Issue number 10 Autumn 2009

Newsletter

Building Control and Development Control Environmental Services

Wigan Council

The articles in this newsletter are designed to...

- **Alert** you to new regulations or procedures
- **Guide** you to source of help on our website or elsewhere
- **Help** you understand our processes
- **Report** performance and request your views on how we can improve services.

Wishing a long and happy retirement to Dennis McBride

Dennis retires from the council at the end of November 2009. He has been at Wigan for 23 years and has a total of over 40 years local government service. He is well known by many due to his long term involvement with minerals and waste sites, and his enthusiasm and knowledge of this area of work has been invaluable to the council. Everyone who has worked with him wishes him a long and happy retirement.

Building Control Technical Seminars

The next BC technical seminar will be held on 29 October, and will cover ground source pumps. The following seminar, on 1 December, will be on basements. Both events will start at 9.30am and will be at Wigan Cricket Club.

Invitations will be issued soon. If you would like to attend, please let one of our Building Control team know and an invitation will be sent to you.

Progress on Local Development Framework

An 8 week consultation period on the Core Strategy Preferred Options recently ended on 4th August. Approximately, 1800 representations have been received by the council, all of which will be considered in the compilation of a publication draft. Publication of the Core Strategy is scheduled for late summer 2010.

Decisions regarding which development plan documents will follow the Core Strategy are currently taking place, specifically the production of Area Action Plans and an Allocations Plan. These will be set out in a revised Local Development Scheme which is due in the autumn 2009.

A House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document is near completion and is likely to be adopted in late 2009.

Approved Document G

Government have announced that the revised version of Document G, originally due to come into force on 1 October, is to be delayed and will instead be operational from 1 April 2010.

Available to download from the Planning Portal **www.planningportal.gov.uk/** the new document has six parts. These cover matters relating to cold water supply, water efficiency including recycling of greywater and harvesting of rainwater. These are aimed at limiting water usage to an average 120litres per person per day in line with the aspirations of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Hot water systems are covered and include a new requirement to provide a temperature regulator to prevent scalding from bath taps. A water use calculator will have to be completed when submitting plans and details of the flow rates and capacities of all taps appliances and fittings must be specified. A copy of the water use calculator is being developed which will be available online.

Section 80 form for Notice of Intended Demolition

Section 80 form; notice of intended demolition; is being revised to help us to undertake duties outlined under section 81 of the Building Act. As well as highlighting the need for applicants to seek planning permission in appropriate circumstances, the new form will request more contact information from the applicant and building owner.

Built in Quality Awards

The Wigan Built in Quality Awards; held since 2004; recognise good builders and promote excellence in building control. Earlier this year we participated in organising the North West's first regional building control award scheme, held at the Reebok stadium Bolton. Winners of Wigan's 2008 awards were invited to the ceremony. Nominations for our fifth annual (2009) awards are now being considered.

Partners

Wigan Building Control are active participants in the LABC Partnership scheme and regularly check and approve plans for works elsewhere in England and Wales. If you would like to partner with us and benefit from a one to one link with our surveyors, please contact either Paul Swift or Steve Gaskell.

Customer service excellence

We are very pleased to confirm that following a government assessment in May, the BC and DC service has successfully achieved accreditation under the Home Office's Customer Service Excellence Award. CSE is the replacement to Chartermark, which we have held for the past three years. The new standard assesses us against 57 criterior which are designed to verify that customer focus is at the centre of what we do. Our thanks go to several local agents and contractors who kindly came in on the assessment day and offered comment on our service to the assessor.

Future changes to the Planning System

The Killian Pretty Review considered how the operation of development management could be improved. Following the review, in March 2009, the government's announced a series of actions to be implemented. A subsequent progress report and further package of consultations on detailed areas of the planning process have recently been issued. The consultation documents are referred to below:

Increase the types of development that will not meed planning permission

The Improving Permitted Development consultation paper sets out proposed changes to the planning process for some minor non-domestic developments for businesses, in cases where it is felt that the burdens placed on business are out of proportion to the impacts. These relate to permitted development for air-conditioning units and the regulation of hard-surfacing and to shops, offices, universities, colleges, hospitals and industry/warehousing buildings. Additionally there are suggested changes to the procedures by which Article 4 Directions (local restrictions to permitted development rights) are made. If implemented the Government estimates it would remove 25,000 planning applications from the system annually.

Changes to the requirements for the Validation of Planning Applications

This consultation document looks at streamlining information requirements for planning applications to ensure that local authorities only ask for information that is relevant, necessary and proportionate in response to the Killian Pretty Review. If proposed changes are adopted, it will require a review of the Wigan Validation Checklist For Planning Applications.

Publicity for planning applications

This includes one suggestion that local planning authorities should no longer be required to publish notices about applications in newspapers but should publish them on their website instead.

Changing the requirements would reduce costs and give authorities greater autonomy and flexibility, but this must be balanced against the lack of internet access by some people and the fear that the lack of a newspaper notice might be construed as a way to 'hide' the emergence of schemes. It would also have an impact on the advertising revenue of local newspapers.

Response to the Killian Pretty Review. If proposed changes are adopted, it will require a review of the Wigan Validation Checklist For Planning Applications.

BC Performance

The latest local indicators for the Greater Manchester group of authorities have been published with Wigan's performance remaining favourable. We acknowledge100% of all applications within the government 3 day target and carry out 99.9 % of inspections on the day requested. Our plan checking performance is mixed. 62% of applications are checked within 5 weeks of deposit (compared to a regional average 55%) but only 71% are checked within 8 weeks (the regional average is 79%). Our recorded costs per application are the lowest in the group (£352 in 2008/9) and, we continue to score high levels of satisfaction amongst our customers.

The Community Infrastructure Levy

New draft regulations have recently been published for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL is a new charge which local authorities in England and Wales will be empowered, but not required, to charge on most types of new development in their area.

CIL charges will be calculated based on the size and character of the development. The proceeds of the levy will be spent on local and sub-regional infrastructure to support the development of the area.

In addition, the CIL will improve predictability and certainty for developers; will increase fairness by broadening the range of developments asked to contribute and will allow the cumulative impact of small developments to be better addressed.

Important changes to our procedures for issuing Decision Notices

From 1 October 2009, although paper copies of decision notice will still be issued, we will no longer send out a copy of stamped Approved/Refused plans. The decision notices will, however, continue to refer to the approved/refused plan numbers - the relevant plans being available to view online on the Planning website. This will mean a reduction in paperwork, savings on postal costs and the need for duplication of plans.

Changes at the Top

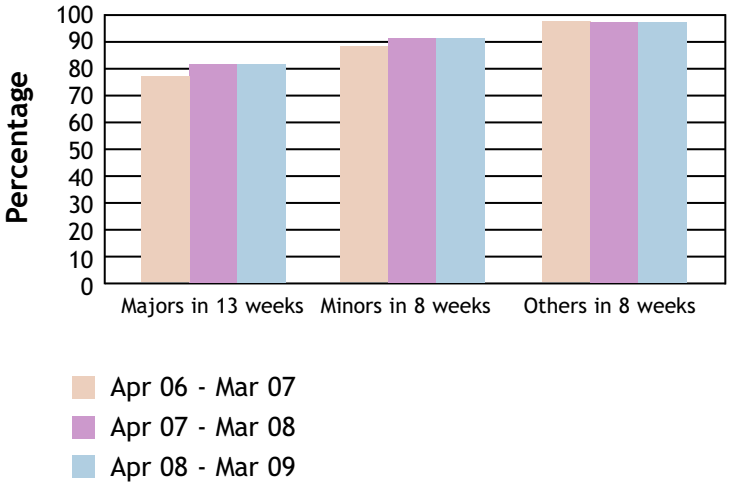
Steve Normington (Service Director) and Mike Worden (Head of Planning and Transport Strategy) have recently taken up post, completing the top tier of the management structure for Development Division. However, this will not be for long, as Martin Kimber, our Executive Director, is due to leave in October!

Planning Applications Requiring Flood Risk Assessment

In order to determine applications as quickly as possible, it's important that all relevant information is provided. Before making an application, you need to consider whether a flood risk assessment may be required as applications will be delayed or refused if flood risk information is not provided.

You can check whether a site is in a flood risk area on the Environment Agency website by entering a town or postcode. Environment Agency Flood Risk Standing Advice will advise whether a Flood Risk Assessment should be carried out before making a planning application.

Percentage of applications determined within statutory time periods



Donaghy Report on construction fatalities

Rita Donaghy (former chair of ACAS) recently produced a report on construction fatalities on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions. The report, published in July made several recommendations, including:

- An extension to Building Regulations to include health and safety processes.
- The drafting of a joint working agreement between the Health & Safety Executive and Building Control (both local authority LABC and private sector ACAI) to develop information sharing aimed at improving standards on site to reduce accidents.

Wigan BC have strengthened direct links with the HSE, making HSE literature available to clients and adding the hyperlink: **http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/cdm/buildingcontrol.htm** to the HSE Construction website to our Building Control webpage. The link contains information such as when construction works need to be notified to the HSE, Construction (Design and Management) Regulations etc.

We asked you what you wanted!: feedback from agents needs survey

At the last BC DC Forum we asked attendees to tell us the top five things that they wanted from BC and from DC. Results show that it is speed of decision and provision of good and consistent advice that agents regard as essential.

Produced by Media & Communications Team - Graphics Town Hall Library Street, Wigan WN1 1YN

The Future of Building Control Implementation Plan

The government have published their Implementation Plan on the Future of Building Control.

The document sets out how they intend to achieve better compliance with regulations at a reduced cost on users. A new vision statement on roles and responsibilities sets out clearly what building control will and will not be expected to do and highlights building owner's responsibilities.

Reviews of regulations will in future be on a more systematic basis. Approved documents will only be reviewed in three year cycles with no document reviewed more frequently than every two cycles, or six years. Exceptions to this are parts F and L for which government has already announced planned changes in 2010, 2013 and 2016.

Project guides will be published to help builders better understand what is required and should reduce the need for 'hand holding' by building control.
A loft conversion guide should be published in October and work has started on a domestic extension guide expected in 2011.

A risk based inspection regime will be introduced which will ultimately replace the current statutory notification stages. Local Authorities will be required to draw up service plans which detail likely inspection stages particular to individual jobs. (Wigan do this now with our Inspection Notification Framework).

Building Notice procedures are to be subject to a further review in 2010, although government have already said that they feel this procedure is not appropriate for new housing. Completion certificates are to become mandatory.

Full details of these and the other recommendations in the plan can be seen at **http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/professionals/en/1115316726951.html**

Building Control Charges Regulations

The government are considering revising the Building Control charges regulations with a view to allowing individual authorities set their own fees. At present local authority charges are set within ±10% of figures established by the government.

Comments, compliments and complaints!

We welcome any comments you may have regarding our work, they help us to improve the service. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints. Please contact Paul Swift or Penny McGinty directly, or, use the corporate complaints process on the council website.