

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

to the
Planning Application Appeals Working Group
Recommendations 2025

For decision by the Executive
on 2 December 2025

Executive Response to the Report and Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Name of Executive Portfolio Holder Councillor: Councillor Jean Conway – Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management	Name of Chief Officer: David Peckford – Assistant Director Planning Paul Seckington – Head of Development Management
Name of External Organisation (if relevant): N/A	Lead Scrutiny Officer contact: Emma Faulkner - Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead Emma.Faulkner@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Overall response to the Scrutiny Report

An Overview and Scrutiny working group was established in light of performance return for the percentage of decisions on major developments overturned at appeal. Since the meeting of the working group, a review of the Planning Committee's decision making has been undertaken by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and a report received. An Action Plan for the management of strategic planning applications has also been prepared. This work informs the response to the Committee.

Executive Decisions (Response to Scrutiny Recommendations).

No.	Recommendation	Agreed? (Yes/ No)	additional information	If 'No', reason and what action, if any, is proposed instead
R1.	That a Lessons Learnt review be carried out on the planning applications process and documented and made available to members of the planning committee and officers to improve learning and development and contribute to ongoing service improvement.	Yes	An internal officer review of the appeal circumstances associated with planning application 21/03522/OUT (land to the west of Yarnton) was undertaken in July 2024 in light of an exceptional award of costs by the Planning Inspectorate. This informed a review by the Council's internal auditors which was confidentially presented with a responding Action Plan to the Accounts, Audit and Risk	

			Committee on 28 May 2025. The Action Plan is internal document but the Assistant Director – Planning and the Head of Development Management are able to brief the working group. Separately, and in view of the percentage of planning applications for major development overturned at appeal slightly exceeding the Government's 10% threshold, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) were invited to review the Council's decision making process. Members of the Council's Executive received the PAS report on 17 November 2025 and it is scheduled to be published before the O&S committee meets. Officers will be presenting an update on its implementation, with any specific recommendations, to the Executive in the new year (meeting to be confirmed) Actions to be completed: 1. O&S Working Group Members to be briefed on the Action Plan. Date to be arranged with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. 2. Confirmation to be provided that the PAS report has been made publicly available.	
R2.	That focused member development workshops be included in the member development programme for members of the planning committee (and substitute members), with an agenda work plan produced for these workshops, addressing known issues and risks that may arise in consideration of overturning	Yes	Two training sessions for Planning Committee Members were held on 2 and 26 June – one internal and one by the Planning Advisory Service in the context of the above performance issue and the PAS review. Separately, The Head of Head of Development Management hosts	

	officer recommendations to the planning committee, to include the potential loss of Section 106 monies and Considering officer recommendations and the possible implications of overturning officer recommendations should they result in being successfully contested as appeal.		a periodic informal Development Management forum with Members which has included a focus on the implications of decision-making, reducing the number of planning appeals and the percentage of decisions overturned by the Planning Inspectorate. It is intended that the informal forum will continue and a forward plan will be prepared to support Members' needs. Members not on Planning Committee are welcome to attend. Actions to be completed: 3. Forward Plan for internal Members' Forum on Development Management	
R3.	That focused member development be included to address the role of planning committee specifically in consideration of planning applications against the Local Plan criteria, to help improve the robustness of planning decisions that overturn officer recommendations and help to reduce the risk of successful appeals.	Yes	These are matters considered by the PAS review and in the Action Plan for strategic applications. The internal Members' Forum also addresses Member Development. No additional actions	
R4.	That the Action Plan being developed address known issues in addressing the robustness of the consideration of member proposals to reject planning applications where officer recommendations would be overturned in planning committee, so that the risk of being successfully contested at appeal may be reduced.	Yes	These are matters considered by the PAS review and in the Action Plan for strategic applications. The internal Members' Forum also addresses Member Development. No additional actions	
R5.	That a monitoring framework be developed to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan and improvements and development to the planning applications process with a reports to a future meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee, to include key metrics (RAG rated) and implementation milestones.	Yes	A report on Development Management performance, the improvement arising from the Action Plan for Strategic Applications and on the implementation of recommendations arising from the PAS Review can be presented at a future	

meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Actions to be completed:

- 4. Future report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be scheduled with Democratic Services.