

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY

Report to MRG – 12 December 2002

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1. Purpose of the Report

To provide comparative information with regard to aspects of the services covered by the Review as requested at the Preliminary Member Reference Group Meeting.

2. Summary

2.1 This Best Value Review is looking at how the Transport and Planning policy services of the County Council are contributing to delivering more sustainable development in the County.

2.2 At the Preliminary Member Reference Group Meeting members identified certain areas of the service where they considered that comparative information would be helpful when reaching a view about the priority areas for the Best Value Review. Information is attached regarding how other counties manage the following:

- Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- Development Control
- Highways Development Control
- TravelWise
- Local Transport Plan preparation

2.3 Members are asked to consider the comparative data to help reach a view on the hypotheses to be tested as set out under Item 6 on the Agenda.

3. Minerals and Waste Local Plan

3.1 In Hertfordshire, this function is carried out in the same Unit as minerals and waste development control, with a dedicated policy team of two staff, plus admin and managerial support (equivalent to 2.4 staff). A similar model operates in Beds (which also includes the Luton Unitary area in its local planning - 2 dedicated staff plus professional input from the Unit Head), Suffolk (1.5 staff), Norfolk (2.75 staff), Cambs (also includes Peterborough Unitary area – 1 member of staff is a shared resource with development control, spending 75% of their time on policy work). In Essex (which also covers Thurrock) the Waste Local Plan was prepared in the strategic

development control unit, whilst the Minerals Local Plan is being prepared in the development control team (7 staff).

4. Development Control

4.1 As indicated above most of the authorities in the East of England have a structure whereby minerals and waste policy planning and development control are implemented in the same unit, together with applications for the County Council's own development. Bedfordshire deals with their own planning applications in a different Unit (which also deals with highways development control), but within the same group. Norfolk also deals with its own applications separately, in the Strategic Policy Unit.

4.2 The following table indicates the resources in this area

County	“County Matter” staff incl enforcement	County Council applications	Number of applications received 2000-1
Herts	13.6 (including management and support)	Included in total	23 County matter 132 County Council
Beds	5 (including management support)	2.5 plus professional input from the team leader	33 County matter 52 County Council
Cambs	8.5	Included in total	43 County matter 83 County Council
Essex	12	Included in total	57 County matter 112 County Council
Norfolk	8.5	2 (also responsible for strategic consultations and demographics)	72 County matter 25 County Council
Suffolk	3.5	3	35 County matter 134 County Council

4.3 Comparative data for planning for all counties collected as part of the Best Value Performance Indicators is attached at Appendix 1. Caution should be exercised when considering BVPI 107 (planning cost per head of population) as there are inconsistencies in the way this data is collated. The costs include those relating to policy planning. For Hertfordshire there is also an outstanding query as to the completeness of the data, and information for 1999-2000, together with provisional data for 2001-2002 indicate the figure should be closer to £2.50 per head in 2000-2001.

5. Highways Development Control

- 5.1 Generally there are two models by which the County Councils surveyed deliver highways development control; either all applications are commented on centrally or more major applications are dealt with centrally with minor applications dealt with in area and/or agency offices. For most authorities, highways development control is dealt with in a separate unit to the Local Transport Plan

County	Development control staff	Number of applications consulted on in 2001-2
Herts	8 central staff (plus 4 in area offices dealing with minor applications)	203 major consultations 3453 in total excluding those dealt with by agencies
Beds	7 - deal with all applications except for 1 agency agreement area.	<i>(to follow)</i>
Cambs	8 – deal with all applications	<i>(to follow)</i>
Essex	<i>(to follow)</i>	<i>(to follow)</i>
Norfolk	16 (including 6 in district offices dealing with smaller applications)	330 major applications 5800 in total
Suffolk	9.5	<i>(to follow)</i>

6. Travelwise

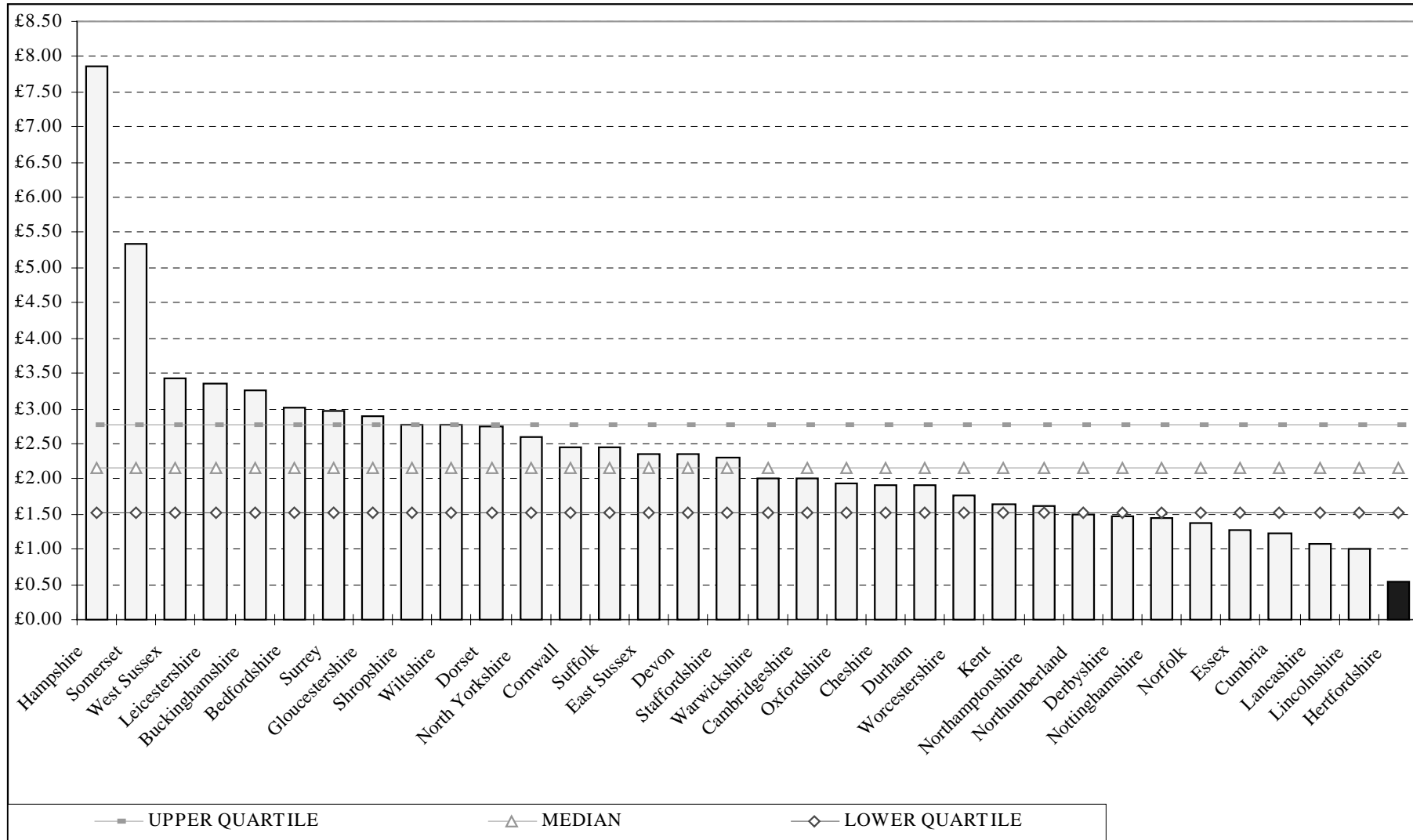
- 6.1 There are a mix of models in terms of where the Travelwise function (including Green Travel Plans, Business Travelwise, Safer Routes to School and School Travel Plans) is implemented, with some authorities having it in the same unit which deals with the Local Transport Plan) whereas others have it in a different policy unit

County	Travelwise Staff	Location
Herts	2	Policy (with LTP)
Beds	2	Policy (not with LTP)
Cambs	2	Policy (with LTP)
Essex	4	Public Transport
Norfolk	3	Strategic Policy (with LTP)
Suffolk	1	Road Safety

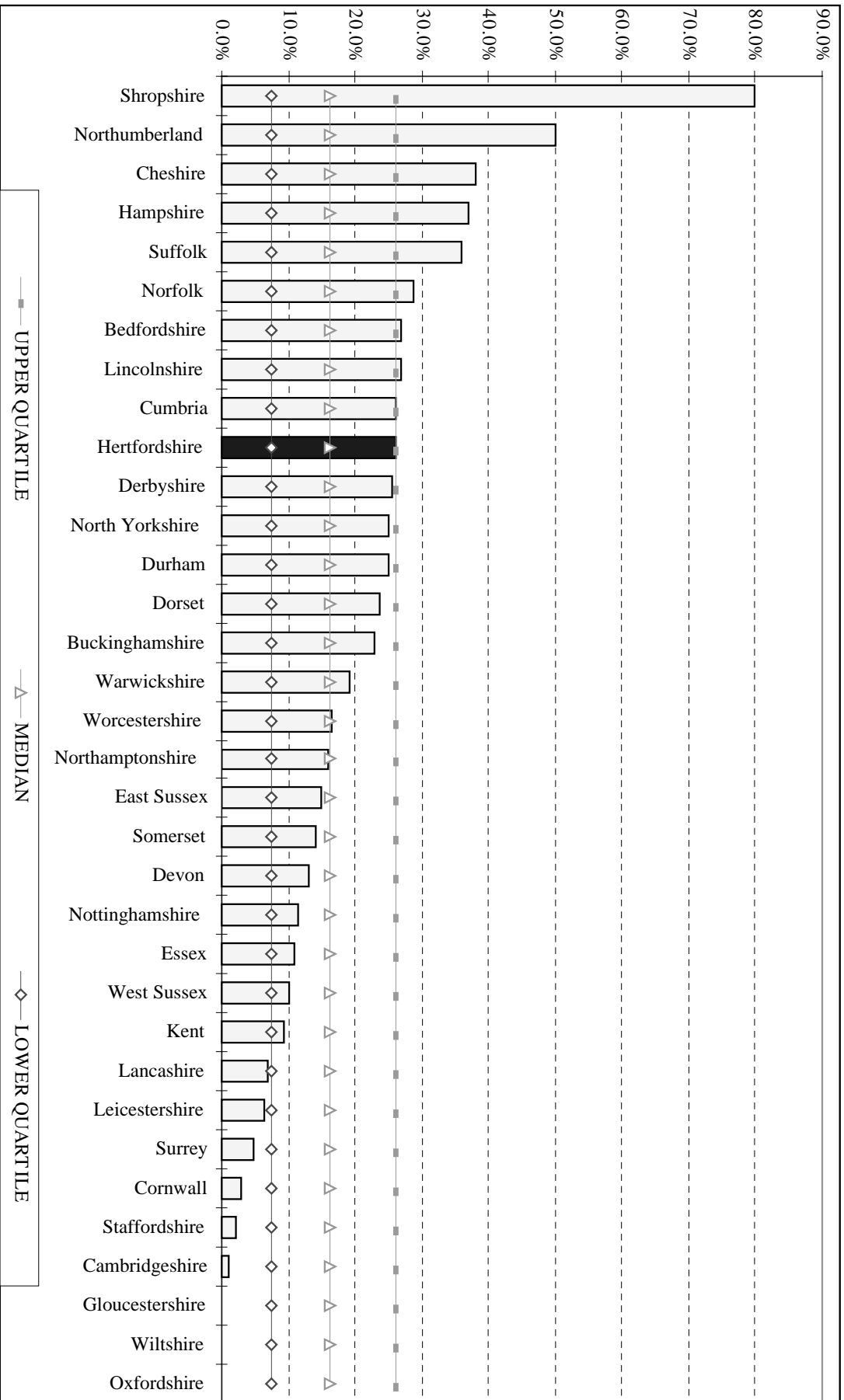
7. Local Transport Plan Preparation

County	LTP staff	Comment
Herts	2	Plus support from Travelwise staff and professional input from Unit Head
Beds	Up to 4	No specific LTP Team. Function sits in the Transport Policy Team with 4 staff inputting to the LTP as required.
Cambs	4	
Essex	<i>(to follow)</i>	
Norfolk	10	(incl Travelwise)
Suffolk	<i>(to follow)</i>	

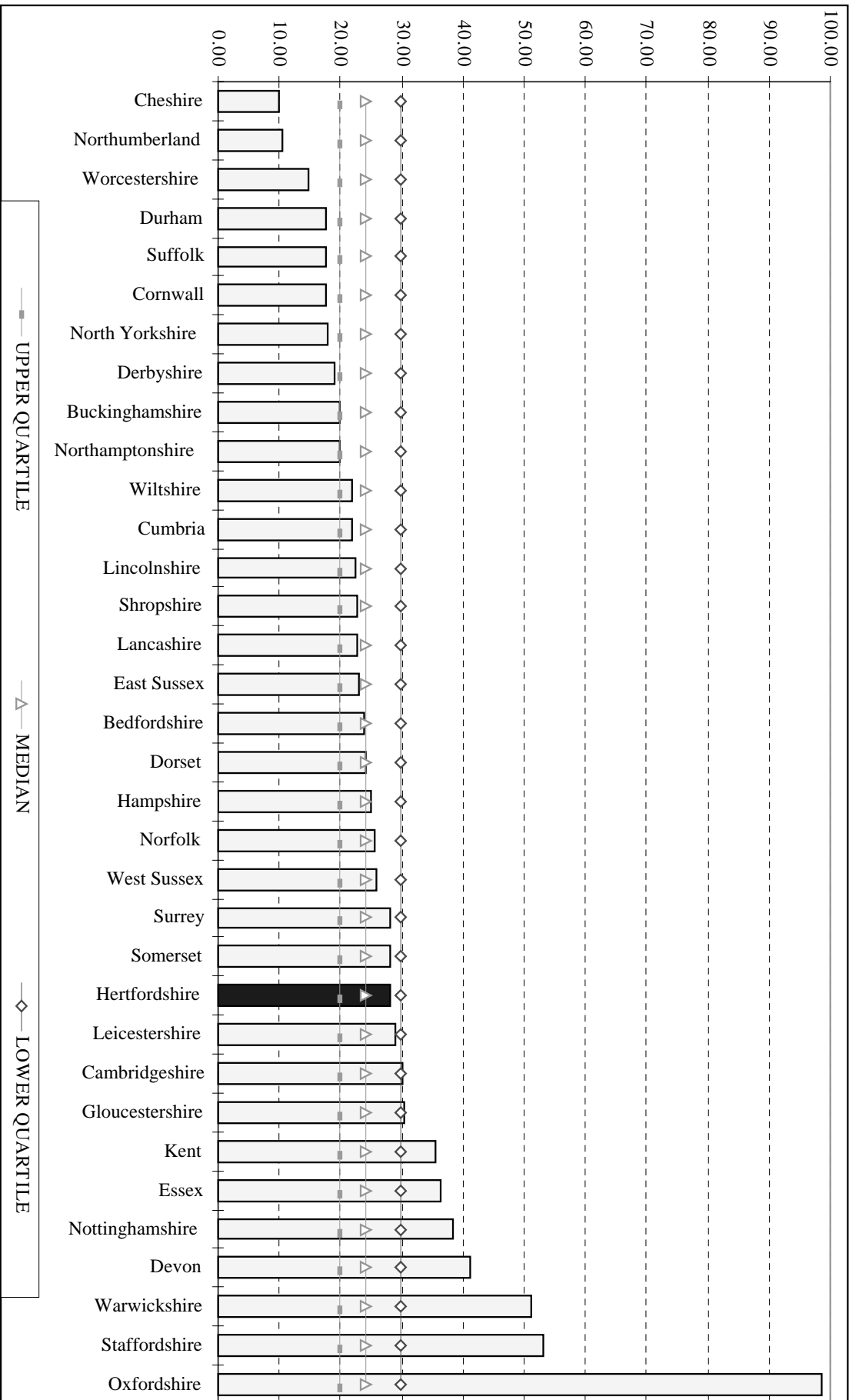
BVPI 107: Planning cost per head of population (2000/01)



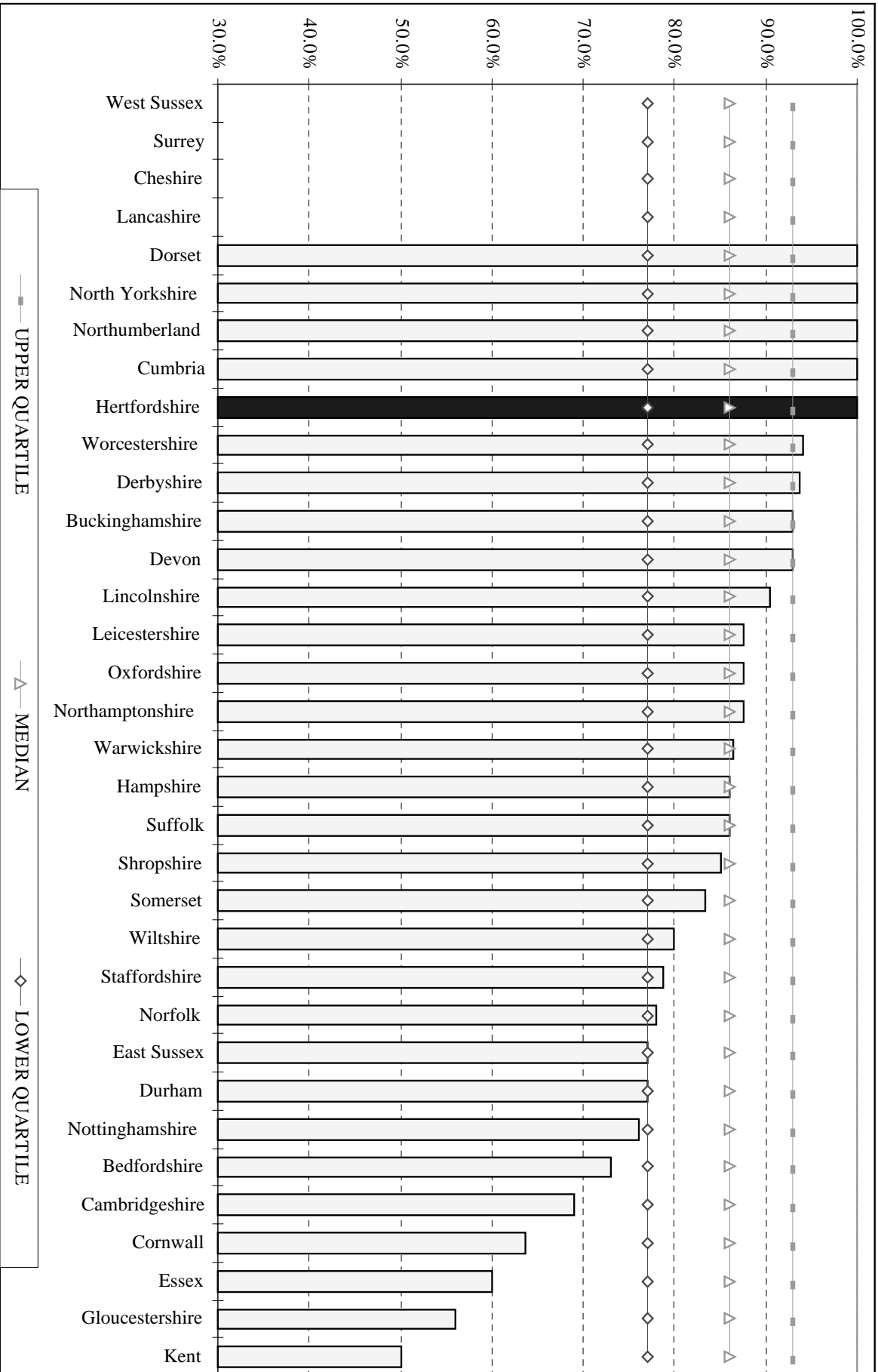
BVPI 109: Percentage of applications determined within 8 weeks (2000/01)



BVPI 110: Average time taken to determine all applications expressed in weeks (2000/01)



BVPI 111: Percentage of applicants and those commenting on planning applications satisfied with the service received (2000/01)



BVPI 112: Score against a checklist of planning best practice (2000/01)

