

Planning Services from the Customer's Perspective

Scrutiny Report

June 2011

South Cambridgeshire District Council

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Task & finish group members:

Cllrs R Barrett, V Barrett, Hales, Hall, Hatton, Hawkins, Hersom, Hockney, Mason (Chairman) and John F Williams (until April 2011)

All four meetings of the task and finish group were attended by the then Planning Portfolio Holder, Cllr Nick Wright.

Introduction

During 2010 councillors became increasingly aware of the need to review the planning service. Staff reorganisation and the introduction of a new IT system had affected performance and customer satisfaction with the planning service.

The scrutiny committee set up a task and finish group in January 2011 with a brief to examine planning services from the customer's viewpoint and identify any improvements to be made. The terms of reference are at Appendix A.

It was not intended to be a comprehensive review because the planning service had already commissioned an internal audit in December 2010 to look at processes and procedures. It was the intention of this review to complement that work by looking at the services from a customer's perspective.

The scrutiny review included consultation of residents, parish councils, planning agents and district councillors via surveys, focus groups and one-to-one contact. Members of the task and finish group also observed the agents' forum and the parish councils' forum, including a session focused solely on the new IT system. Officers were interviewed to discuss the results of this research.

The review sought customer feedback regarding two sections - conservation and design (landscaping, ecology, trees, historic buildings) and development control; as well as about planning appeals and the planning committee.

Many of the services in these sections attracted widespread praise of officers' knowledge, professionalism and customer service and the only concern was how to retain such talented officers.

Other services, such as development control, historic buildings and the planning committee, emerged as having more areas for improvement. Users of these services spoke of their concerns and made a number of suggestions for improvement. The senior management team already had an improvement plan and the task and finish group aimed to complement and inform this.

Finally, the work of the task and finish group has informed the corporate Customer Service Excellence project and the ensuing customer service training will in turn help to address some of the findings of this review.

This report summarises the findings of the task and finish group and sets out a number of recommendations for service improvement. In July 2011 the report will be presented to the Cabinet who will then work with officers on agreeing a response.

Whilst this report focuses on the key issues raised by customers, there were some others which are listed at the end of the report to be carried forward for scrutiny in the future. The scrutiny committee will monitor progress during 2011/12.

Findings and Recommendations

Customers of the various planning services made a range of observations and suggestions. Some related to a particular service; others could be applied across many or all of the services.

1. Cross-service issues

- 1.1 The task and finish group found that there were some systems in place for testing customer satisfaction but they felt that this should be undertaken more regularly and effectively across all planning services. There were some concerns regarding basic customer service standards such as response times and use of voicemail and it was felt that the departmental improvement plan should set some key performance standards with a simple rating system such as smiley faces. Where this revealed dissatisfaction there could be a sample review to identify common themes, with results and actions communicated to customers.

Recommendation 1:

That a coordinated system be developed for regularly measuring the satisfaction of planning service users and then communicating how the results had been used.

- 1.2 The task and finish group was aware of concerns about communication and the need to anticipate and meet customers' communication needs. For example the reasons and timescales for changing the IT system had not been adequately explained to agents, parish councils, staff or councillors. Also, district and parish councillors felt that new organisational charts had not been circulated soon enough following personnel changes and that communication should not rely exclusively on the Members Bulletin.

Recommendation 2:

That any major change in service be accompanied by a full communication plan.

- 1.3 Customers of all services spoke of the need for clearer technical guidance. Guidance for development and heritage matters can be found in the Development Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and other supporting information on the website. But service users asked for shorter, simpler guidance in easier formats. Each service had pages within the Council's website although some were in need of updating and streamlining. The task and finish group agreed that advice given to customers should be policy based and consistent.

Recommendation 3:

That guidance to planning services be made more accessible online and in print; including advice on which documentation an application should include, as well as the type of design standards that apply to various types of work.

- 1.4 Many of the planning services attracted widespread praise of officers' knowledge, professionalism and customer service but there was some concern regarding the strategies in place for retention and development.

Recommendation 4:

That a plan be produced regarding the recruitment, retention and development of staff in planning services.

- 1.5 During the review, respondents suggested several ideas for training officers and councillors to help them better serve customers of the planning services. The task and finish group agreed that the training should include:
- sharing expertise between the various teams within planning services
 - examining case law and developments in modern design, especially as applied to heritage assets
 - meeting other authorities to share experience and good practice
 - maintaining and developing of geographic knowledge of the district

Recommendation 5:

That an ongoing training programme be established for members of the planning committee and planning officers to improve officers' expertise and confidence, improve the quality of debate at planning committee meetings, and strengthen the relationship between officers and councillors.

- 1.6 Many respondents suggested that on retirement of the present Chief Planning Officer a structure was needed that would continue to provide strong leadership and mentoring, a depth of planning experience and local knowledge and, where Development Control and Historic Buildings required it, support to reach an agreed recommendation.

Recommendation 6:

That following the retirement of the Head of Planning, the management of planning services be structured to provide strong, experienced leadership.

- 1.7 Some respondents wanted more site visits to be made, especially by Development Control officers. However, records show that site visits are taking place for every application but the applicant may not always be aware of the visit. The task and finish group also heard that applicants may also be unaware that officers have a right of entry onto the land.
- 1.8 There was also a suggestion that officers and councillors should regularly conduct follow-up visits in order to learn from past cases. The task and finish group found that this does regularly happen but there had been a gap due to the unusual pressures following staff restructure and introduction of the new IT system. The next tour is scheduled for early in 2011/12.

Recommendation 7:

That the website and written communications state clearly that a site visit takes place for every application, and explaining the process that is followed.

2. Conservation and Design

- 2.1 Conservation and Design core services comprise: ecology, trees, landscapes and historic buildings.

Ecology Service

- 2.2 Feedback from agents, parish councils and SCDC councillors was extremely positive regarding the Ecology Service. It was recognised that with just one officer, there were sometimes delays in responding to enquiries. However, the overriding view was that this service provides highly knowledgeable advice, works well with the Environment Agency and provides first-rate customer service internally and externally.

Trees Service

- 2.3 The expertise and customer service provided by this service was also praised by agents, parish councils and SCDC councillors who appreciated the vigilance in safeguarding trees and hedgerows. The majority of parish councils had appointed tree officers, which gave communities an important role in safeguarding local trees. However, one parish council said that a number of trees had been felled contrary to its tree officer's opinion and the council accepted that there was a need for better communication.
- 2.4 Almost all respondents wanted to improve their own contribution as the Council's local eyes and ears, with some citing examples of trees or hedgerows being cleared despite Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). They therefore asked whether TPOs could be made electronically available. Officers confirmed that this would improve efficiency and customer service; for example parish tree wardens could be able to update records online. However this would require considerable resources to implement. A proposal setting out potential ways forward will be produced as part of the departmental improvement plan.
- 2.5 Many respondents wanted to improve their knowledge of TPOs, tree works in conservation areas and planning conditions. This was discussed at the Parish IT Forum. Information is currently given to parish councils and their tree wardens by email or post; more information on local areas will be on the website when it is available as described above.

Landscape Service

- 2.6 This service received positive feedback but it seemed to be not well understood by some respondents. The Landscape page on the

Council's website was awaiting development and many respondents were not aware of the range of activities undertaken by the service. To some extent this was also true of the Trees and Ecology services.

Historic Buildings Service

- 2.7 Many respondents acknowledged that this service should be credited with helping to successfully preserve and enhance the unique beauty and historic integrity of the District. They recognised the team's strong commitment. However there were concerns about an overly rigid approach which needed to be adapted in line with Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5). This guides Councils to manage change. There is a need to weigh potential harm against wider heritage and public benefits, for example keeping buildings in the best viable use, supporting economic development and mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- 2.8 Planning agents reported a difficult relationship with the Historic Buildings team. Key concerns focused on the need to provide a service which is professional, commercially aware and flexible regarding proposals, especially smaller schemes. They gave examples of having been asked for what they considered to be overly detailed information, plans, drawings and samples on relatively straightforward proposals.
- 2.9 The historic buildings team accepted the need for a flexible approach within the parameters of PPS5 and to address certain customer care issues. An action plan has been developed with the overall aim of providing a balanced approach to managing change to the historic environment and good customer service.
- 2.10 Some respondents praised the team's willingness to work constructively with applicants to find the best outcome; but conversely, others felt that there was a resistance to any change to listed buildings or properties in a conservation area. On the other hand, some gave examples of permission being given for too great a change such as unsympathetic designs which appeared to have been based on advice which ran counter to residents' and parish councils' perception of acceptability. There was also a perception that the team varied in approach and that advice and service levels were not consistent.
- 2.11 A key request was for consistency and yet greater flexibility, and a proportionate approach. For example smaller proposals relating to assets of lesser significance should not warrant the same level of documentation and detail as a larger or more significant scheme.
- 2.12 Respondents asked for clearer guidance from the outset, (the pre-application advice stage, if used) regarding the documentation that an application should include, as well as the type of design standards that would be required. There were examples of the Historic Buildings team requesting details unreasonably late in the application process, leading to delays and additional costs.

Recommendation 8:

That the Historic Buildings service takes a level of approach that is timely and proportionate to the type of application and the significance of the heritage asset, and limits requests for extra information to that needed to make an informed decision.

- 2.13 The task and finish group held a workshop on PPS5. An officer from English Heritage provided a very thorough presentation for officers and councillors, setting out the basic tenet that change will happen in most cases and that the role of the planning authority is to manage that successfully.
- 2.14 The aim was to support proposals that would preserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets and minimise harm. Harm would need to be justified by weighing it against benefits to heritage or to the greater population. Examples of benefits would include positive impacts on economic development and the sustainability agenda. Alternative options should be considered to achieve the most sympathetic schemes and secure the best viable use for buildings. One agent asked that more time be allocated at the start of a project to agree a balanced evaluation of the heritage asset in question.

Recommendation 9:

That reports to the planning committee should quantify the significance of the heritage asset in terms of architectural, artistic, archaeological or heritage interest, any potential impact of the proposals on that significance, and potential heritage and public benefits which could balance harm, to enable the committee to weigh these, and to express their decision in similar terms. Reports should also include any specialist's views obtained by the applicant, especially where there has been any disagreement.

- 2.15 The PPS5 presentation also prompted a discussion about the practicalities of holding out for the best possible quality of proposal and councillors accepted the need to be pragmatic. Holding out for a top-quality, rather than 'workmanlike', proposal could make restoration of a building unviable or cause a delay that would lead to further deterioration.
- 2.16 Many service users suggested that the team should communicate less by letter and more by telephone or email. This would speed up communication and allow for easier dialogue. The team felt that letters provided a useful record, but accepted that emails or notes of a phone call would serve just as well.

Recommendation 10:

That the Historic Buildings team makes more use of email and telephone contact to negotiate with applicants and their agents.

- 2.17 The task and finish group would like to see the team taking steps to build and maintain an open and constructive two-way relationship with service users, and planning agents in particular. This may need to be in addition to the existing quarterly Agents Forum. A key objective would for the team learn more about the practical needs of applicants and agents and the commercial pressures they face.
- 2.18 It was understood that training, in skills such as negotiation and presentation, was already underway and this would also help in improving the service.

3. Development Control

- 3.1 Planning agents, parish councils and SCDC councillors gave many examples of good relations with the Development Control service and appreciated service improvements such as the readiness to use email and the allocation of a named officer for each case. They were also pleased to note the reduction in performance targets and abolition of the Housing Planning Delivery Grant system as these had sometimes worked against good service. There was reduced significance regarding for example the 8-week deadline for determination; success would increasingly be measured in terms of outcomes and satisfaction with the service and SCDC had recently joined a new benchmarking club.
- 3.2 Parish councils appreciated the partnership approach and the training presentations made by senior officers to parish council meetings. There was a suggestion that these presentations could be made to two or three neighbouring councils together. They felt this would be more efficient and would allow them to learn from each other and to jointly feedback to SCDC. It would also help to support the emerging localism agenda.

Recommendation 11:

That the planning service continues to provide a coordinated and ongoing range of training and information sessions for groups of parish councils.

- 3.3 Many respondents felt that following recent staff changes the team was now less experienced and therefore sometimes over-cautious in approach. A significant increase in planning applications had also led to an increasing backlog of work. Performance was below target; but it was accepted that those targets had been set well above the national average. They have now been adjusted to more comparable levels.
- 3.4 At the same time, it had become necessary to replace the IT system being used for managing and accessing planning applications and this was creating difficulties for both internal and external users. At first, the new system was hard to use and those unaware of the reasons for the change were passing on their frustration to staff.

- 3.5 Under all these pressures, cases were being delayed and there was often insufficient time for full negotiations with planning agents and other consultees, and so permissions were being granted with a large number of conditions, sometimes on matters covered in the design or access statements. Agents would rather settle such issues beforehand, preferably by phone, as conditions generate costly delays for agents.

Recommendation 12:

That the Planning service resolves to reduce the number of conditions placed on Permissions by ensuring that all matters are adequately negotiated and documented during the application process.

- 3.6 The task and finish group observed a users' forum that had been set up to identify and solve external users' problems with the new IT system. They were satisfied that this forum had attracted a wide range of users who would be able to work constructively with technical officers on the issues. The task and finish group maintained a watching brief on this forum, which continues to meet quarterly.
- 3.7 Agents also reported concerns regarding the pre-application service; it needed to be more constructive, reliable and speedy. It should also include advice from the Historic Buildings service. The pre-app service was already under review and so the agents' feedback was timely. Improvements already made had led to the service generating £44,000 in fees, against a projected £28,000. It was also leading to a higher quality of application, which could be dealt with more efficiently. This service will be further refined over the coming months, in consultation with agents via the Agents Forum.
- 3.8 Respondents also felt that the current pressures were reducing DC officers' confidence to take charge of cases, weigh the issues and make robust recommendations. Agents and parish councils sensed a need for councillors to demonstrate greater trust in their officers' advice and greater respect when they needed to overrule that advice. This could be addressed via training.
- 3.9 Some planning agents asked whether the former architects' forum could be revived. This had been a useful forum for discussing the architectural merits of a proposal but had ceased around eight years ago. However officers advice was that this could not be justified as there was now an urban design team which provided architectural expertise as well as a qualified architect within the historic buildings team.
- 3.10 Parish councils perceived that the DC service was under-resourced leaving insufficient time for example to chase or challenge responses from the highways authority.
- 3.11 As part of the evidence gathering for this review, there was a small pilot exercise in Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) to help inform further CJM exercises elsewhere in the Council.

- 3.12 Ten planning applicants agreed to keep a record of their journey through the application process. Most reported a smooth journey but one asked whether it would be possible to speed up the issuing of the Decision Notice. This seemed to appear online within hours of the planning committee meeting and yet it took several days for the official permission to reach the applicant by post.
- 3.13 There was some discussion regarding the validation checklist, listing the paperwork required under the national planning system, and whether this could be reduced for smaller applications. There was a suggestion that agents could be asked to supply a combined statement of design, access and heritage impact. Officers later confirmed that this is already allowed.

Recommendation 13:

That the validation checklist of documentation to be supplied by applicants be updated and publicised.

- 3.14 Many respondents felt that the Development Control team needed training on conservation matters. They had access to the advice of the Historic Buildings team but they were over-referring, which led to delay. It also seemed to some respondents that undue weight was given to objections raised by the Historic Buildings team. The task and finish group was assured that DC officers were now being encouraged to take the lead and be more confident about exercising their judgement.
- 3.15 An underlying theme was the need for DC and the Historic Buildings service to work together more seamlessly, combining their requests for information and providing coordinated advice. This could be addressed through attendance at each other's team meetings and via training opportunities.

4. Planning Committee

- 4.1 During the review, councillors, staff and agents reported concerns about the length of planning meetings and sometimes about the quality of debate. The task and finish group agreed that shorter reports could lead to a more focussed debate. There was some scope for a clearer approach to setting out and considering the views of the parish council.

Recommendation 14:

That all reports to the planning committee set out the facts, the responses to consultation and the recommendations as succinctly as possible, whilst retaining all relevant facts.

- 4.2 There was a perception that there had been an increase in the frequency with which officers' recommendations were overturned by the committee. Respondents felt that this was due to more junior officers

being given the opportunity to present to the committee; and they wanted them to make more use of parish councils' local knowledge.

- 4.3 It was felt that training of officers and councillors, good relations with parish councils and continuity of strong leadership, as recommended above, would give the planning committee access to reliable and robust advice that would lead to fewer decisions being overturned.
- 4.4 There was a suggestion from planning agents that developments of more than nine dwellings should be determined by the planning committee. Fewer than this and the decision should be delegated to officers. However some parish councillors said they would not welcome this threshold as sometimes it is small 'in-fill' developments that would benefit from committee consideration. The task and finish group was assured that the current review of the delegation protocol would take this into consideration.
- 4.5 Parish councils expressed concern regarding the timeliness and quality of advice given by the Local Highways Authority, and the need to challenge this more effectively. There was a suggestion that the Council should work to improve this.

Recommendation 15:

That the planning portfolio holder meets with the Local Highways Authority to discuss the Council's need for more structured, consistent and timely responses to consultations on planning applications.

- 4.6 Respondents from some parish councils were unsure about how the decision was made on which applications would go to committee. They believed that whenever a parish council's view differed from that of the officer, or if a district councillor so requested, then the application would automatically go to the committee. The position is in fact more complicated and is affected by whether the application is major or minor, and whether the district councillor has cited material planning reasons.

Recommendation 16:

That the process for deciding which applications are decided by committee is communicated more clearly to applicants, partners and other interested parties via the website, Parish Council's Forum and other means.

5. Appeals

- 5.1 The task and finish group examined recent changes to the Council's appeals process. A single Appeals Officer had been dedicated to this work and had developed years of experience and an impressive track record. However, there had been some risk in relying on just one officer

and so this system was changed: all Development Control officers now attend appeals.

- 5.2 Councillors expressed a fear that this was leading to more appeals being lost but the task and finish group found that in fact there had been a dramatic improvement in success at appeals: 90% now, as against 62% previously.
- 5.3 The Council's lack of success at two recent high-profile cases were cited but the former Appeals Officer advised that he would not have been able to achieve different outcomes on either. Nevertheless, the task and finish group saw a need for officers to receive more training in appeals work and presentation skills; this to be supplied by the former Appeals Officer and the Council's legal team.

Recommendation 17:

That Development Control officers are supported to provide a skilled and confident service on appeals. This should draw on current in-house expertise and experience, and legal services where appropriate.

6. Agents Forum

- 6.1 Members of the task and finish group observed a quarterly meeting of the Agents Forum. Their perception was that the meeting was rather too formal. Despite the easy style of the portfolio holder chairing the meeting, there was a format of listening to officers' presentations and asking questions only when invited.
- 6.2 When asked later by the task and finish group, the planning agents confirmed that the Forum was a useful means of staying up to date with current issues and networking with fellow professionals in the field. However, most would have liked a more two-way dialogue; they felt that the Council Chamber was too formal a venue and that more effort should be made to involve agents in shaping the agenda both beforehand and on the day.
- 6.3 Nevertheless, agents did raise concerns, for example about the closure of the cash office, the new IT system, fees and the potential impact of the Government's localism agenda.
- 6.4 During the review, the task and finish group itself held an informal meeting of planning agents and it was clear that this setting provided a more productive means of hearing their views and discussing solutions.

Recommendation 18:

The Agents Forum should be adapted to provide an environment in which agents feel able to give constructive feedback on any aspect of service and to discuss solutions.

7. Parish Councils Forum

- 7.1 Observation of a Parish Councils' Planning Forum meeting found that this too seemed rather formal. However participants seemed to be at ease with this.
- 7.2 The task and finish group held a focus group for parish council representatives and they confirmed that the Forum is a useful source of information and networking opportunities. They felt that the format and timing were about right and there was usually ample opportunity for questions, although some respondents would like more opportunity to talk rather than listen. There was also scope for discussing recent applications to create a learning opportunity.

8. Achievements during the review

- 8.1 Feedback on the pre-application service was actioned, and has led to some positive feedback.
- 8.2 The Historic Buildings team is now represented at planning committee meetings, which is increasing councillors' understanding and their contact with relevant officers.
- 8.3 The English Heritage presentation provided officers and councillors with an excellent update on PPS5 which could be put straight into use. For example, reports are now explaining the significance of historic assets and weighing the scale of potential harm against the scale of potential public benefit.
- 8.4 A comprehensive improvement plan and training programme have been developed by the Historic Buildings service and are now underway.
- 8.5 The Parish Council IT Forum continues to meet and help to refine the Swift software and map based information. The system is becoming far more robust and parish councils' find the new mapping tool very useful. Progress will be reported to the Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.6 A new organisation chart has now been published on the council's website, showing the staff structure within the sections and job responsibilities.

9. Issues for the future

- 9.1 After six months work, the task and finish group is now reporting its findings and recommendations so that officers and the portfolio holder can use them to make improvements.
- 9.2 The review necessarily focussed on those issues to which customers attached the greatest priority; but other issues remain for consideration at a later date:
 - standard letters – could these be clearer?
 - on-line forms – there was some feedback about ambiguity
 - web site – the need for clearer guidance, a database of planning policies and easier navigation
 - enforcement
 - validation times
 - decision notices - timing and format
- 9.3 A respondent suggested looking at the Section 106 (planning gain) process but this is expected to be replaced by a Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 9.4 The task and finish group had also intended to examine issues such as sickness absence and this may be covered by the scrutiny committee during 2011/12, taking a council-wide approach.
- 9.5 The review had also expected to visit other councils to learn from good practice but the timing proved inconvenient for those who were approached.

SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP - SCOPING DOCUMENT

Review name	Planning Service Performance
Terms of reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine performance in the Planning Service at SCDC from internal and external customers' perspective and any barriers to service improvement To examine best practice To recommend how performance could be improved within the Planning Service
Summary of review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct journey-mapping for each customer group Observe parish forum Observe agents forum What performance levels are being achieved in the Planning Service and what is the direction of travel? how well is performance information being used to drive improvement? is the online service functioning well? examine the people-side of the Planning Service, the culture, staff morale, sickness absence and turnover what can we learn from good practice elsewhere? what are the barriers to improvement?
Reason for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns raised by users of the Planning Service regarding performance Reduction in performance indicator outcomes Increase in complaints about the Planning Service
Potential outcome/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved performance in the Planning Service Service priorities more aligned to customers'/Members' priorities Increase in customer satisfaction Wider awareness amongst officers and Members of the needs of users of the Planning Service Recommendations for improving service standards and efficiency Increase in staff morale and retention of experienced staff
Relevant corporate and/or community strategy/ies	Being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all
Portfolio holders	Cllr Wright
Members of the t&f group	Cllrs R Barrett, V Barrett, Hales, Hall, Hatton, Hawkins, Hersom, Hockney, Mason (Chairman) and John F Williams
Key stakeholders	Users of the Planning Service; Parish Councils
Officer involvement	Lead officer: Jo Mills
Timing	January 2011 - April 2011 [Extended to June 2011]
Report dates	Scrutiny 28 April; Cabinet 12 May. [Postponed to 30 June and 7 July]

Glossary of terms

Agents Planning forum	Quarterly meeting with planning officers, open to all planning agents
APAS	Planning IT system supplied by Swift Datapro
Conditions	Stipulations added to planning permission regarding specific works or methods required by the planning authority
Conservation area	An area of special architectural interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance
Development Control or Development Management	Element of the town and country planning system which regulates land use and new building
Grade 1 or 2 Listed Building	A system of classifying historic buildings. Buildings can be listed because of age, rarity, architectural merit, and method of construction. Occasionally English Heritage selects a building for its connection with a famous person or event.
Informal Hearing	The applicant has 6 months to appeal. The process includes an exchange of written statements, once these have been sent a date is set for the hearing and the Inspector will discuss both statements, complete a site visit and then make the decision.
Historic Buildings service	Section of SCDC's planning service that advises on planning applications that related to listed buildings or conservation areas
Public Inquiry	The applicant has 6 months to appeal. The process includes, an exchange of written statements, a date is set for the inquiry. Both parties give their evidence to the Inspector, the Inspector will complete a site visit and then make a decision.
Planning Appeals Inspector	The Appeals Inspector is who will make the decision of the planning appeal.
Written reps	The applicant has 6 months to appeal. The process includes an exchange of written statements, the Inspector will complete a site visit and then make the decision.
Major planning applications	A planning application that is dealt within 13 weeks. An example of a major application is an application for over 10 dwellings. This could also be trigger by floor space and site area.
Minor planning applications	A planning application that is dealt with in 8 weeks. An example of a minor application is an application for under 10 dwellings. This could also be trigger by floor space and site area.
Other planning applications	A planning application that is dealt with in 8 weeks, for example an application for an extension to a dwelling.
Parish (Council) Planning Forum	Six monthly meeting with planning officers, open to all Parishes
PPS5	Planning Policy Statement 5 sets out the Government's planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment
Planning agent	Someone that works on behalf of an applicant
Pre-application service	Advice of planners prior to formal submission of a planning application; aims to promote quality of application
Reserved matters	A reserved matters application deals with outstanding details of an outline application proposal

Appendix C

List of background papers

Agenda and action notes of meetings of the task and finish group
Collation of surveymonkey responses
CorVu report on Planning Service performance 2010/11
Departmental organisation charts
Historic Buildings Team Action Plan
Notes of focus group with agents 3 March 2011
Notes of focus group with parish councils 3 March 2011
Notes of focus groups with members 28 February 2011
Notes of meetings with staff 15 March
Observation notes of agents planning forum 15 December 2010
Observation notes of IT forum 5 January 2011
Observation notes of parish councils planning forum 19 January 2011
Planning and New Communities Departmental Improvement Plan
Pre-Application Restructure Report March 2011
Presentation by English Heritage regarding PPS5 14 April 2011
Record of customer journey-mapping pilot

These documents are available on request from the Scrutiny Officer.