



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Finance and Performance Scrutiny

10 November 2025

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Planning Service Review 2024/25

Report of the Assistant Director Planning and Regeneration

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To update members on the performance of the planning service.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.
- 2.2 That Members acknowledge the positive planning performance and notable achievements, the improvement in retention and recruitment across the service and the current and forthcoming challenges with regards to planning appeals.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 The Planning Service forms part of the Community Services Directorate. It includes the work areas development management, planning enforcement, regeneration/economic development, conservation/heritage and planning policy. This report sets out the key activities carried out by the service, how it is performing against defined indicators and the budget position.

4. Service overview

- 4.1 The service is structured to work as three teams reporting to the Assistant Director Planning and Regeneration and Director of Community Services (Interim).

Development Management

- 4.2 Development Management continues to receive a good mix of application types. In 2024/25 the service received 1400 (down from 1473 in 2023/24) applications of all types. This included 52 (up from 36 in 2023/24) applications for major developments, including 34 (up from 20 in 2023/24) applications for major residential development.
- 4.3 In June 2024, Planning Committee resolved to grant permission for up to 1,500 dwellings across two planning applications that form the majority of the Earl Shilton Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE). The S106 agreement is ongoing and expecting to be signed by the end of December 2025. The ongoing application for the Barwell Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) for 2,500 dwellings is expected to be reported back to Planning Committee for a further resolution within this current financial year.
- 4.4 Planning enforcement continues its proactive approach to enforcement. Complaints about the service have continued to reduce with a more focused timely response on making a decision as to whether to take enforcement action.

Regeneration and Economic Development

- 4.5 The Council's Economic Development and Regeneration Team supports regeneration and economic regeneration in the borough.
- 4.6 The Hinckley Public Realm Masterplan includes proposals for a Wayfinding Strategy and we are working on the implementation of the strategy, with installation of wayfinding items (signage) using funds available through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Hinckley Area Committee and Section 106 monies. A Hinckley Town Centre Masterplan, to identify key sites within the town centre and determine their feasibility for regeneration has been completed, through consultants, including a refresh of the Town Centre Vision. The Vision has received Member endorsement, and the Masterplan will form part of the Local Plan evidence base at its next stage of consultation in Spring 2026.
- 4.7 The Economic Development and Regeneration Team promotes economic well-being for all local businesses and residents across the whole of the borough by delivering against the aims and objectives of the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy 2021-2025. Work has commenced on the work towards a new Economic Regeneration Strategy 2026-2030 with a business intelligence survey undertaken early 2025. Delivery is through working in partnership with local businesses, education establishments and forums to encourage networking, joint initiatives and to explore funding and training opportunities.

- 4.8 The Hinckley and Bosworth Employment and Skills Taskforce continues to influence and drive the employment and skills agenda in the borough. The action plan has recently been updated along the 4 key themes of: Information Data & Governance, Education links, Long term unemployed and Communications. The Council has supported employment and skills initiatives and events such as the Career Speed Networking and TeenTech events at Mira Technology Institute (MTI). Officers have attended 13 school careers events engaging with 760 young people to showcase careers available in local government. The Council also continues to work with the Hinckley Job Centre in promoting local recruitment events at the Hinckley Hub.
- 4.9 Communication to businesses continues through the Councils monthly business newsletter signposting businesses to the latest business support, events, news and grant funding information. Following the success of the first Hinckley & Bosworth Business Network event the well-attended events have continued on a 6-month basis covering key topical content and networking.
- 4.10 HBBC successfully spent the full UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 2022-25 allocation of £2,600,011 delivering 33 projects across the borough including warm welcomes, welfare support, mobile community hub, marketing, climate change, regenerating spaces, active travel, net zero tourism. improvements to town centres, heritage building improvement grants, feasibility studies, taste the place, employment hub, BEAM, RCC HIRE project, Leicestershire Business Advice Service, business prosperity grant, older adult wellness, workplace wellness, youth activator, food poverty, church walk improvements, Hinckley Museum, defibrillators and property surveys.
- 4.11 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2023-2025 £400k capital project funding was fully spent supporting 33 projects ranging from solar installation, improved pathways, energy efficiency improvements and equipment purchases.
- 4.12 The UKSPF 2025-26 HBBC allocation totals £850,583 and is being delivered through 22 projects across the borough through funded posts and a selection of revenue and capital projects. For the REPF HBBC has been awarded £120,261 capital-only funding for the period 2025-2026, following a grant application process the fund is looking to support 10 projects supporting local enterprise and community organisations.
- 4.13 The service provides a holistic and joined up approach to the management of the borough's heritage often working in collaboration with other council departments and local stakeholders. The Heritage Strategy provides the

vision and key aims and objectives to guide conservation and heritage activities in the borough, with this updated through consultation earlier this summer and subsequent Member endorsement with a new working period of 2025-2029.

Strategic Development

- 4.14 The council continue to work in partnership with all the neighbouring authorities across Leicester and Leicestershire, including partners such as Homes England and Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership (LLBSP). through the Strategic Planning Group and Member Advisory Group. A key focus of the partnership continues to be on delivering key priorities within the current Strategic Growth Plan and preparing strategic evidence to support these priorities alongside considering the next steps in strategic cross-boundary planning moving forward and with new Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) to be introduced in 2026. As part of the partnership working, a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) relating to a proposed housing and employment distribution regarding Leicester City's declared unmet need was prepared. The SoCG provided a mechanism to divide the declared unmet need between partner authorities and also aid compliance with the statutory Duty to Cooperate. Compliance with the Duty to Cooperate is required to be demonstrated at a Local Plan examination to ensure a plan can be found sound. Hinckley and Bosworth signed up the SoCG at the Council meeting in January 2024 and with the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) in the process of being updated to reflect updated housing need across the County.
- 4.15 Following a period of uncertainty in relation to national and cross-boundary planning matters in 2023, a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) was agreed and published in February 2024. This set out a new timetable for preparation of the Local Plan with an aim of submission of the plan for Examination by 30 June 2025 which was the previous nationally prescribed deadline. The Regulation 18 consultation took place between 31 July and 27 September 2024 at the same time as a Government consultation on the national planning system (see below).
- 4.16 Following the general election in July 2024 the new Labour Government outlined that changes to the national planning system would be announced shortly. On 30 July 2024 the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced a consultation on sweeping changes to the NPPF and a proposed new Standard Housing Method for calculating housing need. The consultation on proposed changes to the planning system ran from 30 July until 24 September 2024. This was concluded, with a new NPPF and new standard housing method (housing target) published in December 2024.
- 4.17 Following publication of the new NPPF and new standard housing method in December 2024, this set a new housing target for the borough at 50% higher than previous targets, moving the starting point for housing need from 432 dwellings per annum (dpa) to now 663dpa. This starting point is prior to accommodating any unmet need within the housing market area and prior to

accommodating a suitable buffer. As a result of this change in housing target, the Council has to revisit the previous Reg 18 draft Local Plan. This is now currently out for consultation from 17 October 2025 to 28 November 2025 as a second stage. The revised Local Development Scheme proposes a further consultation, at Regulation 19 stage, in Spring 2026, prior to submission to MHCLG by December 2026.

- 4.18 Development of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) in the borough continues to be a significant area of work within the Policy team, with seven made Neighbourhood Plans in the Borough. In terms of specific NDP activity, Market Bosworth's review NDP has progressed through Examination and referendum and was made in July 2025, whilst Thornton, Bagworth and Stanton under Bardonia have formally submitted their Plan and this is currently at Examination.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

- 4.19 Following the high staff turnover in 2021/22, recruitment and retention have been significantly more stable since 2022/23. Of the previous vacant posts, these have mainly since been filled with permanent staff, including replacing previous long term agency posts.

The following permanent recruitment posts have been made:

- November 2024 - Planning Manager – Development Management
- April 2025 - 2 Planning Officers, 1x Technical Planning Assistant,
- May 2025 - Planning Enforcement Team Leader
- November 2025 – Development Management Team Leader

The remaining agency cover in Development Management and Planning Enforcement will be 0.5FTE in Development Management together with 1FTE external consultant cover.

- 4.20 In Planning Policy and Economic Development and Regeneration the Major Projects Manager retired in June 2024, with this role backfilled with 2 existing staff acting up to cover these responsibilities, and a new Economic Regeneration and Projects Officer post created and filled in March 2025. In Planning Policy, a Planning Policy Assistant was recruited through a national graduate scheme in June 2024. The Principal Planning Policy Officer left the Council in November 2024 and this is being backfilled by two existing staff acting up to cover these responsibilities. The Planning Policy Team currently have one member of staff on a career break following maternity leave, with this backfilled with agency staff.
- 4.21 Recruitment to planning teams remains a national issue, not just an issue affecting Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council. Elsewhere in Leicestershire other Local Planning Authorities are having to use agency interim staff to fill vacancies at a higher percentage of teams than that for us, particular for higher level senior and team leader posts. Recent success in recruiting to permanent posts across the teams reflects very well on the Council and goes

against the national tide of recruitment. The financial implications reflect the positive impact on the budget of the move away from the use of agency staff with a £251,621 saving in 2024/25 when compared to the previous year.

- 4.22 The team have also positively used apprenticeships, with three members of the planning service currently enrolled in apprenticeship graduate degree courses.

5. Performance

Planning Applications

- 5.1 In 2024/25 1274 applications of all types were determined, down from 1366 in 2023/24, but up from 1272 in 2022/23 and 856 in 2021/22. Planning Committee made decisions on 50 applications (up from 45 for 2023/24). Of these 43 were determined in accordance with the officer recommendation.
- 5.2 The speed of determining planning application continues to be a key performance indicator for the service. Under-performance can lead to government intervention by removing decision-making powers from local planning authorities. The speed measure is monitored on a quarterly basis for a rolling single year period. Performance for the previous financial year to March 2025 is 81% for major applications (against a target of 60%) and 84% for minor applications (against a target of 70%). As recently as March 2023, the performance for minor applications was as low as 48% on a rolling two-year basis.

Minor application performance

- 5.3 Since April 2022 performance for minor applications has increased significantly and is reflected in continuing and stable performance on a rolling annual basis. The performance increase since early 2022 is demonstrated on the graph below:

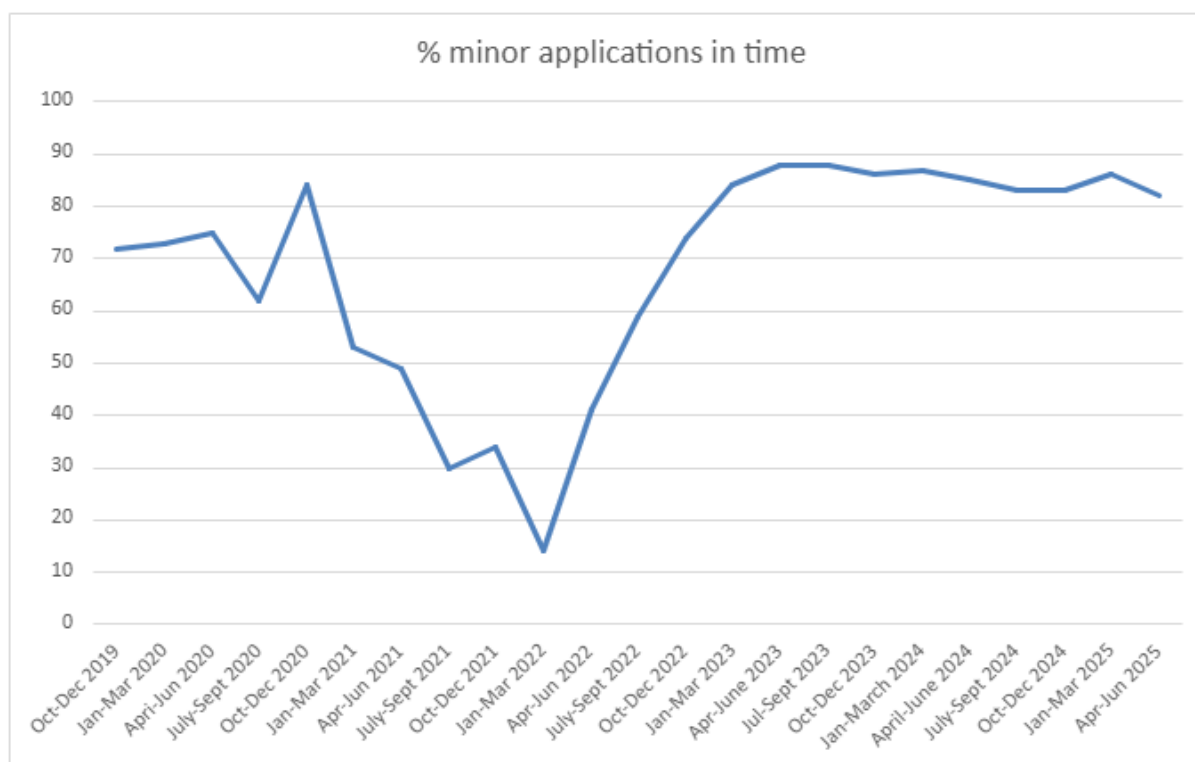


Figure 1: planning application performance – minor applications (October 2019 to June 2025)

- 5.4 Members will be aware that the council has faced the risk of designation for performance on minor applications.
- 5.5 The upturn in performance since 2022 has meant that whilst a further letter was received in January 2024 requesting an explanation of performance below Government targets, the Council has not been designated. Further, rolling annual performance is currently at 84% for minors and 81% for majors, both significantly above Government thresholds. The Council is therefore no longer at risk for designation based on planning performance for speed of processing planning applications.

Planning Appeals

- 5.6 Planning appeal performance remains a key requirement of government. Under-performance can lead to government intervention by removing decision-making powers from local planning authorities. The government measures performance at appeal against all decisions over a rolling 2 year period. No more than 10% of all decisions should be overturned at appeal. It should be noted that at the end of the 2 year period there is a further 9 months to take account of an applications still in the appeal system which for each rolling period is up to the 31st December. The figures set out below in Table 3 therefore have the ability to increase between now and December 2025.

Application Type	National Indicator	Performance
Major Applications	10%	10.0%
Non Major Applications	10%	0.8%

Table 2: Quality of decision making (1 October 2022 to 30 September 2024)

- 5.7 Performance on Majors of 10.0% (down from 12.1% to March 2023) was on the basis that of the 90 major applications determined between October 2022 and September 2024, 11 were appealed and of these 9 were allowed. The 9 appeals allowed was the 8th highest nationally over this period. Of those with a higher number of allowed appeals, only two others are not larger unitary authorities (Cherwell and Wychavon), although both of these processed more applications within the same timeframe (115 and 114 respectively vs 90).
- 5.8 Performance on minors was 0.8% (up from 0.7% to March 2023) on the basis that of the 1233 minor applications determined, 45 were appealed and of these only 10 were allowed. The Council is therefore significantly below the 10% which is the level at which the government would intervene in relation to minor and other applications.
- 5.9 The Council received a letter from MHCLG in March 2025 requesting information as to why performance on quality of decision making for major applications (appeals performance) was above the 10% threshold (also following the same in February 2024). The Council responded in April 2025, outlining the reasons for and raising queries for a number of appeals allowed to justify the performance figure being below 10%, proposing that a more accurate figure instead should be 7.6% when taking into account exceptional circumstances around four of the allowed appeals. The Council was not designated at the time
- 5.10 A separate report on planning appeals is being presented to Scrutiny Commission on 18th December 2025.

Enforcement

- 5.11 Last year (to 31 March 2025), 271 (up from 270 in 2023/24 and 222 in 2022/23) planning enforcement cases were received. During the year the enforcement team closed 284 (down slightly from 286 in 2023/24 and up from 244 in 2022/23) cases.
- 5.12 Where a breach of planning control is identified officer's work to remedy the breach. The serving of an enforcement notice is always the last resort. During 2024/25, 13 (up from 10) notices (all types) were served.

Strategic Planning

- 5.13 The Council continues to work with other Leicestershire authorities through the Strategic Planning Group and Members Advisory Group on strategic

planning matters within the housing market area. It also works with local planning authorities and the local highway authority in Warwickshire on planning matters of cross boundary relevance and with key statutory consultees such as Leicestershire County Council and Homes England on specific schemes and planning applications.

Housing Tests

- 5.14 The Government requires that Councils maintain a 5 year supply of housing sites. At present the Council can demonstrate a 3.89 years' supply of deliverable housing sites. This is a significant material consideration in all residential planning applications and appeals. This is a decrease from previously being able to demonstrate a 5yr housing land supply, and is the result of the change in standard housing method, with a current requirement of 663 dwellings per year. This increase in target has resulted directly in the change to the five year supply, with now additional permissions required to meet needs. We continue to work with developers to ensure that sites that are permitted are built out within a timely manner in order to contribute to the Council's five year supply.
- 5.15 The Housing Delivery Test (HDT) is an annual measurement of housing delivery in the area and is published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The HDT is a calculation of the number of houses delivered in an area over the past three years divided by the target number of houses over that same period, expressed as a percentage.
- 5.16 As of 2023 (most recent figures, published December 2024) the Government assessed that the Council had a delivery rate of 132%. This is above any threshold set and passes the Housing Delivery Test.

6. Future Challenges

- Delivering our major schemes and site allocations particularly the SUEs
- Meeting a 5-year housing land supply
- Maintaining the Housing Delivery Tests
- Progressing the Local Plan through examination and adoption
- Retention and recruitment of staff
- Continue to improve planning application and significantly improve appeal performance to avoid intervention from government.

7. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

7.1 Open

8. Financial implications [CS]

- 8.1 In 2024/25, the total planning application income was £1,100,477 compared to a budget of £1,183,000 which resulted in an income shortfall of £82,523. This compares to the previous year when there was a budgeted income target of £1,008,000 and the actual amount received was £1,038,546.

- 8.2 In 2024/25, the Council also received additional sources of income through its pre-application advice service. A total of £88,953 was received against a target of £58,530. In addition to pre-application advice, the Council introduced Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) for very large and complex applications. This generated a further £19,317 against a budget of £34,000.
- 8.3 Legal cost arising from planning appeals in 2024/25 totalled £50,721 with a budget of £145,790 resulting in an underspend of £95,069.
- 8.4 In 2024/25, Development control spent £497,985 on agency staff which made a staffing overspend of £63,055. Compared to 2023/24, this is a reduction in expenditure of £251,621 as £749,606 was spent on agency and consultants in 2023/24.
- 8.5 The use of agency interim staff and recruitment to planning teams is still an issue although some posts have now been filled. Financial Implications arising from this have been reflected in the corporate monitoring which is presented to this committee on a quarterly basis.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 Set out in the report.

10. Corporate Plan implications

- 10.1 The planning service contributes to all three priorities of the Corporate Plan, helping People stay healthy and reducing crime; improving Places through improved quality of homes, affordable housing, urban design and heritage facilities; and by delivering Prosperity by supporting town centre regeneration, tourism and economic growth.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 None

12. Risk implications

- 12.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.
- 12.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.
- 12.3 The following significant risks associated with these report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks		
Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
DLS.19 - Recruitment & retention of staff Failure to recruit & retain staff leads to failure to maintain staffing levels within Development Services to deal with works required and increases use of agency staff with associated higher costs	Appointment of recruitment consultants Supporting Officers Careers through training and modern apprenticeships Benchmarking against surrounding authorities to ensure competitiveness.	Chris Brown
DLS.44 - Five year housing land supply Failure leads to speculative unplanned housing developments plus additional costs incurred due to planning appeal process	The council to maintain a 5YHLS. All Members have received training and further briefing to this effect. SLT and officers are working closely with Members to plan a positive way forward to address this.	Chris Brown
DLS.51 Housing Delivery Test	MHCLG published Housing Delivery Test results in December 2024 for a period up to 2023. The result for the Council is 132%, up from 89%, and above the threshold of 95% therefore passing the HDT.	Chris Brown
Local Plan Delivery of a Local Plan. The current Government threshold for submission of Local Plans to the Secretary of State under the current system is by December 2026	A new, second stage of Regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultation is underway to 28th November 2025. This follows a previous Reg 18 consultation in summer 2024. A Regulation 19 consultation will follow in Spring 2026 and submission by December 2026.	Chris Brown

14. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 14.1 The planning services takes account of equality and rural issues as part of all the decisions taken.

15. Climate implications

- 15.1 The planning service considers the climate impact of all decisions it takes in accordance with the Council's strategy and Government Policy and Guidance.

16. Corporate implications

- 16.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

Background papers: None

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