

**Draft Development Control Improvement Plan**

**20 November 2008**

**Background**

This Plan has been prepared with the aim of improving Waverley's performance in determining planning applications.

**Corporate Plan aspirations**

The Council's Corporate Plan has an aspiration to achieve a level of performance that places Waverley among the top 25% of Councils in England for the time taken to make decisions on planning applications by 2011/ Accordingly targets have been set for the following three years as set out below..

<b>PI Code</b>	<b>PI Description</b>	<b>2007/08 full year outturn</b>	<b>2008/09 Target</b>	<b>2009/10 Target</b>	<b>2010/11 Target</b>
NI 157	Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for 'major', 'minor' and 'other' application types	Major 51.16% Minor 58.16% Other 78.74%	Major 60% Minor 65% Other 80%	Major 70% Minor 75% Other 90%	Major 82% Minor 85% Other 95%

**Background**

Historically Waverley's performance has been mixed.

An issue which Waverley has only recently addressed is inconsistent performance in the registration of applications with a regular backlog of applications waiting registration. This has meant that Planning Officers have often not received new applications to consider until very late in the time period.

### **Reasons for recent decline in performance**

Performance worsened significantly during the summer for a number of reasons. These can be summarised as follows:

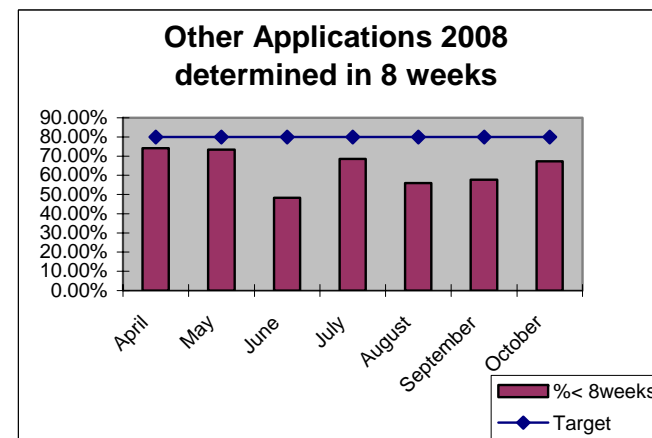
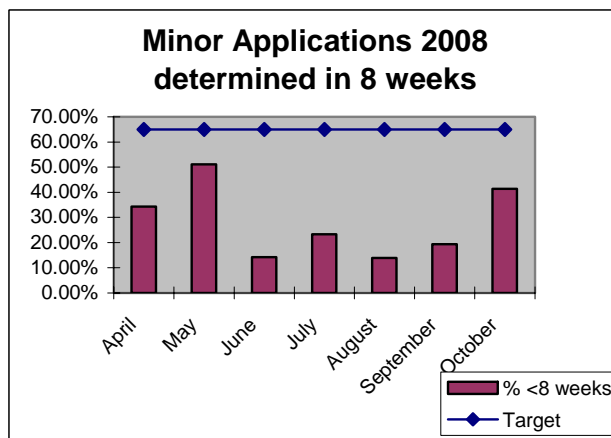
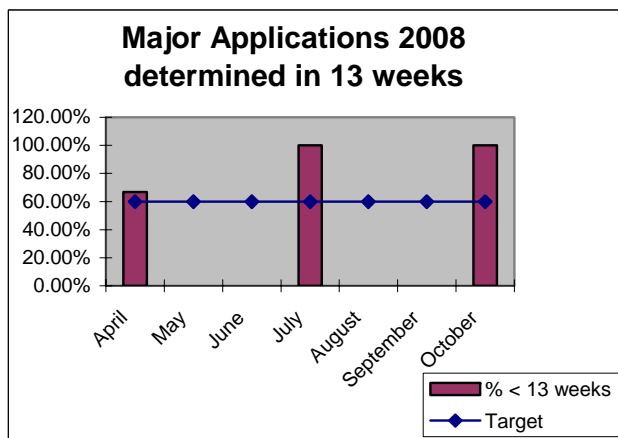
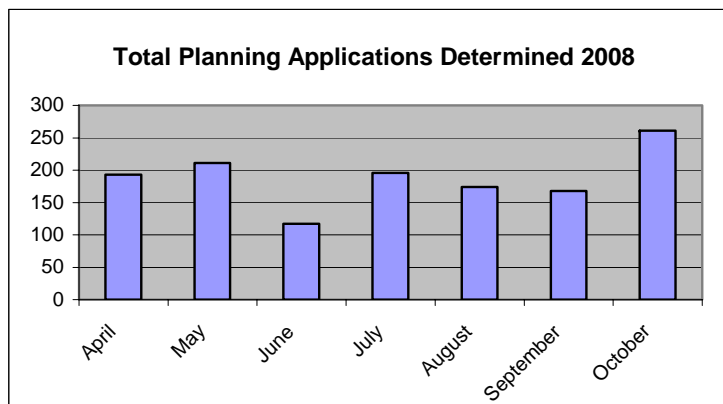
- Lag effect of severe delays in registration
- Key personnel involved in Godalming Key Site inquiry
- Receipt of large number of applications prior to introduction of infrastructure tariff
- Resource impact of handling East Street, Farnham and Dunsfold Settlement planning applications
- Implementation of 1APP planning application system
- Vacant posts
- Introduction of Vanguard diverted resources from determining applications to pre application discussions

During the late summer Officers focussed on addressing the backlog of applications such that by the end of October 2008 applications were normally being registered within 5 days on receipt. The downside in the short term is that in the last quarter (April – September 2008) case officers have received a spike of applications for assessment which were near and often beyond the target determination period. This has had very significant effect on performance.

### **Signs of improvement**

Encouragingly performance in October 2008 has improved (both in terms of applications determined and the speed of decision making) as the table below shows.

### Total applications Determined April – October 2008



### Speed of Determination April – October 2008

A range of improvements have been put in place in recent months notably restructuring of the service, filling of key posts (notably Development Control Manager and Area Team Leader posts) and introduction of a performance culture which had previously been inconsistently applied.

Attached is a draft Plan which sets out those improvements that were put in place in the summer together with additional actions to ensure that improvement continues.

Speed in determining applications is only one element of a quality Planning Service. Improvement Plans will be developed in the coming months covering the following areas:

- Improving appeal performance
- Improving customer service

Matthew Evans  
Head of Planning Services  
November 2008

### Improvement Outcome 1: Quicker Decisions to Improve Customer Service

Action No	Action	Lead Officer	Measurable outcomes / outputs	Target Date	Current Position	Outstanding Actions
1	Restructure of Development Control Service with two multi functional area based teams	DCM	New Teams in place Increased Management time for Area Team Leaders Flexible approach to tasks and responsibilities (inc revised Job Descriptions)	1 February 2009	New Structure in place	Completion Revised Job Descriptions for all Development Control staff
2	Speed registration of planning applications improved	DCM	100% applications registered within 5 working days (to include Vanguarding where appropriate)	1 January 2008	New team structure in place Direct management of registration by Devpt Control Area team leaders Backlog now removed (1 October 2008) Registration now normally within 5 days	Imbed new team structure Training for Officers Checklist in place and communicated to regular customers Registrations surgery for applicants starting December 2008
3	Introduce Development Management approach to relevant applications	DCM	Procedure in place All staff received training Member seminar completed	June 2009		All

<b>Action No</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Measurable outcomes / outputs</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Current Position</b>	<b>Outstanding Actions</b>
4	Maintain staff levels handling planning applications	DCM	Fill one vacant post Review need for filling other vacancies in light of current workloads	January 2009	Post advertised and candidates short listed	Monthly review of workloads (inc appeals)
5	Employ temporary resources to deal with periodic peaks in work load	HoPS	Maintain NATIONAL AND LOCAL INDICATOR performance standards irrespective of workloads			Ongoing .
6	Ensure effective use of pre application discussions	DCM	Implement pre application advice charging system Adoption and communication of checklist and revised guidance for pre application discussions	1 January 2009	Pre application charging agreed at Executive April 2008	Launch of charging regime 1 January 2009 Protocols in place 1 December 2008
7	Early and informed responses from consultees on planning applications	DCM	Agreement of protocol with consultees	1 January 2009	Discussions with consultees during summer –	Preparation of protocol
8	Imbed performance culture into Development Control Service	All Managers	Regularly reporting of performance management information to all Managers	1 January 2009	Core Performance information now reported to Planning Service Managers	Further Review of information needs required

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9	Regular monitoring of staff workloads at Team Meetings	Area Team Leaders	Team and Individual Performance in line with National and Local Indicators			<b>Complete</b> and ongoing
10	Agree a protocol with targets to guide completion of Section 106 agreements	DCM/ Legal Services Manager	Completion of protocol / service level agreement with Legal Services	1 February 2009		To be agreed
11	Efficient issuing of Decision Notices	Area Team Leaders	Delegated: Decision Notice issues on day signed off Committee: Decision Notice issued day after Committee (or completion of legal agreement)	January 2009		Procedure to be prepared
12	Revisions of Scheme of Delegation	HoPS	Minor revisions to avoid non controversial applications unnecessarily being considered at Committee	December 2008	Report prepared for Executive December 2008	Awaiting agreement
13	Development Control Charter	DCM	Set out Clear standards of service	1 April 2009		Charter to be agreed
14	Benchmarking of resources	BSO	Benchmarking with other planning services Clear understanding of costs of service	1 April 2009		Some historic information only
15	Review IT systems	BSO	IT systems support efficient determination of planning	1 February 2009		Set up working group

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			applications			of Officers
16	Review Vanguard system	BSO	Assessment of whether Vanguard is meeting customer needs	1 September 2009		Agree review programme

DCM Development Control Manager  
HoPS Head of Planning Services  
BSO – Business Support Officer