

Planning Committee

19 November 2025

Performance Report 1 July to 30 September 2025

Report from: Mark Breathwick, Assistant Director, Culture & Community - Regeneration Culture Environment and Transformation

Author: Dave Harris, Chief Planning Officer

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 July to 30 September 2025.

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 Changing legislative context, including new and proposed reforms to the Planning system, will impact on the ability to manage development and will place additional demands on Planning Service resources.

3.3 The Planning and Infrastructure Bill, was introduced to Parliament on 11 March and will see significant measures introduced to speed up planning decisions to boost housebuilding and remove unnecessary blockers and challenges to the delivery of development. The Government published an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 12 December 2024, together with some updates to Planning Practice Guidance.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill has had its 3rd reading in the House of Commons and is now about to enter the Report stage in the House of Lords. The Bill will introduce a system of 'strategic planning' known as spatial development strategies, which will look across multiple local planning authorities for the most sustainable areas to build and ensure there is a clear join-up between development needs and infrastructure requirements. These plans will be produced by mayoral authorities or by local planning authorities. At the present time, in the absence of Kent and Medway being a priority area for devolution, the spatial development strategy (regional planning) for our area will be produced jointly by Kent and Medway. There will also be a new and much speedier process for producing Local Plans within a 30-month period. The new Local Plans will have to have regard to and be consistent with the SDS as well as the NPPF.

The Government is considering bringing in a national scheme of delegation and suggesting changes to Planning Committees. Medway has responded to the consultation.

The Government is also considering bringing in the ability for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to set locally planning fees. In light of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), for Medway this will require discussions with those authorities likely to be part of the new unitary.

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 July to 30 September 2025 the Authority received 238 planning applications; this is compared to 256 for the same period in 2024. For the year 2024/25 the Authority received 1,093, this compares to 1,102 in 2023/24, 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 July to 30 September 2025 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 93.22%. 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 98.84%. 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 January to March 2025, 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 also exceeded the national average for all types of types of applications (see Appendix B).
- 4.9 During the period 1 July to 30 September 2025, 46 applications with Planning Extension Agreements were decided with 100% being determined within the agreed extended timeframe.
- 4.10 During the period, 1 Planning Performance Agreement (PPAs) 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 Tree Preservation Order (TPO) applications 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 is 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 September 2024, shows the number of decisions overturned at appeal for major applications is 3.1% and 0.9% for non-major applications.

- 4.16 The percentage of appeals allowed during the period 1 July to 30 September 2025 is 25%. A total of 16 appeal decisions were received, one of which was a Planning Committee overturn decision and one related to enforcement. Four of these appeals were allowed and twelve were dismissed. (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 receives 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 May 2025. 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 next assessment day is scheduled for 10 November.
- 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. Medway is performing well when compared against other Kent planning authorities (see Appendix B, figure 4).

- 4.23 Work of the Planning service on Open Digital Planning continues. MHCLG and Medway co-hosted 'ODP camp' at the Rochester Corn Exchange with 170 attendees and 57 Councils represented. The event was a great success with many positive comments received across social media platforms.
- 4.24 The Council's Internal Audit team carried out an audit of the Planning Obligations process. Based on the results of the work completed, the formal audit opinion for the area reviewed is that no action was identified as part of this audit.

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 Council's decisions are being defended robustly and that appropriate and defendable 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 defendable 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 At Full Council on 26 June 2025, members approved the publication of the regulation 19 Draft Local Plan. A six week period of consultation ran from 30 June to 11 August. There was a programme of staffed exhibitions at various places around Medway, as well as presentations to stakeholder and community groups, including the Major Developers forum on 7 July. The Regulation 19 Plan was accompanied by a raft of evidence based documents which have informed the Plan and are required to ensure the Plan is sound and legally compliant. This included a Sustainability appraisal, Habitat Regulations Assessment and a Strategic Transport Assessment.
- 7.2 Duty to Cooperate meetings were held with neighbouring LPAs and statutory consultees on the preparation of the new Plan and strategic matters, including strategic transport and unmet housing need. There is specific work with Maidstone Borough Council in relation to cross border planning matters on the Lidsing Garden Community and Capstone Valley area. This involves formal meetings at member and officer level. There is cross border working with Gravesham Borough Council in relation to Chapter Farm, west of Strood and the LPAs' emerging Local Plans. There are bi-monthly meetings on Planning and Health infrastructure planning.
- 7.3 Around 540 individual responses were submitted to the consultation on the draft Local Plan. A range of issues were raised in the comments, including promotion of sites for development, and objections to site allocations; concerns about infrastructure capacity and certainty on delivery; environmental impacts. Many suggestions were made for changes to the wording of policies in the draft plan. The service has collated and reviewed the comments in preparation for publication with the submission of the plan for examination.
- 7.4 The Planning Service is liaising with officers from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Planning Inspectorate (PINS) in providing regular updates on the progress of the Local Plan and issues. The Council has signed a SLA with PINS to submit the plan for examination in November 2025. An experienced Programme Officer has been commissioned to work with the Planning Inspector and the council in running the examination process. The Service is completing a pre submission questionnaire for PINS for comment to assist with final submission and the examination process.
- 7.5 The Council has approved a Neighbourhood Plan area for the parish of Allhallows. Officers continue to liaise with the neighbourhood Plan groups in Stoke, high Halstow and Frindsbury Extra.
- 7.6 Work has taken place with the community on the Hoo Peninsula to facilitate the production of a Community Infrastructure Framework and this has helped to inform infrastructure work on the Local Plan. A feedback session was held for local community representatives in August.

7.7 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 July to 30 September 2025 £352,268.74 has been received via S106 contributions and £85,855.15 has been received for Habitat Regulations Agreements. This makes a total of £438,123.89. 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.

7.8 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.

7.9 Government published a revised Standard Method for calculating Local Housing need in April 2025. The figure for Medway is 1,636 homes a year. This is a slight increase on the previous figure of 1,594 homes a year and is a reflection of changes in affordability.

An updated Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (HDTAP) was approved by Cabinet and published in June 2025. 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. The HDTAP will be reviewed and updated within six months of the latest published results, as set out in the NPPG.

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 75% based on last year's HDT, Medway has to apply a buffer of 20%, produce an action plan and has the presumption in favour of sustainable development applied.

7.10 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 (which was the figure applicable at that time), following the standard method set by Government.

Details of housing completions are detailed in Appendix E.

7.11 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 Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) are invited to attend every other meeting.

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 May 2025.

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 July to September 2025 is £177,183. Total income for the year 2024/25 is £1,476,223.50. This compares to a total income for the year 2023/24 of £1,027,254.50, 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 2025. 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.

Lead officer contact

Dave Harris, Chief Planning Officer
Telephone: 01634 331575
Email: dave.harris@medway.gov.uk

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 Planning Performance Dashboard

https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F67da9b02b1857deda3da01ea%2FPlanning_Performance_Dashboard_Table_Final.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

Appendix A : Applications

Figure 1 Number of applications received and determined 2022/23 to September 2025

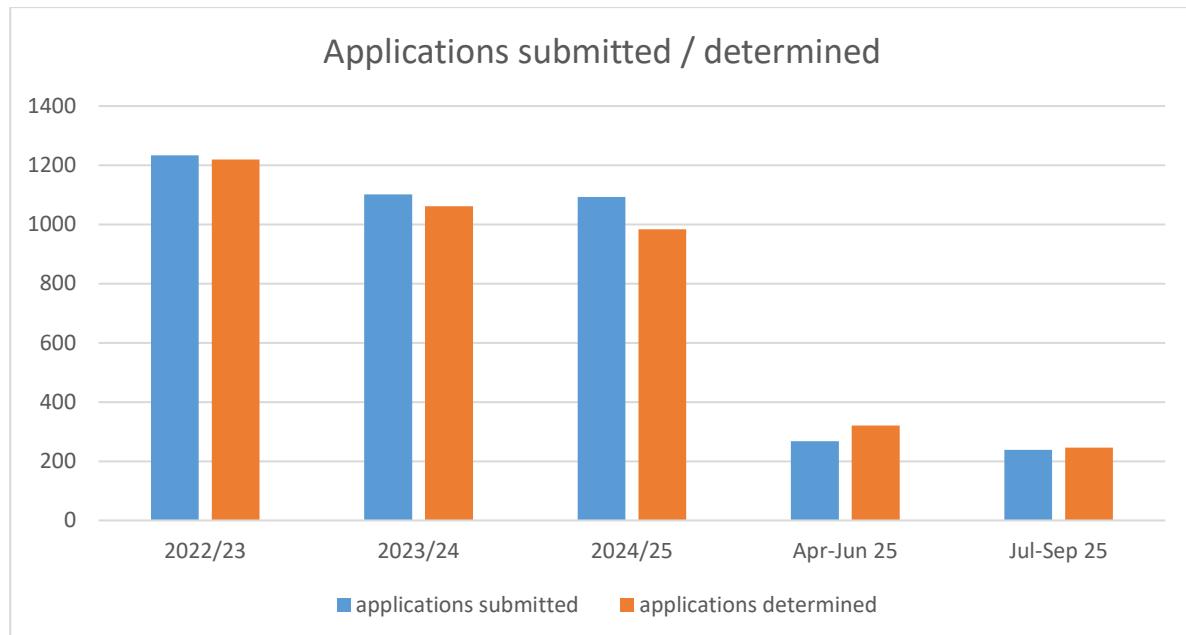


Figure 2 Percentage of “Major” applications determined against performance target October 2024 to September 2025

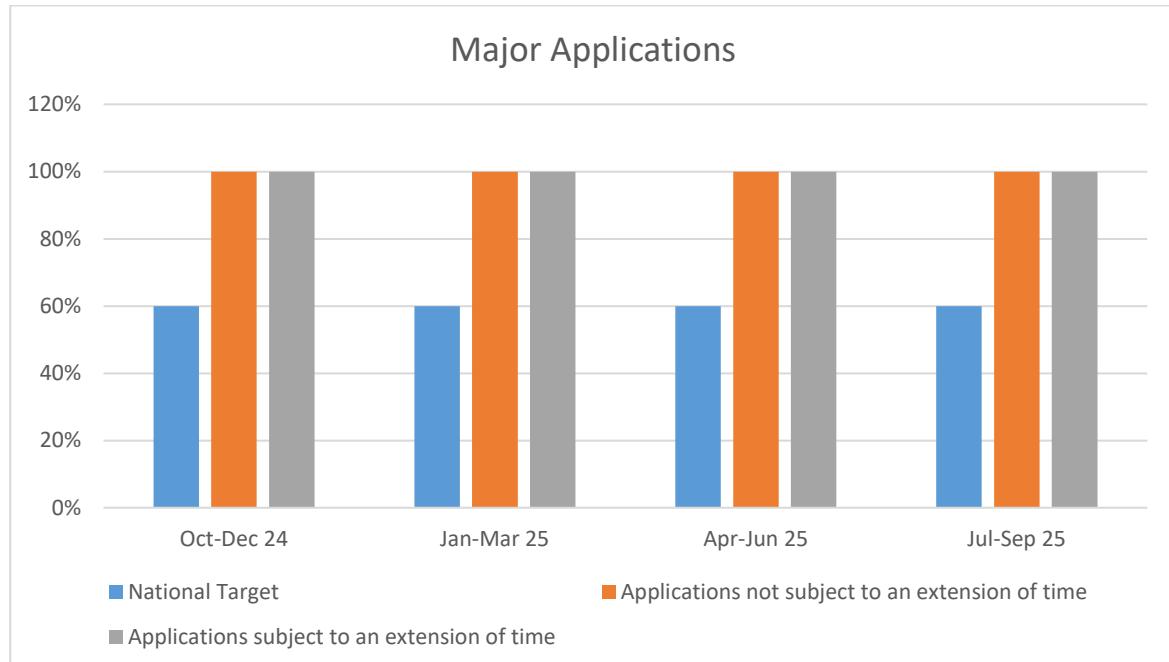


Figure 3 Percentage of “Minor” applications determined against performance target October 2024 to September 2025

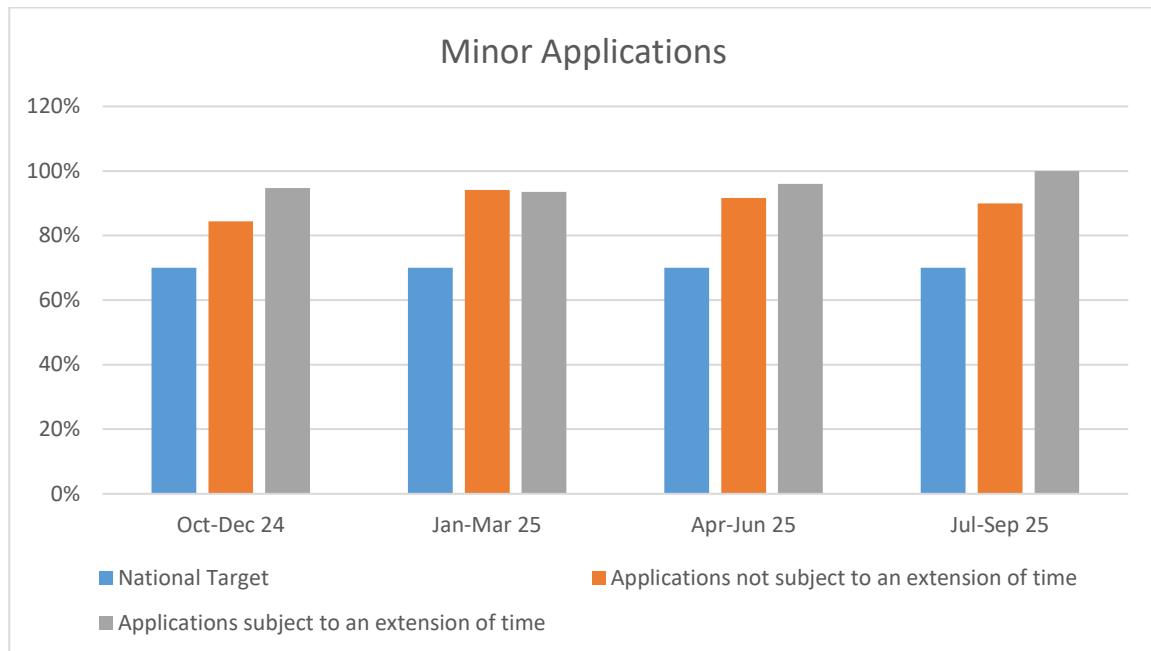


Figure 4 Percentage of “Other” applications determined against performance target October 2024 to September 2025

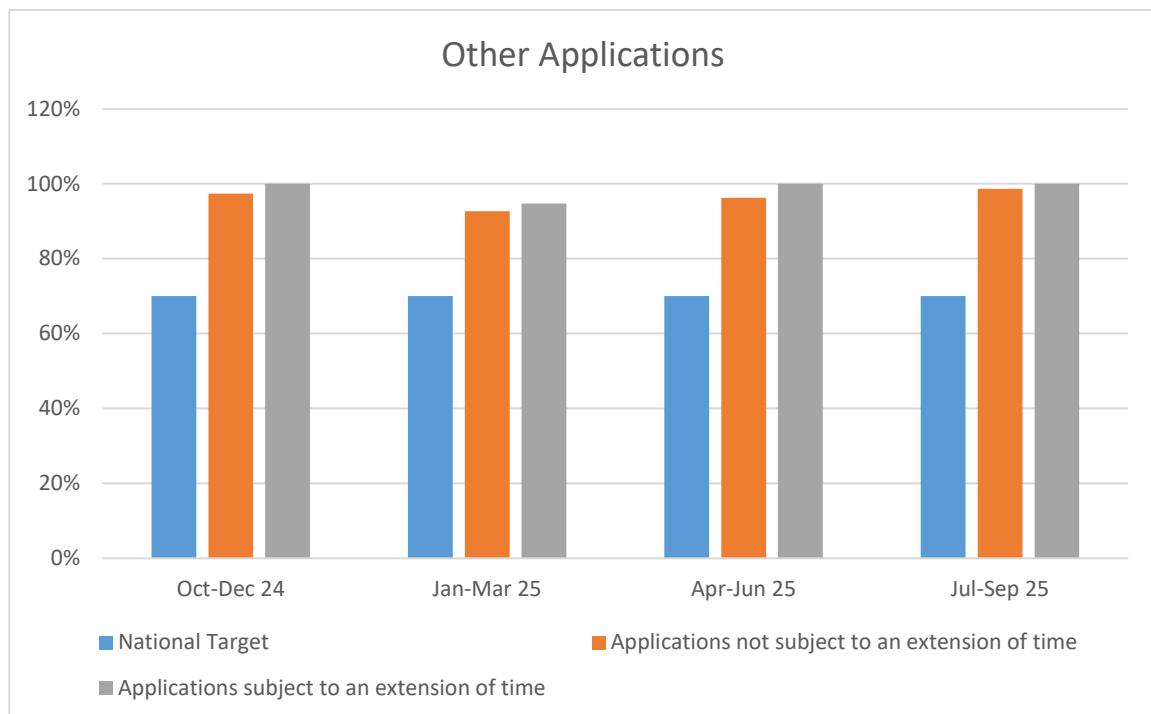
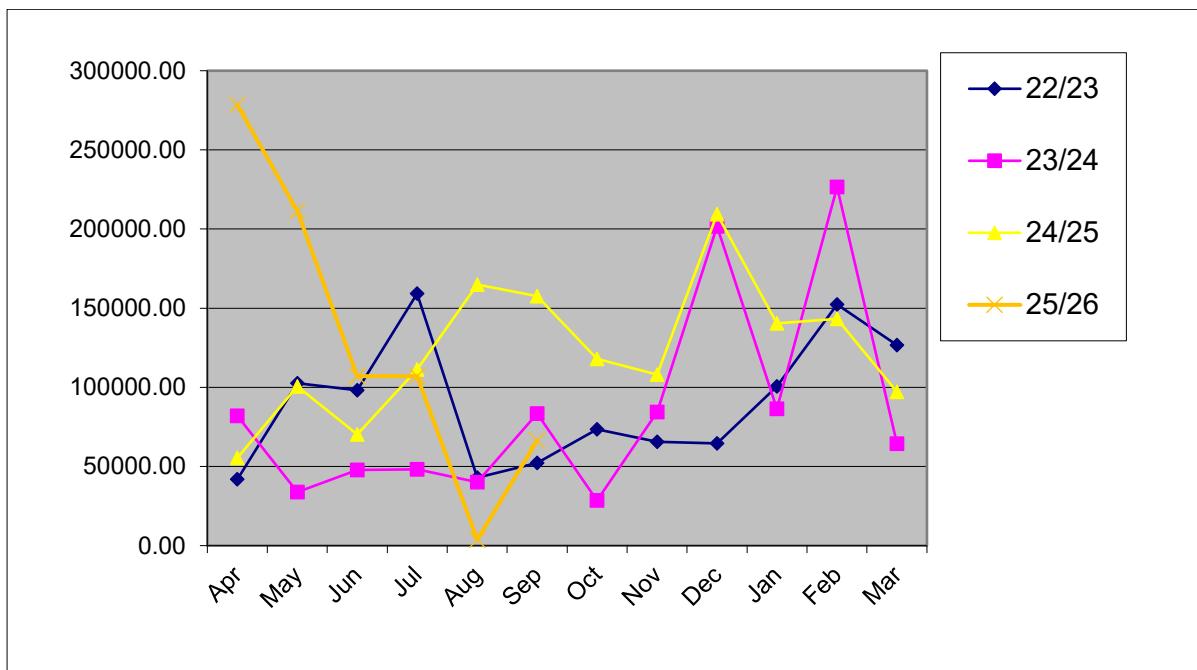


Figure 5 Planning application fees received for the period July to September 2025 and for the year 2024/25, 2023/24, and 2022/23



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 April to 30 June 2025.

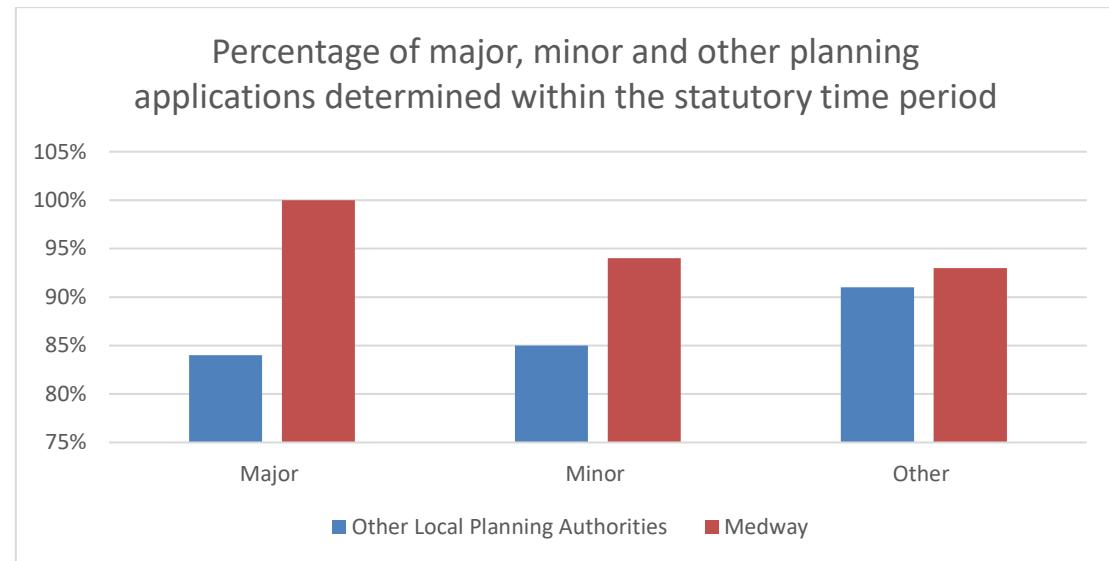


Figure 2 Applications within the agreed Planning Extension Agreement

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 April to 30 June 2025

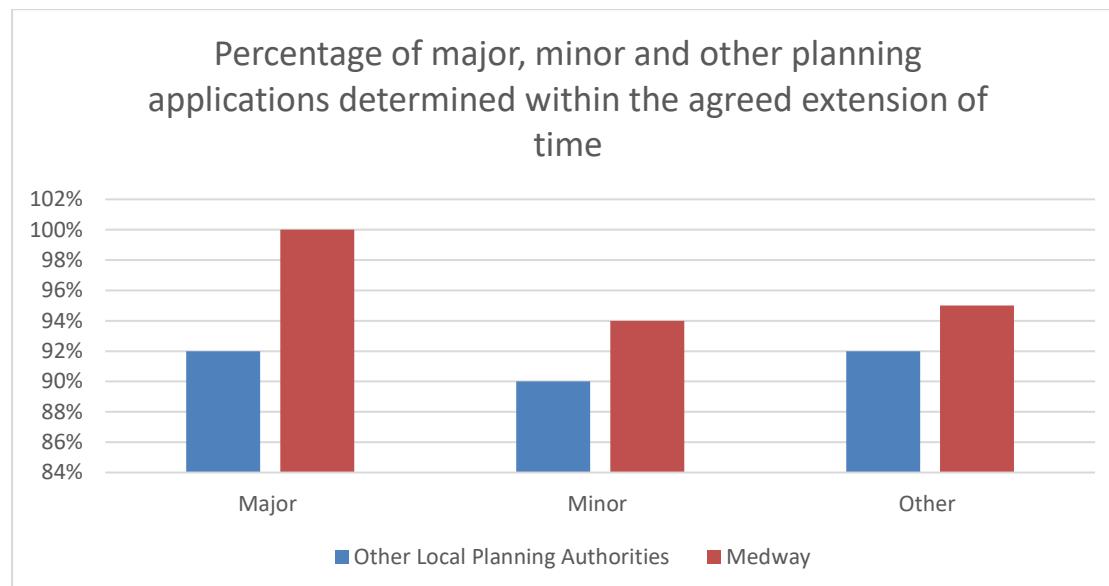


Figure 3 Total planning applications decided in time

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 April to 30 June 2025.

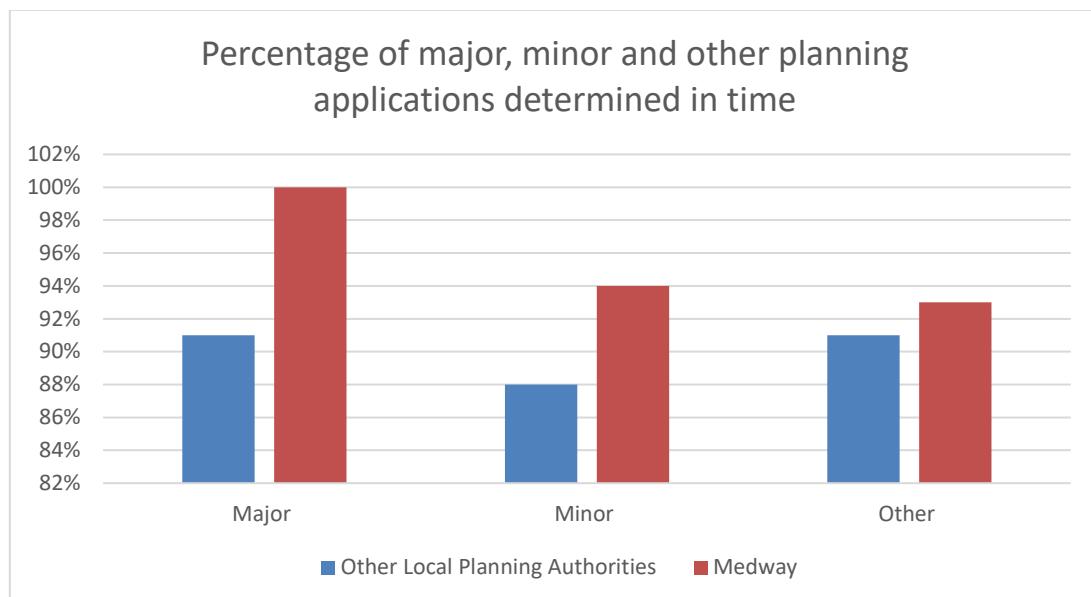


Figure 4 Medway performance compared with other Kent Planning Authorities for the year ending March 2025

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	92%	17%	35%	61%	90%
Ashford	85%	32%	28%	42%	83%
Canterbury	97%	46%	19%	21%	34%
Dartford	79%	47%	36%	31%	56%
Dover	91%	49%	10%	29%	55%
Folkestone and Hythe	83%	15%	15%	74%	93%
Gravesham	69%	23%	33%	52%	82%
Maidstone	78%	24%	38%	58%	86%
Sevenoaks	86%	30%	28%	55%	76%
Swale	88%	59%	15%	19%	52%
Thanet	86%	38%	11%	38%	57%
Tonbridge and Malling	89%	48%	20%	29%	47%
Tunbridge Wells	94%	20%	52%	59%	82%

Appendix C : Appeals

Figure 1 Number of appeal decisions received from October 2024 to September 2025

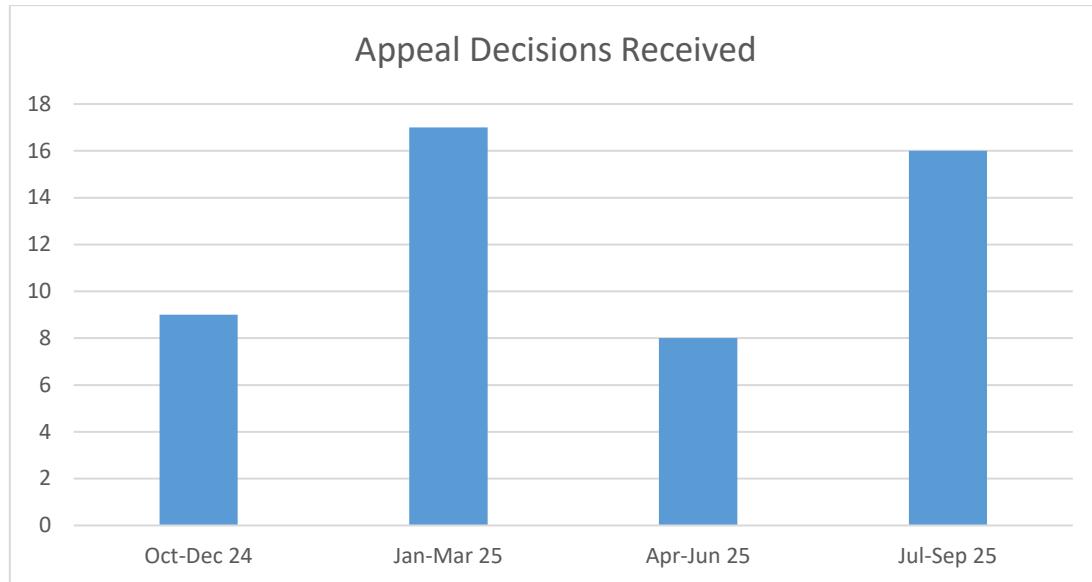


Figure 2 Number of Appeals allowed / dismissed from October 2024 to September 2025

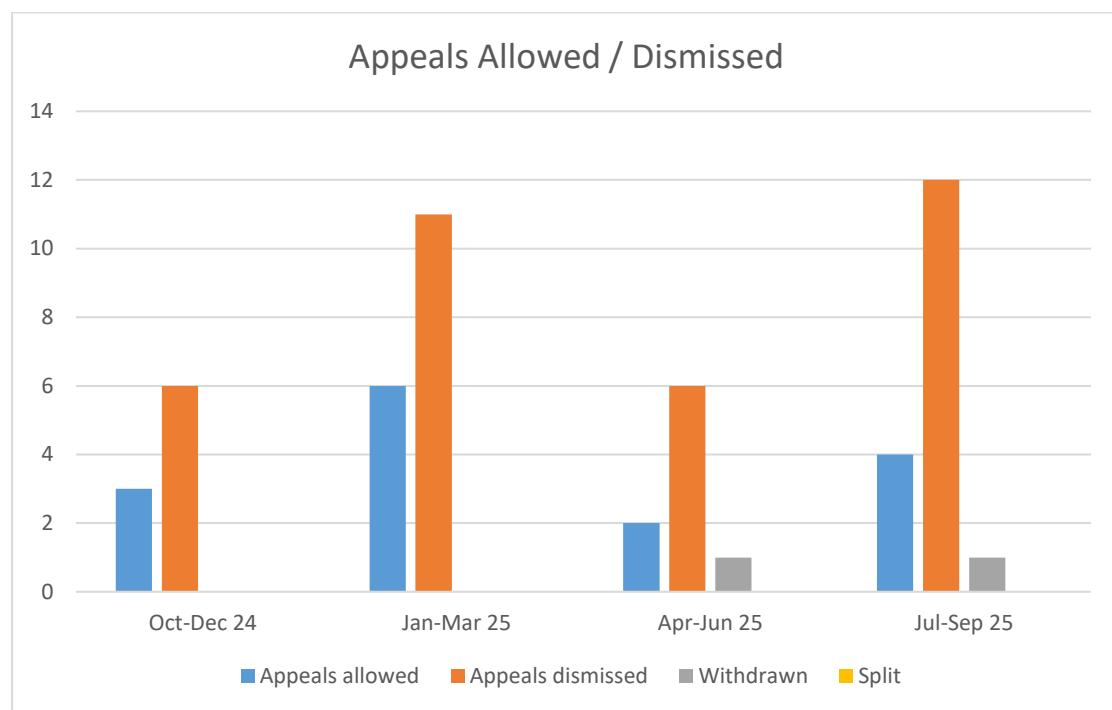
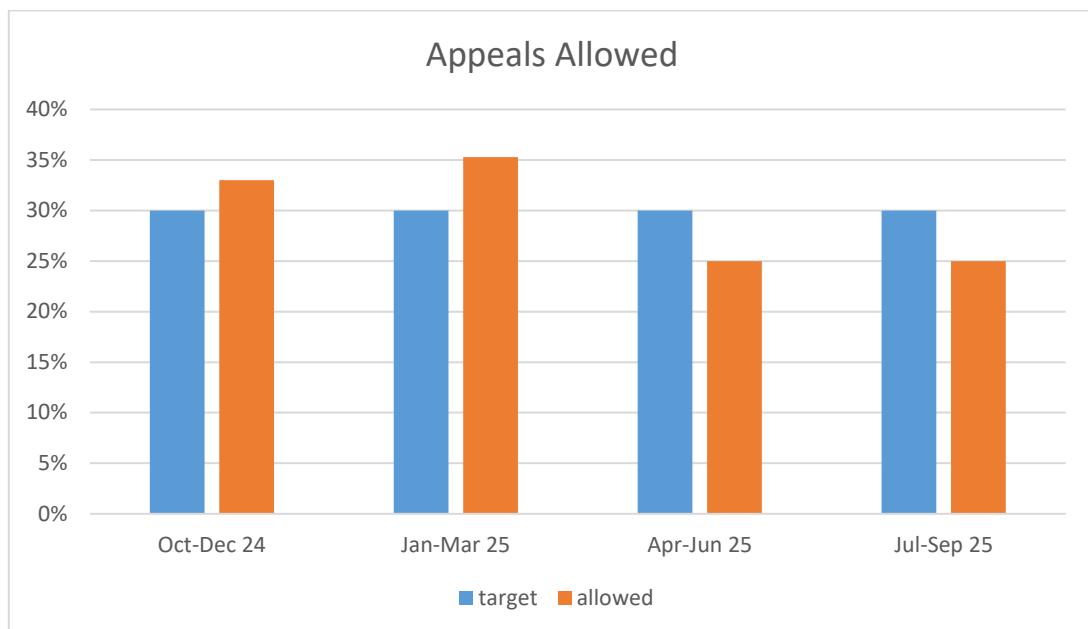
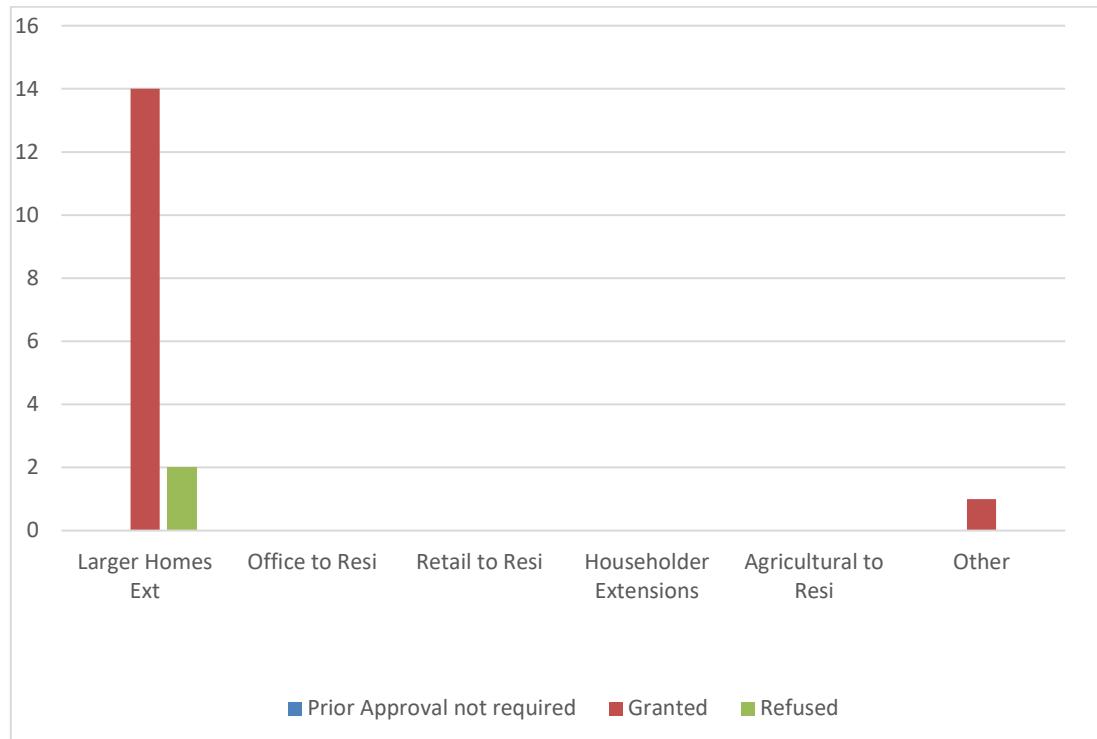


Figure 3 Percentage of appeals allowed against target of 30% from October 2024 to September 2025



Appendix D : Applications for Prior Approvals for Permitted Developments

Figure 1 Number of prior approvals for permitted developments for the period 1 July to 30 September 2025



Appendix E : Number of Units Under Construction

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 October 2024 to 30 September 2025

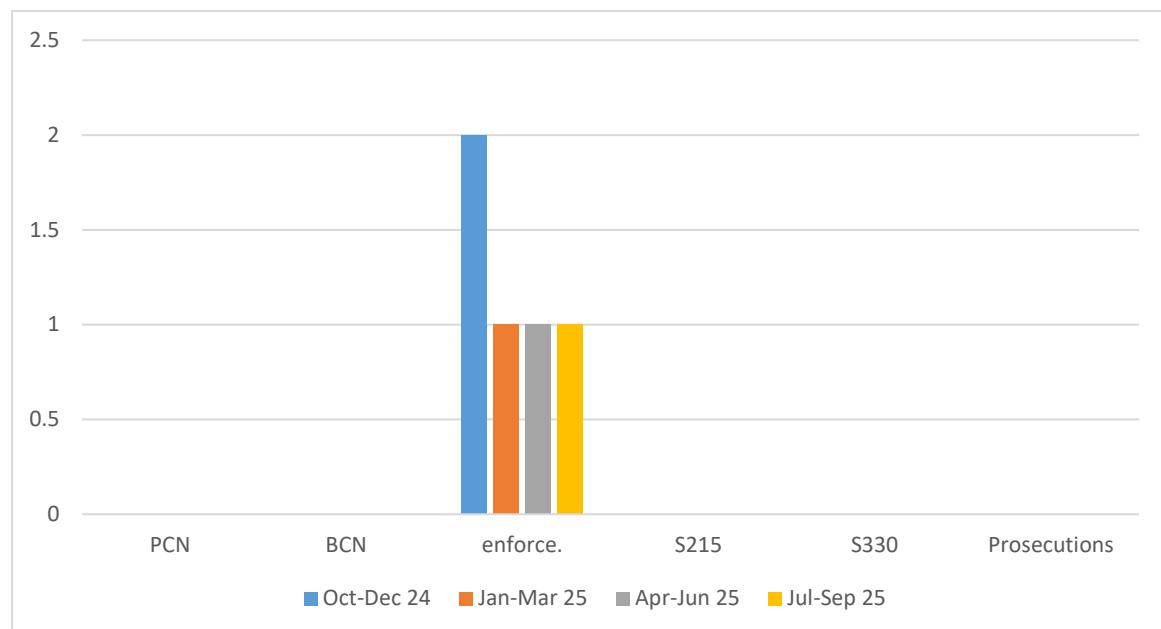
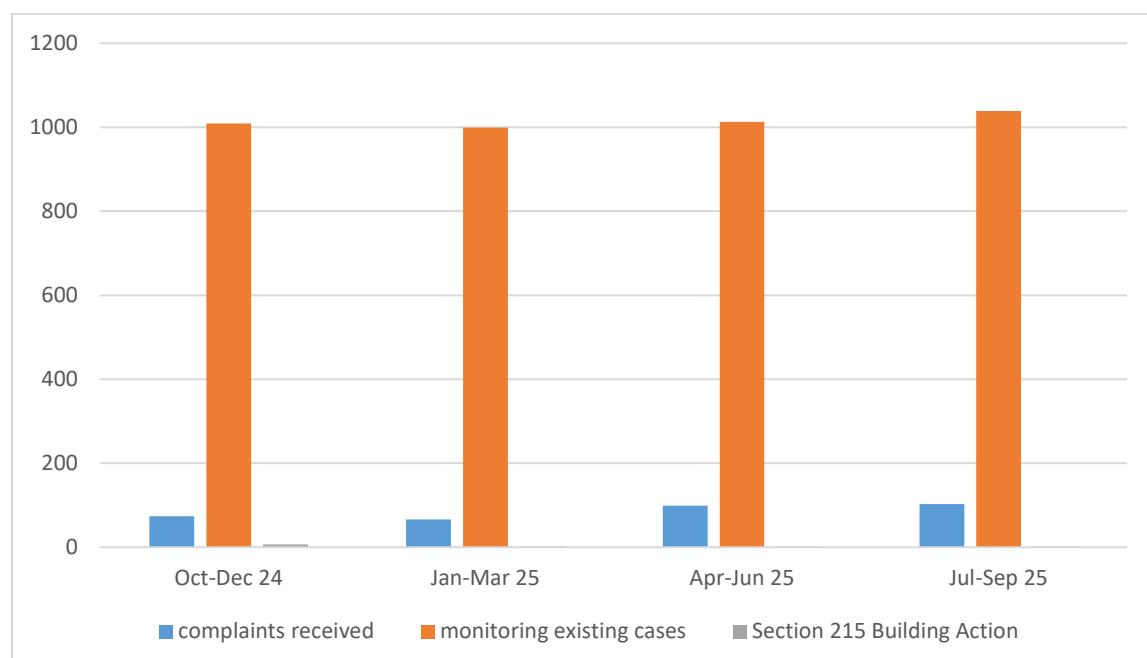


Figure 2 Number of enforcement related complaints and activities from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025



Appendix G : Tree Preservation Order Applications

Figure 1 TPO applications received from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025

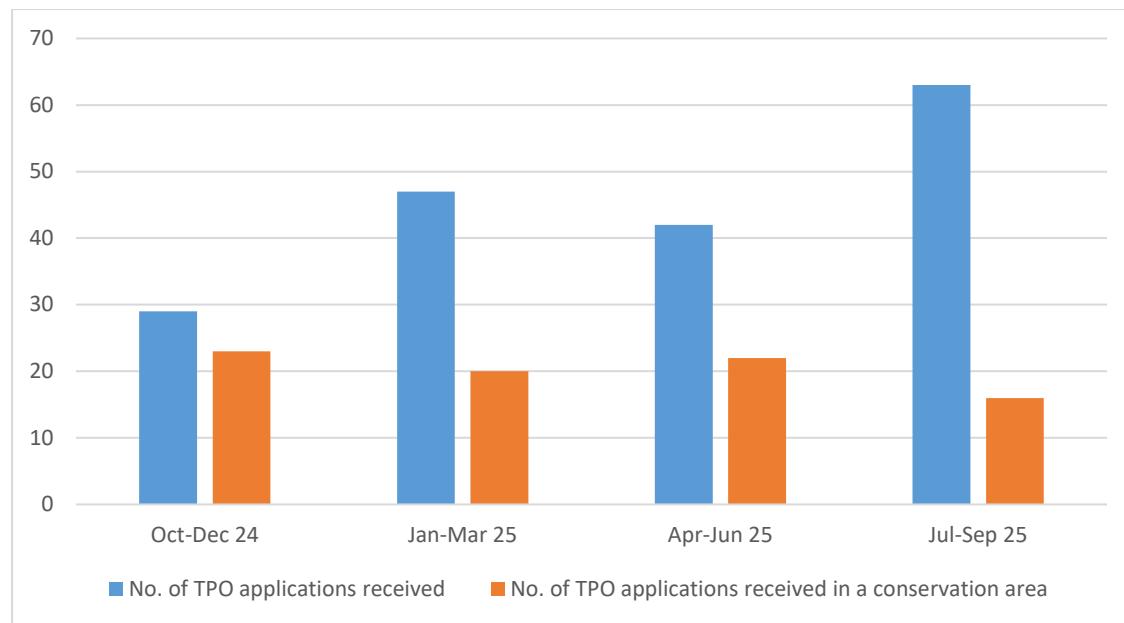


Figure 2 TPO applications determined from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025

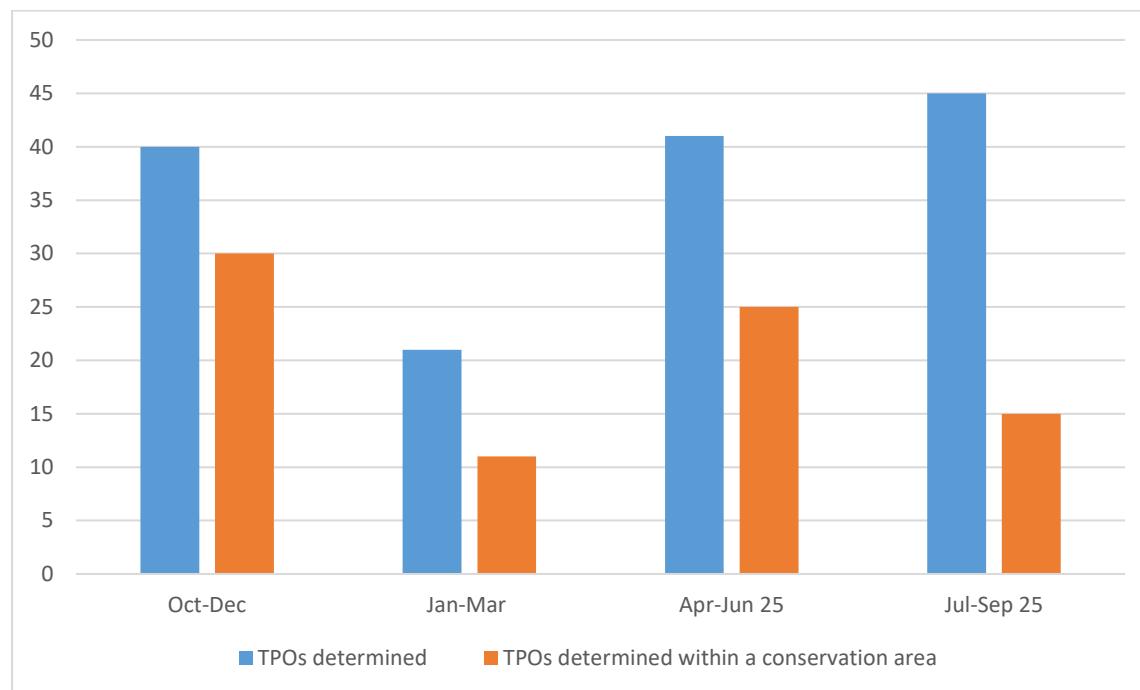
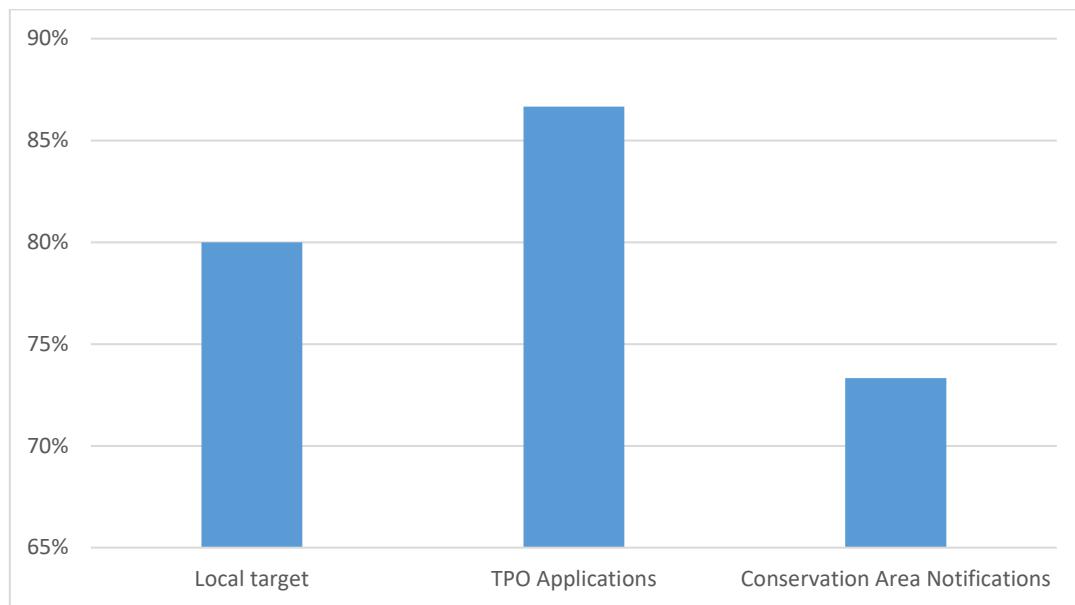
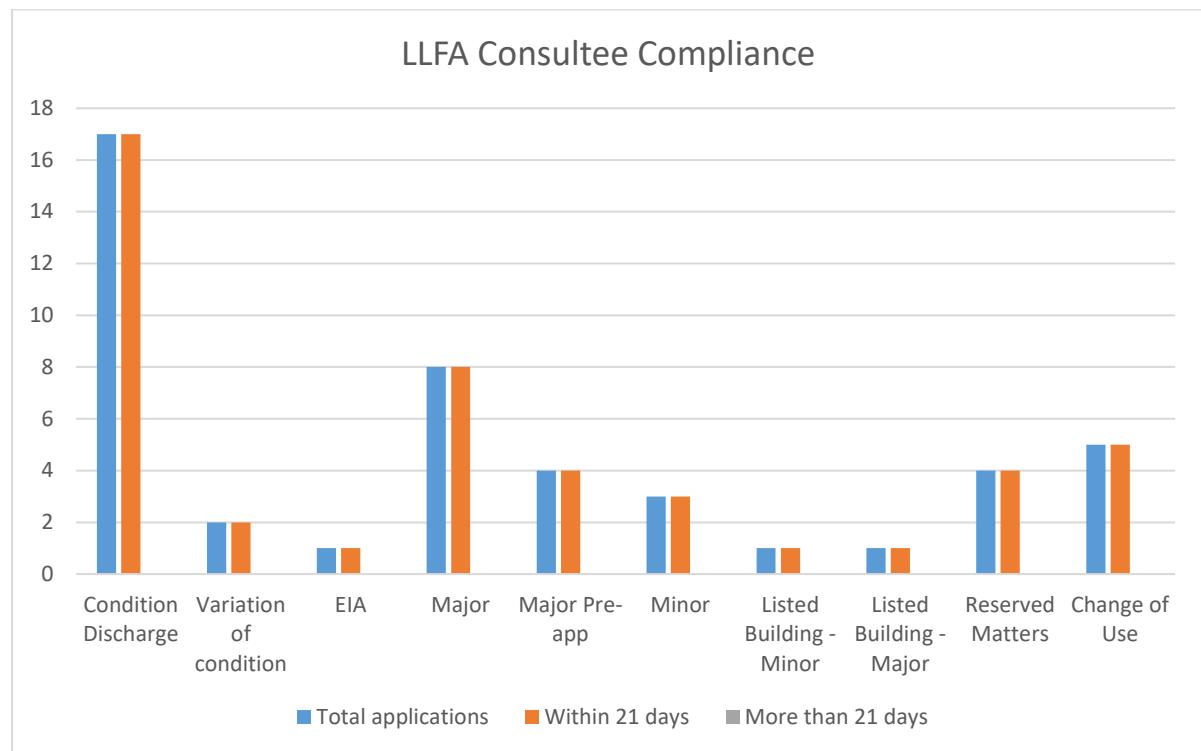


Figure 3 TPO and Conservation Area Notification applications determined within target time from 1 July to 30 September 2025



Appendix H : Lead Local Flood Authority Consultee Compliance

Statutory Consultee compliance results from 1 July to 30 September 2025



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.

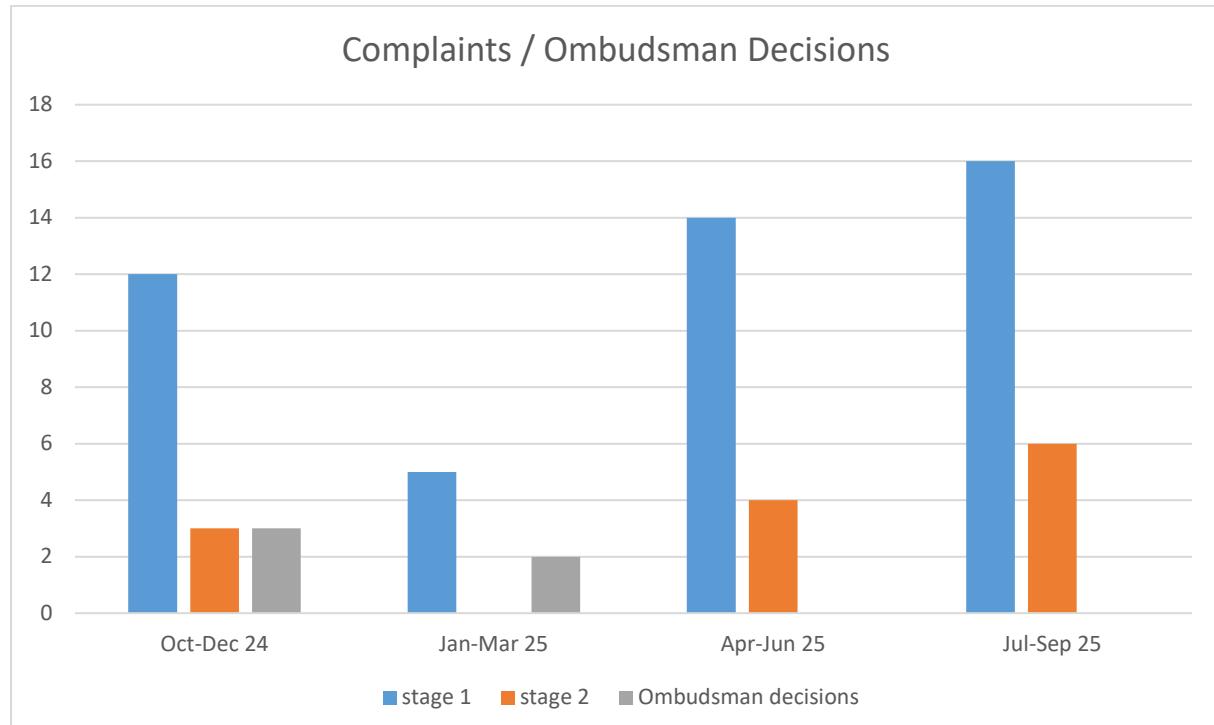
The corporate complaints procedure involves 2 stages:

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 July to 30 September 2025, 22 corporate complaints were responded to; 13 were unhappy with the Council's decision, 3 where communication was not satisfactory, 2 due to poor timeliness, 4 where the service did not meet expectations.

Of the 22 complaints which were responded to, 91% were answered within the target time. 6 Stage 2 complaints were responded to within the period. 15 complaints were not upheld where no fault was found, and 7 were upheld.



Complaints Upheld

- 4 relate to the lack of response to emails by the planning officer. Apology provided, contact has been made with the applicants and a way forward has been agreed.
- Quality of report writing was not good but the decision to refuse the application was not flawed. Apology has been provided.
- Owner of tree was not consulted on a works to a tree application. However, informative to contact the tree owner prior to works being carried out was included on decision notice. Process has been reviewed to ensure tree owners are notified upon receipt of an application.
- Enforcement case has been re-opened as additional information has been submitted.

Ombudsman

There were no decisions issued by the Ombudsman:

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.

Compliments

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

- A big thank you to the planning team for their professionalism and consistent communication regarding my concerns during the decision process. The fact that we were kept updated throughout the decision process was reassuring and I am very relieved that the decision was to reject the planning application.
- It's been an absolute pleasure working with you. Perfect example of why we recommend pre-apps, especially with Medway as I always find the service fantastic.
- Thank you for the guidance and support provided by you and your team on my planning application. I found my engagement with you extremely useful and very professional.
- Thank you for the feedback. I appreciate your engagement on this pre-app, it's been very useful. I would not have picked up some of the points you outlined had I gone straight to application.
- I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere thanks for your proactive and professional approach. Navigating planning authorities and officers is becoming increasingly challenging, but your consistent professionalism and timely responses have made a real difference. Your reliability allows us to keep our clients well informed and reassured throughout the process.

- The feedback has been brilliant. One attendee said that he felt much more comfortable about the local plan knowing that there were people as knowledgeable and articulate as you behind it.
- Thank you for your help with this scheme. I appreciate there were some early stage issues to overcome, but we very much value your help and continued assistance with the application and with getting us through to an approval. It certainly feels like it's been a big joint effort and I can only thank you for your support throughout the process.
- Its been an absolute pleasure to work with professional officers who are prepared to engage constructively and have such a positive, can do, approach, which has undoubtedly helped us to navigate what is a complex and challenging process.