

Development Management – Update

Thursday 24 August 2023



Content

- Overview of Development Management
- Wider context
- Performance
- Current issues
- Recovery Plan
- The Future

Overview of Development management

- DM service is a statutory function of the Council
 - Processing and determining applications for planning permission
 - Advertisement
 - Listed building and conservation area consent
 - Lawful Development Certificates
 - Planning Enforcement
- High level of involvement and interaction with residents, members, Town /Parish Councils, MPs, statutory & non statutory consultees

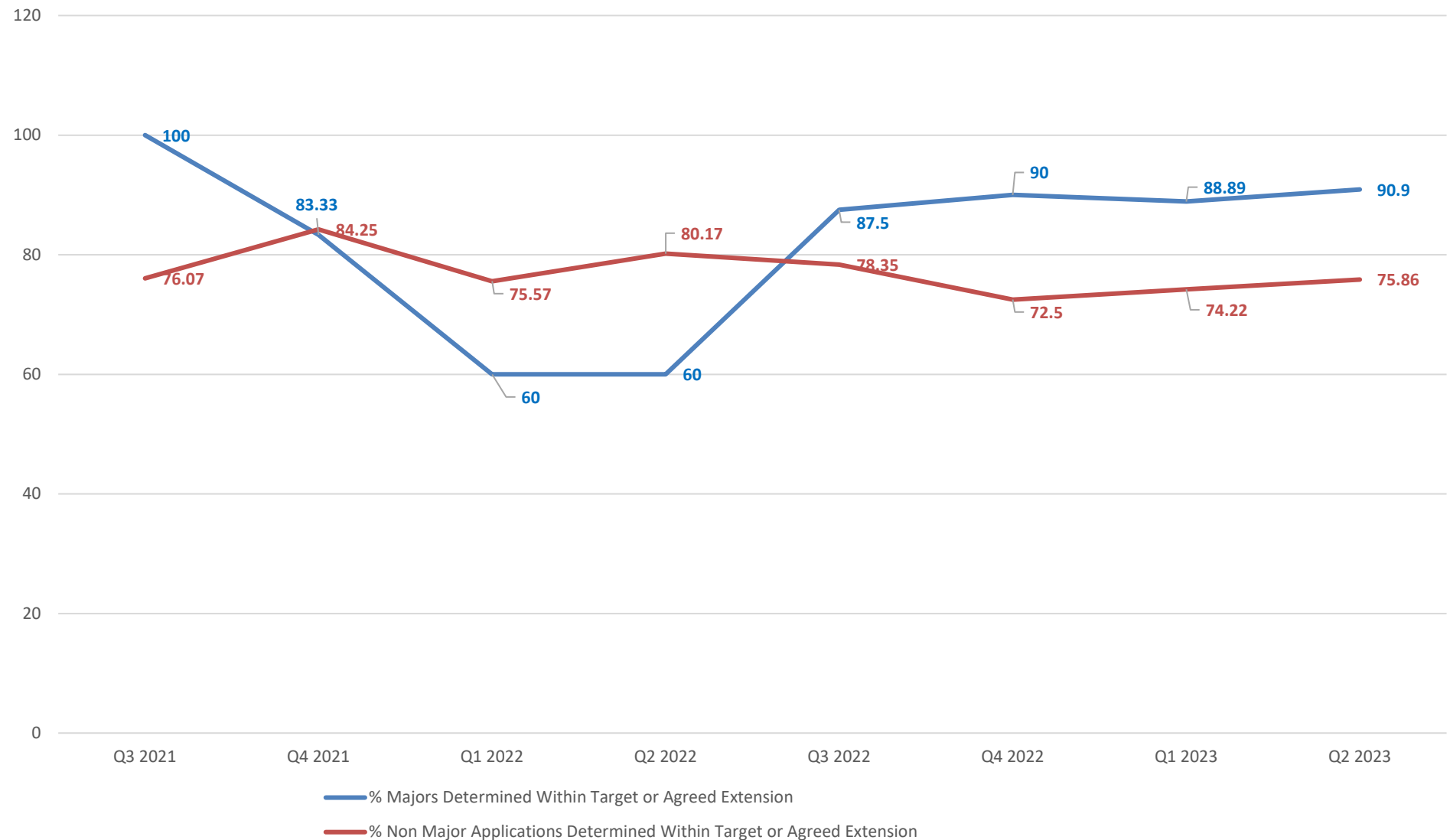
Wider context

- Nationally, Planning has been subject to significant pressure, growth in workloads and changes in recent years
- In recent years, Local Planning Authorities have experienced
 - a drop in the speed of application decision making
 - increased use of ‘Extensions of time’
 - slower validation times
 - significant increase in householder applications
 - increase in objections raised on individual applications
 - increase in customer complaints
 - difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled staff
- Planning fees are set nationally and LPAs do not have powers to increase fees to reduce the funding shortfalls for planning departments. NB Govt has announced that planning fees will increase from 1st April 2024.

Performance

- LPAs are required to measure and report their performance to Government on a quarterly basis
 - Speed of decisions on applications for major development (Target is 60% of applications to be determined within 13 weeks)
 - Quality of decisions on applications for major development based on appeal performance
 - Speed of decisions on applications for non-major development (Target is 70% of applications to be determined within 8 weeks)
 - Quality of decisions on applications for non-major development based on appeal performance
- Performance is assessed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) over a rolling 2-year assessment period.

Quarterly Performance of Major and Non Major Decisions in Time



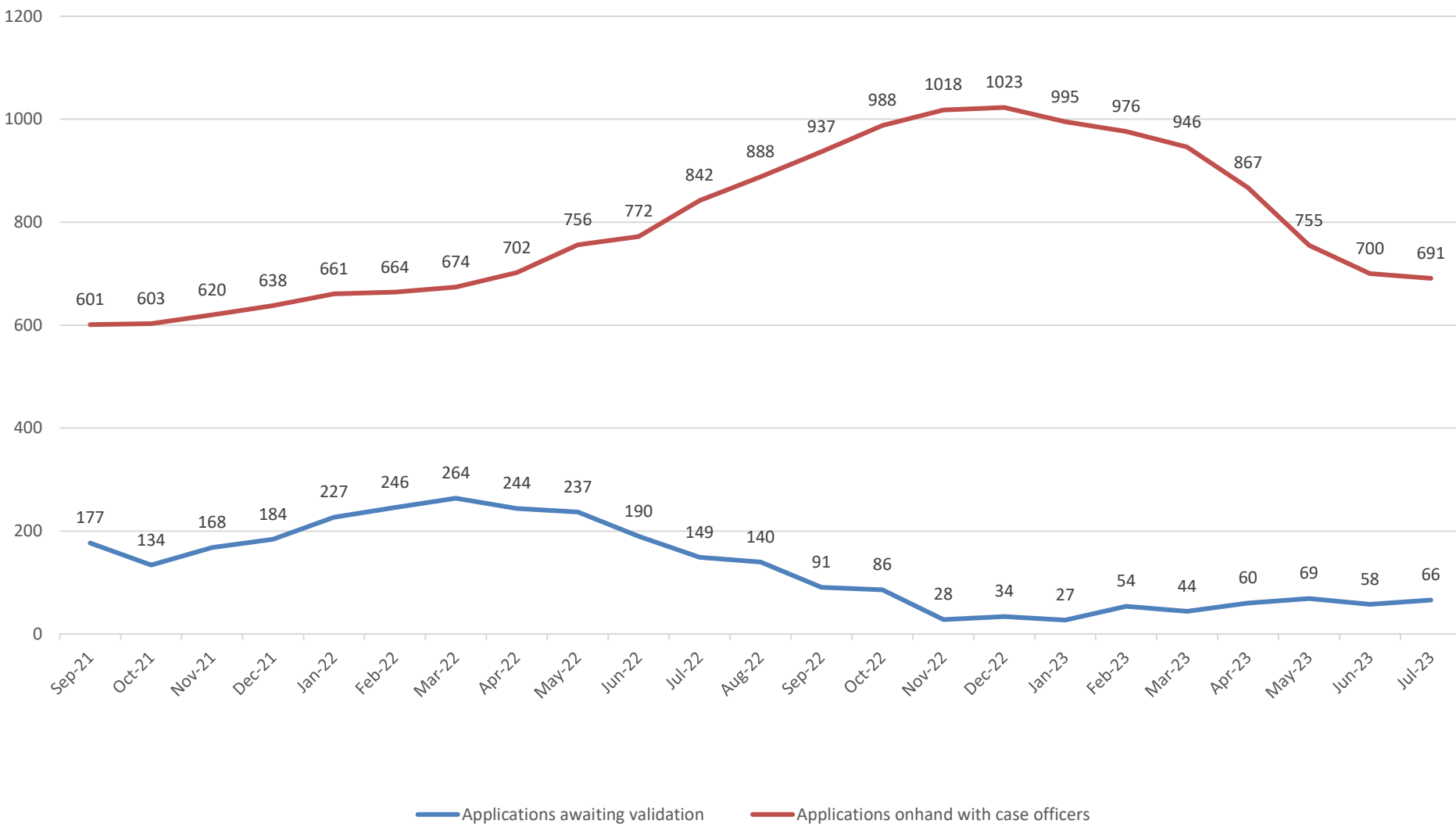
Current issues

- Overall performance against the Govt planning targets is good with targets met or exceeded
- Rolling 2 year performance to 30 June 2023 is currently:
 - Majors 84.7%
 - Non-majors 76.7%
- Due to growth of applications and workload, validation waiting times increased during 2021/22; however validation backlog has reduced significantly and is now stable
- As applications have been validated, the number of 'on-hand' applications has increased significantly, with increased caseloads for officers
- Added to new applications, there are older applications under consideration which need to be prioritised

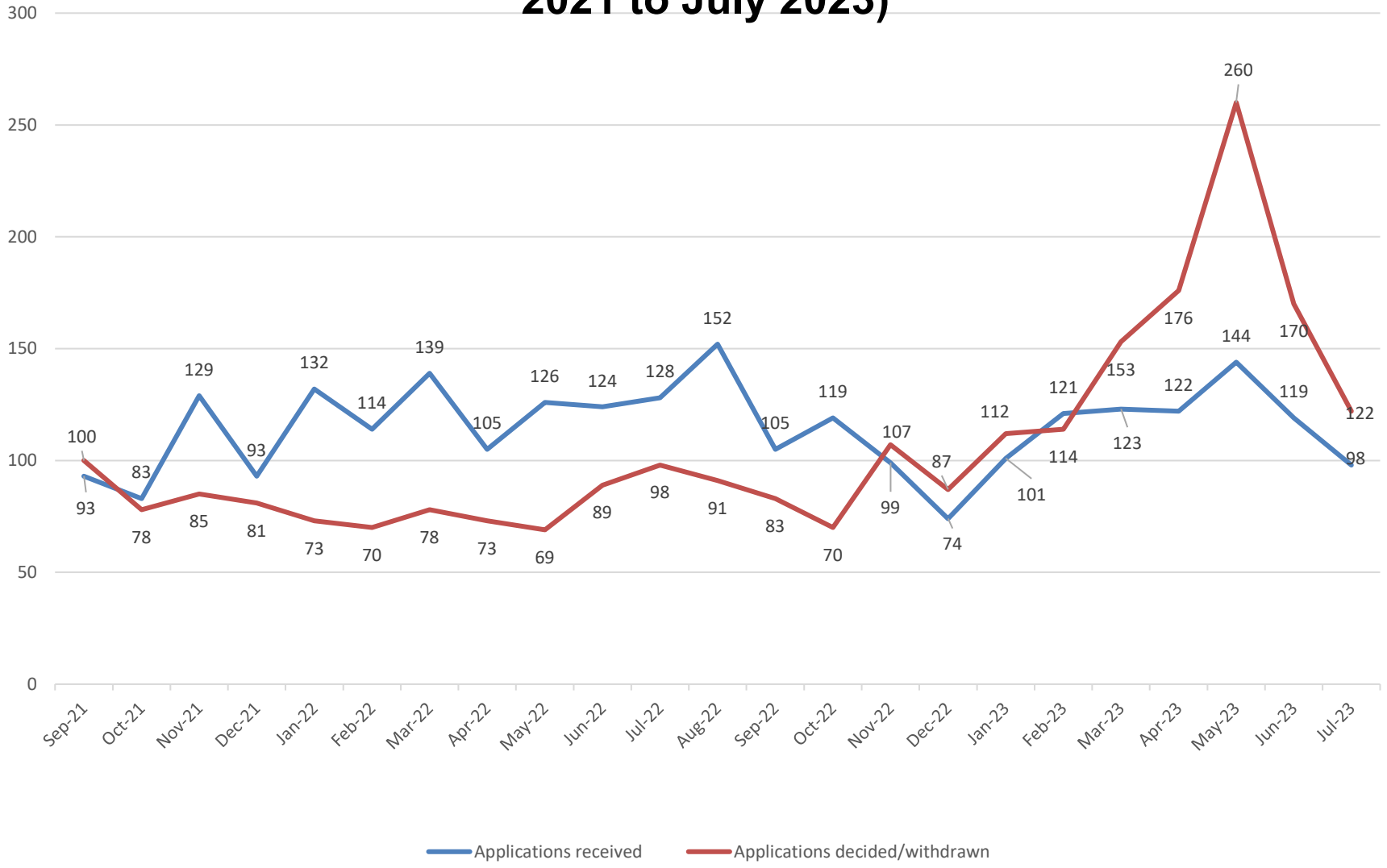
Recovery Plan

- Recovery Plan has been prepared to set out approach to tackling the backlog.
- Service improvements have been introduced to streamline processes, actively manage caseloads and speed up decisions being issued.
- Temporary Agency Planners & Team Leaders have been appointed to provide additional resources to deal with the backlog of applications.
- Appointment of service contract with Terra Quest to assist with processing householder applications in time.
- Task & Finish Group set up and meeting weekly.
- Monthly update reports to Cabinet member for Economic Development Planning and 1/4ly updates to Cabinet & Planning committee.

Apps on hand / Apps awaiting validation (Sept 2021 to July 2023)



Apps received vs. apps decided / withdrawn (Sept 2021 to July 2023)



The Future

- Re-introduce Agents Forum – meeting arranged for 6th Sept
- Govt Planning Skills Delivery Fund – £24m made available to Local Planning Authorities – to help secure additional resources to tackle backlog – Council will submit an application (maximum bid £100k)
- Reduce backlog and stabilise DM caseloads to more sustainable levels
- Re-introduce pre-application service to support applicants – 12 months time
- Peer review of DM service to benchmark against other LPAs
- Creation of DM shared service with Cannock Chase Council - will require transformation of service and alignment of policies /procedures

Questions / Discussion