



Report to Planning Committee 6 August 2026

Director lead: Matt Lamb, Planning and Growth

Lead officer: Lee Robinson, Planning Technical Support Manager – Planning Development, x5821

Report Summary	
Report Title	Development Management Performance Report
Purpose of Report	This report relates to the performance of the Planning Development Business Unit over the six-month period January to June 2026.
Recommendations	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'.

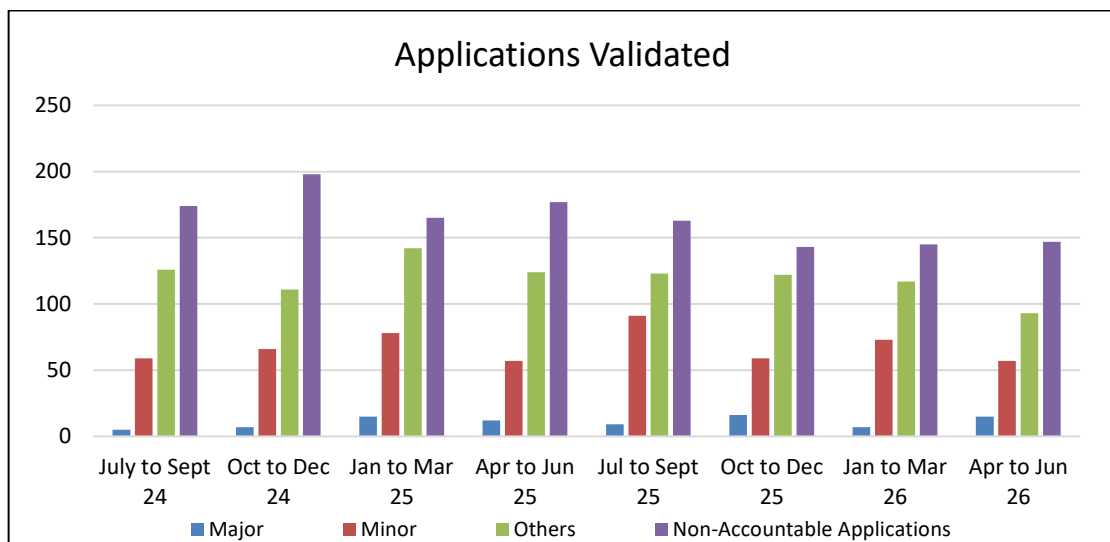
2.0 Performance

- 2.1 The table and graph below show the number of applications that have been received as valid each quarter from April 2024 to June 2026. They are presented in-line with the Council's reporting to Government.

Category	Apr to Jun 24	Jul to Sept 24	Oct to Dec 24	Jan to Mar 25	Apr to Jun 25	Jul to Sept 25	Oct to Dec 25	Jan to Mar 26	Apr to Jun 26
Major	6	5	7	15	12	9	15	7	15
Minor	52	59	66	78	57	91	59	73	57
Others	134	174	111	142	124	123	123	117	93
All other*	402	390	407	369	350	380	317	336	348
Total	594	580	591	604	543	603	514	533	513

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

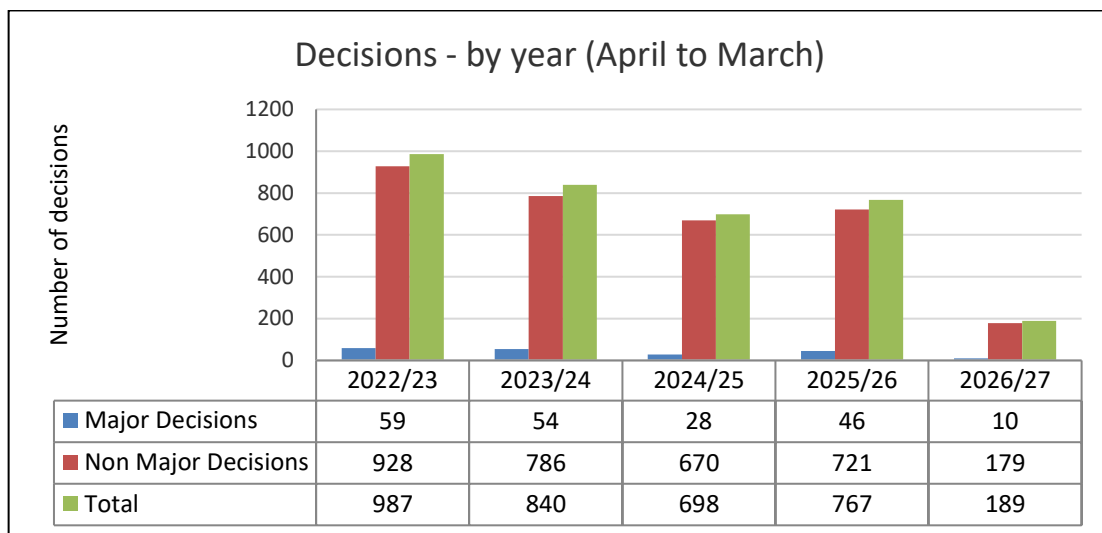
- 2.2 Between January and June 2026, a total of 1,046 applications were validated. This represents a reduction of 101 applications when compared with the same period in 2025, when 1,147 applications were validated. The decrease continues the lower level of activity seen in October to December 2025, although the overall position remains broadly consistent with the wider national trend of reduced planning application numbers.
- 2.3 The reduction was not consistent across all categories. Between January and June 2026, 22 major applications were validated, compared with 27 in the same period in 2025 and 11 between April and September 2024. Major application activity was particularly strong in April to June 2026, with 15 received, matching the highest quarterly figure in the reporting period. This is positive for income, as major applications attract higher fees, but they are usually more complex and often involve extended negotiations, biodiversity net gain matters and legal agreements.



- 2.4 Minor applications totalled 130 between January and June 2026, compared with 135 for the same period in 2025. This represents a small reduction and suggests that minor application volumes have remained relatively stable overall, despite quarterly variation. Other applications reduced more noticeably, from 266 in January to June 2025 to 210 in January to June 2026. The 'All other' category remained comparatively stable, with 684 applications validated in January to June 2026 compared with 719 in the same period in 2025.
- 2.5 Overall, application validated for January to June 2026 were lower than the equivalent period in 2025, but the profile of work has changed. The increase in major applications is likely to place greater pressure on officer capacity because of the complexity and resource requirements associated with these cases. At the same time, the fall in other application categories may partly offset this in terms of volume, although not necessarily in terms of workload complexity.
- 2.6 Overall, 2025/26 showed an increase compared with 2024/25, with total decisions rising by nearly 10% (from 698 in 2024/25 to 767 in 2025/26). The increase was driven by both:
- Major decisions up from 28 to 46.
 - Non-major decisions up from 670 to 721.

It is important to note, nationally, between January to March 2026, district level planning authorities in England decided 68,400 applications for planning permission, down 4% from the same quarter a year. Further information can be found on the following website:: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-applications-in-england-april-to-june-2025/planning-applications-in-england-april-to-june-2025-statistical-release>

- 2.7 Based on the current 2026/27 position (April 2026 to June 2026), performance appears broadly stable and is following close to the 2025/26 level, although a simple projection suggests the year-end total may be slightly lower (756) if the current rate continues.



- 2.8 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%.
- 2.9 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. Housing and planning minister Matthew Pennycook has written to nine councils notifying them that they have been designated from 15 June. Each council has been designated for the quality of its decision-making in respect of applications for planning permission for major development. The councils are: Hertsmere Borough Council; Staffordshire Moorlands District Council; Rossendale Borough Council; Wychavon District Council; Cherwell District Council; Epping Forest District Council; South Tyneside Council; Malvern Hills District Council; and Dacorum Borough Council.

Year	Q1 Apr to Jun	Q2 Jul to Sept	Q3 Oct to Dec	Q4 Jan to Mar
Majors – target 60% in 13 weeks (including extension of time).				
2026/27	100%			
2025/26	87%	100%	100%	93%
2024/25	100%	86%	91%	33%
Non-Majors – target 70% in 8 weeks (including extension of time).				
2026/27	89%			

2025/26	94%	86%	92%	92%
2024/25	92%	94%	92%	94%

2.10 Decision-making performance remained strong during the first half of 2026 and continued to exceed Government targets for both major and non-major applications.

- Major applications achieved an average performance of 96.5% between January and June 2026 (93% in Q4 2025/26 and 100% in Q1 2026/27), a substantial improvement on the equivalent period in 2024/25 when performance fell to 33% in Q4.
- Non-major applications achieved an average performance of 90.5% between January and June 2026 (92% in Q4 2025/26 and 89% in Q1 2026/27) While this is slightly lower than the 92% recorded in October to December 2025, it remains comfortably above the national target of 70% and broadly consistent with performance over recent years.

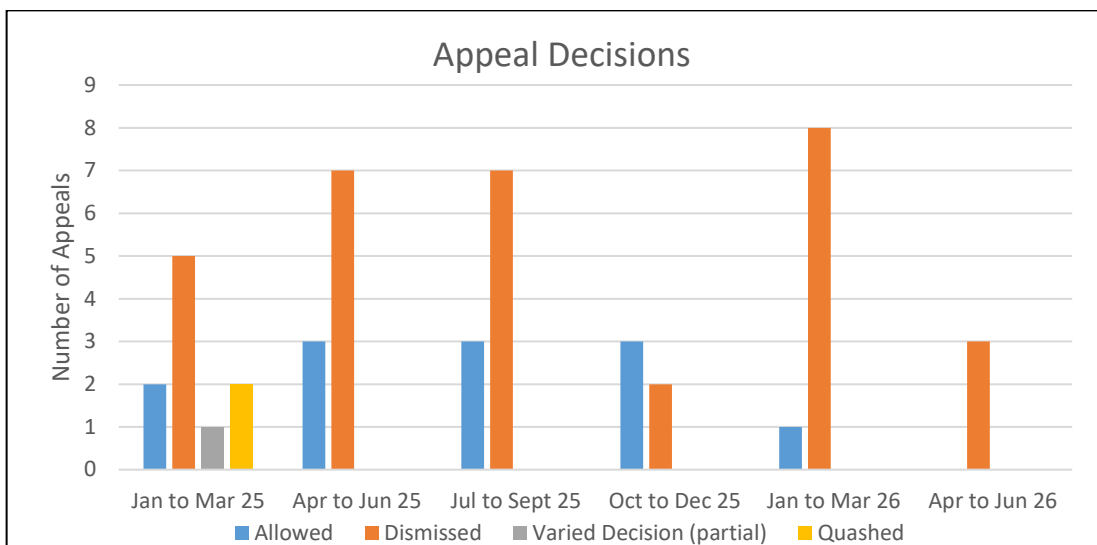
Appeals

2.11 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.

2.12 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.

Appeal decisions and year	Jan to Mar 2025	Apr to Jun 2025	Jul to Sept 2025	Oct to Dec 2025	Jan to Mar 2026	Apr to Jun 2026
Allowed	2	3	3	3	1	0
Dismissed	6	7	7	2	8	3
Total determined	8	10	10	5	9	3

LPA success rate	80%	70%	70%	40%	89%	100%
------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	------



2.13 Appeal performance improved during the first half of 2026 when compared with the corresponding period in 2025. A total of 12 appeals were determined between January and June 2026, compared with 18 in the same period of 2025. The Council successfully defended 11 of the 12 appeals determined, resulting in an overall success rate of approximately 92%, compared with 72% during January to June 2025. Only one appeal was allowed during the reporting period, compared with five in the corresponding period of the previous year. These results indicate a strong improvement in appeal outcomes and demonstrate continued robustness in the Council's decision-making.

2.14 As previously reported, 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

2.15 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.

2.16 Below is the Council's performance on s211 Notices (TWCA) over the last 12 months.

S211 decisions and year	Jan to Mar 2025	Apr to Jun 2025	Jul to Sept 2025	Oct to Dec 2025	Jan to Mar 2026	Apr to Jun 2026
Total S211 decided	108	77	109	128	100	84

Agreed within 6 weeks	108	77	107	128	100	84
% agreed within 6 weeks	100%	100%	98%	100%	100%	100%
No of S211 notices where decision to serve TPO	0	1	1	0	1	0

- 2.17 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 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.

TPO decisions and year	Jan to Mar 2025	Apr to Jun 2025	Jul to Sept 2025	Oct to Dec 2025	Jan to Mar 2027	Apr to Jun 2026
Total TPO applications decided	18	13	28	22	16	10
Agreed within 8 weeks or EOT	18	13	27	21	16	10
% within 8 weeks or EOT	100%	100%	96%	95%	100%	100%

- 2.18 Performance for tree-related work remained strong throughout the period reported. All S211 notifications shown in the monitoring table were determined within six weeks, maintaining a 100% performance position. TPO application performance also remained high, with almost all applications determined within the eight-week period or agreed extension of time. This reflects the continued commitment of technical support officers and the specialist arboricultural support provided by AWA Tree Consultants during the Trees and Landscape Officer vacancy.

3.0 Staffing and resources

- 3.1 As previously reported, the past year has been extremely challenging. To support the team, we have continued to use planning consultancy support to help manage planning application workloads. This has included ongoing support from a Major

Projects Officer, who has provided advice on several Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and other large-scale proposals. Following the PAS review, previously reported recommendations have led to the successful recruitment of several posts, including an additional Principal Planner, a Trainee Planner (Enforcement) and a Technical Support Lead Officer. This has reduced the need for consultancy support, although some ad hoc external assistance is still expected for NSIP and large-scale project follow-up work. The business unit also continues to use external conservation and heritage support to help manage demand for planning-related consultee responses

- 3.2 Although performance is excellent, the vacant post of Trees and Landscape Officer continues to have a significant impact on the workload of technical support colleagues and necessitate external assistance. However, I am pleased to report that the post is currently out to advert. The closing date is towards the end of August 2026, and further updates will be provided regarding the outcome.
- 3.3 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 Although outside the scope of the recent PAS review, salary benchmarking may be considered as a future area of work to support staff retention.
- 3.5 The service is awaiting further Government announcements on the proposed reforms set out in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation document published in December 2025.

4.0 Implications

In preparing this report and its recommendations, officers have considered the relevant implications, including data protection, digital and cyber security, equality and diversity, finance, human resources, human rights, legal, safeguarding and sustainability matters. Where appropriate, these implications have been referenced and supported by expert comment.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 This report is for noting only.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Overall, the business unit has maintained strong performance during January to June 2026. Whilst it is acknowledged application volumes were lower than the corresponding period in 2025, decision-making performance remained well above national targets, appeal outcomes improved significantly, and tree-related services continued to achieve high levels of performance. These results demonstrate the team's continued commitment, resilience and professionalism in delivering a high-

quality service despite ongoing workload and resource pressures. Finally, whilst current performance remains positive, there are ongoing pressures that may affect performance levels in the future, including, increasing complexity of planning applications, and the potential impact of proposed planning reforms. Performance will therefore continue to be closely monitored and reported.