

Decreasing trend in applications and decisions granted continues

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: Planning Applications in England: October and December 2019

OVERVIEW

Between October and December 2019, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 100,300 applications for planning permission, down seven per cent on the corresponding quarter of 2018;
- granted 83,500 decisions, down six per cent from the same quarter in 2018; this is equivalent to 87 per cent of decisions, down from 88 per cent in the same quarter of 2018;
- decided 89 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, unchanged from the same quarter in 2018;
- granted 11,100 residential applications, down seven per cent on a year earlier: 1,500 for major developments and 9,600 for minors;
- granted 2,100 applications for commercial developments, down eight per cent on a year earlier.

Figure 1 shows trends in numbers of applications received, decided and granted since 2004-05.

In the year ending December 2019, district level planning authorities:

- granted 347,300 decisions, down five per cent on the year ending December 2018; and
- granted 44,700 decisions on residential developments, of which 5,900 were for major developments and 38,800 were for minors, down by seven and six per cent respectively on the year ending December 2018. This is equivalent to a decrease of six per cent in the overall number of residential decisions granted.



Planning applications

During October to December 2019, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 100,300 applications for planning permission, down seven per cent on the corresponding quarter in 2018. In the year ending December 2019, authorities received 432,200 planning applications, down four per cent on the year ending December 2018

Planning decisions

Authorities reported 95,800 decisions on planning applications in October to December 2019, a decrease of five per cent on the 101,000 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending December 2019, authorities decided 395,800 planning applications, down four per cent on the number in the year ending December 2018

Applications granted

During October to December 2019, authorities granted 83,500 decisions, down six per cent on the same quarter in 2018. Authorities granted 87 per cent of all decisions, down one percentage point from the December quarter of 2018 (Live Tables P120/P133). Overall, 82 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted, down one per cent from the quarter ending December 2018

Over the 12 months to December 2019, 347,300 decisions were granted, down five per cent on the figure for the year to December 2018.

Historical context

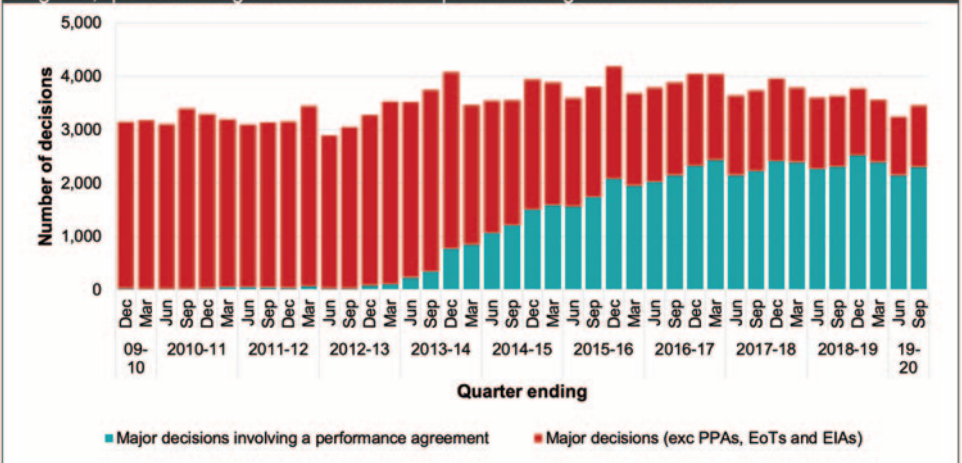
Figure 1 (front page) and Table 1 show that, since about 2009-10, the numbers of applications received, decisions made and applications granted have each followed a similar pattern. As well as the usual within-year pattern of peaks in the Summer (April to June quarter for applications and July to September 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 with small reductions in more recent quarters.

Historical figures for all district level decisions dating back to 2007-08 are set out in Live Table P120, with separate breakdowns for residential and commercial decisions being shown in Live Tables P120A and P120B respectively. These latter two tables are discussed below in the sections on residential and commercial decisions.

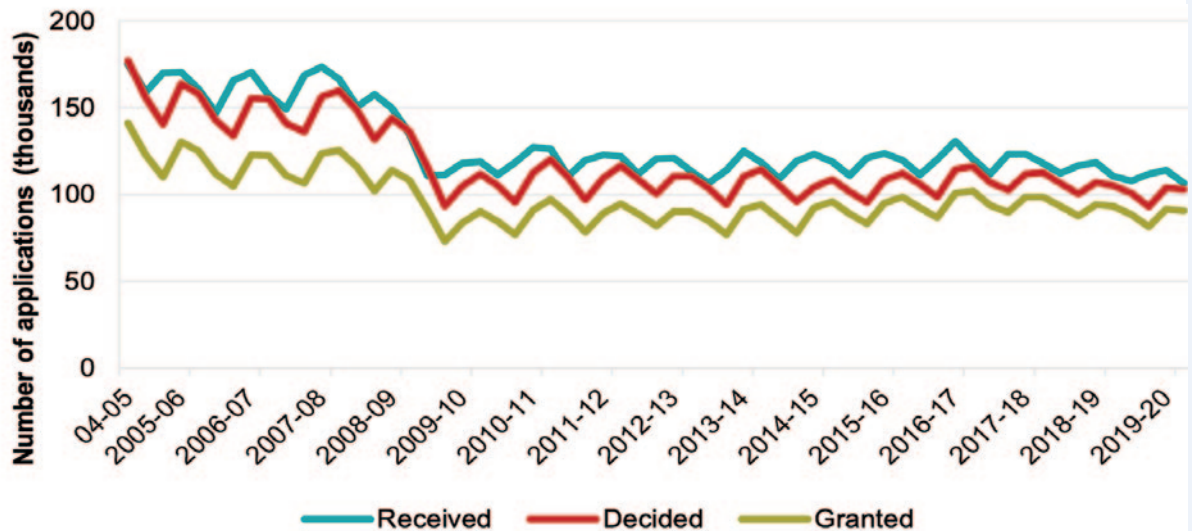
Speed of decisions

- In October to December 2019, 89 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time², unchanged from the same quarter a year earlier.
- In the same quarter, 85 per cent of minor applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, unchanged from a year earlier.
- Also in the same quarter, 90 per cent of other

Figure 4: Use of performance agreements with applications for major developments¹
England, quarter ending December 2009 to quarter ending December 2019



RIGHT: FIGURE 1
Number of planning applications received, decided and granted by district level planning authorities



applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, unchanged from a year earlier.

Use of performance agreements

Table 2 shows the increase in the use of performance agreements since April 2014. It shows that they are more commonly used for major developments than minor or other developments, with 68 per cent of major decisions made during October to December 2019 involving a planning agreement, compared with 42 per cent of minor decisions.

Figure 4 shows, from 2009, numbers of decisions on major developments made involving a performance agreement, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of all decisions on major developments.

Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority. All tables and figures can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/u4x8xvl>.

Source: MHCLG/ONS

Notwithstanding definitional changes, there has been a marked increase in the use of agreements since early 2013. In reality, this longer upward trend has been driven by both the additional scope for recording them and their additional use.

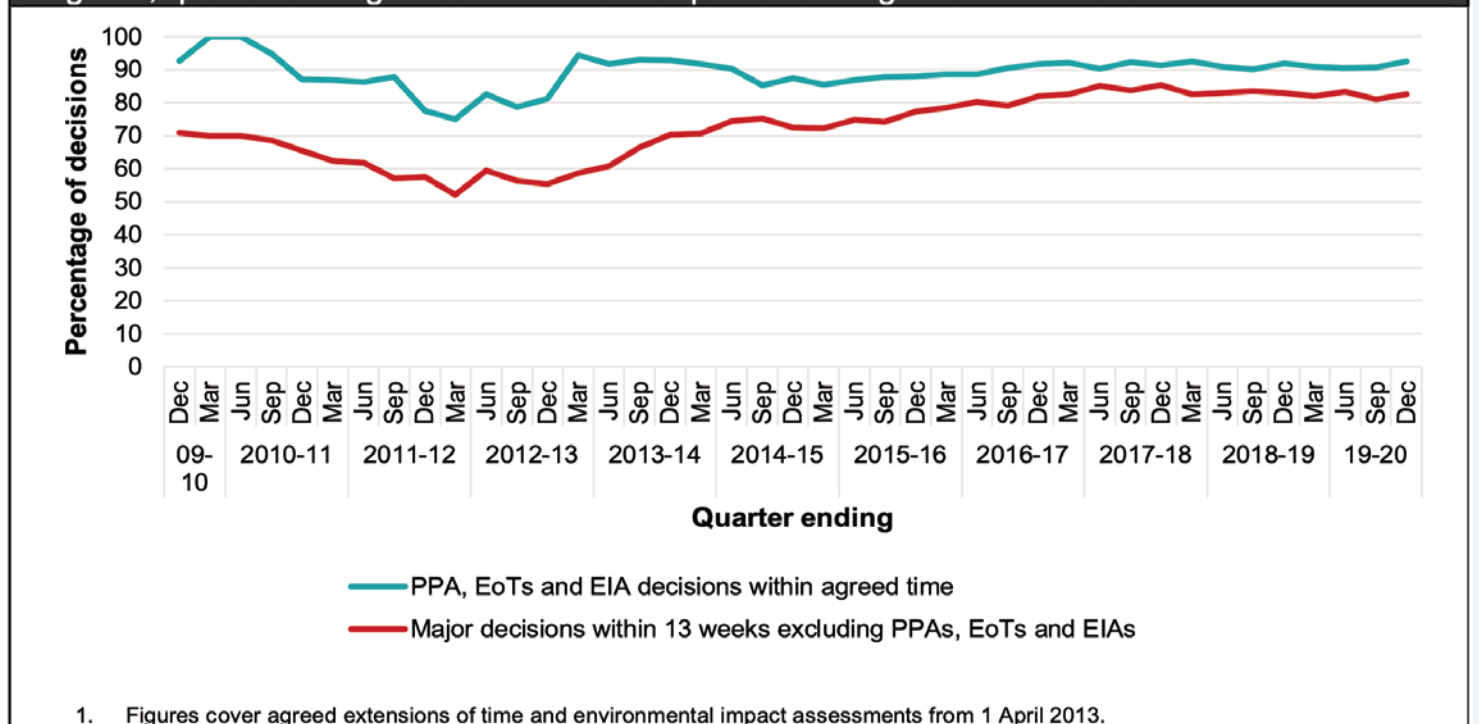
Figure 5 and Reference Table 2 show that in the quarter to December 2019, 93 per cent of major development decisions involving performance agreements were made on time. In comparison, 83 per cent of major decisions not involving performance agreements were made within the statutory time

limit of 13 weeks.

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 sec- >>>

Figure 5: Percentage of major development decisions made within time¹
England, quarter ending December 2009 to quarter ending December 2019



1. Figures cover agreed extensions of time and environmental impact assessments from 1 April 2013.

>>> tion 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' (previously 'minor and other developments', and 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.

Residential decisions

In October to December 2019, 15,200 decisions were made on applications for residential5 developments, of which 11,100 (73 per cent) were granted. The number of residential decisions made decreased by five per cent from the December quarter of 2018, with the number granted dropping seven per cent.

The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by six per cent to 1,500, and the number of minor residential decisions granted decreased by seven per cent, to 9,600 (Live Table P120A, and the PS2 development types dashboard).

In the year ending December 2019, authorities granted 5,900 major and 38,800 minor residential applications, down by seven and six per cent respectively on the year ending December 2018 (Live Table P120A and the PS2 local planning authorities dashboard). This is equivalent to a decrease of six 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.⁶ The latest

provisional figures show that permission for 371,800 homes was given in the year to 31 December 2019, down three per cent from the 383,300 homes granted permission in the year to 31 December 2018.

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.

Table 3 and Figure 6 show how the rolling annual total of housing units granted has changed since 2008.

Commercial decisions

In October to December 2019, 2,300 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 2,100 (91 per cent) were granted. The total number of commercial decisions granted decreased by eight per cent on the same quarter of 2018. In the year ending December 2019, 8,600 applications for commercial developments were granted, down six per cent on the year ending December 2018 (Live Table P120B).

Trends in numbers of residential and commercial decisions

Historically, numbers of residential decisions dropped sharply during 2008 (particularly for minor decisions) but have been increasing since 2012, albeit with some decreases recently.

Numbers of commercial decisions made 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 2018/19, numbers of major commercial decisions were at about 54 per cent of the

pre-recession peak, with the numbers of minor commercial decisions being at about 40 per cent (Live Tables P120A and P120B, Figure 7).

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). The number of decisions made on householder developments was 46,800 in the quarter ending December 2019, accounting for 49 per cent of all decisions, down seven per cent from the 50,200 decisions made in the quarter ending December 2018. Authorities granted 90 per cent of these applications and decided 92 per cent within eight weeks or the agreed time.

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 legislation 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). A local planning authority is able to 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 2019) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 6,700 applications reported in the October to December quarter of 2019, prior approval was not required for 3,700

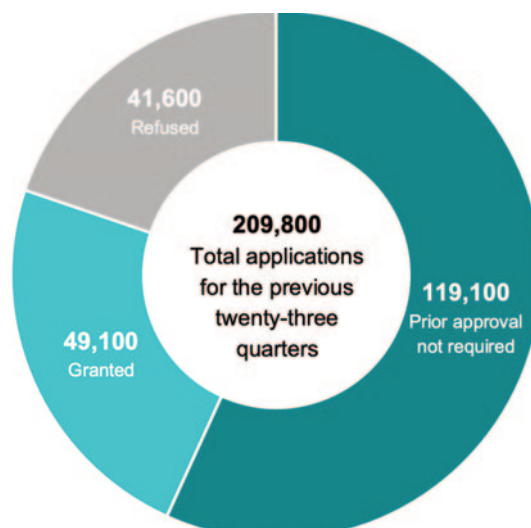


FIG 9: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities. England: 22 quarters from April 2014 to December 2019

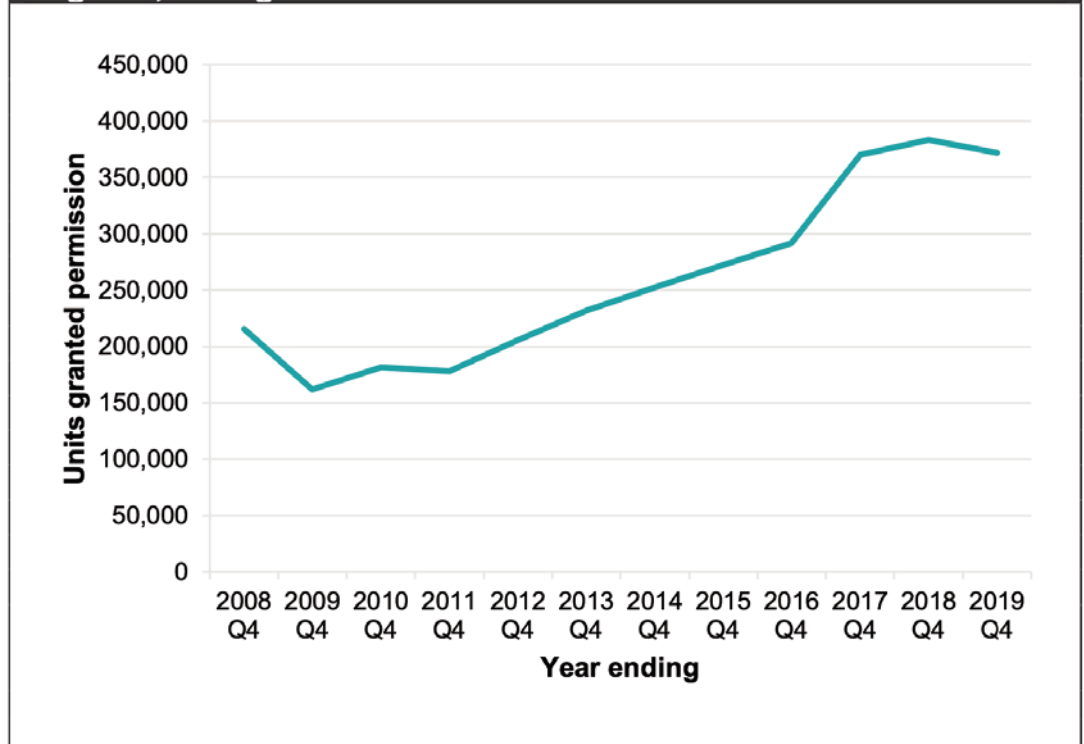
Table 3 - Number of housing units granted planning permission

Rolling annual totals	
Annual total to:	Number
2008 Q4	215,800
2009 Q4	161,900
2010 Q4	181,300
2011 Q4	177,900
2012 Q4	205,800
2013 Q4	231,800
2014 Q4	252,200
2015 Q4	272,500
2016 Q4	291,700
2017 Q4	370,400
2018 Q4 ^R	383,300
2019 Q4 ^P	371,800

Source: Glenigan planning permission data: snapshot as at 6 February 2020

P Provisional
R Revised

Figure 6: Number of housing units granted planning permission, England, rolling annual totals to December 2019 ^P



and permission was granted for 1,600 and refused for 1,400. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate of 80 per cent. Larger householder extensions accounted for 68 per cent of applications (4,500), with nine per cent relating to agricultural to residential changes and six per cent to office to residential changes. 'All other' permitted development rights, accounted for 14 per cent of applications, unchanged from a year earlier.

Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 5,300 applications were approved without having to go through the full planning process, down 20 per cent from a year earlier. Within an overall decrease of 22 per cent in the reported total number of PDR applications between October to December 2018 and October to December 2019:

- larger householder extensions decreased by 25 per cent;
- office to residential changes decreased by 14 per cent;
- agricultural to residential changes increased by one per cent; and
- 'all other' permitted development rights decreased by 26 per cent.

Figures for activity under the PDR for the change of use from shops and some other specified high street uses to office use were collected for the first time for October to December 2019. These show that prior approval was not required for six applications, 34 were granted and six were refused.

Figures for the total number of permitted development right applications made for changes to residen-

tial 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 2019, of which 800 (67 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

Overall during the twenty-three quarters ending December 2019, district planning authorities reported 209,800 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 119,100 (57 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 49,100 (23 per cent) were granted and 41,600 (20 per cent) were refused (Figure 9).

To put these recent figures into context, Live Table P128 and Figure 10 show how the number of 'determination applications' received remained broadly stable at around 5,000 to 8,000 per year from 2004/05 to 2012/13, but approximately doubled to 15,700 in 2013/14, following the creation of new permitted development right categories in May 2013.

Since April 2014, there have been 36,500 PDR applications in 2014/15, 40,200 in 2015/16, 39,400 in 2016/17, 36,800 in 2017/18 and 34,900 in 2018/19. The quarterly pattern since April 2014 reflects a combination of both: i) the introduction of new permitted development right categories on several occasions; and ii) the seasonal peaks and troughs that have previously also been observed for planning applications, as shown earlier in this release, in Figure 1 (Live Table PDR 2 and Figure 10).

The initially large increase since 2014 in reported numbers of PDR applications for a change of use (e.g. office to residential), followed by a more recent decrease, is consistent with the annual numbers of dwellings added to the net housing supply as a result of a change of use. These have shown increases of 65 per cent in 2014/15, 48 per cent in 2015/16 and 22 per cent in 2016/17, and a decrease of 20 per cent in 2017/18 and two per cent in 2018/19.

Other information

England totals for all the items of information collected on the PS1 and PS2 returns for October to December 2019 are given in Reference Tables 1 and 2 respectively. These include the following:

Delegated decisions

- Of the 95,800 decisions made during the quarter, 91,200 (95 per cent) were delegated to officers. This percentage has been stable since 2014, having previously increased from around 75 per cent in 2000. Also see Live Table P133.

Enforcement activity

- During the quarter, authorities issued 987 enforcement notices and served 1,107 planning contravention notices, 173 breach of condition notices, 27 stop notices and 44 temporary stop notices, while nine enforcement injunctions were granted by the High/County Court and no injunctive applications refused. In recent years, this level of activity has remained broadly proportionate to the number of planning decisions made. Also see Live Table P127. ■