

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Recommendation		Priority	Completion Date	Budget Requirement	Resp. Officer	Current status/Actions pending
1.	Staffing					
S1	Consideration should be given to creating an additional post within the case officer team, with a view to appointing an experienced officer capable of handling major applications. This may require incentivisation.	High	April 08	£40-45k plus £5k if incentives are required	SP	A permanent full-time post is being advertised, for an experienced officer. Following maternity leave this is likely to increase the staffing complement by c. 0.5. Peaks in workload to be accommodated by agency staff or call-down contract.
S2	If recruitment fails, the a call-off contract should be considered.	Medium	July 08	£20k-£40k	RM	Await outcome of S1
S3	The Principal Planning Officer (development control) should not carry a caseload and staffing levels in the team should be adequate to permit this.	High	Linked to S1 and S2	Nil	RM	Delivered through S1 and S2
S4	The training requirements identified through the Personal Development and Review system should feed into a prioritized annual training plan.	Low	April 09	Nil	RM/ Assistant Director	Process for producing a prioritized plan to be identified.
S5	Succession planning should be strengthened through a workforce development plan which recognizes the likelihood of a tightening recruitment market and the need to address this internally by training and developing staff	Medium	April 09	Nil	Assistant Director	Process for producing a workforce development plan to be agreed.

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2.	Procedures and Working Arrangements					
P1	A comprehensive review of procedures against best practice should be commissioned leading to the codifying of the revised procedures in the form of an on-line guide.	High	Commissioning February 08 Completion August 08	£38k PDG (committed)	JR	Commission now implemented. Trevor Roberts Associates now on-site undertaking work.
P2	A management system for the systematic updating and review of the new procedure guide should be put in place.	High	April 08 to assist production of guide	Nil	DH	DH to lead team and notify team members following consultation with DC (case officer, enforcement officer, technician required on team)
P3	Some immediate changes to streamline 'front end' processes should be implemented in advance of the procedural review along the lines set out in 4c(i) and Appendix 2. This includes some task re-distribution and the placing of press notices weekly rather than fortnightly.	High	February 08	Nil	JR	1. DH to implement weekly press notices 2. JR and DH to discuss validation of householder applications with staff. 3. Following 1 month's trial of 2 above, DH to arrange for process change to amalgamate stages 5 and 6 at registration. 4. DH to implement changes to decision notice production to reduce stages involved and order a stamp.
P4	Following the comprehensive procedural review, consideration should be given to further revision of staffing structures and task distribution to create a dedicated, integrated team, providing administrative and technical support to development control. Ideally, team members would be generically skilled, providing greater flexibility to deal with both workload peaks and staffing shortages.	Medium	September 08	Nil but subject to confirmation via JE	RM	Await results of TRA review.

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P5	Pre-application discussions should be documented and entered onto Uni-form.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DH/DC	DH to check with Nigel Disley that 'notes' section of Uni-form can be used. DC to notify case officers to use the 'notes' section.
P6	Wherever possible, the case officer involved in the pre-application discussions should process the subsequent application.	Medium	Ongoing	Nil	DC	Implemented
P7	Where appropriate, design and access statements should be sought at the pre-application stage as an aid to discussion.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DC	To be incorporated in P8
P8	A charter setting out pre-application advice should be produced.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DC	DC to research charters published on web and customize.
P9	Consideration should be given to charging for pre-application advice (substantive requests for diared meetings and site visits only) once service levels have been established and can be consistently met.	Low	March 09	Nil	DC	No action required until arrangements for providing pre-app advice in line with charter are bedded in and working well.
P10	More formal discussions should precede major applications with a view to specifying the information requirements for documents submitted in support of the application and to commenting on drafts. In the longer term, consideration should be given to the use of Planning Performance Agreements.	High	To be phased in from February 08	Nil	DC	Implemented and ongoing

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P11	Where a Section 106 requirement is identified, Heads of Terms for this should be agreed at the pre-application stage.	High	To be phased in from February 08	Nil	DC	DC to review procedure note on Section 106 with Keith. DC to discuss with legal the appropriateness of using planning conditions to require an agreement to be entered into with the authority as an alternative to waiting for the signing of a S106.
P12	A service level agreement should be agreed with the Council's legal service to ensure the timely availability of legal support for S106 agreements.	High	July 08	Nil	RM	Discussions to be initiated with Legal Services.
P13	Greater use of the 'development team approach' should be made at the pre-application stage, ensuring that the issues relevant to statutory consultees are identified early in the process.	Medium	To be phased in from July 08	Nil	DC	DC to consider the merit of more formal arrangements and the greater use of the DTA
P14	A processing checklist should be introduced for major applications and used as the basis for agreeing a timetable with the applicant.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DC	DC to produce a checklist
P15	The procedural review and guide referred to in Recommendation 1 should include the case officer role (together with related areas such as enforcement and appeals).	High	As for P1	Included in P1	JR	Implemented

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P16	The duty officer service should be discontinued and replaced by additional training for customer services staff, an appointments system for face-to-face contact with case officers and promotion of the website.	High	April 08	Nil	DH	DH to consult with DC and customer services (where appropriate) and produce a new customer interface model for discussion. This is to include the means of notification needed for cessation of the duty officer service
P17	Measures should be introduced to improve the quality of applications. This would involve working with local agents and developers and, perhaps, introducing some form of quality accreditation for agents. The setting up of a developer/agents forum would be an initial first step.	Medium	January 09	Nil	DC/RM	For future discussion between DC and RM.
P18	Consultation should be e-enabled and greater use made of SLAs for internal consultees.	Medium	July 08	Included in IT2	JR/DC/DH	E-consultation – see IT2 SLAs – JR and DC to meet Rob George and Ian Thompson re countryside consultations. DH to provide baseline data on response times and monitor future performance.
P19	Consideration should be given to making more use of the power of refusal.	Medium	July 08	Nil	RM/DC	Await views of Scrutiny task group
P20	A checklist and proforma should be put in place for site visits to ensure that site visits are fully effective and properly recorded.	Medium	February 08	Nil	DC	Implemented

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P21	Consideration should be given to routing calls to case officers through a customer services point.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DH	DH to examine options and ascertain what is required to furnish case team with voice mail. Special arrangements to be considered for Members. JR to consult Richard on acceptability of voice mail.
P22	Case officers should be trained in the use of Uniform.	Medium	July 08	Within existing training budgets	DH	DH to provide programme for delivering in-house training.
P23	Consideration should be given to reviewing the delegation scheme in order to deliver levels of delegation which are more in line with the norm.	High	July 08	Nil	RM	Awaiting TRA review
P24	Other arrangements for Planning Committee should be looked at in the context of the planned review of the trial system introduced in February 2008.	Medium	July 08	Nil	RM	Awaiting TRA review
3.	Information Technology and E-Planning					
IT1	The full capacity of Uni-form should be explored and customization undertaken to maximize processing efficiency and provide management information. This should be progressed by a task group led by the Planning Support Manager.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DH	JR and DH to meet Uniform development officer and subsequently arrange a task group meeting to include TB and KD. Task Group to visit Stockton.

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IT2	The software and hardware required to commence the on-site scanning of incoming applications and related correspondence should be installed as a matter of priority and an interface created between Uni-form and the EDMS. The EDMS and the Uni-form interface already in place in Stockton should be assessed for possible replication in Darlington. Potential to share the procurement and installation costs with other users within the Council (particularly the Uni-form users) should also be explored.	High	July 08	Cost of scanner as for IT4 Software costs to be confirmed – depends on route chosen.	DH	Task Group to visit Stockton as for IT1.
IT3	The in-tray and work-flow requirements needed for the operation of live scanning should be developed in parallel with the installation of the hardware and software to facilitate the early commencement of live scanning. As with the software, the arrangements in Stockton may be suitable for replication.	High	July 08	Nil	DH	Task Group to visit Stockton as for IT1.
IT4	A programme should be put in place for the completion of back-scanning of 'closed' files and for the transfer of previously archived files from disc and microfiche into a database linked to an EDMS.	Medium	July 08	£22.5k for file scanning. Costs to be obtained for Microfiche and Alchemy conversion.	DH	VFM of microfiche to be established. Costs to be confirmed or obtained for conversion of data held on alchemy discs, scanning of remaining paper files and scanning of all decision notices. Budget bid to be prepared.

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IT5	A 'super user' should be designated within the department with responsibility for coordinating the customization of software and the further implementation of e-planning.	High	March 08	Nil but subject to confirmation via JE	RM	In discussion
IT6	A programme should be put in place to achieve the satisfaction of the outstanding Pendleton Criteria and to guide the further development of e-Planning in line with the government's 'Better Planning Services Standards'.	High	July 08	Nil	RM	In discussion
IT7	Management arrangements should be strengthened in relation to the ongoing development of e-planning.	High	March 08	Nil	RM	In discussion
4.	Performance Management					
PM1	A quality systems manual should be set up containing all information on the performance targets, performance management systems and performance improvement programmes which are in place, together with other related information on customer charter standards and quality control systems. If possible, this should add a layer to the corporate system rather reside within a separate database.	Medium	September 08	Nil	RM	JR to ascertain what is already available corporately within Performance Plus.
PM2	Access to the corporate system (Performance Plus) should be made available to all managers.	Medium	July 08	Nil	JR	Performance Plus data now available on the intranet.

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PM3	The capability of Uni-form to provide management information should be further explored.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DH	DH to coordinate standard reporting requirements with DC and ask Nigel Disley to set up within Uniform. DH and DC to be trained to produce one-off reports.
PM4	If Uni-form cannot deliver in a responsive way, then appropriate staff should be trained to extract information from the data base through other software such as Access or Crystal.	Medium	July 08	Nil	DH	Hold pending outcome of PM3
PM5	Performance information should be routinely shared and discussed with teams.	Medium	April 08	Nil	DC	DC to consider best means of sharing performance information and report back on proposals
PM6	Consideration should be given to introducing 'earliest determination dates' to empower staff to take ownership of performance on BVPI 109.	Medium	April 08	Nil	DC	DC to consider and report back.
PM7	Consideration should be given to increasing team work to bridge the 'divide' between 'support staff' and case officers and create joint ownership of responsibility for the progression of planning applications.	Medium	September 08	Nil	RM	Await outcome of TRA review.