

# Applications made and decided little changed; commercial permissions down nine per cent

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs:  
Planning Applications in England: October and December 2017

## OVERVIEW

Between October and December 2017, district level planning authorities in England:

- ◆ received 112,300 applications for planning permission, unchanged from the corresponding quarter of 2016;
- ◆ granted 93,200 decisions, unchanged from the same quarter in 2016; this is equivalent to 88 per cent of decisions, up from 87 per cent for the same quarter of 2016;
- ◆ decided 88 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, up from 87 per cent a year earlier;
- ◆ granted 12,600 residential applications, down one per cent on a year earlier: 1,700 for major developments and 10,900 for minors;
- ◆ granted 2,600 applications for commercial developments, down 10 per cent on a year earlier; and
- ◆ received 8,900 applications for prior approval for permitted development rights, down five per cent from the same quarter of 2016. Of these, 1,400 applications were for changes to residential use, of which 1,000 were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full

planning process.

In the year ending December 2017, district level planning authorities:

- ◆ granted 380,300 decisions, down one per cent on the year ending December 2016;
- ◆ granted 49,600 decisions on residential developments: 6,500 for major developments and 43,100 for minors, up on the year ending December 2016 by three per cent and one per cent respectively; and
- ◆ granted 10,200 applications for commercial developments, down nine per cent on the year ending December 2016.

## Planning applications

During October to December, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 112,300 applications for planning permission, unchanged from the corresponding quarter in 2016. In the year ending December 2017, authorities received 476,500 planning applications, down one per cent on the year ending December 2016 (Live Tables P120/P132/P134 and Table 1).

## Planning decisions

Authorities reported 106,500 decisions on planning applications in October to December 2017, a decrease of one per cent on the 107,100 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending December 2017, authorities decided 433,700 planning applications, down one per cent on the number in the year ending December 2016 (Live Tables P120/P133/P134 and Table 1).

## Applications granted

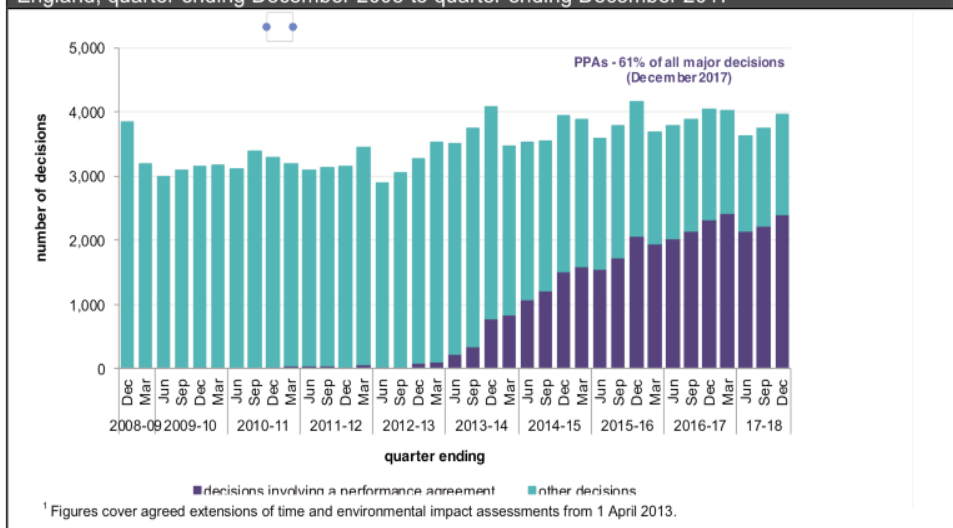
During October to December 2017, authorities granted 93,200 decisions, unchanged from the same quarter in 2016. Authorities granted 88 per cent of all decisions, up from 87 per cent in the December quarter of 2016 (Live Tables P120/P133). Overall, 83 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted.

The percentage of decisions granted varied between local planning authorities, ranging this quarter from 25 to 100 per cent for major developments, 41 to 100 per cent for minor developments and 64 to 100 per cent for other developments (Live Tables P120/P131). Over the 12 months to December 2017, 380,300 decisions were granted, down one per cent on the figure for the year to December 2016 (Live Tables P122/P132 and Table 1).

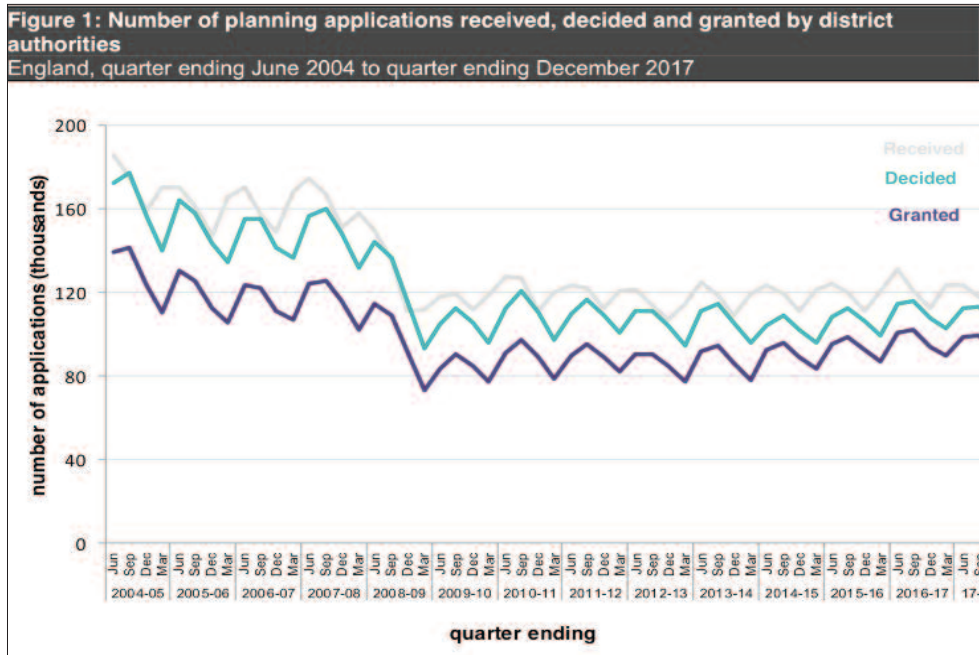
## Historical context

Figure 1 and Table 1 show that, since 2005, 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 and troughs in the Winter, there was a clear downward trend during the 2008 economic downturn, with figures remaining broadly level since then, albeit with numbers granted showing a slight upward trend. Figure 1 shows that the numbers of applications received in recent years are some

Figure 2: Use of performance agreements with applications for major developments<sup>1</sup>  
England, quarter ending December 2008 to quarter ending December 2017



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



way below the peak in 2004/05.

Historical figures for all district level decisions dating back to 2004 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<sup>1</sup>.

**Speed of decisions**

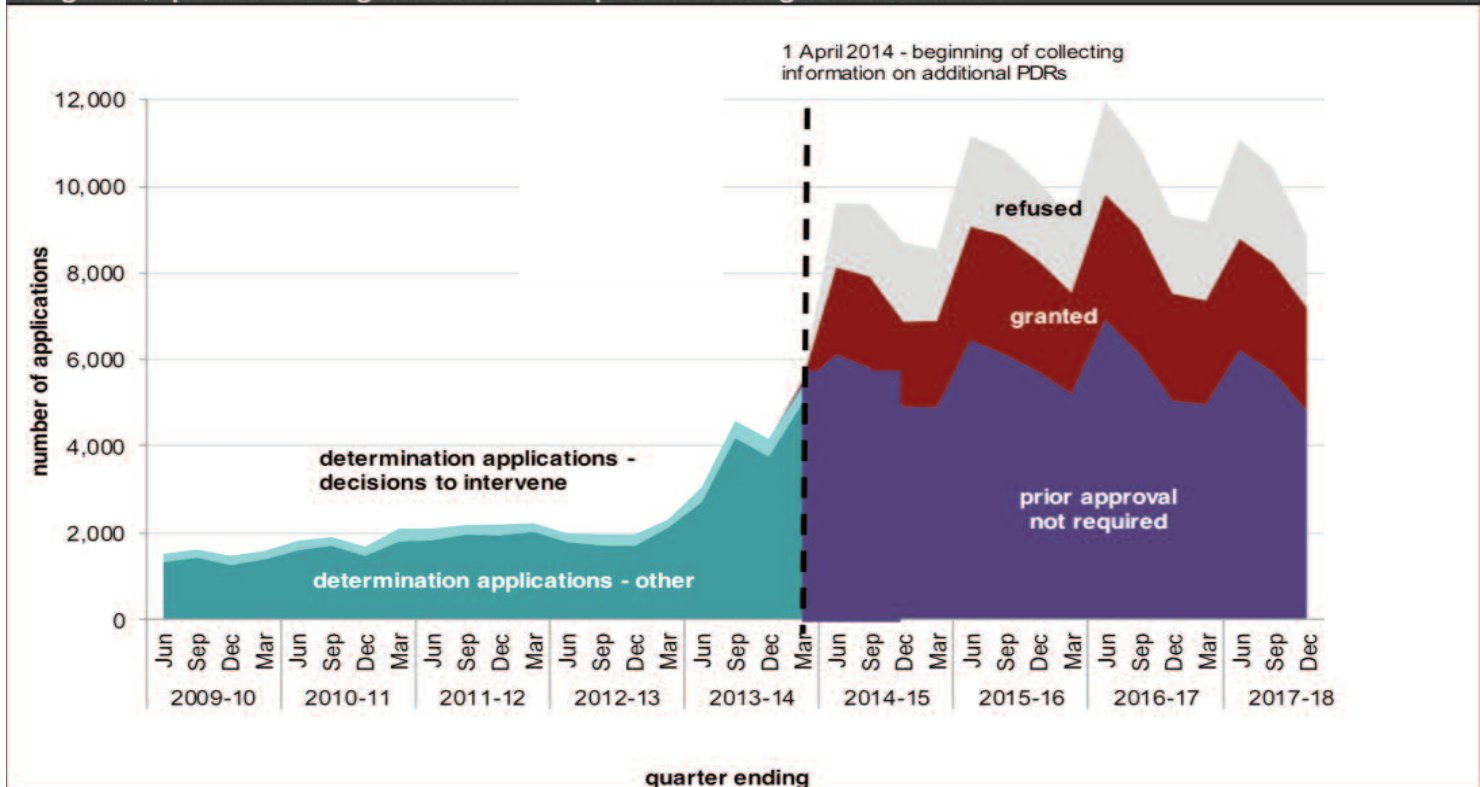
- ◆ In October to December 2017, 88 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time<sup>2</sup>, compared with 87 per cent in the same quarter a year earlier.
- ◆ In October to December, 85 per cent of minor applications and 90 per cent of other applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time. These figures show increases, compared with 83 per cent and 89 per cent a year

earlier respectively. The percentage of decisions made in time varied between local planning authorities, ranging this quarter from 25 to 100 per cent for major devel-

opments, 37 to 100 per cent for minor developments and 28 to 100 per cent for other developments (Live Tables P120, P123 and P131).

**Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority: July to September 2017** Table 131 can be found with all tables and figures here: <https://goo.gl/5Vw4N9> Source: CLG/ONS

**Figure 7: Applications for determination and prior approvals for permitted development rights decided by district planning authorities**  
England, quarter ending June 2009 to quarter ending December 2017



### Use of performance agreements

Because the most consistent reporting of the use of performance agreements<sup>3</sup> is for major applications, Figure 2 and Table 2 show, from 2008, 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.

Notwithstanding definitional changes, there has been a marked increase in the use of agreements since early 2013, although the increases have slowed down in recent quarters. In reality, this longer upward trend has been driven by both the additional scope for recording them and their additional use. The proportion of major decisions subject to an agreement was 61 per cent during October to December 2017 (Table 2).

The three final columns in Table P120 give corresponding figures for planning applications 1 Figures cover agreed extensions of time and environmental impact assessments from 1 April 2013

involving a planning agreement for all types of development (major, minor and 'other' combined), showing numbers of decisions and percentages decided within time.

Figure 3 and Reference Table 2 show that in the quarter to December 2017, 91 per cent of major development decisions involving performance agreements were made on time. In comparison, 85 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 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' (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 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 minor and other 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.

### Residential decisions

The figures collected by the department are 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.

The latest figures show that permission for 338,000 homes was given in the rolling year to 31 December 2017, down three per cent compared to the 349,000 homes granted permission in the rolling year to 30 September 2017.<sup>4</sup> The number of homes granted permission during the rolling year to 31 December 2017 was eight per cent higher than in the rolling year to 31 December 2016. 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. These figures are provided to give contextual information, and have not been designated as National Statistics.

Regarding the figures reported by local planning authorities to the Department on PS1/2 returns, in October to December 2017, 16,900 decisions were made on applications for residential<sup>5</sup> developments, of which 12,600 (75 per cent) were granted. The total number of residential decisions made decreased by one per cent from the December quarter 2016, with the number granted also dropping one per cent. The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by five per cent to 1,700, whereas the number of minor residential decisions granted was unchanged from last year at 10,900 (Live Tables P120A, P123 and P135).

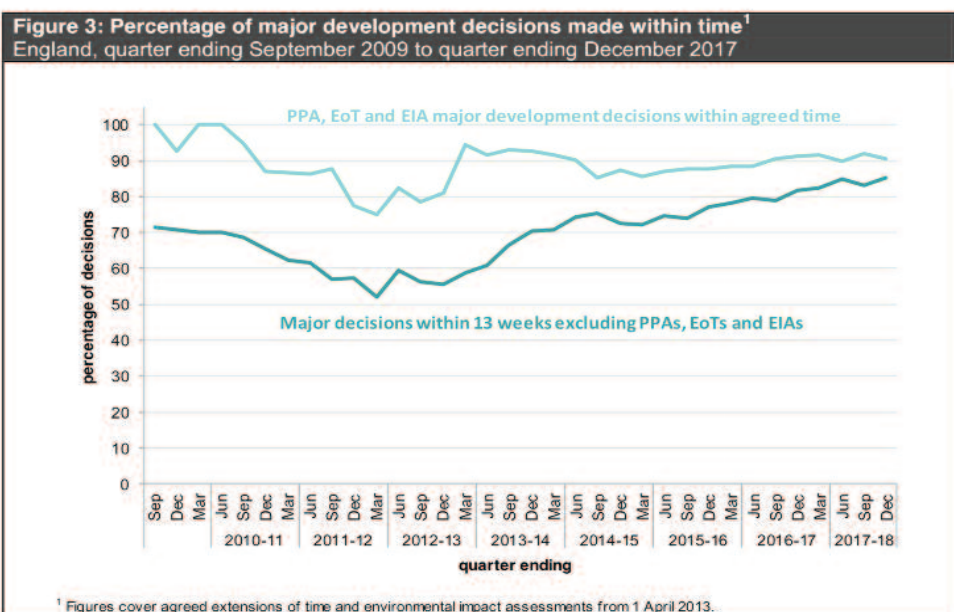
In the year ending December 2017, authorities granted 6,500 major and 43,100 minor residential applications, up by three and one per cent respectively on the year ending December 2016 (Live Tables P120A and P136).

### Commercial decisions

In October to December 2017, 2,800 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 2,600 (91 per cent) were granted. The total number of commercial decisions made decreased by ten per cent on the same quarter of 2016. In the year ending December 2017, 10,200 applications for commercial developments were granted, down nine per cent on the year ending December 2016 (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. Numbers of commercial decisions made also decreased sharply during 2008, and have since stabilised at around 2,200 per year for major and 10,000 per year for minor commercial developments. In 2016/17, numbers of minor commercial decisions were at about 45 per cent of the pre-recession peak, with the numbers of major developments being at about 62 per cent (Live Tables P120A and P120B, Figure 4).

#### 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 majors and about 75 per cent for minors), and have stabilised since then.

The percentages of major and minor commercial decisions granted have been increasing steadily, from 88 and 86 per cent respectively in 2008/09, to 94 and 91 per cent respectively in 2016/17 (Live Tables P120A and P120B, Figure 5).

#### Householder developments

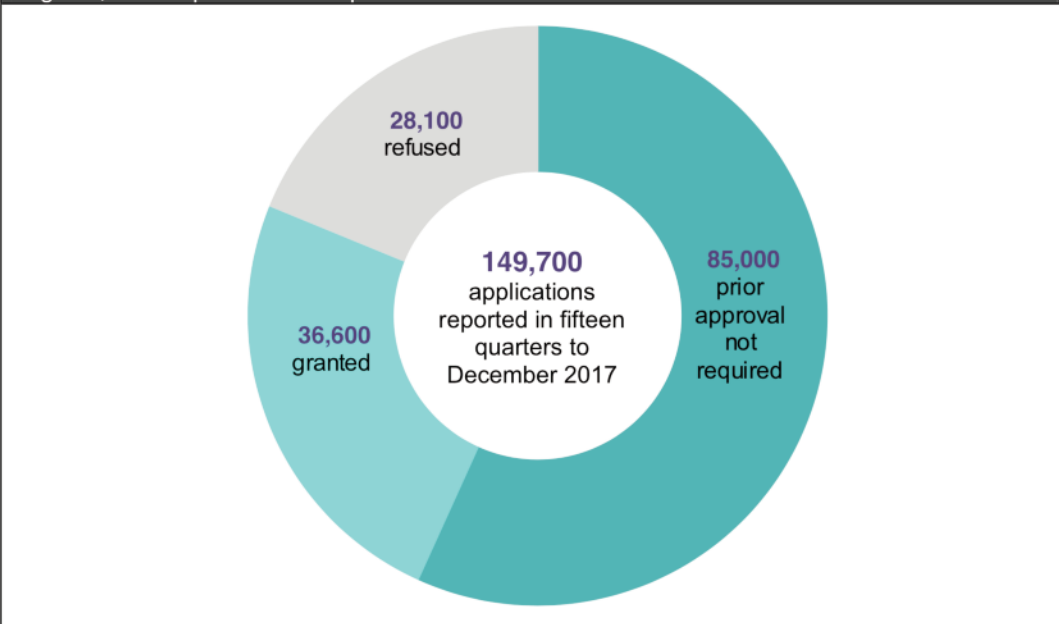
Householder developments are those developments to a house which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and conservatories (more details are in the Definitions section). The number of decisions on householder developments increased by one per cent, from 51,500 decisions in the quarter ending December 2016 to 52,200 decisions in the corresponding quarter in 2017, when they accounted for 49 per cent of all decisions. Authorities granted 90 per cent of these applications and decided 92 per cent within eight weeks or the agreed time (Live Table P123).

#### Prior approvals for permitted developments

The results for the latest quarter for which they have been collected (October to December 2017) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 8,900 applications reported in the October to December quarter of 2017, prior approval was not required for 4,800, and permission was granted for 2,400 and refused for 1,700.

This resulted in an overall acceptance rate of 81 per cent. Sixty-eight per cent of applications (6,100) related to larger householder extensions,

**Figure 6: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities**  
England, fifteen quarters from April 2014 to December 2017



with seven per cent relating to office to residential changes and six per cent to agricultural to residential changes. 16 per cent related to 'all other' permitted development rights, up from 13 per cent a year earlier.

Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 7,200 applications were approved without having to go through the full planning process, down four per cent from a year earlier.

Within an overall decrease of five per cent in the reported total number of PDR applications between October to December 2016 and October to December 2017:

- ♦ larger householder extensions decreased by seven per cent;
- ♦ office to residential changes decreased by 13 per cent;
- ♦ agricultural to residential changes decreased by 17 per cent; and
- ♦ 'all other' permitted development rights increased by 16 per cent.

Figures for the total number of permitted development right applications made for changes to residential for quarters from October to December 2016 onwards are given in Live Table PDR1, which show that a total of 1,400 applications for changes to residential use were reported in October to December 2017, of which 1,000 (70 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process. The overall acceptance rate for the fifteen quarters between the collection of detailed data started in April 2014 and the end of December 2017 is 81 per cent. The rate initially

dropped from 85 per cent in the quarter ending June 2014 to 79 per cent in the quarter ending December 2014, and has broadly stabilised since then (Live Table PDR2).

Overall during the fifteen quarters ending December 2017, district planning authorities reported 150,000 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 85,000 (57 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 36,600 (24 per cent) were granted and 28,100 (19 per cent) were refused (Figure 6).

To put these recent figures into context, Live Table P128 and Figure 7 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 the new permitted development right categories in May 2013.

Since April 2014, there have been 36,500 applications in 2014/15, 41,400 in 2015/16 and 41,500 in 2016/17. The quarterly pattern since April 2014 reflects a combination of both: i) the introduction of new permitted development right categories in May 2013 and April 2015; 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 7).

This significant increase in numbers of applications is consistent with the annual increases in the number of dwellings added to the net housing supply through change of use of: 65 per cent in 2014/15, 48 per cent in 2015/16 and 22 per cent in 2016/17. ■