

# Planning Applications Committee

03 June 2026



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
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<b>Title</b>	<b>Annual Performance – Building Control and Development Monitoring</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 following over the last year – 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026
  - The work and performance of the Building Control team;
  - The results of the annual development monitoring exercise.
- 1.2 The report serves as an addition to the annual performance report on development management that was discussed at Committee on 29 April (Minute 70 refers).

## 2. Policy context

### ***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.

### ***Development monitoring***

- 2.6 Monitoring development in Reading is required to assess performance against policies, in particular the Local Plan. There are a range of indicators within the plan which are generally monitored and reported on an annual basis. Many of these are set out within the Annual Monitoring Report, published in December each year, but the monitoring of the progress of specific planning permissions and the total levels of development in terms of dwellings and floorspace has been carried out and the results published.
- 2.7 The key figure is numbers of new dwellings completed, which is recorded as required by paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): "To maintain the supply of housing, local planning authorities should monitor progress in building out sites which have permission." This is important firstly because it is an annual return that is made to government that forms the basis of the Council's performance against the Housing Delivery Test, which tests delivery over a three-year period against targets, with potential consequences if delivery falls below requirements. Secondly it also allows for the calculation of whether the Council has a five-year supply of housing land, as required by paragraph 78 of the NPPF.

### **3. Building Control team performance**

- 3.1 Whilst the Building Control team manages the ever-changing regulatory environment, the team leader and the team have worked together to manage these difficulties and have made significant improvements. As part of the drive to build stability within the team, the recruitment drive has resulted in the appointment of a new Trainee Building Inspector with an Apprentice Inspector and current Assistant Inspector both likely to achieve Registration as Class 2 RBI's (Results pending) as have recently sat competency assessments.
- 3.2 The government has recently released funds to support a profession which they consider crucial to their ambition of building 1.5 million warm homes whilst ensuring public safety.
- 3.3 The team have worked hard to ensure public safety is their key consideration, this has resulted in an increase in informal enforcement action being taken to resolve crucial safety issues, examples of enforcement action taken over the last quarter include the total of 240 non-compliant issues being identified, of which:
- 53 fire/life safety issues
  - 34 related to moisture ingress/damp/mould risks
  - 30 related to drainage and waste disposal/ sanitary concerns
  - 28 related to inadequate or poor insulation
  - 17 related to inadequate ventilation
- 3.4 This highlights the challenges faced by the team in what is still an industry plagued with a lack of competency of those within the industry including Contractors and Designers, this was identified in the Governments response to the Building Control Independent Panel report:
- 'Building control is not being supported by an effective wider building safety system. Building control cannot and should not compensate for weaknesses elsewhere, and wider reform is required to ensure each part of the system fulfils its role effectively in delivering safe buildings and supporting growth.'* (Building Control Independent Panel report: government response - GOV.UK)
- 3.5 In terms of fee income, the team's drive to increase enforcement has resulted in an increase in Regularisation applications numbers and helped drive up the income. They are in part able to do this now that the level of stability within the team has improved in part due to upskilling the knowledge and experience of current members of staff. Other contributing factors to the increase in fee income include:

- An increase in fees for all types of applications, which has not resulted in a reduction in application numbers across the board
- A drive to recover unpaid application fees from previous years
- Actively reviewing process and charging appropriate fees for Business Services
- A lack of public and professional confidence in the stability and reliability of Private Building Control companies

3.6 Table 1 shows the case load for the quarters for this year 2025/26 and the totals for the same work over the last two years. An explanation for the work carried out is given after the table.

3.7 Please note that there during 2025/26 a significant strengthening of admin support within the team has allowed them to work through a very significant backlog in logging competent persons notifications, which is why the figures for 2025/26 are so much higher than in previous years. This backlog has now been largely cleared.

**Table 1: Building Control work**

Case work	23/24	24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Total 25/26
Fee earning							
Building notices	235	176	36	45	24	32	137
Regularisations	55	82	20	24	38	29	111
Full Plans	180	184	57	27	37	56	177
Demolition notices	16	10	3	4	4	3	14
Partnerships	31	33	1	4	4	0	9
Fee Income	£244,631	£241,547	£67,076	£76,745	£87,695	£118,271	£351,294
Non-Fee earning							
Dangerous structures attended Non fee work	5	18	2	21	16	14	53
Competent Persons	1	28	17,718	19,586	19,090	1,583	57,977
AI Initial Notices	404	431	118	120	84	99	421
Advice & Quotes	38	19	1	0	0	0	1
Unauthorised work checks	17	86	10	35	23	38	106

**Building notices** - Submitted to the local authority building control (LABC) to notify them of planned minor building works, allowing the work to start within 2 days with minimal plans. Normally followed by a regularisation application. Work is inspected as it progresses to ensure compliance with regs.

**Regularisations** – submitted to obtain building control approval for works carried out already. Inspectors will check that the works met regs in operation at time of completion.

**Full Plans applications** – involves submitting all plans and details to ensure works comply. Plans will be checked and relevant authorities (water providers etc) consulted. A notice will be provided to confirm plans are approved and works can proceed as per the approved plans. When work finishes a completion certificate can be issued if work complies.

**Demolition notices** - Section 80 Demolition notices of intended demolition need to be served on an LABC giving 6 weeks to be approved. If not approved by then works can proceed by default. A counter notice can be issued if concerns raised or to impose conditions.

**Partnership** – Partnership Schemes allows companies to just use one LABC to process all their applications all over the country. This provides consistency with agent and fees for the

company. That LABC then applies and usually pays the fee to the home authority to carry out inspections and to provide completion certificates.

## NON-FEE EARNING

**Unauthorised works** – Enforcement notices are issued if works are carried out without first notifying the local authority of the works or getting approval for it if needed. Can lead to Regularisation applications.

**Competent Persons schemes** – scheme allows trade people to self-certify their work complies with building regs. Does not need an application but trades person should let the local authority know when complete.

## 4. Development monitoring

4.1 The Council produces two documents on an annual basis:

- Residential commitments – monitoring planning permissions that would result in the gain or loss of dwellings.
- Non-Residential commitments – monitoring planning permissions that would result in a net change of 100 sq m of uses other than dwellinghouses (C3).

4.2 These documents consider what has been completed, is under construction, not started, newly permitted or has lapsed, and give totals for the Borough, by ward and by certain type of designation. It is about amount of development and does not include a deeper analysis of, for instance, size or energy efficiency of the permitted dwellings. These matters take longer to assemble and are generally included in the Annual Monitoring Report published in December each year.

### **Residential**

4.3 The key figures for residential development in 2025-26 are set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary figures for residential development 2025-26 (dwellings)**

Newly permitted 2025-26	823
Not started at 31/03/2026	3,621
Under construction at 31/03/2026	1,396
Completed 2025-26	733
Lapsed 2025-26	655
'Soft commitments' <sup>1</sup>	8,577

4.4 The key figure is completed dwellings. The net gain of 733 dwellings is above the target in the current Local Plan of 689, but below the target in the Partial Update (currently at examination) of 825. It is also well below the national standard method figure against which the Council is currently assessed (until such time as the Partial Update can be adopted) of 975.

4.5 Table 3 compares against past performance over a ten-year period.

**Table 3: Comparison against previous years**

Year	Completed (net)	Under construction (net)	Not started (net)	New permissions (net)
2015	635	998	2,883	764
2016	751	1,060	2,221	393
2017	717	1,003	2,353	1,172
2018	700	1,206	2,769	1,402
2019	910	1,128	4,467	2,588
2020	524	1,633	3,754	492

<sup>1</sup> Soft commitments are those agreed in principle but without planning permission. They fall into three categories: (a) resolutions to grant subject to S106; (b) permissions in principle; and (c) Local Plan allocations

Year	Completed (net)	Under construction (net)	Not started (net)	New permissions (net)
2021	408	1,976	3,104	281
2022	850	2,519	3,833	2,367
2023	888	2,163	3,881	802
2024	1,021	1,644	4,726	1,460
2025	890	1,159	4,371	561
2026	<b>733</b>	<b>1,396</b>	<b>3,621</b>	<b>823</b>

- 4.6 There has been a notable reduction in completed dwellings this year compared to the last four years. Almost half of these completed dwellings have been in the town centre, with completions at Weldale Street and Caversham Road, but there has also been strong levels of delivery elsewhere, in particular at the Reading Golf Club site in Emmer Green.
- 4.7 The number of dwellings under construction has increased slightly from last year. It remains below the peak in recent years, but still represents a healthy pipeline of supply. Significant amounts of housing at sites such as Reading Golf Course remain under construction alongside a number of conversions from office to residential in the town centre. The vast majority of homes under construction are in the town centre.
- 4.8 The number of dwellings not started is reduced from last year, and is broadly in line with the average over the last ten years. There has been a healthy number of new homes permitted this year, although not particularly high by historic standards. There are now a number of very large sites with permission but where development has not commenced, and some of the largest are wholly or partly in outline, in particular Vastern Court, Station Hill Phase 3 and Royal Elm Park.
- 4.9 Although not reported as part of the Residential Commitments document, within the figure of 733 dwellings is a net gain of 147 affordable homes, made up of new homes completed at Wensley Road, 45 Caversham Road, Reading Golf Club, 103 Dee Road and 97a-117 Caversham Road.

#### ***Non-residential***

- 4.10 The key figures for non-residential development in 2025-26 are set out in Table 4.

**Table 4: Summary figures for non-residential development 2025-26 (floorspace in sq m)<sup>2</sup>**

Use class	Newly permitted	Not started	Under construction	Soft commitments	Completed	Lapsed
B2	9,908	9,807	19,693	-8,140	130	0
B8	-3,236	5,213	0	76,523	-105	0
C1	1,513	66,045	3,858	0	22	0
C2	8,700	50,912	1,324	0	-1,096	154
E	-59,079	171,203	-64,203	18,034	-10,666	21,122
F1	3,468	7,105	1,958	1,100	335	0
F2	261	54,356	48	-222	-351	198
Sui generis	-25	48,174	5,612	-89,188	1,761	-11,754

- 4.11 In terms of new completions the largest change is a significant net loss of commercial (E) due mainly to some office to residential conversions and the demolition of an office building ahead of an industrial development. The other changes are relatively small scale.
- 4.12 In terms of development under construction, there is currently a significant amount of conversion from offices to residential underway in the town centre, which is the reason for the decrease in commercial use. There is also a relatively significant increase in industrial floorspace underway, due to two developments in south Reading.
- 4.13 Outstanding permissions continue to show a vast amount of office floorspace with unimplemented permission, albeit this is partly countered by a number of prior approvals for loss of offices to

<sup>2</sup> B2 – general industrial; B8 – storage and distribution; C1 – hotels; C2 – residential institutions; E – commercial, business and service; F1 – Learning and non-residential institutions; F2 – Local community; sui generis means excluded from a specific use class

residential, and has reduced from last year. Many of the older office proposals have been outstanding for some years, and there is a question mark over whether they will ever be implemented. There are also large volumes of hotel, local community and sui generis uses outstanding. In terms of new permissions this year, there is a significant net loss of commercial due mainly to there being a number of new prior approvals for conversion to residential this year.

- 4.14 Figures for non-residential development can fluctuate quite significantly from year to year, and it is not always possible to discern particular trends. In addition, the planning use classes changes in 2020. Therefore, it is not particularly helpful to present historic information here. However, of most significance in terms of completions in 2025-26 is the reasonably significant loss of commercial (E class) space, largely through conversions of offices to residential. Over the last ten years this has varied between gains and losses, but on average has seen a net gain.

## **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 Planning 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 None

## **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 matters set out in this report have 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 income.