

# Decisions down 11 per cent and decided down 9pc over the past year

## Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: planning applications in England between January to March 2024

### OVERVIEW

Between January to March 2024, district level planning authorities in England: received 85,800 applications for planning permission, down 11% from the same quarter a year earlier; decided 79,100 applications for planning permission, down 9% from the same quarter a year earlier; granted 67,400 decisions, down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier; this is equivalent to 85% of decisions, down 1 percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier; decided 90% of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, up one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier; and decided 19% of major applications within the statutory period of 13 weeks, up two percentage points from the same period a year earlier; granted 7,800 residential applications, down 7% from the same quarter a year earlier; granted 1,600 applications for commercial developments, down 4% from the same quarter a year earlier; and decided 39,800 householder development applications, down 15% from the same quarter a year earlier. This accounted for 50% of all decisions, down from 53% a year earlier.

In the year ending March 2024, district level planning authorities: granted 285,300 decisions, down 13% from the year ending March 2023; and granted 32,000 residential applications, down 8% from the year ending March 2023.

### Planning applications received

During January to March 2024, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 85,800 applications for planning permission, down 11% from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending March 2024, authorities received 350,800 planning applications, down 11% from the year ending March 2023 (Live Table P134, PS1 Dashboard).

### Planning decisions

Authorities reported 79,100 decisions on planning applications in January to March 2024, down 9% from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending March 2024, authorities decided 332,900 planning applications, down 12% from the year ending March 2023 (Live Tables P120/P133/P134, PS1/PS2 Dashboard).

### Applications granted

During January to March 2024, authorities granted 67,400 decisions, down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier. This represented 85% of all decisions, down 1 percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending March 2024, authorities granted 285,300 decisions, down 13% from the year ending March 2023. Authorities granted 86% of all decisions, down one percentage point from the year ending March 2023 (Live Tables P120/P133, PS2 Dashboard).

### Applications on hand

Authorities reported that they had 120,300 applications on hand as at 1 January 2024, down 14% from the same quarter a year earlier. This is 52% above the number of decisions made during the quarter. The corresponding figure for the same quarter a year earlier was 60%. Taking account of numbers of applications received, decisions made and applications withdrawn during the quarter gives a total of 120,000 as at 31 March 2024, down 14% from the same quarter a year earlier (Live Table P133, PS1 dashboard).

### Historical context

Figure 1 shows 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 (July to September quarter) and troughs in the Autumn and Winter (October to December and January to March quarters), there was a clear downward trend during the 2008 economic downturn, followed by a period of stability. There was a large dip in 2020 following the start of the pandemic and a subsequent recovery in early 2021, including a particular peak in applications received, but since the peak there has been a steep downward trend.

### Regional breakdowns

Table 1 shows how numbers of applications received, decisions made and decisions granted varied by region. It also shows how the percentage of decisions granted varies widely by region, from 80% in London to 91% in North East (Live Table P133, PS1/PS2 Dashboard).

### Decisions 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% of local authorities fall within this range, with the horizontal line in the centre of the box representing the median. The whiskers are the two lines above and below the box that are 1.5 times the size of the box (the interquartile range) with the dots representing outliers. Figure 2 shows that the range between the whiskers for the percentage of applications granted is widest between authorities for major developments (40% to 100%), followed by minor developments (52% to 100%) and other developments (70% to 100%) (PS2 Dashboard).

### Speed of decisions

In January to March 2024, 90% of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time, up 1 percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier. 19% of major applications were decided within the statutory time period of 13 weeks, unchanged from the same quarter a year earlier.



**Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority.**

All tables and figures can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/49zbvztb>

Source: DLUHC/ONS

In the same quarter, 87% of minor applications were decided within 8 weeks or within the agreed time, up 4 percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier. 38% of minor applications were decided within the statutory time period of 8 weeks, up 3 percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier.

Also in the same quarter, 90% of other applications were decided within 8 weeks or within the agreed time, up 2 percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier. 55% of other applications were decided within the statutory time period of 8 weeks, up 5 percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier.

For more information on major, minor and other developments please see the PS1 and PS2 district planning matter guidance notes.

Figure 3 shows that the range between the whiskers for the percentage of decisions made in time this quarter for major developments was 69% to 100%, for minor developments it was 66% to 100% and for other developments it was 75% to 100% (PS2 Dashboard).

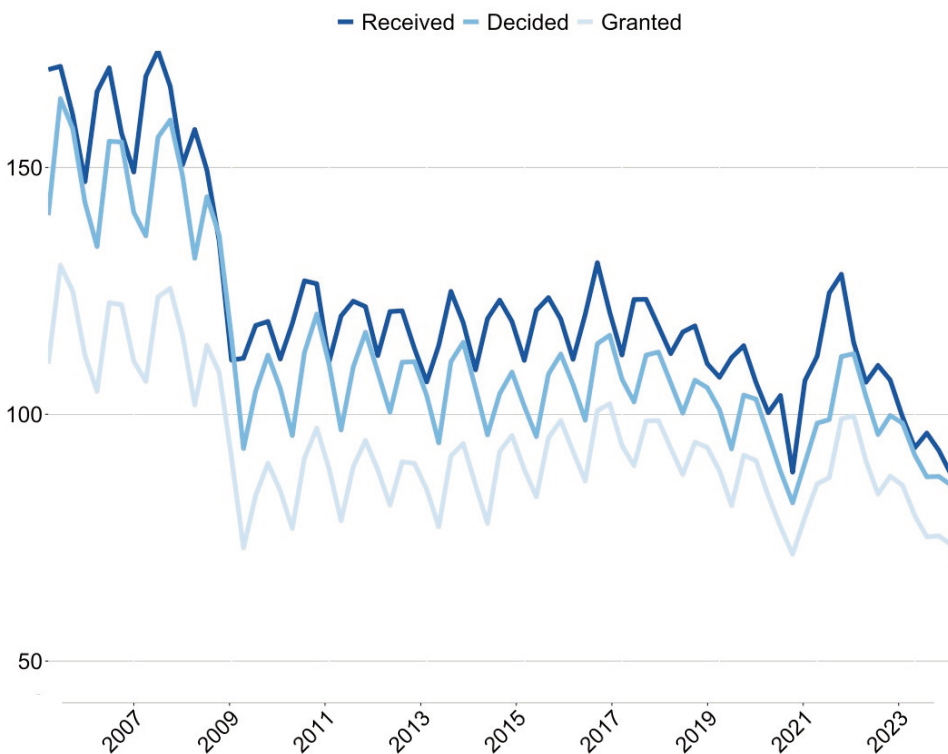
**Use of performance agreements**

“Performance agreement” is an umbrella term used here to refer to Planning Performance Agreements, Extensions of Time and Environmental Impact Assessments. Between January to March 2024, 44% of all planning application decisions involved a performance agreement. Major developments were more likely to involve a performance agreement compared to minor and other developments with 77% of major decisions involving a planning agreement, compared with 54% of minor decisions and 38% of other decisions (Reference Table 2, PS2 Dashboard).

Figure 4 shows, from April 2010, the numbers of decisions on major, minor and other developments made involving a performance agreement, compared with numbers without a performance agreement. Notwithstanding definition changes, there has been a marked increase in the use of agreements since early 2013 (see Technical Notes for more information). This longer upward trend has been driven by both the additional scope for

**Figure 1: Number of planning applications received, decided and granted (thousands)**

England, quarter ending June 2005 to quarter ending December 2023



recording them and their additional use (Live Table P120, PS2 Dashboard)

**Performance of individual district level local planning authorities**

The existing approach to measuring the performance of authorities was introduced by the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 and is based on assessing local planning authorities’ performance on the speed and quality of their decisions on applications for major and non-major development. Where an authority is formally designated by the Secretary of State as underperforming, applicants have had the option of submitting their applications for major and non-major development (and connected applications) directly to the Planning Inspectorate (who act on behalf of the Secretary of State) for determination. See Improving planning performance: criteria for designation for more information.

**Speed of decisions**

The designation thresholds, below which a local planning authority is eligible for designation are:

- For applications for major development: less than 60% of an authority’s decisions made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant;
- For applications for non-major development: less than 70% of an authority’s decisions made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with

the applicant.

See Live Tables P151/P153

**Quality of decisions**

The threshold for designation on applications for both major and non-major development, above which a local planning authority is at risk of designation, is 10% of an authority’s total number of decisions on applications made during the assessment period being overturned at appeal.

Once the figures for the relevant period have been published in Live Table P152 or P154, which identify local planning authorities are at risk of designation by exceeding the threshold, they are invited to contact Departmental officials with any data corrections, and information on any exceptional circumstances applying to the authority that might be used as reasons why the Secretary of State should not designate them. The Secretary of State then takes this evidence into account when making decisions on which authorities should be designated. See Live Tables P152/P154

Five local planning authorities are currently designated by the Secretary of State in relation to their planning performance. These are Uttlesford District Council (on 8th February 2022), Chorley Council (on 19th December 2023) and Lewes District Council (on 8th May 2024) in relation to quality of decision-making for major applications; and St Albans City and District Council on 6th March 2024) and Bristol City Council (on 6th March 2024) in relation to speed of decision-making for non-major applications.

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**>>> Residential decisions**

In January to March 2024, 11,200 decisions were made on applications for residential developments<sup>[footnote 3]</sup>, of which 7,800 (70%) were granted. The number of residential decisions made was down 4% from the same quarter a year earlier, with the number granted down 7% from the same quarter a year earlier. 900 major residential decisions were granted, down 11% from the same quarter a year earlier and 6,900 major residential decisions were granted, down 6% from the same quarter a year earlier (Live Table P120A, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending March 2024, 45,000 decisions were made on applications for residential developments, of which 32,000 (71%) were granted. The number of residential decisions made was down 6% from the previous year, with the number granted down 8% from the year ending March 2023. 3,700 major residential decisions were granted, down 12% from the previous year and 28,200 minor residential decisions were granted, down 8% from the previous year.

**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, Glenigan<sup>[footnote 4]</sup>.

The latest provisional figures show that permission for 236,000 homes was given in the year to March 2024, down 13% from the 270,000 homes granted permission in the year to March 2023. On an ongoing basis, figures are revised to ensure that any duplicates are removed as far as possible, 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. For the previous eight quarters, the year to figures have been revised upwards by 2% on average. These figures are provided here to give contextual information to users and have not been designated as National Statistics.

When considering the above figures in relation to the central government ambition of raising housing supply to 300,000 homes per year on average by the mid-2020s, it should be noted that many permissions do not result in a home being delivered in practice. This is due to a range of reasons, relating to the circumstances of landowners and developers, as well as the local and national economy. In addition, i) time lags in building can affect the number of homes built in a particular

period; and ii) the methodology used cannot guarantee that all double counting of permissions is removed from the above figures.

In comparing the number of residential applications granted and the number of units granted, it should be noted that the two series measure different things and use data from different sources, and so may not track each other closely over the short term. More specifically, this difference is likely to be due to a combination of differences in the timing of recorded decisions and a difference in the average numbers of homes included within the relevant planning applications.

**Commercial decisions**

In January to March 2024, 1,900 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments<sup>[footnote 5]</sup>, of which 1,600 (88%) were granted. The number of commercial decisions made was down 5% from the same quarter a year earlier, with the number granted down 4% from the same quarter a year earlier. 400 major commercial decisions were granted, down 6% from the

same quarter a year earlier and 1,300 minor commercial decisions were granted, down 4% from the same quarter a year earlier (Live Table P120B, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending March 2024, 7,700 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 6,800 (88%) were granted. The number of commercial decisions made was down 5% from the previous year, with the number granted down 6% from the year ending March >>> 2023. 1,500 major commercial decisions were granted, down 6% from the previous year and 5,300 minor commercial decisions were granted, down 6% from the previous year.

**Trends in the percentage of residential and commercial decisions granted**

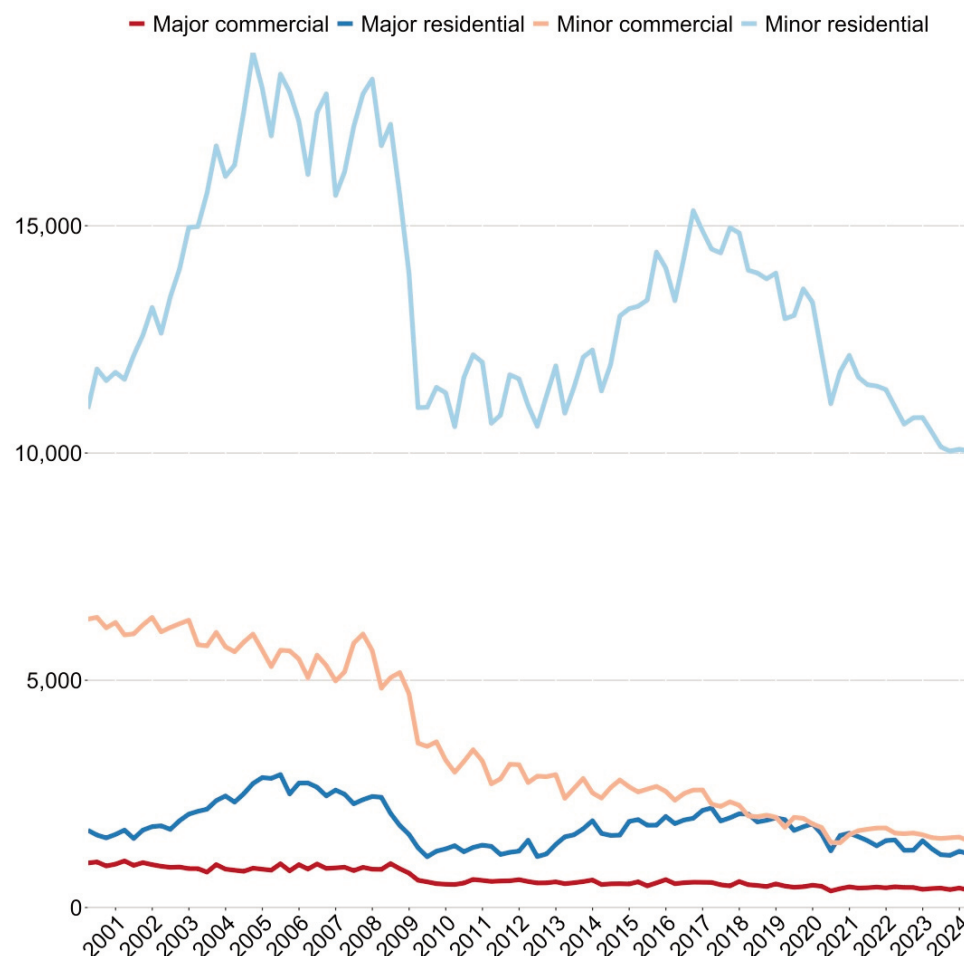
SEE Fig 7 BELOW

**Householder developments**

Householder developments are those developments to a residence which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and

**Figure 7: Number of planning applications decided by district authorities, by type of development**

England, quarter ending March 2000 to quarter ending March 2024



conservatories (see Definitions section of the Technical Notes).

The number of decisions made on householder developments was 39,800 in the quarter ending March 2024, accounting for 50% of all decisions, down from 53% of all decisions made in the quarter ending March 2023. Authorities granted 88% of these applications and decided 92% within eight weeks or the agreed time (Reference Table 2, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending March 2024, 173,300 decisions were made on applications for householder developments, accounting for 52% of all decisions, down from 56% of all decisions made in the year ending March 2023. Authorities granted 89% of these applications and decided 91% within eight weeks or the agreed time.

**Major public service infrastructure development decisions**

Since August 2021, major public service infrastructure developments broadly defined as major developments for schools, hospitals and criminal justice accommodation have been subject to an accelerated decision-making timetable.

Separate figures on major public service infrastructure development decisions have been collected on the quarterly PS2 return with effect from October 2021. During January to March 2024 there were 23 decisions, of which 22 were granted and 21 were decided in time (Live Table MJPSI – for the latest quarter only - PS2 Dashboard and PS2 open data table). Please note that figures are not collected on the CPS1/2 return and so don't include education developments by county councils.

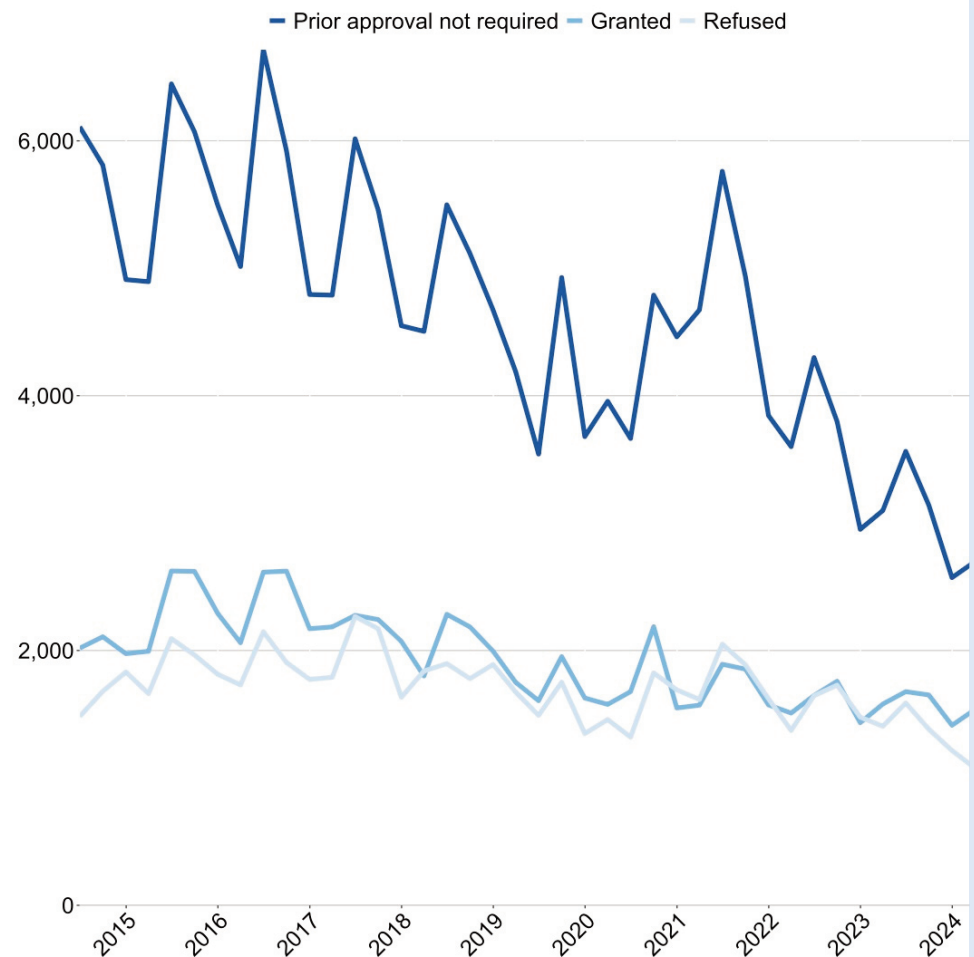
**Permission in Principle/Technical Details consent decisions**

Since April 2017, local planning authorities have had the ability to grant permission in principle (PiP) to sites which have been entered on their brownfield land registers. Where sites have a grant of permission in principle, applicants have been able to submit an application for Technical Details Consent (TDC) for development on these sites. In addition, since June 2018, it has also been possible to make an application for PiP for minor housing-led development as a separate application, independently of the brownfield register. Where a site has been granted PiP following an application, it is possible to apply for a TDC.

Figures on PiP/TDC decisions have been collected on the quarterly PS2 return from January 2020. During January to March 2024, local planning authorities reported 148 PiP (minor housing-led developments) decisions, 17 TDC (minor housing-led developments) decisions and 2 TDC (major developments) decisions. The totals for the previ-

**Figure 8: Permitted development rights decided by district planning authorities**

England, quarter ending June 2014 to year ending March 2024



ous quarters have been similar although there has been a slow upward trend since 2020, when there were about 60 PiP decisions per quarter (Live Table PiP/TDC1 – for the latest quarter only - PS2 dashboard and PS2 open data 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' (PDRs). For certain permitted development rights, if the legislation is complied with, developments can go ahead without the requirement to notify the local planning authority. Hence no way of capturing this data exists and these are not accounted for in this report. In other cases, the permitted development right legislation requires an application to the local planning authority to determine whether or not prior approval is required and to determine as appropriate (see the Definitions section of the Technical Notes).

Between January to March 2024, 5,300 applications were reported, of which prior approval was not required for 2,700, permission was granted for 1,500, and 1,100 were refused. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate [footnote 6] of 80%. Large householder extension accounted for 56% of all PDR applications reported, with 27% relating to All others, 7% relating to Agricultural to residential, and 6% relating to Commercial Business and service to residential (Live Tables PDR1/PDR2).

In the quarter to March 2024, 800 permitted development right applications were made for changes to residential use, of which 500 (65%) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

Overall during the 40 quarters ending March 2024, district planning authorities reported 330,100 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 184,900 of them prior approval was not required, 77,200 were granted and 68,000 were refused. (Live Table PDR2). ■