

Planning decisions increase four per cent over the year

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs

OVERVIEW

Between July and September 2015, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 120,400 applications for planning permission, up one per cent from 118,700 in the corresponding quarter of 2014;
- granted 98,700 decisions, up three per cent from the same quarter in 2014;
- this is equivalent to 88 per cent of decisions, unchanged from the same quarter of 2014;
- decided 79 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, up from 78 per cent a year earlier; and
- granted 12,200 residential applications, up 12 per cent on a year earlier.

In the year ending September 2015, district level planning authorities:

- granted 366,000 decisions, up four per cent from

the figure for the year ending September 2014;

- 46,200 of the granted decisions were for residential developments: 5,800 for major developments and 40,300 for minors.

Of 10,800 applications received for prior approval for permitted development rights during July to September 2015:

- 8,800 were approved without having to go through the full planning process and 2,000 were refused. The number of applications received for prior approval was 36,400 in 2014/15 and 21,900 in the first two quarters of 2015/16, up from 15,700 in 2013/14 and 7,300 in 2012/13.

Planning applications During July to September 2015, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 120,400 applications for planning permission, up one per cent from 118,700 in the corresponding quarter in 2014. In

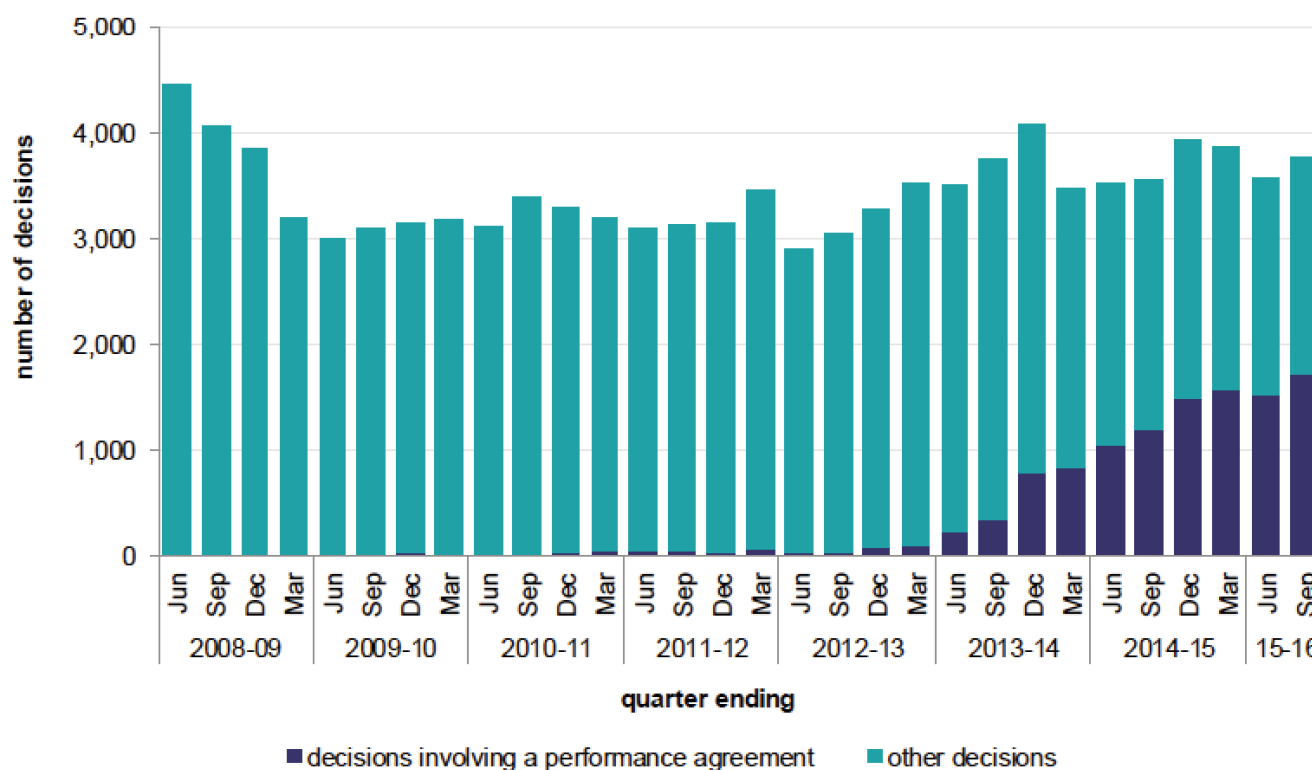
the year ending September 2015, authorities received 476,000 planning applications, an increase of one per cent compared to the year ending September 2014. (Table P120 and Table 1) Planning decisions Authorities reported 112,200 decisions on planning applications in July to September 2015, an increase of three per cent on 108,500 decisions in the same quarter of the previous year. In the year ending September 2015, authorities decided 417,400 planning applications, an increase of one per cent compared to the year ending September 2014. (Table P120 and Table 1)

Applications granted During July to September 2015

Authorities granted 98,700 permissions, up three per cent from the same quarter in 2014.

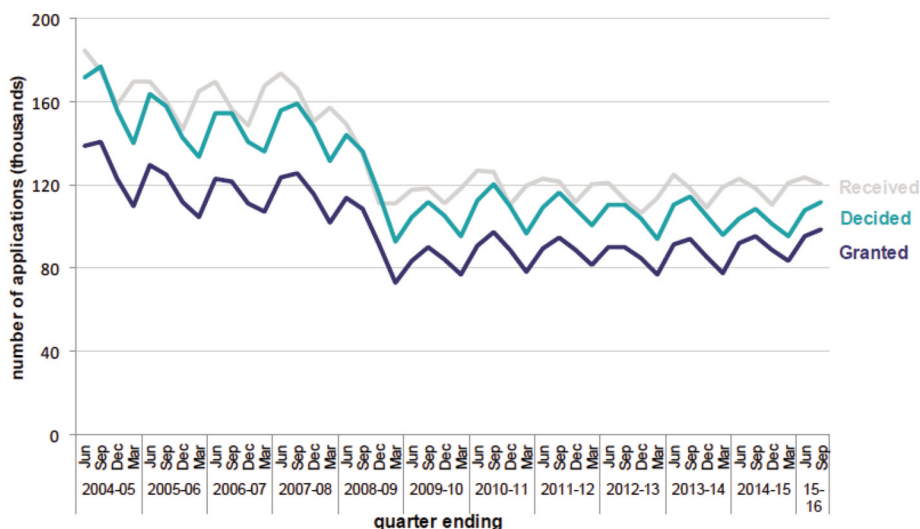
Authorities granted 88 per cent of all decisions,

Figure 2: Use of performance agreements with applications for major developments¹ England, quarter ending June 2008 to quarter ending September 2015



¹ Figures cover planning performance agreements from April 2008 and agreed extensions of time and environmental impact assessments from 1 April 2013.

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



unchanged on the September quarter 2014. Overall, 84 per cent of major and minor decisions were granted. The percentage of decisions granted varied widely between local planning authorities, ranging from 28 to 100 per cent for major developments, 54 to 100 per cent for minor developments and 53 to 100 per cent for other developments. (Tables P120/P131) Over the 12 months to September 2015, 366,000 applications were granted, up four per cent from the year to September 2014. Authorities granted 88 per cent of all decisions in the year to September 2015, unchanged from the year to September 2014.

Since 2005, 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 and troughs in the Winter, there was a clear downward trend during the 2008 economic downturn, with figures remaining broadly level since then.

Looked at another way, the number of applications received in the year to September 2015 was 476,000, as stated above, up one per cent on the year to September 2014 (Table P120/P132 and Table 1). This was still below the peak of 689,000 in 2004/05.

Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2015, Table 131 can be found with all tables and figures here: <https://goo.gl/PS3Q24> Source: DCLG/ONS

Speed of decisions

In July to September 2015, 79 per cent of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs), Extensions of Time (EoTs) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), compared with 78 per cent in the September quarter 2014.

In the September quarter 2015, 74 per cent of minor applications and 83 per cent of other applications were decided within 8 weeks or the agreed time. The percentage of decisions made in time varied widely between local planning authorities, ranging from 29 to 100 per cent for major developments, 12 to 100 per cent for minor developments and 16 to 100 per cent for other

developments. These figures include applications involving PPAs, EoTs and EIAs made for minor developments and some 'other' developments that were collected for the first time for the June quarter 2014, and so are not directly comparable with figures before then.

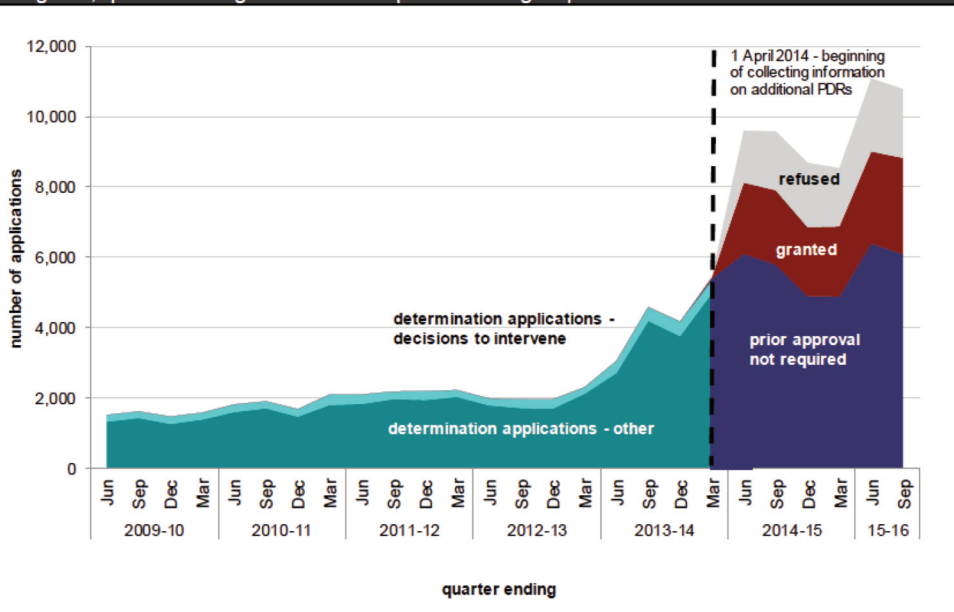
Section 1 of the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 amended the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to allow planning applications to be submitted directly to the Secretary of State if a local planning authority has been designated on the basis of under-performance. One of the two criteria set out in Improving planning performance: criteria for designation (revised 2015) relates to the speed of decision-making. Because deciding an application on time can include the use of a performance agreement, the calculation of the proportion of decisions made within the agreed time was changed to include PPAs from April 2008 for major and some 'other' developments, and to also include agreed EoTs and EIAs from April 2013.

Applications since April 2014 for minor developments and for changes of use, householder developments and advertisements can now also be recorded as having included a performance agreement. The other criterion relates to the quality of decision-making, as measured by the percentage of appeals that are successful, for which figures are published.

Notwithstanding these definitional changes, there has been a marked increase in the use of agreements since early 2013, although this has slowed down in recent quarters. In reality this has been driven by both the additional scope for recording them and their additional use.

The proportion of major decisions subject to an agreement increased to 46 per cent during the July to September 2015 quarter, from 6 per cent

Figure 5: Applications for determination and prior approvals for permitted development rights decided by district planning authorities England, quarter ending June 2009 to quarter ending September 2015



>>> in the April to June quarter of 2013 (Table 131). Performance of individual district level local planning authorities Table P151a presents data on the performance of district level local planning authorities against the 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, it gives detailed figures for the time taken for major decisions to be made over the eight most recent quarters.

Similarly, Table P152a, presents data on the performance of district level local planning authorities against the 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. Table P153 presents data for the time taken by district level local planning authorities for decisions on minor and other developments (defined as changes of use and householder developments) to be made over the eight most recent quarters.

Applications for residential developments

In July to September 2015, there were 16,200 decisions on applications for residential developments, an increase of eleven per cent compared with September quarter 2014. Of these, 12,200 residential applications were granted, up twelve per cent from the September quarter 2014.

The number of major residential decisions increased by thirteen per cent from July to September 2014 to July to September 2015 - to 1,800 - while the number of minor residential decisions increased by eleven per cent, to 14,400.

Authorities granted 78 per cent of major residential applications, down from 79 per cent in the September quarter 2014, deciding 74 per cent of them within 13 weeks or the agreed time. Authorities granted 75 per cent of decisions on minor residential applications, deciding 70 per cent of them within 8 weeks or the agreed time. (Tables P123 and P135). In the year ending September 2015, authorities granted 5,800 major and 40,300 minor residential applications, with 79 and 74 per cent of applications being granted respectively (Table P136)

Householder developments

Householder developments are those developments to a house which require planning permission such as extensions, loft conversions and conservatories (more details are in the Definitions section). The number of decisions on householder developments increased by six per cent from 53,200 decisions in the September quarter 2014 to 56,200 decisions in the corresponding quarter in 2015, when they accounted for 50 per cent of all decisions. Authorities granted 90 per cent of these applications and decided 85 per cent within 8 weeks or the agreed time. (Table P123).

Prior approvals for permitted developments

Following the creation in May 2013 of some additional permitted development right categories (see the Definitions section) and consultation with local authorities, the Department increased the level of detailed information on prior approvals for permitted developments collected on the PS1 return with effect from 1 April 2014.

The results for the sixth quarter for which they have been collected (July to September 2015) are given in Tables PDR1 (local authority level figures) and PDR2 (England totals). They show that of the 10,800 applications reported in the July to September quarter of 2015, prior approval was not required for 6,100 applications, and that permission was granted for 2,700 applications and refused for 2,000.

This means that 8,800 applications were approved without having to go through the full planning process: those for which prior approval was not required, and those for which permission was granted. This resulted in an overall acceptance rate of 82 per cent. 72 per cent of applications (7,800) related to larger householder extensions, with 9 per cent relating to agricultural to residential changes and 8 per cent relating to office to residential changes. 5 The acceptance rate is defined as the number of applications for which prior approval was not required, or for which permission was granted, as a percentage of the total number of applications.

The total number of applications reported during July to September 2015 was thirteen per cent greater than in July to September 2014. Within this total, the number of granted applications increased by 30 per cent, the number of refusals increased by 17 per cent and the number of cases where prior approval was not required increased by five per cent.

Within the overall increase of thirteen per cent

RIGHT: Applications for prior approvals for permitted development rights reported by district planning authorities – England, six quarters to June 2015

in the reported number of applications between July to September 2014 and July to September 2015, those for larger householder extensions increased by twelve per cent; office to residential changes dropped by sixteen per cent; and agricultural to residential and 'All others' both increased by 37 per cent.

The overall acceptance rate for the six quarters ending September 2015 was 82 per cent. The rate has decreased slightly during this period if each quarter is calculated separately, from 85 per cent in the first quarter to 82 per cent in the latest one, after dropping to 79 per cent in the third quarter. Overall during the six quarters ending September 2015, district planning authorities reported 58,300 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 34,200 (59 per cent) of them prior approval was not required, 13,500 (23 per cent) were granted and 10,700 (18 per cent) were refused (see figure below).

To put these recent figures into context, Table P128 and Figure 5 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 the new permitted development right categories in May 2013. Since then, there have been just over 36,000 applications in 2014/15 and almost 22,000 in the first two quarters of 2015/16.

The quarterly pattern since April 2014 reflects a combination of both: i) the introduction of new permitted development right categories in May 2013 and April 2015; and ii) the seasonal peaks and troughs that have previously been observed for planning applications, as shown in Figure 1 (Table PDR 2 and Figure 5). This significant increase in numbers of applications appears to be consistent with the 65 per cent increase in the number of dwellings added to the net housing supply through change of use between 2013/14 and 2014/15, as reported in the Net supply of housing in England: 2014 to 2015. ■

