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The Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy sets out Councils’ planning policy and conforms to wider regional and national policy guidance. It is the blueprint that boroughs use to set out their plans to improve their areas as places to live, play, learn and work. They must provide the right balance of development, infrastructure and services.

Core Strategies show where and how development should take place in a borough. This document brings together the content of exhibition panels on show at the NLA and provides a snapshot of current strategies; as the new London Plan by Sadiq Khan evolves then these local strategies will need to adapt.
Introduction

Nick Jones, Head of Strategic Communications, GL Hearn

The different identities of London’s 32 Boroughs (plus the City of London Corporation) are reflected in the varied strategies that each implements to support growth and development. These strategies aim to meet local needs, identifying key areas for regeneration in turn supporting the creation of local jobs and improving the quality of places, while also addressing pressing issues that concern the city as a whole, including housing delivery and transport capacity. This document illustrates the evolving local strategies, aspirations for the future and key objectives that each London borough seeks to implement.

An insight into the planning performance of each borough is central to understanding whether our current planning system is able to deliver change at the rate required, and GL Hearn’s experience in the field provides vital information on this essential aspect of the development process.

Since 2012 GL Hearn has been analysing the output of the planning departments of the 32 London boroughs and the City of London through the Annual Planning Survey (APS) and Major Applications Research programme. The number of planning applications determined, their outcome, and the time it takes for them to be approved are of vital importance to the development industry. Our work with both the private and public sector has always focused on how both can work together to improve performance.

We are currently undertaking the research for the fifth year. Our report in 2015 concluded that the largest single risk in the planning system was the lack of resources and strongly recommended that this be addressed as a matter of urgency. London’s boroughs are now seeking to attract investment in these uncertain times, much of which will require planning permission. A positive planning environment, including well-resourced planning departments, will play a crucial role in ensuring investment can be delivered.

Key findings from our 2015 report include:

• The volume of major planning applications determined fell 26% year-on-year, with 23 out of 33 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) witnessing a decline. In contrast, three LPAs saw growth of more than 50%: Hillingdon, Lewisham and Richmond-upon-Thames. In the case of Hillingdon, this is the second consecutive annual increase of more than 50%, as it moves from being the 21st busiest Greater London LPA in 2012-13 to the 2nd busiest this year (trailing only City of Westminster).

Note: To allow direct year-on-year comparisons, the study did not include the relatively recently formed London Legacy Development Corporation, which this year determined 11 major planning applications.

• Gaining planning approval in London this year was more difficult than in other UK cities such as Manchester and Bristol, with 84% of major planning applications granted during 2014-15, down 2% from last year. For the second year in a row, Bexley, City of London and Wandsworth all had 100% approval rates, and this year they were also joined by Hounslow. At the other end of the spectrum, three boroughs had approval rates of 60% or less.

• The average time taken from submission to determination of a major planning application has significantly increased this year up to 34 weeks (the first time since 2011-12 that submission to determination has taken over 30 weeks). In total, determination times have increased at 21 out of 33 LPAs. Meanwhile, the prize for the fastest LPA goes to Sutton, which determined 24 major planning applications in an average of just 13 weeks.
Introduction

Our work has been supported by, and brought us into close contact with, other organisations seeking to encourage partnership working. This has included our partner in the APS – the British Property Federation – and of course the NLA.

We have also always sought to ensure both sides of the story are heard so sensible conclusions can be reached and effective decisions made. Our APS seminars have variously included speakers from: London boroughs (including Lambeth, Haringey, Croydon and Camden); the GLA (including senior offices and the Deputy Mayor for Housing); and the Department for Communities and Local Government, including the Chief Planner for England.

Of course, as well as determining planning applications (and setting planning policy), London’s boroughs have a vital role to play in encouraging investment and ensuring this investment benefits their local communities. When the constraints on the public purse started in 2010, many commentators warned that local government would cease to become an effective force. However, we have all seen that rather than fade, London boroughs – along with local authorities across the country – have responded by becoming more innovative and more entrepreneurial. This has resulted in a much more positive environment for investment. As the uncertainty surrounding the Brexit result and its impact on local government funding continues, it is clear that this approach will become even more important to London in the future.