



PLANNING COMMITTEE

9 FEBRUARY 2023

REPORT TITLE	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE - PLANNING APPLICATIONS
REPORT OF	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the performance of the Development Management Service with regard to determining planning applications. The report outlines performance against government targets in terms of the speed of processing all applications.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee is recommended to note and endorse the performance report. .

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To enable Members to be updated on the performance of the Development Management Service with regard to determining planning applications.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 As this report is for information no alternative options are recommended.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Development Management Performance Indicators

- 3.1 Development Management performance is monitored within the 3 subdivisions as set out below.

(a) Major Applications

The Government's target is for 60% of major applications to be determined in 13 weeks. Major applications are defined as residential development of 10 or more units or retail/ commercial development of 1,000 square metres or more of additional floor area.

(b) Minor Applications

The Government's target is for 65% of minor applications to be determined in 8 weeks. Minor applications are defined as residential development of less than 10 units or retail/commercial development of less than 1,000 square metres of additional floor area.

(c) Other Applications

The Government's target is for 80% of other applications to be determined in 8 weeks. Other applications include advertisements, conservation area, listed building and householder proposals. Householder applications are not included as a separate National Indicator. However, they comprise about 60% of all applications submitted to the Council and their handling is therefore a key issue in performance terms.

Additional measures introduced to address issues with underperforming Authorities

- 3.2 Section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows certain applications to be made directly to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities where the local planning authority is deemed to be underperforming. The two criteria used to assess whether Local Authorities are performing to the required standard are Speed of Decisions and Quality of Decisions.

Speed of Decisions

- 3.3 The measure to be used is the percentage of decisions on applications for major development made:

- (i) within the statutory determination period; or

(ii) within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the local planning authority.

Currently 60% of Major applications must be determined either within 13 weeks or within the extended period agreed with the applicant.

- 3.4 In addition, the Secretary of State also monitors performance for non-major applications. In these cases, 70% of applications must be determined either within 8 weeks or within the extended period agreed with the applicant.

Quality of Decisions

- 3.5 The measure to be used is the percentage of decisions on applications for Major development that have been overturned at appeal, once nine months have elapsed following the end of the assessment periods recorded in the data collected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 3.6 Currently the threshold for designation is 10% or more of an authority's decisions on applications for Major and Non-Major applications being overturned on appeal.

Commentary on Annual Performance – National and Local Targets

- 3.7 The table below includes overall figures for 2020/21 and 2021/22, together with figures for the first three quarters of 2022/23. New data not reported to Planning Committee previously is data for Q2 (1st July 2022 to 30th September 2022) and Q3 (1st October 2022 to 31st December 2022) of the 2022/23 period:

Table 1 Performance

Planning Applications	2020/21 Year	2021/22 Year	Q1 2022/23	Q2 2022/23	Q3 2022/23	2022/23 Year
Majors (applications determined within 13 weeks)	85% (34/40)	96% (25/26)	100% (4/4)	70% (7/10)	93% (13/14)	86% (24/28)
Minors (applications determined within 8 weeks)	85% (212/250)	79% (199/251)	69% (36/52)	76% (41/54)	85% (46/54)	77% (123/160)
Others (inc. householders) (applications determined within 8 weeks)	93% (854/922)	91% (1017/1121)	89% (193/216)	68% (124/183)	80% (154/192)	80% (471/591)

weeks)						
All (all application types determined within designated timescales)	91% (1100/1212)	87% (1238/1398)	86% (233/272)	70% (172/247)	82% (213/260)	79% (618/779)
Householders (Householder applications determined within 8 weeks)	95% (730/770)	89% (692/774)	92% (170/185)	65% (103/159)	79% (129/163)	79% (402/507)

- 3.8 As noted previously, the Service surpassed the requirements for Major, Minor and Other targets in 2021/22. However, most Quarters of 2022/23 shows a decline in the number of Minor and Other applications being determined within the statutory period, in particular Q2 (July-September). This can largely be attributed to the introduction of the Council's new IT system for Development Management, which went live towards the end of June.
- 3.9 Officers were unable to validate or determine applications for approximately 3-4 weeks whilst the service was migrated to the new system and this created a backlog of applications to be registered and determined. In addition to this, processes have taken longer to complete as Officers and support staff familiarise themselves with the new system, whilst teething problems with the new system have also caused further delays. This has resulted in applications not being determined as quickly as they previously had been.
- 3.10 There was an improved performance for Minor and Other applications determined within Q3 when compared to Q2 as Officers began to become more familiar with the new system. Despite this, the figures for Others remained below the yearly figures for 2019/20 and 2020/21. Issues with the new system remain. Whilst improvements are ongoing and processes are being continuously refined, it remains a continued reliance on extensions of times in order to meet targets. Whilst the backlog of applications has reduced since Autumn 2022, a backlog nevertheless does remain, with applications taking approximately one month before they are allocated to a case officer. Whilst this is not uncommon within local planning authorities, it means that applications are sometimes not determined as expeditiously as would be preferred. Additionally, the presence of a backlog and ongoing heavy caseloads can make it difficult for Officers to manage workloads effectively. Without additional resources to deal with this backlog it will likely remain and will have a continuing impact on both determination periods and the reliance on extensions of times.
- 3.11 Performance for Major applications has remained consistent and above the target of 60%. There is a general reliance on extensions of time for these applications but this

can often be due to ongoing negotiations between the applicant and the local planning authority. Regardless, given the extensive regeneration plans within the Borough there continues to be a deficit in resources to deal with significant Major applications. Increased use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) seeks to increase revenue from applicants, but the result of this is greater pressure on officers to meet deadlines agreed within those PPAs.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There is a risk of government intervention if performance falls below the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' targets. This report seeks to monitor performance and manage the risk.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 This report is factual so there has been no consultation on its contents.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. There are no equality implications arising from the proposals within this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct community wealth implications arising from this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Neil Williams
Principal Planning Officer

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years) Council

Council Meeting	Date
Planning Committee	11th February 2021
Planning Committee	15th July 2021
Planning Committee	14th October 2021
Planning Committee	10th February 2022
Planning Committee	13th October 2022