

**REPORT FOR DECISION**

Agenda Item	
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**MEETING:** PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 14 DECEMBER 2004

**SUBJECT:** DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PERFORMANCE STATISTICS

**REPORT FROM:** BOROUGH PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

**CONTACT OFFICER:** TOM MITCHELL, DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

**TYPE OF DECISION:** Council

**REPORT STATUS:** For Publication

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

The report sets down the statistical performance for decision making within Development Control.

**OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):**

The Committee is recommended to note the information and endorse a continuing focus on the speed of decision making for all planning applications.

**IMPLICATIONS -**

**Financial Implications and Risk Considerations** N/A

**Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:**

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes  No

Are there any legal implications? No (see paragraph .....)  
**Considered by Monitoring Officer:** Yes  Comments

**Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:** N/A

**Staffing/ICT/Property:**

**Wards Affected:** All

**Scrutiny Interest:** N/A

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**TRACKING/PROCESS**

**DIRECTOR:**

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Panel	Executive	Committee	Council

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**1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The performance of the Council in terms of the Development Control function is subject to considerable scrutiny through the Best Value Performance Indicator 109 which measures the speed of decision making for 3 categories of application – Major (109a), Minor (109b) and Other (109c) (which includes house extensions).
- 1.2 The last of these categories is also included within the suite of Local Priority Indicators.
- 1.3 The speed of decision making only measures the quantitative aspects of the service and is not necessarily a true measure of the quality of the service but it is nonetheless used to assess the Council and for the past 2 years has been used to decide how much Planning Delivery Grant has been made available to the Council. It is also going to be used to inform this current year's allocation. This aspect of the service is therefore an important consideration.
- 1.4 The importance of a speedy and efficient service is however also linked to good standards of customer service and applicants should expect a reasonable prompt determination of their planning application.
- 1.5 The statistics for development control are submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on a quarterly basis and are published regularly.

## 2.0 APPLICATION CASELOAD

- 2.1 Nationally there has been a significant rise in the number of planning applications and this has been particularly so in Bury. In 2003/4 we received 1772 applications and for the first half of 2004/5 we have received 991 – an increase of 15% (pro rata).
- 2.2 The attached table (table A) indicates the general rise in application numbers over time. It will be noticed from this same table that the number of decision in the third quarter of 2003/4 was low due to staffing problems at that time but that this was complemented by a surge in applications being determined during the second quarter of 2004/5.
- 2.3 During the period the staff establishment has changed little. However, during the summer and autumn there were staffing issues in both professional and administrative support. Since October 2003 we have had 2 additional posts – The Development Manager and a Planning Officer, intended to support performance issues.

## 3.0 SPEED OF DECISIONS

- 3.1 The attached table (Table B) indicates the performance in general terms for all applications decided within 8 weeks. There has been a distinctive push to improve performance and the current BVPI figures for the first half of 2004/5 are very encouraging (see below).
- 3.2 Currently, all 3 categories of application are being decided at or above the Government targets.
- 3.3 The level of performance in respect of Committee decisions are understandably below the set targets. Whilst this can be justified in terms of the democratic process and the addressing of more complex issues it does give a strong message of support for the recent changes to the delegation scheme.

	Targets for 2004/5	Current National averages	2002/3 (full year)		2003/4 (full year)		Apr-Sept 2004	
				%		%	No.	%
Major applications determined within 13 weeks (BVPI 109a)	60%	53%		36.6		34.8	34	65
Minor applications determined within 8 weeks (BVPI 109b)	65%	66%		59.5		52.5	229	66
Other applications determined within 8 weeks (BVPI 109c) (this is also a Local Priority Indicator)	80% (National and Local)	82%		72.3		70.9	807	83
% of Delegated decisions within 8				77.7		73.8	961	85..7

weeks								
% of Committee decisions within 8 weeks				11.7		22.7	115	17.4

3.4 The table below indicates that the percentage of all decisions which have been delegated to officers, has crept upwards but this is wholly in line with the general trend and consistent with a national average of 87%. The average within Greater Manchester is above this level.

3.5 The table below also indicates that a significant percentage of applications are now being refused. The current national average of applications approved is 84%.

3.6 The table also illustrates the surge in decision making this municipal year

	2002/3 (full year)	2003/4 (full year)	Apr-Sept 2004
% Approved	85.2	83.1	77.2
% Refused	14.8	16.9	21
% Delegated	84.9	83.1	89
Total numbers	1520	1462	1070

#### 4.0 GOVERNMENT STANDARDS

4.1 The Government have recently indicated that for the coming year special standards will be imposed upon Councils who have not achieved a given speed of decision making in each of the 3 categories. The given levels required to have been met are:

Major applications 40% within 13 weeks (BVPI 109a target 60%)

Minor applications 50% within 8 weeks (BVPI 109b target 65%)

Other applications 65% within 8 weeks (BVPI 109c target 80%)

4.2 The period for assessing performance has been fixed as the year ending June 2004 and during this time Bury's performance figure for Major applications fell below the threshold at 39%. The primary reason for this low level of performance is that the majority of major applications are for residential development and invariably involve a s106 agreement. The process and legal complexities of these agreements make it very difficult to determine applications within the required time scale.

4.3 In respect of the other 2 categories we achieved the required level.

4.4 For 2005/6 the Council has been set a standard for the determination of major commercial and industrial applications within 13 weeks of 57%. Based on current performance levels this is considered to be an achievable target, particular for non residential applications. For the last quarter the performance figure was 62% of all major applications decided in less than 13 weeks and in respect of commercial and industrial proposals the figure was 75%. There is however a need to be diligent and ensure that the standards can be met over the next 12 months.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Performance of decision making is a major factor in external views of the service and good performance is key to both customer care standards and recognition from the ODPM and other inspection regimes.
- 5.2 The current performance levels are at or above required standards. These levels have been achieved by additional resources, but also be a sustained focus on performance issues by all staff. This focus will need to be maintained and improved over time in order to secure further resources and recognition from both the ODPM and the Audit Commission.

**BRIAN DANIEL  
BOROUGH PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

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### **List of Background Papers:-**

None

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TABLE 1

**Number of planning applications and decisions  
1999/2000 to 2004/05**

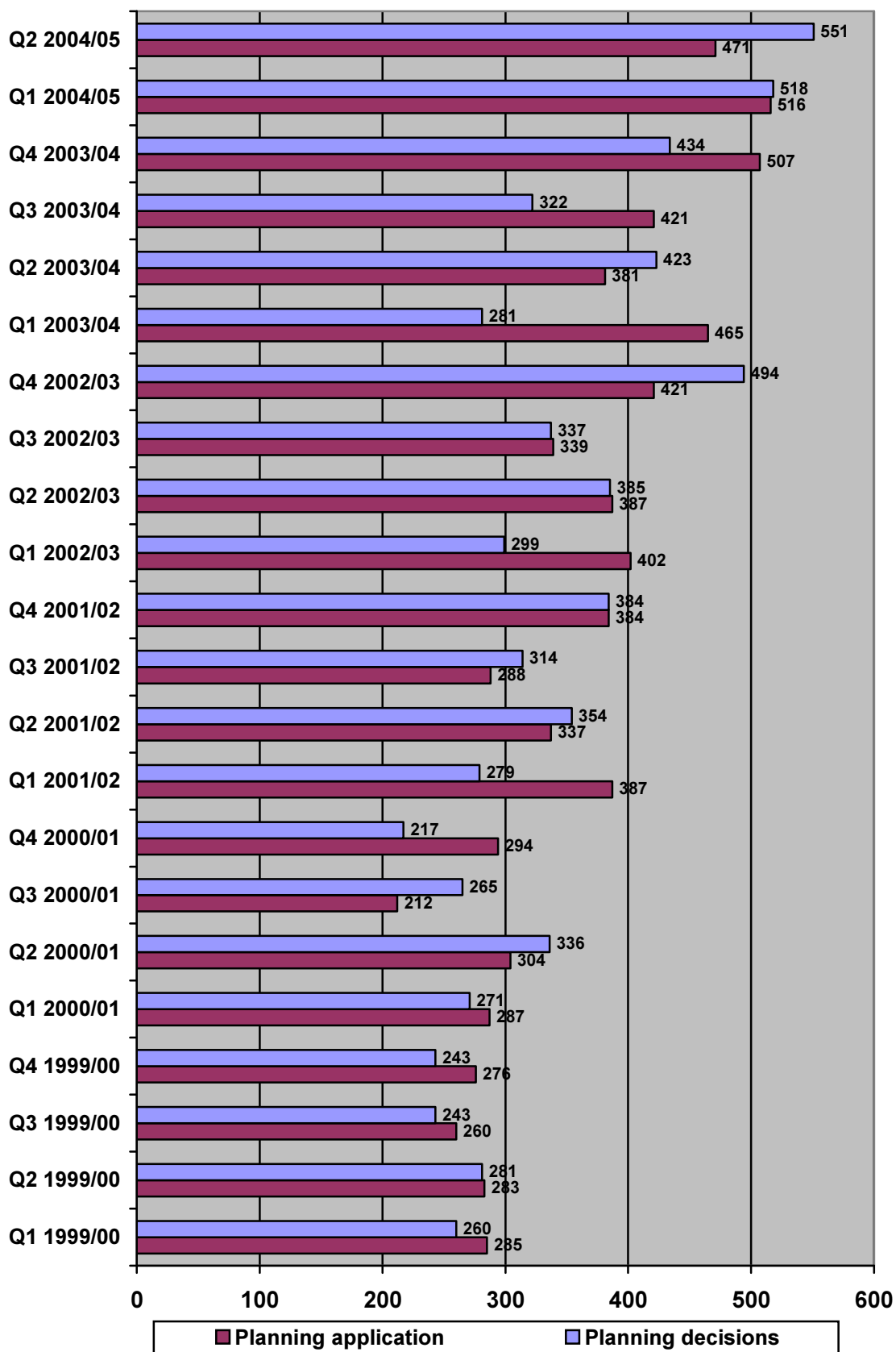


TABLE 2

Percentage of decisions within 8 weeks  
1999/2000 to 2004/05

