

Local Members
N/A

Planning Committee – 08 June 2023

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Planning, Policy and Development Control Team Full Year Report

Purpose of the Report

This report is to inform the Planning Committee about our planning policymaking and planning development control activities and related matters at the end of 2022-2023.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Summary

Planning policy-making performance

We are continuing to monitor our Mineral and Waste Local Plans and we have now published our latest [Annual Monitoring Report \(AMR\)](#).

Overall, the AMR concluded that there was no immediate need to update our Minerals or Waste Local Plans.

Work on preparing for the review of our local plans remains on hold.

Planning development control performance – 2022-23

- a) Speed - major development decisions
94% (17 out of 18)
- b) Quality – major development decisions overturned at appeal
Nil (0 out of 18)
- c) Speed - County Council's 'non-major development' decisions
100% (2 out of 2)
- d) Speed - County Council's major development decisions
100% (1 out of 1)

- e) Delegated decisions
81% (17 out of 21)

Staff and Caseload

Staff changes during 2022-23 included: the return to full-time working of Team Leader who had been absent due to long-covid is now back working full time; the continued casual employment of a former member of the team; the replacement and training of our Planning Information Officer (our Planning Information Team Leader has recently retired (April 2023)); the retirement of a Senior Planning Officer and the training of a Planning, Policy and Enabling Officer to pick up some of the officer's work.

Notwithstanding, we have continued to maintain our good performance as can be demonstrated by the caseload comparison summarised below:

- the number of minerals and waste applications determined was the same as last year and down compared to the year before that.
- the number of other approvals was significantly higher than in the previous two years.
- the overall total number of cases determined was higher than in the previous two years.

Background

We report our policymaking and development control activities halfway through and at the end of each financial year. This is our end of year report for 2022-23.

Planning policy-making performance

We have recently published our latest [Annual Monitoring Report](#) (AMR) for the period April 2021 to March 2022. The findings of the AMR are as follows:

Minerals: The 10-year average sales of sand and gravel from Staffordshire sites is 4.531 million tonnes. This is less than the level of provision made under Policy 1 of the Minerals Local Plan (MLP) i.e., 5 million tonnes of sand and gravel per annum, used to assess the allocation of additional sand and gravel resources to meet needs up to the end of 2030. Using the MLP level of provision of 5 million tonnes per annum would mean the landbank of permitted reserves as of 1 January 2021 would last for 12.3 years. This exceeds the target of maintaining a 7-year landbank.

As of 31 March 2023, of the 11 extension sites and the area of search allocated in the MLP, 7 extension sites and a site in an area of search have now been granted planning permission or approved subject to the completion of Section 106 Legal Agreements. A further 2 sites are the subject to current applications which are yet to be determined.

Demand for sand and gravel remains in line with planned provision although the impact of the construction of HS2 on sales and reserves of construction aggregates is being monitored.

Waste: The number of waste related planning applications during the reporting period was small, and not all planning applications relating to waste treatment facilities lead to an increase in treatment capacity, or an increase in the number of operational sites. However, data from planning applications does show that there was an overall increase in treatment capacity. It is reasonable to conclude that waste treatment capacity is keeping pace with production; we are maintaining net self-sufficiency for waste management within the Plan area; and the criteria-based policies for locating waste sites are working.

The Waste Local Plan (WLP) was reviewed in 2018 and since then there have been no significant changes. The WLP policies are working as intended, the targets are being met on time or ahead of schedule, and there have been no significant changes to national waste planning policy, strategic priorities, or local circumstances.

Overall, the AMR concluded that there was no immediate need to update our local plans. Consequently, work on preparing for the review of our local plans remains on hold but also because the government is taking a fresh look at planning reforms (see [Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill](#) and [reforms to national planning policy](#) which include the introduction of a reformed plan-making system).

Planning development control performance

[Appendix 2](#) provides a summary of performance by quarter in 2022-23.

[Appendix 3](#) provides a comparison with the previous two years.

Staff and Caseload

The Planning, Policy & Development Control Team:

Team Manager
2 Policy and Development Control Team Leaders
2 Principal Planning Officers (1 temporary and part time)
1 Senior Planning Officer* (part-time)
1 Planning Policy and Enabling Officer (shared)
1 Planning Information Team Leader* and 1 Planning Information Officer

* Now retired and post currently vacant

Staff changes during 2022-23 included:

- a Team Leader who had been absent due to long-covid is now back working full time;

- a former member of the team has continued to be employed on a casual basis;
- we replaced and are currently training our new Planning Information Officer (our Planning Information Team Leader has recently retired (April 2023)); and,
- a Senior Planning Officer retired (November 2022) and we are training a Planning, Policy and Enabling Officer who was recruited by the wider Planning, Policy and Enabling team in June 2022 to carry out some of the officer's work for the team.

Options to replace the above-mentioned retirees are currently being considered.

Notwithstanding, we have continued to maintain our good performance as demonstrated by the caseload comparison below:

- the number of minerals and waste applications determined was the same as last year and down compared to the year before that (18 compared to 18 and 24).
- the number of other approvals was significantly higher than in the previous two years (100 compared to 76 and 75)
- the overall total number of cases determined (applications, submissions, and consultations) was higher than in the previous two years (150 compared to 122 and 137). Notably the difference can be accounted for by the increase in the other approvals mentioned above.

Report author

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Definitions

'Major development' is defined in the [Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#)

In so far as it is relevant to applications determined by the County Council, a 'major development' means development involving the winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits; waste development; the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more.

List of Background Papers

- Half Year Performance Report 2022-23 to Planning Committee on 1 December 2022 ([see Committee agenda – item 31](#))

- Annual Performance Report 2021-22 to Planning Committee on 9 June 2022 ([see Committee agenda - item 8](#))
- [MHCLG - Improving planning performance: criteria for designation \(updated October 2022\)](#)
- [DLUHC - Live tables on planning application statistics](#)
- [Town and Country Planning \(Section 62A Applications\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on Equal Opportunities.

Legal implications:

Officers are satisfied that there are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Resources and value for money implications:

Officers are satisfied that there are no direct resource and value for money implications arising from this report.

A significant increase in workload and the next review of our Minerals and / or Waste Local Plan are likely to require additional resources if we are to maintain our current high performance. Decisions to refuse applications may lead to appeals being made. The funds to cover the cost of appeals would need to be found from the County Council's contingencies.

[The Town and Country Planning \(Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2017](#) increased planning application fees by about 20% with effect from 17 January 2018. At the request of the Government, the County Council, together with all other Local Planning Authorities, agreed to re-invest the additional income in the planning service. This ring-fenced reserve now stands at just over £132,000.

The temporary recruitment is being funded by the service from savings and the ring-fenced reserve.

Risk implications:

Officers are satisfied that there are no direct risk implications arising from this report.

Climate Change implications:

The Staffordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plans and the Staffordshire District /

Borough Local Plans include policies to address climate change which are considered, where applicable, when determining planning applications for mineral and waste development and applications for the County Council's own developments.

Government planning policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), which refers to climate change (section 14), is also a material consideration in reaching decisions.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

The Staffordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plans and the Staffordshire District / Borough Local Plans include policies to address health which are considered, where applicable, when determining planning applications for mineral and waste development and applications for the County Council's own developments.

Government planning policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), which refers to healthy communities (section 8), is also a material consideration in reaching decisions.



Appendix 2 Planning Development Control - Quarterly Performance– 2022-23

	Target Description	Target (Local)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Performance (outturn)
National	Speed of 'major development' decisions	60% (90%)	86% 6 out of 7	100% 3 out of 3	100% 1 out of 1	100% 7 out of 7	94% 17 out of 18
	Quality of 'major development' decisions	10% (5%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Local	Speed of the County Council's own 'non-major development' decisions	(90%)	100% 1 out of 1	Nil	100% 1 out of 1	Nil	100% 2 out of 2
	Speed of the County Council's own 'major development' decisions	(80%)	Nil	100% 1 out of 1	Nil	Nil	100% 1 out of 1
	Applications determined under delegated powers	(80%)	75% 6 out of 8	100% 4 out of 4	100% 2 out of 2	71% 5 out of 7	81% 17 out of 21

Speed is measured (in so far as it relates to applications dealt with by the County Council) by the proportion of major applications dealt with within 13 weeks, or within 8 weeks for non-major development decisions, unless the application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement when the target is 16 weeks, or within an agreed extension of time.

Quality is measured (in so far as it relates to applications dealt with by the County Council) by the proportion of major applications that are subsequently overturned at appeal.

Generally, a 'major development' (in so far as it relates to applications dealt with by the County Council) is defined as an application for the winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits; and, waste development. A 'non-major development' is defined as an application which is not a 'major development'.

Appendix 3 Comparison with the previous two years

Planning Development Control – Full Year Performance – 2022-23

	National (Local Target)	
Speed of 'major development' decisions		
2022-23	60% (90%)	94% 17 out of 18
2021-22	60% (90%)	100% 18 out of 18
2020-21	60% (90%)	96% 23 out of 24
Speed of the County Council's own 'non-major development' decisions		
2022-23	(90%)	100% 2 out of 2
2021-22	(90%)	100% 6 out of 6
2020-21	(90%)	100% 7 out of 7
Speed of the County Council's own 'major development' decisions		
2022-23	(90%)	100% 1 out of 1
2021-22	(90%)	100% 1 out of 1
2020-21	(90%)	Nil 0 out of 0
Applications determined under delegated powers		
2022-23	(80%)	81% 17 out of 21
2021-22	(80%)	72% 18 out of 25
2020-21	(80%)	87% 27 out of 31