

# Applications fall, decisions up but fewer residential permissions granted

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: planning applications in England between October-December 2021

## OVERVIEW

Between October to December 2021, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 106,600 applications for planning permission, down five per cent from the corresponding quarter of 2020;
- granted 90,700 decisions, up five per cent from the same quarter in 2020; this is equivalent to 87 per cent of decisions, unchanged from the same quarter of 2020;
- decided 86 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, down two percentage points from the same quarter in 2020;
- granted 9,500 residential applications, down seven per cent on a year earlier: 1,200 for major developments and 8,300 for minor developments;
- granted 2,000 applications for commercial developments, up six per cent on a year earlier.
- decided 60,200 householder development applications, up eight per cent on a year earlier.

This accounted for 58 per cent of all decisions, up from 57 per cent a year earlier. In the year ending December 2021, district level planning authorities:

- granted 376,700 decisions, up 20 per cent on the year ending December 2020; and
- granted 38,500 decisions on residential developments, of which 4,800 were for major developments and 33,700 were for minor developments, down by three and two per cent respectively on the year ending December 2020. This is equivalent to a decrease of two per cent in the overall number of residential decisions granted.

## Planning applications

During October to December 2021, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 106,600 applications for planning permission, down five per cent from the corresponding quarter in 2020. In the year ending December 2021, authorities received 474,100 planning applications, up 15 per cent on the year ending December 2020

## Planning decisions

Authorities reported 103,800 decisions on planning applications in October to December 2021, an increase of five per cent on the 98,600 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending December 2021, authorities decided 426,900 planning applications, up 19 per cent on the number in the year ending December 2020

## Applications granted

During October to December 2021, authorities granted 90,700 decisions, up five per cent on the same quarter in 2020. Authorities granted 87 per cent of all decisions, unchanged from the December quarter of 2020 (Live Tables P120/P133). Overall, 82 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted, up one percentage point from the quarter ending December 2020 (PS2 development types dashboard). Over the 12 months to December 2021, 376,700 decisions were granted, up 20 per cent on the figure for the year to December 2020.

## Historical context

Figure 1 shows that, since about 2009-10, the numbers of applications received, decisions made and applications granted have each followed a similar pattern. As well as the usual within-year pattern of peaks in the Summer (July to September quarter for applications and July to September for decisions) and troughs in the Autumn (October to December quarter for applications and January to March quarter for decisions), there was a clear downward trend during the 2008 economic downturn, followed by a period of stability leading to a large dip in 2020 following the start of the pandemic and a subsequent recovery in early 2021.

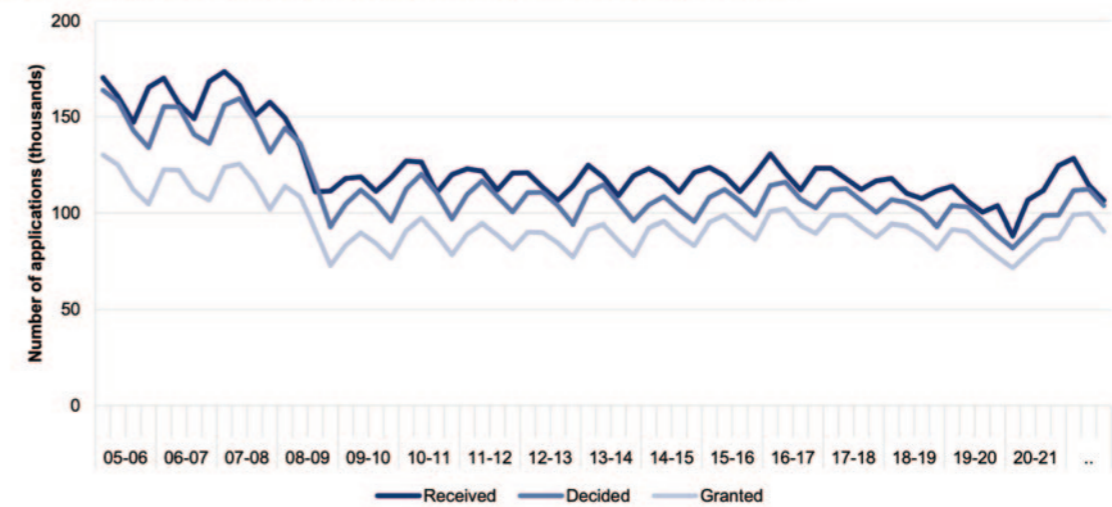
## Regional breakdowns

Table 2 shows how numbers of applications received, decisions made and decisions granted varied by region. It also shows how the percentage of decisions granted varies widely by region, from 80 per cent in London to 93 per cent in the N.E.

## Speed of decisions

- In October to December 2021, 86 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time<sup>5</sup>, down two percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier.
- In the same quarter, 80 per cent of minor applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, down four percentage points from a year earlier.

Figure 1: Number of planning applications received, decided and granted England, quarter ending April 2006 to quarter ending December 2021



• Also in the same quarter, 84 per cent of other applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, down six percentage points from a year earlier.

Figure 3 summarises the distribution of the percentage of decisions made in time across authorities for major, minor and other developments using box and whisker plots. The ends of the box are the upper and lower quartiles, meaning that 50 per cent of local authorities fall within this range. The whiskers are the two lines above and below the box that extend to the highest and lowest observations (the range). Figure 3 shows that the variation in percentage of decisions made in time this quarter is widest between authorities for major developments (0 to 100 per cent), followed by minor developments (0 to 100 per cent) and other developments (7 to 100 per cent).

Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority. All tables and figures can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8x39w2>

Source: DLUHC/ONS

## Use of performance agreements

Table 4 summarises the recent use of performance agreements<sup>6</sup>. It shows that they are more commonly used for major developments than minor or other developments, with 72 per cent of major decisions made during October to December 2021 involving a planning agreement, compared with 50 per cent of minor decisions and 37 per cent of other decisions. Figure 4 shows, from 2010, numbers of decisions on major developments made involving a performance agreement, compared with numbers of major developments without a

performance agreement. The underlying historical figures are available in the PS2 development type dashboard. Notwithstanding definitional changes, there has been a marked increase in the use of agreements since early 2013. This longer upward trend has been driven by both the additional scope for recording them and their additional use.

The three final columns in Live Table P120 give time series for corresponding totals for planning applications involving a planning agreement for all types of development (major, minor and 'other' combined), showing the numbers of decisions and percentages decided within time.

Figure 7: Number of planning applications decided by district authorities, by type of development England, quarter ending June 2011 to quarter ending December 2021

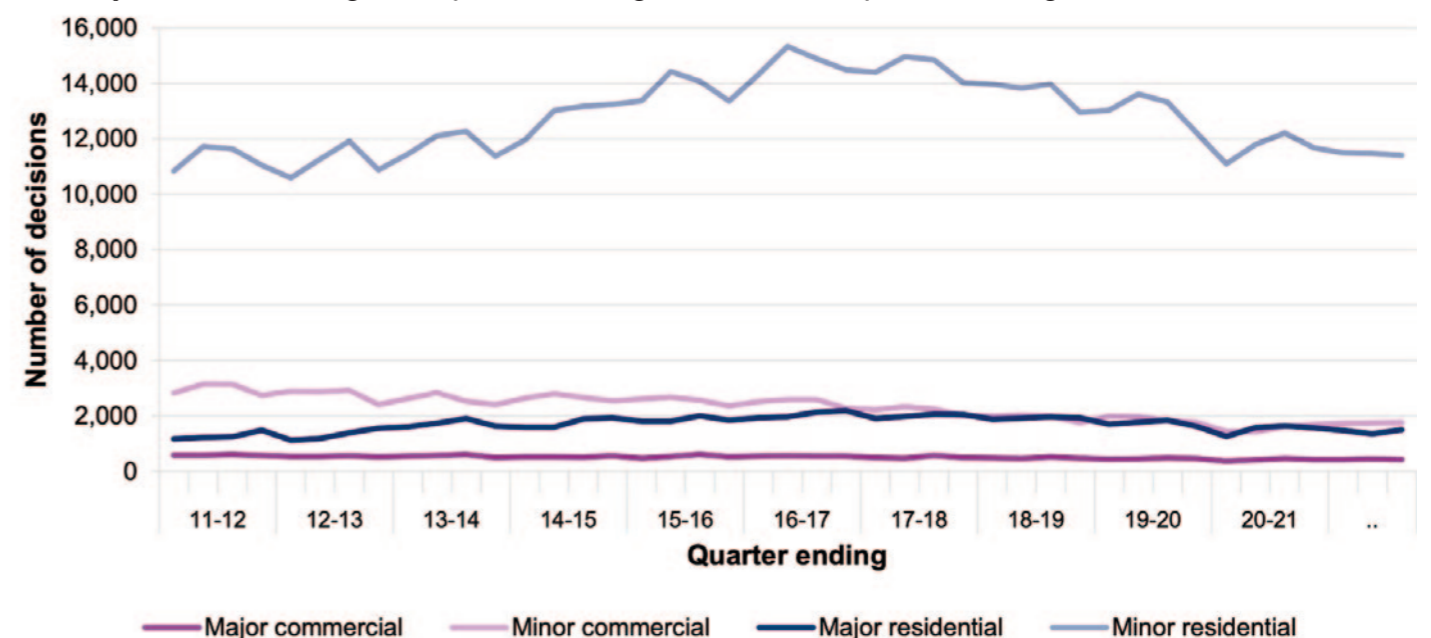
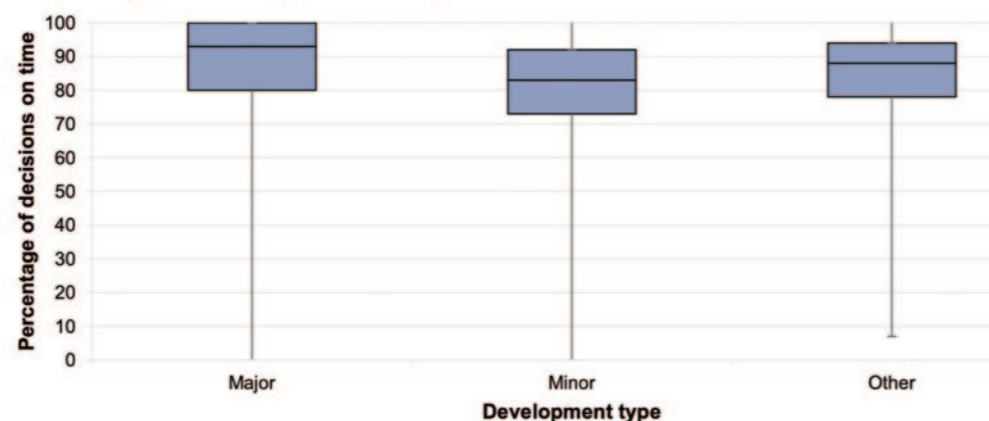


Figure 3: Speed of decision-making, by type of development Local planning authorities, quarter ending December 2021



>>> **Performance of individual district level local planning authorities**

Live Tables P151a and P153 present data on the performance of district level local planning authorities against the latest published criterion in Improving planning performance: criteria for designation on the speed of decision-making for informing decisions on the designation of poorly performing local planning authorities under section 62B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In particular, Live Table P151a gives detailed figures for the time taken for major decisions to be made over the eight most recent quarters and Live Table P153 presents data for the time taken by district level local planning authorities for decisions on 'non-major developments' (defined as minor developments, changes of use and householder developments) to be made over the eight most recent quarters.

Similarly, Live Table P152a, presents data on the performance of district level local planning authorities against the latest published criterion in Improving planning performance: criteria for designation on the quality of decision-making for assessing performance under section 62B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

In particular, it gives detailed figures for the percentage of major decisions subject to a successful planning appeal, by matching eight quarters of the department's data on decisions and all available quarters of Planning Inspectorate data on appeals. This table is usually published a few weeks after the statistical release and most of the other live tables, to take account of the latest appeals data.

Live Table P154 presents data for the percentage of decisions on non-major developments (as defined for Table P153) subject to a successful planning appeal, by matching eight quarters of the department's data on decisions and all available quarters of Planning Inspectorate data on appeals. Like Table P152a, this table is usually published a few weeks after the statistical release and most of the other live tables, to take account of the latest appeals data.

In October to December 2021, 12,900 decisions were made on applications for residential 7 developments, of which 9,500 (73 per cent) were granted. The number of residential decisions made decreased by seven per cent from the December quarter of 2020, with the number granted also decreasing by seven per cent. The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by nine per cent to 1,200, and the number of minor residential decisions granted decreased by seven per cent, to 8,300 (Live Table P120A, and the PS2 development type dashboard). In the year ending December 2021, authorities granted 4,800 major and 33,700 minor residential applications, down three and two

per cent respectively on the year ending December 2020 (Live Table P120A and the PS2 local planning authorities dashboard). This is equivalent to a decrease of two per cent in the overall number of residential decisions granted.

**Residential units**

The figures collected by the department are the numbers of decisions on planning applications submitted to local planning authorities, rather than the number of units included in each application, such as the number of homes in the case of housing developments. The department supplements this information by obtaining statistics on housing permissions from a contractor, Glenigan.8 The latest provisional figures show that permission for 317,000 homes was given in the year to 31 December 2021, up 10 per cent from the 288,000 homes granted permission in the year to 31 December 2020.

On an ongoing basis, figures are revised to ensure that any duplicates are removed, and also to include any projects that local planning authorities may not have processed: they are therefore subject to change, and the latest quarter's provisional figures tend to be revised upwards. These figures are provided here to give contextual information to users and have not been designated as National Statistics.

**Commercial decisions**

In October to December 2021, 2,200 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 2,000 (89 per cent) were granted. The total number of commercial decisions granted increased by six per cent on the same quarter of 2020. In the year ending December 2021, 7,800 applications for commercial developments were granted, up nine per cent on the year ending December 2020

**Trends in numbers of residential and commercial decisions**

Historically, numbers of residential decisions dropped sharply during 2008 (particularly for minor decisions) then increased from 2012, before decreasing since about 2018 (major decisions) and 2019 (minor decisions).

Numbers of commercial decisions also decreased sharply during 2008 and then stabilised at around 2,100 per year for major and 10,000 per year for minor commercial decisions, but have undergone some further decreases recently, particularly for minor decisions. In 2020/21, numbers of major commercial decisions were at about 47 per cent of the pre-recession peak, with the numbers of minor commercial decisions being at about 27 per cent.

**Trends in the percentage of residential and commercial decisions granted**

The percentages of major and minor residential decisions granted increased between 2008/09 (from about 65 per cent for each type) and 2010/11 (to about 80 per cent for major developments and about 75 per cent for minor developments) and have stabilised since then, at just over 80 per cent for major developments and just under 75 per cent for minor developments. The percentages of major and minor commercial decisions granted increased steadily, from 89 and 85 per cent respectively in 2007/08, to 94 and 91 per cent respectively in 2014/15, and have both been largely stable since then.

**Householder developments**

Householder developments are those developments to a residence which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and conservatories (more details are in the glossary accessible from the Definitions section of the Technical Notes). The number of decisions made

on householder developments was 60,200 in the quarter ending December 2021, accounting for 58 per cent of all decisions, up from 57 per cent of all decisions made in the quarter ending December 2020. Authorities granted 90 per cent of these applications and decided 85 per cent within eight weeks or the agreed time.

**Permission in Principle/Technical Details consent decisions**

Since 16 April 2017, local planning authorities have had the ability to grant permission in principle (PIP) to sites which have been entered on their brownfield land registers. Where sites have a grant of permission in principle, applicants have been able to submit an application for Technical Details Consent (TDC) for development on these sites. In addition, since 1 June 2018, it has also been possible to make an application for PIP for minor housing-led development as a separate application, independently of the brownfield register. Where a site has been granted PIP following an application, it is possible to apply for a TDC and a determination period of five weeks applies as it is minor development. Extensions of time may be agreed.

TDC applications have a 10-week determination period for major development and a five-week determination period for minor development. Extensions of time may be agreed and where it is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, the 16-week determination period applies.

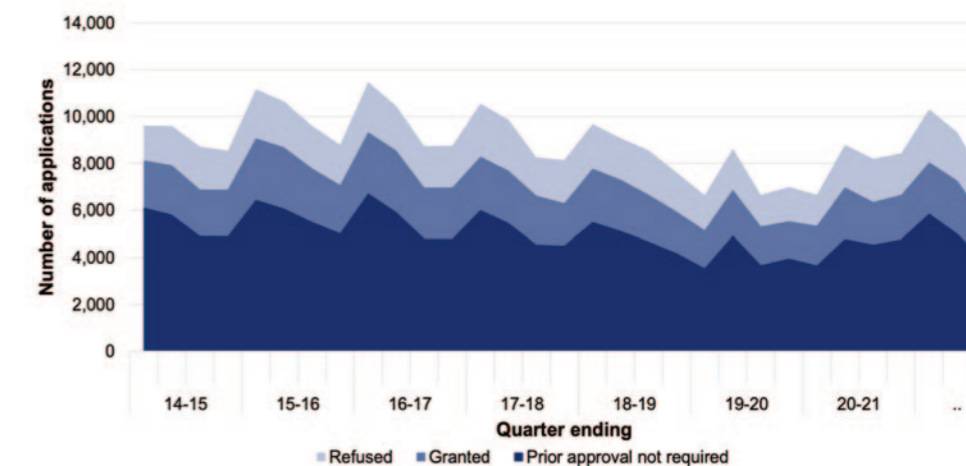
Figures on PIP/TDC decisions have been collected on the quarterly PS2 return with effect from 1 January 2020. They are provided at local planning authority level in Live Table PIP/TDC1. In summary, during January to March 2020, local planning authorities reported 64 PIP decisions (minor housing-led developments), five TDC (minor housing-led developments) and no TDC (major developments).

The totals for the next few quarters have been similar, with 60, four and no decisions respectively in April to June 2020; 52, eight and no decisions respectively during July to September 2020; 77, five and no decisions respectively during October to December 2020; 79, four and no decisions respectively during January to March 2021; 86, five and no decisions respectively during April to June 2021; 84, six and no decisions respectively during July to September 2021, and, 73, eight and two decisions respectively during October to December 2021.

**Permitted development rights**

Planning permission for some types of development has been granted nationally through legislation, and the resulting rights are known as 'permitted development rights'. In some cases, if the legis-

**Figure 10: Applications for determination and prior approvals for permitted development rights decided by district planning authorities England, quarter ending June 2014 to quarter ending December 2021**



lation is complied with, developments can go ahead without the requirement to notify the local planning authority and hence no way of capturing data exists. In other cases, the legislation requires an application to the local planning authority to determine whether prior approval is required (more details are in the Definitions section of the Technical Notes). A local planning authority can withdraw specific permitted development rights across a defined geographical area, bringing these types of development within the control of the main planning process.

The results for the latest quarter for which they have been collected (October to December 2021) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 7,300 applications reported in the October to December quarter of 2021, prior approval was not required for 3,900 and permission was granted for 1,700 and refused for 1,700. This resulted

in an overall acceptance rate of 77 per cent. Larger householder extensions accounted for 65 per cent of applications (4,700), with seven per cent relating to change of use from agricultural to residential and four per cent to change of use from office to residential. 'All other' permitted development rights, accounted for 18 per cent of applications, up from 16 per cent a year earlier. Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 5,600 applications were approved without having to go through the full planning process, down 12 per cent from a year earlier. Within the 12 per cent decrease in the reported total number of PDR applications between October to December 2020 and October to December 2021:

- larger householder extensions decreased by 16 per cent;
- change of use from office to residential

- decreased by 34 per cent;
- change of use from agricultural to residential decreased by two per cent; and
- 'all other' permitted development rights was unchanged.

A new PDR for Commercial, business and service to residential use was created with effect from 1 August 2021. Figures for this were collected for the first time for October to December 2021, when about 140 applications were recorded. Of these, prior approval was not required for about 20, about 60 were granted and about 60 refused. Because this new PDR includes some of the uses that were previously included within the PDR for 'Retail and sui generis uses to residential', this latter PDR has been redefined and renamed 'Laundrette, betting office, pay day loan shop, hot food takeaway, amusement arcade or centre or casino to residential'. Figures collected on this new basis are therefore not directly comparable with figures for the 'Retail and sui generis uses to residential' PDR for previous quarters.

Figures for the total number of permitted development right applications made for changes to residential use for quarters from July to September 2014 are given in the quarterly worksheets in Live Table PDR1. These show that a total of 1,200 applications for changes to residential use were reported in October to December 2021, of which 700 (62 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

Overall during the thirty-one quarters ending December 2021, district planning authorities reported 275,900 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 155,600 (56 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 64,400 (23 per cent) were granted and 55,900 (20 per cent) were refused (Figure 9).

**FIG 9:** Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities. England, thirty-one quarters from April 2014 to December 2021

