

Step change improvement in stats

The published performance statistics are in a new format. The commentary is on the next page.

Major and minor residential decisions by London Borough year ending 31 Dec 2006 / Oct-Dec 2006 (DCLG Table 8)

Planning authority	YEAR ENDING MARCH 2007						JANUARY – MARCH 2007					
	Major residential decisions	Percentage granted	Percentage within 13 weeks	Minor residential decisions	Percentage granted	Percentage within 8 weeks	Major residential decisions	Percentage granted	Percentage within 13 weeks	Minor residential decisions	Percentage granted	Percentage within 8 weeks
City of London	8	100	88	4	75	25	1	100	100	-	-	-
Barking and Dagenham	5	100	80	110	54	82	2	100	50	34	53	79
Barnet	29	66	93	494	56	79	8	75	88	145	57	87
Bexley	17	35	88	88	44	84	7	43	71	25	44	80
Brent	30	30	77	199	41	70	7	43	71	52	37	63
Bromley	57	51	63	383	50	61	12	33	83	98	46	56
Camden	29	86	93	272	74	74	5	80	100	64	78	67
Croydon	103	40	69	612	47	83	17	41	71	170	46	85
Ealing	37	27	81	178	52	70	7	14	71	35	49	80
Enfield	44	48	80	371	49	90	13	46	92	98	59	88
Greenwich	40	50	68	95	29	71	17	71	47	15	53	67
Hackney	52	60	71	321	50	85	9	78	67	75	56	89
Hammers. and Fulham	6	83	83	133	74	85	-	-	-	36	72	89
Haringey	11	45	91	276	41	86	1	-	100	75	35	85
Harrow	32	59	59	326	44	70	8	63	50	88	36	74
Havering	25	36	84	271	38	93	7	-	86	50	36	88
Hillingdon	45	60	71	280	41	69	13	54	92	69	54	64
Hounslow	43	35	84	179	39	78	12	42	92	37	32	86
Islington	38	42	63	295	59	65	7	71	43	67	52	76
Kensington and Chelsea	18	61	72	174	81	78	4	75	75	42	69	79
Kingston upon Thames	3	-	100	180	57	78	-	-	-	43	63	60
Lambeth	79	61	53	507	65	70	21	71	48	131	69	63
Lewisham	39	64	46	449	74	70	6	50	33	96	75	74
Merton	17	47	47	257	53	75	5	40	60	66	44	79
Newham	26	77	31	101	55	73	4	75	-	16	56	81
Redbridge	29	38	69	136	35	66	5	20	80	23	48	39
Richmond upon Thames	8	50	88	218	63	55	4	50	100	45	58	58
Southwark	52	65	42	211	51	62	8	75	13	56	57	55
Sutton	55	31	84	196	54	76	16	25	94	42	38	74
Tower Hamlets	42	67	31	162	76	71	6	67	17	57	81	81
Waltham Forest	22	41	77	352	53	74	7	57	57	94	53	76
Wandsworth	41	71	83	372	69	73	10	50	90	92	68	65
City of Westminster	13	92	77	851	81	67	4	100	50	235	86	74

Source: Source: DCLG (www.communities.gov.uk)

- incomplete data

And in the blue corner... shadow boxing at the RTPI

Readers may have noticed a verbal scrap between planners and volume housebuilders that has been going on in the media over the housing crisis, writes *Andrew Rogers*.

In the red corner is Kelvin MacDonald of the RTPI who claims that builders are sitting on vast reserves of land with planning permission while in the blue corner is the Home Builders Federation, pointing out that the planning system is still very slow (average of 16 months to get a workable consent) and that "more than 97 per cent of units with fully implementable planning permission have builders on site within three months" (Stewart Baseley in

The Times).

The planning system, according to the latest statistics, continues to improve towards meeting its targets for decisions [right cross from Kelvin], but the proportion of refusals has risen at the same rate as the improved performance [left uppercut from Stewart]. Whether this will be reflected in greater success at appeal remains to be seen [saved by the bell].

Jim Claydon for the RTPI has acknowledged that however much land is allocated for housing, it is never going to be in the housebuilders' interests to take it all up. "Neither is it their responsibility to

construct all the affordable homes we need" he concedes.

However a referee has now stepped in to stop the fight. This is the heavyweight Office of Fair Trading, which on 22 June launched a market study into the UK housebuilding industry. This will focus on two principal areas - customer satisfaction and delivery of housing. It aims to determine, once and for all, "whether land which is suitable for development is being effectively brought through to the planning approval stage and whether land with planning permission is being converted effectively into homes".

Perhaps they should start by ask-

ing to see Kate Barker's evidence, if only because their study is a direct result of the recommendation, in her Review of Housing Supply 2004, that if the industry did not increase levels of customer satisfaction and introduce a code of conduct within three years, the OFT should conduct a wide-ranging review of the market.

Stewart Baseley leaves the ring with a final word: "This study will give us a further opportunity to show that the real problem is the shortage of land with planning permission for much-needed new homes".

Seconds out, Round Two.

DCLG commentary: New performance statistics...

show a step-change improvement in performance by local planning authorities.

70 per cent of authorities met or surpassed their target of handling 60 per cent of their major applications within 13 weeks in the last financial year, up from just 55 per cent six months ago.

Quarterly statistics also published today show that 81 per cent of all planning decisions were made within 8 weeks between January and March 2006, three per cent higher than the same period a year ago.

Nationally 127 authorities have improved their performance in the six months since September last year. Communities and Local Government is formally dis-engaging with and congratulating three in particular - Kirkless, Southwark and Waveney - who were previously designated as poorly performing but have now turned the corner.

The planning minister said: "Continued increasing performance over recent years means that the

planning system is now delivering on time for homeowners and businesses across the country - but we also need to go further. We want to sustain these rates of improvement so that in a year's time every local planning authority in England is meeting their timeliness targets.

"We are also anticipating further improvements following Kate Barker's Review of Land Use Planning to ensure that we facilitate the right kind of development to better serve businesses and our economy and meet the long term challenges of globalisation and climate change."

To support continuing improvement Communities and Local Government is today publishing a new report summarising key ways in which local authorities can improve their performance. £7.5m is also being provided this year for the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and Advisory Team on Large Applications (ATLAS) to assist local authorities. The funding is part of £485m of Planning Delivery Grant invested

since 2003 to reward local authorities on meeting their timeliness targets and improve the quality of planning and online planning services.

In the year ending March 2006, local planning authorities determined, on average, 65 per cent of major planning applications within 13 weeks, 74 per cent of minor planning applications and 86 per cent of other planning applications within 8 weeks.

These reflect an improvement of 4 percentage points for processing major applications, a 3 percentage point increase for determining minor applications, and a 1 percentage point increase for determining other applications from the previous Planning Performance Checklist published in December 2005, based on performance in the year ending September 2005.

In the year ending March 2006, 255 (70 per cent) planning authorities met or surpassed the Government's target of deciding 60 per cent of major planning applica-

tions within 13 weeks; 315 (87 per cent) met the target of deciding 65 per cent of minor planning applications within 8 weeks, and 320 (88 per cent) met the target of deciding 80 per cent of other planning applications within 8 weeks.

These mark a substantial improvement in performance from that in the year ending September 2005 when 199 (55 per cent) authorities met the target for deciding major applications, 283 (78 per cent) authorities met the target for deciding minor applications, a

Consistent with the new emphasis in Government policy, the table shows only performance for residential applications.