



City of Westminster

Planning & City Development Committee

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Classification: General Release

Title: Annual Update on Planning Application Performance

Report of: Director of Place Shaping and Town Planning

Financial Summary: None.

Report Author and Contact Details: Oliver Gibson (ogibson@westminster.gov.uk/ 020 7641 2680)

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents an annual update on the performance of the Place Shaping and Town Planning department in terms of the timeliness and quality of its decision making in respect of planning applications. The performance of the department over the period between April 2018 and March 2019 continues to significantly exceed the required performance thresholds set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

2. Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of this report and to note the ongoing good performance of the Place Shaping and Town Planning department in terms of its performance in the determination of planning applications.

3. Background

3.1 The performance of local planning authorities in determining major and Non-Major development is assessed on a quarterly basis by the MHCLG. The assessment of performance is judged by the MHCLG against two separate measures of performance, which are:

- the speed with which applications are dealt with measured by the proportion of applications that are dealt with within the statutory time or an agreed extended period; and,
- the quality of decisions made by local planning authorities measured by the proportion of decisions on applications that are subsequently overturned at appeal.

Where an authority does not meet the required performance levels set out in Table 1 (below), it can be 'designated' by the MHCLG on behalf of the Secretary of State. Where a local planning authority is designated, applicants may apply directly to the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) for determination of the

category of applications (i.e. major, Non-Major or both) for which the authority has been designated.

- 3.2 Local planning authorities are required to submit data showing their performance against the speed and quality measures set by the MHCLG on a quarterly basis and this data is published by the MHCLG.

Table 1 – MHCLG Major and Non-Major Application Performance Indicator Thresholds

Measure and type of Application	Threshold and assessment period October 2016 to September 2018	Threshold and assessment period October 2017 to September 2019	Live Table
Speed of major Development (District and County)	60%	60%	District - P151a County - P151b
Speed of non-major Development	70%	70%	P153

Measure and type of Application	Threshold and assessment period April 2016 to March 2018	Threshold and assessment period April 2017 to March 2019	Live Table
Quality of major Development (District and County)	10%	10%	District - P152a County - P152b
Quality of non-major Development	10%	10%	P154

(Table extracted from 'Improving Planning Performance – Criteria for Designation (revised 2018)' – MHCLG.)

Full details of the legislative and regulatory background to the MHCLG performance thresholds and designation process can be found in the MHCLG guidance document 'Improving Planning Performance – Criteria for Designation (revised 2018)', which is attached at Appendix 1.

4. Considerations

Speed of Decision Making

- 4.1 For the period from April 2018 to March 2019 the City Council met and exceeded the MHCLG performance thresholds for both Major and Non-Major applications. The Major applications threshold was exceeded by 27%, whilst the Non-Major applications threshold was exceeded by 9% (see Tables 2 and 3). Coupled with similar performance for the preceding 2017/ 2018 financial year, the City Council is not at risk of designation in respect of the speed of its decision making.

Tables 2 & 3 – Performance Against MHCLG Thresholds for Major and Non-Major Planning Applications for April 2018 to March 2019 period.

Development Type	Total Decisions	Total Less than 13 weeks	Total PPA's/ EoT's within target	% < 13 weeks or within PPA/EoT Target
Majors	47	1	40	87.2%

Development Type	Total Decisions	Total < 8 weeks	Total PPA's/ EoT's within target	% < 8 weeks or within PPA/EoT Target
Non-Majors	3259	2212	372	79.3%

4.2 The latest data published by the MHCLG for the two-year period up to December 2018 shows Westminster's performance for Major applications to be 89.7%, whilst performance for Non-Major applications is 80.2%. The latest performance statistics therefore demonstrate in combination with the previously published MHCLG data that the department continues to provide a consistently high level of performance in terms of the speed of its decision making.

Quality of Decision Making

4.3 The performance in terms of the number of appeals won and lost over for the 2018/2019 financial year is set out in detail in the Planning Appeal 2018-19 item, which is also on this Committee agenda. Over this period 66% of the 191 appeals submitted were dismissed and the Council's original decision upheld.

4.4 The quality of decision making by local planning authorities is measured by the MHCLG in terms of the proportion of decisions that are overturned and allowed at appeal over a rolling 24-month period. The threshold for designation is where 10% or more of a local planning authorities' total number of decisions on applications within a given period are overturned. It should be noted that only certain types of planning application are included in the MHCLG appeal performance statistics.

4.5 The latest data published by the MHCLG for Major application appeals demonstrates that in the two years to December 2017 the City Council handled 161 applications of which 5 resulted in appeals and of this number 3 were allowed. As a percentage of the total number of Major applications handled in this period this equates to 1.9%. This is well below the 10% threshold for designation.

4.6 The latest data published by the MHCLG for appeals demonstrates that for Non-Major applications in the two years to December 2017, the City Council handled 7,821 applications of which 273 resulted in appeals and of this number 83 were allowed. As a percentage of the total number of Non-Major applications handled in this period this equates to 1.1%. This is well below the 10% threshold for designation.

4.6 In light of the statistics referenced in Table 4 and in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6, the department can be seen to be performing well in terms of its quality of decision making, which has been consistently supported by Planning Inspectors at appeal.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 None.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 None.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The Place Shaping and Town Planning department has performed well against the MHCLG performance indicators and these demonstrate that the department is providing a good service in terms of both the speed and quality of planning outcomes it delivers to applicants and stakeholders.

If you have any questions about this report, or wish to inspect one of the background papers, please contact: Oliver Gibson (ogibson@westminster.gov.uk / 020 7641 2680)

Background Papers:

1. Improving Planning Performance – Criteria for Designation (revised 2018) – MHCLG (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760040/Improving_planning_performance.pdf)