

## PLANNING TURNAROUND DISTRICT ANALYSIS For the period up to September 2014 (Q2)

The attached spreadsheets, 'RSN Development Control Analysis' set out our latest analysis of Planning Turnaround statistics for local district authorities across England. This analysis compares your authority to other rural authorities and family authorities. All information is taken from the Department for Communities and Local Government at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

There are two analyses attached:

1. RSN Development Control Analysis QE September 2014 – showing performance for the quarter July to September 2014.
2. RSN Development Control Analysis YE September 2014 – showing performance for the year ending September 2014.

What does it show?

By selecting your authority in the top left yellow box, you can see your performance in relation to three indicators, Turnaround time for Major, Minor and Other Applications.

### Why these measures?

These traditional performance measures, long collected by the Government to measure success in the planning system, are lagging indicators; they measure what has already happened in the system and are not necessarily an indicator of a good experience for the customer.

Turnaround time from the date of a valid application being received to a decision may only be 5 or 6 weeks, but from the customers perspective the clock starts when they hand in their application to the council, or their agent whether it is a valid application or not.

Planning will always be a contentious subject as the outcomes can affect so many individuals and organisations, a 'good' decision could differ for the applicant, neighbour, parish council or community as a whole and a range of factors should be considered by an authority to determine the successful performance of their planning department.

This analysis however focuses on the turnaround time indicators as these are readily available for every authority. We would be interested to hear from authorities that are using alternative indicators to manage their performance or who would like to share their improvement stories with the rural planning community.

The top performing district authorities are continuing to perform well, for the year ending September 2014, top quartile performance for Minor Applications was 78% and for Other applications, this was 91%.

Who is doing well?  
Focus on Watford

Watford Council is the top performing district for turning around Minor Applications and Other Applications within specific timescales.

Local Authority planning departments can spend a significant amount of resources on ensuring that applications are validated before the 'real' planning work commences.

Watford introduced a specific policy for dealing with invalid applications to try to reduce the amount of invalid applications received which enables them to focus more resources on determining applications. Their website includes the following information:

*"The processing and handling of invalid applications imposes a cost on the council (nearly £20,000 a year), which is not covered by any of the statutory planning application fees set by the Government. It also diverts staff resources from dealing with valid applications. To reduce these costs and improve efficiency, a formal process for dealing with invalid applications is in place."*

Applicants are given three weeks to provide the relevant information which includes a reminder letter to them. If the required information has not been supplied within three weeks a copy of the application will be returned to the applicant (except where the application has been submitted through the planning portal). To progress with the proposed development the applicant or agent will need to start the submission process again with full documentation and the correct fee.

There is an administrative charge for handling invalid applications which remain incomplete after the three week period has ended. The charge will recover some of the cost of officer time involved in handling the invalid application and the costs involved in refunding any fees paid.

Top 10 performing District councils Year ending September 2014		Top 10 performing District councils Year ending September 2014	
MINOR APPS	% within 8 weeks	OTHER APPS	% within 8 weeks
Watford	97%	Watford	100%
East Staffordshire	96%	East Staffordshire	99%
Northampton	96%	Lichfield	99%
Warwick	94%	Ashfield	98%
Harlow	93%	Broxbourne	98%
South Bucks	93%	South Bucks	98%
Ashfield	92%	Northampton	97%
Hertsmere	92%	Purbeck	97%
Three Rivers	91%	Rushmoor	97%
Havant	90%	Scarborough	97%
		Three Rivers	97%

\*All figures come from live tables on planning application statistics. Where there are anomalies ie figures over 100%, these have not been included in this summary.