

BRIEFING NOTE FOR SCRUTINY BOARD

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

We are responsible for providing Planning services; determining planning applications, completing S106 Agreements, dealing with appeals and breaches of planning control through the enforcement process. We also ensure building regulations are complied with and take action to tidy up derelict/unsightly land and buildings. We also examine the highways and transportation implications of planning applications and prepare Section 276 Agreements for works to the public highway.

Our aim is to support Leeds key strategic objectives of “Going up a League” and “Closing the Gap”, through the management of new development proposals. This means that we must achieve high quality developments and public spaces in a way which meets the ambitions and timescales of the applicant and reflects the concerns of members of the community. This often means resolving competing objectives. We can help to narrow the gap by delivering training packages targeted at the unemployed and ensuring appropriate forms of new investment and job creation take place in the right places.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

Planning Services; delivering planning applications, appeals and enforcement cases. Dealing with development enquiries.

Building Standards; dealing with applications for buildings in accordance with the building regulations, safety of sports grounds, and dangerous structures.

Projects; dealing with key applications (eg LIFT), co-ordination of Section 106 Agreements, service improvements, managing the Development Enquiry Centre.

Highways; advising on the highways and transportation implications of development proposals. Completion of Section 278 works for work to the public highway.

3. RECENT WORKLOADS/PERFORMANCE

	04/05	05/06	06/07	1 Apr-30 Jun	07/08 Predicted
Planning Received	7865	7212	7307	2043	8000+
Performance					
Majors	60.6%	53.3%	61%	62.5%	
Minors	65.3%	70.7%	69.9%	81.9%	
Others	80.5%	81%	83.6%	88%	
Appeals Received	226	280	337	63	240
Enforcement Complaints	1427	1608	1612	449	1800
Building Control Rec	5153	5044	4836	1183	4800

- Leeds receives more major planning applications than any other local Planning Authority (approximately 340 per year).
- We receive more big planning applications approximately 60 per year than any other authority (ie over than 200 dwellings or more than 10,000 square metres of industrial/commercial/mixed use floor space).
- Our workload per planning case officer is 166 applications per year. The recommended case load is 150, assuming smaller/less complex schemes. This compares with 105 per officer in Manchester, 103 per officer in Nottingham and 129 per officer in Liverpool.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006/07 INCLUDE

(a) Planning

- Determination of the Eastgate/Harewood retail scheme.
- Approving all school PFI schemes
- Approving 7 EASEL projects allowing for the first development to proceed.
- Achieving all best value targets for the determination of applications.
- Confirmation of CPO for Trinity Quarter development

- Delivering the highest level of house completions of any district in the UK (approximately 3,300 units in 2006/07)
- Approval of strategic review of Planning Services

(b) **Building Standards**

- A growing reputation for dealing with tall buildings (eg Bridgewater Place, Lumiere), an invitation to supervise similar projects elsewhere in the UK (eg Salford Quays).
- Built in quality award for 4 Leeds schemes.
- Production of an access guide for people with disabilities.

(c) **Highways**

- Completing Section 278 Agreement for Eastgate Quarter.
- Rapid and pro-active response to planning applications.
- Significant progress on Highways Design Guide

4. KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2007/08

Following the Strategic Review of planning issues we are also undertaking a review of Building Standards which is focussing on tackling the ever increasing competition from the private sector and our loss of market share.

Our key priorities are:-

- Improving the quality, public involvement and dealing with major strategic projects in the city. This initiative will also embrace proposals for Planning Performance Agreements as outlined in the Planning White Paper. It will deal with larger projects for example Eastgate/Harewood, Quarry Hill, West End, Kirkstall Forge, EASEL, Kirkstall Road, and Aire Valley. A development prospectus is in the course of preparation.
- Improving customer satisfaction with the planning and building standards services by setting up customer panels and preparing Charter Mark applications.
- Reviewing the performance of the Plans Panels to ensure that they operate in an effective and efficient way thereby helping to promote a positive image of Leeds to our citizens, developers and investors. A report is to be presented to the overview and Scrutiny Board in October 2007.

- Speeding the delivery of e-planning initiatives, to meet Government targets and to provide better access on information for Members, the public and applicants.
- Monitoring planning application performance and reducing the balance of old applications in order to continue to meet Government targets and maximise income from planning delivery grant.
- Improving the effectiveness of our enforcement service with more proactive communication on key complaints.
- Marketing our specialist skills in building standards to gain increased work income and market share.
- Publishing the Street Design Guide for residential development.
- Continuing to secure additional resources to support the planning and development service particularly in order to reduce the workload per planning officer and to provide additional advice and expertise in the fields of Urban Design, Landscape, and Conservation.