

# 85% of minor planning applications approved within 8 weeks, the same figure as for the preceding quarter

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs:  
 Planning Applications in England: January-March 2018

**OVERVIEW**

Between January and March 2018, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 116,700 applications for planning permission, down five per cent for the corresponding quarter of 2017;
- granted 87,900 decisions, down two per cent from the same quarter in 2017; this is equivalent to 88 per cent of decisions, up from 87 per cent for the same quarter of 2017;
- decided 88 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, unchanged from a year earlier;
- granted 11,900 residential applications, down four per cent on a year earlier: 1,700 for major developments and 10,200 for minors;
- granted 2,300 applications for commercial developments, down 11 per cent on a year earlier;
- received 8,700 applications for prior approval for permitted development rights, down six per cent from the same quarter of 2017. Of these, 1,300 applications were for changes to residential use, of which 900 were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning

process.

In the year ending March 2018, district level planning authorities:

- granted 378,600 decisions, down two per cent on the year ending March 2017;
- granted 49,100 decisions on residential developments, of which 6,500 were for major developments and 42,700 were for minors, both down by two per cent on the year ending March 2017;
- granted 9,900 applications for commercial developments, down 11 per cent on the year ending March 2017.

**Planning applications**

During January to March 2018, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 116,700 applications for planning permission, down five per cent on the corresponding quarter in 2017. In the year ending March 2018, authorities received 470,100 planning applications, down three per cent on the year ending March 2017 (Live Tables P120/P132/P134 and Table 1).

**Planning decisions**

Authorities reported 100,400 decisions on planning applications in January to March 2018, a decrease of two per cent on the 102,500 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending March 2018, authorities decided 431,500 planning applications, down two per cent on the number in the year ending March 2017 (Live Tables P120/P133/P134 and Table 1).

**Applications granted**

During January to March 2018, authorities granted 87,900 decisions, down two per cent on the same quarter in 2017. Authorities granted 88 per cent of all decisions, up from 87 per cent in the March quarter of 2017 (Live Tables P120/P133). Overall, 82 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted.

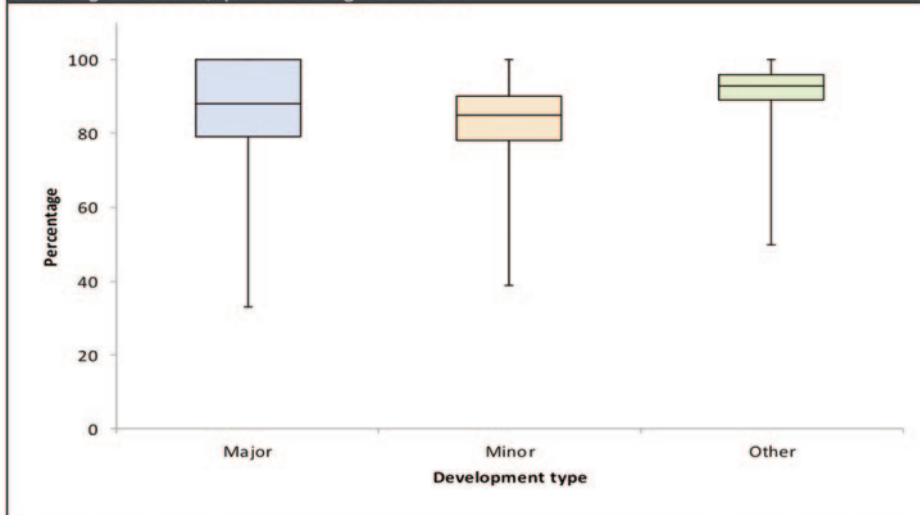
Figure 2 summarises the distribution of the percentage of decisions granted across authorities for major, minor and other developments using box and whisker plots. The ends of the box are the upper and lower quartiles, meaning that 50 per cent of local authorities fall within this range. The whiskers are the two lines above and below the box that extend to the highest and lowest observations (the range). Figure 2 shows that the variation in percentage of decisions granted this quarter is widest between authorities for major developments (33 to 100 per cent), followed by minor developments (39 to 100 per cent) and other developments (50 to 100 per cent) (Live Tables P120/P131).

Over the 12 months to March 2018, 378,600 decisions were granted, down two per cent on the figure for the year to March 2017 (Live Tables P122/P132 and Table 1).

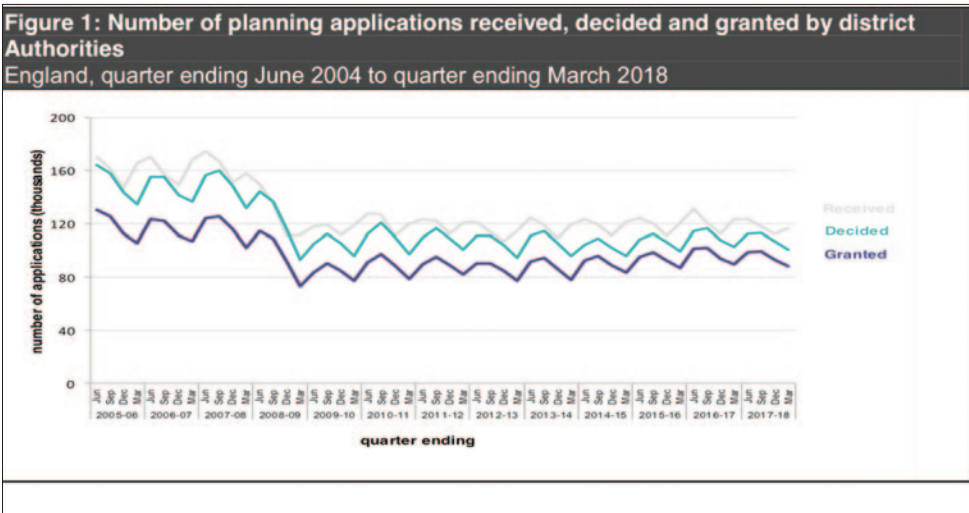
**Historical context**

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

**Figure 2: percentage of planning decisions granted, by type of development**  
 Planning authorities, quarter ending March 2018



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



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 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.

#### Speed of decisions

In January to March 2018, 88 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time, unchanged from the same quarter a year earlier.

- In January to March 2018, 85 per cent of minor applications and 90 per cent of other applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, both unchanged from a year earlier.

Figure 3 summarises the distribution of the per-

centage 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 (22 to 100 per cent), followed by minor developments (35 to 100 per cent) and other developments (58 to 100 per cent) (Live Tables P120, P123 and P131).

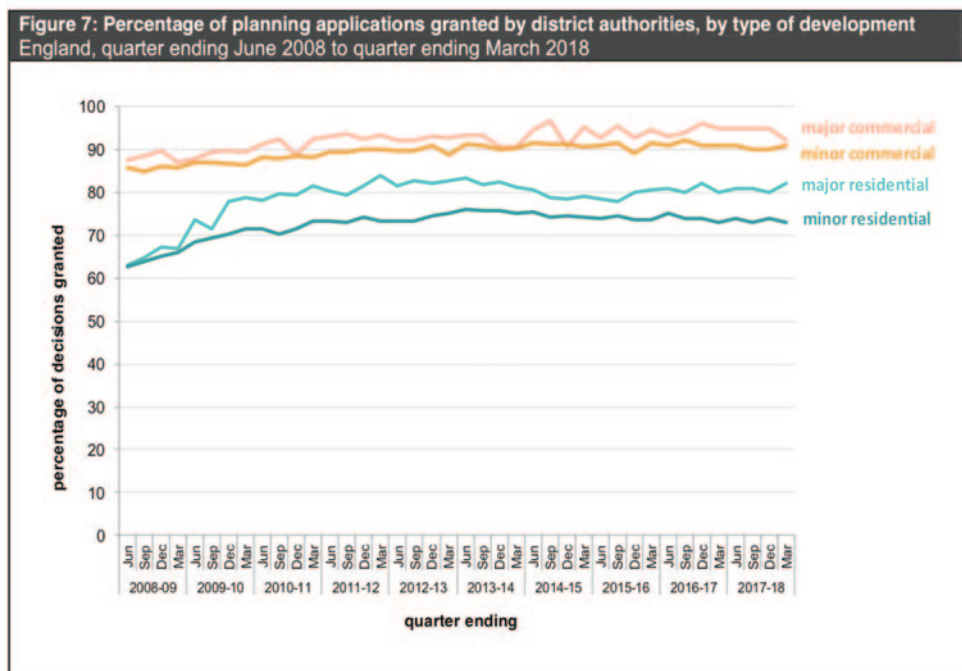
#### Use of performance agreements

Because the most consistent reporting of the use of performance agreements<sup>3</sup> is for major applications, Figure 4 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 63 per cent during January to March 2018 (Table 2).

#### 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' (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.

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 look at 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. The latest figures show that permission for 347,000 homes was given in the rolling year to 31 March 2018,

down two per cent compared to the 354,000 homes granted permission in the rolling year to 31 December 2017 and up 11 per cent compared to the 314,000 homes granted permission in the rolling year to 31 March 2017. 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 January to March 2018, 16,100 decisions were made on applications for residential developments, of which 11,900 (74 per cent) were granted. The total number of residential decisions made decreased by four per cent from the March quarter of 2017, with the number granted also dropping four per cent.

The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by four per cent to 1,700, and the number of minor residential decisions granted also decreased by four per cent to 10,200 (Live Tables P120A, P123 and P135). In the year ending March 2018, authorities granted 6,500 major and 42,700 minor residential applications, both down by two per cent on the year ending March 2017 (Live Tables P120A and P136).

### Commercial decisions

In January to March 2018, 2,500 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 2,300 (91 per cent) were granted. The total number of commercial decisions made decreased by 11 per cent on the same quarter of 2017. In the year ending March 2018, 9,900 applications for commercial developments were granted,

down 11 per cent on the year ending March 2017 (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, albeit with some decreases recently. In 2017/18, numbers of major developments were at about 57 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 6).

### 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 2017/18 (Live Tables P120A and P120B, Figure 7).

### Householder developments

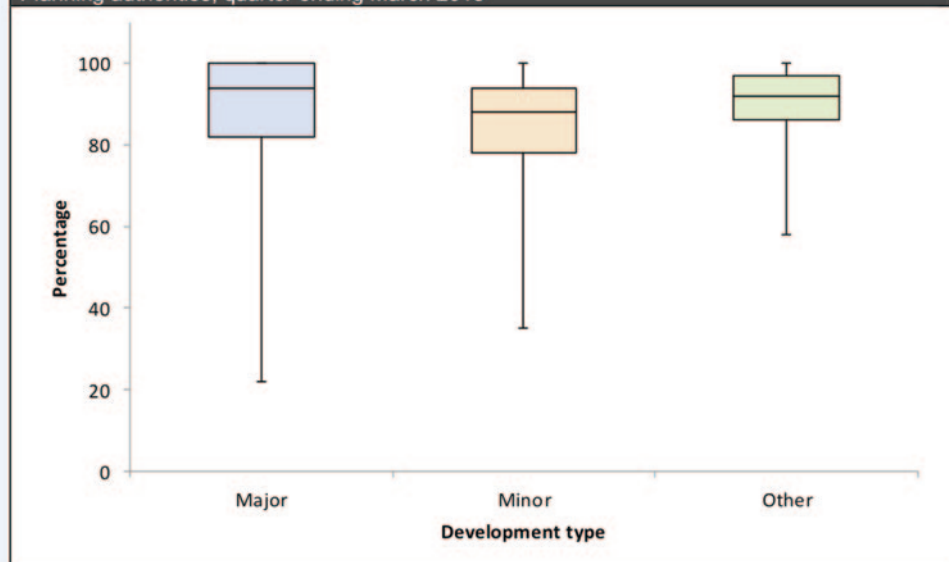
Householder developments are those developments to a house which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and conservatories (more details are in the Definitions section). The number of decisions on householder developments was 50,500 in the quarter ending March 2018, accounting for 50 per cent of all decisions, up from the 50,300 decisions in the quarter ending March 2017. Authorities granted 91 per cent of these applications and decided 92 per cent within eight weeks or the agreed time (Live Table P123).

### 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

**Figure 3: speed of decision-making, by type of development**  
Planning authorities, quarter ending March 2018



are in the Definitions section).

The results for the latest quarter for which they have been collected (January to March 2018) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 8,700 applications reported in the January to March quarter of 2018, prior approval was not required for 4,700, and permission was granted for 2,100 and refused for 1,900. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate 10 of 79 per cent. Larger householder extensions accounted for 70 per cent of applications (6,000), with six per cent relating to office to residential changes and six per cent to agricultural to residential changes. 'All other' permitted development rights, accounted for 15 per cent of applications up from 14 per cent a year earlier.

Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 6,800 applications were approved without having to go through the full planning process, down eight per cent from a year earlier.

Within an overall decrease of six per cent in the reported total number of PDR applications between January to March 2017 and January to March 2018:

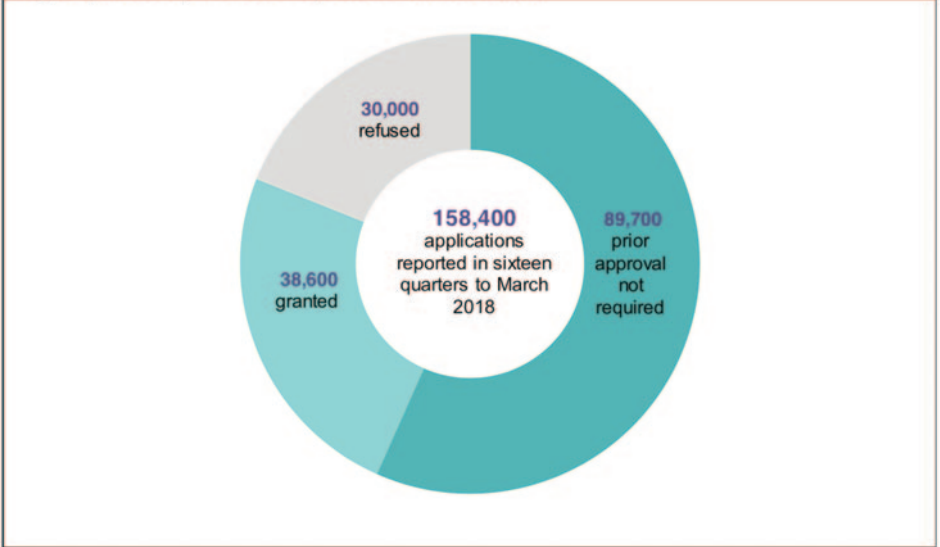
- larger householder extensions decreased by seven per cent;
- office to residential changes decreased by 16 per cent;
- agricultural to residential changes decreased by 14 per cent; and
- 'all other' permitted development rights increased by five per cent.

Figures for the total number of permitted development right applications made for changes to residential for quarters from January to March 2017 onwards are given in Live Table PDR1, which show that a total of 1,300 applications for changes to residential use were reported in January to March 2018, of which 900 (70 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

The overall acceptance rate for the sixteen quarters between the collection of detailed data started in April 2014 and the end of March 2018 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).

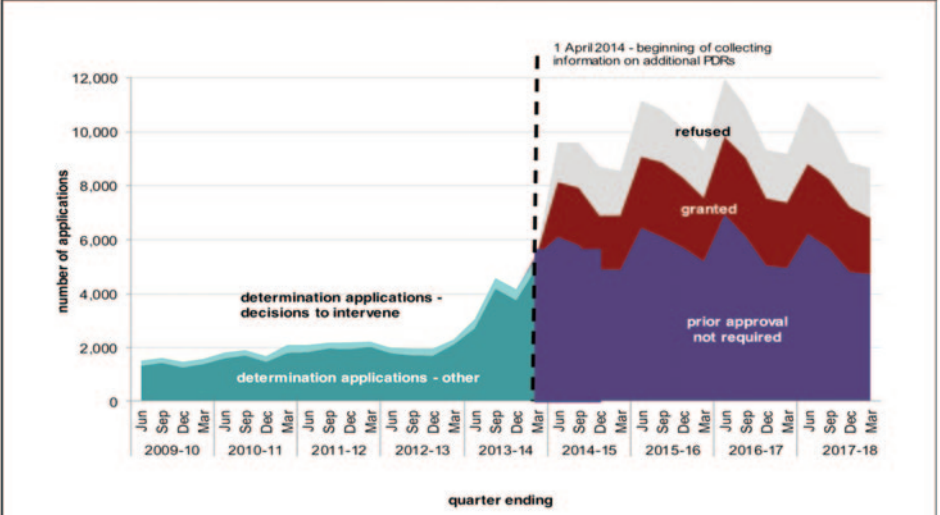
Overall during the sixteen quarters ending March 2018, district planning authorities reported 158,400 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 89,700 (57 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 38,600 (24 per cent) were granted and 30,000 (19 per cent) were refused (Figure 8). ■

**Figure 8: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities**  
England, sixteen quarters from April 2014 to March 2018



Component figures may not sum to the total due to rounding.

**Figure 9: Applications for determination and prior approvals for permitted development rights decided by district planning authorities**  
England, quarter ending June 2009 to quarter ending March 2018



**Figure 6: Number of planning applications decided by district authorities, by type of development**  
England, quarter ending June 2008 to quarter ending March 2018

