

Your ref: Planning Officers Consultation

Our ref:

05 October 2001

Dear Colleague,

Moving Towards Excellence in Development Control

The IDeA is supporting the Planning Officers Society in its work on 'Moving Towards Excellence' and attached are the first documents for consultation. The purpose of these papers is to provide a view on what constitutes an Excellent service.

The IDeA and the Planning Officers Society see the value of this work as being in a number of key areas:

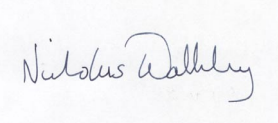
- providing a benchmark for practitioners when they come to consider where they want their service to be;
- identifying gaps in service and helping to map out their improvement plan;
- supporting the drive for continuous improvement.

The work on 'Moving Towards Excellence' started in part with the Audit Commission but has been taken up by the Planning Officers Society with support also coming from the DTLR Modernisation Team. The work on Development Control will be the first in a series intended to include Planning Policy, Minerals and Waste, Regeneration and Conservation and Listed Buildings. The IDeA will promote the 'Moving Towards Excellence' work on its Best Value Web pages.

These papers are very much for consultation and it is hoped that members of POS and others will contribute their comments. Please direct your comments on the paper to karen.moore@hart.gov.uk.

The intention is to publish the final version as part of the updated Guide to Best Value and Planning scheduled for publication in March 2002.

Yours sincerely,



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MOVING TOWARDS EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

CONSULTATION DRAFT 01.08.01

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1. Purpose and Scope

This paper, together with its companion note “Moving Towards Excellence in Planning Policy”, has been produced by the Planning Officers Society to set out what might constitute an excellent development control service. It seeks to identify specific aspects of the development control and enforcement functions and associated management mechanisms that contribute to the achievement of excellence. It draws on current good practice and a wide range of guidance and professional practice reports and reflects the latest Government initiatives.

This version is interim in nature. Feedback is sought from within a number of forums and relevant organisations as well as from local authorities. A final version will be produced as part of the revised and updated Good Practice Guide on Best Value and Planning at the end of the year.

While linked to Best Value and performance management, this paper is designed for use by professional managers, as part of the ongoing process of service improvement, whether or not as part of a Best Value Review. The Excellence Matrix in Section 4 provides a basis for any review of a planning service aimed at improving its quality of process and outcome. An excellent development control service will deliver both rapid decision making and high quality outcomes.

There is an essential link between development control and the preparation, monitoring and review of planning policy, and it is unlikely that an excellent development control service can be provided in the absence of a relevant or up-to-date plan. Consideration of development control performance will need to be seen in the wider planning and development context within the authority, and this document should therefore be read in conjunction with the associated paper for planning policy. The achievement of an excellent planning service will also rely on the effective engagement of other services such as transport planning, economic development and housing and be linked into the corporate agenda.

As part of its modernising agenda the Government has set out its objectives that it considers should be implemented through the planning system. The Government wants to see the planning system play a positive and effective role in achieving a better quality of life for all, economic growth and better public services. The planning system should not be seen as a regulatory service that is an end in itself. It should be seen as a means of delivering what people want – jobs, homes, better transport, lively city centres, sensitive care for our built environment and the countryside. In doing this the planning system should always respect and take account of people’s views and rights.

The planning system must provide effective mechanisms whereby the differing and sometimes conflicting objectives of stakeholders can be resolved in a way that is fair, open and accountable for all stakeholders. This objective must go hand in hand with the delivery of a

quality planning service, which is fast and effective, and delivers the certainty and measurable quality outcomes that the community and businesses need and expect. Members are a critical part of this process, as their approach to their responsibilities; their relationship to officers and the quality of decision-making, underpins the effectiveness of the overall planning service.

An excellent service must be responsive to local needs but would make explicit and demonstrate in a practical way how it sets out and achieves the Government's national objectives. It would also seek to integrate at the point of delivery with other initiatives such as the community plan and sustainable development. Therefore the Excellence Table in section 4 makes reference to the wider agenda as set out more fully in reports by other parties, particularly the Audit Commission in relation to their inspection function and their advice on best practice and the DTLR and their wide range of guidance.

2. Key Issues

An excellent Development Control Service will need to address key issues that are common to most planning authorities and pertinent to the development control function. These include the following, though they are not necessarily in order of priority:

- recognition of local economic, social circumstances and cultural diversity, and the need for effective and appropriate methods of communication with users, with service standards and targets designed to promote engagement and respond to **their** needs
- managing and regulating the environment effectively – to achieve demonstrable outcomes in relation to the wider sustainability and design quality agendas, as well as to resolve issues concerning unauthorised development and getting rid of 'nuisance'
- measuring 'good quality' outcomes and determining what these are – not least what is meant by 'added value' and how it might be measured, determining what is 'good quality' design, and delivering these outcomes with speed
- joint working with other agencies and internal services/disciplines to facilitate the role of development control in delivering the governments urban renaissance and rural areas agendas as well as achieving corporate priorities and tackling cross-cutting issues such as sustainability, economic and physical regeneration, community safety and social exclusion
- incorporation and implementation of national guidance and legislation, including "Modernising Planning", "Modernising Planning – a progress report" – DETR 1998 and 1999, Planning Policy Guidance notes, relevant standards from Commission for Racial Equality, relevant standards from the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, and the Access to Information and Human Rights Acts
- introducing measures to streamline the planning process, including level of delegation, promotion of the One Stop Shop approach and pre-application discussions
- balancing the conflicting views and expectations of a wide variety of stakeholders and development pressures and determining what 'real' participation in the planning process means in the context of achieving performance targets
- facilitating understanding by the general public as to the role and remit of the planning authority and what development control is, and isn't, able to deal with - this particularly applies to issues like 'right to light' and property value
- ensuring an up-to-date and relevant development planning framework is provided as the context of an effective and efficient development control function. The absence of this would delay the process and weaken the credibility and certainty for applicants

- monitoring of quality, both process and outcome, to include regular and integrated external and internal assessment, and using monitoring information to feed back into the process of service improvement and to raise awareness of quality issues
- political sensitivity and the need to be aware of the wider political agenda and the importance of appropriate relationships and understanding between officers and members, facilitated by regular training, to ensure openness, probity and fairness and enable 'good' decision making
- introduction of Best Value, improving accountability, local democracy and promoting the well being of communities are all key aims identified by the Government in order to change the way services are provided so that they are 'citizen centred'
- securing adequate resources and professionally competent staff to deliver the service, supported by training programmes and skills development
- ensuring there is an innovative ICT strategy in accordance with e-governance targets, to underpin delivery of objectives and organisational development, to include provision of information in electronic form, i.e. GIS; workload and performance management and to assist access to information, participation, consultation and enable customer choice.

3. Towards an Excellent Service

An excellent service is one that is demonstrably performing well across a number of Critical Factors. The Critical Factors may change in relation to the functions and objectives of the Planning Service, but those considered fundamental to the Development Control aspects of an excellent planning service are outlined below. These Critical Factors seek to encapsulate clear objectives based on current thinking on key issues and best practice. Factors 1 - 4 reflect on the importance of meeting user expectations. Factors 5 - 7 focus on the way development control can play a positive and effective role in achieving quality outcomes, in context, and in an integrated, co-ordinated and proactive way. The ability of the service to address local issues and manage resources to maximise performance underpin factors 8 -10. The final Factor, 11 encapsulates the total ethos of an excellent service.

1. *Accessible to all stakeholders, including traditionally hard to reach groups.*

Access considerations include physical access and access to the planning process, ensuring access by all users through appropriate office location, signage, opening hours, ease of access to inquiry staff, remote access to services/information and overall "welcome". Particular attention should be given to meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The social inclusion agenda also needs to be addressed by facilitating access to information and advice for traditionally hard to reach groups.

2. *User-focused and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.*

Services should have a good customer focus and sound knowledge of the cultural diversity of the local population. Effective, appropriate and responsive consultation and public involvement needs to be achieved, in both use and service design, which ensures that the public know how consultation has developed into outcomes. A Customer Charter is a key element of this.

3. *Ensures stakeholders are kept informed*

Information is designed to help stakeholders know what to expect from the service, with up-to-date and timely information provided at key stages in a clear and accessible form, using plain language and in a variety of formats. Includes the use of interactive ICT to facilitate this process.

4. ***Demonstrates transparency, probity, fairness and consistency in decision-making.***

Both members and officers have an up-to-date understanding of their roles and responsibilities, with a clear and public modus operandi. Stakeholder information and feedback regarding decision-making/Committee procedures form part of this process.

5. ***Operates within a development framework, which is rooted in an up-to-date development plan.***

A framework provides a basis for certainty and consistency but is flexible enough to allow for innovative and non-traditional development control solutions. There are strong linkages between development control practice and policy formulation.

6. ***Pro-active in securing a high quality of outcome***

Maximising benefits for the wider community and ensuring environmental stewardship in a positive rather than wholly reactive way. The service will incorporate measures of “added value” in assessing the quality of outcomes. Enforcement of compliance with permissions, conditions etc. is an integral part of the service and is properly resourced.

7. ***Responsive to government and national initiatives and policy***

An excellent development control service will seek to contribute to and influence the formation of government policy through consultation and seek to respond effectively to the developing national agendas.

8. ***Takes a corporate approach to the development process***

Development control advice and information is fully integrated with other disciplines and helps to support and further the corporate agenda and other corporate initiatives.

9. ***Establishes strong and effective relationships and partnerships with other authorities and external bodies***

To deliver the wider national and local agendas it will be essential to work closely with other external organisations to maximum the benefits of the development control regime.

10. ***Ensures provision of appropriately skilled and competent staff.***

It will not be possible to deliver an excellent service without adequate numbers of skilled staff and ongoing training to meet resource needs. A range of innovative solutions should be considered to ensure appropriately qualified staff.

11. ***Provides an effective, well-managed service***

The service achieves both quantifiable targets (such as percentage of applications dealt with inside the 8 week period) and high quality outcomes. In doing so it sets clear standards and monitors/evaluates its performance with the involvement of users.

For each of these “Critical Factors” there will be **essential features**, which, if achieved, contribute to “excellence”, though they will apply to different processes and outcomes of the service. These have been broadly grouped into 5 areas:-

- **Policy**-clear objectives and strategies for the service
- **Customer Focus**- the service as seen from the user perspective
- **Process and Procedures**-internal mechanisms for achieving that element of the service
- **Performance measurement**- performance targets and monitoring systems
- **Outcomes**- what service is delivered in terms of clear and sustainable outcomes

A summary table of the Critical Factors and associated Essential Features follows as an “**Excellence Matrix**” in section 4. The Essential Features have been set out in a condensed form for ease of reference, and are listed in 5 columns, one column for each of the 5 groupings mentioned above. Some elements of the Essential Features may appear in more than one cell where they relate to more than one heading or Critical Factor.

4. Excellence Matrix

(attached as separate document in landscape format)

EXCELLENCE MATRIX FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Consultation Draft 1.8.01

CRITICAL FACTORS (Criteria)	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: POLICY	ESSENTIALFEATURE: CUSTOMER FOCUS	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: PROCESS AND PROCEDURES	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: OUTCOMES
<p>1.</p> <p>Accessible to all stakeholders, including traditionally hard to reach groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and equalities policies are formulated in conjunction with users and adopted and published as key/mainstream service issues. • A policy for identifying the relevant stakeholders for an application, design brief or supplementary guidance is in place. These are detailed in a footnote* at the end of the matrix. • A strategy is in place for engaging and involving traditionally hard to reach groups. • Published standards and policies are set out that ensure appropriate levels of access to information, advice, buildings and facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service is easily accessible by both public and private transport. Where appropriate, is also accessible in local centres or delivered locally at shared information points within the community. • Seeks suggestions for policies and improving accessibility from traditionally hard to reach groups. • Offers a One Stop Shop and Development Team service, including single contact point for development related advice. • All facilities are attractive, inviting, legible and well maintained. • Provides sensory aids and facilities for the visually and hearing impaired where appropriate, following consultation with users with special needs. • Clearly informs customers about additional facilities, such as interpretation service or signers, home visits, ICT etc. and how to gain access to these. • Information is provided in a form that is easy to understand and uses plain language • Consultation with existing and potential user groups informs the design, layout, and signage of facilities, office opening times, and the availability of professional advice. These are detailed in a footnote** at the end of the matrix. • Facilities, office opening times and availability of professional advice reflects the needs of different users and is clearly communicated and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and practice incorporates current legislation, guidance and Best Practice e.g. Audit Commission and DTLR information. • Fully resourced action plans are prepared and implemented to achieve full compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act by 2004. • Pursues proactive approaches to involving traditionally hard to reach groups. • Procedures are in place to provide translation services and signing facilities on request or by appointment. • Provides all staff with training in communicating with and assisting people with disabilities and people whose first language is not English. • Staff induction training includes an understanding of accessibility issues, customer focus and satisfaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly reviews policies, practices and procedures in consultation with users and revises them to increase access to services and information. • Undertakes access audits by staff with specialist expertise. • Regularly reviews facilities, office opening times and availability of professional advice to meet customer expectations. • Collects evidence to confirm that policies are being applied consistently. • Monitors participation levels (e.g. attendance at meetings) by hard-to reach groups (in relation to proportion in population and needs indices). • Regularly monitors staff awareness of policies and processes and identifies appropriate levels of training. • Regularly monitors customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An equally open and accessible service is provided to all stakeholders in terms of procedures, standards and participation. • There is real evidence of positive engagement by hard to reach groups. • There is evidence of high customer satisfaction across all stakeholder and ethnic groups.

CRITICAL FACTORS	POLICY	CUSTOMER FOCUS	PROCESS AND PROCEDURES	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	OUTCOMES
		and is clearly communicated and consistently applied.**		levels of any target* or hard to reach groups.	
<p>2.</p> <p>User-focused and responsive to the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public consultation and involvement strategy is in place, based on the agreement / views of all stakeholders* on the priorities and the range and nature of the objectives and targets that have been set. • A development control <u>Customer Charter</u> is published and readily available, setting performance standards/targets for all aspects of the development control service including the level of service customers can expect, in particular for persons invited to comment on planning applications. • A Policy is in place outlining how the Service has introduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has formal liaison/ contact with local community / minority groups to establish the most effective methods of consultation and disseminating information. • Arranges public meetings to meet local needs in response to stakeholder feedback. • Responsive to Members. • Publishes targets and response times for full replies that are equivalent whether to correspondence, telephone enquiries or communication by fax or e-mail. • Compliments and complaints procedures are readily available to the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes ongoing user groups/forums representing a wide range of stakeholder interests to feed back on service performance and influence service design. • Reviews consultation procedures in light of the Human Rights Act and Disability Act, and other legislation as appropriate • Ensures that consultation procedures are consistently applied. • Sufficient staff are readily available and empowered to provide the service to the level specified and able to respond to enquiries with easy access to all relevant data and information. • Implements procedures to ensure that consultations are taken into account and consultees and complainants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carries out a programme of review of consultation and participation activities, including contact with all key stakeholder groups, to establish whether consultation mechanisms are effective and enable socially excluded groups to take part in the planning process. • Regularly and effectively monitors all aspects of the development control process against the <u>Customer Charter</u> standards and locally agreed targets, including key stakeholder /user views on forms, letters and documents; responsiveness to enquiries, whether by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to the BVP1111 questionnaire (the percentage of applicants and those commenting on applications satisfied with the Service received) demonstrate high levels of customer satisfaction. • High levels of participation and involvement. • Customer surveys provide evidence of high levels of customer satisfaction across <u>all</u> stakeholder groups. • Achieves <u>Customer</u>

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	<p>Service has introduced a "listening " culture, including Customer Care objectives and action on feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A publicised compliments and complaints procedure exists together with a system of monitoring and reviewing customer comments and acting upon them to improve the level of service delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff display a customer care culture i.e. are friendly, competent and helpful, and make visitors feel welcomed and valued. 	<p>are given constructive feedback as to how their comments have been addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routinely carries out surveys and reports back to customers the results of surveys and any corresponding action taken to improve services. • Provides Customer Care training for all staff to make all users feel welcome, valued, and 'listened to'. 	<p>telephone, e-mail or through written correspondence; user experience of the service; handling and effectively resolving complaints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates the <u>Customer Charter</u> in light of the monitoring information and using benchmarks from other organisations. 	<p><u>Charter</u> targets (where targets are set for response times, full replies will have been sent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of complaints.
<p>3. Ensures stakeholders are kept informed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear policy for the provision of information and advice is formulated in consultation with stakeholders and is being delivered. • A policy is in place to ensure that information is regularly monitored and updated to ensure relevance and availability. • An adopted and published policy is in place that clearly sets out the key stages of consultations and provision of information in relation to different types and scales of planning application, to include 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive, up-to-date and relevant range of information and advice is available and clearly displayed which would include statutory documents, Development Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Planning Briefs and publicly available information. • Information and advice content responds to local needs and demand and covers issues relevant to all service users, including related development issues and associated regulatory services. • Identifies other information, including all current application files and recently determined applications, to be made available to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All information complies with the provisions of the Local Government Access to Information Act (e.g. Committee papers) and the Data Protection legislation. • Development teams are established with lead officers to manage and co-ordinate development advice and information, and subsequent application processing. • Integrates advice and information with other disciplines and co-ordinate the provision of advice and information on associated regulatory services. • Clear procedures are in place for regularly reviewing information for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly reviews policies and arrangements for providing advice and information, including the content, range and scope of information, with stakeholders involved in the review process. • The review process involves comparing information provision with other similar organisations, including best in class. • Timescale targets are in place for when to acknowledge objections, advise people of decisions and other key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence across the community and in other council services that the process of development control is well understood. • High satisfaction levels for all service users. • Fewer enquiries about progress of applications / complaints etc. • Schemes amended in response to views of consultees indicate added value to the decision-making process.

CRITICAL FACTORS	POLICY	CUSTOMER FOCUS	PROCESS AND PROCEDURES	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	OUTCOMES
<p>3. (continued) Ensures stakeholders are kept informed.</p>	<p>application, to include customer consultation/user review. Information is produced, and disseminated, informing people of the extent of the role they play in decision making process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an agreed policy clearly identifying the scope of information, plans and documents that are available free of charge or at a price that is reasonable, and affordable to the target users*. • Policies are in place to ensure “plain language” with information provided in a clear and accessible form, using plain language and in a variety of formats, developed following direct consultation with target groups. • An ICT customer use 	<p>be made available to members of the public by appointment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displays and maintains appropriate information in reception areas, such as: service performance standards, organisational and committee structures, and photographs of relevant Members/ staff. • Early in the application process, applicants are advised of realistic timescales for determination. Users are routinely notified about progress and the next stage in the process and associated time scale with all documents and information including clear guidance on what to do next and all relevant contact names, numbers and officer availability. • ICT is used to enable the provision of the same information whatever the customer’s choice of contact mode (telephone, in-person, letter, electronically). • Prominently displays a list of information together with 	<p>accuracy and relevance and updating the information where necessary. This would include designing, managing and monitoring websites and other ICT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stages for consideration of planning applications are identified and agreed with applicant / agent and key stakeholder groups. • Mechanisms are in place to inform key stakeholders how key stages are being handled and associated timescales in the planning process. This includes post decision processes such as clearing conditions, enforcement and appeals. • All staff are trained and knowledgeable on the range of documents and literature which is available to customers. 	<p>and other key stages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key documents have a Crystal Mark or meet other similar ‘plain language’ standards. • Targets for ICT at or above national E-governance targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves E-governance targets.

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	<p>strategy is in place and linked to the Corporate E-government strategy, including an informative, up-to-date and interactive web site with consultation, forms, policies etc. in relation to planning applications, and the facility to receive applicants forms, plans etc electronically.</p>	<p>appropriate charges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information, including signage, meets a range of detailed criteria for user-friendliness regarding design, media, and language. These are detailed in a footnote*** at the end of the matrix. 			
<p>4. Demonstrates transparency, probity, fairness and consistency in decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions made, whether by committee or by officers under delegated powers, are consistent, and made in accordance with Section 54a of the Act. A Code of Conduct for Officers / Members is in place to ensure both have an up-to-date understanding of their roles and responsibilities in decision-making. There is a clear and appropriate schedule of delegated powers and protocol for referral of applications, planning briefs and supplementary guidance to Committee, Cabinet or full Council as appropriate, the undertaking of site visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Code of Conduct for Officers and Members is made available to the public. The scheme of delegation to officers and referral to committee is clear and transparent to users, staff and councillors. There are opportunities to address the Planning Committee with all interested parties notified and made aware of their role at the meeting and the likely format of the meeting. Clear reports with supporting plans are widely available in advance of Committee meetings with unambiguous officer recommendations. Reports are available in different languages / mediums to reflect local needs. Clear committee procedures are in place and widely publicised, including information leaflets available for the public outlining the Planning Committee process and how it is managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines and clarifies relationships between Cabinet, Executive /Scrutiny Committees and the Planning Committee and officers within the context of the new local government decision - making arrangements, including protocols for officers serving both Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee, and delegation levels. Procedures and protocols clarify the different levels of responsibility and legitimacy of member roles in decision making including the distinction between planning committee members, area committee and ward members. Defines procedures for both delegation of decision to officers and referral from officers to committee. The Code of Conduct includes information on processes and procedures, such as dealing with correspondence, lobbying, meetings with applicants, overturning officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review systems are in place to evaluate the outcome of decisions made by officers and Committee, including those not in accordance with the recommendation. Ethnic monitoring of decisions where appropriate is undertaken in consultation with under represented groups. Includes public and member feedback on reports and committee processes in monitoring procedures. Carries out an internal audit. Customer surveys are regularly undertaken to test the perceptions of fairness and transparency in decision making. Regular reports are presented to Members advising them of key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of decisions in accordance with officer recommendations is higher than the national average. There are no Ombudsman cases regarding this issue. There are no challenges or cases referred to the Standards Committee. High proportion of successful appeals. Appeal costs have not been awarded against the Council. The outcome of customer surveys

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	<p>undertaking of site visits etc. that are available and communicated to Members and stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and published policies set out how and when reports are available to the public. • Clear and published policies are in place relating to how the public can expect to be treated and there is a process for regular updates on probity issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are clear presentation methods at committee, which maximise the use of IT. • Provision for applicants / agents to amend proposals and / or submit additional information up until time of decision. • Produces and disseminates information on what stakeholders can expect and their role in the decision making process. 	<p>recommendations and conduct on Committee site visits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mandatory and regular training programme for Members is in place on the Code of Conduct, supplemented by training on the development control process, new legislation, procedures, etc. • Officers have formal access to Members to brief them on new emerging issues and for pre-committee briefings in order to identify outstanding issues. • All staff are aware of probity issues. 	<p>performance results: e.g. numbers of applications received and determined, percentage determined in 8 weeks, appeal decisions, S106 agreements, information on enforcement and tree matters, complaints and outcomes, consistency of decisions, performance against locally set targets and comparison with other authorities.</p>	<p>customer surveys show that stakeholders perceive that decision-making is fair, transparent and in accordance with the scheme of delegation and referral.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of delegation above 80% (or as modified in policy).
<p>5. Operates within a development framework which is rooted in an up-to-date development plan and other policy documents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear strategic guidance, in the form of an up-to-date and statutorily adopted development plan, is in place [or where not up-to-date is in the advanced stages of review]. This sets out the authority's objectives in terms of the nature and form of development it wishes to promote and policies to secure improvements to the built environment. • Introduces strategies to ensure the service remains outward looking and flexible enough to address emerging objectives such as Urban Renaissance. • Supplementary Planning Guidance including 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application reports relate to national, regional, local and corporate policy context. • Supplementary Planning Guidance such as Conservation strategies, design guidance and planning briefs are prepared in association with key stakeholders. • Proactive in communicating existing and new guidance and policies to developers and agents. • Offers pre-application discussions and written advice to ensure understanding of the development framework, awareness of all policies, strategies and guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A systematic approach is in place to ensure that decisions are taken in the context of national, regional, local and corporate policies. • Regularly reviews and updates design policies and development briefs to reflect national guidance and initiatives. • Introduces procedures that manage and support flexible application of policy where appropriate. • Officers and Members visit completed schemes or award winning schemes in other local authorities, where appropriate, in order to assess the outcome of decisions and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertakes regular monitoring of committee reports and planning decisions to ensure that decisions are taken in the context of national, regional local and corporate policies and meet these policy objectives. Monitoring of development control decisions are also used to formulate policy and aid the plan making process. • Members regularly review and assess the outcome of non-traditional design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low proportion of appeals where the Council's decision has been overturned. • Advertised departures from the approved statutory plan represent a low percentage of the total permissions granted. • The objectives of the development plan are achieved through development control decisions. • Targets in development plan e.g. affordable housing have been

CRITICAL FACTORS	POLICY	CUSTOMER FOCUS	PROCESS AND PROCEDURES	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	OUTCOMES
	<p>clear and up-to-date Conservation strategies, design guidance and planning briefs are in place and integrated with strategic policy but allow for circumstances where innovative and non-traditional development control solutions may be appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy in place to maximise linkages integration and feedback between Development Control and Planning Policy functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages applicants to present innovative schemes to Members. 	<p>the merits of innovative design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms exist to ensure close and effective working between Development Control and Policy Planning officers • Sets up multi-disciplinary internal forums, training sessions etc for the discussion of issues and feedback. 	<p>solutions to inform future decision-making.</p>	<p>achieved.</p>
<p>6. Pro-active in securing a high quality of outcome.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members and staff are committed to a “vision” which maximises benefits for the wider community and ensures a high quality of environment; this is captured in both corporate and service goals and objectives. • Utilises the development control process to implement policies in the development plan and other guidance and strategies that encourage and promote high quality of the built environment, sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, produces comprehensive design briefs to inform potential applicants of issues and standards in advance of submission. • Pre-application discussions are welcomed and encouraged to supplement policies and guidance. These involve all the significant and relevant parties and will include statutory bodies where appropriate. • Appropriate site-specific design advice is available to potential applicants at the pre-application stage. • Written documents and plans are encouraged prior to meetings to allow for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures are in place for measuring the quality of outcome and ‘added value’ of the Development Control process which account for cost and timeliness of decision making and test the level of community benefit. • Requests full design appraisals for all major schemes on submission and design justification statements for minor schemes in accordance with PPG1. • Liaison agreements are in place with building regulations and other regulatory staff to provide a corporate approach to regulating the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive conditions monitoring systems are in place to ensure that decisions are implemented fully and deliver the best possible outcome. • Sensitive or contentious proposals are targeted for closer monitoring to ensure compliance. • Clear monitoring systems are in place that identify an officer responsible for monitoring each section 106 agreement to ensure the spend of monies against the required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of design brief objectives. • High levels of satisfaction with the quality of the physical environment are evident. • Substantial number of approval decisions resulted from negotiations on proposals initially unacceptable. • Examples of good design outcomes are publicised and the authority actively celebrates successful developments and

CRITICAL FACTORS	POLICY	CUSTOMER FOCUS	PROCESS AND PROCEDURES	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	OUTCOMES
<p>6. (continued) Pro-active in securing a high quality of outcome.</p>	<p>development and environmental stewardship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a clear and adopted policy for the positive use of Planning Conditions and Section 106 agreements to secure environmental enhancements and other community benefits, which is regularly monitored and reviewed. Has an agreed and co-ordinated strategy for assessing and measuring 'added value' and the quality of outcome achieved, which has been the subject of consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Agreed policies ensure that enforcement is an integral part of the service and properly resourced, with a programme of pro-active enforcement activity to secure environmental improvement, which has been developed through consultation and reflecting the Council's priorities. The service complies with BVPI112 [5] relating to provision of 	<p>proper consultation. Accurate records of meetings are kept and available to interested parties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves user-groups in assessing and providing feedback on significant applications / developments. Consults the community on enforcement policy and widely publicises its existence. Staff, Members and the wider community are encouraged to monitor and report breaches of planning control. Targets for initial visits, resolution and other key stages in the enforcement process are publicised following consultation with users. Enforcement complainants are kept informed of the progress of complaints. It is possible to access enforcement officers outside normal office hours. Employs a full array of enforcement responses, including, where appropriate, prosecution and direct action. 	<p>environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures are in place for working with other council services and other local authorities/ agencies to help deliver sustainable development. Procedures and protocols are in place regarding the requirement for Environmental Impact Assessments including how to address the issue of 'significance' locally. Members regularly review completed developments and feed back learning into the decision making process and undergo design awareness training. A wide range of appropriate specialist advice [e.g. urban design, conservation, landscape, archaeology etc.] is 'packaged' into the service to support case officers. Close liaison with the local police architectural officer (or similar) to ensure 'designing out crime' and community safety issues are fundamentally considered. A protocol is in place for agreeing terms on S106 agreements which ensures that agreed head terms and the applications consideration at committee coincide. 	<p>against the required timetable and to collect evidence that benefits are meeting community and corporate objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A process is in place and deployed for regular assessment of additional value and the quality of outcome achieved, using a range of measures i.e. internal quality audits, peer group reviews, end-user surveys and Design Award Schemes. Targets are in place for pursuing compliance with permissions, conditions, S106 agreements, and responding to complaints in respect of breaches of planning control, 	<p>design awards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence that people understand the logic of where the resources from negotiated settlements for S106 agreements are being targeted. There is evidence of success in undertaking enforcement initiatives involving [where appropriate] a range of regulatory services which address local stakeholder concerns and secure environmental improvement and enhancement. The majority of breaches of planning control are investigated within the target number of days. A high percentage of breaches of control are resolved within a set timescale. Stakeholders consider a 'seamless service'

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	<p>an Enforcement Charter, and has a clear and published strategy, developed through consultation with stakeholders, which sets out standards, priorities and time-scales for resolving breaches of planning control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has adopted the enforcement concordat and regularly monitors compliance. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability checklists / scores are used to inform the decision making process. • Clear procedures, as agreed by Committee, exist for dealing with enforcement issues are in place and practised by staff. • A system is in place, which enables the effective management and monitoring of performance in respect of breaches of planning control. <p>Staff are provided with structured training in good practice and professional standards in relation to enforcement issues.</p>	<p>including for initial investigations and visits, resolution and other key stages in the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts appropriately and consistently in accordance with PPG18 when presented with similar breaches of legislation in similar circumstances. 	<p>to be provided.</p>
<p>7. Responsive to government and national initiatives and policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies are in place clarifying how development control will contribute to the achievement of national objectives such as sustainable development, economic growth, rural diversification, increased use of public transport and Urban Renaissance • Strategies are in place to achieve national and regional guidance / recommendations and National Performance Indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation arrangements are in place to ensure all relevant organisations are involved in policy development and consulted on relevant proposals. • Sets Local Performance Indicators in consultation with the community. (reference should be made to the AC/IDeA library of local indicators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures are in place to ensure that the development control process addresses national and regional guidance, legislation and emerging priorities and best practice guidelines. • Regular seminars and other training sessions are held to inform Members and officers of new legislation and other initiatives. • Establishes procedures to update and train staff in these issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporates national and local performance indicators into targets and monitoring systems. • Monitors committee reports to ensure they have responded to relevant issues • Monitors implemented proposals to ensure they meet objectives as envisaged. • All legislation and other guidance is reported to committee and Members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers are able to identify developments that have achieved national objectives or incorporated recommended principles. • Achieves targets. • Officers and Members are aware of emerging national legislation and ensure its implementation through local decision-making. • Exemplifies best practice.

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<p>8. Takes a corporate approach to the development process.</p> <p>8. (continued) Takes a corporate approach to the development process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A corporate development charter is in place, or being prepared, together with a protocol for the provision of “joined-up” advice and determination of planning applications, produced in conjunction with key stakeholders. • Incorporates a policy of providing a corporate response to enquiries and requests for information that involve liaison with other departments / disciplines. • Has a protocol for handling major schemes, including establishment of Development Teams, identifying key players, key timescales and appropriate public / member participation. • Identified service objectives reflect and contribute to achieving corporate goals and vision and researched local preferences. There are clear linkages to other plans and strategies including asset management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributes documentation and information widely, amongst other council services and area offices, which relates to the planning service and its role within the council. • Information is produced and made available on the interrelationship of related disciplines, which includes relevant staff contacts and their areas of responsibility. • A single point of contact within the Development Team is available for development related advice, which is clearly communicated to potential applicants. • Ability to discuss proposed development with all relevant parties, including officers from related services, prior to the submission of an application. • Enquiry or reception staff are adequately skilled in dealing with enquiries or requests for information on all development related disciplines.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes Development Teams involving an appropriate range of professionals and with lead officers to manage and co-ordinate development advice and subsequent application processing. Procedures ensure clarity between different professionals on planning policy and requirements, and the nature of their input. • Engages Members and senior officers as a key part of the determination process. • Internal consultees are aware of what is expected of the consultation process. Relevant and timely comments are provided which are taken on board or if not, an explanation is given as to why. • Liaison agreements are in place with key consultees to enable effective communication, establish service level agreements and feedback, and achieve cross-cutting corporate objectives, e.g. community safety, sustainability. • Senior staff from all development related disciplines meet regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Corporate approach to development advice is monitored through developer / user forums providing feedback on their experience which is fed back into service design. • Agent / client groups provide feedback on service and identify areas for improvement. • Following the completion of a major development project both the project management process and the outcome are reviewed and comments fed back into the process to allow continuous improvement activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence of a proactive approach to fostering good working relationships with other departments and working within a mutually agreed framework. • High levels of satisfaction by both internal and external users of the service. • Development control service helps facilitate the delivery of wider corporate and community plan objectives.

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	and community plans.		<p>to discuss emerging issues (e.g. new legislation) and major schemes, and successfully plan to implement change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organises a programme of information exchange with other related disciplines to increase the awareness of development related issues. Project management tools are employed to co-ordinate advice in a timely manner. 		
<p>9. Establishes strong and effective relationships and partnerships with other authorities and external bodies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has agreed policies (and protocols) which secure effective working with the other tier of local government where it exists. Has agreed policies (and protocols) to secure good working relationships where appropriate with other development partners outside of the authority (e.g. with neighbouring local authorities, Counties, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Housing Associations etc.) and their commitment to securing the objectives of the local authority as set out in the development plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular, ongoing and constructive consultation and dialogue with outside organisations. Development control representation on appropriate working parties and partnerships. Form of dialogue and linkages reflects needs of different agencies and organisations. Private sector and community representatives are encouraged and supported to become involved in partnerships. There is an established and clearly defined framework for liaising with key stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures are in place to develop sound working relationships with external consultees, to include a shared understanding of the aims of the service, relevant timescales and the need to effectively and speedily respond when consulted. Where partnership working exists, clear codes of working practices and / or service level agreements are in place which set out timescales and information requirements for both parties. Has a protocol for co-ordinating the handling of application processes between tiers of government where appropriate. Have procedures to facilitate Members commitment and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly monitors reports and other key documents to ensure consideration of partnership opportunities and adherence to procedures. There is an annual review meeting with external agencies to assess effectiveness of procedures There is a pro-active approach to exploring implementation agreements for partnership working and pooling of resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Control decisions contribute to wider partnership objectives and help support the work of partner agencies. Interventions and responses from adjacent authorities and other agencies are timely and add value to the decisions. Partnership working enables effective sharing or resources where relevant. The Council's partners effectively contribute to

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has agreed policies to support involvement in partnerships including the private sector and the community to deliver initiatives such as Urban Renaissance and regeneration. Allocates appropriate resources to support partnership working, joint funding etc. 	<p>stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External consultees are provided with appropriate and timely information in order that they can comment effectively. 	<p>involvement in partnership working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has ongoing and regular formal liaison or focus group comprising key players from other departments and agencies instrumental in delivering objectives, e.g. English Heritage. Other agencies are informed of the decision on applications that are subject to their comment. Have established procedures for working with adjacent authorities on applications that have implications across the boundary. 		<p>securing the objectives of the authority as set out in the development plan.</p>
<p>10. Ensures provision of appropriately skilled and competent staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a Human Resources Strategy to secure the quantity and quality of staff required which sets out a range of imaginative and innovative approaches to ensure that all elements of the service are appropriately resourced. Training and development programmes, including career development opportunities, ensure that skills, knowledge and expertise of all staff match the requirements for service provision and are driven by a training policy that is delivered and monitored. This includes professional, technical, customer care and project management skills. Sufficient resources are allocated to training for all staff, including agency or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff (including those in other service areas and contract staff) are able to give competent, timely and relevant advice with certainty and integrity. Information and advice provided is right first time. Officers understand the purpose of pre-application advice and the without prejudice nature with which it is given. Ensures ongoing staff awareness and training on complaints procedures, use and responses. Provides adequate resources for the enforcement service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff dealing with initial enquiries are at an appropriate level with appropriate experience and qualifications and where possible always become the case officer. Corporate and Departmental training plans together with personal development plans (or any other formal process for identifying training and development needs) are in place, up-to-date and monitored. Ensures opportunities for internal promotion. Has a formal programme of staff training to address current and emerging issues, e.g. managing change, best value, new legislation etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature and type of all complaints and Ombudsman cases are monitored and work practices reviewed in light of findings. Feedback is given to stakeholders on what has changed as a result. Systems are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment and training. Monitors compliance with staff CPD requirements and ensures provision of support and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service is within the top 25% for the BVPI for customer satisfaction Low level of complaints. Ombudsman cases are low. High staff morale, including low sickness levels. Staff turnover levels in the service are at their optimum. Staff appraisals generally indicate career development. Staff skills and competencies are

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	<p>temporary staff and enforcement officers, which is not restricted to professional grades.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up-to-date and agreed working practice and procedures / guidance is issued to all staff and regularly reviewed for accuracy and relevance and updated where necessary. Guidance is used in induction training programme for all new staff. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A formal and agreed process is in place for ensuring the wide dissemination of information and skills amongst staff, including a manual of working practices / guidance for staff available electronically to allow for on site / remote working. Incorporates training and career development needs in staff performance appraisals. A continuous learning scheme is in place that ensures CPD for all staff which is related to the outcomes the service is expected to deliver. 	<p>opportunities so that staff fulfil those requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a Chartermark and Investors in People status. 	<p>aligned to met the required outcomes of the service.</p>
<p>11. Provides an effective, well-managed service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted and explicit policies, objectives and priorities are in place to ensure speed of processing applications and a quality decision; this policy addresses the Government's targets of processing 80% of all applications in 8 weeks and determining 70% of applications under delegated powers. A sound Service Business Plan is in place to clarify budget issues, ensure adequate resources, and help achieve efficient and innovative use of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes One-Stop-shop and Development Team approach in service delivery. Users and staff are involved in setting out aims, objectives and priorities that are monitored through action plans. Service and Performance Plans are effectively communicated both internally within the organisation and externally to relevant stakeholders to ensure that all parties are clear about what they are trying to achieve and their own roles within the process. Enforcement activities are included as an integral part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear and robust procedures and rationale are in place for identifying service objectives and priorities. Effective dialogue with Members to ensure understanding of objectives, priorities and targets. Identifies a lead officer to take responsibility for meeting objectives, priorities and associated targets. Uses project management tools to manage activities such as major planning applications. Operates an effective case management system, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives and priorities have clear targets / milestones which reflect the policy on speed vs. quality and are monitored. Identifies targets for processing of applications within 8 weeks. Where targets are not already met, improve performance towards achieving the target. Continuous (programmed, monthly) assessment of current operational and service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service is in the top 25% for average processing time. The percentage of appeals dismissed is above the national average. No costs are awarded against the Council. Customer surveys should show high levels of satisfaction. Planning costs per head of population meet local targets

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<p>11.(continued) Provides an effective, well-managed service</p>	<p>resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans set out clearly defined local indicators, standards and performance indicators, as a basis for measuring service delivery and systems for regular monitoring. Incorporates the assessment and management of risk in service delivery, linked through to a corporate risk management strategy. Where a Service Review has been undertaken, an Improvement Plan is in place that includes clear timescales and responsibilities for the delivery of agreed improvements. The programme for continuous improvement and the action plan from Best Value Review are aligned. An agreed plan for implementing the Best Value Review of the service should be in place. This should set out how it is going to turn aims into action and what 	<p>of Service and Performance Plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key performance criteria and results are readily accessible by all staff and interested third parties, eg current performance against service entitlements identified in the customer charter / local indicators to be displayed in reception areas and publicised in local press. Key users are engaged in the review of service performance and satisfaction levels and informed of what has changed as a result. 	<p>including the early setting of target dates for reports/decision, systematic recording on file of all stages and matters arising, e.g. telephone conversations, and progress sheets to ensure that all processing elements have been completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures continuity of service through a single case officer for the duration of the application including pre application stages. Procedures are in place to ensure consistency of advice, recommendation and decision between case and senior officers. Procedures are in place for business / service planning with clear timescales and links into the corporate planning frameworks and budget cycles. Operates an effective workload management system, supported by resources (e.g. voicemail/ filtering), that is responsive to changing demands for the service. Management information systems are in place to inform allocation of resources. A performance management framework is in place. Time recording systems are 	<p>achievements against published local and national targets /objectives, including national Best Value performance indicators and local customer charters; to include monitoring and identification of reasons for failure in service delivery and reporting progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where appropriate, an improvement plan supported by Members with resources to deliver remedial action and priority service improvements is prepared and programmed into mainstream activities. Survey results are fed back to Members and into the policy making process and used to improve and adapt the service towards meeting user expectations. Regularly monitors, updates and reviews processes and procedures 	

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	<p>outcomes it is seeking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective application / appeal caseload and performance management system is in place. 		<p>used and regularly monitored to manage staff resources to maximise the time spent on core activities (as defined in objectives).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual staff performance reviews emphasise the contribution staff make to meeting objectives, attaining wider corporate goals and achieving outcomes. 	<p>procedures, including those for recording and managing information, the response to enquiries, and complaints.</p>	

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Notes:

*** Stakeholders**

A stakeholder is anyone with an interest in the service. The breadth of impact of the planning service means that this term covers a broad range of individuals and collectives and can include the local resident or business community, visitors, neighbours, applicants, local amenity or community groups, individual businesses etc.

Therefore in designing consultation & engagement processes it is important to distinguish between at least the following groups:

- a. Individuals
- b. Groups of users or groups with a common interest.
- c. Applicants
- d. Commentators/ objectors
- e. Agents and other representatives of parties involved in the process
- f. 'target users' i.e. those for whom a service or aspect of a service is designed.
- g. 'Hard to reach' groups are defined as the young, the elderly, those whose first language is not English, the homeless and those with disabilities. There may be other 'hard to reach' groups that can be defined in a locality.

An excellent authority will understand, and its practise reflect, that different groups and individuals have different agenda in the development process.

****Accessibility:** Consultation with existing and potential user groups informs:-

- a. the design, layout, signage and provision of facilities (both internal and external, e.g. disabled parking), ensuring obstacle-free access for people with disabilities, older or less ambulant people and those with responsibility for young children
- b. the office opening times to reflect the needs of different users, with regular reviews and adjustments to meet customer expectations and clearly communicated and consistently applied.
- c. the availability of professional advice (eg duty officer), to be available in person and by telephone at all times during office opening hours. To provide extended opening hours beyond normal office hours where appropriate in response to customer (including potential applicants) demand, along with the ability to leave messages in the evening and weekends.
- d. the availability of appropriate seating, work areas and meeting rooms, with customer access to satisfactory facilities to view and copy plans and other documents and to IT terminals to allow easy access to routine information.
- e. Information, documents, and plans are available at a price that is reasonable, and affordable for all individuals and groups.

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*****Information**, including signage, must:

- a. be up-to-date, well designed, clearly written with illustrations and photographs used to convey information wherever possible;
- b. produced in suitable media formats and languages (where appropriate) and publicly available through a variety of channels and widely-publicised;
- c. available in a range of different media eg. Internet, audio tapes, leaflets. Verbal communication should be clear and confirmed in writing wherever possible;
- d. available in alternative forms for people with sensory disabilities and in translated form for members of local ethnic communities where English may not be the first language;
- e. planning information web site available on the Internet and locally accessible terminals, to include standard forms and documents and guidance on the planning process;
- f. include a programme of providing registers, development plans and policies, and progress on planning applications on the Internet and locally accessible terminals, with the potential for 'hands-on' interaction and feedback on-line.

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