

Numbers of applications and decisions continue to drop

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: planning applications in England between April to June 2022

OVERVIEW

Between April to June 2022, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 106,800 applications for planning permission, down 17 per cent from the corresponding quarter of 2021;
- granted 87,600 decisions, down 12 per cent from the same quarter in 2021; this is equivalent to 88 per cent of decisions, down one percentage point from the same quarter of 2021;
- decided 86 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, down one percentage point from the same quarter in 2021;
- granted 8,700 residential applications, down nine per cent on a year earlier; 1,000 for major developments and 7,700 for minor developments;
- granted 1,800 applications for commercial developments, down five per cent on a year earlier.
- decided 58,000 householder development applications, down 16 per cent on a year earlier.

This accounted for 58 per cent of all decisions, down from 62 per cent a year earlier. In the year ending June 2022, district level planning authorities:

- granted 362,000 decisions, up three per cent on the year ending June 2021; and
- granted 37,100 decisions on residential developments, of which 4,600 were for major developments and 32,500 were for minor developments, down by 11 and five per cent respectively on the year ending June 2021. This is equivalent to a decrease of six per cent in the overall number of residential decisions granted.

Planning applications

During April to June 2022, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 106,800 applications for planning permission, down 17 per cent from the corresponding quarter in 2021. In the year ending June 2022, authorities received 437,700 planning applications, down seven per cent on the year ending June 2021.

Planning decisions

Authorities reported 99,900 decisions on planning applications in April to June 2022, a decrease of 11 per cent on the 111,700 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending June 2022, authorities decided 412,000 planning applications, up three per cent on the number in the year ending June 2021.

Applications granted

During April to June 2022, authorities granted 87,600 decisions, down 12 per cent on the same quarter in 2021. Authorities granted 88 per cent of all decisions, down one percentage point from the June quarter of 2021 (Live Tables P120/P133). Overall, 82 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted, unchanged from the quarter ending June 2021 (PS2 development types dashboard). Over the 12 months to June 2022, 362,000 decisions were granted, up three per cent on the figure for the year to June 2021.

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 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, followed by a period of stability leading to 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.

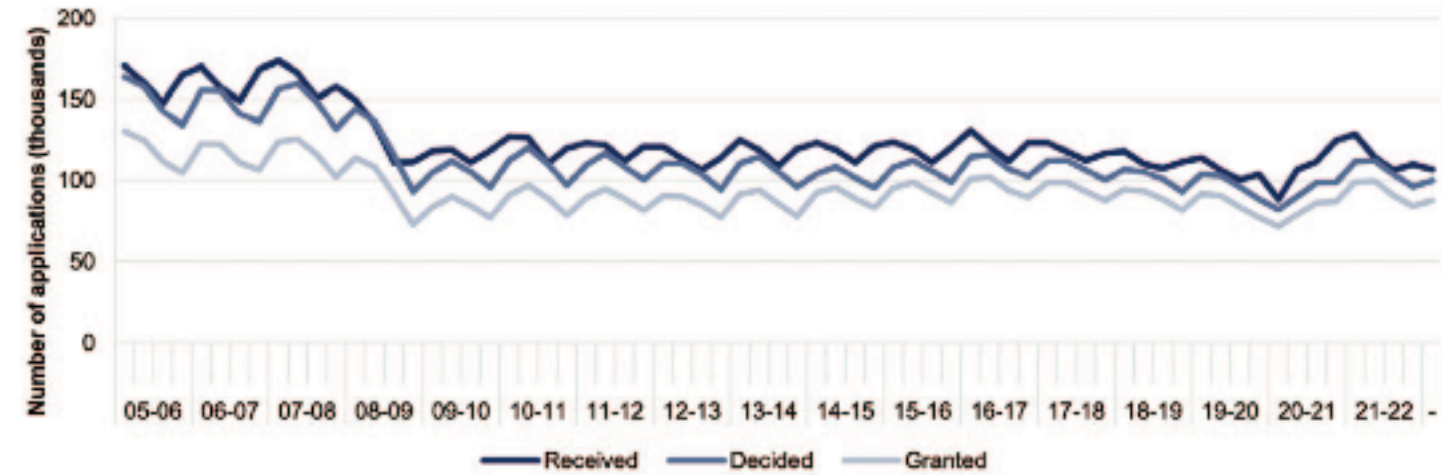
Regional breakdowns

Table 2 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 81 per cent in London to 94 per cent in the North East.

Speed of decisions

In April to June 2022, 86 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time⁵, down one percentage point from the same quarter a year earlier.

Figure 1: Number of planning applications received, decided and granted England, quarter ending June 2005 to quarter ending June 2022



Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority. All tables and figures can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycya4ymv> Source: DLUHC/ONS

- In the same quarter, 82 per cent of minor applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, up one percentage point from a year earlier.
- Also in the same quarter, 87 per cent of other applications were decided within eight weeks or the agreed time, up one percentage point from a year earlier.

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, 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 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 minor developments (11 to 100 per cent) and other developments (40 to 100 per cent).

Use of performance agreements

Table 4 summarises the recent use of performance agreements⁶. It shows that they are more commonly used for major developments than minor or other developments, with 74 per cent of major

decisions made during April to June 2022 involving a planning agreement, compared with 50 per cent of minor decisions, 37 per cent of other decisions and 41 per cent of all decisions (also shown in Reference Table 2). Figure 4 shows, from 2010, numbers of decisions on major developments made involving a performance agreement, compared with numbers of major developments without a performance agreement. The underlying historical figures are available in the PS2 development type dashboard. Notwithstanding definitional changes, there has been a marked increase in the use of agreements since early 2013. This >>>

Figure 3: Speed of decision-making, by type of development Local planning authorities, quarter ending June 2022

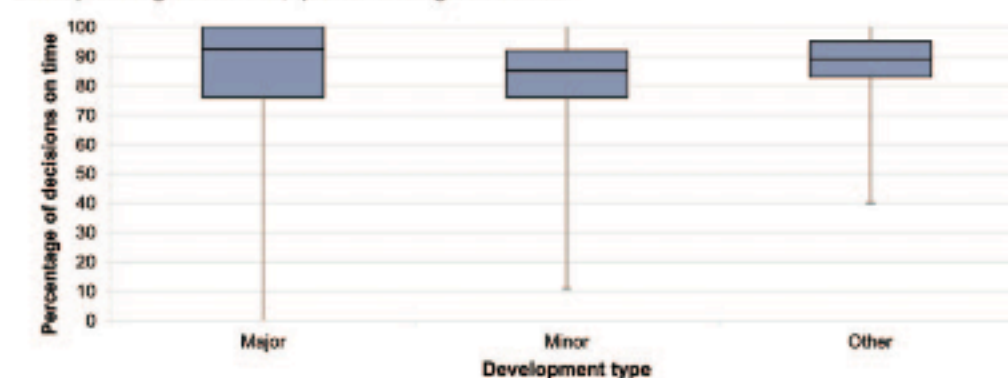
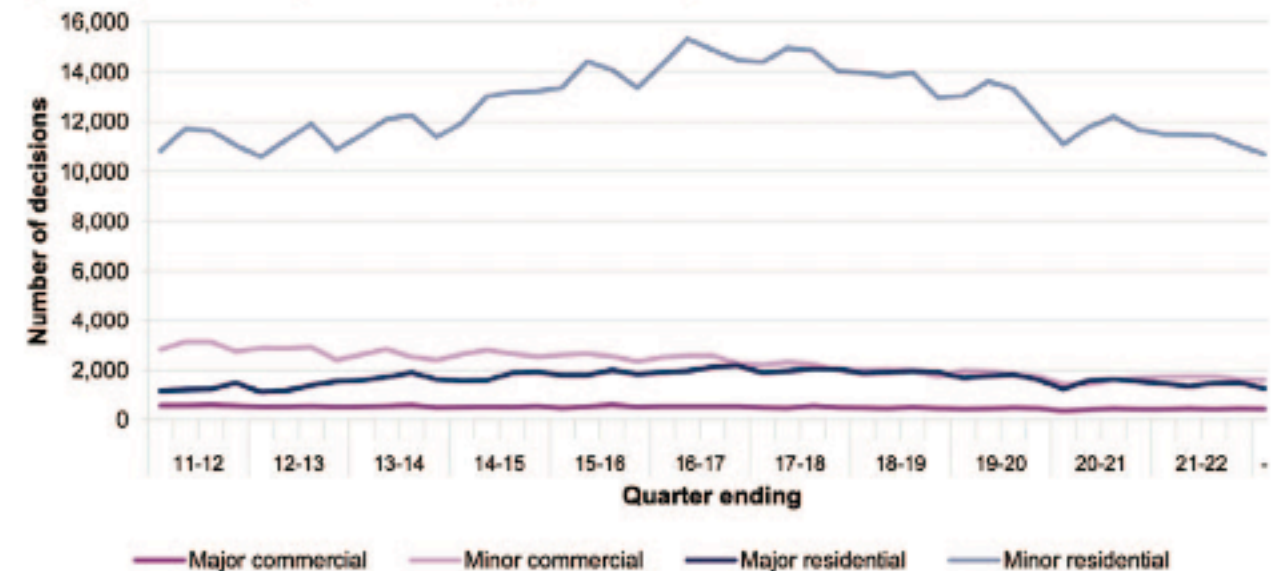


Figure 7: Number of planning applications decided by district authorities, by type of development England, quarter ending June 2011 to quarter ending June 2022



>>> longer upward trend has been driven by both the additional scope for recording them and their additional use.

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' (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 non-major 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 April to June 2022, 12,000 decisions were made on applications for residential 7 developments, of which 8,700 (73 per cent) were granted. The number of residential decisions made decreased by eight per cent from the June quarter of 2021, with the number granted decreasing by nine per cent. The number of major residential decisions granted decreased by 16 per cent to 1,000, and the number of minor residential decisions granted

decreased by eight per cent, to 7,700 (Live Table P120A, and the PS2 development type dashboard).

In the year ending June 2022, authorities granted 4,600 major and 32,500 minor residential applications, down by 11 per cent and five per cent respectively on the year ending June 2021 (Live Table P120A and the PS2 local planning authorities dashboard). 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, Glenigan.8 The latest provisional figures show that permission for 280,000 homes was given in the year to 30 June 2022, down 16 per cent from the 334,000 homes granted permission in the year to 30 June 2021.

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. These figures are provided here to give contextual information to users and have not been designated as National Statistics.

Commercial decisions

In April to June 2022, 2,100 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 1,800 (89 per cent) were granted. The total number of commercial decisions granted decreased by five per cent on the same quarter of 2021. In the year ending June 2022, 7,700 applications for commercial developments were granted,

up four per cent on the year ending June 2021.

Trends in numbers of residential and commercial decisions

Historically, numbers of residential decisions (particularly for minor decisions) then increased from 2012, before decreasing since about 2018 (major decisions) and 2019 (minor decisions).

Numbers of commercial decisions 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.

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 major developments and about 75 per cent for minor developments) and have stabilised since then, at just over 80 per cent for major developments and just under 75 per cent for minor developments. The percentages of major and minor commercial decisions granted increased steadily, from 89 and 85 per cent respectively in 2007/08, to 94 and 91 per cent respectively in 2014/15, and have both been largely stable since then.

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 of the Technical Notes). The number of decisions made on householder developments was 58,000 in the quarter ending June 2022, accounting for 58 per cent of all decisions, down from 62 per cent of all decisions made in the quarter ending June 2021.

FIG 9: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities, England, thirty-three quarters from April 2014 to June 2022



Authorities granted 90 per cent of these applications and decided 88 per cent within eight weeks or the agreed time.

Permission in Principle/Technical Details consent decisions

Since 16 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 Detail Consent (TDC) for development on these sites. In addition, since 1 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 and a determination period of five weeks applies as it is minor development. Extensions of time may be agreed.

TDC applications have a 10-week determination period for major development and a five-week determination period for minor development. Extensions of time may be agreed and where it is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, the 16-week determination period applies.

Major public service infrastructure development decisions

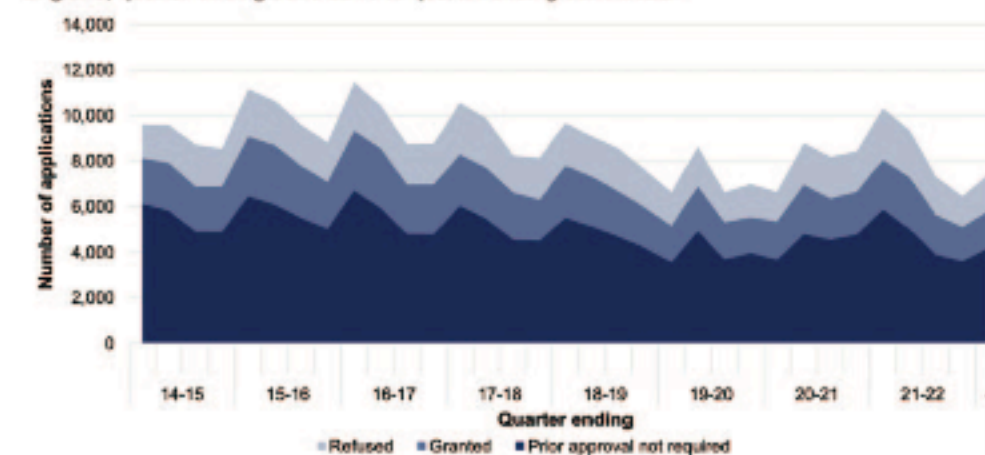
Since 1 August 2021, major public service infrastructure developments – broadly defined as major developments (excluding Environmental Impact Assessments) for schools, hospitals and criminal justice accommodation – have been subject to an accelerated decision-making timetable under which they are to be determined within 10 weeks instead of falling within the normal 13-week determination period.

Separate figures on major public service infrastructure development decisions have been collected on the quarterly PS2 return with effect from 1 October 2021. They are provided at local planning authority level in Live Table MJPSI. In summary, during October to December 2021, local planning authorities reported five such decisions, of which four were granted and all five were decided within 10 weeks or the agreed time. During January to March 2022 there were eight decisions, of which all eight were granted and seven were decided in time. During April to June 2022 there were 10 decisions, of which all 10 were granted and eight were decided in time.

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 of the Technical Notes). A local planning authority can withdraw specific permitted development rights across a defined geographical area, bringing these types of development within the control of the main planning process 13.

Figure 10: Applications for determination and prior approvals for permitted development rights decided by district planning authorities, England, quarter ending June 2014 to quarter ending June 2022



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The results for the latest quarter for which they have been collected (April to June 2022) are included in Live Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). Of the 7,400 applications reported in the April to June quarter of 2022, prior approval was not required for 4,200 and permission was granted for 1,600 and refused for 1,600. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate of 78 per cent. Larger householder extensions accounted for 69 per cent of applications (5,100), with six per cent relating to change of use from agricultural to residential and 18 per cent relating to 'All other' permitted development rights.

Taking i) granted applications and ii) those for which prior approval was not required together, 5,800 applications were approved without having to go through the full planning process, down 28 per cent from a year earlier. Within the 28 per cent decrease in the reported total number of PDR applications between April to June 2021 and April to June 2022:

- larger householder extensions decreased by 29 per cent;
- change of use from agricultural to residential decreased by 12 per cent; and

'all other' permitted development rights decreased by 18 per cent.

Part of the decrease in the overall total between April to June 2021 and April to June 2022 is due to applications under the PDR for change of use from office to residential no longer being able to be submitted after 31 July 2021: 600 such applications were reported for the April to June 2021 quarter.

A new PDR for Commercial, business and service to residential use was created with effect from 1 August 2021. Figures for this were collected for the first time in October to December 2021, when – to quote unrounded figures – 138 applications were recorded. Of these, prior approval was not required for 17, 64 were granted and 57 were refused. In January to March 2022, 196 applications were recorded, of which prior approval was not required for 18, 113 were granted, and 65 were refused. In April to June 2022, 231 applications were recorded, of which prior approval was not required for 42, 119 were granted, and 70 were refused.

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 800 applications for changes to residential use were reported in April to June 2022, of which 500 (63 per cent) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

Overall during the thirty-three quarters ending June 2022, district planning authorities reported 289,800 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 163,400 (56 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 67,500 (23 per cent) were granted and 58,900 (20 per cent) were refused (Figure 9).