

# Downward trend accelerates for applications and decisions

## Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: Planning Applications in England: July-September 2018

### OVERVIEW

Between July to September 2018, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 110,300 applications for planning permission, down six per cent on the corresponding quarter of 2017;
- granted 93,300 decisions, down six per cent from the same quarter in 2017; this is equivalent to 89 per cent of decisions, up one percentage point from the same quarter of 2017;
- decided 88 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, down one percentage point from a year earlier;
- granted 11,800 residential applications, down six per cent on a year earlier: 1,600 for major developments and 10,200 for minors;
- granted 2,300 applications for commercial developments, down 10 per cent on a year earlier.

The Figure 1 shows trends in numbers of applications received, decided and granted since 2006-07.

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

- granted 368,800 decisions, down three per cent on the year ending September 2017; and
- granted 48,100 decisions on residential developments, of which 6,400 were for major developments and 41,700 were for minors, both down by three per cent on the year ending September 2017.

### Planning applications

During July to September 2018, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 110,300 applications for planning permission, down six per cent on the corresponding quarter in 2017. In the year ending September 2018, author-



ities received 457,700 planning applications, down four per cent on the year ending September 2017 (Live Tables P132/P134, Table 1 and Detail of district matters decisions table).

### Planning decisions

Authorities reported 105,400 decisions on planning applications in July to September 2018, a decrease of six per cent on the 112,700 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending September 2018, authorities decided 419,100 planning applications, down three per cent on the number in the year ending September 2017 (Live Tables P120/P133/P134 and Table 1).

### Applications granted

During July to September 2018, authorities granted 93,300 decisions, down six per cent on the same quarter in 2017. Authorities granted 89 per cent of all decisions, up one percentage point from the September quarter of 2017 (Live Tables P120/P133). Overall, 83 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted (Live Table P131).

Over the 12 months to September 2018, 368,800 decisions were granted, down three per cent on the figure for the year to September 2017 (Live Table P132, Table 1 and Details of district matters decisions table).

### Historical context

Figure 1 and Table 1 show that, since 2006-07, 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 showing a slight upward trend recently.

Historical figures for all district level decisions dating back to 2006/07 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>.commercial decisions<sup>1</sup>.

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 (0 to 100 per cent), followed by other developments (66 to 100 per cent) and minor developments (48 to 100 per cent) (Live Tables P120/P131).

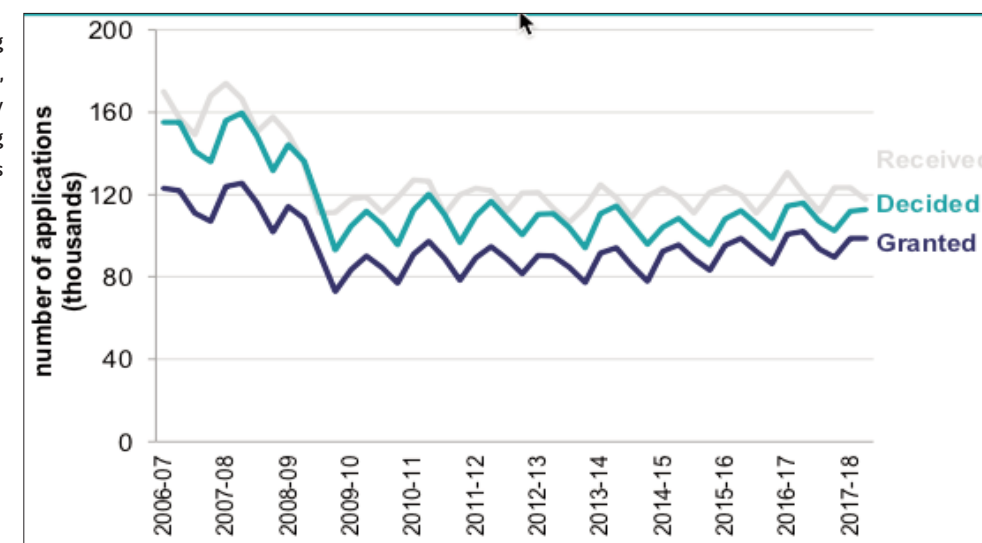
### Speed of decisions

• In July to September 2018, 88 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time<sup>2</sup>, down one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier.

• In July to September 2018, 85 per cent of minor applications and 90 per cent of other applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, up one percentage point and unchanged from a year earlier respectively.

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 other developments (30 to 100 per cent) and minor developments (38 to 100 per cent) (Live Tables P120 and P131, and Details of district matters decisions table).

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



Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority: July-Sept 2018. Table 131 can be found with all tables and figures here: <https://goo.gl/HphuyW> Source: CLG/ONS

### Use of performance agreements

Table 2 shows the increase in the use of performance agreements<sup>3</sup> since April 2014. It shows that they are more commonly used for major developments than minor or other developments<sup>4</sup>. 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. 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 64 per cent during July to September 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 house-

holder developments) to be made over the eight most recent quarters.

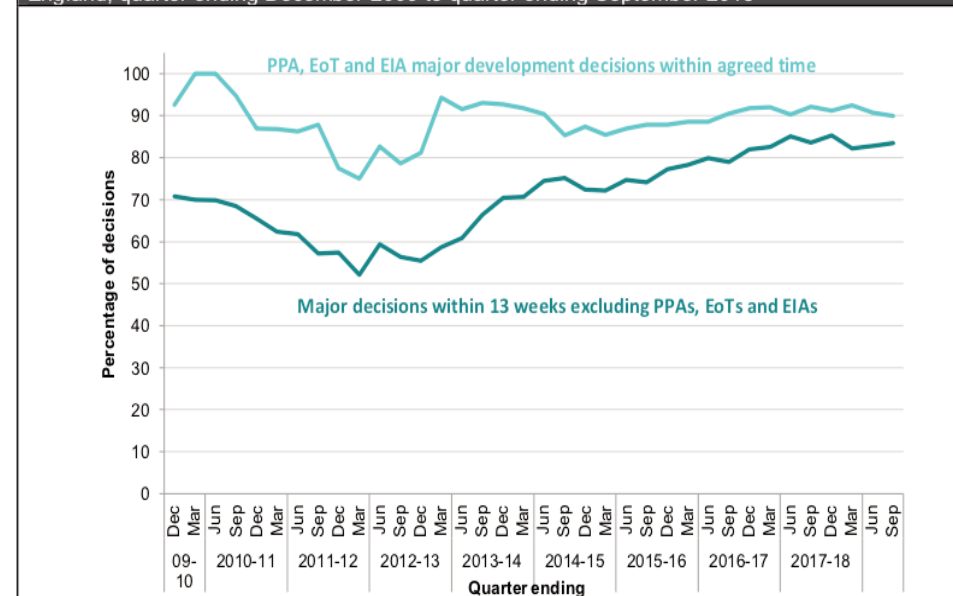
Similarly, Live Table P152a, presents data on the performance of district level local planning authorities against the latest published criterion in Improving planning performance: criteria for designation on the quality of decision-making for assessing performance under section 62B of the Town and Country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

In July to September 2018, 15,700 decisions were made on applications for residential<sup>5</sup> developments, of which 11,800 (75 per cent) were granted. The total number of residential decisions made decreased by seven per cent from the September quarter of 2017, with the number granted dropping six per cent. The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by one per cent to 1,600, >>>

Figure 5: Percentage of major development decisions made within time<sup>1</sup> England, quarter ending December 2009 to quarter ending September 2018



<sup>1</sup> Figures cover agreed extensions of time and environmental impact assessments from 1 April 2013.

>>> and the number of minor residential decisions granted decreased by six per cent to 10,200 (Live Tables P120A and P135, and Details of district matters decisions table). In the year ending September 2018, authorities granted 6,400 major and 41,700 minor residential applications, both down by three per cent on the year ending September 2017 (Live Tables P120A and P136).

**Residential units**

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 6. The latest provisional figures show that permission for 359,500 homes was given in the rolling year to 30 September 2018: • up two per cent compared to the 352,100 homes granted permission in the rolling year to 30 September 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, 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 2007.

**Commercial decisions**

In July to September 2018, 2,500 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 2,300 (92 per cent) were granted.

The total number of commercial decisions granted decreased by ten per cent on the same quarter of 2017. In the year ending September 2018, 9,400 applications for commercial developments were granted, down 11 per cent on the year ending September 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, albeit with some decreases recently. Numbers of commercial decisions made also decreased sharply during 2008, and have since stabilised at around 2,100 per year for major and 10,000 per year for minor commercial decisions, albeit with some further decreases recently, particularly for minor decisions. In 2017/18, numbers of major commercial decisions 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 7).

**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 increased steadily, from 88 and 86 per cent respectively in 2008/09, to 94 and 91 per cent respectively in 2014/15, and have both been stable since then (Live Tables P120A and P120B, Figure 8).

**Householder developments**

Householder developments are those develop-

ments to a residence 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 54,500 in the quarter ending September 2018, accounting for 52 per cent of all decisions, down six per cent from the 57,700 decisions in the quarter ending September 2017. Authorities granted 91 per cent of these applications and decided 91 per cent within eight weeks or the agreed time (Detail of district matters decisions table).

**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).

The results for the latest quarter for which they have been collected (July to September 2018) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 9,600 applications reported in the July to September quarter of 2018, prior approval was not required for 5,300, and permission was granted for 2,500 and refused for 1,800. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate of 81 per cent.

Larger householder extensions accounted for 71 per cent of applications (7,600), with five per cent to agricultural to residential changes and six per cent to agricultural to residential changes. 'All other' permitted development rights, accounted for 16 per cent of applications, unchanged from a year earlier.

Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 7,800 applications were approved without having to go through the full planning process, down six per cent from a year earlier.

Within an overall decrease of eight per cent in the reported total number of PDR applications between July to September 2017 and July to September 2018:

- larger householder extensions decreased by six per cent;
- office to residential changes decreased by 26 per cent;
- agricultural to residential changes decreased by 12 per cent; and
- 'all other' permitted development rights decreased by nine per cent.

Figures for the total number of permitted development right applications made for changes to residential for quarters from July to September 2014 onwards are given in the quarterly worksheets in Live Table PDR1, which show that a total of 1,200 applications for changes to residential use were reported in July to September 2018, of which 900 (71 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

The overall acceptance rate for the eighteen quarters between the start of collection of detailed data in April 2014 and the end of September 2018 was 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).

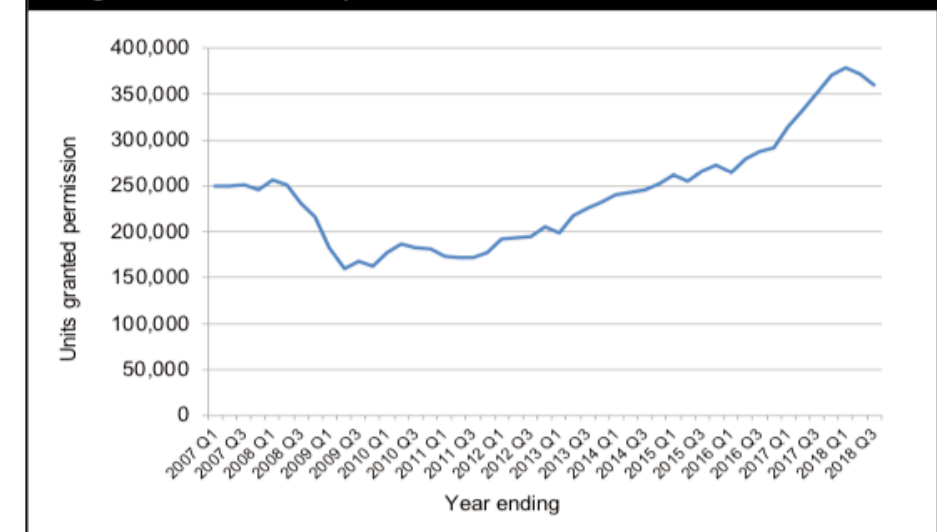
Overall during the eighteen quarters ending September 2018, district planning authorities reported 178,200 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 100,800 (57 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 43,600 (24 per cent) were granted and 33,700 (19 per cent) were refused (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.

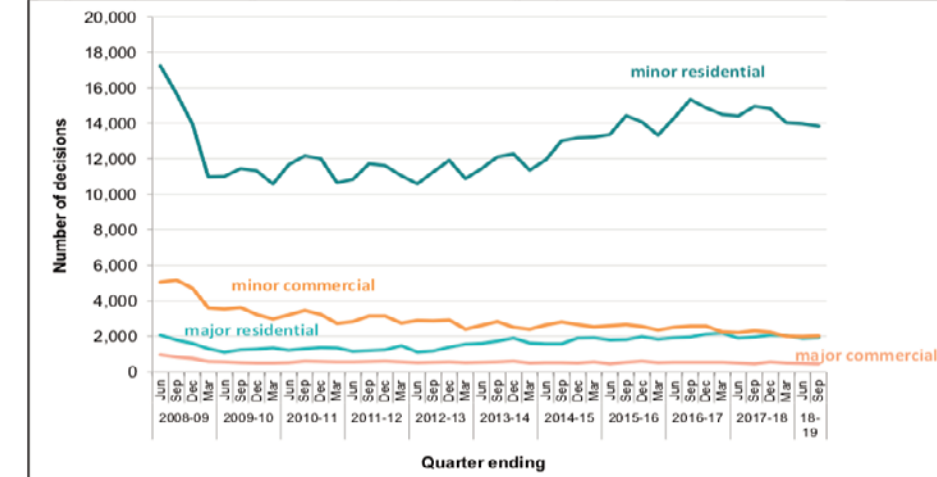
Since April 2014, there have been 36,500 PDR applications in 2014/15, 41,400 in 2015/16, 41,500 in 2016/17 and 39,100 in 2017/18. The quarterly pattern since April 2014 reflects a combination of both: i) the introduction of new permitted development right categories on several occasions; and ii) the 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 report-

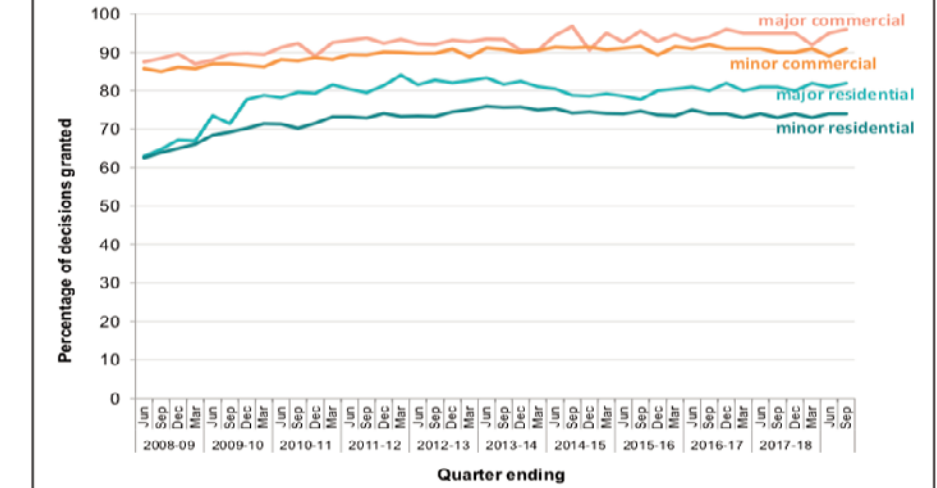
**Figure 6: Number of housing units granted planning permission, England, rolling annual totals to September 2018<sup>P</sup>**



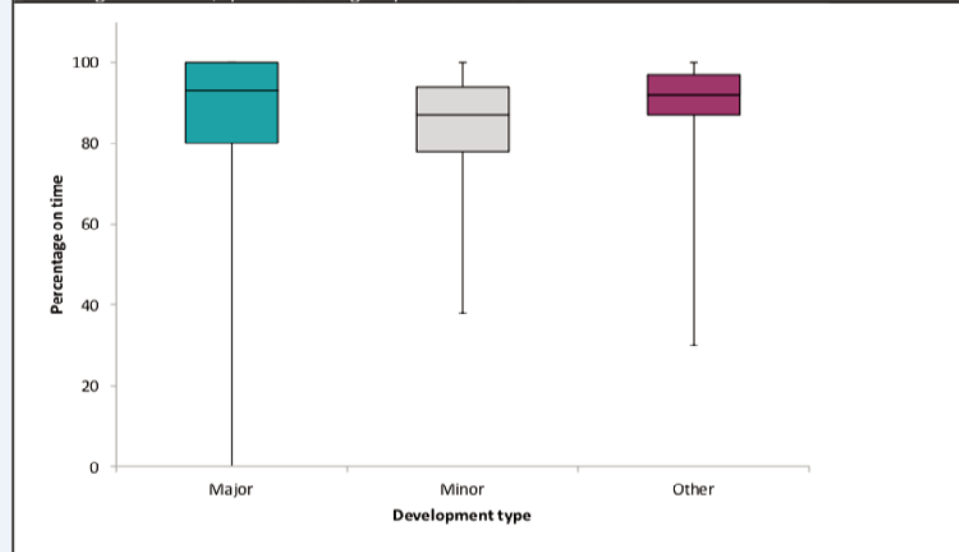
**Figure 7: Number of planning applications decided by district authorities, by type of development England, quarter ending June 2008 to quarter ending September 2018**



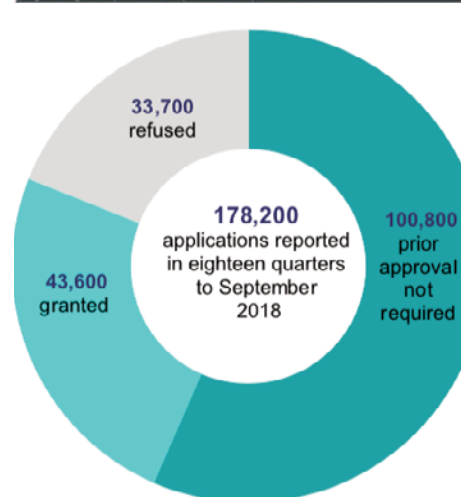
**Figure 8: Percentage of planning applications granted by district authorities, by type of development England, quarter ending June 2008 to quarter ending September 2018**



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



**Figure 9: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities England, eighteen quarters from April 2014 to September 2018**



ed 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 2017/1810. ■