

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES**

TO:	PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE		
DATE:	3rd November 2021		
TITLE:	PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE - Quarter 2 (July - September) 2021/2022		
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	JULIE WILLIAMS	TEL:	0118 937 2461 (72461)
JOB TITLE:	PLANNING MANAGER (acting)	E-MAIL:	Julie.williams@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on how the Planning Service has performed over the second quarter of 2021/2022 in terms of meeting government set targets for dealing with planning applications and success at planning appeals.
- 1.2 For context, details on the types of applications handled and appeal decisions provided are given for this same quarter last year.
- 1.3 I also want to bring to Members attention that we are about to launch a new pre-app service. It is modelled on our current one but we have simplified the menu of service available to help customers and staff and also to convert it to an easier form to complete on our website.
- 1.4 In addition, we have recently been reviewing and consulting on our Planning Application Validation checklist (last carried out in 2016) and the new 2021 edition is about to be added to the website. The checklist guides applicants on what information is needed for their applications with reference to Local Plan policies and other relevant guidance. The checklist thus speeds up the validation of applications and also improves the quality of many submissions. Here is a quote from one of our happy consultees:
- "I just wanted to respond on the Validation Checklist. I think this is a super idea - very clear and informative with details about what precisely is required. I really cannot add anything to it! I hope more councils adopt this level of detail as I'm sure it will help in reducing the number of invalid applications."
- 1.5 The checklist is too large to add to this report but a copy of the final version will be circulated to Members when ready.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the contents of the report be noted.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The MHCLG published criteria (2018) judges a Local Planning Authority to not be performing well if:
- a. For applications for major development: less than **60 per cent** of an authority's decisions are made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant;
 - b. For applications for non-major development: less than **70 per cent** of an authority's decisions are made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant.
 - c. For applications for both major and non-major development over **10 per cent** of an authority's total number of decisions on applications have been overturned at appeal.

4. PERFORMANCE AGAINST MHCLG TARGETS

Speed

- 4.1 The Council's performance over the past 3 months in terms of speed of determination of planning applications (see Table 1 below) is:
- 99% of major development applications within the statutory determination period or an agreed extended period.
 - 89.5% of all non-major development applications within the statutory determination period or an agreed extended period.
- 4.2 Table 1 provides a breakdown on the types of planning applications handled with a comparison with the same quarter last year. As can be seen, the number of applications received and decided so far in 2021/22 has risen on all types of applications and this pattern is consistent with the experience of planning authorities across the country. Performance on issuing decisions remains good and above the MHCLG's targets and staff are working hard to keep up with the number of applications being submitted.

Quality

- 4.3 The quality performance requirement is based on the percentage of appeal decisions allowed, thus overturning the local planning authority's decision, when compared to the total number of decisions made. The current percentage threshold is 10 per cent of an authority's total number of decisions.
- 4.4 Table 2 provides the results on appeals decided so far this year in comparison with the same quarter last year. It shows that over the past three months no appeals have been allowed so we are well within the target set.
- 4.5 Table 3 shows the fee income so far compared to the previous year.
- 4.6 We have had two new planning officers recently join us to help the team deal with the non-major category work and that also frees up senior officers to deal with the more complex cases.

Table 1: Application Performance for Q2 21/22 (1st July 21 to 30th September 2021) for the Planning Service compared with the same quarter of the previous year.

Description	MCHLG Target	Q2 20/21	Q2 21/22
Number & Percentage of major applications issued in time	60%	4/4 100%	9/10 99%
Number and Percentage of all other minor applications issued in time	70%	41/53 77%	48/55 87%
*Number and Percentage of other applications issued in time	70%	99/105 94%	156/173 90%
<i>*Of which were householder applications (not prior approval)</i>	70%	81/88 92%	117/130 90%
TOTAL DECISIONS		144/162 89%	213/238 89%

Table 2: Section 78 Appeals against the refusal of planning permission

	Q2 20/21	Q2 21/22
APPEALS LODGED	9	3
NUMBER OF APPEAL DECISIONS	2	2
APPEALS ALLOWED	1	1
APPEALS DISMISSED	1	1
SPLIT DECISIONS	0	0
APPEALS WITHDRAWN	0	0

Table 3: Planning Fee Income

	20/21	21/22
Q1	£160,444	£158,447
Q2	£230,151	£180,242

4.6 The number of planning applications submitted in the last quarter compared to the same quarter in 2020 represents a 32 % increase, however the fees received are still less than the same quarter last year. This seems to be due to the increase in Householder and small Other category commercial applications being submitted which come in with lower fees per application than the Minor and Major categories.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The processing of planning applications contributes to creating a sustainable environment with active communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan:

1. Healthy Environments
2. Thriving Communities
3. Inclusive Economy

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 Statutory consultation takes place on planning applications and appeals and this can influence the speed with which applications and appeals are decided. Information on development management performance is publicly available.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics, it is considered that the development management performance set out in this report has no adverse impacts.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

8.2 The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods. As a team we have also reduced the amount of resources (paper and printing) we use to carry out our work.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The collection and monitoring of performance indicators is a statutory requirement and a requirement of MHCLG.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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