

Downward trend continues for applications and decisions and permitted development PN approvals

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: Planning Applications in England: January to March 2019

OVERVIEW

Between January to March 2019, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 111,300 applications for planning permission, down five per cent on the corresponding quarter of 2018;
- granted 81,500 decisions, down seven per cent from the same quarter in 2018; this is equivalent to 88 per cent of decisions, unchanged from the same quarter of 2018;
- decided 88 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, down one percentage point from the same quarter in 2018.
- granted 11,200 residential applications, down six per cent on a year earlier: 1,600 for major developments and 9,600 for minors;
- granted 2,000 applications for commercial developments, down 11 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 March 2019, district level planning authorities:

- granted 357,700 decisions, down five per cent on the year ending March 2018; and,
- granted 46,800 decisions on residential developments, of which 6,300 were for major developments and 40,500 were for minors, down by three two and five per cent respectively on the year ending March 2018.

Planning applications

During January to March 2019, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 111,300 applications for planning permission, down five per cent on the corresponding quarter in 2018. In the year ending March 2019, authorities received 447,900 planning applications, down five per cent on the year ending March 2018 (Live Table P134, Table 1 and Detail of district matters decisions table).

Planning decisions

Authorities reported 93,000 decisions on planning

applications in January to March 2019, a decrease of seven per cent on the 100,200 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending March 2019, authorities decided 406,200 planning applications, down six per cent on the number in the year ending March 2018 (Live Tables P120/P133/P134 and Table 1).

Applications granted

During January to March 2019, authorities granted 81,500 decisions, down seven per cent on the same quarter in 2018. Authorities granted 88 per cent of all decisions, unchanged from the March quarter of 2018 (Live Tables P120/P133). Overall, 83 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted, an increase of one percentage point from the quarter ending March 2018 (Comparison between local authorities table).

Over the 12 months to March 2019, 357,700 decisions were granted, down five per cent on the figure for the year to March 2018 (Table 1, Comparison between local authorities table and Details of district matters decisions table).

Historical context

Figure 1 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, with figures remaining broadly level since then.

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.

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).

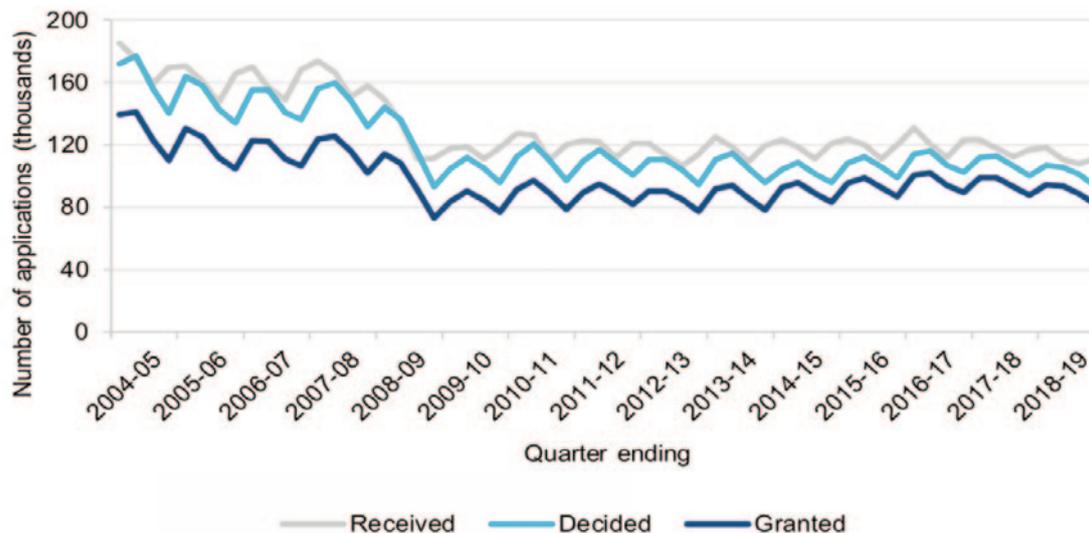
Figure 2 shows that the variation in percentage of decisions granted this quarter is widest between authorities for major developments (14 to 100 per cent), followed by minor developments (46 to 100 per cent) and other developments (62 to 100 per cent) (Live Tables P120A and P120B do not between them cover the totality of decisions included in P120, which also includes decisions on Traveller caravan pitches and various 'Other developments'. Tables P120/Comparison between local authorities table).

Speed of decisions

- In January to March 2019, 88 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time, down one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier.
- In January to March 2019, 84 per cent of minor applications and 89 per cent of other applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, both down one percentage point 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 (15 to 100 per cent), followed by other developments (22 to 100 per cent)

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



and minor developments (27 to 100 per cent) (Live Tables P120, Comparison between local authorities table, and Details of district matters decisions table).

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 67 per cent of major decisions made during January to March 2019 involving a planning agreement, compared with 43 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. 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.

The three final columns in Live Table P120 give

Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority. Table 131 can be found with all tables and figures here: <http://bit.do/eXNb6> Source: MHCLG/ONS

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

Figure 5 and Reference Table 2 show that in the quarter to March 2019, 91 per cent of major development decisions involving performance agreements were made on time. In comparison, 82 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

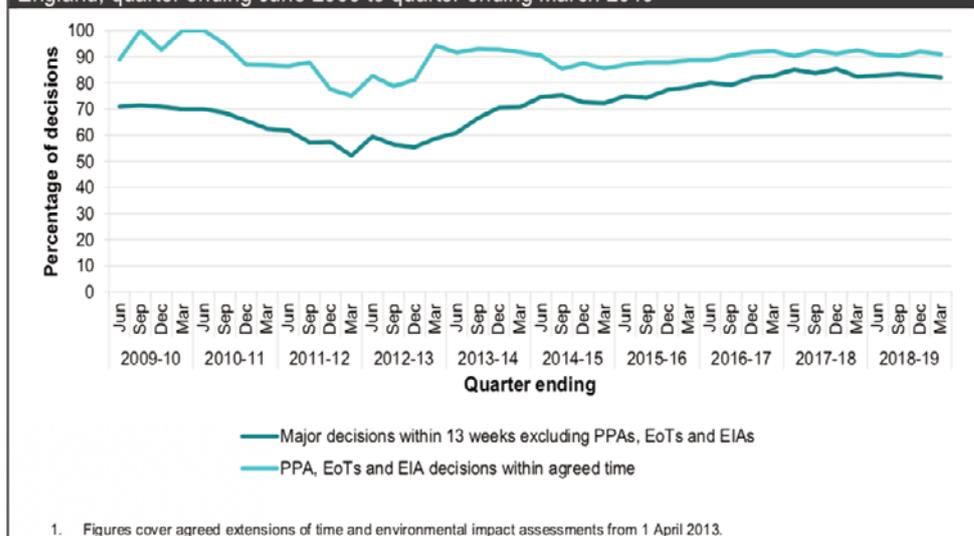
Live Tables P151a and P153 present data on the performance of district level local planning

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 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 >>>

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



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

>>> 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 January to March 2019, 14,900 decisions were made on applications for residential 5 developments, of which 11,200 (75 per cent) were granted. The total number of residential decisions made decreased by seven per cent from the March quarter of 2018, with the number granted dropping six per cent.

The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by five per cent to 1,600, and the number of minor residential decisions granted decreased by six per cent to 9,600 (Live Table P120A, Details of district matters decisions table and Comparison of local authorities table). In the year ending March 2019, authorities granted 6,300 major and 40,500 minor residential applications, down by two and five per cent respectively on the year ending March 2018 (Live Table P120A and Comparison between local authorities table).

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 361,800 homes was given in the rolling year to 31 March 2019, down five per cent compared to the 380,500 homes granted permission in the rolling year to 31 March 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.

Rolling annual totals for each quarter from 2007 are held as linked open data on Open Data Communities at <http://opendatacommunities.org/data/planning/units-granted-permission/all-sites>.

Commercial decisions

In January to March 2019, 2,200 decisions were made on applications for commercial develop-

ments, of which 2,000 (91 per cent) were granted. The total number of commercial decisions granted decreased by eleven per cent on the same quarter of 2018. In the year ending March 2019, 8,900 applications for commercial developments were granted, down 10 per cent on the year ending March 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 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 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).

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

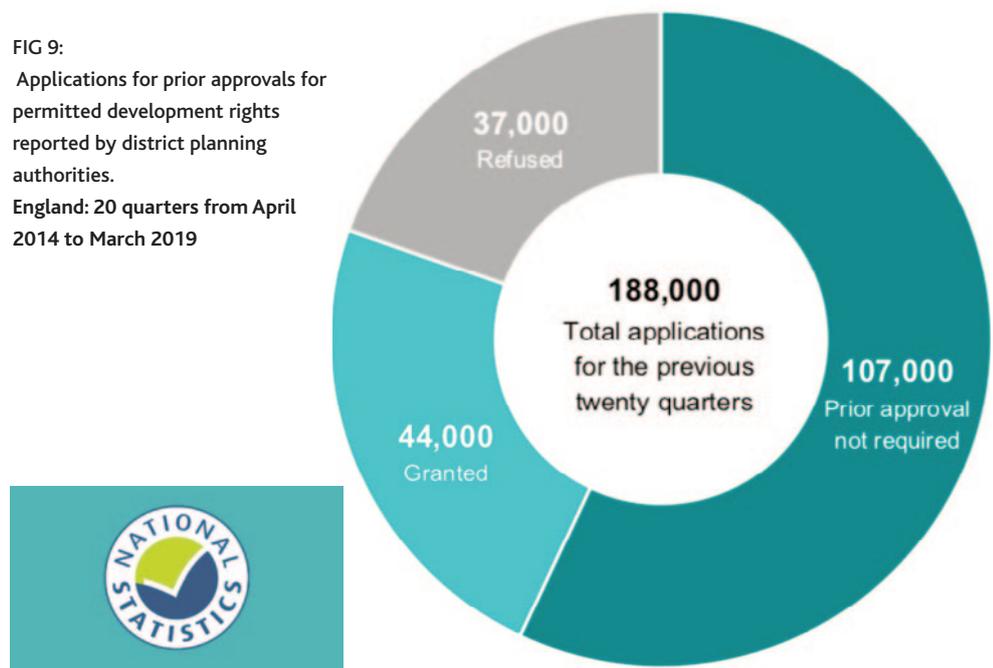
Householder developments are those developments to a residence which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and conservatories (more details are in the glossary accessible from the Definitions section). The number of decisions made on householder developments was 46,900 in the quarter ending March 2019, accounting for 50 per cent of all decisions, down seven per cent from the 50,200 decisions in the quarter ending March 2018. Authorities granted 90 per cent of these applications and decided 91 per cent within eight weeks or the agreed time (Reference Table 2 and 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 (January to March 2019) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 7,800 applications reported in the January to March quarter of 2019, prior approval was not required for 4,200, and permission was granted for 1,900 and refused for 1,700. This resulted in an overall accep-

FIG 9: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities. England: 20 quarters from April 2014 to March 2019



tance rate 9 of 78 per cent. Larger householder extensions accounted for 74 per cent of applications (5,700), with five per cent relating to office to residential changes and six per cent to agricultural to residential changes. 'All other' permitted development rights, accounted for 16 per cent of applications, up from 11 per cent a year earlier.

Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 6,100 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 January to March 2018 and January to March 2019:

- larger householder extensions decreased by three per cent;
- office to residential changes decreased by 20 per cent;
- agricultural to residential changes decreased by three per cent; and
- 'all other' permitted development rights decreased by three 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. These show that a total of 1,100 applications for changes to residential use were reported in January to March 2019, of which 800 (70 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

The overall acceptance rate for the twenty quarters between the start of collection of detailed data in April 2014 and the end of March 2018 was 80 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 twenty quarters ending March 2019, district planning authorities reported 188,000 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 107,000 (57 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 44,000 (23 per cent) were granted and 37,000 (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 35,100 in 2018/19. The quarterly pattern since April 2014 reflects a combination of both: i) the introduction

Table 3 - Number of housing units granted planning permission
Rolling annual totals

Annual total to:	Number
2008 Q1	256,900
2009 Q1	183,000
2010 Q1	176,900
2011 Q1	173,900
2012 Q1	192,400
2013 Q1	198,800
2014 Q1	240,000
2015 Q1	261,900
2016 Q1	264,700
2017 Q1	313,700
2018 Q1 ^R	380,500
2019 Q1 ^P	361,800

Source: Glenigan planning permission data: snapshot as at 2 May 2019

P Provisional
R Revised

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

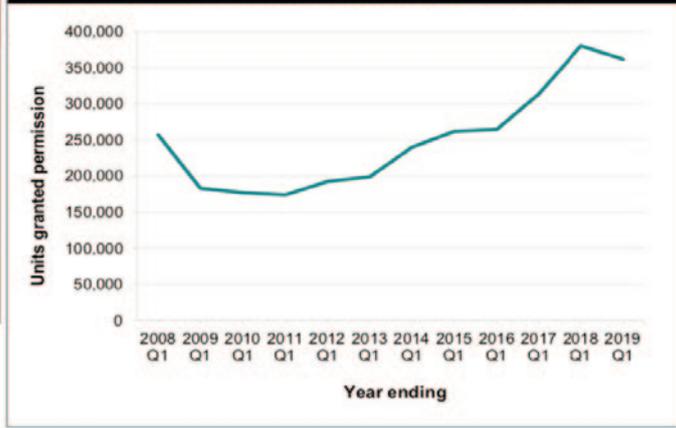


Figure 7: Number of planning applications decided by district authorities, by type of development
England, quarter ending June 2010 to quarter ending March 2019

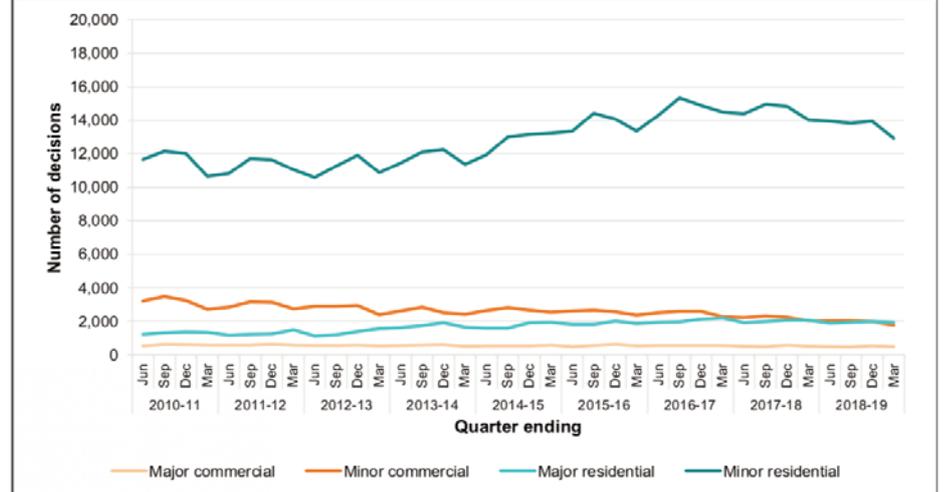
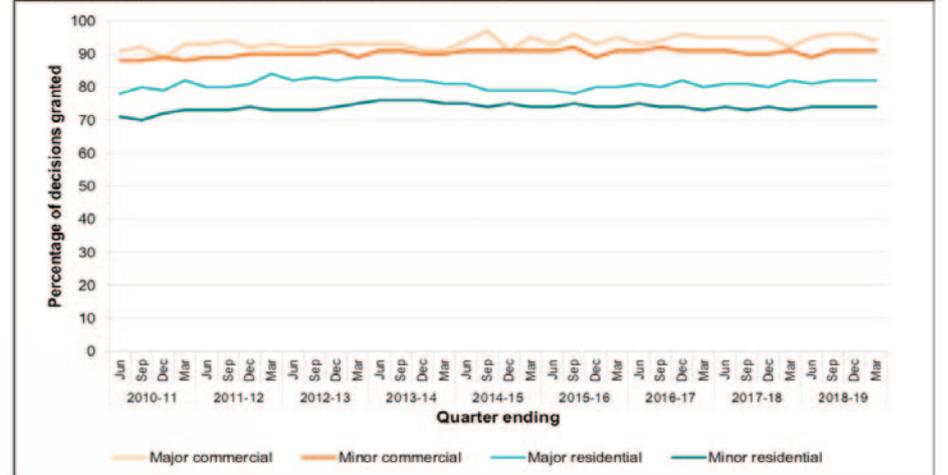


Figure 8: Percentage of planning applications granted by district authorities, by type of development
England, quarter ending June 2010 to quarter ending March 2019



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. ■