

Planning Committee

12 March 2025

Performance Report 1 October to 31 December 2024

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Regeneration Culture Environment and Transformation

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Summary

This report is presented to the Planning Committee informing Members on current planning performance and the Local Plan. The report covers the period from 1 October to 31 December 2024.

1. Recommendation

1.1 The Planning Committee is asked to consider and note the report which is submitted to assist the committee in monitoring planning activity.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1 There are no budget and policy framework decisions arising directly from this report. This is an information item for the Planning Committee.

3. Background

3.1 Performance relating to the processing of planning applications is collected as National Indication 157. The NI157 targets are:

- Major developments: to determine 60% of applications within 13 weeks.
- Minor Developments: to determine 70% of applications within 8 weeks.
- Other Developments: to determine 70% of applications within 8 weeks.

3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised on 12 December 2024. The Framework set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

3.3 As part of the new Planning and Infrastructure Bill, the Government has pledged to 'modernise planning committees' in a bid to improve local decision making and increase local authority capacity to provide a 'more predictable service to developers'. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has produced a working paper and invited Local

Planning Authorities (LPA's) to comment upon it. The paper considers whether there should be a national scheme of delegation that focuses planning committees on the applications that really matter, avoids a potential development being reviewed multiple times and places more trust in skilled professional planners.

- 3.4 The paper also asks for comments on limiting the size of planning committees and whether there would be a benefit for some LPA's to set up 'strategic committees' with fewer members devoted to determining larger planning applications.

4. Performance

- 4.1 See attached charts in Appendices A to I for performance concerning the processing of planning applications, benchmarking, appeals, enforcement activity, applications for Prior Approvals for Permitted Development, number of units under construction and number completed, Tree Preservation Order applications, a breakdown of complaints and compliments received and Lead Local Flood Authority Consultee Compliance.
- 4.2 During the period 1 October to 31 December 2024 the Authority received 248 planning applications; this is compared to 271 for the same period in 2023. For the year 2023/24 the Authority received 1,102, this compares to 1,230 in 2022/23 and 1,586 in 2021/22.
- 4.3 Performance for applications is split between those subject to an extension of time and those not. An extension of time can be in the form of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) or a Planning Extension Agreement (PEA).
- 4.4 During the period 1 October to 31 December 2024 100% of major applications were determined within 13 weeks or within the agreed timeframe. This is against a target of 60%.
- 4.5 Performance for minor applications determined within 8 weeks or within the agreed timeframe during the period is 87.5%. This is against a target of 70%.
- 4.6 Performance for other applications determined within 8 weeks or within the agreed timeframe during the period is 98%. This is against a target of 70%.
- 4.7 Appendix A, figure 2, 3 and 4 shows performance against target (including those not subject and those subject to an extension of time) for majors, minor and other applications for the year.
- 4.8 Comparing performance against the latest data available nationally for the period July to September 2024, where applications have been determined within the statutory timeframe, Medway has exceeded the national target and the national average for all types of applications. Where applications have been determined with an extension of time (PEA), Medway has exceeded the national average for all types of types of applications (see Appendix B).
- 4.9 During the period 1 October to 31 December 2024, 44 applications with Planning Extension Agreements were decided with 98% being determined within the agreed extended timeframe.

- 4.10 During the period, 1 Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) has been completed and a number have been agreed in principle.
- 4.11 Pressure on Officer resources has been carefully managed in order to meet national performance targets. This pressure continues and with the added pressure of annual leave and vacancies, the workload will need to be carefully managed if performance is to continue to be maintained.
- 4.12 A number of appointments have been made to vacant posts but the service still carries some vacancies, which will take time to fill due to the time taken to advertise, shortlist, recruit and notice period.
- 4.13 The service continues to use a variety of consultants during the interim period, covering consideration of TPO applications, conservation matters and planning applications. Where possible the cost of the use of consultants for planning applications is covered through PPAs.
- 4.14 As part of the reform of the planning system, the Government are focusing on planning committee decisions, with the Planning Inspectorate being asked to start reporting to Government about cases where a successful appeal is made against a planning committee decision contrary to the Officer recommendation. The overturning of a recommendation made by a professional officer should be rare and infrequent. The Government have reminded the Inspectorate that where it cannot find reasonable grounds for the committee having overturned the officer's recommendation, it should consider awarding costs to the appellant.
- 4.15 Following consultation undertaken earlier in 2024, the Government has halved the assessment period for its 'special measures' speed of decision-making from 24 to 12 months to allow earlier identification of poor performing authorities so that action can be taken sooner. However, it has dropped plans to exclude agreed time extensions from the calculation.

Authorities that decide fewer than 60% of major applications within the statutory deadline of 13 weeks or 70% of non-major applications within the eight week deadline could face sanctions.

For quality of decision-making assessment, any authority that has more than 10% of either major or non-major applications overturned at appeal over a specified two year period is at risk of designation. The assessment period for quality of decision-making continues to be 24 months as it is considered the number of relevant cases is lower than for the speed of decision-making and if measured over 12 months would represent too few cases to provide an accurate measure of performance.

The quality of decisions is reviewed by Government and the threshold for designation on applications for both major and non-major development is 10% of an authority's total number of decisions being allowed on appeal. The most up-to-date Government data, which is for the 24 months to the end of June 2023, shows the number of decisions overturned at appeal for major applications is 2.9% and 0.9% for non-major applications. MHCLG has

recently written to 15 LPA's where they have concerns over quality of decision making.

- 4.16 The percentage of appeals allowed during the period 1 October to 31 December 2024 is 33.33%. A total of nine appeal decisions were received. Three of these appeals were allowed, which were all delegated decisions. Six appeals were dismissed, which included one enforcement appeal. (See Appendix C).
- 4.17 Government stats for applications for prior approvals for permitted developments by local planning authorities are reported in Appendix D.
- 4.18 The validation of tree preservation order applications is undertaken by the Planning Service, but the administration of tree enquiries and the making of new TPO's is undertaken by the Administration Hub. The number of TPO applications received and performance against target time is reported in Appendix G.
- 4.19 Medway Council in its remit as Lead Local Flood Authority was made a statutory consultee in respect of surface water for major development on 15 April 2015. Statutory consultees have a duty to respond to statutory consultations within 21 days in accordance with Article 22 of the Development Management Order. The 21 day period does not begin until the statutory consultee in question has such information to enable a substantive response.
- 4.20 The Lead Local Flood Authority also receive consultations where relevant for some minor developments, change of use applications, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping and Screening, pre-application consultations, and variation of condition applications. An internal target of 80% responses within the timeframes has been set for all consultations. There are no nationally set applicable external targets. Statutory Consultee compliance results are reported in Appendix H.
- 4.21 The service had its ISO re-certification assessment in November 2024. There were no non-conformities identified during the review and the service has been recommended for recertification of ISO 2015:9001 for another 3 year period.

The Assessor felt that Senior Leadership had demonstrated commitment and involvement in the implementation and success of the Management System and that staff had good awareness of operational processes and issues. The Assessor also considered the Management System is in line with the strategy of the organisation, which has been designed to support the strategic direction and deliver the intended results.

- 4.22 The Government has produced a draft Planning Performance Dashboard that brings together performance data for individual local planning authorities for speed of decision-making. The table provides data on the percentage of applications determined within statutory timeframes and the use of Extension of Time agreements. The data is for major, non-major and householder applications and will be updated every quarter. The first formal dashboard has been published for the year ending March 2024. Medway is performing well when compared against other Kent planning authorities (see Appendix B, figure 4).

4.23 The Planning Service continues to work on the Open Digital Planning (ODP) project. End-to-End testing commenced on 11 December focusing on the 'Application' service, Back Office Planning system (BOPS) and the Digital Planning Register. Medway are the first local authority outside London to launch end to end testing. The Application service will allow residents to apply and pay for a householder development online via Medway Council's website, making the service more accessible. BOPS aims to support faster decision making, making it easy for planners to use, resulting in less time spent searching for information and having more time to use their planning expertise on higher value work, enabling planning officers to process planning applications more efficiently. The digital Planning Register is an engagement tool designed to help local planning authorities keep residents informed and involved in planning applications in their area. It simplifies the process by presenting planning applications in a clear and accessible way, making it easier for planners to gather structured feedback and incorporate community insights into their decisions.

The ODP team has engaged with several agents to participate in end-to-end testing, and we anticipate receiving our first Householder application in the coming weeks.

4.24 Work continues on the 'Report a Breach' tool. This allows customers to report a planning enforcement breach online. This has reduced the number of complaints processed by the service that are not breaches of planning permission. Since this was launched on 1 July 2024 the level of invalid reports has reduced from 60% to 10%.

4.25 Following a successful soft launch of Medway's guidance tool ("find out if you need planning permission") the Planning service continues to see an increase in the number of people using the tool and a 22% decrease in telephone contact. We have also been able to identify a 96% success rate with customers being able to use the tool which demonstrates how intuitive the tool is and the 'help' resources incorporated in the tool are proving successful. On average 100 customers are successfully using the tool daily. Work continues on promoting the use of this tool.

5. Advice and analysis

5.1 This report is submitted for information and enables Members to monitor performance.

6. Risk management

6.1 The risk register for the service rates the risk against service vulnerability, triggers, consequence or risk and mitigation.

6.2 Performance is regularly monitored to ensure that the Council's Development Management function meets its monthly, quarterly and annual targets. In addition, comparisons are undertaken with all other authorities to assess performance against the national average.

- 6.3 Monitoring of all appeal decisions is undertaken to ensure that the Councils decisions are being defended thoroughly and that appropriate and defensible decisions are being made by Committee and under delegated powers. The lack of any monitoring could lead to more decisions going contrary to the Council decisions resulting in poorer quality development and also costs being awarded against the Council.
- 6.4 Within the Enforcement team measures and procedures are in place to ensure that appropriate enforcement action will be taken where necessary and that decisions taken are defensible to challenge.
- 6.5 The service has achieved accreditation to ISO 9001:2015 for its processes, which ensures a quality and consistency of decision making that enables the majority of challenges/complaints against decisions not to be upheld. Where complaints are justified then the reasons for that are reviewed and appropriate action/changes are made.
- 6.6 In negotiating Planning Performance Agreements, the Chief Planning Officer, Development Manager and Principal Planners will try to negotiate backfilling payments with developers, which enable the developer to get an enhanced service and also enable Medway Council to use the payments to bring in additional staff/consultants to deal with the greater workload demands or cases of a specialist nature.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Cabinet approved an updated Local Development Scheme, which sets out the timetable for the Local Plan, on 17 December 2024. Key milestones are:
- Publication of Draft Plan at Regulation 19 – June 2025
 - Submission of plan for examination – November 2025
 - Adoption of plan following examination – December 2026
- 7.2 The Planning Service is liaising with officers from MHCLG and PINS in providing regular updates on the progress of the Local Plan and issues. The Policy team has recruited a Programme Manager to support the delivery of the Local Plan and the post holder started in November 2024.
- 7.3 The Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Neighbourhood Plan was supported at a referendum on 7 November 2024. It has full planning weight as part of the Council's Development plan following the outcome of a successful referendum. A formal decision to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan was taken by Full Council in January 2025. The Council has met with the High Halstow Neighbourhood Plan group to discuss its proposals for reviewing its Plan. The Council approved the designation of the Stoke Neighbourhood Area on 23 July and has met with the Neighbourhood Plan group to discuss its work on the Plan.
- 7.4 Liaison with major house builders within Medway and the Planning Service continues to assist them to meet commitments. This has resulted in the negotiation of payment plans to assist developers to meet their S106 developer contributions. During the period 1 October to 31 December 2024 £1,303,413.77 has been received via S106 contributions and £33,890.48 has

been received for Habitat Regulations Agreements. This makes a total of £1,337,304.25. The Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) was published in December 2024, which covers the financial year 2022 to 2023. The IFS includes details of all Section 106 contributions received, expenditure of contributions and proposals for future infrastructure provision to be funded by Section 106 contributions.

- 7.5 Medway Council continues to meet with developers to work with them to ensure developments with planning permission start on site and developments continue. This includes considering appropriate amendments to developments and viability assessments.
- 7.6 Cabinet approved an updated Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (HDTAP) in June 2024 and this was reported to Planning Committee on 11 July 2024. This sets out the Council's work in promoting housebuilding in Medway. The latest Housing Delivery Test results were published in December 2024. Medway scored 72% of delivery compared with the defined housing requirement. This means that the presumption in favour of sustainable development has been enacted. In addition, the HDTAP will be reviewed and updated within six months of the latest published results, as set out in the NPPG.
- 7.7 The NPPF requires all authorities with a delivery of less than 95% to produce an action plan, those with less than 85% delivery to apply a buffer of 20% on the 5 year local housing need figure and those with a delivery of less than 75% have to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. As Medway was under 85%, based on last year's HDT, Medway has to apply a buffer of 20% and produce an action plan. As above, Medway now has to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is further enforced by the fact that Medway cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply.
- 7.8 The Authority Monitoring Report Vol 1 (AMR) and Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) was presented to Cabinet in December 2024 and has been published. The AMR concerns monitoring information prepared by the Planning Service to meet statutory requirements for publishing data on development and infrastructure. The IFS sets out details of funding agreed, received and spent through developer contributions, and proposed spend on infrastructure.

The AMR sets out details of the delivery of 1,300 new homes and 1,328 units under construction in Medway during 2023/24. This is the highest number of dwellings built in a single year in Medway since becoming a Unitary in 1998. It also makes the past 5 years the highest number of dwellings delivered in a 5 year period since 1998. There was a high percentage of gross affordable completions too at 29% of the gross number of completions. However, this record high rate of housebuilding still fell short of the defined level of local housing needs for 1,658 homes a year, following the standard method set by Government.

Details of housing completions are detailed in Appendix E.

- 7.9 Government has published, with the new NPPF, a revised Standard Method for calculating Local Housing need on 12 December 2024. The figure for Medway is 1594 homes a year. This is a slight reduction on the previous figure of 1658 homes a year. This allows the Council to continue its work in defining a preferred spatial strategy. The levels of housing need have changed more significantly in other parts of Kent, which require additional work to be done in preparing new Local Plans.
- 7.10 Recognising the important role that Small/Medium Enterprises (SME's) can play in helping Medway meet its housing needs, Medway facilitated the setting up of a North Kent SME Forum, which is chaired by an SME (at present Paul Henry of Esquire Developments). This should help to build stronger partnership working and support SME's to compliment the delivery of homes from the volume house builders. The Chief Planning Officers of Medway and other North Kent LPA's are invited to attend every other meeting. The Chairman of the SME forum as recently attended a meeting at Downing Street with the PM to discuss housing delivery.
- 7.11 The minister for Housing, Matthew Pennycook, recently attended the Planning Advisory Service, Annual Chief Planning Officers conference, at which he talked about future planning reform, Planning Committee reform, Local Government Re-organisation and housing delivery linked to the Housing crisis and the very clear Government objective of delivering 1.5m new homes within the period of this Parliament.

8. Climate change implications

- 8.1 Planning Officers are members of a technical group supported by the Planning Advisory Service considering best practice in planning for climate change.
- 8.2 Representatives of the Planning team attend the Climate Change Board meetings and are on the Officer Climate Change Steering group to bring forward an action plan to deal with climate change.
- 8.3 Planning officers are supporting the commissioning of a heat network study.
- 8.4 Considerations of climate change are being reflected in the draft local plan policies and development allocations.
- 8.5 All planning applications for new development must have a section on Climate Change and Energy efficiency. Validation requirements have been changed so that all applications for new development are required to include information on climate change and energy efficiency.
- 8.6 Planning policy do monitor Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Licencing numbers. Although there was an increase of 80% of ULEV's being registered in Medway over the last 5 years, the actual number registered in 2023/24 is only around half the number that was registered the year before in 2022/23. This seems to be consistent regionally and nationally, with a drop of licences overall from the year before. It seems 2022/23 was a peak year.

8.7 In February 2024, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) announced amendments to Clauses 4.1 and 4.2 of the management system for ISO 9001:2015. The organisation now has to determine whether climate change is a relevant issue and whether relevant interested parties can have requirements related to climate change. The service satisfied this clause during its inspection in November 2024.

9. Financial implications

9.1 Development Management procedures are constantly being reviewed to reflect new ways of working.

9.2 Planning income during the period October to December 2024 is £435,251. Total income for the year 2023/24 is £1,027,254.50. This compares to a total income for the year 2022/23 of £1,075,818 and 2021/22 of £1,555,439. See Appendix A, Figure 5.

9.3 Fees and charges increased on 1 April 2024. This included the fees for PPA's, pre-application advice; administration charges and monitoring officer costs.

9.4 If the Local Planning Authority is designated as non-performing then applicants would have the choice of submitting applications to the Planning Inspectorate, which would include the fee. This would not only take control away from the LPA but would reduce income.

9.5 Changing legislative context, and signals of further reforms and flexibilities, may impact on ability to manage development and place additional demands on Planning Service resources. All changes and their implications are reviewed by the service with appropriate action taken.

10. Legal implications

10.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

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Appendices

- A) Applications
- B) Benchmarking
- C) Appeals
- D) Applications for Prior Approvals for Permitted Development
- E) Number of Units Under Construction
- F) Enforcement
- G) Tree Preservation Order Applications
- H) Lead Local Flood Authority Consultation Compliance
- I) Complaints and Compliments

Background papers

General Development Control Return PS1

General Development Control Return PS2

MHCLG Live tables on planning applications statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-planning-application-statistics>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

MHCLG Improving planning performance – Criteria for designation (updated 2024)

https://cached.offlinehbpl.hbpl.co.uk/NewsAttachments/PCD/Criteria_Document_2024.pdf

Appendix A : Applications

Figure 1 *Number of applications received and determined 2021/22 to December 2024*

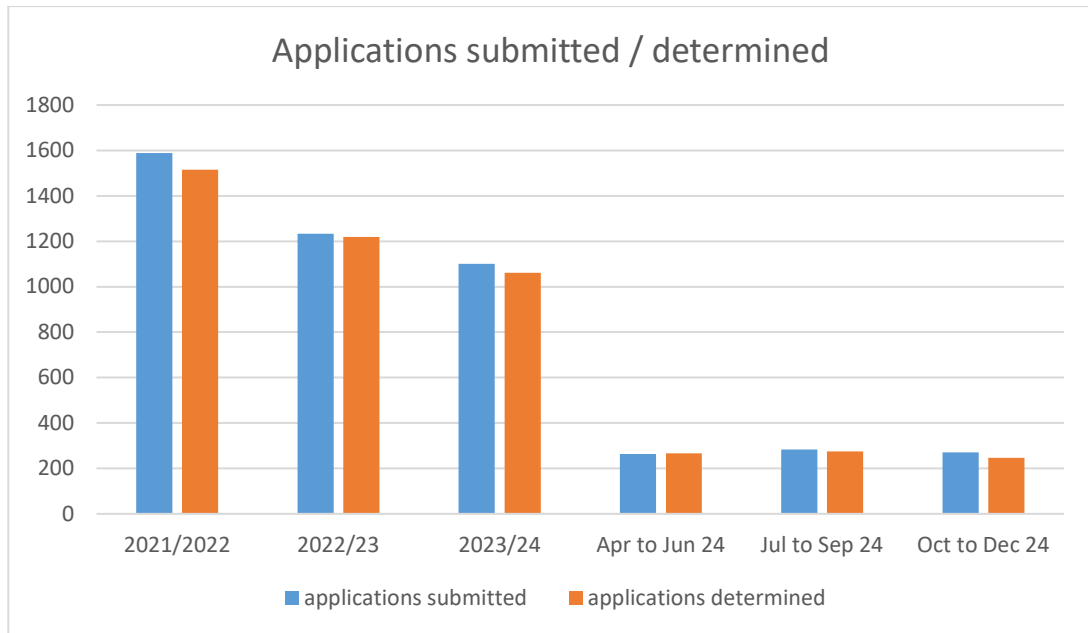


Figure 2 *Percentage of "Major" applications determined against performance target January 2024 to December 2024*

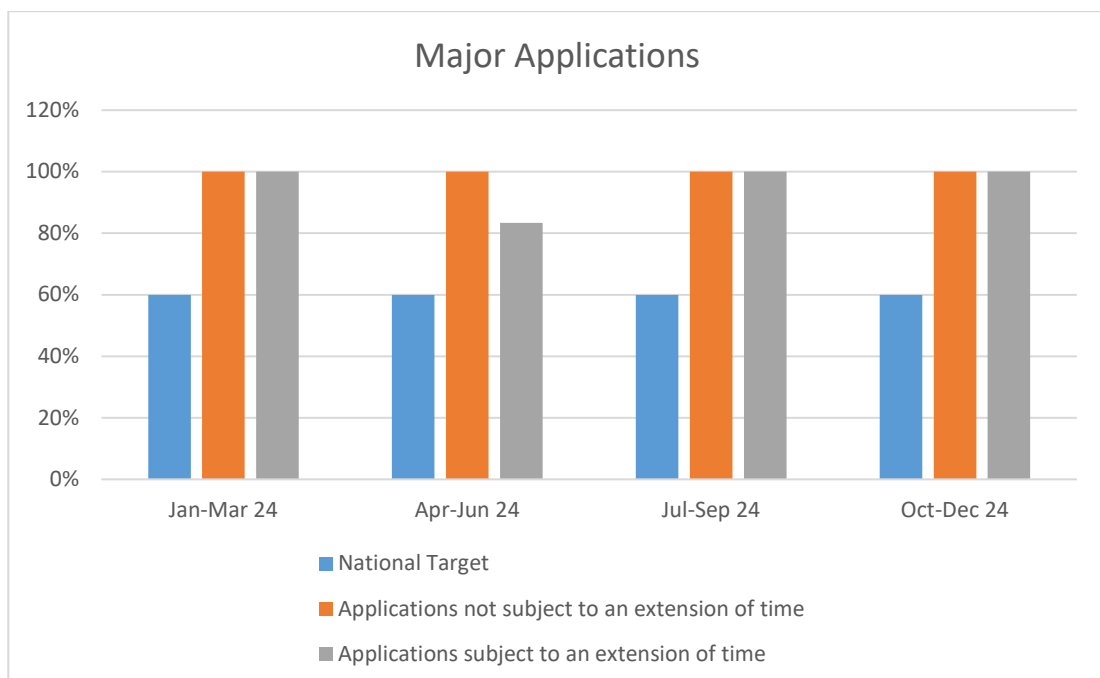


Figure 3 Percentage of “Minor” applications determined against performance target January 2024 to December 2024

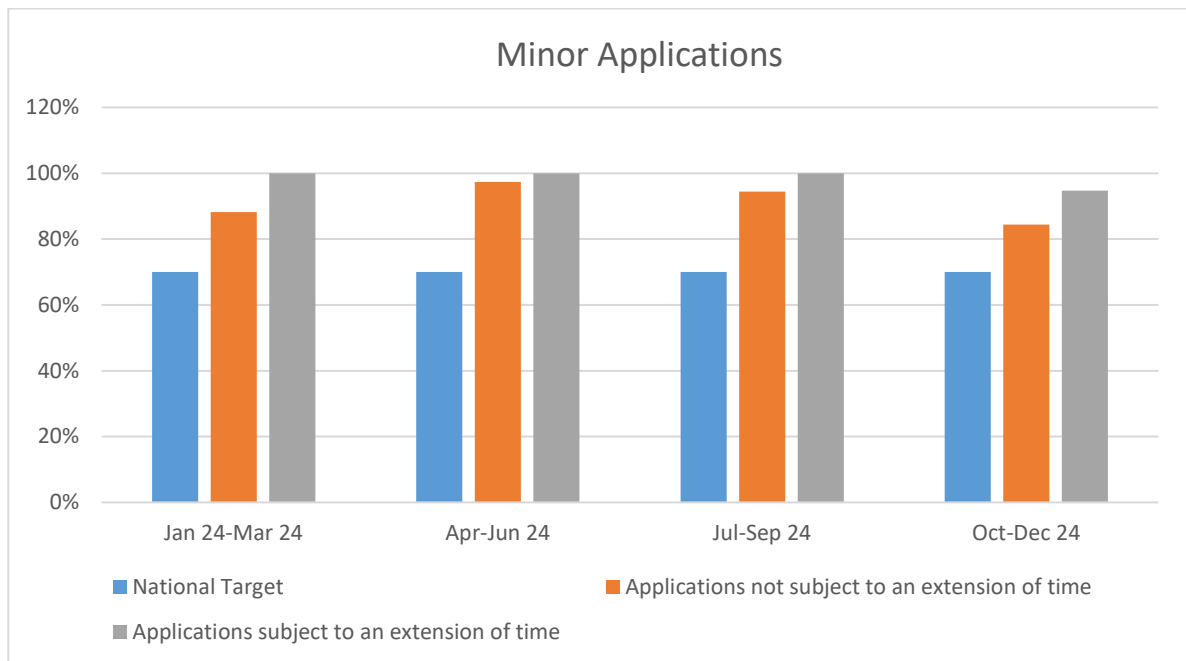


Figure 4 Percentage of “Other” applications determined against performance target January 2024 to December 2024

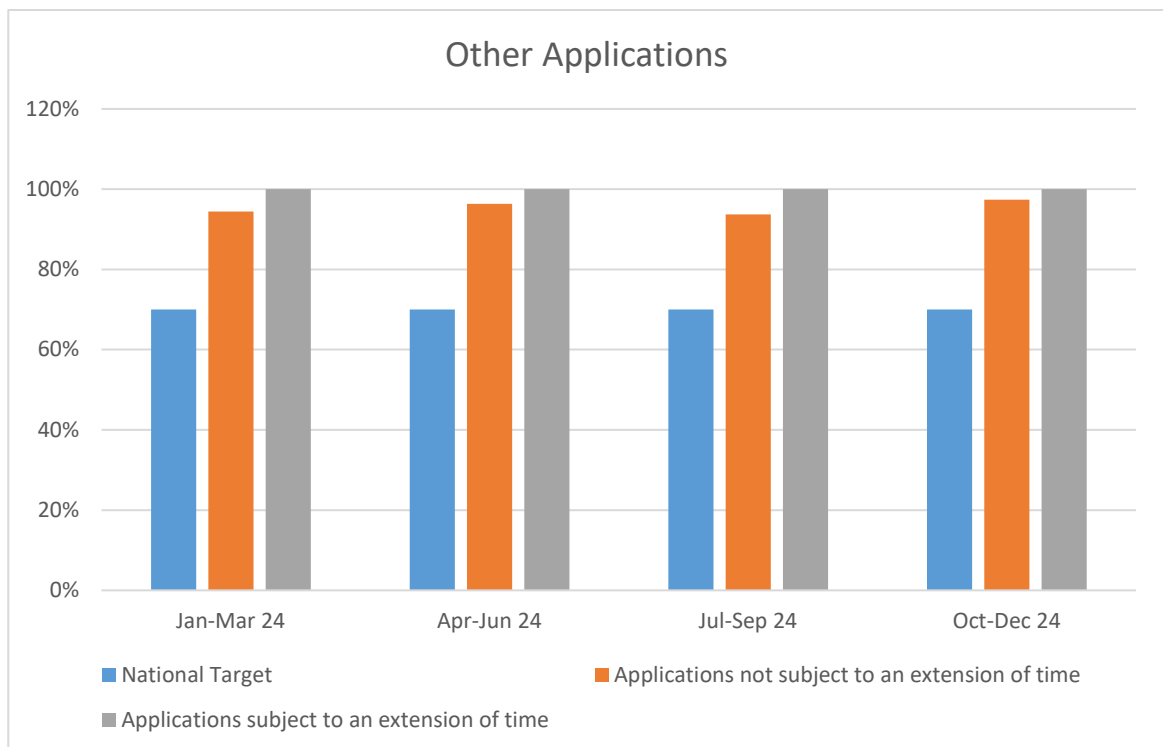
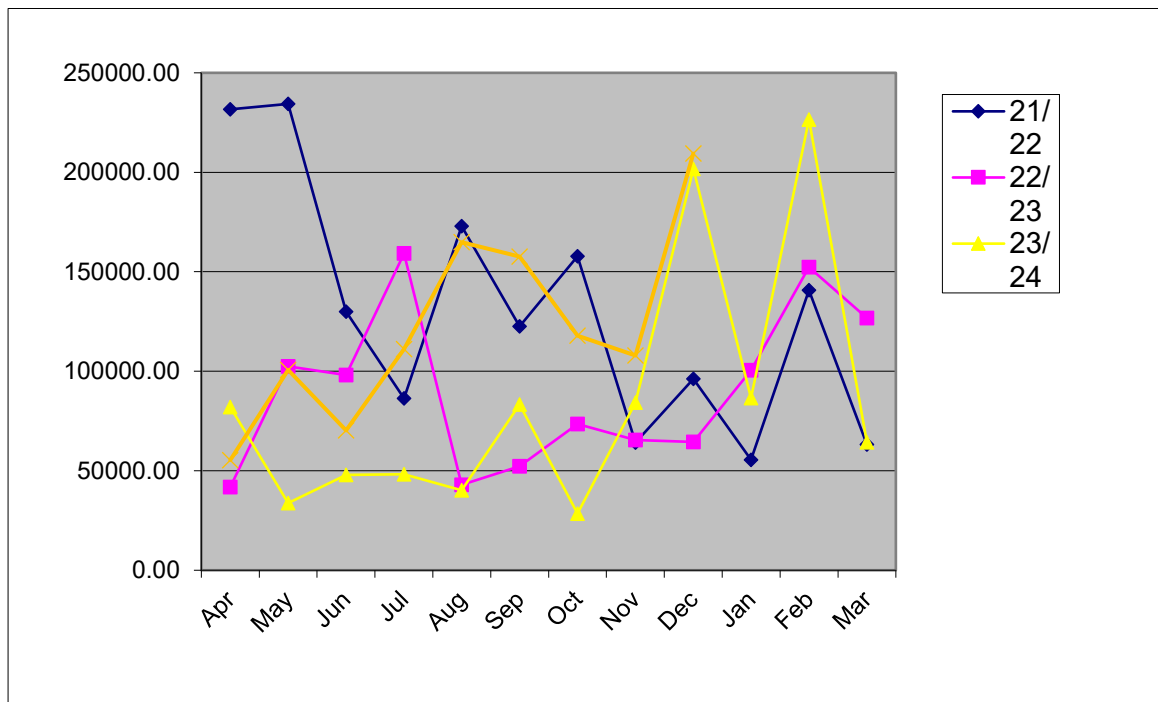


Figure 5 Planning application fees received for the year to date 2024/25 and the year 2023/24, 2022/23 and 2021/22



Appendix B : Benchmarking

Figure 1 Planning applications determined within the statutory timeframe

Government produced statistics and league tables compares performance to the national average. The chart below compares Medway's performance with the latest data available for other local planning authorities for the period 1 July to 30 September 2024.

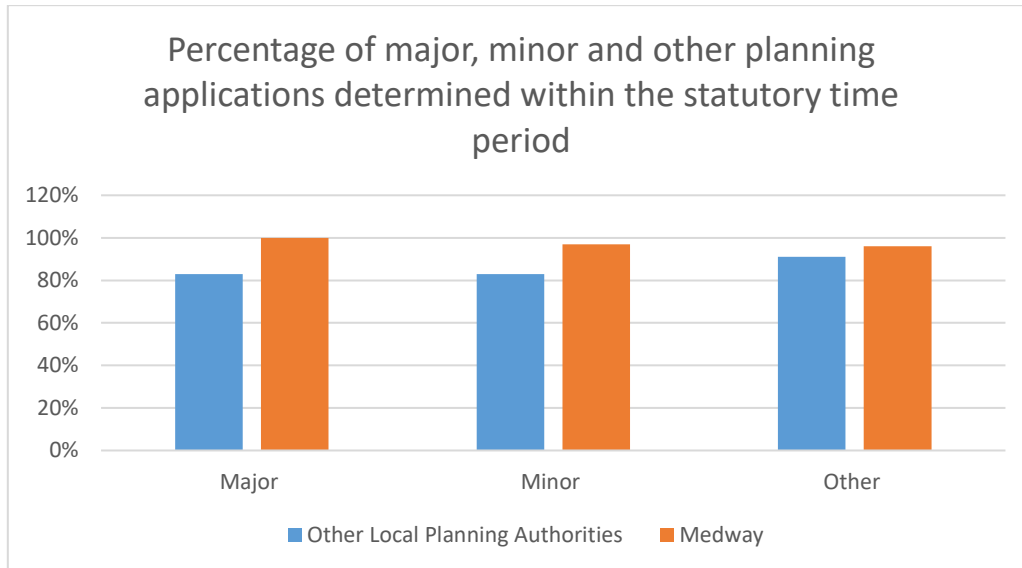


Figure 2 Applications within the agreed Planning Extension Agreement

Government produced statistics and league tables compares performance to the national average. The chart below compares the performance with the latest data available for other local authorities for applications with a Planning Extension Agreement for the period 1 July to 30 September 2024

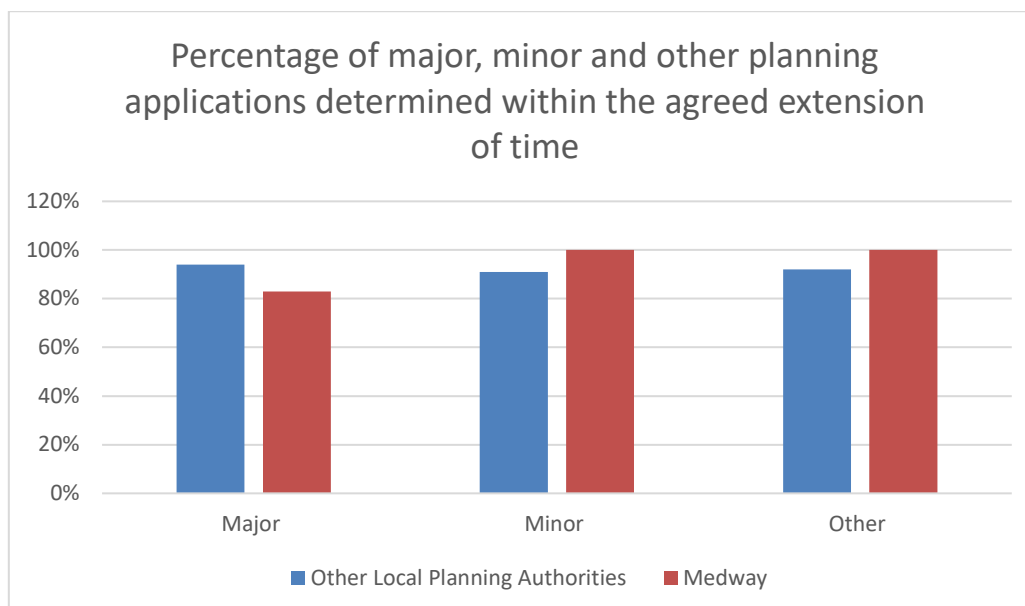


Figure 3 Total planning applications decided in time

Government produced statistics and league tables compares performance to the national average. The chart below compares performance with the latest data available for other local authorities for the total percentage of applications determined within the statutory timeframe and/or the agreed time for the period 1 July to 30 September 2024.

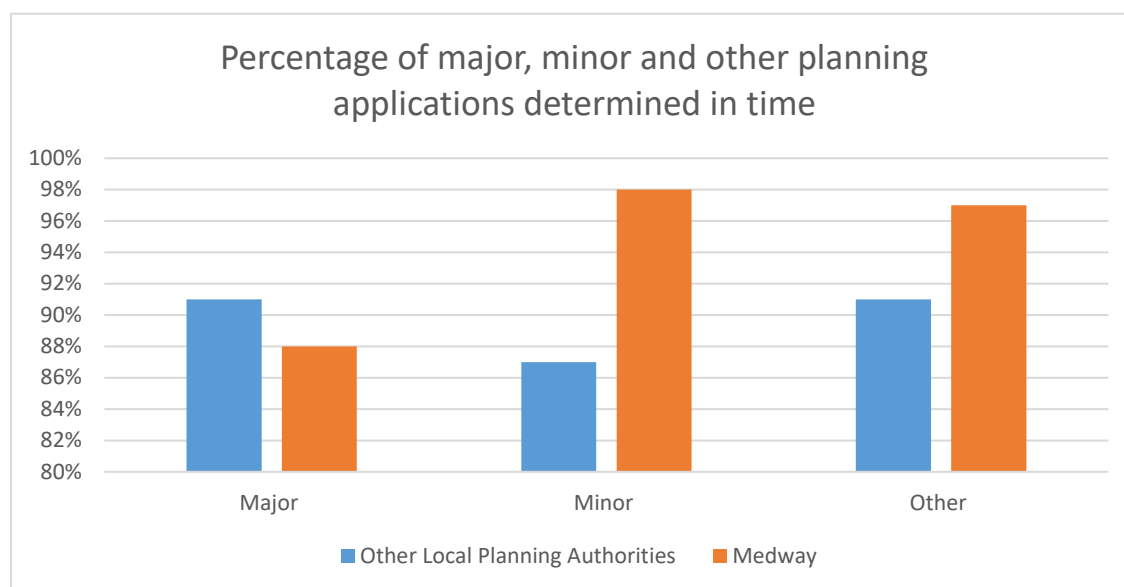


Figure 4 Medway performance compared with other Kent Planning Authorities for the year ending June 2024

Local Planning Authority	Percentage of decisions granted	% with an Extension of Time	Major dev % decided within 13wks	Non-major devt % decided within 8 wks	Householder devt % decided within 8 wks
Medway	90%	20%	39%	62%	86%
Ashford	79%	35%	15%	43%	73%
Canterbury	90%	42%	21%	22%	40%
Dartford	75%	39%	52%	33%	65%
Dover	92%	44%	7%	31%	64%
Folkestone and Hythe	81%	22%	6%	60%	85%
Gravesham	69%	20%	42%	62%	82%
Maidstone	78%	23%	45%	66%	83%
Sevenoaks	83%	29%	45%	56%	77%
Swale	87%	50%	14%	28%	63%
Thanet	87%	39%	13%	38%	62%
Tonbridge and Malling	86%	54%	18%	31%	38%
Tunbridge Wells	94%	19%	66%	66%	86%

Appendix C: Appeals

Figure 1 Number of appeal decisions received from January 2024 to December 2024

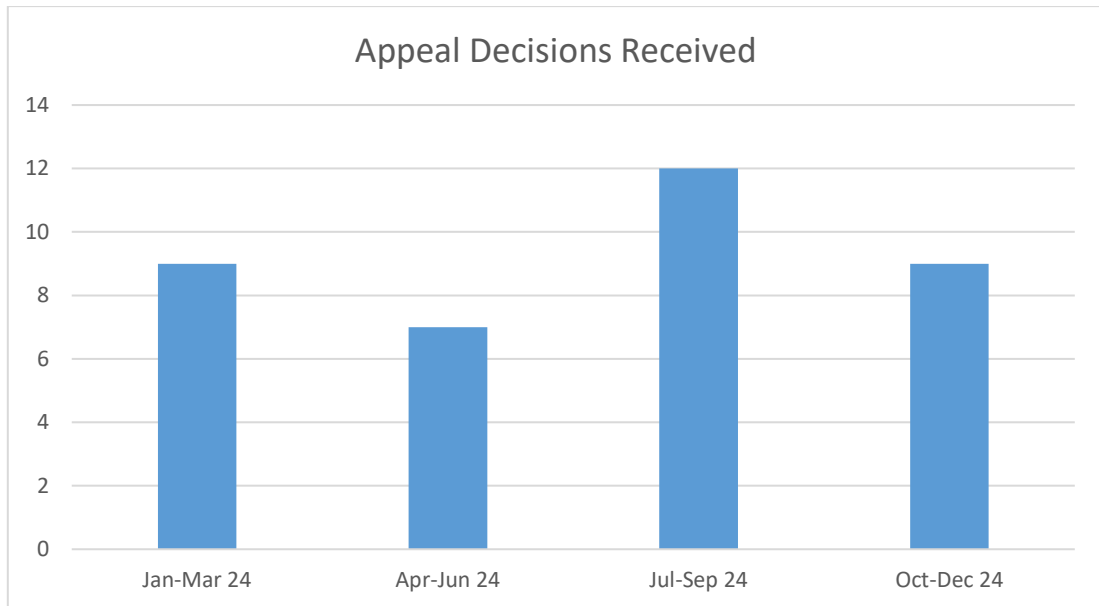


Figure 2 Number of Appeals allowed / dismissed from January 2024 to December 2024

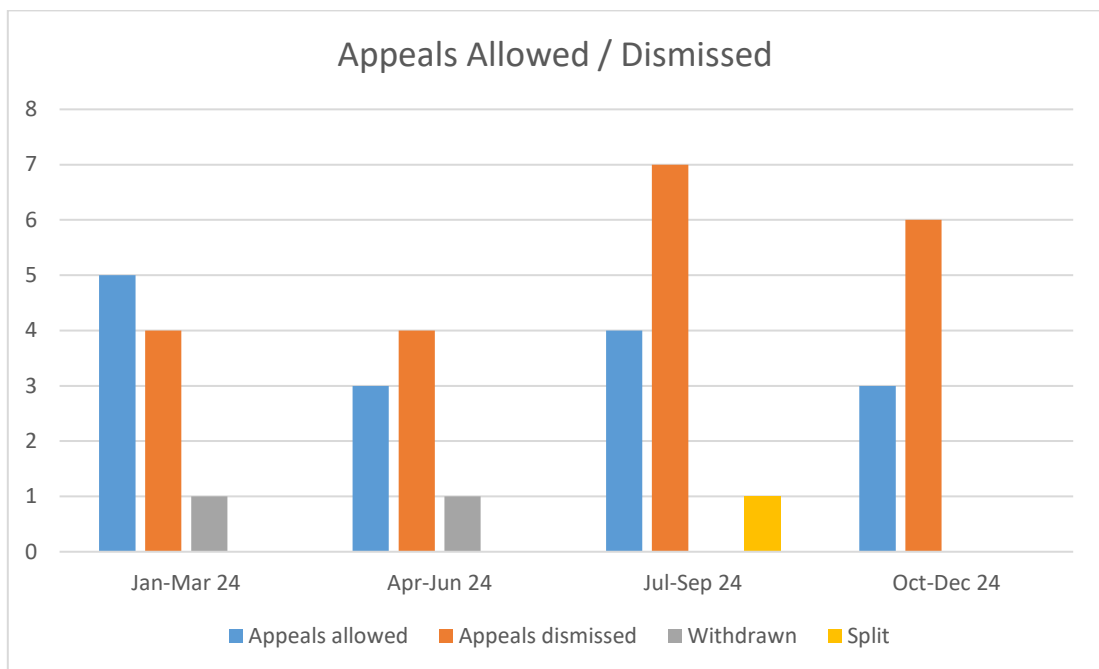
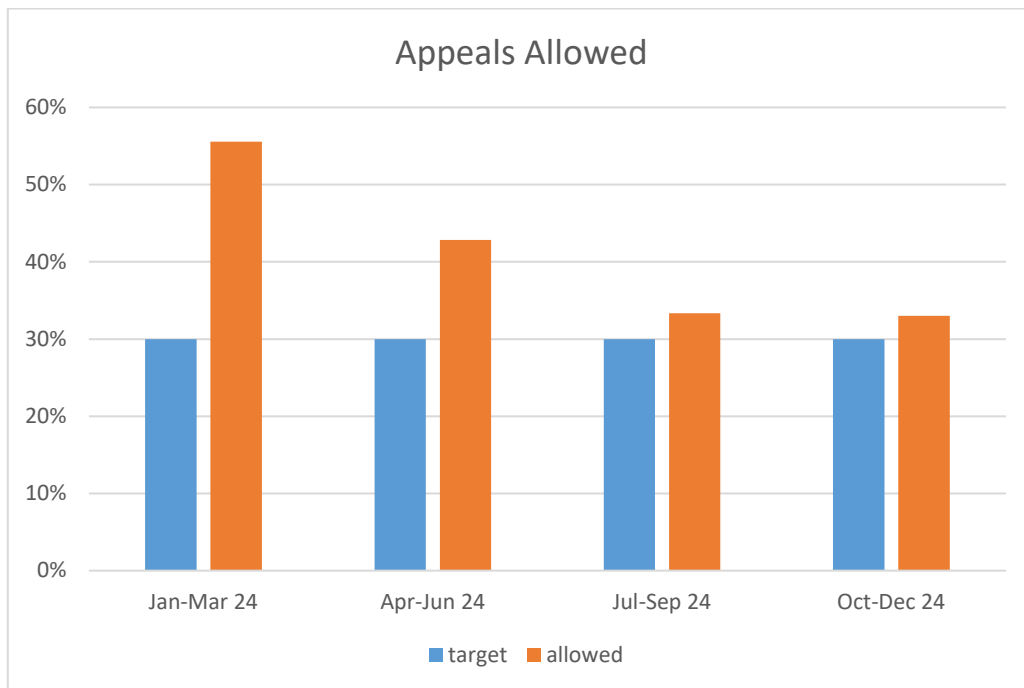
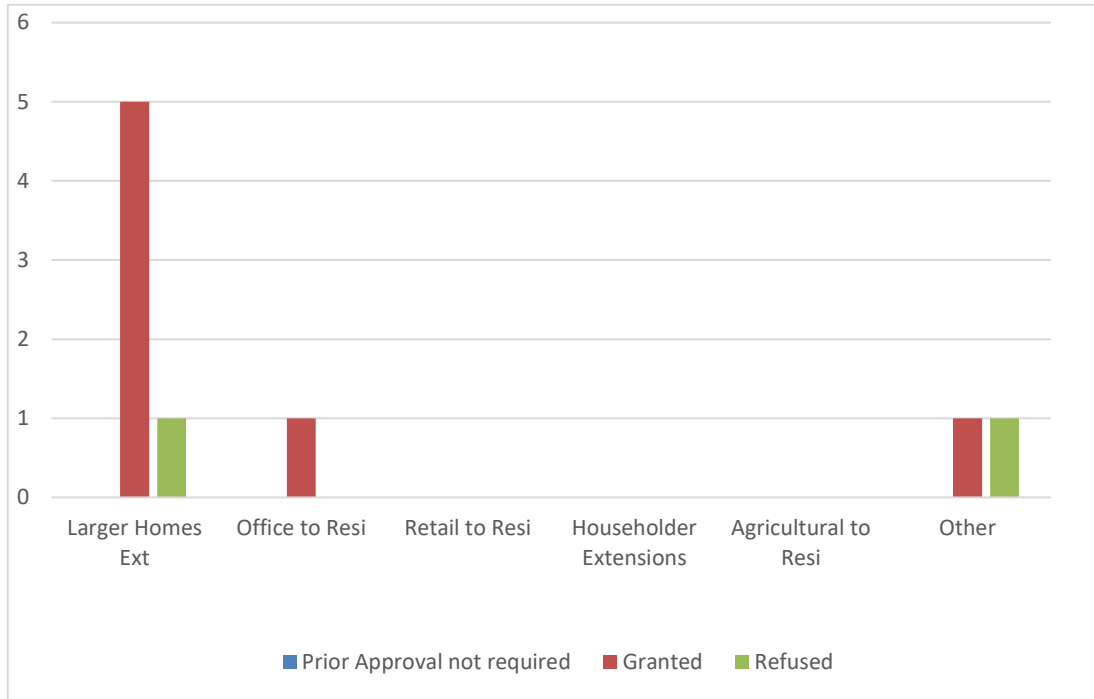


Figure 3 Percentage of appeals allowed against target of 30% from January 2024 to December 2024



Appendix D: Applications for Prior Approvals for Permitted Developments

Figure 1 Number of prior approvals for permitted developments for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024



Appendix E:

Figure 1

Number of units under construction

Year	No of units under construction as at 31 March (net)
2015	857
2016	760
2017	805
2018	1202
2019	1486
2020	1629
2021	1925
2022	1752
2023	2,061
2024	1,328

Figure 2

Number of units completed

	Year 2019/20	Year 2020/21	Year 2021/22	Year 2022/23	Year 2023/24
Completions	1130	1082	1102	950	1300
Requirement	1662	1586	1675	1667	1685
Surplus/Deficit	-532	-504	-573	-717	-358

Figure 3

Housing completions comparison with other authorities in Kent

This data includes mobile and temporary dwellings (such as houseboats) so varies from the data published in the AMR

Authority	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Ashford	923	753	1,144	627	1,001	471
Canterbury	311	417	319	692	644	660
Dartford	960	487	553	540	738	637
Dover	374	370	411	625	543	719
Gravesham	302	174	250	421	419	293
Maidstone	1,215	1,424	1,446	1,627	1,064	1,040
Medway	657	1,142	1,087	1,103	960	1,303
Sevenoaks	299	477	260	267	261	114
Folkestone and Hythe	435	451	478	454	454	373
Swale	956	1,065	892	989	818	757
Thanet	352	427	596	548	617	844
Tonbridge and Malling	361	410	380	467	492	377
Tunbridge Wells	396	317	533	518	636	611

Appendix F: Enforcement

Figure 1 Number of enforcement notices served and prosecutions from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

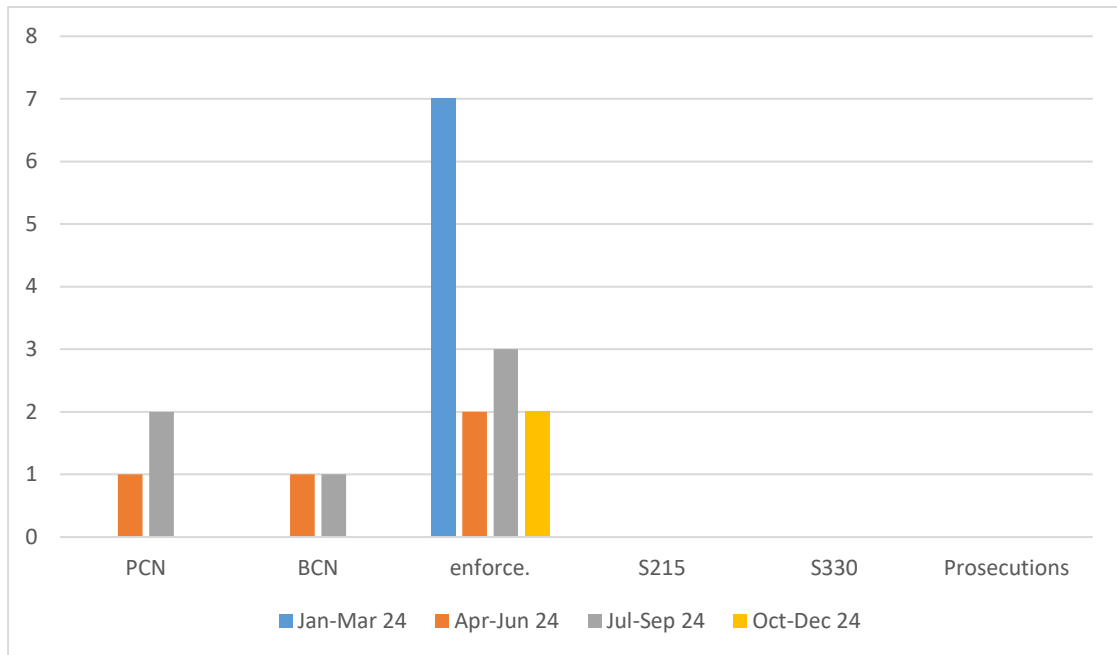


Figure 2 Number of enforcement related complaints and activities from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024



Appendix G: Tree Preservation Order Applications

Figure 1 TPO applications received from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

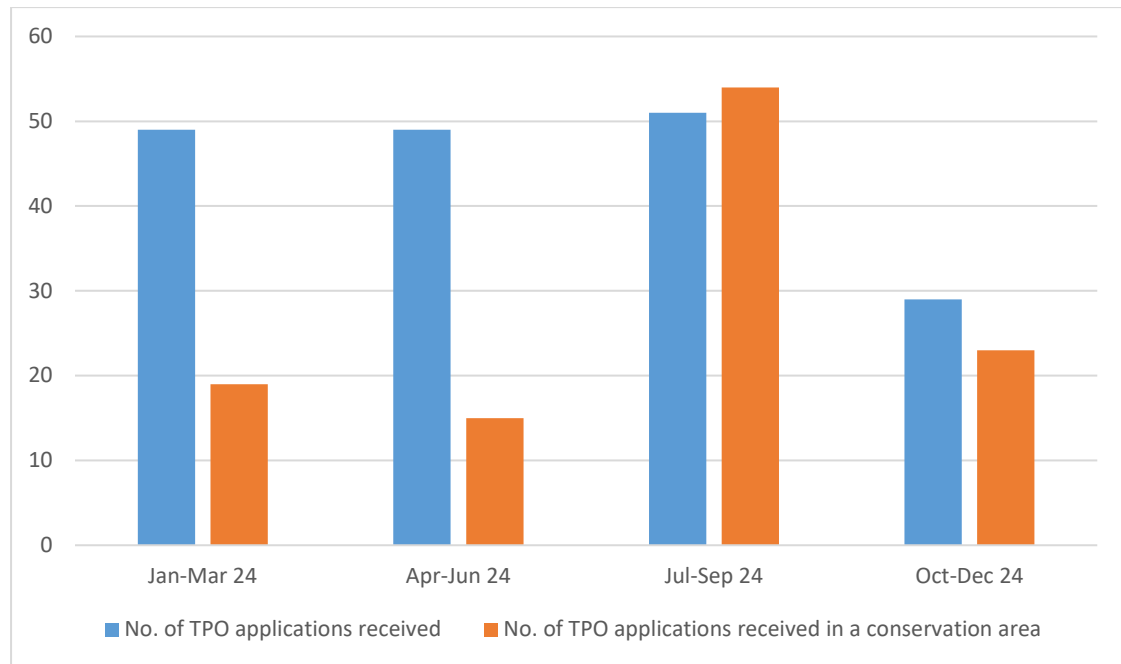


Figure 2 TPO applications determined from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

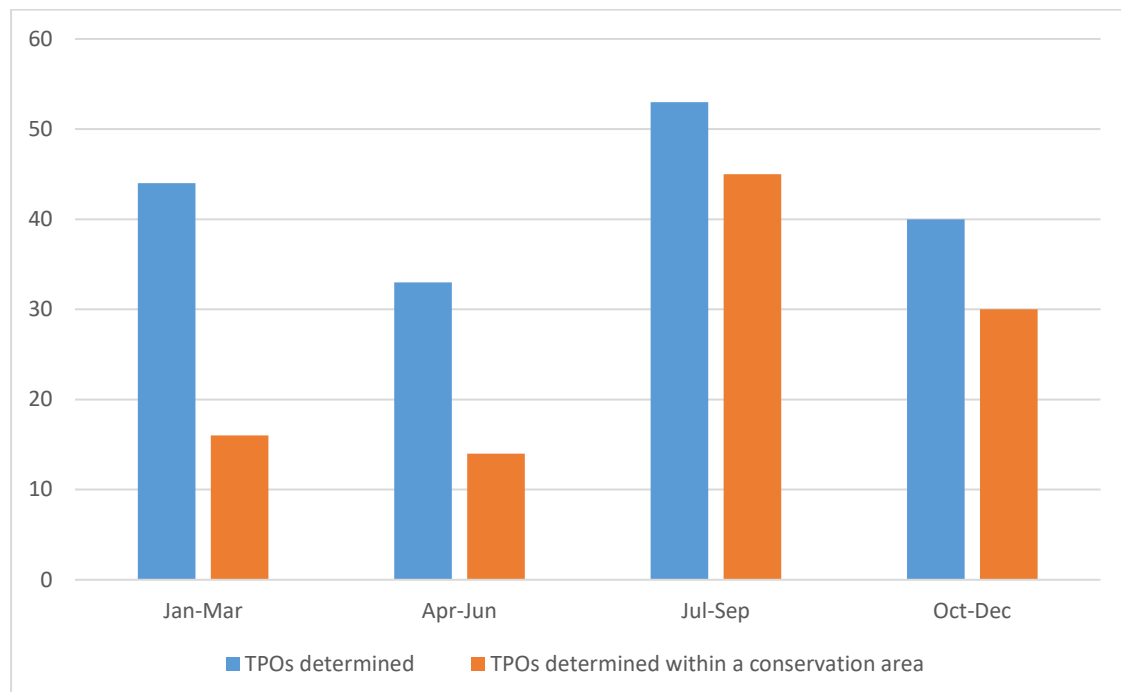
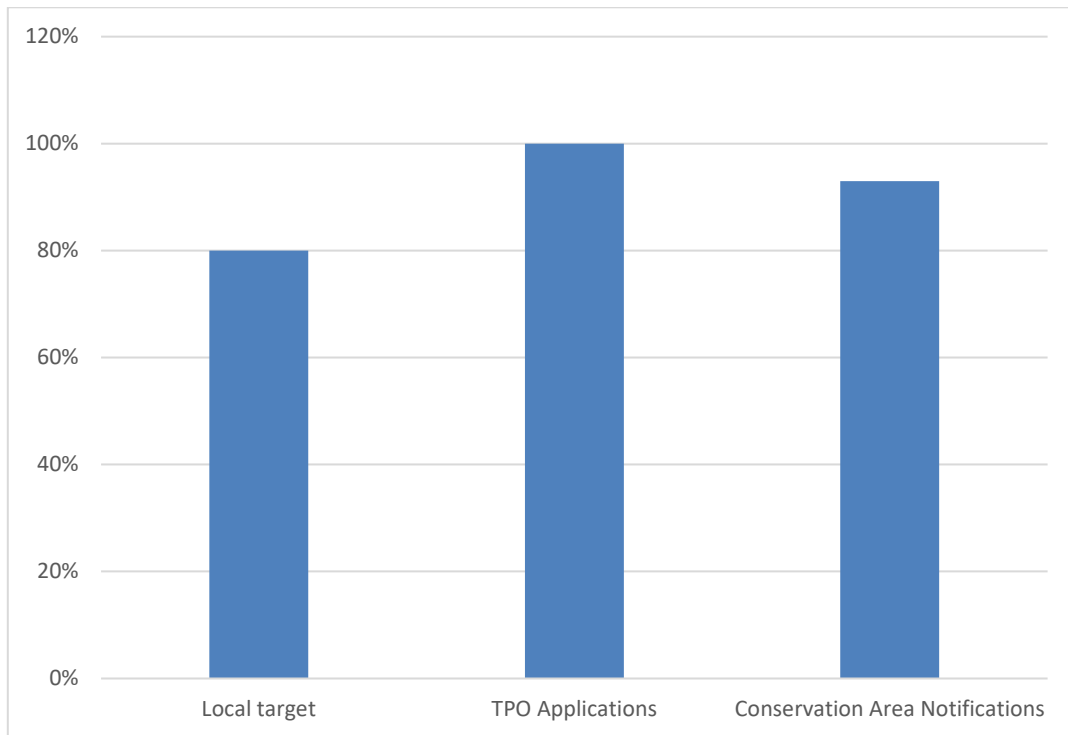
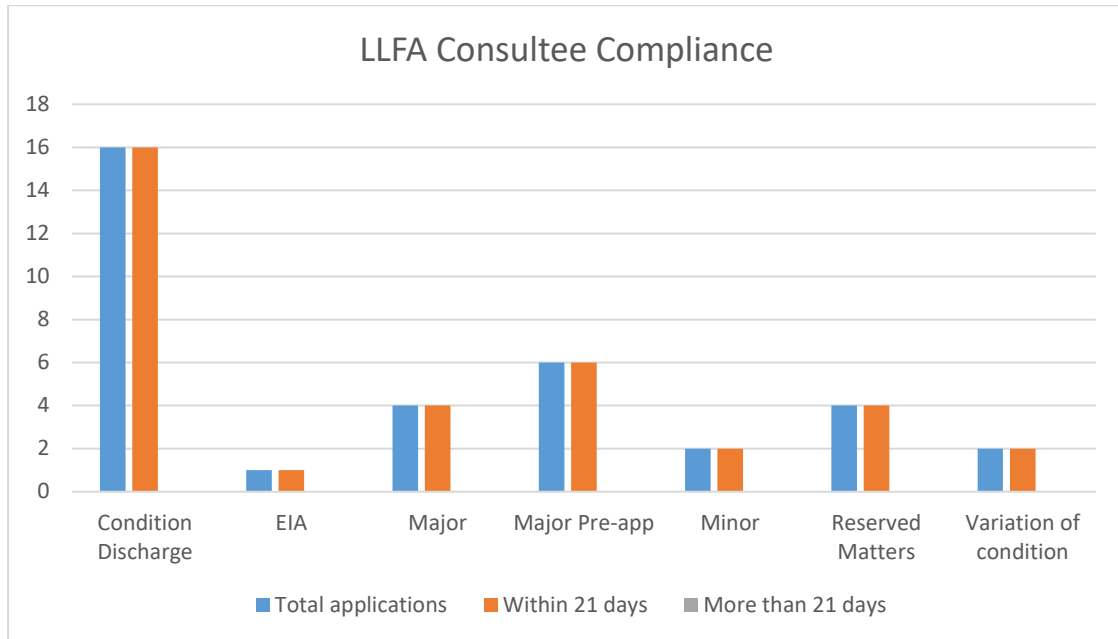


Figure 3 TPO and Conservation Area Notification applications determined within target time from October and December 2024



Appendix H: Lead Local Flood Authority Consultee Compliance

Statutory Consultee compliance results from 1 October to 31 December 2024



Overall compliance for all types of consultations received is 100%. The internally set target is 80%.

Appendix I: Complaints and Compliments

Complaints can be submitted online, in writing, in person at a local community hub and by phone. We aim to reply with a full written response within 10 working days. The chart below shows number of complaints received.

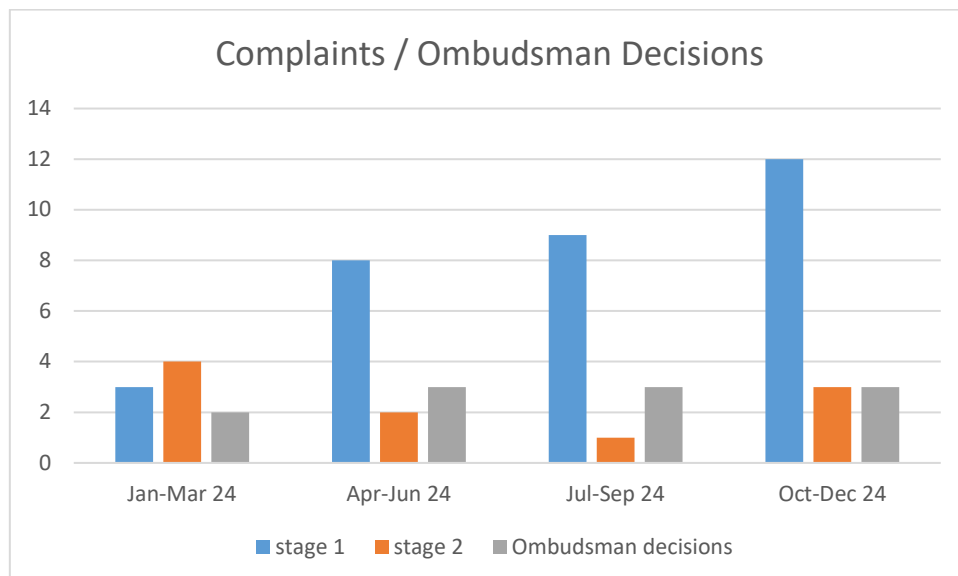
The corporate complaints procedure involves 2 stages:

Stage 1: The complaint is investigated within service and a draft response is provided to the Customer Relations Team who then writes to the complainant. The response letter also includes a final paragraph providing information on how to take the matter further if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

Stage 2: The complainant receives a response from the Customer Relations Officer giving details on how to contact the Ombudsman should the complainant remain dissatisfied.

Stage 1 corporate complaints are now categorised into generic and service specific categories. Complaints for planning are expected to fall mainly into the category whereby customers disagree or are unhappy with the Council's decision. For the period 1 October to 31 December 2024, 15 corporate complaints were responded to; 5 where unhappy with the Council's decision, 5 where communication was not satisfactory, 2 related to poor timeliness, 3 where the service requested or required was not provided.

Of the 15 complaints which were responded to, 93.33% were answered within the target time, 3 of which were escalated to Stage 2. 8 complaints were dismissed where no fault was found, 2 were partially upheld and 5 were upheld.



Complaints Upheld

- 2 relate to the same complaint for the non-determination of TPO application. Apology provided and applicant can appeal against non-determination with the Planning Inspectorate.
- Significant delay responding to a High Hedge complaint. Apology provided. Delay due to consultant undergoing surgery.
- Lack of response from planning officer. Apology provided and details on how to appeal provided.
- Lack of response to enquiry in relation to listed building consent. Apology provided and information provided.

Complaint Partially Upheld

- Delay responding to a High Hedge complaint although there is no statutory timeframe for dealing with this type of complaint. Apology provided.
- Enforcement case opened due to additional information being provided in relation to the installation of a digital advertisement adjacent to the highway.

Ombudsman

There were three decisions issued by the Ombudsman:

- One was closed due to no contact from the complainant.
- One about a lack of enforcement action on an area of green space allegedly being used as a car park will not be investigated as there is not enough evidence of fault in the way the Council failed to respond to the complaint. It is not considered the complainant suffered a significant personal injustice to warrant an investigation.
- One investigation found there was no fault.

Following consultation, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) launched The Complaint Handling Code in February 2024. Local Councils are encouraged to adopt the Code as soon as they are able to do so. The LGSCO intend to start considering the Code as part of its processes from April 2026. This gives local councils the opportunity to adopt the Code successfully into working practices. Medway have set up a Task and Finish group to implement the recommendations of the Code.

Compliments

The Planning Service has received a number of compliments during the period from both internal and external customers. Comments include:

- You are incredible and an amazing asset to Medway.
- Thank you so much for all your time and efforts over the last few weeks to provide us with your advice and co-ordinating that of your fellow officers.
- I appreciate your assistance and support throughout the application process.

- I myself have to deal with the public on a day to day basis and I personally know that it is only when people want to complain that emails are sent and it is very rare that people actually praise and thank someone for helping and supporting them. Therefore, can you please pass on my thanks and gratitude for the information and patience that the officer has shown in helping me. I wish there were more people like her and in this day and age when people are stressed due to internal and external pressures she has taken the time and patience to explain processes and procedures to me. She is an asset to your department. So in light of this can you please thank her personally for me.
- I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to both of you. Your professionalism, patience, and sound advice have been instrumental in helping me reach this milestone. I truly could not have done it without your support.
- I was very grateful for the way in which you greeted me and was impressed by the way you conducted the room. Thank you very much to you, your colleagues and all the councillors that attended.
- Thank you for your time and effort. You have been amazing and I really appreciate your efforts.