

Highways Agency Performance Specification 2013-14 – Technical Note

Field	Notes
Short Title	Planning Direction of Non-approval for a Defined Period (“Holding Direction”) Responses and Reasons.
Performance Specification Reference	Output 2 – PS 2.9b
Requirement / Output Details	<p>The network operator should report on the following measures to provide further transparency of performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of applications which have a holding direction placed on them by the network operator and a breakdown of the main reasons for doing so.
Technical Definition	<p>The percentage of responses that are directions of non-approval for a defined period (commonly known as “holding directions”), to planning application consultations received from Local Planning Authorities.</p> <p>In addition, the main reasons for issuing such responses will also be reported. The options available are insufficient or inappropriate information relating to:- Transport Assessment; Travel Plan; safety information including road safety audit; environmental information including audits; engineering mitigation; departures from policy; or other.</p>
Rationale	<p>Such directions are utilised to provide the Agency and developer additional time in which to discuss and agree the impact of proposals on the SRN in circumstances where the Transport Assessment is complex or there is missing data.</p> <p>It is a key indicator of our performance in needing more than the 21 days (target) to resolve issues relating to a planning application i.e. a “holding direction” would need to be issued within 21 days if insufficient or inadequate information was received about the impact or mitigation of the proposed development.</p> <p>Knowing the main reasons for issuing a holding direction will enable the Highways Agency and developers to be better aware of typical problems with applications and work on those areas to lessen the risk of a “holding direction” needing to be issued.</p>
Formula	<p>Formula for “Applications on hold at first Response”:</p> <p><i>[Responses “Holding Direction” responses issued in Period]/[Responses Due total in Period]x100%</i></p> <p>E.g. - If a Planning Application was received on the 1st January 2013 it will be due a response by the 22nd January 2013. This measure identifies the percentage of applications that received a “holding” response within the time period stipulated (usually monthly or annual figures).</p>

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Start Date	<p>Figures on the proportion of “holding directions” are available going back to March 2010.</p> <p>Main reasons for “holding directions” have started to be collected from April 2013.</p>
Performance	<p>Although there is no target, we would wish the proportion of “holding directions” to reduce further. However, this does rely on more robust information coming through from the developer, which more pre-application engagement from developers can help with. To help this improve, the Highways Agency published its ‘planning protocols’ in December 2012 to assist developers and Local Planning Authorities understand our requirements and how we can assist in reaching a prompt positive response to any given application.</p> <p>http://www.highways.gov.uk/our-road-network/planning/</p> <p>Proportions of “holding directions” responses are low (7.4% in 12/13) and around half what they were in 10/11).</p> <p>Data on the main reasons for “holding” directions is just starting to be collected from April 2013.</p>
Behavioural Impact	<p>More detailed monitoring on this will provide better quality data to understand what actions may be needed to further reduce the proportion of “holding directions” that the Agency has to issue.</p> <p>A greater focus on the proportion of “holding directions” may encourage Agency staff to issue more ‘no objection’ final responses, when there may be insufficient information to reach a final position on an application. This could lead to applications not being properly assessed in terms of their impact on the SRN. Processes are in place to ensure Team Leader sign off when our Spatial Planning consultancy advice is not being followed (i.e. they would recommend a “holding direction” if it was necessary for proper consideration of an application). The other risk would be for more indefinite non-approvals (refusals) to be issued instead of a “holding” response – but this is controlled through needing Team Leader sign off, and the requirement for detailed reporting of these (which are rare).</p>
Comparability	<p>None with other statutory consultees, who do not formally have this reply option, although they can seek to agree an extended deadline with the Local Planning Authority on any given application.</p>
Collection Frequency	<p>Monthly.</p>
Clearance Process	<p>Monthly through NDD Regional Director lead for Planning, and then through all NDD Directors and Board Director, before release outside Agency for monthly report. For Annual Report, similar, but also through NetServ planning policy team.</p>

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Time Lag	One month.
Data Source	Development Control Database (accessed via HAMIS general tab).
Type of Data	Manually inputted response type of holding direction to a planning application consultation. Since April 2013, this has included a mandatory and summarised list of “holding direction” reasons which is manually chosen. This is then drawn down into the Monthly National Planning Report to automatically produce an average figure and reason proportions.
Robustness and Data Limitations	Relies on correct response type being manually entered from a short drop down menu.
Collecting Organisation	Highways Agency (NDD).
Return Format	Average proportion of “holding direction” type response as a percentage of all responses. Plus text for reasons for this type of direction response.
Geographical Coverage	England.
How Indicator Can be Broken Down	Monthly breakdown via NDD Regional boundaries is also done.