



NORTHAMPTON
B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 7 May 2013

DIRECTORATE: Planning, Enterprise and Regeneration

HEAD OF PLANNING: Susan Bridge

REPORT TITLE: Development Management Activity and Performance 2012-13

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That the contents of the report be noted.

2. BACKGROUND AND COMMENTARY

2.1 2012-13 was a significant year for the Council's Development Planning service following the staged transfer of powers from West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) during the previous 2 years. This process resulted in a significant increase in workload (over 25% increase in the volume of planning applications received overall) with stage I from April 2011 and significantly increased complexity and scale development proposals with stage II from April 2012.

2.2 2012-13 was the first year since 2005-06 when the Council has exercised all development management functions and there were notable achievements with the issuing of planning permission for applications / proposals that had been transferred from WNDC such as the new community at Pineham (up to 650 new homes, local centre, community facilities and primary school), the regeneration of the former sorting office site on Barrack Road and the new Hindu Welfare Centre on Lings Way.

2.3 Other noteworthy applications are the student accommodation development at St John's and the Northampton Bus Interchange. Both of these applications are major regeneration projects approved within the statutory determination period and contribute to Northampton Alive.

2.4 In spite of their increased quantity and complexity, the processing of the applications within all three of the DCLG categories (*Major NI157a, Minor NI157b and Other NI157c*) exceeded national targets during 2012-13, and were on target for the more demanding targets set

locally. These figures are set out in the table below.

- 2.5 2013-14 will also be a challenging year as the team continues to adapt to the increased and changing profile of workload arising from the final stage of the transition of planning powers from WNDC to determine extant proposals such as those at Upton Lodge, Upton Park and Dallington Grange as well as new applications. These include the Strategic Urban Extensions identified in the Joint Core Strategy at Collingtree and Hardingstone, the two regeneration projects for Avon Nunn Mills (Residential / Mixed use and the University relocation) and the Homes and Communities Agency’s proposals at Ransome Road.
- 2.6 Appeals performance is a useful ‘barometer’ of the quality of decision making. At the mid-point of the year performance had declined significantly. Appeals performance is be prone to significant fluctuation due to the small volumes of applications that go to appeal. It was also thought that this might be due to the impact of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on the decision-making behaviour of Planning Inspectors. However, during the second half of the year there was a marked improvement such that overall performance was on target. The impact of the NPPF will, nonetheless, be kept under review.
- 2.7 2012-13 was also a significant year in that for the first time since 2008 the Council had a Public Inquiry and also a Hearing. Both were determined in line with the Council’s original decisions. The Hearing was particularly important as it was an early test of the recently adopted Northampton Central Area Action Plan and serves to illustrate the value of up to date planning policy.

3. PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 The table below sets out performance data on the principal national and local indicators for the whole of the year 2012-13. The DCLG figures for the whole period in question are not yet available, however, given that overall performance has been maintained well above targets it is expected that NBC would remain within the top quartile as one of the higher performers within the region.

Performance indicator	National Target	Local Target	Totals
% Large Major apps within 13 weeks – NI157(A)	>60%	>60%	69.2% 9/13
% Small Major apps within 13 weeks - NI157(A)	>60%	>60%	76.7% 33/43
% Minor apps	>65%	>86%	85.5%

within 8 weeks - NI157(B)			206/241
% Other apps within 8 weeks - NI157(C)	>80%	>90%	92.9% 672/723
% Appeals allowed	<33%	<33%	27.6% 8/29

Summary of key performance data.

4. ENFORCEMENT

4.1 The Council has an adopted an enforcement policy and associated priorities. In summary the four priority areas are as follows:

- **Priority One:** A serious threat to health / safety or permanent damage to the environment. Where a case is categorised as Priority One immediate action will be initiated to address the breach of control.
- **Priority Two:** Building work, which is unlikely to be given planning permission without substantial modification or unauthorised uses causing severe nuisance through noise, smells, congestion etc.
- **Priority Three:** A breach causing problems, which may be resolved by limited modification, or property whose condition adversely affects the amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood.
- **Priority Four:** Breaches of a minor nature raising minimal planning concerns.

4.2 Planning Enforcement statistics for the year are set out in the table below. In summary at the start of the year there were 146 cases on hand carried over from the year 2011/12. During the course of the period 803 new cases were received and a total of 810 cases investigated and closed, leaving a total of 139 outstanding cases which have been carried over into the following quarter.

Enforcement Investigations	TOTAL
Outstanding cases as at 31.03.12	146
New cases 1.04.12 to 31.03.13	803
Cases closed 1.04.12 to 31.03.13	810
Outstanding cases as at 1.04.13	139

Summary of enforcement caseload.

4.3 This year the Enforcement team have issued 2 Enforcement Notices. One has been complied with and the other Notice has been appealed and the outcome is awaited (see Item 6 of this Agenda). The Council

also served a pre-emptive Injunction to prevent the use of a piece of land by travellers.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 DCLG PS1 and PS2 planning statistics.

7. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 In reaching the attached recommendation regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies. Monitoring performance is consistent with the objectives of securing an efficient and effective planning service.