



Planning Committee

Wednesday 22nd July 2020

Subject: Development Management Performance Update

Report by:

Assistant Director of Planning & Regeneration

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To provide an update on the Council's
Development Management performance in
2019/20 and in Q1 of 2020/21, following the
Coronavirus pandemic

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Members to note the Development Management Performance Update Report;
2. Members to agree that further performance updates will be circulated via the West Lindsey Member's bulletin.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

No legal implications arising.

Financial :

No financial implications arising.

Staffing :

No staffing implications arising.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

No equality and diversity implications arising.

Data Protection Implications

No data protection implications arising

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

No climate related risks and opportunities arising

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

No crime and disorder implications arising

Health Implications:

No health implications arising

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Live tables on planning application statistics, MHCLG

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-planning-application-statistics#local-planning-authority-performance-tables>

Risk Assessment :

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the service and performance of the Development Management function in 2019/20 and the first quarter Q1 of 2020/21.

1.2 The Government assesses performance on the speed and quality of decision making, which will be addressed below.

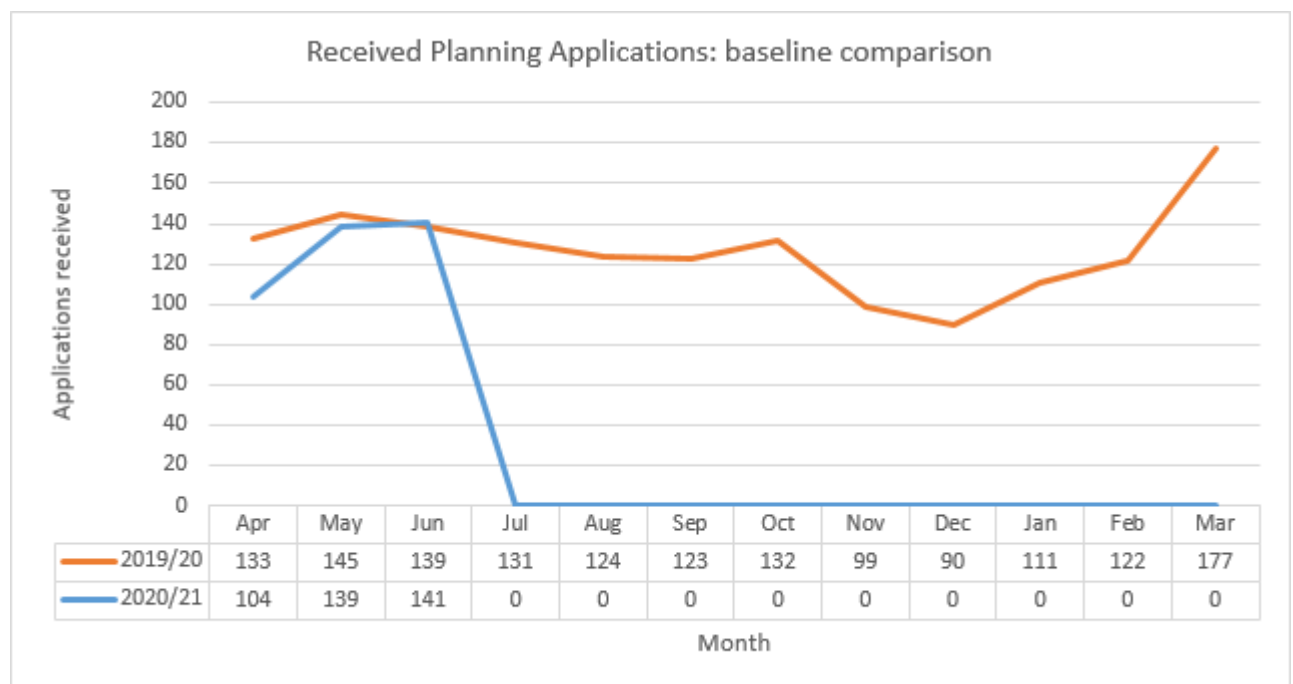
2 Applications Received

2.1 In 2019/20, the service received in total, 1,526 applications of all types (planning, listed building consent, discharge of planning conditions etc.) – this was consistent with the previously reported year (1,529 total applications in 2018/19). In March 2020, we received the highest number of monthly applications in over two years (177 applications).

2.2 This provides a mean monthly average of 127 applications a month in 2019/20.

2.3 This is against the backdrop of a national reduction in the number of new planning applications in the year ending December 2019, with a 4% drop in applications across England overall from the year before¹.

2.4 In Q1 2020/21 we received 384 applications, including 11 major planning applications – a monthly mean average of 128 applications. It indicates that, following lockdown commencing in March 2020, after an initial below average month in April, it has since seen two above average months in May and June, and that overall, the effect of the pandemic is yet to be seen in the number of new applications received.



¹ [National Statistics – Planning applications in England: October to December 2019](#)

3. Speed of Decision Making - Applications Determined

- 3.1 National performance indicators measure the speed at which the Council makes its planning decisions.
- 3.2 Following the commencement of lockdown in March 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has made clear² that *“It is important to keep the planning system moving as much as we can, so that it is able to play its full part in the economic recovery to come, at both national and local levels”*, but that they *“do not intend to change the determination timescales for planning applications [8/13 weeks]... Developers should be encouraged to agree extensions of time where necessary but retaining the timescales means there is still the option to appeal to the Secretary of State on the grounds of non-determination.”*
- 3.3 Accordingly, with Council offices closed, the Service has adapted to new working practices, with all planning staff now working remotely. Within Q1 2020/21, the Council has continued to operate at full strength and determined 8 major applications and 201 non-major planning applications.
- 3.4 Following legislative changes in early April in order to allow virtual Council meetings to take place, the Council has successfully and quickly adapted to new practices. We held our first two virtual Planning Committee Meetings in Q1 2020/21, in which the Committee has been able to consider and made resolutions on 10 applications (comprising 4 major applications and 6 non-major applications).

Major developments

- 3.5 The Government sets a target³ of 60% of all major applications to have been determined “within time” – that is, within the statutory 13 week period; or within a longer period that has been agreed in writing with the applicant / with a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) in place / EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Developments. Failure to achieve this target would mean the Authority would be “designated” and special measures put in place.
- 3.6 In 2019/20, West Lindsey District Council determined 100% (50 out of 50) of its major applications in time.
- 3.7 In Q1 2020/21, this excellent performance has been maintained, with 100% (8 out of 8) major applications being determined in time.
- 3.8 National statistics⁴ show that, in the 24 month period ending December 2019, West Lindsey DC determined 96.4% of major applications in time (England overall total - 88.3%) – of which 44% were determined within 13 weeks (29% in

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-update>

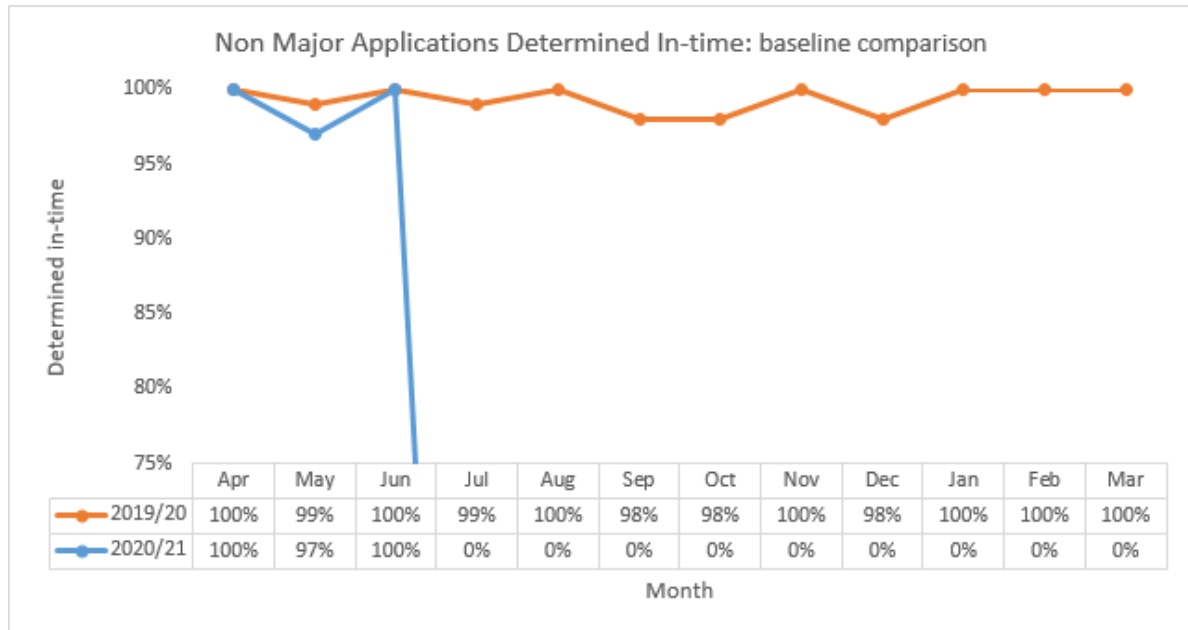
³ [Improving Planning Performance: criteria for designation \(revised 2018\)](#)

⁴ Table P151a, Live tables on planning application statistics, MHCLG

England overall), and 52% with an agreed extension of time in place (59% in England overall).

Non-Major Developments

3.9 For non-major development, the Government threshold⁵ is set at 70% of such applications being determined in time – within 8 weeks, or within a longer period that has been agreed in writing with the applicant. Failure to achieve this target would mean the Authority would be “designated” and special measures put in place.



3.10 In 2019/20, West Lindsey District Council determined 99% (721 out of 726) of non-major applications within time.

3.11 In Q1 2020/21, we have determined 99% (199 out of 201) of non-major applications within time.

3.12 National statistics⁶ show that, in the 24 month period ending December 2019, West Lindsey DC determined 98.9% of non-major applications in time (Overall English total is 88%) – of which 73% were determined within 8 weeks (63% in England overall), and 26% with an agreed extension of time (25% in England overall).

4 Quality of Decisions – appeals

4.1 In order to assess the quality of decision-making, the measure employed by the Government is the percentage of the total number of decisions made by the authority, on applications that are then subsequently overturned at appeal. The

⁵ [Improving Planning Performance: criteria for designation \(revised 2018\)](#)

⁶ Table P153, Live tables on planning application statistics, MHCLG

threshold for designation, on applications for both major and non-major development, is 10% of applications being overturned at appeal.

- 4.2 Within the current Government assessment period⁷, only 1.6% of major decisions were overturned at appeal, and 1.1% of non-major decisions.
- 4.3 In 2019/20 we received 39 appeal decisions overall of which, 29 were dismissed and 10 were allowed,. Allowed appeals equate to 1.3% of the overall decisions made.
- 4.4 In Q1 2020/21, appeal decisions had initially been suspended, following the Covid-19 outbreak. They have recommenced in June – we received two appeal decisions, both were dismissed (allowed appeals equate to 0% of decisions made).

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Last year (2019/20), the service received on average 127 applications a month. In Q1 we received on average 128 applications a month, indicating that the number of applications received has not, so far, been affected by the current health pandemic.
- 5.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has made clear⁸ that *“It is important to keep the planning system moving as much as we can, so that it is able to play its full part in the economic recovery to come, at both national and local levels”* and that they *“do not intend to change the determination timescales for planning applications [8/13 weeks]... Developers should be encouraged to agree extensions of time where necessary but retaining the timescales means there is still the option to appeal to the Secretary of State on the grounds of non-determination.”*
- 5.3 We held our first two virtual Planning Committee Meetings in Q1 2020/21, in which the Committee has been able to consider and has made resolutions on 10 applications (including 4 major applications and 6 non-major applications).
- 5.4 It can be considered that, despite the upheavals arising from the pandemic, with the offices closed the entire department now working remotely from home and adaptation to virtual planning committees, the service has been resilient and has sustained excellent levels of performance with 100% of major decisions and 99% of non-major decisions being made in time within Q1 2020/21.

⁷ Tables P152a (Major applications –24 months ending September 2018) and P154 (non major apps -24 months ending June 2018), Live tables on planning application statistics, MHCLG

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-update>