

Report to: **Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee**  
Date: **27 October 2008**  
Report of: **Head of Planning and Building Control**  
Subject: **Planning and Building Control Quarterly Performance Report**  
Ward: **All**

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide information on the performance of the Planning and Building Control Services Unit.

## 2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 Consultation has taken place with appropriate staff of the Planning and Building Control Services Unit.

## 3.0 Development Control

- 3.1 Performance improvement continues to focus upon on indicators related to the determination of planning applications. Current performance is shown in relation to historic performance in the table below.

	National Target	Service Target	2006/7	2007/8	2008/09 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr
Major Applications	60% (13 weeks)	69%	63.9%	69.4%	84.6%
Minor Applications	65% (8 weeks)	74%	68.7%	78%	85.5%
Other Applications	80% (8 weeks)	92%	80.8%	90.7%	92%

- 3.2 The trend continues to show significant and continuous improvement and now matches or exceeds all national and Council service targets. When considered as part of a basket of regulatory indicators, it is pleasing to report that the Audit Commission have provisionally ranked Easington as first out of 388 authorities with 100% of indicators improved since last year and 50% of indicators are now in the top quartile for performance. The final audit report awaits verification and a more detailed report will be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

## 4.0 Development Plan

- 4.1 As previously reported, preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) is now in transition between finalising the draft LDF Core Strategy for Easington and commencing preparation work for the development of a new LDF for County Durham.
- 4.2 The draft Easington Core Strategy was published for consultation in May and the results of the consultation exercise will be reported to Council in the near future. Further development of the Strategy will then cease, but the draft Strategy will provide an

important policy context for the development of priorities for the new Council. Indeed, it is already clear that the work undertaken by Easington is amongst the most advanced in Co. Durham and the strategy adopted is recognised as being the clearest. This will help to advance LDF preparation for Co. Durham by providing a established and viable basis for future plan preparation and has also informed the development of the Growth Point initiative referred to below.

- 4.3 Over the coming months, the service will also bring to a conclusion the various technical studies undertaken to provide an effective evidence base for the Local Development Framework. A number of reports will be submitted to the Council for approval to underpin the Core Strategy and will then be available for assimilation with similar reports prepared by the other Durham Districts, in order to underpin future plan making activity for the new authority.
- 5.0 **Early integration of Development Plan activity**
- 5.1 Draft transitional regulations provide for the early transfer of development plan preparation to the new authority. In anticipation of the enactment of these regulations, the early integration of development plan activity was agreed by each of the Durham Authorities in the summer. Since that time, members of the development plan team have met with their colleagues, twice a week at Chester-le-Street to ensure the delivery of all of the statutory requirements necessary for the new authority to fulfil its new role, and to enable it to commence the development of the new LDF in January.
- 5.2 Two of the first tasks of the new team are to deliver a Local Development Scheme (the future LDF work programme) and a combined Annual Monitoring Report for County Durham. The Government requires submission of both reports before Christmas and publication of these documents is on currently on target. The documents are amongst a number of 'must haves' to be delivered by the planning and building control service before Vesting Day to ensure a smooth service transition. To achieve these deliverables, three sub-workstreams have been established across the Co. Durham to deliver the 'must haves' for the Development Control, Development Plans and Building Control. Each sub-workstream provides progress reports to the Planning Workstream on a fortnightly basis.
- 6.0 **Durham New Growth Point**
- 6.1 Development of a new Growth Point for south and east Durham was approved by the Government in July. The Co. Durham Growth Point bid covers the Districts of Easington, Sedgefield and Wear Valley and work is progressing to develop an accelerated programme of housing delivery and regeneration across the area covered by the three Districts. Work is continuing to submit to Government, an agreed Programme of Development before the 27 October deadline.
- 6.2 Clearly, accelerated housing development in the current economic climate is problematic, but the programme focuses development in the period to 2016 and will continue to deliver growth after that date. Development of the bid has helped to inform the future work programme of the Planning Service and has been incorporated in the draft Local Development Scheme for the new Council described above. Should the Government approve the Programme of Development, it will help to accelerate development plan preparation across the new authority. It will also help to ensure that

the appropriate plans are in place to deliver the accelerated housing programme when market conditions improve.

## **7.0 Implications**

### **7.1 Policy Implications**

This report details refers to the revised arrangements for policy development in the new Council.

#### Local Government Review

The report also details evolving arrangements for service delivery by the new authority.

#### Legal Implications

It is not considered that there are any implications resulting from this report.

#### Financial Implications

It is not considered that there are any financial implications resulting from this report.

#### Risk Implications

The report reflects the current situation and therefore there are no risks arising from this report.

#### Communications

Development Control staff meet on a regular basis and performance improvement is a key element of the agenda.

## **8.0 Corporate Implications**

### **8.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities**

Performance improvement issues have been highlighted in the current plan.

#### Equality and Diversity

It is not considered that there are any implications resulting from this report.

#### E-Government & Procurement

The service is supported by recently purchased technology will is used maintain enhanced service levels relating to e-government.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

### **9.1 That members note the content of the report.**

## **Background Papers**

- 1 Previous quarterly report
- 2 Best Value Performance Plan
- 3 Service Plan
- 4 Corporate Plan