

# Numbers of applications and decisions continue to fall sharply

Latest planning performance by English districts and London boroughs: planning applications in England between January to March 2023

## OVERVIEW

Between January to March 2023, district level planning authorities in England:

- received 96,000 applications for planning permission, down 13% from the same quarter a year earlier;
- decided 87,200 applications for planning permission, down 9% from the same quarter a year earlier;
- granted 75,000 decisions, down 11% 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 89% of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time, up three percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier;
- granted 8,400 residential applications, down 9% 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 46,600 householder development applications, down 14% from the same quarter a year earlier. This accounted for 53% of all decisions, down from 57% a year earlier.

In the year ending March 2023, district level planning authorities:

- granted 327,600 decisions, down 12% from the year ending March 2022; and
- granted 34,800 residential applications, down 8% from the year ending March 2022.



### Planning applications

During January to March 2023, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 96,000 applications for planning permission, down 13% from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending March 2023, authorities received 395,600 planning applications, down 14% from the year ending March 2022.

### Planning decisions

Authorities reported 87,200 decisions on planning applications in January to March 2023, down 9% from the same quarter a year earlier. In the year ending March 2023, authorities decided 376,900 planning applications, down 11% from the year ending March 2022.

### Applications granted

During January to March 2023, authorities granted 75,000 decisions, down 11% 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 March 2023, authorities granted 327,600 decisions, down 12% from the year ending March 2022. Authorities granted 87% of all decisions, down one percentage point from the year ending March 2022.

### Applications on hand

Authorities reported that they had 138,500 applications on hand as at 1 January 2023, down 7% from the same date a year earlier. This is 59% above the number of decisions made during the quarter. The corresponding figure for the same quarter a year earlier was 55%.

### Historical context

Figure 1 shows that, since about 2009-10, the numbers of applications received, decisions made and applications granted have each followed a

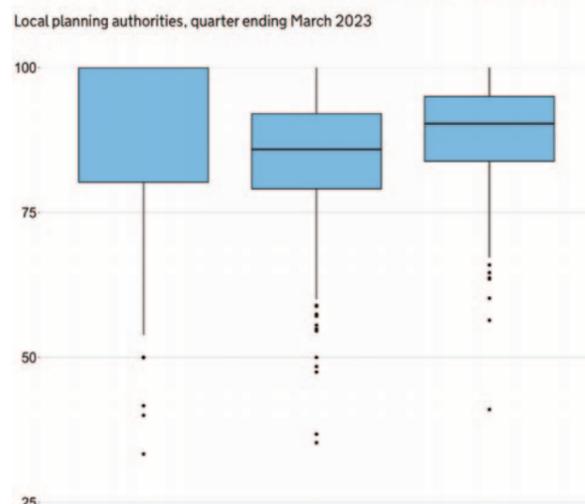
similar pattern. As well as the usual within-year pattern of peaks in the Summer (July to September quarter) and troughs in the Autumn and Winter (October to December and January to March quarters), there was a clear downward trend during the 2008 economic downturn, followed by a period of stability. 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, and since the peak there has been an ongoing 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 93% in the North East.

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

Figure 3: Percentage of planning decisions made in time, by type of development



Planning decisions by development type, speed of decision and local planning authority. All tables and figures can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/49tcvn4e>

Source: DLUHC/ONS

For the performance of individual planning authorities go to

<https://tinyurl.com/7hmdk28u>

varies widely by region, from -19% in the North East to -9% in London, and National Parks.

### 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 (73% to 100%).

### Speed of decisions

In January to March 2023, 89% of major applications were decided within 13 weeks or within the agreed time, up three percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier.

In the same quarter, 83% of minor applications were decided within 8 weeks or within the agreed time, up three percentage points from the same quarter a year earlier.

Also in the same quarter, 88% of other applications were decided within 8 weeks or within the agreed time, up three 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.

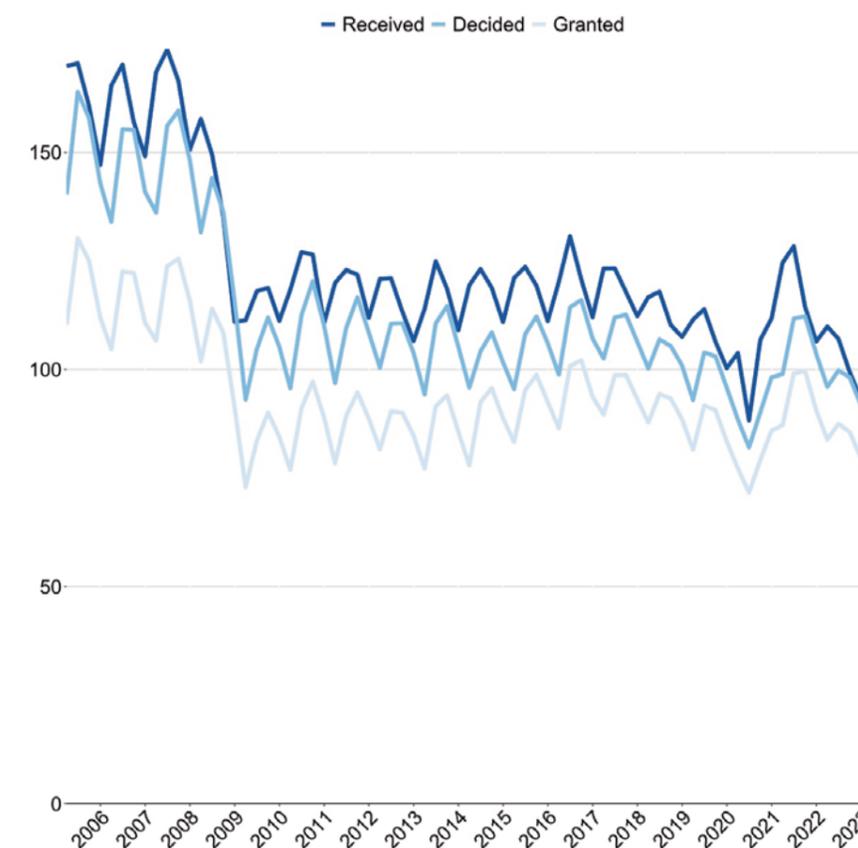
Figure 3 shows that range between the whiskers for the percentage of decisions made in time this quarter for major developments was (50% to 100%), for minor developments it was (60% to 100%) and for other developments it was (67% to 100%)

### Use of performance agreements

'Performance agreement' is an umbrella term used here to refer to Planning Performance

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

England, quarter ending June 2005 to quarter ending March 2023



Agreements, Extensions of Time and Environmental Impact Assessments. Between January to March 2023, 45% 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 75% of major decisions involving a planning agreement, compared with 54% of minor decisions and 41% 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.

### Performance of individual district level local planning authorities

The existing approach to measuring the perfor-

mance 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.

**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.

**Residential decisions**

In January to March 2023, 11,800 decisions were made on applications for residential developments, of which 8,400 (72%) were granted. The number of residential decisions made was down 6% from the same quarter a year earlier, with the number granted down 9% from the same quarter a year earlier. 1,000 major residential decisions were granted, down 16% from the same quarter a year earlier and 7,400 major residential decisions were granted, down 8% from the same quarter a year earlier (Live Table P120A, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending March 2023, 48,000 decisions were made on applications for residential developments, of which 34,800 (73%) were granted. The number of residential decisions made was down 6% from the previous year, with the number granted down 6% from the previous year. 4,200 major residential decisions were granted, down 11% from the previous year and 30,600 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 269,000 homes was given in the year to March 2023, down 11% from the 302,000 homes granted permission in the year to March 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.

**Commercial decisions**

In January to March 2023, 1,900 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments[footnote 5], 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 12% from the same quarter a year earlier and 1,300 minor commercial decisions were granted, down 9% from the same quarter a year earlier.

In the year ending March 2023, 8,100 decisions were made on applications for commercial developments, of which 7,200 (89%) were granted. The number of commercial decisions made was down 6% from the previous year, with the number granted down 7% from the year ending March 2022. 1,600 major commercial decisions were granted, down 5% from the previous year and 5,600 minor commercial decisions were granted, down 8% from the previous year.

**Trends in numbers of residential and commercial decisions**

Historically, numbers of residential decisions

dropped sharply during 2008 (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, to around 1,700 and 7,000 decisions per year respectively.

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

SEE Fig7 next page.

**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).

The number of decisions made on householder developments was 49,600 in the quarter ending December 2022, accounting for 54% of all decisions, down from 58% of all decisions made in the quarter

ending December 2021. Authorities granted 89% of these applications and decided 88% within 8 weeks or the agreed time (Reference Table 2, PS2 Dashboard).

In the year ending December 2022, 217,800 decisions were made on applications for householder developments, accounting for 56% of all decisions, down from 60% of all decisions made in the year ending December 2021. Authorities granted 90% of these applications and decided 88% within 8 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 October to December 2022 there were 13 decisions, of which all 13 were granted and 13 were decided in time

**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 October to December 2022, local planning authorities reported 86 PiP (minor housing-led developments) decisions, 14 TDC (minor housing-led developments) decisions and zero TDC (major developments) decisions. The totals for the previous quarters have been similar.

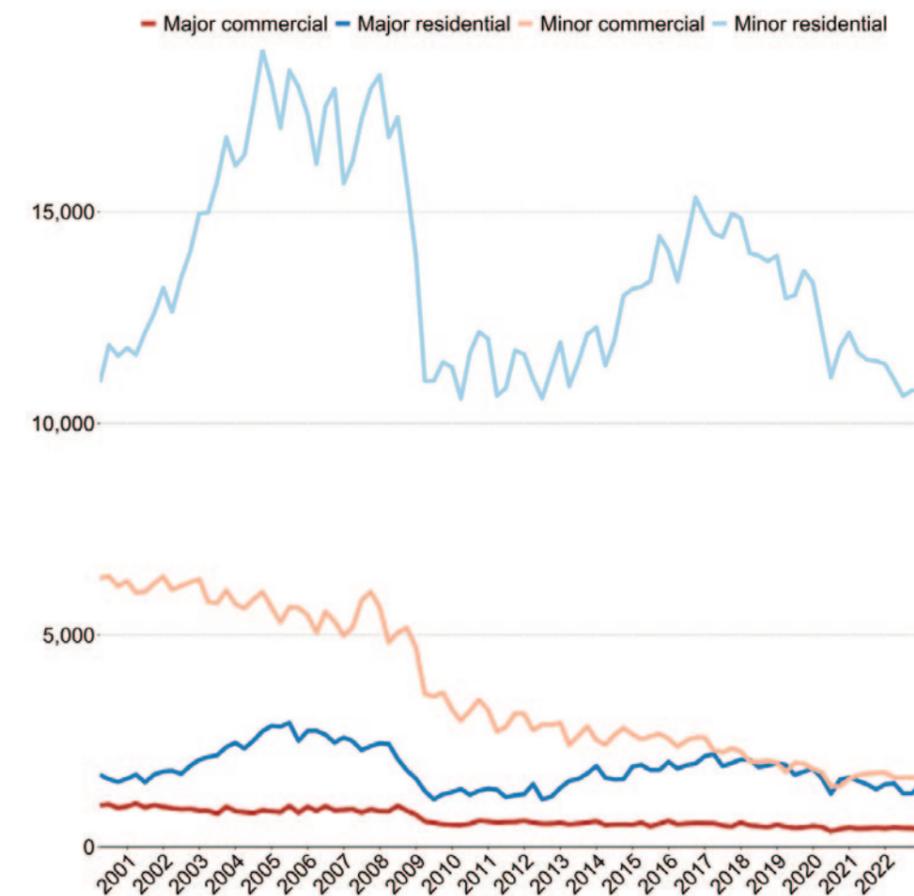
**Householder developments**

In the year ending March 2023, 210,000 decisions were made on applications for householder developments, accounting for 56% of all decisions, down from 59% of all decisions made in the year ending March 2022. Authorities granted 90% of these applications and decided 89% within eight weeks or the agreed time.

**3.14 Trends in the percentage of residential and commercial applications**

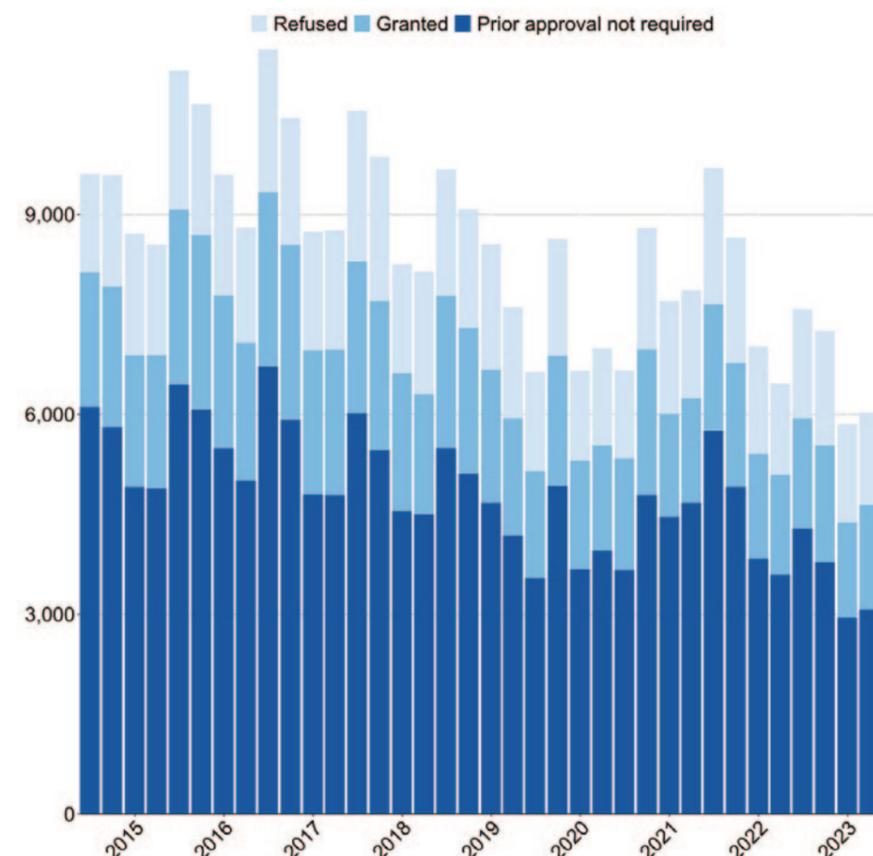
**Figure 7: Number of planning applications decided by district authorities, by type of development**

England, quarter ending March 2000 to quarter ending March 2023



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

England, quarter ending June 2014 to year ending March 2023



**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.

Between January to March 2023, 6,000 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 77%. Large householder extension accounted for 57% 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 March 2023, 900 permitted development right applications were made for changes to residential use, of which 500 (63%) were given the go-ahead without having to go through the full planning process.

Overall during the 36 quarters ending March 2023, district planning authorities reported 306,400 applications for prior approvals for permitted developments. For 172,900 of them prior approval was not required, 70,900 were granted and 62,700 were refused. ■