

## PLANNING TURNAROUND UNITARY ANALYSIS March 2014

The attached spreadsheets, 'RSN Development Control Analysis' set out our latest analysis of Planning Turnaround statistics for local unitary authorities across England. This analysis compares your authority to other rural authorities and family authorities. All information is taken from the Department for Communities and Local Government at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

There are two analyses attached:

1. RSN Development Control Analysis QE March 2014 – showing performance for the quarter January to March 2014.
2. RSN Development Control Analysis YE March 2014 – showing performance for the year ending March 2014.

What does it show?

By selecting your authority in the top left yellow box, you can see your performance in relation to three indicators, Turnaround time for Major, Minor and Other Applications.

### Why these measures?

These traditional performance measures, long collected by the Government to measure success in the planning system, are lagging indicators; they measure what has already happened in the system and are not necessarily an indicator of a good experience for the customer.

Turnaround time from the date of a valid application being received to a decision may only be 5 or 6 weeks, but from the customers perspective the clock starts when they hand in their application to the council, or their agent whether it is a valid application or not.

Planning will always be a contentious subject as the outcomes can affect so many individuals and organisations, a 'good' decision could differ for the applicant, neighbour, parish council or community as a whole and a range of factors should be considered by an authority to determine the successful performance of their planning department.

This analysis however focuses on the turnaround time indicators as these are readily available for every authority. We would be interested to hear from authorities that are using alternative indicators to manage their performance or who would like to share their improvement stories with the rural planning community.

The top performing unitary authorities are continuing to perform well, for the year ending March 2014, top quartile performance for Minor Applications was 80.50% and for Other applications, this was 91%.

Who is doing well?  
Focus on Thurrock

For the yearly performance up to March 2014 when considering Minor and Other Developments, Thurrock, an urban authority in Essex, was the top performing unitary authority with 99% turnaround time for Other Applications and 92% of applications determined within timescales for Minor Applications.

They recently reported back to their Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress over the last year. The Development Management team have been working on an Improvement plan over the last year which was independently reviewed by the Planning Officer Society (POS) who were highly supportive of the plan.

One of most important changes to the service has been a switch from paper to digital format. The team has worked closely with the Council's transformation teams and in March we were awarded 'Smarter Planning Champion' status by the Planning Portal. They have a target of securing 100% on-line submission of Planning applications by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 working alongside the Planning Portal.

In order to achieve this aim, they will continue to develop the service alongside their customers. Agent Panel meetings are held each 6 months with the service's key customers where initiatives are debated and suggestions for improvements tabled. They are presently discussing the introduction of an agent certification system which will benefit the service, the agents making planning applications and applicants themselves.

Top 10 performing Unitary councils Year ending March 2014		Top 10 performing Unitary councils Year ending March 2014	
MINOR APPS	% within 8 weeks	OTHER APPS	% within 8 weeks
Thurrock	92%	Thurrock	99%
Southend-on-sea	90%	Stockton-On-Tees	96%
Nottingham	89%	Plymouth	95%
Plymouth	89%	Bournemouth	94%
Portsmouth	89%	Central Bedfordshire	94%
Stockton-on-Tees	89%	Peterborough	94%
Bournemouth	86%	Redcar & Cleveland	94%
Redcar & Cleveland	85%	Southend-on-Sea	94%
Stoke-on-trent	85%	Windsor & Maidenhead	94%
Central Bedfordshire	83%	North East Lincolnshire	93%
Luton	83%	Warrington	93%