

# A decrease of six per cent in the overall number of residential decisions granted

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

**OVERVIEW**

Between July and September 2019, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 106,500 applications for planning permission, down four per cent on the corresponding quarter of 2018;
- granted 90,600 decisions, down three per cent from the same quarter in 2018; this is equivalent to 88 per cent of decisions, down from 89 per cent in the same quarter of 2018;
- decided 87 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, down from 88 per cent in the same quarter in 2018;
- granted 11,500 residential applications, down three per cent on a year earlier: 1,400 for major developments and 10,000 for minors;
- granted 2,200 applications for commercial developments, down four per cent on a year earlier.

The chart (Figure 1) shows trends in numbers of applications received, decided and granted since 2004-05.

In the year ending September 2019, district level planning authorities:

- granted 352,400 decisions, down four per cent on the year ending September 2018; and
- granted 45,500 decisions on residential developments, of which 6,000 were for major developments and 39,500 were for minors, down by six and five per cent respectively on the year ending September 2018. This is equivalent to a decrease of six per cent in the overall number of residential decisions granted.

**Planning applications**

During July to September 2019, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 106,500 applications for planning permission, down four per cent on the corresponding quarter in 2018. In the year ending September 2019, authorities received 440,100 planning applications, down four per cent on the year ending September 2018

**Planning decisions**

Authorities reported 103,100 decisions on planning applications in July to September 2019, a decrease of two per cent on the 105,400 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending September 2019, authorities decided 400,900 planning applications, down four per cent on the number in the year ending September 2018

**Applications granted**

During July to September 2019, authorities granted 90,600 decisions, down three per cent on the same quarter in 2018. Authorities granted 88 per cent of all decisions, down one percentage point from the September quarter of 2018. Overall, 83 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted, unchanged from the quarter ending September.

Over the 12 months to September 2019,

352,400 decisions were granted, down four per cent on the figure for the year to September 2018

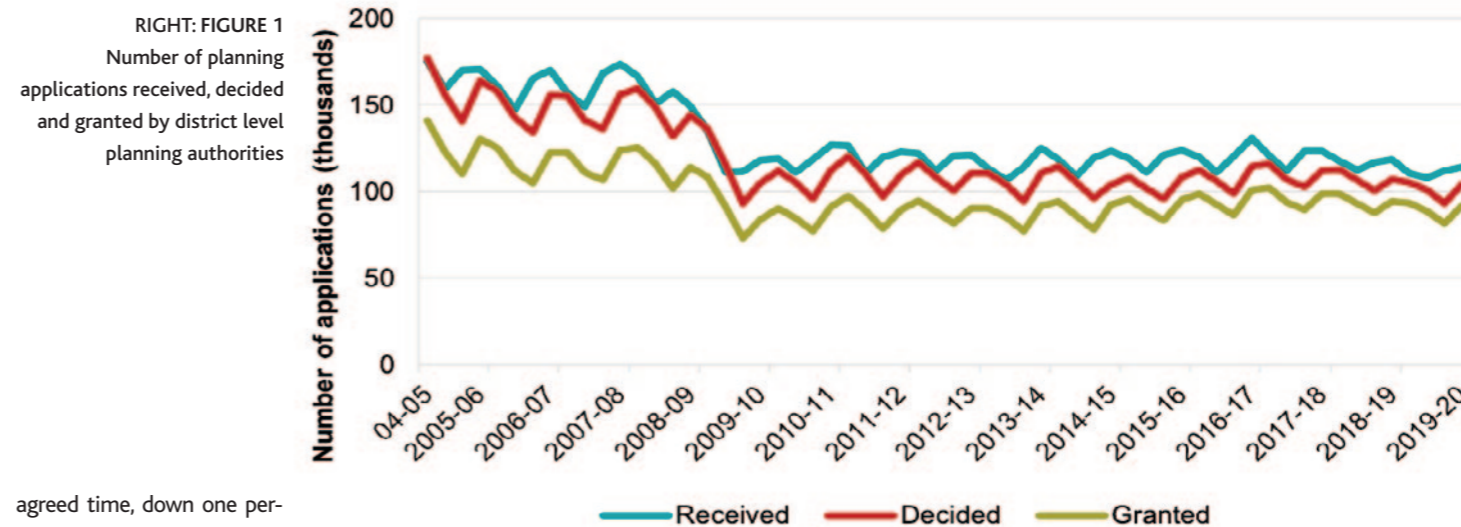
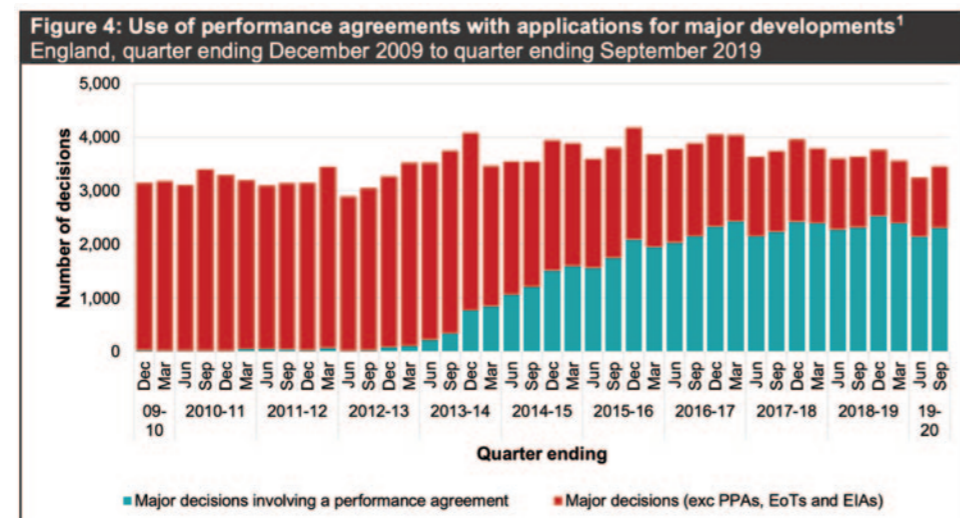
**Historical context**

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.

**Speed of decisions**

- In July to September 2019, 87 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 the same quarter, 84 per cent of minor applications were decided within eight weeks or the



Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority. All tables and figures can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/rt8z84g> Source: MHCLG/ONS

agreed time, down one percentage point from a year earlier.

- Also in the same quarter, 89 per cent of other applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, down one percentage point from a year earlier.

**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 July to September 2019 involving a planning agreement, compared with 40 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.

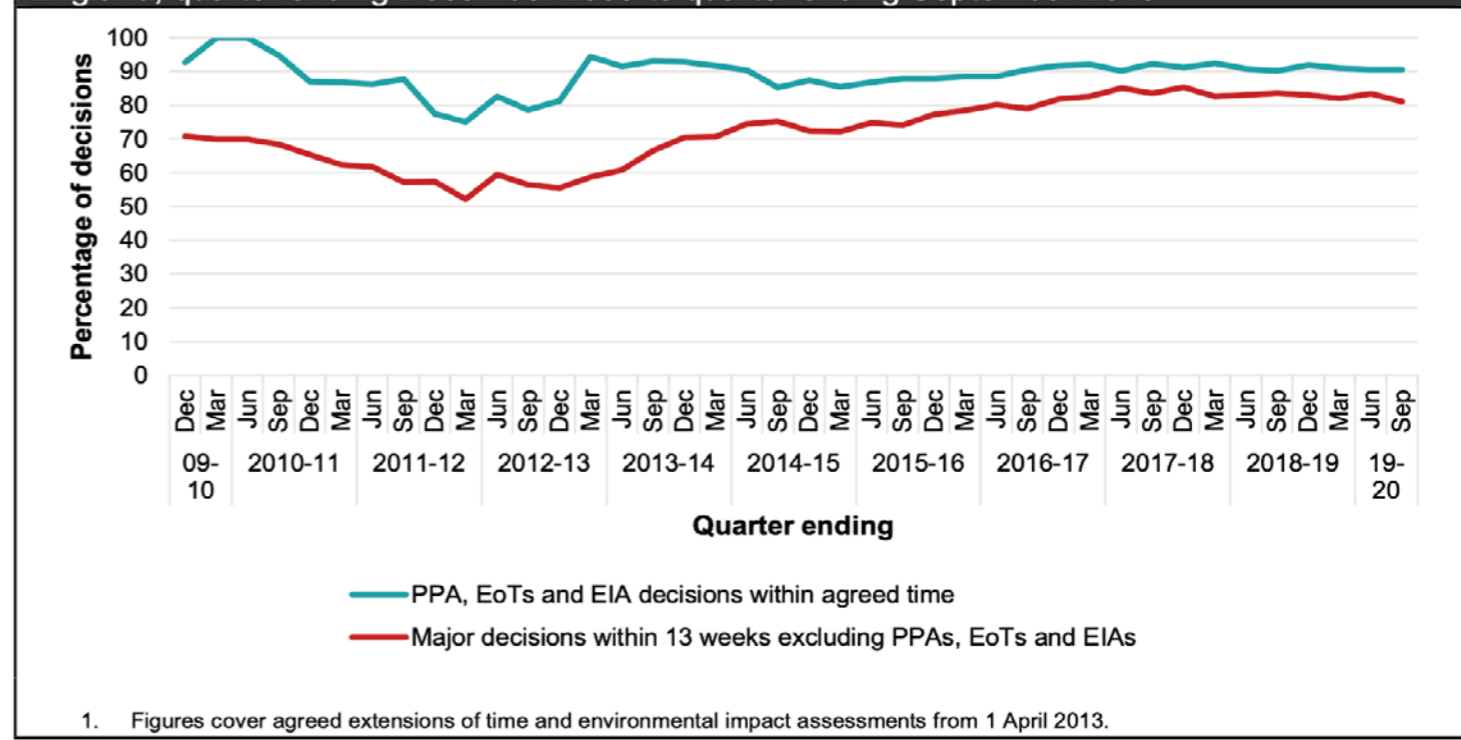
Figure 5 and Reference Table 2 show that in the quarter to September 2019, 91 per cent of major development decisions involving performance agree-

ments were made on time. In comparison, 81 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 designa- >>>

**Figure 5: Percentage of major development decisions made within time¹ England, quarter ending December 2009 to quarter ending September 2019**



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



>>> tion 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.

**Residential decisions**

In July to September 2019, 15,400 decisions were made on applications for residential5 developments, of which 11,500 (74 per cent) were granted. The number of residential decisions made decreased by two per cent from the September quarter of 2018, with the number granted dropping three per cent.

The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by ten per cent to 1,400, and the number of minor residential decisions granted decreased by two per cent, to 10,000 (Live Table P120A, 'Details of district matters decisions' table and 'Comparison of local authorities' table). In the year ending September 2019, authorities granted 6,000 major and 39,500 minor residential applications, down by six and five per cent respectively on the year ending September 2018 (Live Table P120A and 'Comparison between local authorities' table). This is equivalent to a decrease of six per cent in the overall number of residential decisions granted.

**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.6 The latest provisional figures show that permission for 365,200 homes was given in the year to 30 September 2019, down three per cent from the 377,700 homes granted permission in the year to

30 September 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.

**Commercial decisions**

In July to September 2019, 2,400 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 2,200 (91 per cent) were granted. The total number of commercial decisions granted decreased by four per cent on the same quarter of 2018. In the year ending September 2019, 8,800 applications for commercial developments were granted, down seven per cent on the year ending September 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 then stabilised at around 2,100 per year for major and 10,000 per year for minor commercial decisions, but have undergone 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 numbers of residential and commercial decisions**

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 52,800 in the quarter ending September 2019, accounting for 51 per cent of all decisions, down three per cent from the 54,500 decisions made in the quarter ending September 2018. Authorities granted 91 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**

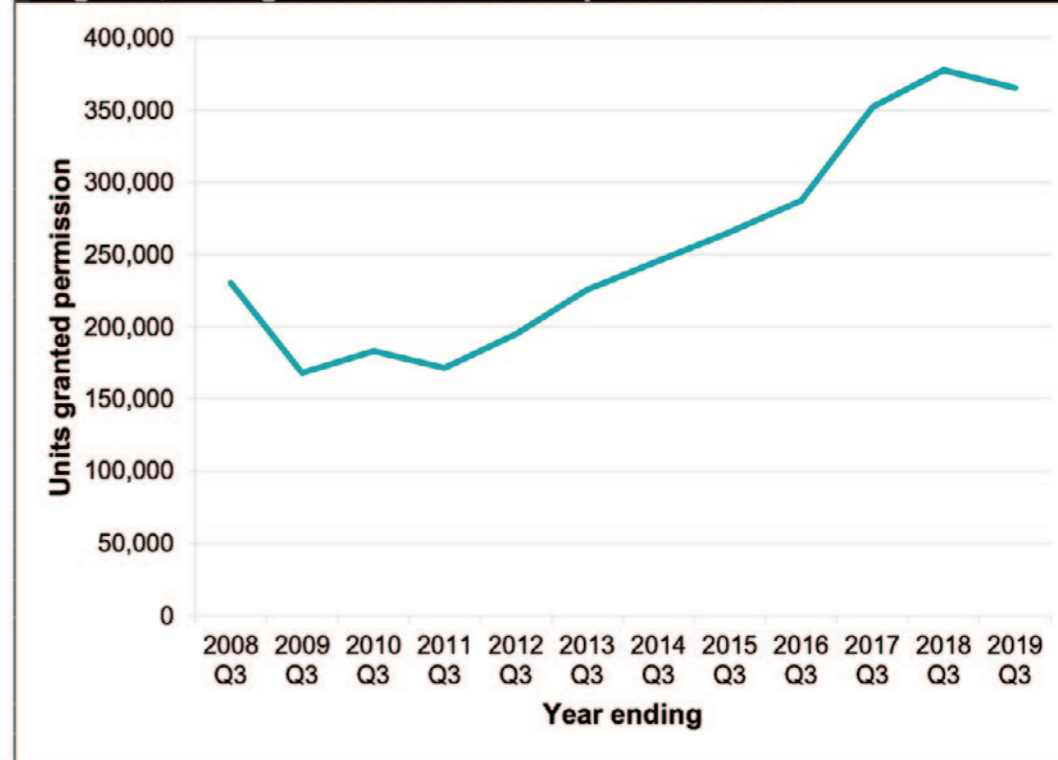
Planning permission for some types of development has been granted nationally through legislation, and the resulting rights are known as 'permitted development rights'. In some cases, if the legislation is complied with, developments can go ahead without the requirement to notify the local planning authority 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). A local

**Table 3 - Number of housing units granted planning permission**

Rolling annual totals	
Annual total to:	Number
2008 Q3	230,500
2009 Q3	168,200
2010 Q3	183,200
2011 Q3	171,700
2012 Q3	195,200
2013 Q3	226,000
2014 Q3	246,000
2015 Q3	265,500
2016 Q3	287,200
2017 Q3	352,100
2018 Q3 <sup>R</sup>	377,700
2019 Q3 <sup>P</sup>	365,200

Source: Glenigan planning permission data: snapshot as at 4 November 2019  
P Provisional  
R Revised

**Figure 6: Number of housing units granted planning permission, England, rolling annual totals to September 2019<sup>P</sup>**



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>.

planning authority is able to withdraw specific permitted development rights across a defined geographical area, bringing these types of development within the control of the main planning process9.

The results for the latest quarter for which they have been collected (July to September 2019) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 8,600 applications reported in the July to September quarter of 2019, prior approval was not required for 4,900 and permission was granted for 1,900 and refused for 1,800. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate of 80 per cent. Larger householder extensions accounted for 74 per cent of applications (6,300), with seven per cent relating to agricultural to residential changes and five per cent to office to residential changes. 'All other' permitted development rights, accounted for 12 per cent of applications, down from 13 per cent a year earlier.

Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 6,900 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 five per cent in the reported total number of PDR applications between July to September 2018 and

July to September 2019:

- larger householder extensions decreased by five per cent;
- office to residential changes decreased by two per cent;
- agricultural to residential changes increased by 15 per cent; and
- 'all other' permitted development rights decreased by 15 per cent. Figures for the total number of permitted development right applications made for changes to residential use for quarters from July to September 2014 are given in the quarterly worksheets in Live Table PDR1. These show that a total of 1,300 applications for changes to residential use were reported in July to September 2019, of which 900 (70 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

Overall during the twenty-two quarters ending September 2019, district planning authorities reported 203,100 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 115,400 (57 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 47,400 (23 per cent) were granted and 40,300 (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 'deter-

mination 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 34,900 in 2018/19. 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 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 decreases of 20 per cent in 2017/18 and two per cent in 2018/19. ■

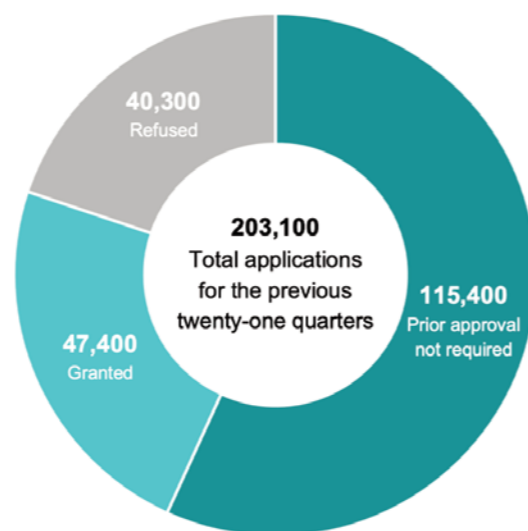


FIG 9: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities. England: 22 quarters from April 2014 to September 2019