

# Planning Applications Committee

29 April 2026



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Annual Development Management Performance</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Emma Gee, Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
<b>Report author</b>	Mark Worringham, Planning Policy Manager / Acting Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
<b>Council priority</b>	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
<b>Recommendations</b>	To note the report.

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. To advise Committee on the work and performance of the Planning Development Management team over the last year – 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, including comparison to previous years.

## 2. Policy context

### *Planning*

- 2.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF). The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12). The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 places national development management policies on an equal footing with the development plan (with conflicts to be resolved in favour of the national development management policies) but these provisions are yet to come into force.
- 2.2. The current approach for measuring the performance of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) when dealing with applications was introduced by the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013. It is based on an LPA's performance on the speed of determining applications and the quality of their decisions. The **Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government** (MHCLG) collects data from LPAs to enable performance tables to be published on a quarterly basis. LPAs are at risk of being designated as "underperforming" if targets are not met over the preceding 24 months. If an LPA is designated as underperforming applicants can submit their applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate (who act on behalf of the Secretary of State) to make the decision.

### *Building Control*

- 2.3 Local authorities have a duty under the Building Act 1984 to enforce the Building Regulations 2010 in their area. To do this they are obliged to undertake a range of functions aimed at securing the health, safety, welfare, and convenience of people in and about buildings.

2.4 There has also been a series of regulatory changes brought forward by the Building Safety Act 2022, with one being the requirement for all building control surveyors to be registered, to practice. The Building Safety Regulator has responsibility for the oversight of all building control professionals in terms of their competence, ensuring building control teams have appropriate levels of competence to perform their roles. In addition to this, there are operational standards, which all building control bodies are expected to work within and report on. These operational standards include several broad themes including:

- Systems and controls
- Risk management
- People
- Building Control functions
- Enforcement and intervention activity

2.5 A range of key performance indicators (KPI's) has been established to monitor performance against these themes to ensure building control bodies are operating efficiently and effectively and delivering their intended purpose. It should be noted the Building Safety Regulator will have the power to intervene in cases where Building Control Bodies (including local authorities) are failing to meet requisite standards.

### 3. Planning Development Management Team Performance

3.1 As set out in paragraph 2.2, performance is measured on the speed of determining applications and performance at appeal. The criteria for designation as “underperforming” are:

a. Major development: less than **60 per cent** of an authority's decisions on major applications made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as agreed in writing with the applicant;

b. Non-major development: less than **70 per cent** of an authority's decisions on non-major applications made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as agreed in writing with the applicant;

c. For applications for both major and non-major development, above which a local planning authority is eligible for designation, is **10 per cent** of an authority's total number of decisions on major and non-major applications respectively made during the assessment period (previous 24 months) being overturned at appeal.

#### Speed – criteria a & b

3.2 Once a planning application is valid the local planning authority should issue a decision on the proposal within the statutory time limits set. The statutory time limits are normally 13 weeks for applications for major development (when an application is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment a 16 week limit applies) and 8 weeks for all other types of development.

3.3 Local planning authorities can agree with the applicant to extend the time needed. In most cases a written agreement is sufficient when it becomes apparent that more time is needed to address details. For more significant developments, where it is clear from the start that more than 13 weeks is needed, a formal Planning Performance Agreement can be used to set a timetable. When an applicant has agreed to extend time the “Planning Guarantee”, which requires the planning application fee to be refunded to applicants if no decision has been made within 26 weeks, does not apply (Regulation 9A of the 2012 Fees Regulations).

3.4 Table 1 below shows the performance on decisions issued last year and how many were decided within the statutory timeframe or an agreed extended timeframe for the different types of planning applications handled. Data for preceding years is provided for comparison.

**Table 1: Application Performance in 2025/26 compared with previous years.**

Description	MHCLG Target	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Number and Percentage of major applications decided within statutory 13 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	60%	13/15 86%	20/20 100%	17/20 85%	7/11 64%
Number and Percentage of minor applications decided within statutory 8 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	70%	145/196 74%	145/159 91%	132/153 86%	151/180 84%
Number and Percentage of other applications (including householder applications) decided within statutory 8 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	70%	404/539 75%	377/417 90%	349/395 88%	388/452 86%
Total decisions issued	N/A	750	596	568	643
Number and Percentage of householder applications decided within statutory 8 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	70%	287/386 74%	269/295 91%	285/314 91%	239/284 84%

3.5 Performance on speed of making decisions last year was generally slower than both of the most recent years across all types of application, although it was faster than 2022/23 for everything but major applications. The performance on major applications in 2025/26 is particularly low in comparison to previous years, and is only slightly above the MHCLG target, and major application performance is therefore something that will need to be carefully monitored in future years.

3.6 Table 1a shows the performance by quarter, and, other than for major applications (where there were very small numbers in each quarter) the performance has been relatively consistent across the year.

**Table 1a: Application Performance by quarters in 2025/2026**

Description	MHCLG Target	Q1 Apr-Jun	Q2 Jul-Sept	Q3 Oct-Dec	Q4 Jan-Mar
Major	60%	1/3 33%	1/1 100%	2/4 50%	3/3 100%
Minor	70%	42/50 84%	25/32 78%	47/53 89%	37/45 82%
Other	70%	43/45 93%	25/31 81%	56/64 88%	25/28 89%
Householder	70%	62/77 81%	57/64 89%	61/71 86%	59/72 82%

***Types of applications received***

3.7 In addition to planning applications for new development the Council also receives requests for pre-application advice, plus a variety of other applications. Table 1b shows the fluctuations in the various types of applications received over the last 4 years. The notable changes include a year on year reduction in householder applications, an increase in 25/26 in both pre-application enquiries and listed building consent applications, and there has also been a resurgence in interest in prior approvals that would result in new dwellings, potentially in response to increasing viability pressures in new-build development.

**Table 1b: Number of types of applications received**

	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Full Planning	265	240	233	269
Householder Applications	428	358	340	313
Advertisement consent	67	49	51	67
Pre-application advice	113	129	106	184
Certificates of lawfulness	167	157	182	147
Listed Building consent	59	55	39	76
Variations / s73	27	27	33	63
Householder Prior Approvals	32	28	42	49
New residential prior approvals	28	10	14	37
Non-Material Amendment	71	57	74	72
Approval of conditions	197	164	252	213
Works to TPO/CA trees	200	213	209	214
Other types of application <sup>1</sup>	62	61	29	81
<b>All types of applications</b>	<b>1,716</b>	<b>1,548</b>	<b>1,604</b>	<b>1,785</b>

TPO – Works to trees with Tree Preservation Orders  
CA – Works to trees in Conservation Areas

### Quality – criteria c

#### Planning Appeals

- 3.8 Table 2 shows how many of the appeals lodged found favour with the Planning Inspector and were allowed but that in most of the appeal cases the Council's defence of the reasons for refusing planning permission were successful. Performance when dealing with appeals in 25/26 was not as strong as in 24/25 but remains superior to 22/23 and 23/24, with 27% of appeals allowed. There were 43 appeals lodged, significantly higher than in the most recent three years, which has been inflated by 12 appeals against refusal of permission for BT street hubs.

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

	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Appeals lodged	24	29	21	43
Number of all appeal decisions	28	28	27	30
All appeals allowed in year	9 (31%)	11 (39%)	3 (11%)	8 (27%)

- 3.9 Local planning authorities' performance on appeals is measured by checking the proportion of all decisions made on applications that are subsequently overturned at appeal. Quality is given to be the number of non-major appeals allowed as a percentage of all non-major decisions issued and likewise for major appeals allowed as a percentage of all major decisions issued. The threshold for designation on applications for both major and non-major development, above which a local planning authority is eligible for designation, is 10% of an authority's total number of decisions on relevant applications made during the assessment period being overturned at appeal.
- 3.10 Tables 2a and 2b show a summary of the latest published government performance tables (P152 and P154) for the previous 24 months ending March 2025 (the qualifying period) for Reading and other local authorities in Berkshire. For non-majors our decision making was overwhelmingly upheld with 0.9% of all decisions overturned at appeal. For majors the figure is higher, at 2.4%, but this is still well below the 10% threshold.

<sup>1</sup> Adjacent authority consultations, outline, reserved matters, screening opinions, other forms of prior approval, miscellaneous

**Table 2a – Government statistics (24 months to end of March 2025 – non-major appeals)**

	Total non-major decisions	Total non-major appeal decisions	Non-major decisions overturned at appeal	<i>Quality of decisions (% overturned at appeal)</i>
<b>Reading</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0.9</b>
Wokingham	2,264	50	12	0.5
Bracknell Forest	1,044	44	12	1.1
West Berkshire	1,960	63	21	1.1
Slough	1,248	53	15	1.2
Windsor and Maidenhead	2,595	141	40	1.5

**Table 2b – Government statistics (24 months to end of March 2025 – major appeals)**

	Total major decisions	Total major appeal decisions	Major decisions overturned at appeal	<i>Quality of decisions (% overturned at appeal)</i>
<b>Reading</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Bracknell Forest	51	0	0	0.0
West Berkshire	106	5	3	2.8
Slough	37	4	2	5.4
Windsor and Maidenhead	62	10	4	6.5
Wokingham	91	12	6	6.6

- 3.11 This is why it is important when officers or Planning Applications Committee decide to refuse to grant planning permission that the grounds for refusal are carefully considered and tested to ensure that they derive from material planning considerations and are substantiated by reference to Local Plan policies. Appeal statements produced by officers are also checked to ensure that a robust defence of the Council's decision is presented. However, despite all our efforts, sometimes a Planning Inspector can give different weight to concerns raised and the benefits of an application to justify reaching a position that supports allowing a planning application.

#### 4. Planning fee income

- 4.1 The following table 3 shows fee income to the planning service from Major, Minors and Other applications last year. Table 3a provides a comparison of the same income over the previous 3 years. Fee income in 2025/26 has been higher than any year since before the Covid pandemic. The increase in applications in 2025/26 has meant that the benefits of the November 2023 increase in planning fees has been reflected in the total fee income. The fee income was boosted by the receipt of one very large major application fee on the last day of the financial year.

**TABLE 3: Income from applications for Major, Minor, Others submitted by quarter**

Quarter 25/26	Majors £	Minors £	Others/HH £	Total Fee £
Q1 April - June	25,474.00	121,256.42	46,992.80	193,723.22
Q2 July - September	192,685.45	99,061.50	46,865.52	338,612.47
Q3 October - December	16,113.05	111,626.40	55,123.20	182,862.65
Q4 January - March	186,249.00	121,705.40	62,115.00	370,069.40
<b>Totals</b>	<b>420,521.50</b>	<b>453,649.72</b>	<b>211,096.52</b>	<b>1,085,267.74</b>

**Table 3a – Total application fee income for 25/26 and previous 3 years**

	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
<b>Total Fee Income</b>	£733,703	£596,412	£967,488	£1,085,267.74

## **5. Contribution to strategic aims**

5.1 The Council Plan (2025-2028) identifies five priorities for the Council over the next three years. These are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future.

5.2 The processing of planning applications (also for work to trees and listed buildings) and associated enforcement work and building control activities contribute to securing Reading's economic and cultural success, delivers sustainable development and healthy environments, including reducing the carbon footprint through application of our policies and national regulations on energy efficient buildings.

## **6. Community engagement**

6.1 Statutory consultation takes place on most planning applications and appeals. The Council's website also allows the public to view information submitted and comments on planning applications and on the decision once it is reached. There is also information on our planning policies. Facilitating engagement can influence the quality of public involvement and thereby the quality of the eventual decision.

## **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). The Planning and Building Control functions are essential in helping to address the Climate Emergency through ensuring that development is undertaken to the highest possible environmental standards in line with national regulations and local policies.

8.2 There are no direct environmental or climate implications of this report.

## **9. Legal implications**

9.1 The collection and monitoring of performance indicators and publication of financial performance is a statutory requirement. In addition, a number of the functions of the service are mandatory requirements including the determination of planning applications and the preparation of the development plan.

## **10. Financial Implications**

10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although we continue to monitor fee income and look for ways to improve our efficiency and boost fee income.