



Report to Planning Committee 12 March 2026

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Report Summary	
<b>Report Title</b>	Development Management Performance Report
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	This report relates to the performance of the Planning Development Business Unit over the three-month period October to December 2025 (Quarter 3).
<b>Recommendations</b>	For noting.

## 1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 The Government encourages Development Management services to regularly review their performance and challenge themselves to improve the service they provide. Similar advice is given by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).
- 1.2 The Council’s Planning Development Business Unit undertakes a range of activities including the processing of planning applications and associated appeals, planning enforcement, conservation and listed building advice, tree applications, pre-application advice as well as other service areas including land charges, street naming and numbering and management of the building control service for the Council. This report relates to the planning related functions of the service area.
- 1.3 The Government currently measures Development Management performance in terms of speed and quality of decision-making. The minimum threshold for speed of determining Major applications is 60% of decisions in time and for Non-Majors it is 70% of decisions in time. For quality of decision-making it is a maximum of 10% of decisions overturned at appeal – Majors and non-Majors are assessed separately. From January 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) measure performance related to speed on an annual basis (October to September) whilst quality will be measured over a two year period.
- 1.4 The Council looks at performance in other ways, including average number of days taken to deal with applications. The department’s business plan allows for higher targets on Majors (90%) and Non-majors (93%).

1.5 Regarding performance for planning enforcement area in line with our Planning Enforcement Plan (PEP), this is reported separately - please refer to 'Quarterly planning enforcement activity update report'.

## 2.0 **Performance**

2.1 The table and graph below show the number of applications that have been received as valid each quarter from October 2023 to December 2025. They are presented in-line with the Council's reporting to Government.

Category	Oct to Dec 23	Jan to Mar 24	Apr to Jun 24	July to Sept 24	Oct to Dec 24	Jan to Mar 25	Apr to Jun 25	July to Sept 25	Oct to Dec 25
Major	23	12	6	5	7	15	12	9	15
Minor	69	72	52	59	66	78	57	91	59
Others	114	173	134	174	111	142	124	123	123
All other*	352	399	402	390	407	369	350	380	317
<b>Total</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>514</b>

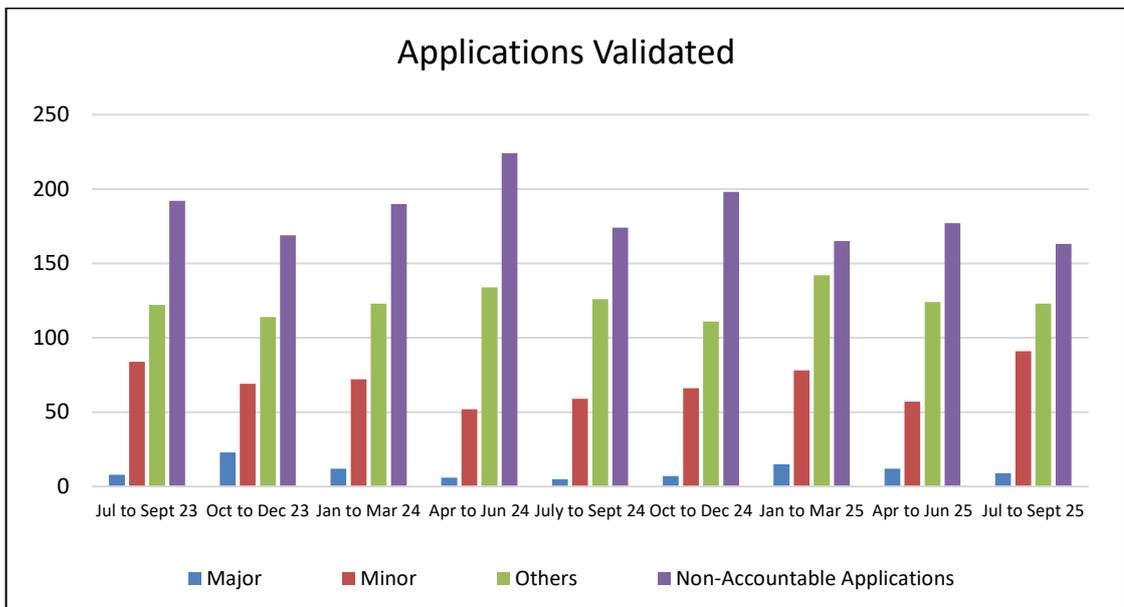
*\*Includes: Non – accountable applications, applications/S211 notices regarding protected trees and trees in a conservation area and Pre-application advice*

2.2 Between October and December 2025, a total of 514 applications were validated. This figure is the lowest recorded in years for this period, albeit it follows the usual drop observed ahead of the festive season and New Year. Compared to the same quarter in 2024, there was a 13% decline in validated applications. It is likely that this reflects the national picture, with many Council's reporting lower numbers during 2025. Uncertainty on planning reforms, delays in securing legal agreements and challenges with securing BNG are also likely to be factors.

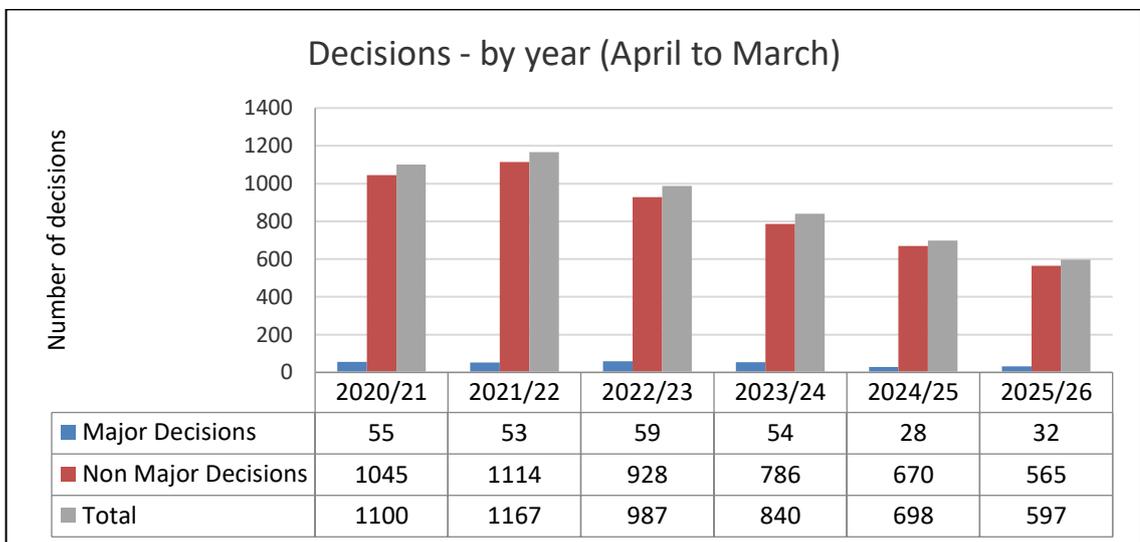
2.3 The 'Minor' category experienced the biggest decline, while 'Major' applications increased to that recorded at the start of 2025, and more than double that number when compared to the corresponding quarter in 2024/25. It is important to note, 'Major' applications are generally more complex and often involve negotiations and s106 legal agreements. Although national figures for this quarter are not yet available, previously reported data indicate that the number of major applications received across the country remains low.

2.4 The remaining categories are considered consistent with the previous quarter, and although applications validated within the 'Minor' category represented a decrease, it is important to note, this is reflective of the national picture for planning application numbers. Although data is not yet available for the period October to December 2025, nationally, between July and October 2025, district planning authorities in England received 78,800 applications for planning permission, down 3% from the same quarter a year earlier (reference: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-applications-in-england-july-to-september-2025/planning-applications-in-england-july-to-september-2025-statistical-release>).

2.5 Although numbers are slightly down, the reported figure for major development may be an indicator of major development picking up again, which is positive news regarding income targets.



2.6 Decisions for the year to date (April 2025 to December 2025), suggest, if recent (local) trends continue, may exceed those reported for the previous year. However, it is important to note, nationally, in Q2 2025 (July to September 2025), decided applications for planning permission, was reported to be down 4% from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending September 2025, this figures is down 6% from the year ending September 2024 (*reference: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-applications-in-england-july-to-september-2025/planning-applications-in-england-july-to-september-2025-statistical-release>*)



2.7 Assessing local planning authorities' performance was introduced in the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013. Planning performance is considered annually based on a defined previous 24-month assessment period that separately measures the speed and quality of decision-making. Speed of decision-making is measured by the proportion of applications that are decided within the statutory determination period (8 weeks for non-major applications or 13 weeks for major applications), or an agreed extended period of time. The authority needs to achieve 60% for majors and 70% for non-majors. Quality of decision-making is measured by the proportion of total decisions, or non-determinations, that are allowed at appeal. Quality is set at 10%,

this being the threshold for appeal overturns. Government is considering reducing this to 5%.

- 2.8 For authorities who under-perform against their national target, they will be classed as ‘poorly performing’ and applications for major development may be made by developers directly to the Planning Inspectorate. The Council would not receive the fees for these but would be expected to deal with all the associated administration.

Year	Q1 Apr to Jun	Q2 Jul to Sept	Q3 Oct to Dec	Q4 Jan to Mar
Majors – target 60% in 13 weeks				
2025/26	87%	100%	100%	
2024/25	100%	86%	91%	33%
2023/24	100%	93%	85%	92%
Non-Majors – target 70% in 8 weeks				
2025/26	94%	86%	92%	
2024/25	92%	94%	92%	94%
2023/24	94%	94%	88%	94%

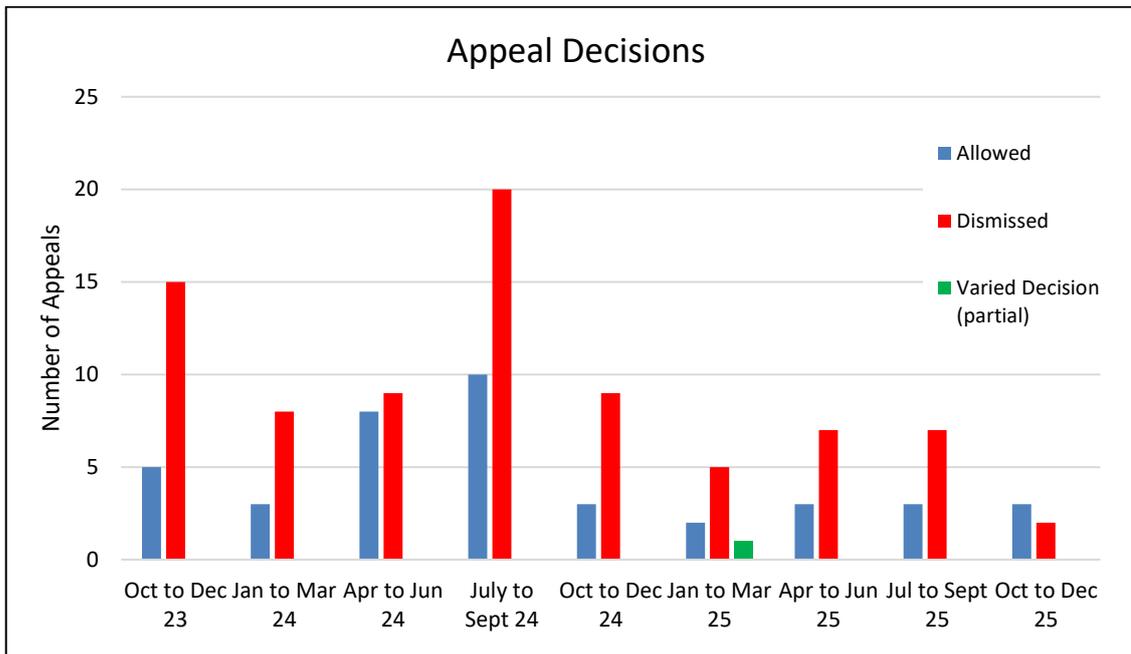
- 2.9 Performance at NSDC remains strong overall, with recognition of the decline observed in ‘Majors’ category during Q4 2024/25. Results for the most recent quarter are exceptional, deciding 6 of 6 applications within the 13-week target date or agreed extension of time. As previously reported, performance can fluctuate according to the complexity of a scheme (note reference to Q4 2024/25), negotiation undertaken, BNG as well as need for s106 legal agreements. Additionally, ‘Non-Major’ category has outperformed the national target, acknowledging a 6-percentage points increase from the previous quarter. The senior team continues to monitor this area of work with additional training and awareness undertaken.

#### Appeals

Appeal Decision	Oct to Dec 2024	Jan to Mar 2025	Apr to Jun 2025	July to Sept 2025	Oct to Dec 2025
Allowed	3	2	3	3	3
Dismissed	9	6	7	7	2
Total determined	12	8	10	10	5
LPA success rate	75%	80%	70%	70%	40%

- 2.10 There is a right of appeal against most local authority decisions on planning permission and other planning decisions, such as advertisement consent, listed building consent, prior approval of permitted development rights, and enforcement notices. The table and graph below highlight the number of appeals and whether they were allowed or dismissed. In general, appeals are determined on the same basis as the original

application. The decision will be made considering national and local policies, and the broader circumstances in place at the time of the decision.



2.11 The appeal will be determined as if the application for permission had been made to the Secretary of State in the first instance. This means that the Inspector (or the Secretary of State) will come to their own view on the merits of the application. The Inspector will consider the weight to be given to the relevant planning considerations and come to a decision to allow or refuse the appeal. As Inspectors are making the decision as if for the first time, they may refuse the permission on different grounds to the local planning authority. Where an appeal is made against the grant of permission with conditions, the Inspector will make a decision in regard to both the granting of the permission and the imposition of conditions. Appeals are regularly reported to the Committee.

2.12 The trend over the current monitoring period (April 2025 to December 2025) is that we are seeing fewer appeals (25 against 59 (April 2024 to December 2024)) and although our success rate fell during the Q3, overall, the Council has a 64% success rate. Further analysis of those appeals allowed during reported quarter, inform 2 of 3 appeals allowed were based on committee overturns, against officer recommendations.

- 23/01837/FULM – Land to the west of Main Street, Kelham.  
*Proposed ground mounted photo voltaic solar farm and battery energy storage system with associated equipment, infrastructure, grid connection and ancillary work.*
- 24/01810/FUL - Flaggs Farm, Caunton Road, Norwell.  
*Change of use of two former farm storage buildings to storage (Use Class B8) and associated parking.*

2.13 Given the 5-year housing land supply shortfall, we are anticipating an increase in challenges to refusals for greenfield sites at the edges of settlements. We have already seen a couple of examples of this.

### Trees

2.14 Trees in a conservation area that are not protected by an Order are protected by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These provisions require people to notify the local planning authority, using a 'section 211 notice', 6 weeks before carrying out certain work on such trees, unless an exception applies. The work may go ahead before the end of the 6-week period if the local planning authority gives consent. This notice period gives the authority an opportunity to consider whether to make an Order on the tree. Below is the Council's performance on s211 Notices (TWCA) over the last 12 months.

<b>TWCA Total Notifications</b>	Oc	No	De	Ja	Fe	Ma	Ap	Ma	Ju	Jul	Au	Se	Oc	No	De
Total notifications	53	37	37	38	32	38	21	27	29	40	30	39	59	47	22
Determined within 6 weeks	53	36	37	38	32	38	21	27	29	38	30	39	59	47	22

2.15 When determining applications for consent under a Tree Preservation Order, the authority may: grant consent unconditionally; grant consent subject to such conditions as it thinks fit; refuse consent. The authority must decide the application before it, so it should not issue a decision which substantively alters the work applied for. The authority could, however, grant consent for less work than that applied for. The authority should make absolutely clear in its decision notice what is being authorised. This is particularly important where the authority grants consent for some of the operations in an application and refuses consent for others. The Council's performance on TPO applications is set out below.

<b>TPO Total Applications</b>	Oc	No	De	Jan	Fe	Ma	Ap	Ma	Jun	Jul	Au	Se	Oc	No	De
Total applications	9	5	11	5	5	8	7	3	3	13	5	10	7	6	9
Determined within 8 weeks (or EOT)	8	5	10	5	5	8	7	3	3	13	4	10	6	6	9

2.16 This quarter's results for both TWCA notifications and TPO applications have remained strong, with every S211 notification being resolved within six weeks. For TPO decisions, all except one met the set deadline, the minor delay was due to an extra site visit required to provide additional expert support to the case officer. This strong performance showcases the commitment and hard work of both the tech support officers and the specialist arboricultural support provided by AWA Tree Consultants, who have been assisting the team during the council's Trees and Landscape Officer vacancy.

### **3.0 Next steps**

3.1 As previously reported, the past year have been extremely challenging and to support the team, we continue to utilise a planner consultant to assist with planning related application workloads, alongside ongoing commission of major projects officer, providing advice in support of several Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs - large scale projects). The business unit continues the recently commissioned external support from a conservation and heritage professional to assist our conservation team with the demand for planning related consultee responses.

3.2 Regarding vacant post of Trees and Landscape Officer. The Business Manager and Planning Technical Support Manager are currently finalising options and will be presented as part of a separate report regarding recommendations as outcomes of a recent Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review (see below). However, the absence continues to have a significant impact on the workload of technical support colleagues and necessitate external assistance.

3.3 Performance data indicates positive progress; however, there remains scope for further improvement. Government planning reforms suggest renewed focus on performance metrics and locally set fees. As previously reported, recent communication to government, we emphasised that the speed of decision-making should not be considered the sole indicator of quality, although it remains a key area for development. We will continue to prioritise effective pre-application advice and enhanced communication moving forward.

3.4 PAS visited the business unit on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to provide an independent review and offer recommendations for improvement after a period of significant staff changes within the Business unit. It is important to note, amongst the planners and senior planners, 75% of the staff are new in post, many new to the authority. The entire conservation team is new in post.

3.5 Despite the blip in early 2025, performance against national planning targets is generally good, and a recent forum held with local planning agents did not identify any significant issues from a customer service perspective. The review was, therefore, not seeking to address a particular problem, but to provide an independent assessment of progress that has been made with establishing the new teams, and to provide guidance to help those involved provide the best service possible.

3.6 Feedback from the review informs that after a period of considerable upheaval:

*“The authority has established a team that is performing well, where staff are well motivated, and morale appears to be good. Everyone involved should be commended for their part in this achievement.*

*Performance is good in terms of national targets, but performance and workload management could be improved by easier access to current data, and this is already in hand. There is a need to ensure that DM officers receive timely and proportionate advice from experts, and the report makes some recommendations in this area, again some changes are already under consideration.*

*There are some vacant posts in the structure and there has been a conscious decision not to fill them so far. Nevertheless, now that the teams have become established there is a need to increase resources at the top of the structure at the level of assistant business manager.”*

3.7 Outside of the scope of the review, salary benchmarking will be a potential area to review to ensure we support staff retention.

3.8 A separate report will be presented to Planning Committee in due course regarding outcomes of the PAS review.

#### **4.0 Implications**

4.1 In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation’s officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 This report is for noting only.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

6.1 The team has consistently met and surpassed performance expectations, and their ongoing support and dedication are commendable. This is further highlighted with the following comment received from Raymond Crawford (PAS) after his visit:

*“I would like to say that in most DM teams that I visit there is a kind of air of exhaustion and resignation. The experience at your council was very different and there seemed to be a real feeling of optimism and enthusiasm. I found the experience really positive - so well done, and please pass that message from me on to everyone involved.”*