Decisions both decided and granted show strong fall over the past year

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: planning applications in England July to September 2023,

OVERVIEW

Between July to September 2023, district level planning authorities in England:

• received 87,800 applications for planning permission, down 12% from the same quarter a year earlier;
• decided 85,600 applications for planning permission, down 13% from the same quarter a year earlier;
• granted 73,500 decisions, down 14% from the same quarter a year earlier; this is equivalent to 86% of decisions, down one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier;
• decided 88% of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, up one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier;
• granted 7,900 residential applications, down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier;
• granted 1,700 applications for commercial developments, down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier; and
• decided 45,100 householder development applications, down 19% from the same quarter a year earlier. This accounted for 53% of all decisions, down from 57% a year earlier.

In the year ending September 2023, district level planning authorities:
• granted 303,600 decisions, down 13% from the year ending September 2022; and
• granted 33,200 residential applications, down 8% from the year ending September 2022.

Planning applications received
During July to September 2023, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 87,800 applications for planning permission, down 12% from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending September 2023, authorities received 369,900 planning applications, down 13% from the year ending September 2022 (Live Table P134, PS1 Dashboard).

Planning decisions
Authorities reported 85,600 decisions on planning applications in July to September 2023, down 13% from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending September 2023, authorities decided 352,100 planning applications, down 11% from the year ending September 2022. A decrease in the number of householder development decisions (of 19%) was a key driver of this, with numbers of decisions made – excluding householder developments – decreasing by a much lower 5%. Householder developments are those developments to a residence which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and conservatories (Live Tables P120/P133/P134, PS1/PS2 Dashboard).

Applications granted
During July to September 2023, authorities granted 73,500 decisions, down 14% from the same quarter a year earlier. Authorities granted 86% of all decisions, down one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending September 2023, authorities granted 303,600 decisions, down 13% from the year ending September 2022. Authorities granted 86% of all decisions, down one percentage point from the year ending September 2022 (Live Tables P120/P133, PS2 Dashboard).

Applications on hand
Authorities reported that they had 131,900 applications on hand as at 1 July 2023, down 14% from the same quarter a year earlier. This is 54% above the number of decisions made during the quarter. The corresponding figure for the same quarter a year earlier was 57%. (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.

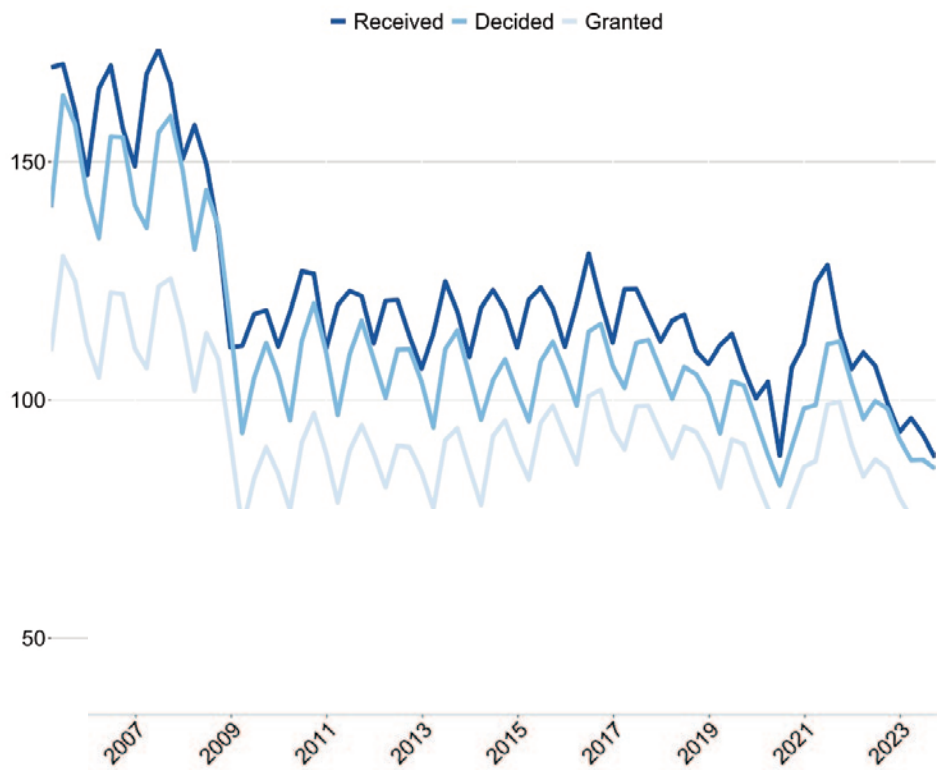
Regional breakdowns
Table 1 shows how numbers of applications received, decisions made and decisions granted varied by region. It also shows how the percentage of decisions granted varies widely by region, from 79% in London to 92% in North East (Live Table P133, PS1/PS2 Dashboard).

Table 2 like Table 1 shows how numbers of applications received, and planning decisions made, varied by region. It also shows the percentage change in number of applications received and decided compared to the same quarter a year earlier. The percentage change in the number of applications received varies widely by region, from -16% in Yorkshire and the Humber to -4% in North East (PS1 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

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

England, quarter ending June 2005 to quarter ending September 2023



Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority.
All tables and figures can be found here: *http://tinyurl.com/8ubpjfy2*

Source: DLUHC/ONS

range between the whiskers for the percentage of applications granted is widest between authorities for major developments (40% to 100%), followed by minor developments (54% to 100%) and other developments (72% to 100%) (PS2 Dashboard).

Speed of decisions

In July to September 2023, 88% of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time, up one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier. 21% of major applications were decided within the statutory time period of 13 weeks, up two percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier.

In the same quarter, 85% of minor applications were decided within 8 weeks or within the agreed time, up three percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier. 39% of minor applications were decided within the statutory time period of 8 weeks, up three 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 three percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier. 56% of other applications were decided within the statutory time period of 8 weeks, up five 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 range between the whiskers for the percentage of decisions made in time this quarter for major developments was (50% to 100%), for minor developments it was (62% to 100%) and for other developments it was (72% 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 July to September 2023, 42% 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 74% of major decisions involving a planning agreement, compared with 51% of minor decisions and 37% 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 recording them and their additional use (Live Table P120, PS2 Dashboard).

Figure 5 shows that in the quarter to September 2023, 91% of major development decisions involving performance agreements were made on time. In comparison, 79% of major decisions not involving performance agreements were made within the statutory time limit of 13 weeks (see Reference Table 2, 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 assess- >>>

>>> ment period being overturned at appeal.
See Live Tables P152/P154

Residential decisions

In July to September 2023, 11,200 decisions were made on applications for residential developments[footnote 3], of which 7,900 (71%) were granted. The number of residential decisions made was down 7% from the same quarter a year earlier, with the number granted down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier. 900 major residential decisions were granted, down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier and 7,000 major residential decisions were granted, down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier (Live Table P120A, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending September 2023, 46,400 decisions were made on applications for residential developments, of which 33,200 (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 September 2022. 4,000 major residential decisions were granted, down 10% from the previous year and 29,200 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.

The latest provisional figures show that permission for 245,000 homes was given in the year to September 2023, down 15% from the 290,000 homes granted permission in the year to September 2022. 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 July to September 2023, 1,900 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments of which 1,700 (87%) were granted. The number of commercial decisions made was down 7% from the same quarter a year earlier, with the number granted down 10% from the same quarter a year earlier. 400 major commercial decisions were granted, down 14% from the same quarter a year earlier and 1,300 minor commercial decisions were granted, down 8% from the same quarter a year earlier (Live Table P120B, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending September 2023, 7,800 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 6,900 (89%) were granted. The number of commercial decisions made was down 7% from the previous year, with the number granted down 8% from the year ending September 2022. 1,500 major commercial decisions were granted, down 9% from the previous year and 5,400 minor commercial decisions were granted, down 8% from the previous year.

Trends in the percentage of residential and commercial decisions granted

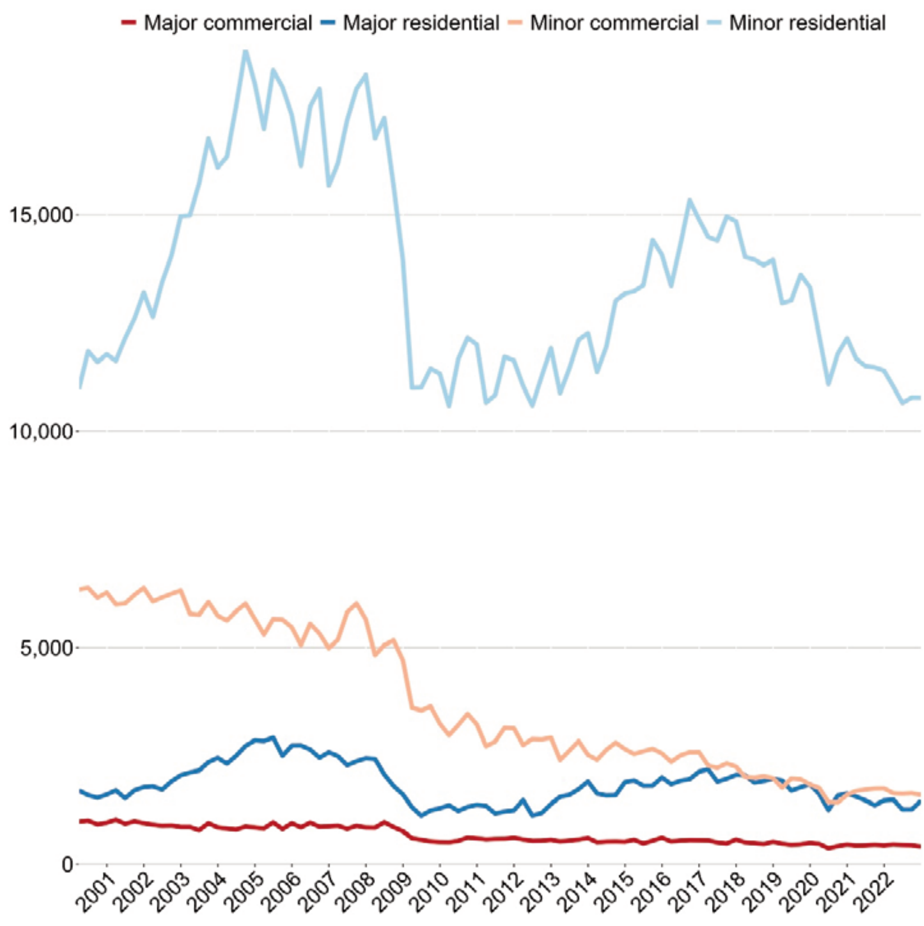
SEE Fig 7 BELOW

Householder developments

Householder developments are those developments to a residence which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and conservatories (see Definitions section of the Technical Notes).

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

England, quarter ending March 2000 to quarter ending September 2023



The number of decisions made on householder developments was 45,100 in the quarter ending September 2023, accounting for 53% of all decisions, down from 57% of all decisions made in the quarter ending September 2022. Authorities granted 89% of these applications and decided 91% within eight weeks or the agreed time (Reference Table 2, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending September 2023, 189,100 decisions were made on applications for householder developments, accounting for 54% of all decisions, down from 57% of all decisions made in the year ending September 2022. Authorities granted 89% of these applications and decided 90% 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 July to September 2023 there were 17 decisions, of which all 17 were granted and 14 were decided in time (Live Table MJPSI, PS2 Dashboard). Please note that figures are not collected on the CPS1/2 return and so don't include education developments by county councils.

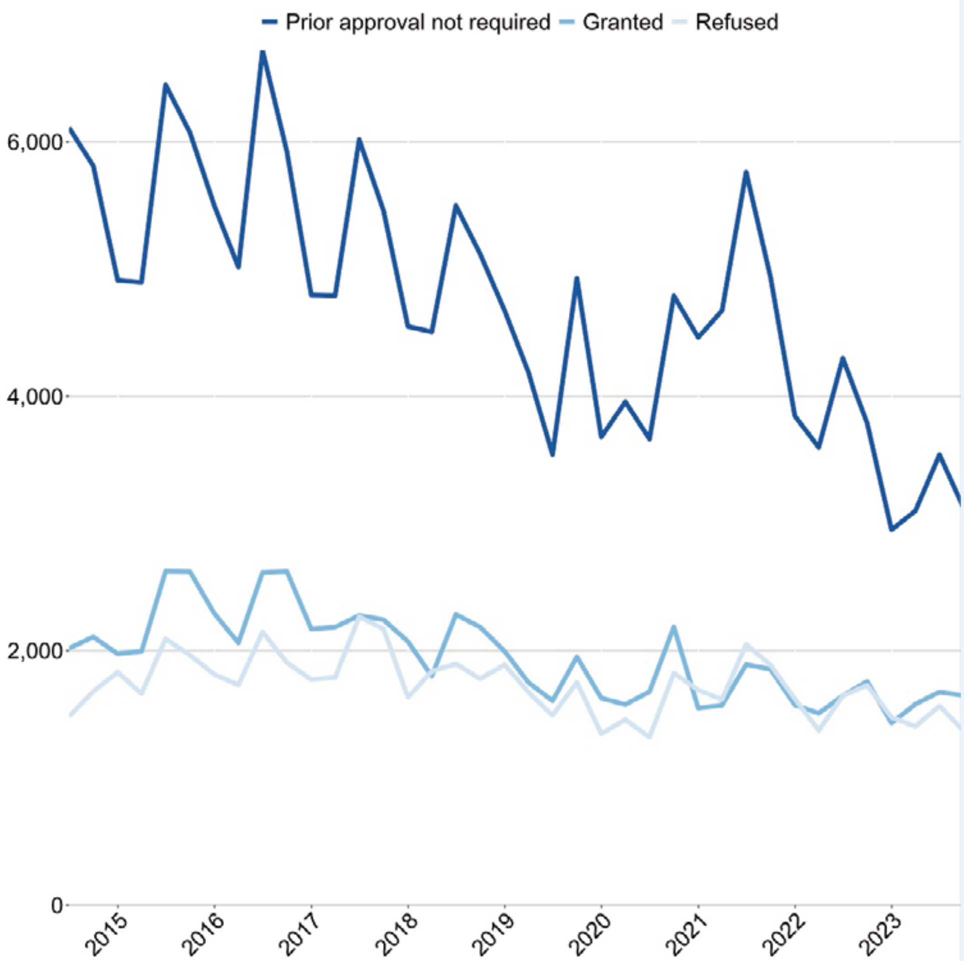
Permission in Principle/Technical Details consent decisions

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 July to September 2023, local planning authorities reported 127 PiP (minor housing-led developments) decisions, 12 TDC (minor housing-led developments) decisions and 2 TDC (major developments) decisions. The totals for the previous 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, PS2 dashboard).

Figure 8: Permitted development rights decided by district planning authorities

England, quarter ending June 2014 to year ending September 2023



Please note, different rights have come to into force and ceased to have effect since 2014, and therefore the annual figures are not directly comparable. See Live Table PDR1 and PDR2 for more information.

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 July to September 2023, 6,100 applications were reported, of which prior approval was not required for 3,100, permission was granted for 1,600, and 1,400 were refused. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate[footnote 6] of 78%. Large householder extension accounted for 58% of all PDR applications reported, with 27% relating to All others, 7% relating to Agricultural to residential, and 5% relating to Commercial Business and service to residential (Live Tables PDR1/PDR2).

In the quarter to September 2023, 800 permitted development right applications were made for changes to residential use, of which 500 (66%) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

Overall during the 38 quarters ending September 2023, district planning authorities reported 319,400 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 179,600 of them prior approval was not required, 74,200 were granted and 65,600 were refused (Live Table PDR2).