Planning Applications Committee

22 July 2026

Reading Borough Council
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Title	**First Quarter Performance Report 2026-27**
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Mark Worringham, Planning Policy Manager / Acting Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Council priority	Secure Reading's economic & cultural success
Recommendations	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 first quarter (April to June) of 2026-27, including comparison to the relevant quarter of the previous year.

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. We generally report this on an annual basis as there are not enough appeals to make quarterly performance meaningful, and it is not therefore included in this report.

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 in the first quarter of the 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 the first quarter of 2025/26 is provided for comparison.

Table 1: Application performance in the first quarter of 2026/27 compared to 2025/26

Description	MHCLG Target	Overall 25/26	Q1 25/26	Q1 26/27
Number and Percentage of major applications decided within statutory 13 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	60%	7/11 64%	1/3 33%	2/3 67%
Number and Percentage of minor applications decided within statutory 8 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	70%	151/180 84%	42/50 84%	63/69 91%
Number and Percentage of other applications (including householder applications) decided within statutory 8 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	70%	388/452 86%	105/122 86%	117/141 83%
Total decisions issued	N/A	643	175	213
Number and Percentage of householder applications decided within statutory 8 weeks or an extended period agreed with the applicant.	70%	239/284 84%	62/77 81%	84/102 82%

3.5 The performance on speed of making decisions in the first quarter of 2026/27 was comparable to the same period in the previous year. Performance for both minors and majors (with the caveat that there are a very small number of major decisions in the period) is higher, but performance on others is very slightly lower. Speed of decisions for all application types exceed the targets set by MHCLG.

Planning fee income

3.6 Table 3 shows fee income to the planning service from Major, Minors and Other applications in the first quarter of the year and compares it to the corresponding quarter in 2025/26. It shows that fee income is lower compared to the same period last year, in particular for minor applications and for pre-application enquiries, and suggests that there may be a lower overall income in 2026-27, albeit it is very dependent on when a small number of major applications are received.

Table 2: Development management fee income in first quarter 2026/27 compared to last year

Quarter 25/26	Overall 25/26	Q1 25/26	Q1 26/27
Major applications	420,521.50	25,474.00	25.949.00
Minor applications	453,649.72	121,256.42	65,795.80
Others/householders	211,096.52	46,992.80	52,521.50
Total applications	**1,085,267.74**	**193,723.22**	**144,266.30**
Pre-application enquiries	209,713.49	24,500.00	3,400.35
Total development management fee income	**1,294,981.23**	**218,223.22**	**147,666.65**

4. Building Control team performance

4.1 Table 3 shows the case load for the first quarter of 2026/27 compared to the same quarter last year and last year's total. An explanation for the work carried out is given after the table.

4.2 The figures show that there are higher levels of fee earning work in the first quarter of 2026/27 compared to the equivalent quarter last year, in particular for regularisations, and that fee income is significantly higher.

Table 3: Building Control work for first quarter 2026/27

Case work	Total 25/26	Q1 25/26	Q1 26/27
Fee earning			
Building notices	137	36	40
Regularisations	111	20	42
Full Plans	177	57	60
Demolition notices	14	3	4
Partnerships	9	1	1
Fee Income	£351,294	£67,076	£110,107
Non-Fee earning			
Dangerous structures attended Non fee work	53	2	6
Competent Persons	57,977	17,718	2,409
AI Initial Notices	421	118	113
Advice & Quotes	1	1	2
Unauthorised work checks	106	10	42

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.

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.