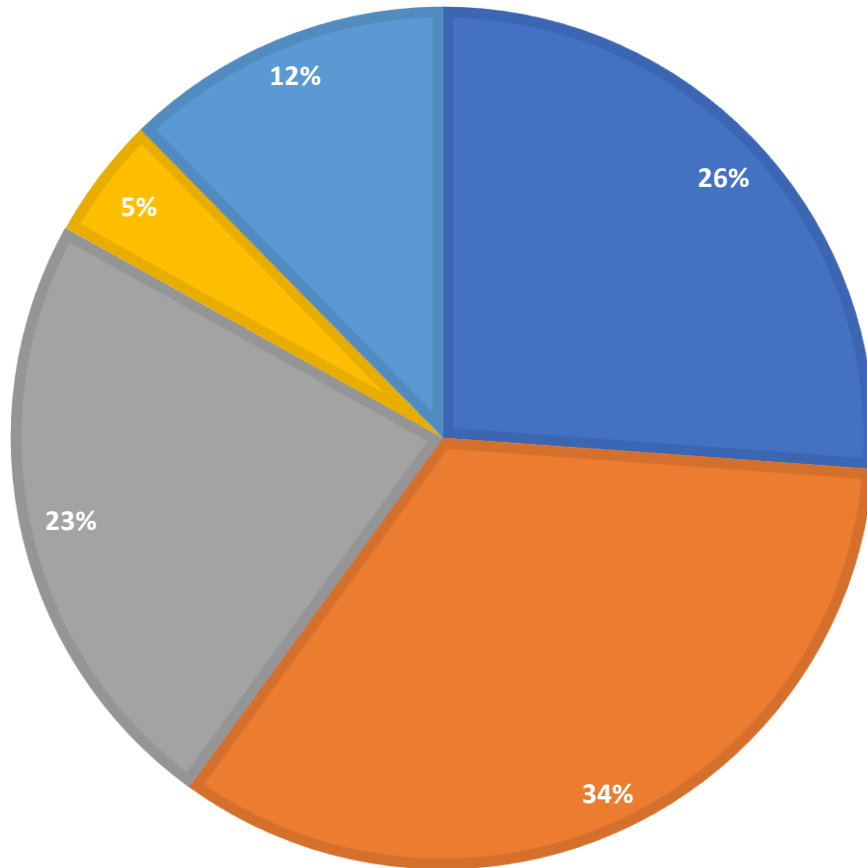


| Q6A | Yes | No |
|-----|-----|----|
|     | 36  | 31 |

# “Did our pre-app advice help when submitting a planning application?”



■ Strongly Agree  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Neither Agree or Disagree  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Strongly Disagree



60% responded "Strongly Agree" or "Agree"

### Comments:

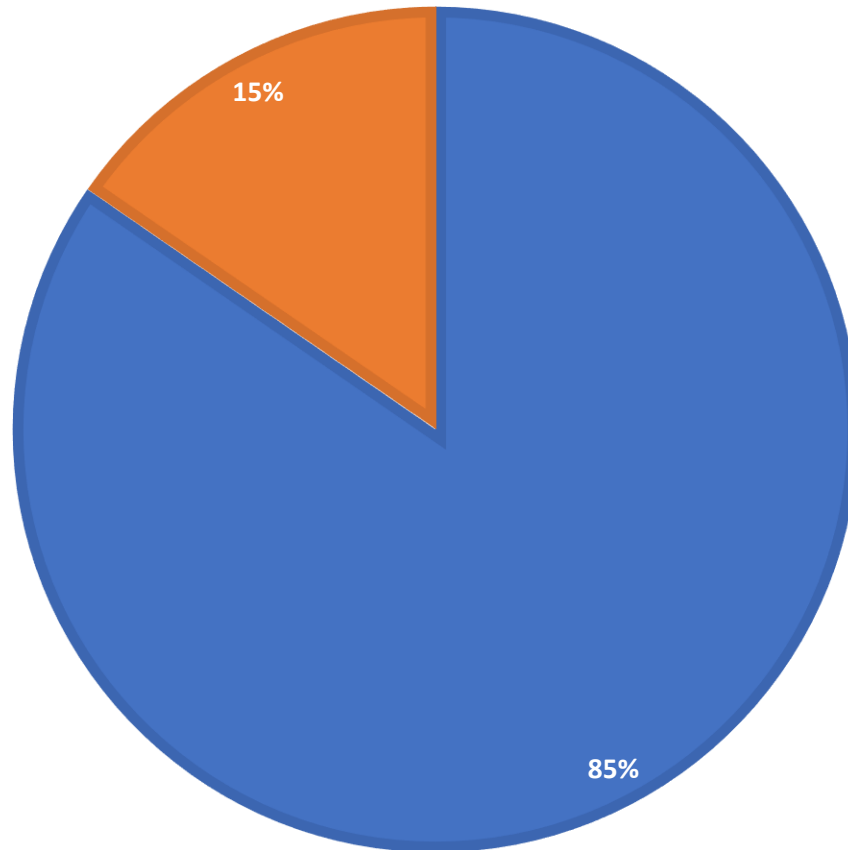
- “We changed our plans based on the advice”
- “It gave me a signal that the general idea was likely to succeed but I didn’t feel it represented value for money”
- “The response to the pre-application request was slow....and by the time the advice was received the opportunity to purchase the property had passed”

| Q7 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----|----------------|-------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------|
|    | 17             | 22    | 15                        | 3        | 8                 |

# “Did you understand the reasons for the advice given?”



■ Yes ■ No



## Comments:

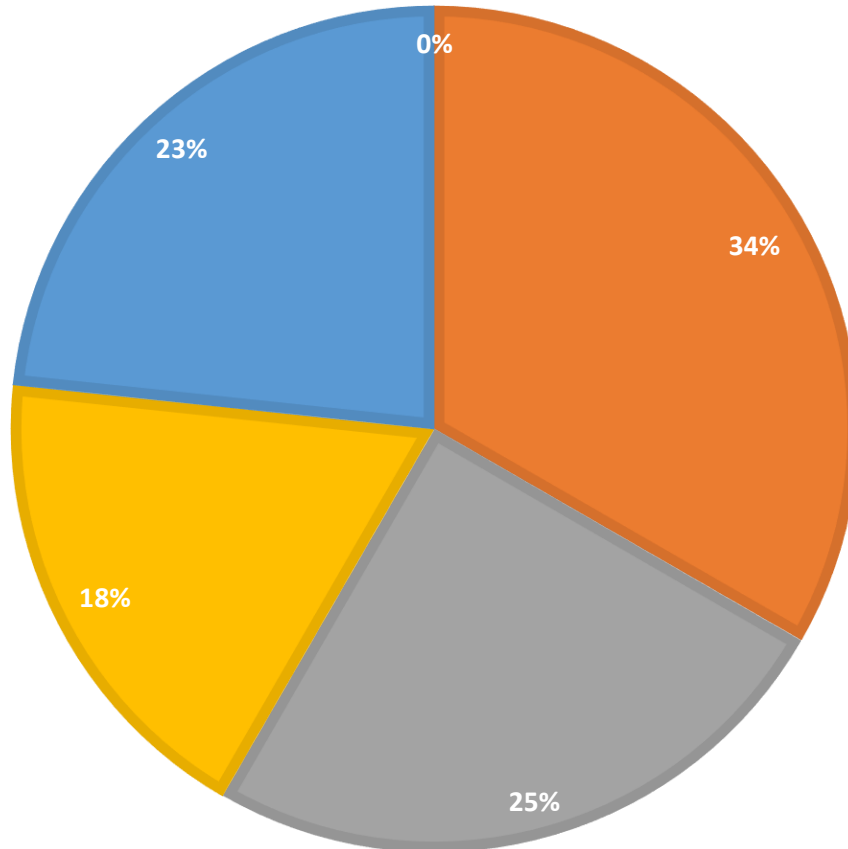
- “There was a total conflict of what was said by the Case Officers on site to what written advice was given”
- “...my architect was equally as flummoxed by the advice”

| Q&A | Yes | No |
|-----|-----|----|
|     | 22  | 4  |

“Do you think that the overall advice received represented good value for money?”



■ Strongly Agree  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Neither Agree or Disagree  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Strongly Disagree



**Comments:**

- “Planning officer advice very poor given the £1400 cost..”
- “Conservation advice was fine (and largely as expected)...next time we may only seek conservation advice”
- “...advice given was shallow, suffered delays”
- “...the service itself has improved with the responses received typically being more consistent with the eventual reasons reached”
- “..in the end the advice received was too late...”

| Q9 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----|----------------|-------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------|
|    | 0              | 20    | 15                        | 11       | 14                |

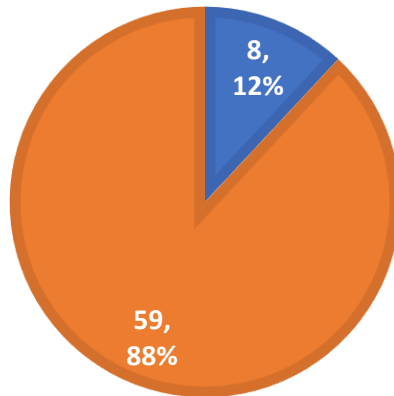


**Next we asked a series of advice specific questions including:**

- **SCC Highways**
- **SCC Floods**

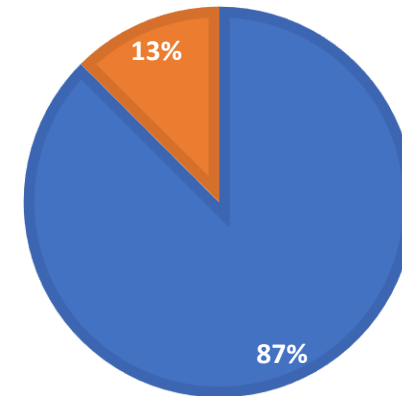
"DID YOU INCLUDE HIGHWAYS IN YOUR PRE-APPLICATION REQUEST"

■ Yes ■ No



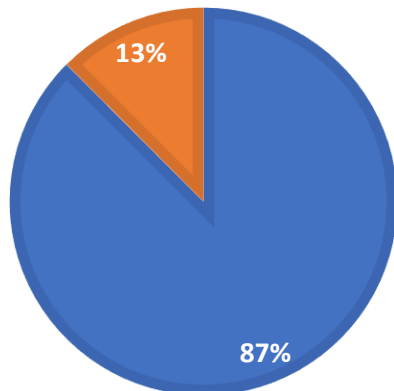
"DID THE HIGHWAYS ELEMENT OF OUR SERVICE HELP YOU TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION"

■ Yes ■ No



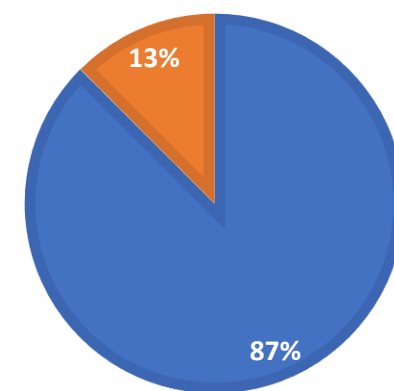
"DID THE HIGHWAYS ADVICE RECEIVED REPRESENT GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY?"

■ Yes ■ No

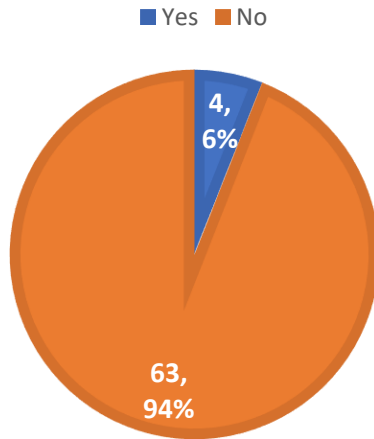


"WOULD YOU USE THE HIGHWAYS PRE-APP ELEMENT AGAIN?"

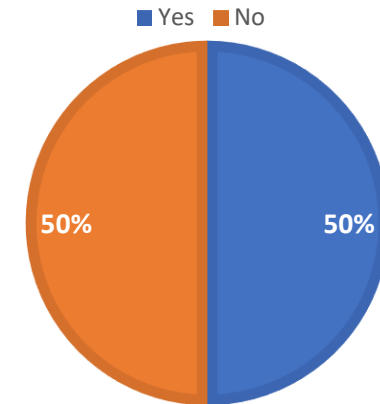
■ Yes ■ No



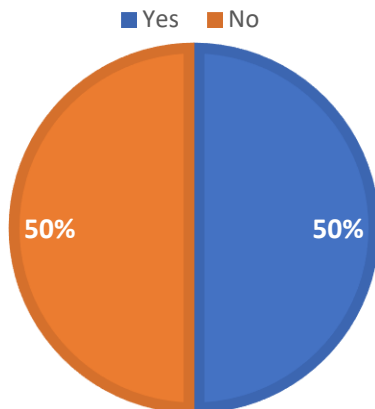
"DID YOU INCLUDE FLOODS IN YOUR PRE-APPLICATION REQUEST"



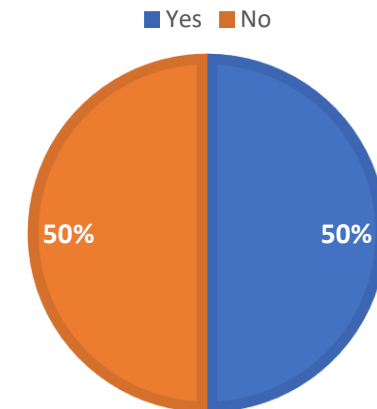
"DID THE FLOODS ELEMENT OF OUR SERVICE HELP YOU TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION"



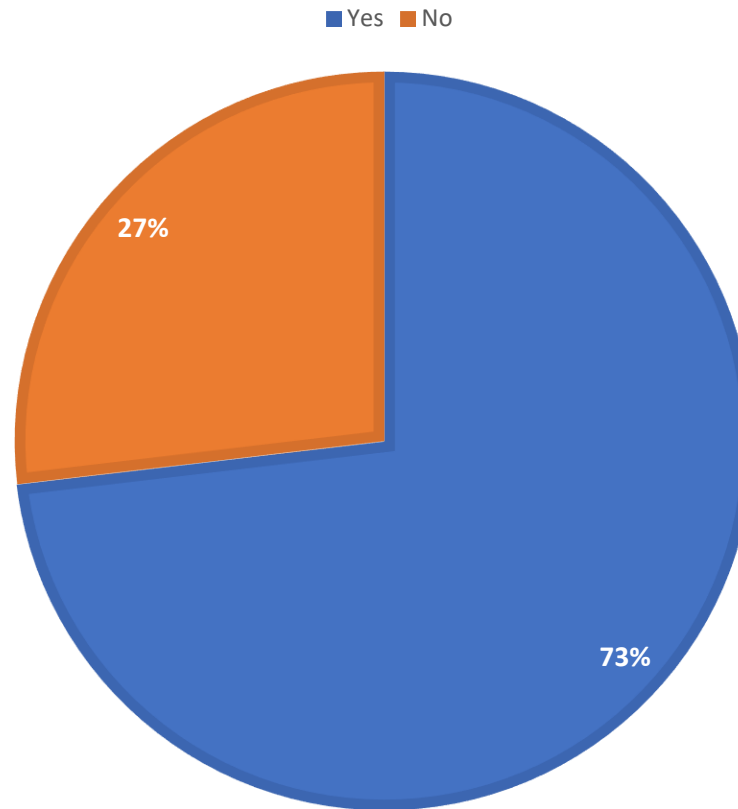
"DID THE ADVICE RECEIVED REPRESENT GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY?"



"WOULD YOU USE THE FLOODS PRE-APP ELEMENT AGAIN?"



## "OVERALL WOULD YOU USE OUR PRE-APP SERVICE AGAIN?"



| Q15 | Yes | No |
|-----|-----|----|
|     | 49  | 18 |



## Q15 Feedback – Would you use the service again?



### *Comments:*

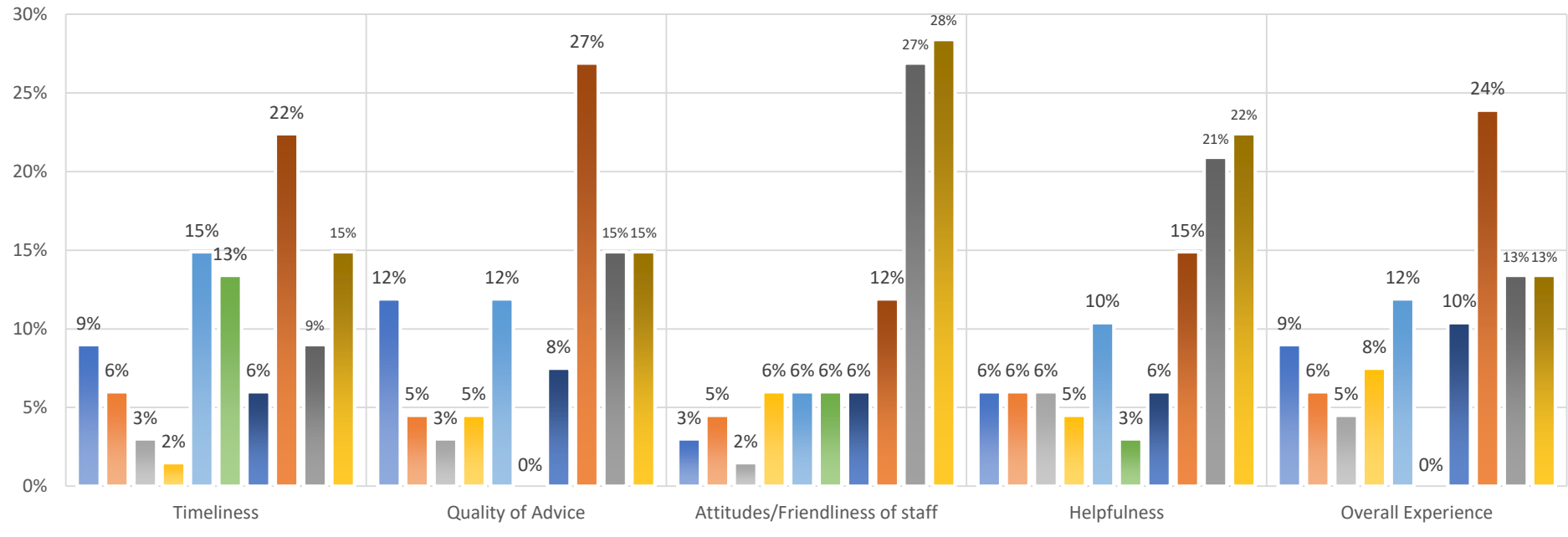
- “Because I believe it is a valuable exercise for our clients. However if one pays for a service then one expects a level of service, which unfortunately in this instance was not forthcoming.”
- “I think the money would be better spent on professional advice and a full application. I wouldn’t recommend the service to others”
- “Very expensive for a meeting that only lasted for 5 min and gave us inaccurate information”
- “No! Complete waste of time, just to get an answer of 'yes, we think it will pass but no guarantees.”
- “Poor value and poor planning advice for what was a considerable fee. Highways was fine.”
- “I feel its too expensive for what is offered. An hour with a officer and a few comments is not worth that value. Also, charging for pre application advise will force many to try even harder to side step the planning system. This I feel is very strongly true of heritage applications where the councils should be promoting an open conversation for the sake of the asset in question. I would also question the principal of charging for heritage pre application as the general legal principal is that you should NOT be penalised for you care of a heritage asset.”
- “waste of my time and money, as you couldn't be bothered to attend the meeting”

# Rating the service out of 10 (10 being highest)



## "OVERALL HOW WOULD YOU RATE OUR SERVICE?" (10 BEING THE HIGHEST, 1 THE LOWEST)

■ 1 
 ■ 2 
 ■ 3 
 ■ 4 
 ■ 5 
 ■ 6 
 ■ 7 
 ■ 8 
 ■ 9 
 ■ 10



## Overall what is the most important thing we could improve with our pre-app service?

- “I am quite happy with what has been offered so far”
- “provide a fee calculator online, not just the fee structure”
- “The timeliness of the written report. we were told we would have it in 2 weeks but it actually took 4”
- “Faster response - acknowledgement letter did not specify deadline date, and five days have elapsed”
- “Charging differing amounts depending on the advice needed i.e. a much smaller fee for inquiring if planning permission is required for a householder app.”
- “Consistency in verbal and written advice.”
- “nothing its fine as it is”
- “Offer more than one meeting / opportunity to discuss the report after the meeting.”
- “Happy with service received”
- “The speed of responses probably by having more staff.”
- “A more timely service would be beneficial. If a meeting is required it often take at least a week to arrange, this is then followed with a wait of between 2 & 3 weeks for the feedback. This could easily take a month and even at this stage a negative response could be received....by which time an application would be submitted registered and the consultations nearly completed.”
- “Return telephone calls - I twice left messages for the officer handling the pre-app and neither was returned.”
- “Heritage could offer a chargeable 'Written advice' option.”
- “You need more staff, you have great staff but are overwhelmed”
- “As a householder some of the terminology could be simpler”
- “quality of advice rather than regurgitating policy”
- “Try to provide appointments within 72 hrs of pre-app submission.”
- “I think the pre app service was more than adequate for my project and was dealt with very professionally so for me it was good.”

### **Are there any other types of advice you would like us to include in our service in the future?**

- “Be able to save a draft application on the 'Pre Planning enquiry form”
- “Reasons why specialist sections should be included in consultation -- how do I know if e.g. heritage or flood is relevant?”
- “...don't make it impossible to talk to someone in the dept, when I turn up to discuss problems don't sit me in corner of busy reception on the phone when I can clearly see the person I am talking to through the window!”
- “If you are going to charge for this service, it must be delivered as a service and not a grudging shop to irritating individuals who wish to muck about with old properties - which is the impression your ‘service’ left me with. If ‘advice’ is given that is not clear, then you must respond to requests for clarification, and you should do so until all parties understand what is required and the subsequent planning/listed buildings application is likely to be successful. In my case, I am no nearer being able to guess what would be successful than I was before the visit - except that I now know that one specific proposal would be refused.”
- “Just get it right. The service I have had from Babergh planning has been exceptionally poor, unprofessional in the extreme, and in due course will lead to legal action costing the Council greatly in time, money and reputation.”