

Report of:	Meeting	Date	Item No.
Cllr David Henderson Chairman of the Planning Committee	Council	18 October 2012	10

PLANNING COMMITTEE: PERIODIC REPORT
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the current position on issues being dealt with by the Planning Committee.

2. Applications Determined by the Planning Committee

- 2.1 The scheme of delegation set out in the council's Constitution allows for the Head of Planning Services to determine all planning applications. However, that delegation is conditioned by paragraph 1. It allows for any Member to call a planning application to Committee for determination. To do so, the member must make the request within ten working days of the date of distribution of the weekly list of planning applications, upon which the planning application in question appeared.
- 2.2 Whilst most planning applications are decided under the delegated powers, applications of most strategic or local significance or which are or most likely to be controversial are brought to the Planning Committee for a decision. At present about 97% of all applications are decided under delegated powers.
- 2.3 Between 1 January 2012 and 30 September 2012, a total of 573 planning applications were received and 522 determined. These figures do not include the determination of applications for non-material amendments and requests for the discharge of conditions of which there were 24 and 33 applications respectively. Since January 2012 the Planning Committee have determined 17 planning applications representing 3% of all applications.
- 2.4 Whilst National Performance indicator for the speed in dealing with planning applications NI157, is no longer applicable, the government still places great emphasis on the need for the planning system to be streamlined and quick to avoid causing applicants costly delays. Performance is therefore, still measured against the old National Indicator NI157 and the Service Plan. NI157 requires 60% of major applications to be determined within 13 weeks, 65% of minor

applications to be determined within 8 weeks and 80% of other applications to be determined within 8 weeks. The service plan requires more stringent targets of 70% of major applications to be determined within 13 weeks, 80% of minor applications to be determined within 8 weeks and 90% of other applications to be determined within 8 weeks.

- 2.6** Performance for the period January 2012 to end of September 2012 for the determination of applications has, however, fallen such that only 63% of 'major' applications, 64% of 'minor' applications and 87% of 'other' applications have been determined within the requisite timescales.
- 2.7** This may reflect the restructure which came into effect this time last year and which saw the departure of one of the two team leaders who was not replaced, and the amalgamation of all officers into a single team under one Development Manager. It is also reflective of the fact that there have been 17 major or largescale major applications submitted since January which generate a significant amount of work due to their complexity. This includes 3 major retail development proposals. The team is also presently without a Development Manager in post as the Post holder left the council on 28 September and a replacement is not expected until early February or March. This will, inevitably and unfortunately have a further negative impact on performance.

3. Appeals

- 3.1** Between 1 January 2012 and 30 September 2012 a total of 28 applications were refused, out of a total of 522 decisions (5%). Of those refused 26 were delegated decisions. Between 1 January 2012 and 30 September 2012 there have been only 6 appeals lodged and 9 decided. 5 out of the 9 appeals were allowed (55%). This is, unfortunately above the Service Plan Target of not more than 30% allowed. This is partly down to uncertainties arising from the interpretation of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (referred to below). Of particular note is the fact that there have been no appeals allowed this year as a result of a member decision contrary to officer recommendation.

4. Other Matters for Information

4.3 Planning Fees

At present, the fees paid by applicants for planning permission are set by central Government and it is recognised that for the majority of local planning authorities the annual fee income does not cover the cost of providing the service. Whilst we are able to charge for certain non statutory services, such as pre application discussions, this does not make up the shortfall which, at present has to be made up by the general Council Tax payer via the Planning Services budget. In the last periodic report it was reported that the Government were proposing to introduce legislation during the summer to allow LPA's to set their own fee levels. It appears, however, that the Government have now abandoned or at least put on hold for the time being, the proposals as it

has recently been announced that legislation is shortly to go through Parliament which will propose a simple 15% across the board increase on the existing fees. At present it is not known when the new fee structure will come into force.

4.4 NPPF

In March, the Government published its new National Planning Policy Framework which is a single and intentionally relatively short document setting out its planning policies. The document replaced a suite of previously used planning policy guidance contained in over 24 individual Planning Policy Statements. The main thrust of the document is pro growth and for the presumption to be in favour of sustainable development. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government considers that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

The document stresses the need to have up to date local plans otherwise sustainable development should be granted unless any adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies contained in the NPPF.

4.5 Affordable Housing

The planning team continues to work with our partners to encourage the provision of affordable housing, and since 1 January 2012 a total of 63 Affordable homes have been completed across the Borough. For the financial year April 2011 – March 2012 a total of 96 affordable homes were delivered exceeding the target of 65 by 31. So far this year planning permission has been granted for 18 affordable dwellings on land at Hall Lane, Great Ecclestone and an application for 20 affordable dwellings on land off Garstang Road, Bowgreave is under consideration.

5. In accordance with Procedure Rule 11.3, any Member of Council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or any issue which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with Procedure Rules 11.5.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	All matters raised in this report are funded from existing budgets
Legal	All actions referred to in this report are carried out under existing planning legislation
Community Safety	No direct implications
Equality and Diversity	No direct implications
Sustainability	No direct implications
Health and Safety	No direct implications
Risk Management	No direct implications
Asset Management	No direct implications
Climate Change	No direct implications

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List of Background Papers:		
Name of Document	Date	Where available for inspection
n/a		

LIST OF APPENDICES

None

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