
Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 5 November 2025

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Performance Report 2025/26 – Quarter 2
Priority P6: Improve delivery of our planning service.

Purpose of report

This report provides an overview of the performance of the Council's Development Management Team. It includes additional narrative that explains the position of the indicators that have targets set against them.

Executive summary

Over the past 12 months, the Development Management Team has undergone a significant transformation in how caseloads are managed, and performance is monitored. The implementation of the Phase II Power BI dashboard in June has become integral to daily operations, enabling real-time oversight and fostering a strong performance culture within the team. This cultural shift is a direct outcome of the Service Fit for the Future project.

Performance targets for processing major, minor, and other planning applications have been recalibrated to reflect the median performance of CIPFA comparator authorities and Devon councils, setting a benchmark for excellence.

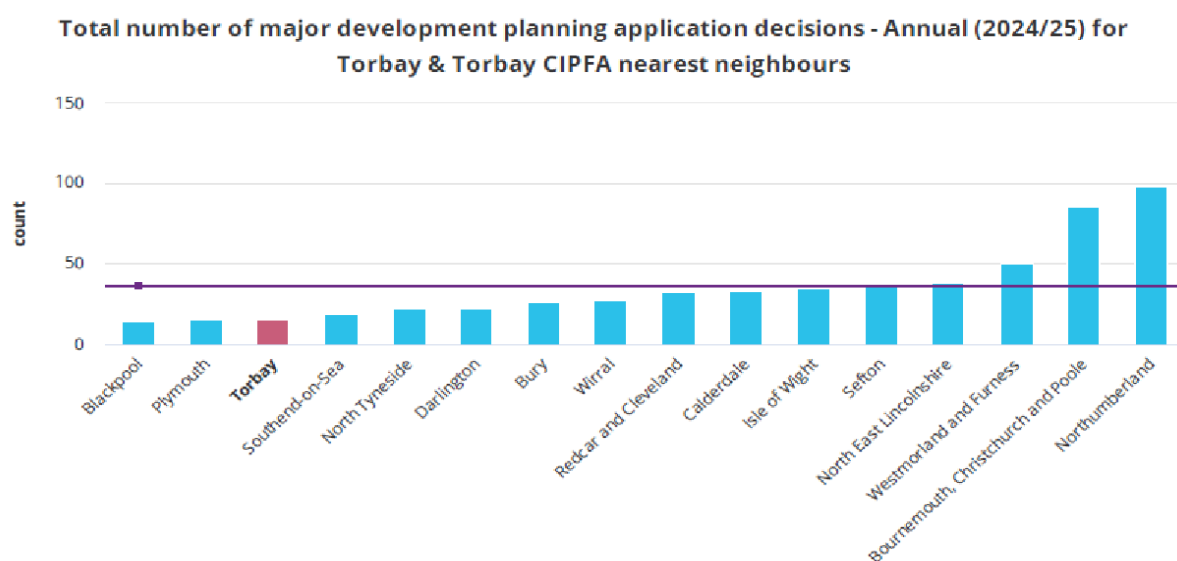
In Planning Enforcement, notable progress has been made with the appointment of a new Assistant Enforcement Officer to work alongside the existing two Senior Officers. The adoption of a proactive enforcement policy and theme-based investigations into historic cases have contributed to a stabilisation of open cases. This is paired with improved recording of investigations, faster response times and action being taken.

Staffing has seen positive developments, with new Officers attracted and existing staff retained, supporting service resilience. Application volumes increased during Quarter 2, leading to higher fee income, and there has been a rise in pre-application enquiries, indicating growing engagement and demand.

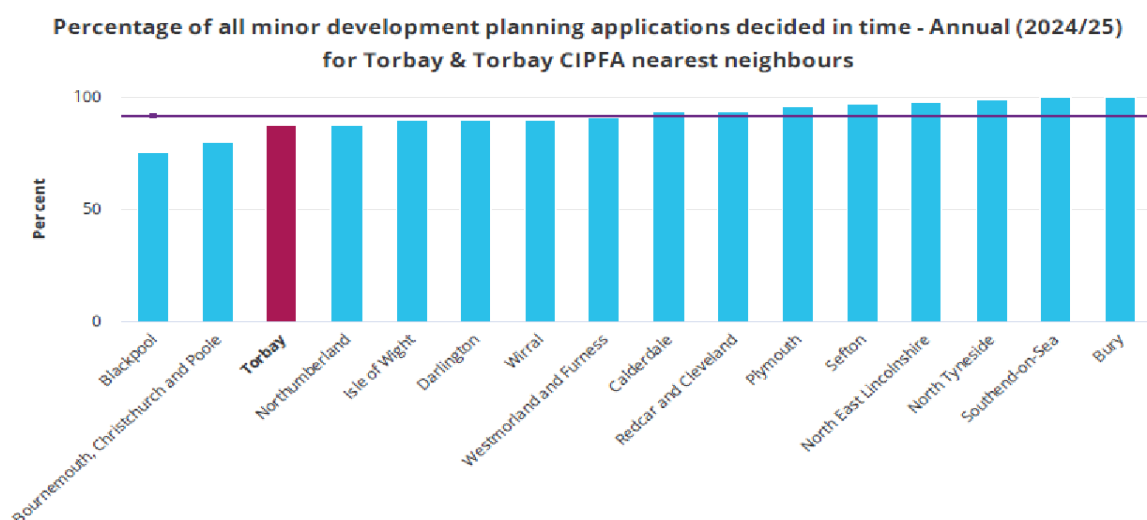
Benchmarking

The data below includes Local Government Association Research and gives a detailed insight into how planning differs between various comparator locations within England.

In 2024/25, the total number of major planning development decisions granted in Torbay was 16. Torbay has fewer major applications compared to other Local Authorities which then makes the percentage of appeals, for example, appear more noticeable.



In 2024/25, the percentage of minor development planning applications that have been decided in time in Torbay was 88%, which is below the Torbay CIPFA nearest neighbours mean percentage of 92%. This is determined as minor planning applications, regardless of whether they have a Planning Performance Agreement (PPAs), Extension of Time (EoT) and/or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which have been decided in a timely manner, each financial year. A timely manner is defined as within eight weeks for minor applications.



The performance indicators being used to monitor the Development Management

BP59 – 63: Major Planning Applications

The Quarter 2 data relates to a total of seven applications in comparison with four applications determined in Quarter 1. All performance has improved other than validation speed.

Largely similar to Quarter 1 other than the number of appeals received and allowed has risen.

Average validation speed has dropped. Largely similar to Quarter 1 other than the number of appeals received and allowed has risen.

The number of allowed appeals has risen nationally and a number of authorities, including ourselves are writing to the Planning Inspectorate to understand their position. Importantly, costs have not been awarded on any of the recent appeals.

BP74 – 77: Open planning enforcement cases as at the last day of the quarter.

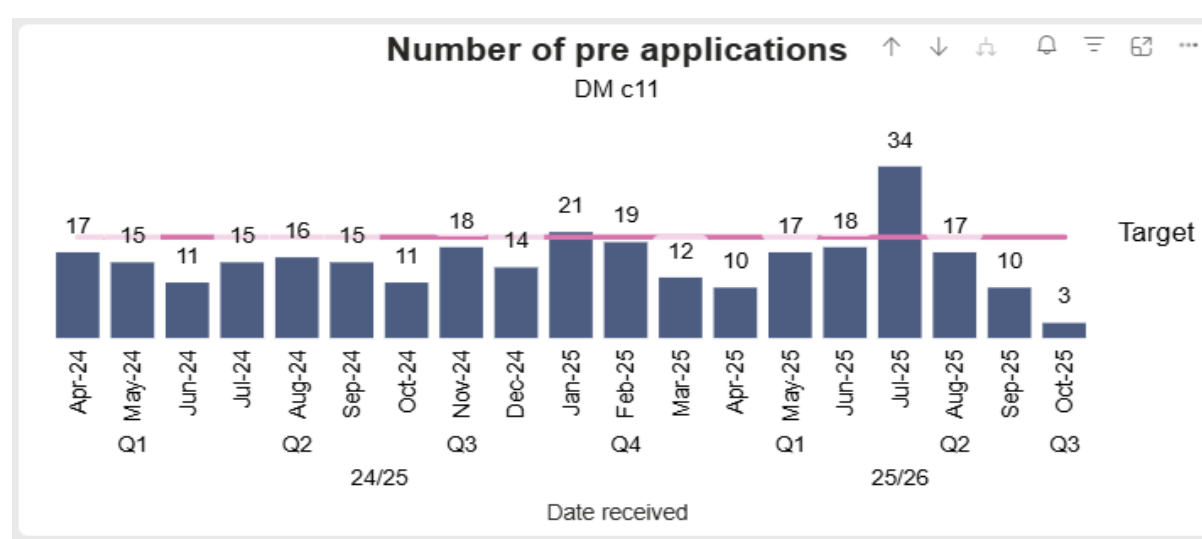
Number of open cases has stabilised. A lower number of cases have been registered due to improved gatekeeping and more cases closed than Quarter 1.

Wider performance

Pre-application enquiries

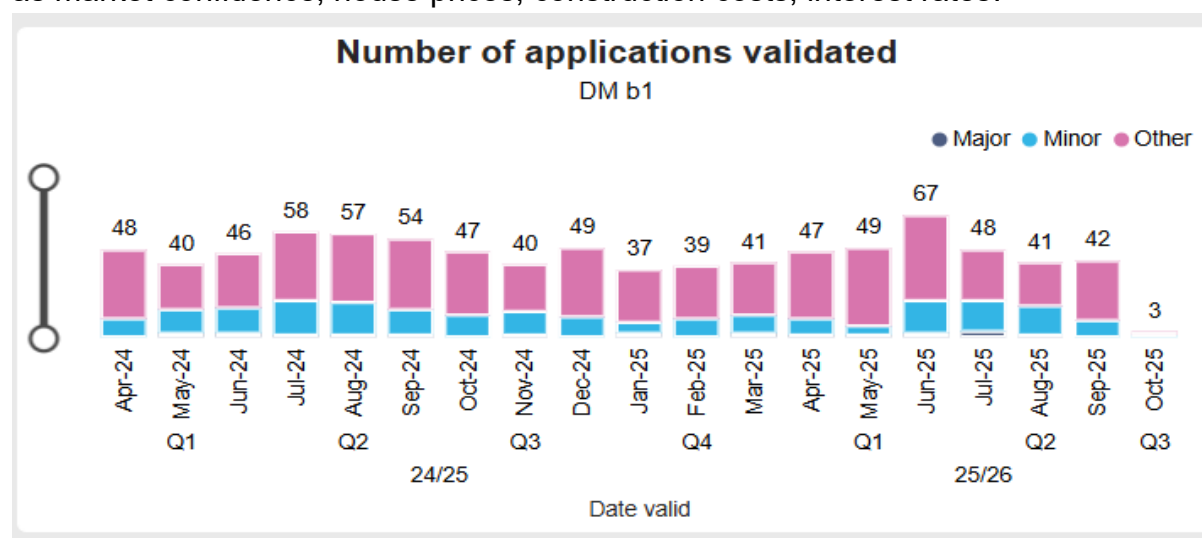
We have established this service as the starting point for our customers to be set on a pathway to a positive decision.

- The local target is set at 20. July saw a large spike in early engagement through pre-application enquiries with 34 submitted.
- There was an increase throughout the summer which has tailed off into September. This trend is typical of recent years.
- It is worth reflecting that there have also been a lower number of refusals.



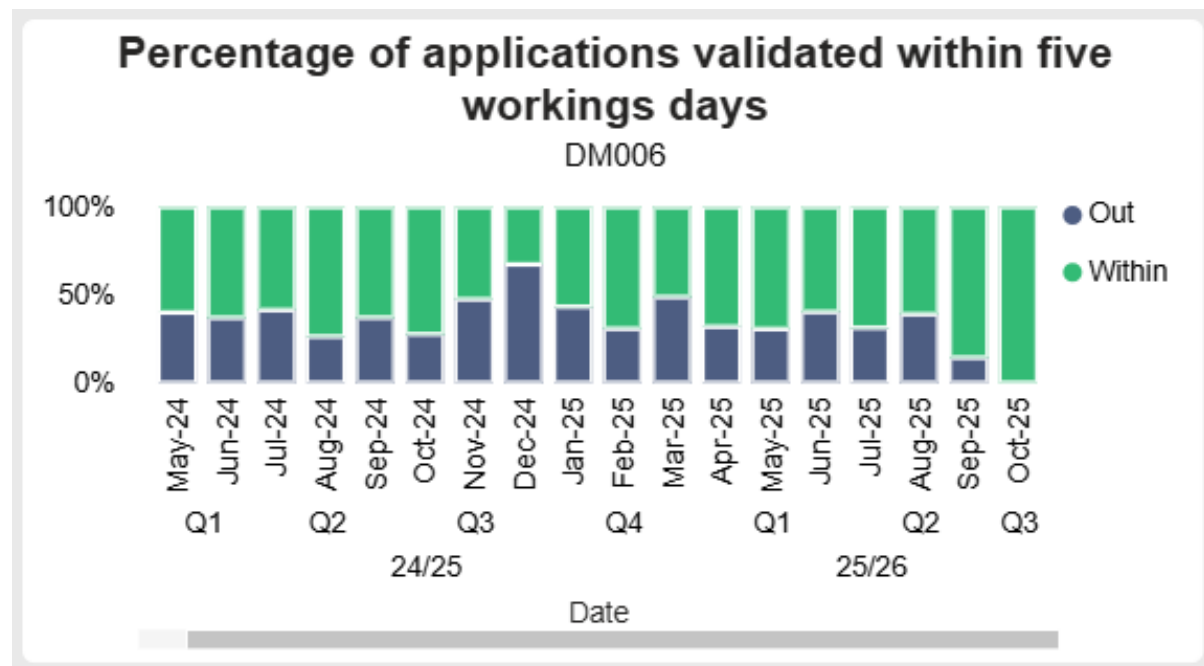
Number of applications validated

The numbers of applications fluctuates and responds to economic conditions such as market confidence, house prices, construction costs, interest rates.



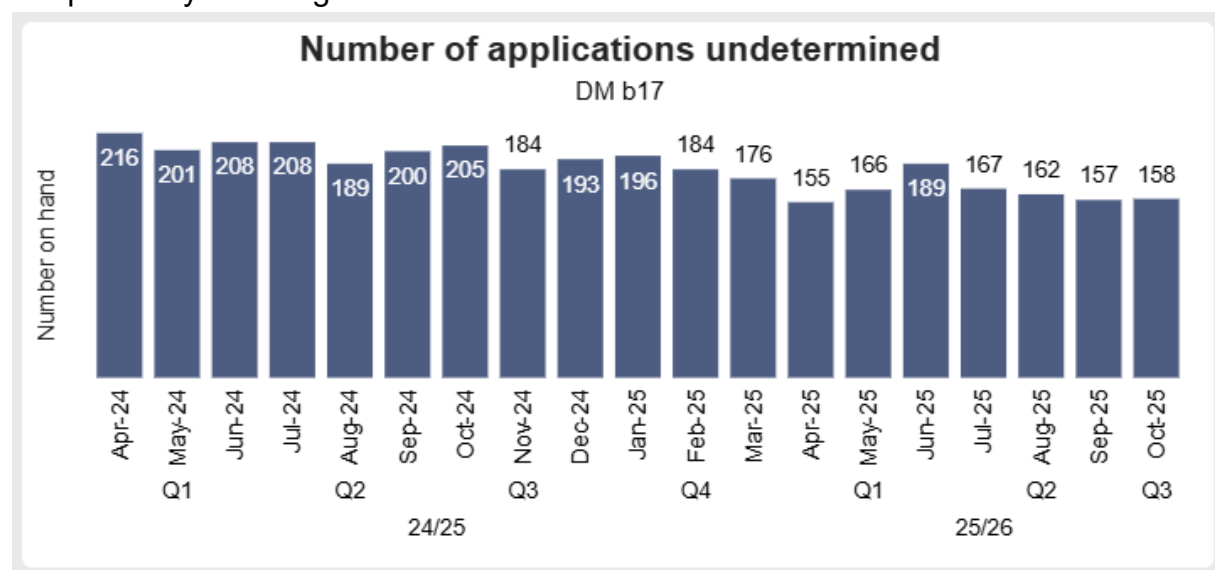
Validation speed

The percentage of applications validated within five working days is improving each month. The majority of all application types are now validated within five days.



Number of applications undetermined

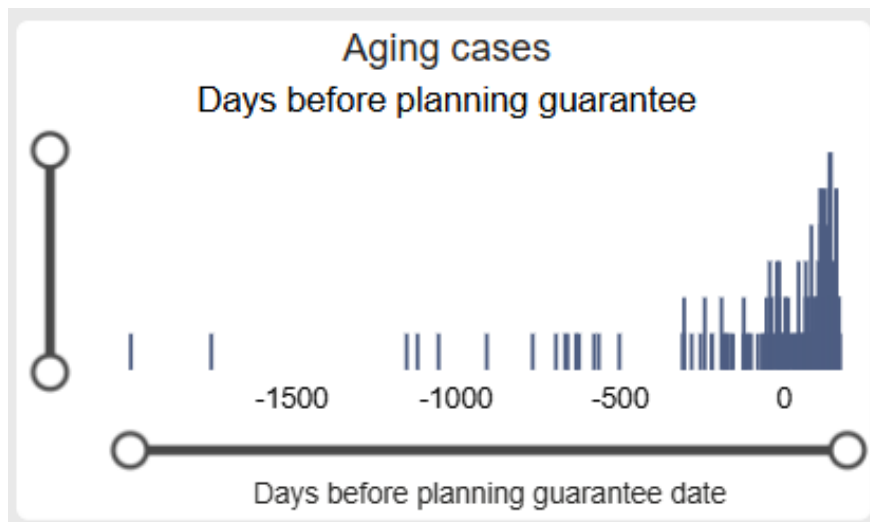
The number of applications undetermined is gradually being reduced given the number of applications submitted, but largely down to a commitment by Officers to clear older applications. There is no 'backlog' only a small number of challenging applications largely relating to historic legal issues. The overall application numbers are positively reducing.



Aging cases

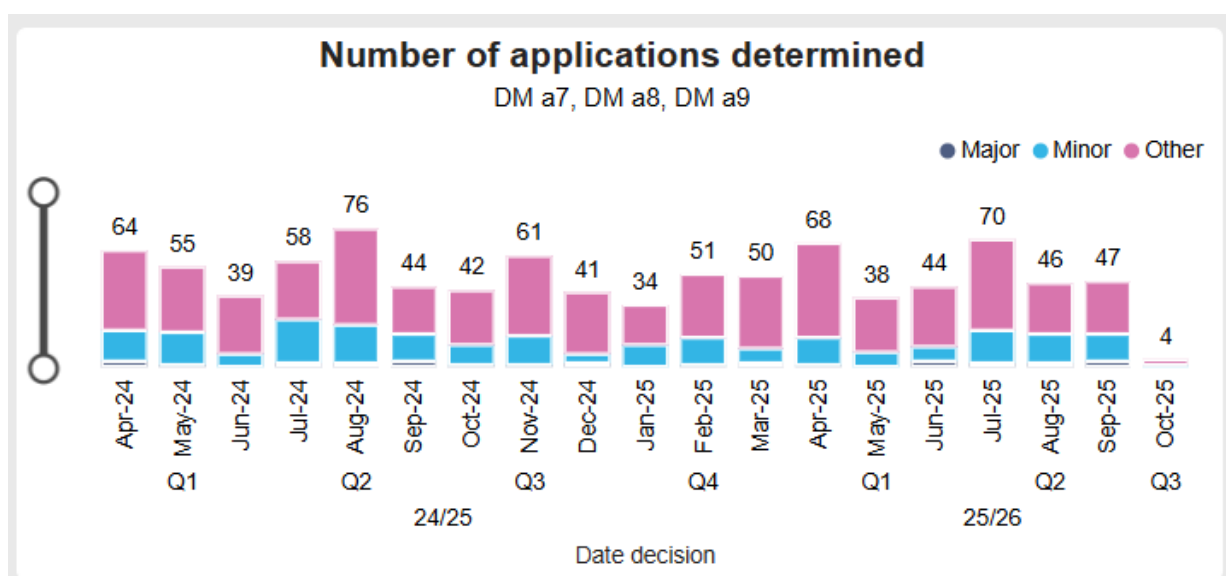
The number of applications fluctuate significantly over the 12 month period. Again, the summer saw a larger number of applications being determined as Officers worked through the older cases and had higher caseloads.

This can be evidenced below with the Power BI measure on aging cases:



Number of applications determined

The number of applications determined in July hit a summer spike which tailed off towards the end of Quarter 2.



Enforcement cases

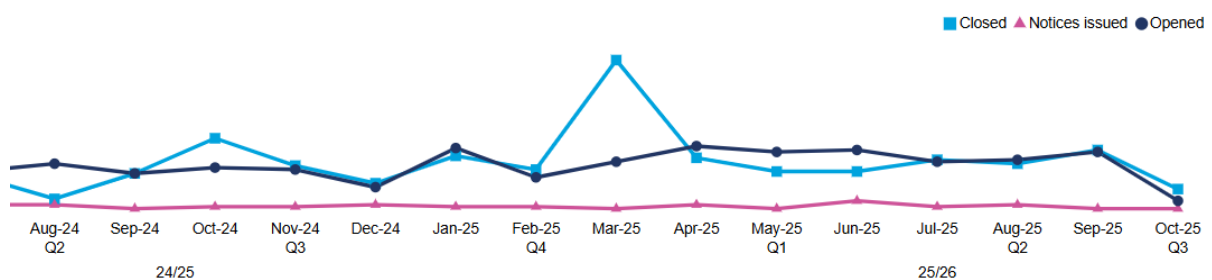
There has been significant progress with Planning Enforcement. We have recruited to the post of Assistant Planning Enforcement Officer post. This Officer is currently receiving training and has already progressed 15 cases to closure following investigations. It is worth reflecting that PAS say that an Officer should carry around 50 cases at any one time.

The Enforcement Policy and proactive approach from both existing officers to close cases is having a positive impact on reducing numbers. Theme based investigation of historic cases has led to more closures.

The Enforcement Team have continued to take action at key sites where negotiations have failed. All recent Enforcement appeals have been dismissed demonstrating we have correctly applied the policies and guidance.

Number of enforcement cases received, closed and noticed issued

DM b4, DM b5 BP74, DM c13 BP75



Total number of open enforcement cases

DMc 13.1 BP77

