

NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

THIRD QUARTER 2018/19 STATISTICAL BULLETIN

(October – December 2018: Provisional figures)



Theme: People and Places
Coverage: Northern Ireland
Frequency: Quarterly

An Official Statistics Publication
Date of Publication: 21st March 2019



Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency

Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

Contents:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Key Points | 4 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Overall NI Planning Activity | 7 |
| Department Activity | 10 |
| Major Development | 11 |
| Local Development | 13 |
| Development Type | 15 |
| Compliance & Enforcement | 18 |
| Renewable Energy | 20 |
| User Guidance | 22 |

Published by:

Analysis, Statistics & Research Branch
Department for Infrastructure
Room 4.13c, Clarence Court
Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8GB

Statistician: Paul Flynn

Telephone: 028 90540046

Email: ASRB@nisra.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>



© Crown copyright 2019

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/ or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

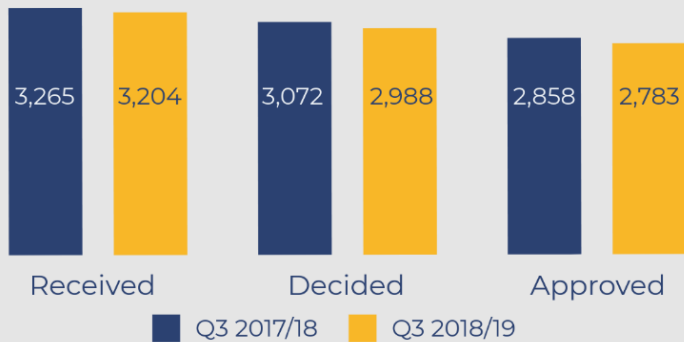
Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is also available at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>.

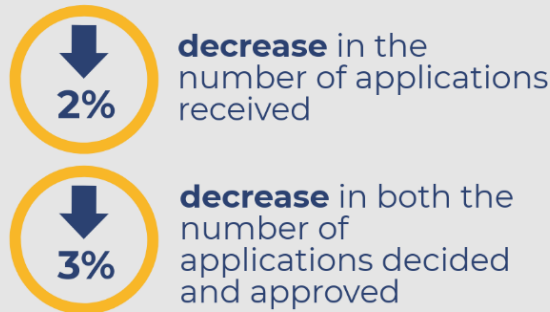
Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at ASRB@nisra.gov.uk.

Overall planning applications

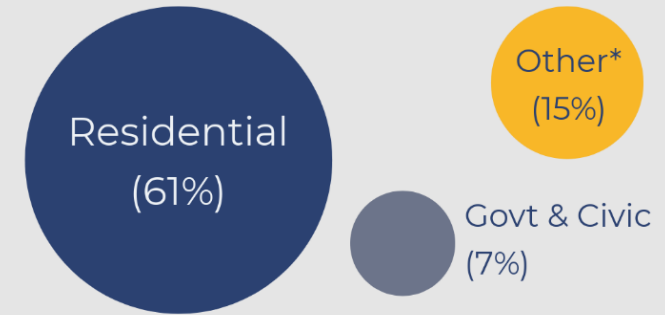
Applications received/decided/approved



Comparing Q3 2018/19 with Q3 2017/18:



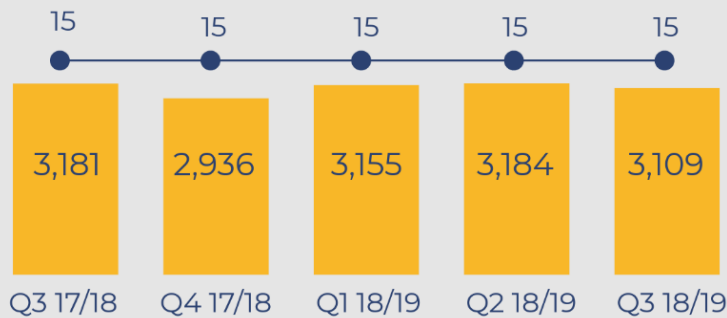
3 largest development types (received)



*Other includes work to facilitate disabled persons, signs/advertisements and listed buildings

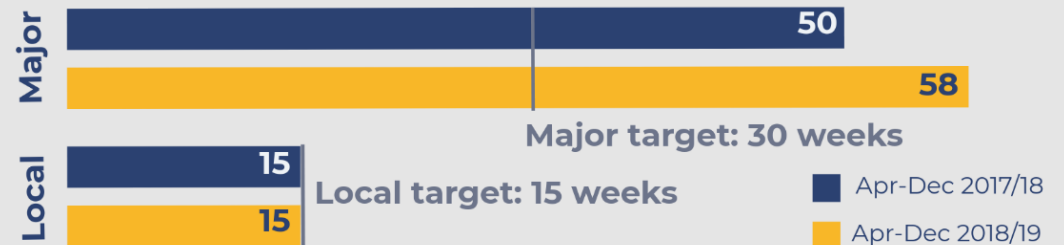
Local planning applications

Q3 2017/18: 3,222
Q3 2018/19: 3,158

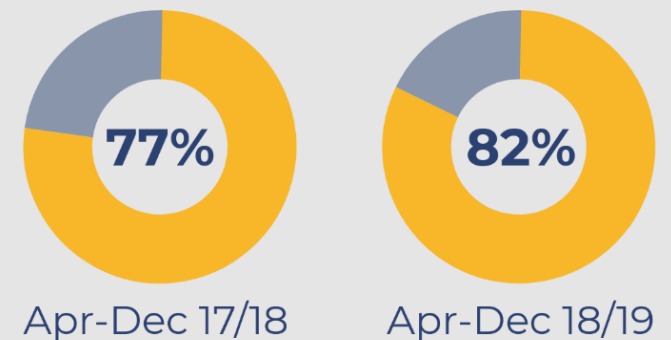


Planning statutory targets (Apr-Dec)

Major & local average processing times (weeks)



% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks (target: 70%)



Key Points

- There were 3,204 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during October to December 2018 (Q3), up by 9% on the previous quarter, but down by 2% on the same period a year earlier. This comprised 3,158 local and 46 major applications.
- During the third quarter of 2018/19, 2,988 planning applications were decided, a decrease of almost 3% over both the quarter and the year.
- In the first nine months of 2018/19 it took councils, on average, 15 weeks to process local applications to decision or withdrawal; the same as the figure reported for the equivalent period last year. Four of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after three quarters of 2018/19.
- The average processing time for major applications during the first nine months of 2018/19 was almost 58 weeks across all councils; up from just over 50 weeks reported for the same period the previous year. This was almost double the statutory processing time target of 30 weeks. The majority of councils did not process a large number of major applications during the first three quarters of 2018/19. Nonetheless, four councils were within the 30 week target at the end of this period.
- In the first nine months of 2018/19 over four-fifths (82%) of enforcement cases in NI were concluded within 39 weeks. This is 12 percentage points above the statutory target and is five percentage points higher than the figure reported for the same period a year earlier (77%). After three quarters of 2018/19, nine of the 11 councils are on track to meet the target, with highs of 93% concluded within 39 weeks in Antrim and Newtownabbey, and 88% in Mid and East Antrim.

Introduction

This statistical bulletin presents a summary of Northern Ireland (NI) planning volumes and processing performance for the new district councils, and the Department for Infrastructure, during the third quarter of 2018/19. Note that from the 8th May 2016, Ministerial responsibility for planning transferred from the former Department of Environment to the Department for Infrastructure (the 'Department') following departmental reorganisation.

Whilst the bulletin and accompanying tables report data for the third quarter of 2018/19, the detailed tables also include comparable data from previous years. Commentary will be mainly focussed on changes over the year and changes over the last quarter. Please note that these quarterly figures for 2018/19 are provisional and will be subject to scheduled revisions ahead of finalised annual figures, to be published in June / July 2019.

Background

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the '2011 Act') sets out the legislative framework for development management in NI and provides that, from 1 April 2015, councils now largely have responsibility for this planning function. Planning applications for development categorised as being either major development or local development are determined by the councils. Responsibility for planning applications for regionally significant development rests with the Department. In addition, the Department retains responsibility for legacy 'Article 31' applications (i.e. Article 31 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991).

Furthermore, the Department has the power to 'call in' both major and local development applications from councils, where it so directs, and determine them (see 'User Guidance' for a fuller description of the different planning application types). Responsibility for planning

legislation, and for formulating and co-ordinating policy for securing the orderly and consistent development of land, remains with the Department. Consequently, the responsibility for development management is shared between the 11 councils and the Department.

The Department will continue to have responsibility for the provision and publication of Official Statistics relating to the overall development management function, including enforcement. The quarterly and annual reports provide the NI headline results split by district council (and the Department where relevant). These data will also provide councils with information on their performance in order to meet their own reporting obligations under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Note that whilst pre-transfer activity volumes can be mapped historically to the new organisational areas from which the demands arise, it would not be valid to do the same with performance data as the newly established district councils did not exist, nor do they neatly overlap with the old area planning office jurisdictions.

The first year of data under the new organisational areas was 2015/16. Therefore 2015/16 is regarded as the base year for reporting of performance-related data at council level with comparative trend data building from that point onwards. Whilst historic comparisons of performance at NI level can still be made, it is important to be aware that there have been a number of significant recent changes to the Planning system which will have had an impact. Where relevant these have been highlighted throughout the report.

Statistics included in this report

This bulletin provides an overall view of planning activity across NI. It provides summary statistical information on council progress across the 3 statutory targets for major development applications, local development applications and enforcement cases as laid out in the Local Government

(Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. It also provides information relating to Departmental performance against quantitative Corporate Business Plan targets.

All of the information underlying the charts and graphs featured in this bulletin are included in accompanying Excel tables (see Appendix 1 for additional 'Definitions' used in these tables). This summary bulletin provides an overview and high level commentary with more details and further analyses available in the Excel tables. Where relevant, some of the more detailed findings may be referred to in the commentary.

Revisions and changes since Quarter 1 2015/16

(i) Major versus local classification - following the publication of the first quarter provisional bulletin in November 2015, a number of planning application classification issues were identified which required further investigation. This led to a number of revisions to the first quarter 2015/16 provisional figures which are reflected in later quarterly bulletins. The validation exercise additionally highlighted some inconsistencies in major and local development classification between the 2015/16 and 2014/15 when the new classification hierarchy was first administratively implemented. It was decided, therefore, that 2015/16, when the classification hierarchy was given full legal effect, would be the base year for future comparisons of major and local development activity. As such, back-comparisons at council level for these application types are not possible.

(ii) 'Discharge of conditions' - whilst forming part of a council's workload, these are not planning applications per se and hence should be excluded from the assessment of target processing performance. This led to some further revisions from the previously released first quarter 2015/16 results. However, whilst there were some small changes to activity volumes, their exclusion did not materially affect average processing times across the vast majority of councils. See 'User Guidance' for further detail on excluded

planning activity. Table 9.1, in the accompanying bulletin tables, provides volumes and processing times for all such 'non-application' workload.

(iii) Legacy versus new council activity – in order to provide additional context around council performance, two additional analyses have been included in the companion tables. Table 8.1 shows the volume of legacy work which each council inherited on 1st April 2015 and to what extent it has since been reducing, while Table 8.2 splits out processing performance for major and local development into legacy versus new council applications. These tables will be retained until the legacy applications become a negligible part of overall council workload.

Future Releases

The finalised annual report for 2018/19 is due to be published in June / July 2019.

The next quarterly release is due in September 2019. This will contain provisional planning data up to 30th June 2019 and will commence the quarterly reporting cycle for 2019/20. Development of a planning monitoring framework is ongoing and the current intention is that progress on this will be published in September 2019. The format for this publication is still under consideration.

See [Gov.UK Release Calendar](#) for release dates of future publications.

1. Overall NI Planning Activity

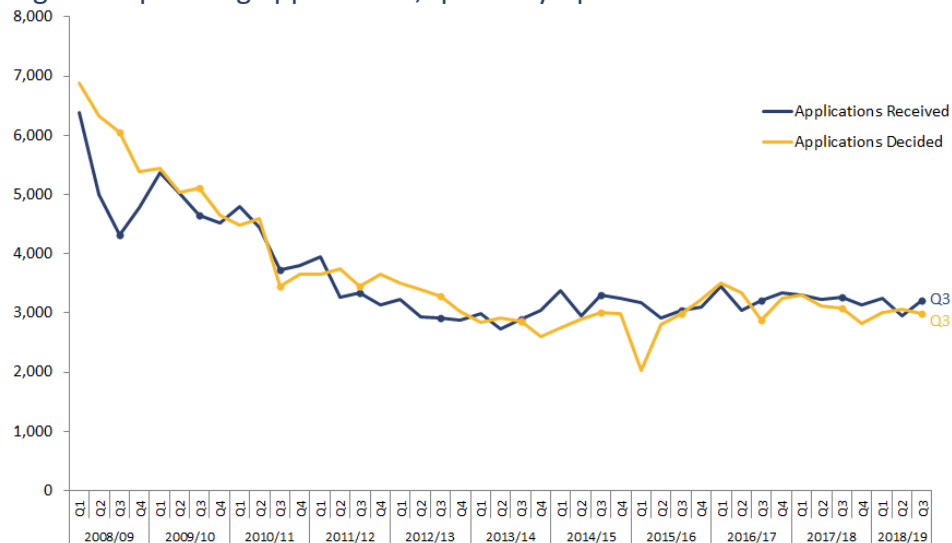
Applications Received

The number of planning applications **received** in Northern Ireland (NI) by councils and the Department in the period October to December 2018 (Q3) was **3,204**; an increase of 8.9% on the previous quarter (2,942), but a decrease of 1.9% on the same period a year earlier (3,265).

The number of planning applications received had generally been on the decline from its peak in 2004/05 until 2013/14, when it reached its lowest level of the series. The series shows that the number of applications received has been fairly stable for the last six years.

Of the 3,204 applications received in Q3, over three-quarters were for full planning permission (75.8%); similar to the same period last year (76.7%).

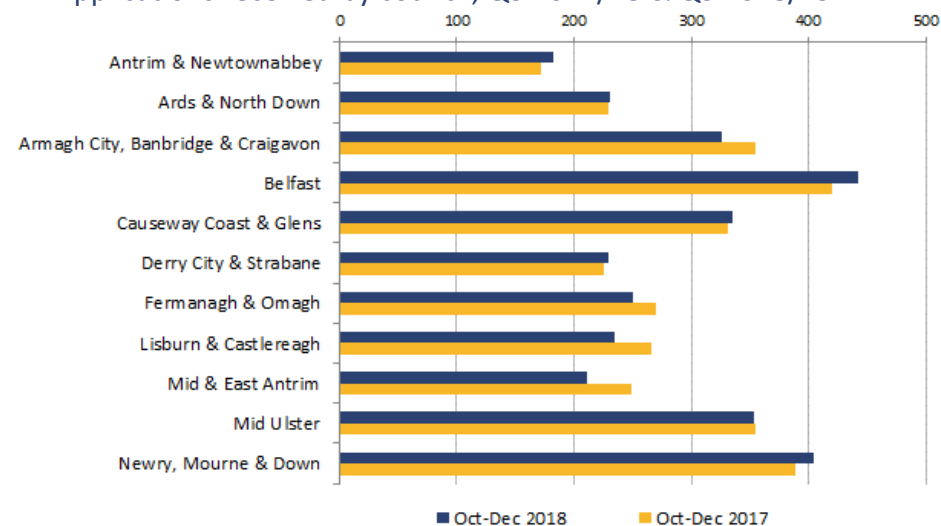
Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, quarterly Apr 2008 - Dec 2018



In Q3, Belfast received the most (443) planning applications, followed by Newry, Mourne and Down (404) and Mid Ulster (353); between them accounting for over one third (37.5%) of all applications received across NI. The councils receiving the lowest number of applications were Antrim and Newtownabbey (183), Mid and East Antrim (211) and Derry City and Strabane (229).

In Q3 2018/19, five of the 11 councils recorded a decrease in the number of applications received compared with the same period last year, with the greatest decreases in percentage terms occurring in Mid and East Antrim (-15.3%) and Lisburn and Castlereagh (-12.0%). Six councils reported increases over the year: with the largest, in percentage terms, occurring in Antrim and Newtownabbey (6.4%) and Belfast (5.5%).

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, Q3 2017/18 & Q3 2018/19



[Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2](#)

Applications Decided

The number of planning decisions issued during October to December 2018 was **2,988**, representing a decrease of 2.7% over both the quarter (3,071) and the year (3,072). Over three-quarters of planning decisions in Q3 2018/19 (77.0%) were for full planning permission.

In the first quarter of 2015/16, immediately following the transition of planning authority to councils, the level of decisions issued dropped sharply, before quickly recovering in subsequent quarters. Nonetheless, from Q3 2016/17 the number of applications received has generally exceeded the number decided, and this was true in Q3 2018/19 (Fig 1.1).

In Q3 2018/19, **147** applications were **withdrawn**, representing a decrease of 2.6% over the quarter (151) and a 7.0% decrease from the same period the previous year (158). Applications can be withdrawn at any stage prior to a decision being made.

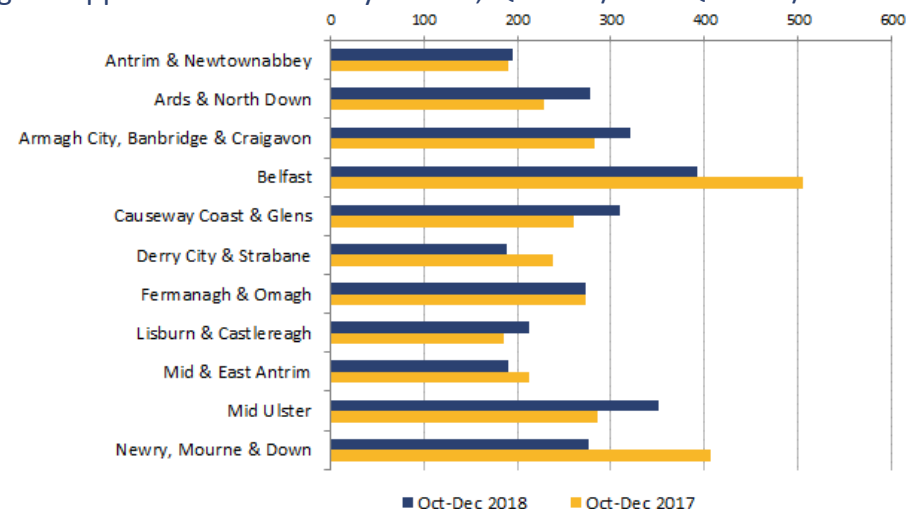
Applications Decided by Council

Belfast issued the highest number of decisions (393) in Q3 2018/19, followed by Mid Ulster (351) and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (320). Derry City and Strabane (188), Mid and East Antrim (190), and Antrim and Newtownabbey (195) issued the least.

Although the volume of planning decisions issued across Northern Ireland decreased over the year, six of the 11 councils reported an increase over the same period. The greatest increases in percentage terms occurred in Mid Ulster (22.7%), and Ards and North Down (21.0%). Four councils reported decreases over the year, with the largest occurring in Newry, Mourne and Down (-32.0%) and Belfast (-22.2%). In Fermanagh and Omagh, 273 planning decisions were made in both Q3 2017/18 and Q3 2018/19.

Three of the eleven councils issued more decisions than they received during Q3 2018/19: Ards & North Down (+19.9%); Fermanagh and Omagh (+9.2%); and Antrim and Newtownabbey (+6.6%). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, Q3 2017/18 & Q3 2018/19

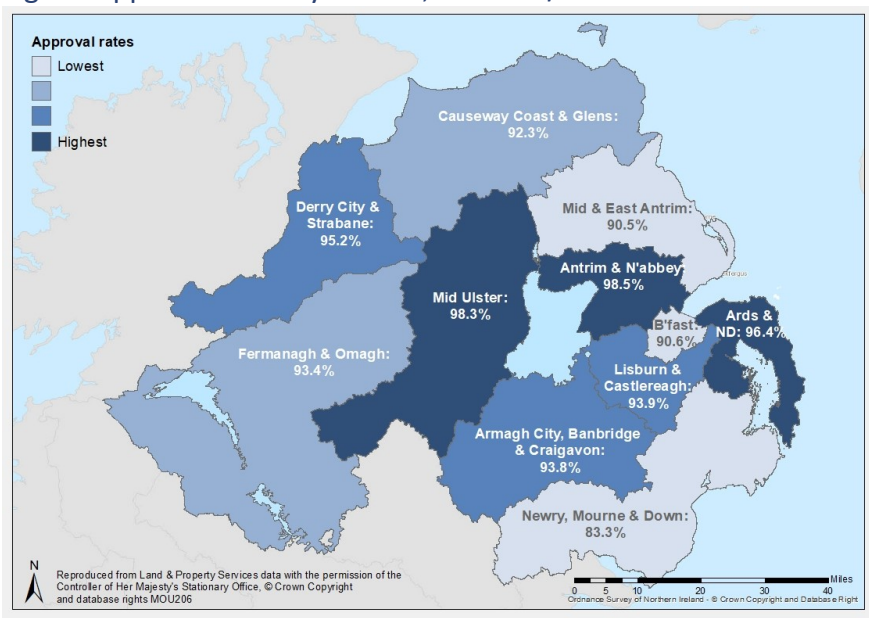


In addition to processing applications, councils deal with a range of other planning related work. For example, during Q3 2018/19, they processed to decision or withdrawal: 163 discharge of conditions; 157 certificates of lawfulness; and 137 non material changes. While the number of discharge of conditions processed was similar to the same period last year, the number of certificates of lawfulness and non material changes processed increased considerably. A further breakdown of these figures is provided in [Table 9.1.](#)

Approval Rates

The **overall Northern Ireland approval rate** for all planning applications was **93.1%** in Q3 2018/19; similar to the rate for same quarter a year earlier (93.0%), and a small decrease from the previous quarter (94.0%).

Fig 1.4 Approval rates by council, Q3 2018/19



Approval rates varied across councils during Q3 2018/19: from highs of 98.5% in Antrim and Newtownabbey and 98.3% in Mid Ulster; to lows of 83.3% in Newry, Mourne and Down and 90.5% in Mid and East Antrim.

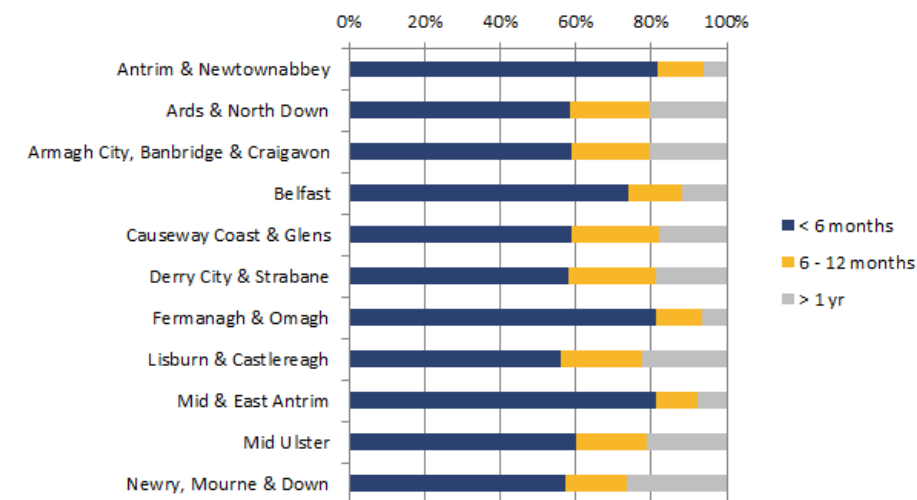
Four of the 11 councils reported an increased approval rate over the year, most notably in Antrim and Newtownabbey (up 4.3 percentage points to 98.5%). Six councils reported a decreased approval rate when compared with the same quarter a year earlier, most notably in Mid and East Antrim (down 4.3 percentage points to 90.5%). In Causeway Coast and Glens the approval rate remained unchanged over the year at 92.3%. [Refer to Table 1.2](#)

Live applications

At the end of December 2018, there were **6,542** live applications in the planning system across NI, a decrease of 0.7% from 6,587 at the end of

December 2017. Nearly one-fifth of all live applications in the planning system at the end of December 2018 were over one year old (1,234: 18.9%); an increase of 3.3 percentage points from the proportion reported for the end of December 2017 (1,024: 15.5%). [Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

Fig 1.5 Live applications by council at end of Dec 2018



The proportion of live applications over one year old at the end of December 2018 varies across councils, as shown in Figure 1.5. Antrim and Newtownabbey had the lowest proportion of cases over one year old (6.2%), followed by Fermanagh and Omagh (6.6%) and Mid and East Antrim (7.9%). Newry, Mourne and Down had the highest proportion of applications in the system for over a year (26.4%), followed by Lisburn and Castlereagh (22.4%) and Mid Ulster (21.3%).

Compared with the same point in 2017, three councils reduced the proportion of live cases in the system for over a year, with the greatest decrease occurring in Derry City and Strabane (down 4.0 percentage points to 18.6%). The proportion of live cases in the system for over a year increased in eight councils, with the increase greatest in Lisburn and Castlereagh (up 7.2 percentage points to 22.4%). [Refer to Table 1.4.](#)

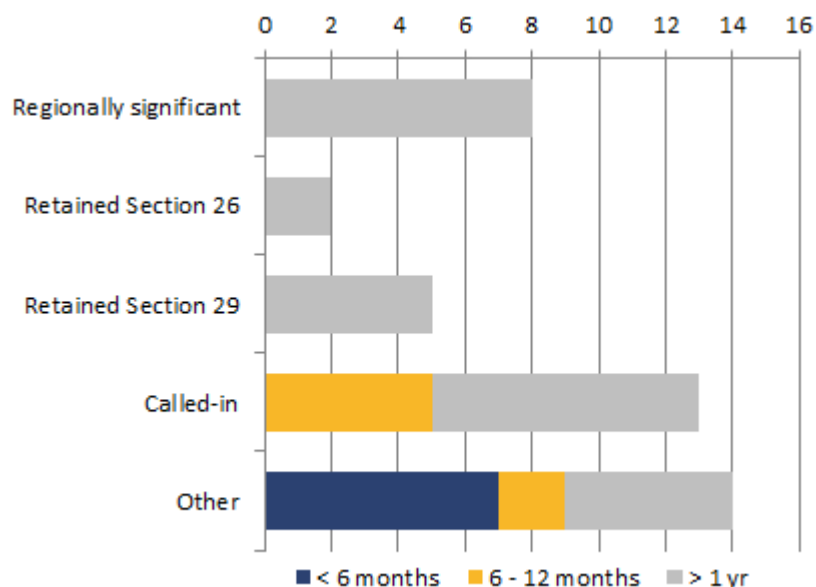
2. Departmental Activity

During Q3 2018/19, the Department **received five** new applications and issued **decisions on two**.

At the end of December 2018, there were: **8 ongoing regionally significant development (RSD) applications; 13 called-in; 7 retained applications and 14 other applications**¹. Two-thirds of these applications (28 of 42) were in the system over a year.

[Refer to Tables 2.1, 2.2.](#)

Fig 2.1 Live Departmental applications by development type at end of Dec 2018



¹ 'Other' applications include Conservation Area Consents, Variation of Conditions and Reserved Matters.

RSD applications are similar to former Article 31 applications in that they will be determined by the Department. These developments have a critical contribution to make to the economic and social success of Northern Ireland as a whole, or a substantial part of the region. They also include developments which have significant effects beyond Northern Ireland or involve a substantial departure from a local development plan.

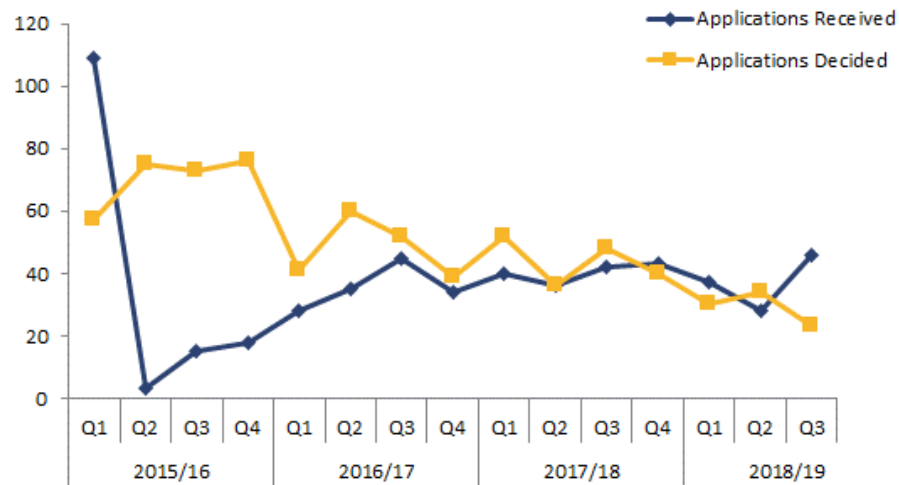
It is a target for the Department to contribute to sustainable economic growth by processing 50% of Regionally Significant Planning Applications to a Ministerial Recommendation within 30 weeks, subject to pre-application discussions having taken place and meeting the requirements of relevant Environmental Legislation.

At 31 December 2018, of the **8** RSD applications currently live in the planning system, four were not subject to Pre-Application Discussions and therefore fell outside the remit of the target. Of the remaining four applications, one had a recommendation during Q4 2017/18 to go to public inquiry where the target was met. The target dates for the other three applications were missed. These are all ongoing applications and will continue to be assessed in future reports up until the point of decision or withdrawal, alongside any new applications which may come into scope.

3. Major Development Planning Applications

Major Developments have important economic, social and environmental implications. The majority of major applications are multiple housing, commercial, and government and civic types of development. The number of **major** planning applications **received** in NI during Q3 2018/19 was **46**.

Fig 3.1 Major Development applications, quarterly Apr 2015 - Dec 2018



From 1st July 2015, pre-application community consultation became a pre-requisite to a major application. All major applications now go through a minimum 12 week consultation process before being accepted. The impact of this requirement should be borne in mind when considering the longer term trend in major applications received.

Q2 2015/16 had the lowest number of major applications received across the whole series but this can be attributed to the new community consultation requirement. From Q2 2015/16, the number of major applications received steadily increased quarter on quarter until Q3 2016/17. Since then, the number of major applications received each

quarter over the last two years suggests something a levelling out, although the 46 received in Q3 2018/19 was the highest for any quarter since Q1 2015/16.

Across the 11 councils in Q3 2018/19, Belfast (seven), Antrim and Newtownabbey, Lisburn and Castlereagh, and Mid Ulster (all six) received the most major applications.

Over the quarter, **23 major** planning applications were **decided** and **three withdrawn**. This is the lowest number of decisions issued quarterly for major applications since the transfer of planning powers.

At council level, Mid Ulster (four), Belfast, Causeway Coast and Glens, and Fermanagh and Omagh (all three) issued the most decisions on major applications.

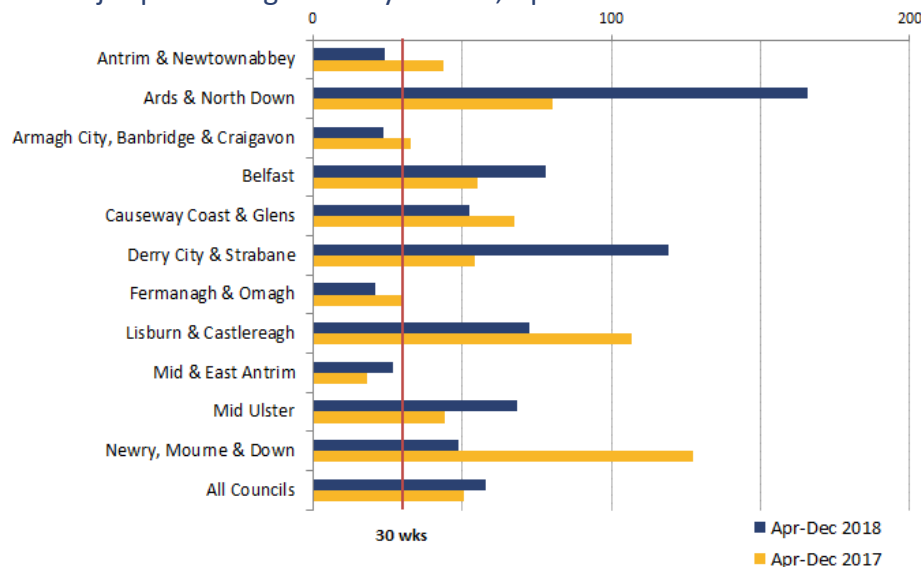
[Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.](#)

Since Q2 2015/16, the number of planning decisions issued for major applications has generally exceeded the numbers being received. However, for three of the last four quarters, including Q3 2018/19, the opposite has been true.

It is a statutory target for each council that their major development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 30 weeks.

Figure 3.2 provides year-to-date processing times for major applications. During this period (April to December 2018), the **average processing time** to bring **major** applications to a decision or withdrawal was **57.8 weeks** across all councils, an increase (7.4 weeks) from the 50.4 weeks reported for the same period last year. This is almost double the statutory processing time target of 30 weeks.

Fig 3.2 Major processing times by council, Apr-Dec 2017 & 2018



Whilst Fig 3.2 has been provided for completeness, the majority of councils did not process a large number of major applications during the first nine months of the current and previous years. In the first three quarters of 2018/19, only four councils processed to decision or withdrawal more than 10 major applications: Belfast (13); Causeway Coast and Glens; Lisburn and Castlereagh; and Mid Ulster (all 11).

Comparison against the target and across councils will become more robust as we reach the year end. With that in mind, it is still worth noting

that during the first nine months of the year, four of the councils, on average, processed major applications within the 30 week target time.

[Refer to Table 3.2.](#)

A further breakdown of these figures by legacy cases and council received cases is provided in [Table 8.2.](#)

Across Northern Ireland in Q3 2018/19, 19 out of 23 (82.6%) major planning applications decided upon were approved; the lowest quarterly approval rate since Q4 2015/16. Ten councils issued decisions on major applications during the third quarter of 2018/19, and for seven of these all major applications decided upon were approved.

4. Local Development Planning Applications

Local Development planning applications are mostly residential and minor commercial applications received and determined by a council. The number of **local** planning applications **received** in NI during Q3 2018/19 was **3,158**, an increase of 8.4% on the previous quarter (2,914), but a decrease of 2.0% on the same period a year earlier (3,222).

Across councils, Belfast (436), Newry, Mourne and Down (402), and Mid Ulster (347) received the highest number of local planning applications during Q3 2018/19. Belfast, and Newry, Mourne and Down also received the most applications during the same period last year.

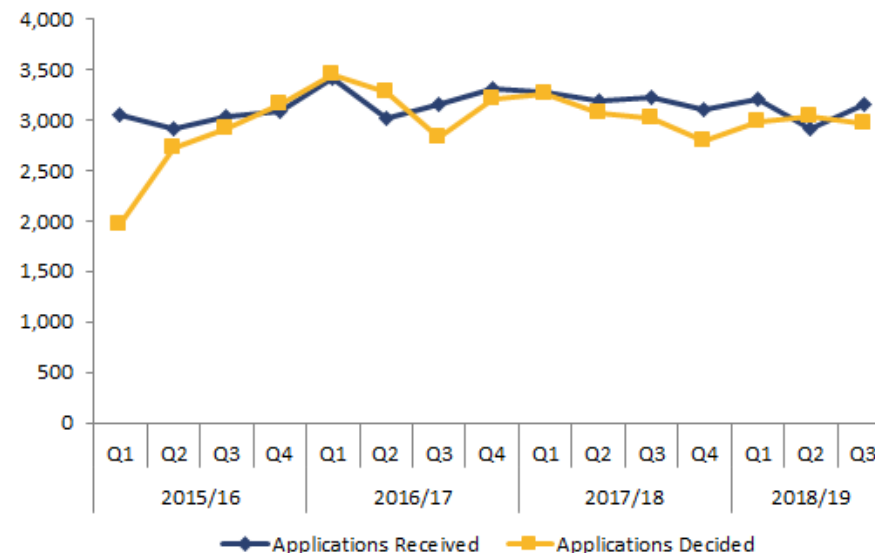
Five of the 11 councils reported an increase in the number of local applications received in Q3 2018/19 compared with the same period a year earlier. In percentage terms, Belfast (6.1%), and Antrim and Newtownabbey (4.7%) recorded the largest increases. Four councils reported decreases over the year, with the largest occurring in Mid and East Antrim (-14.4%), and Lisburn and Castlereagh (-13.0%). In Ards and North Down, and Mid Ulster there was no change in the number of local applications received in Q3 2018/19 compared with Q3 2017/18.

The number of **local** applications **decided** in Q3 2018/19 was **2,965**, a decrease of 2.4% over the quarter (3,037) and 2.0% over the year (3,024).

In the first quarter of 2015/16, immediately following the transition of planning functions to councils, the number of decisions reached on local planning applications was considerably lower than the number of applications received. Moving through 2015/16, the number of applications decided each quarter increased considerably, narrowing the gap significantly between the numbers received and the numbers decided.

In Q4 2015/16, the number of applications decided exceeded the number received for the first time in the series and this continued during the first part of 2016/17. From Q3 2016/17 onwards, the number of local applications received has been higher than the number decided each quarter, with the exception of Q2 2018/19 (Fig 4.1).

Fig 4.1 Local applications, quarterly Apr 2015 - Dec 2018



During Q3 2018/19, the number of local planning decisions issued ranged from 390 in Belfast to 186 in Derry City and Strabane.

Although the volume of local planning decisions issued across Northern Ireland decreased over the year, seven of the 11 councils reported an increase over the same period. The greatest increases, in percentage terms, occurred in Mid Ulster (23.5%), Ards and North Down (21.1%), and Causeway Coast and Glens (18.1%). Four councils reported decreases over the year, with the largest occurring in Newry, Mourne and Down (-31.2%), Belfast (-22.0%), and Derry City and Strabane (-21.2%).

Over the quarter, there were 144 local applications withdrawn across NI; this ranged from 25 applications withdrawn in Belfast, to two in Antrim and Newtownabbey, and Mid and East Antrim.

[Refer to Tables 4.1, 4.2.](#)

It is a statutory target for each council that their local development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

During April to December 2018 (the year-to-date), the **average processing time** to bring local applications to decision or withdrawal was **15.0 weeks** across all councils; the same as the figure reported for the equivalent period last year.

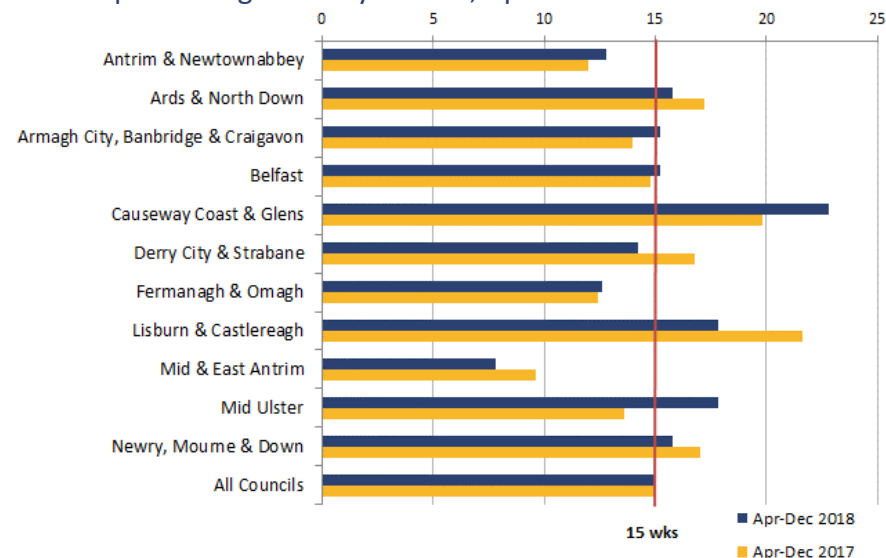
The shortest average processing time for local applications during the first nine months of 2018 was 7.8 weeks in Mid and East Antrim (based on 655 local applications decided and 12 withdrawn), whilst the longest was 22.8 weeks in Causeway Coast and Glens (based on 884 local applications decided and 61 withdrawn). Four of the 11 councils, namely Mid and East Antrim (7.8 weeks), Fermanagh and Omagh (12.6 weeks), Antrim and Newtownabbey (12.8 weeks), and Derry City and Strabane (14.2 weeks) were within the 15 week target at the end of December 2018.

Average processing times in six of the 11 councils increased during April to December 2018 when compared with the same period a year earlier. This was most notable in Mid Ulster, and Causeway Coast and Glens, where average processing times for local applications increased by 4.2 and 3.0 weeks respectively over the year.

Over the same period, the greatest reductions in local processing times were achieved in Lisburn and Castlereagh, where average processing times were improved by 3.8 weeks (from 21.6 weeks to 17.8 weeks), and Derry City and Strabane, where average processing times decreased from 16.8 to 14.2 weeks (2.6 weeks).

[Refer to Table 4.2.](#)

Fig 4.2 Local processing times by council, Apr-Dec 2017 & 2018



A further breakdown of these figures by legacy cases (those applications received prior to transition of planning powers) and council received cases is provided in [Table 8.2](#).

Across Northern Ireland, 93.2% of local planning applications decided upon were approved in Q3 2018/19, a small increase on the rate for the same period last year (93.1%).

5. Development Type

Generally the majority of planning applications received are for residential development. During Q3 2018/19, **residential** applications made up **60.6%** of all planning applications received in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 0.7 percentage points from the same period last year (61.3%).

Residential was the most common application type in all councils in Q3 2018/19. The proportion of all applications received that were residential ranged from over two-thirds in Newry, Mourne and Down (68.6%), and Mid Ulster (68.3%), to less than one-half in Belfast (47.6%), Derry City and Strabane (48.5%).

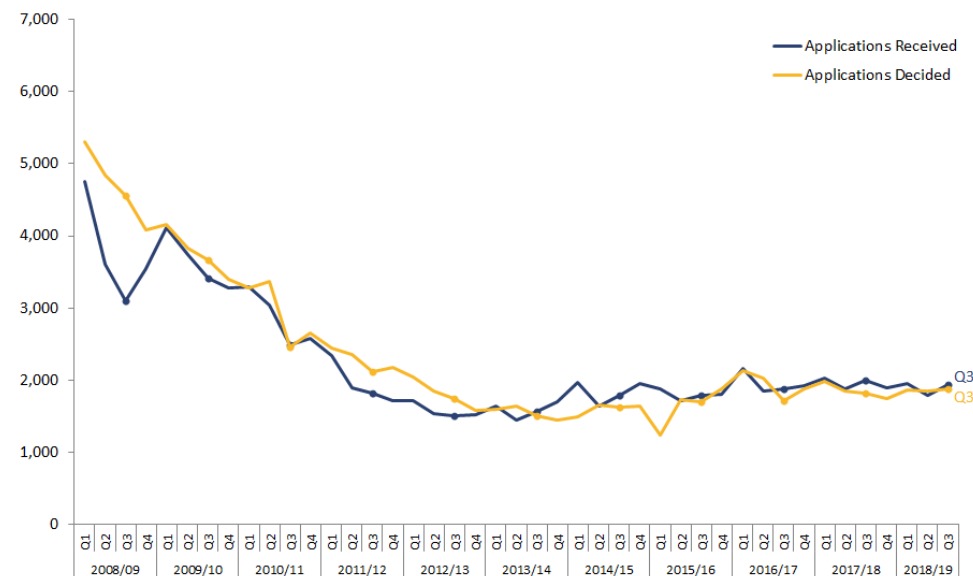
During the same period, Belfast (26.2%) and Derry City and Strabane (25.3%) received a higher proportion of applications categorised as 'Other', compared with the other councils. See Appendix 1 – 'Definitions' for a description of the types of applications included in this category.

[Refer to Tables 5.1, 5.2.](#)

Residential applications

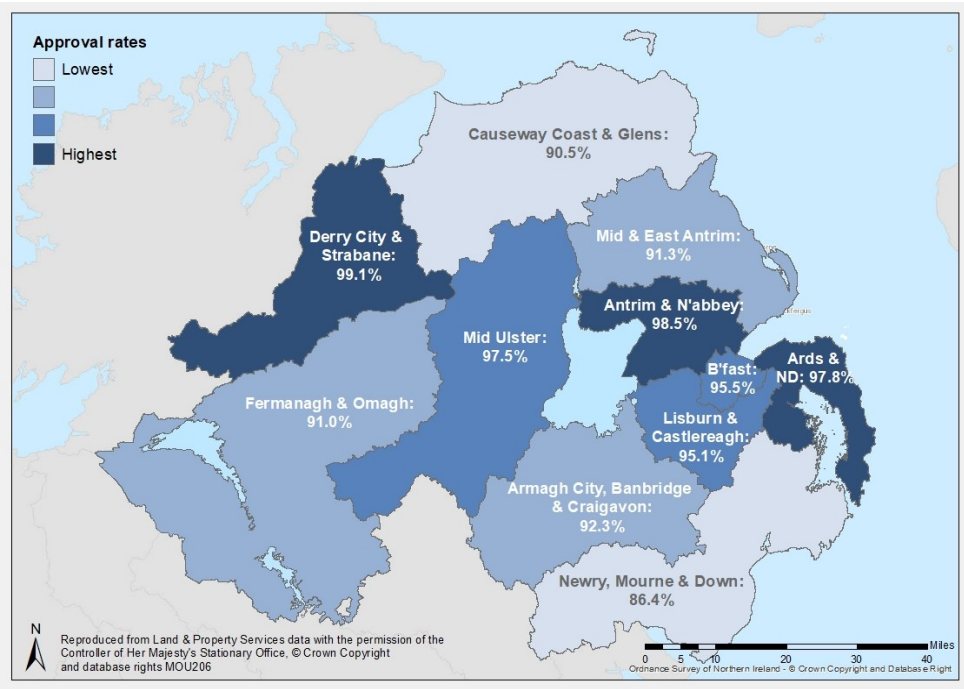
The overall number of **residential** planning applications **received** for Northern Ireland in Q3 2018/19 was **1,942**; an increase of 8.7% on the previous quarter (1,787), but down 2.9% on the same period a year earlier (2,001).

Fig 5.1 NI Residential applications, quarterly from Apr 2008 - Dec 2018



Approval rates for residential planning applications in Q3 2018/19 varied across councils in Q3, from 99.1% in Derry City and Strabane to 86.4% in Newry, Mourne and Down (Fig 5.2).

Fig 5.2 Residential approval rates by council, Q3 2018/19



In Q3 2018/19, five councils reported increased approval rates for residential planning over the year, with the most notable increases in Antrim and Newtownabbey (up from 92.9% to 98.5%), Derry City and Strabane (up from 95.5% to 99.1%), and Lisburn and Castlereagh (up from 92.5% to 95.1%). Approval rates declined in six councils over the year, most notably in Fermanagh and Omagh (from 94.9% to 91.0%), Causeway Coast and Glens (from 93.7% to 90.5%), and Mid and East Antrim (from 94.3% to 91.3%).

During Q3 2018/19, there were 64 residential applications withdrawn, a decrease on the previous quarter (77) and the same period a year earlier (90).

[Refer to Table 5.4.](#)

Residential applications – Urban, Rural and Open Countryside

In urban areas (*settlements greater than 5,000 population*), the number of residential applications received in Q3 2018/19 (663) increased by 6.8% from the previous quarter (621), but decreased by 4.5% compared with the same period a year earlier (694).

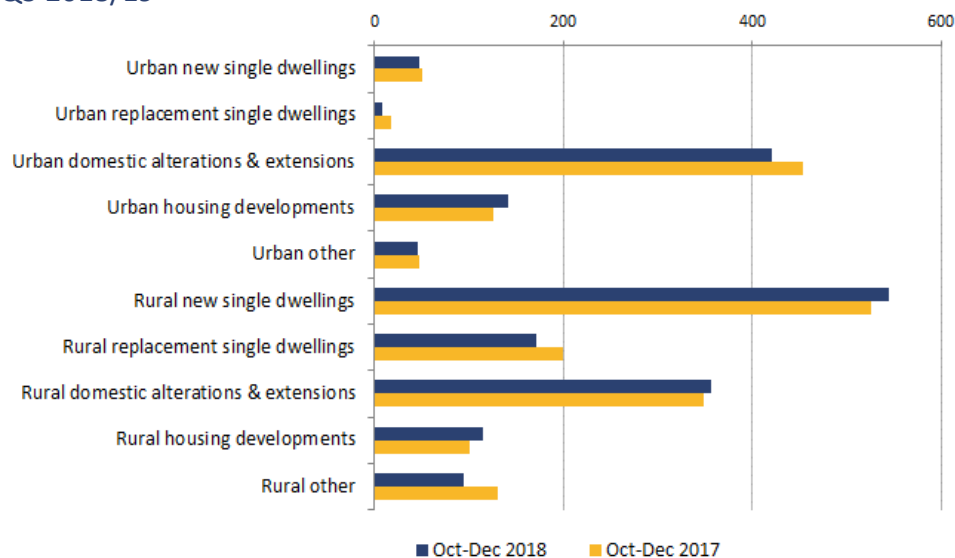
In rural areas, within settlements of less than 5,000 population, there was an increase in the number of residential applications received in Q3 2018/19 (243) over the quarter (from 230; 5.7%) and the year (from 220; 10.5%).

In the open countryside, the number of residential applications in Q3 2018/19 (1,036) increased over the quarter (from 936; 10.7%), but decreased over the year (from 1,087; 4.7%).

Residential applications – Urban and Rural

Fig 5.3 shows a breakdown of the type of residential applications received. Urban is based on areas with settlements greater than 5,000 population while rural is a combination of settlements below 5,000 population and open countryside.

Fig 5.3 NI Residential applications received by urban/rural, Q3 2017/18 & Q3 2018/19



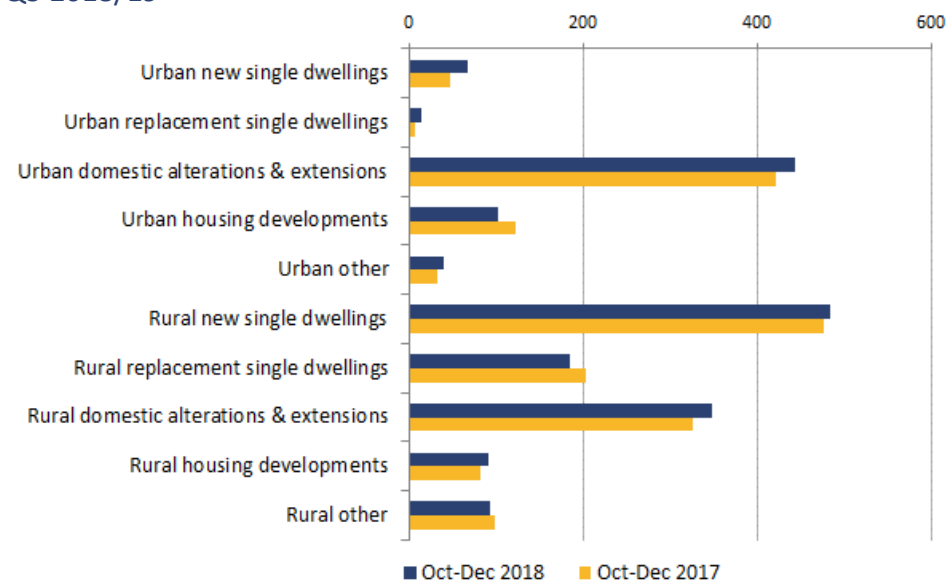
New single dwellings in rural areas (544) and alterations/extensions in urban areas (421) continue to dominate, together making almost half of (49.7%) of all residential applications received during Q3 2018/19.

The decrease over the year in the number of residential applications received (-2.9%) was driven in large part by decreases in the number of applications received for: 'other' rural applications (down 28.2%; from 131 to 94); domestic alterations and extensions in urban areas (down 7.3%; from 454 to 421); and replacement single dwellings in rural areas (down 14.5%; from 200 to 171).

The number decisions on residential applications made in Q3 2018/19 was 1,870; a small increase on both the quarter (from 1,848; 1.2%) and the year (from 1,818; 2.9%).

The increase in decisions made over the year was driven in large part by increases in the number of applications decided for: domestic alterations and extensions in both rural (up 6.7%; from 326 to 348) and urban (up 5.2%; from 421 to 443) areas; and single dwellings in urban areas (up 44.7%; from 47 to 68).

Fig 5.4 NI Residential applications decided by urban/rural, Q3 2017/18 & Q3 2018/19



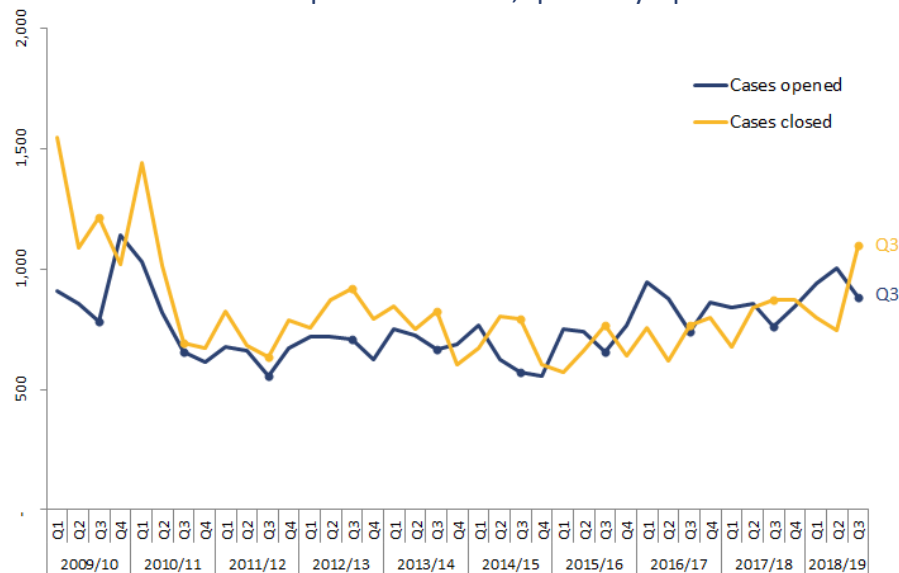
[Refer to Table 5.5.](#)

6. Compliance and Enforcement Activity

The number of **enforcement cases opened** in Northern Ireland during Q3 of 2018/19 was **884**, an increase of 16.2% compared with the same period a year earlier (761), but a decrease of 11.8% from Q2 2018/19 (1,002).

Across the councils, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (136), Belfast (124), and Antrim and Newtownabbey (111) opened the highest number of cases in Q3 2018/19, whilst Mid Ulster (40), Derry City and Strabane (41), and Mid and East Antrim (48) opened the least.

Fig. 6.1 Enforcement cases opened & closed, quarterly Apr 2009 - Dec 2018



The number of **enforcement cases closed** during Q3 2018/19 was **1,097**; an increase of 47.1% over the last quarter (746), and 26.1% compared with the same period a year earlier (870). This was the highest number of enforcement cases closed in any quarter since Q1 2010/11 (1,440).

Belfast (176), Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (142), and Ards and North Down (136) closed the highest number of cases in Q3 2018/19, whilst Derry City and Strabane (44), and Mid Ulster (53) closed the least.

The most common reasons for enforcement cases closing in Q3 2018/19, were that no breach had actually occurred (33.5%) or that the cases had been remedied or resolved (28.7%). Together these accounted for over three-fifths (683; 62.3%) of the 1,097 enforcement cases closed in Q3 2018/19.

[Refer to Tables 6.1, 6.2.](#)

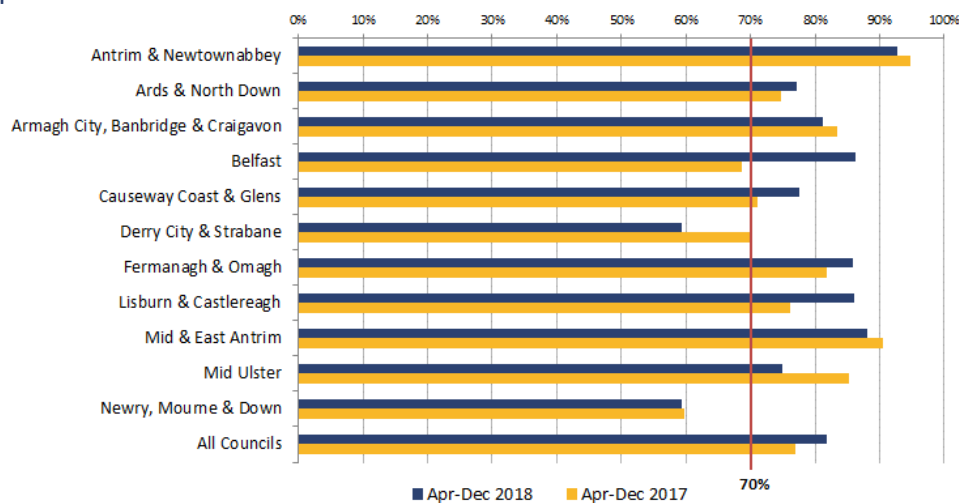
It is a statutory target that 70% of all enforcement cases dealt with by councils are progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.

For the year-to-date (April to December 2018), **over four-fifths (81.9%)** of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks. This is 11.9 percentage points above the statutory target, and is 4.9 percentage points higher than the figure reported for same period last year (76.9%).

At the end of December 2018, nine of the 11 councils were on track to meet the target. Antrim and Newtownabbey (92.7%), Mid and East Antrim (88.2%), and Belfast (86.2%) had the highest proportion of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks. Derry City and Strabane (59.3%), and Newry, Mourne and Down (59.4%) are currently below the target level. Compared with the same period last year, the proportion of cases concluded within 39 weeks decreased considerably in Derry City and Strabane (-10.7 percentage points), but remained similar in Newry, Mourne and Down (-0.4 percentage points).

[Refer to Table 6.2.](#)

Fig. 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, Apr-Dec 2017 & 2018



During Q3 2018/19, there were **28 prosecutions** initiated across NI; an increase from 16 the previous quarter, and from 7 during the same period the previous year.

During the third quarter of 2018/19, six of the 11 councils initiated prosecutions, with Antrim and Newtownabbey, and Fermanagh and Omagh initiating the most (nine each).

There were 10 convictions during the same period: five in Antrim and Newtownabbey; two each in Causeway Coast and Glens, and Fermanagh and Omagh; and one in Belfast.

[Refer to Table 6.3.](#)

The number of **live enforcement cases** at the end of December 2018 was **3,561**, an increase of 4.8% from the same point the previous year (3,398), but a decrease of 5.6% compared with the end of June 2018 (3,774).

The number of **cases over two years old** stood at **1,080** at the end of December 2018, accounting for 30.3% of all live cases. This represents the highest proportion of cases over two years old reported since the end of Q2 2013/14.

[Refer to Table 6.4.](#)

Across the councils, Newry, Mourne and Down had the highest number of live cases at the end of December 2018 (1,096), with over two-fifths of these (43.5%) in the system for over 2 years; the highest proportion across all councils.

Mid and East Antrim had the smallest number of live cases (133), with 9.8% of these in the system for over 2 years; the lowest proportion across all councils.

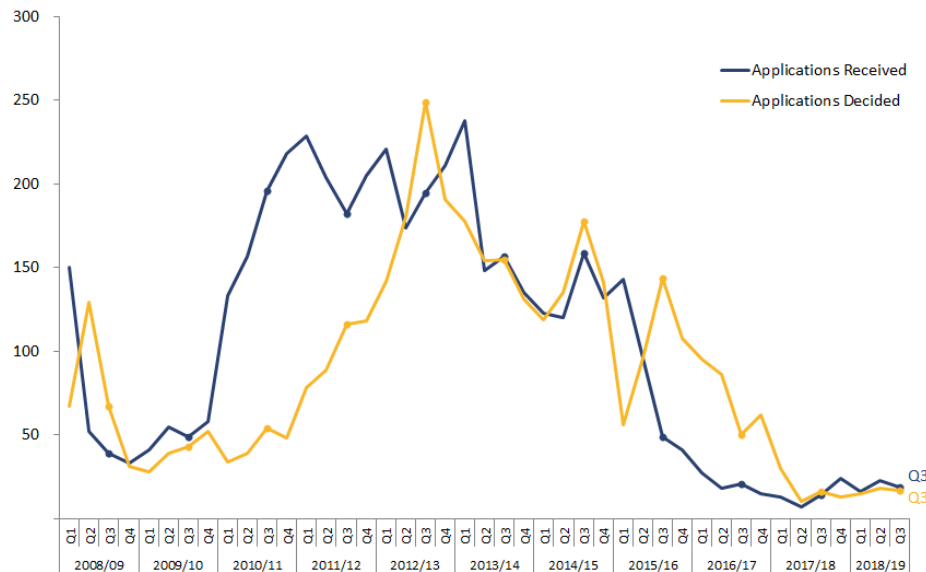
Although the number of live enforcement cases increased overall between the end of December 2017 and 2018, the number of live cases decreased in eight of the 11 councils, with the greatest percentage decreases occurring in Causeway Coast and Glens (-15.6%; down by 52 enforcements), and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (-14.0%; down by 55 enforcements). The overall increase over this period was largely driven by a large increase in the number of live enforcement cases in Newry Mourne and Down (32.7%; up by 270 enforcements). Increases were also evident in Fermanagh and Omagh (9.6%; up by 21 enforcements), and Lisburn and Castlereagh (7.1%; up by 12 enforcements).

[Refer to Table 6.5.](#)

7. Renewable Energy (RE) Activity

The overall number of **renewable energy** applications **received** in Q3 2018/19 was **19**, a decrease from 23 in the previous quarter, but an increase from 14 during the same period a year earlier. The number of applications received during October to December peaked in 2010/11 with 196 applications. It is likely that the high levels at this time were driven by the NI Executive’s targets for electricity consumption from renewable sources, with a target of 20% to be achieved by 2015, and 40% by 2020. This continuing sharp decline in recent years (an **90.3%** decrease from Q3 peak of 196 to 19 applications in Q3 2018/19) may be partly due to a reduction in government funding available, as well as a lack of capacity on the power grid to allow for new connections.

Fig 7.1 Renewable Energy applications, quarterly Apr 2008 – Dec 2018



The number of renewable energy applications **decided** during Q3 2018/19 was **17**; similar to both the previous quarter (18) and the same period a

year earlier (16). The figure for Q3 2018/19 represents a 93.2% decrease from the series third quarter peak of 249 decided in Q3 of 2012/13.

During the third quarter of 2018/19, the average processing time for these applications was 81.9 weeks across NI; an increase of 49.5 weeks over the quarter (from 32.4 weeks) and 21.7 weeks over the year (from 60.2 weeks).

Single wind turbines continue to be the most common renewable energy application, accounting for 12 of the 19 (63.2%) received during the third quarter of 2018/19. Over two-fifths (seven out of 17) of the renewable energy decisions issued in the third quarter of 2018/19 were for single wind turbines. [Refer to Tables 7.1, 7.2.](#)

Fig 7.2 RE applications received by authority, Q3 2017/18 & Q3 2018/19

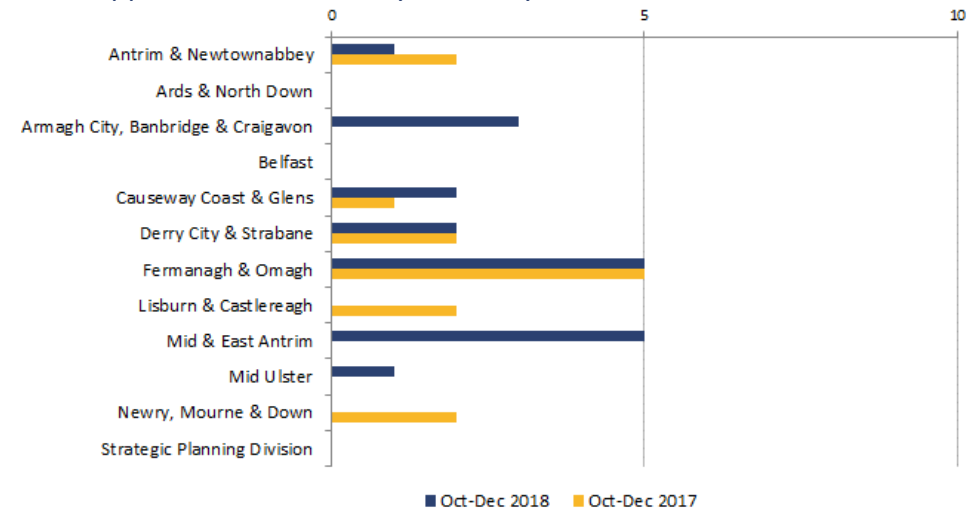
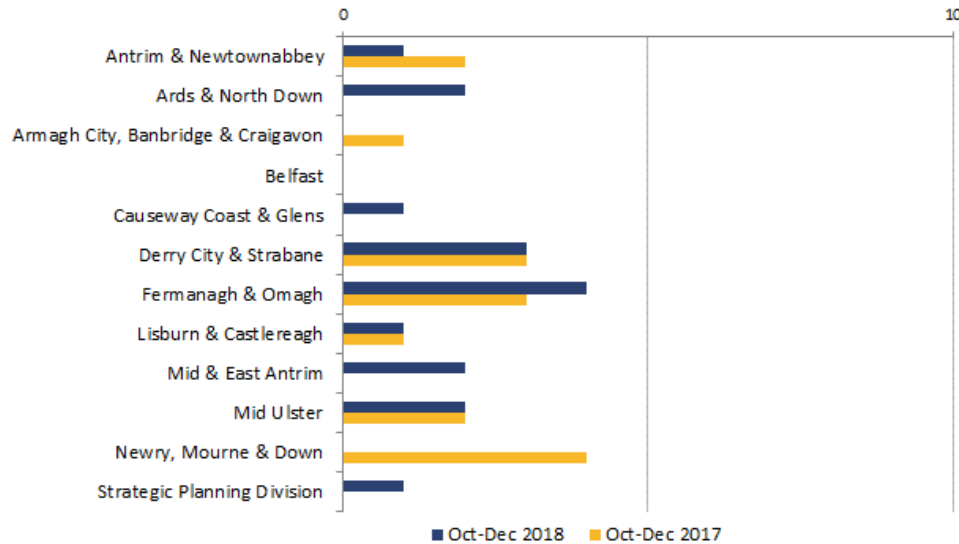


Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of renewable energy applications across planning authorities, with Fermanagh and Omagh, and Mid and East Antrim, (both five), and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (three) receiving the highest number of applications in Q3 2018/19.

Figure 7.3 shows that Fermanagh and Omagh (four), and Derry City and Strabane (three) issued the most renewable energy decisions across all planning authorities during Q3 2018/19.

Fig 7.3 RE applications decided by authority, Q3 2017/18 & Q3 2018/19

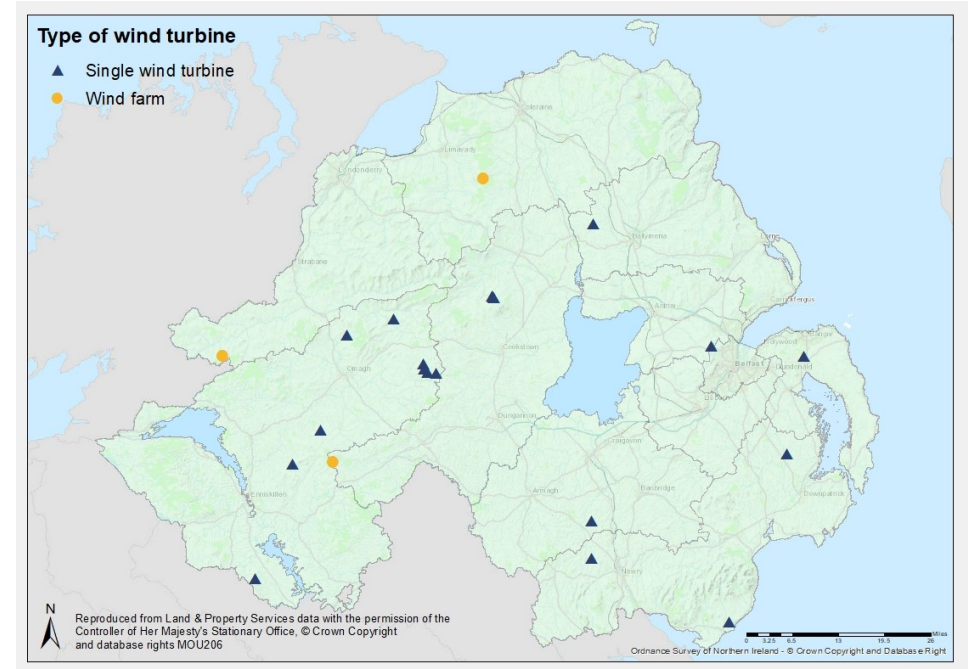


Five renewable energy applications were withdrawn during Q3 2018/19: two in Ards and North Down; and one each in Antrim and Newtownabbey, Mid Ulster, and Newry, Mourne and Down.

At the end of December 2018, there were **96 live renewable energy applications**. Of these, almost two-fifths (39.6%) were in the planning system for over a year; a decrease of 6.9 percentage points from the previous quarter (46.5%) and 26.7 percentage points from the end of December 2017 (66.3%). The majority (59.4%) of live renewable energy applications at the end of December 2018 were for single wind turbines.

The overall **NI approval rate** for renewable energy applications in Q3 2018/19 was **82.4%**; down slightly from 83.3% in Q2 2018/19, but up by 26.1 percentage points from the same period a year earlier (56.3%).

Fig 7.4 Location of approved wind energy applications by council, Apr-Dec 2018



[Refer to Tables 7.3, 7.4.](#)

Interactive maps have been developed for renewable energy planning applications by the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Sharing (NINIS) team. These maps are held on the [\(NINIS\) website](#) and direct links can be found below:

- [Single Wind Turbines](#)
- [Wind Farms](#)
- [Solar Farms](#)

User Guidance

Notes on Data Source and Quality

The records of all planning applications from 1st April 2018 to 31st December 2018 were transferred in January 2019 from a live database. This included all live planning applications in the Planning Portal. The data were validated by Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB) which involved quality checks and inspection of coding of classifications in the Planning Portal. Local councils were provided with their own headline planning statistics before the release of this publication as part of the quality assurance process. On completion of ASRB and council validation, a final extract was taken in February 2019. Quarterly data for 2018/19 are regarded as provisional and will retain this status until the annual report for 2018/19 is published in June / July 2019.

Users should be aware that quite a number of structural changes have been made to the Planning Portal and associated processes, in order to comply with new planning legislation and it will inevitably take time for these to become properly embedded.

Regionally Significant / Major / Local Development Applications after 1st April 2014

Note that a new classification hierarchy of development for planning application came into effect on 1st April 2014, on an administrative basis, with the introduction of the following new categories – regionally significant, major and local development. The hierarchy was subsequently placed on a statutory basis in line with the transfer of planning functions to the new district councils on 1st April 2015. It should be noted that there are some differences between the initial administrative hierarchy classifications in place from 1st April 2014 and the final classifications set

out in the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (S.R.2015 No.71).

Regionally significant developments (RSD) are similar to former Article 31 applications in that they will be determined by the Department. These developments have a critical contribution to make to the economic and social success of Northern Ireland as a whole, or a substantial part of the region. They also include developments which have significant effects beyond Northern Ireland or involve a substantial departure from a local development plan. Applications for these development proposals will be submitted to and determined by the Department. However, the thresholds for RSD may mean that applications which may have previously been dealt with by the Department will now be classified as major development and thus determined by the relevant council. Like major applications, RSD proposals will be subject to pre-application consultation with the community.

Major developments have important economic, social and environmental implications for a council area. The majority of applications for major developments will be dealt with by councils under the new planning system and will be subject to pre-application consultation with the community.

Local developments will comprise of all other developments (other than permitted development) that do not fall within the classes described for major or for regionally significant developments. They comprise of the vast majority of residential and minor commercial applications to be received and determined by a council.

Departmental activity

Retained Section 26 (former Article 31) applications are Major applications being processed by the Department as Article 31 (under the Planning (NI) Order 1991) and, where a decision had not issued before 1 April 2015, which will now be determined under Section 26 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

Retained Section 29 (former non Article 31) applications are those being dealt with by the Department's Strategic Planning Division which were close to determination at 1 April 2015 and which were retained for determination as if the Department had called them in under Section 29 of the Planning Act (NI) 2015.

Called-in applications are those initially made to councils where the Minister/Department directs that these should fall to the Department for determination.

It should be noted that in Section 2 of this report, processing times for 'Called-In' applications are calculated from the date the application was called in by the Department. This method is only used in Section 2 of the report in order to show Departmental processing performance. All other processing times reported in the publication are based on the date the application is made valid.

Appeals

All applicants of a planning application have the right to appeal a decision or the conditions attached to a decision. The statistics reflected in this publication only reflect the original decision and not any subsequent decision on appeal.

Enforcement Activity

Compliance and enforcement are important functions of the planning system. The summary data presented in this report and accompanying Excel tables covers enforcement cases opened, enforcement cases closed, court action taken and the live caseload as at the end of the quarter. Cases may be closed for a variety of reasons:

- case has been remedied or resolved (the breach may have been removed or amended accordingly);
- planning permission has been granted (so no breach has occurred); it would not be expedient to take further action;
- no breach has actually occurred; the breach may be immune from enforcement action (it may be outside the time limit in which to initiate action);
- Or an application has been allowed on appeal or indeed the notice has been quashed.

The time taken to conclude an enforcement case is calculated from the date the complaint is received to the earliest date of the following:

- a notice is issued;
- legal proceedings commence;
- a planning application is received;
- the case is closed.

Please note that the number of cases closed is not a sub-set of the number of cases concluded in that period - cases that are concluded in any given period may not be closed until subsequent periods, and cases that are closed in any given period may have been concluded in previous quarters.

The value at 70% is determined by sorting data from its lowest to highest values and then taking the data point at the 70th percentile of the sequence.

Processing Times

The time taken to process a decision/withdrawal is calculated from the date on which an application is deemed valid to the date on which the decision is issued or the application is withdrawn. The average processing time is the median. The median is determined by sorting data from its lowest to highest values and then taking the data point in the middle of the sequence. The median is used because some planning applications can take several years to reach a decision. As a consequence, these extreme cases (outliers) can inflate the mean to the extent that the mean may not be considered as 'typical'. Therefore the median may be taken to better represent the 'average' or 'typical' processing time.

Geographical Classification

The method of classifying the urban and rural marker has been updated to reflect the latest NISRA guidance using the 2015 Settlement limits: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/settlement-15-guidance.pdf>.

This method is preferred to the previous method as it more accurately considers which of the eight settlement bands fall into mainly urban or rural areas. The limitation of the previous method was that all settlement bands were classified as urban. Under the new method it is recognised that smaller settlements are more rural than urban in character and should be distinguished as such. Presently the mid-point of the application polygon is used to assign urban and rural bandings.

From Q2 2016/17, an additional split has been provided reporting separately rural settlements with populations of less than 5,000 people. In addition to that 'housing developments' and 'other' residential applications have been included within the urban and rural breakdowns.

If users want to compare this information with information published before 2015/16 the 'housing developments' and 'other' residential applications should be excluded first; the next step to obtain a comparative figure would be to add 'Urban settlements' (>=5,000 people) and 'Rural settlements' (<5,000 people) together.

From 2015/16 the Urban/Rural data reported in this bulletin is based on the recommended NISRA definition. To obtain rural figures in line with the NISRA definition users should add 'Rural Settlements' and 'Countryside' together.

The method of classifying the Parliamentary Constituencies is based on the x and y co-ordinates as recorded on the planning application in conjunction with Westminster Parliamentary Constituency boundaries (2008).

Note on Exclusions:

Certificates of Lawful Use or Development (CLUDs)

Certificates of Lawful Use or Development (CLUDs), either proposed or existing, have not been included in the Official Statistics bulletin since 2012/13. These are not actually applications for planning permission. A council will issue a CLUD if it is satisfied that a particular development is lawful within the provisions of planning legislation. Examples include proposed extensions, which fall within the provisions of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 for permitted development and do not require planning permission, or uses that have become lawful due to the length of time they have been in existence.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

While applications for planning permission and other consents were included in the operational statistics produced prior to transfer, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) were excluded. In the interests of consistency TPOs will also be excluded from the new operational statistics.

Non Material Changes (NMCs)

Applications for a Non Material Change (NMCs) to an existing planning permission are provided for under the 2011 Act, but they are not planning applications. There is no requirement to advertise or consult on NMCs.

Pre-Application Discussions (PADs)

Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) are not provided for in planning legislation and councils may adopt different approaches in relation to these, as may the Department.

Proposal of Application Notices (PANs)

Proposal of Application Notices (PANs) are provided for under Section 27 of the 2011 Act, but they are not planning applications. They are essentially advance notices of major/RSD planning applications and detail how a developer proposes to engage with the community. A major/RSD development planning application cannot be submitted without a PAN having been issued, community consultation undertaken and a report prepared and submitted with the application by a developer.

Discharge of Conditions (DCs)

It will be necessary to seek to discharge a condition where planning approval has been granted and a condition has been attached to the decision which requires the further consent, agreement or approval of the council (or the Department).

Further Information

Information and statistics for the other devolved administrations and Republic of Ireland can be found at the following links.

England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-applications-statistics>

Scotland:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Planning>

Wales:

<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/planningstats/development-management-quarterly-survey/?lang=en>

Republic of Ireland:

<http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/construction/>

Building Control (LPS Starts and completions):

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/new-dwelling-statistics>

Housing Bulletin, Department for Communities:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

Appendix 1 – Definitions

The Statistical Categories referred to in Section 5 and Excel Table 5.1 are defined below.

Agricultural

These include: agricultural buildings or structures for the storage of slurry and/or manure; agricultural glasshouses, stables and livery yards; and infilling of land for agricultural purposes.

Commercial

These include: food supermarkets and superstores; non-food retailing; major retail developments exceeding 1000 sq. m; alterations, extensions and improvements to buildings used for retailing; retail warehouses; clubs; post offices; factory outlets; petrol stations; offices; purpose built office developments; restaurants; car parking; and motor vehicle display, hire, repair or sale.

Government and Civic

These include: police stations; coastguard stations; civic amenity sites; recycling centres; schools and colleges; hospitals; clinics; other medical establishments including surgeries and dental practices; and 'hard infrastructure' facilities such as roads, water mains, water treatment works, trunk sewers, waste water treatment works and natural gas pipelines. This also includes: recreational facilities, including indoor and outdoor sports facilities, and swimming pools; and renewable energy applications, including wind turbines, wind farms, solar panels, biomass burners, hydroelectric schemes etc. Note that this category also includes non-public sector applications related to the above topics.

Industrial and Manufacturing

These include: factories; warehousing; light and general industrial floor space; quarries; sand and gravel extraction; and fuel depots.

Mixed Development

These include applications for mixed development, incorporating a number of development types such as residential, retailing, offices, community and leisure.

Residential

These include: housing developments (incorporating a mixture of house types and apartments); purpose built apartment developments; sheltered housing schemes; single dwellings including dwellings on farms; holiday chalets; caravans and mobile homes; alteration, extension or improvement of existing dwellings; residential homes or nursing homes; and hotels or motels.

Change of Use

These include applications for a change in the use of land or buildings, including changes to residential, retailing, offices, community or leisure uses.

Other types of application

All other types of applications not mentioned above are put into the 'Other' category but mainly comprise 'Works to Facilitate Persons Who Are Disabled', 'Advertisements', and 'Listed Buildings'.

The application types referred to in Excel Table 5.6 are defined below.

Outline permission

An application for outline planning permission can be used to ascertain whether a proposed development is acceptable in principle. This usually means that detailed drawings are not needed. However, the council or, as the case may be, the Department, may, in certain circumstances, require the submission of additional information or insist that an application for full planning permission be submitted.

Full permission

An application for full planning permission requires the submission of all details of the proposal. This type of application would be appropriate, for example, if the erection of new buildings is proposed and / or if a change of use of land or buildings is proposed.

Approval of Reserved Matters

If outline planning permission is granted, then a subsequent application and approval relating to the siting, design, external appearance, means of access and landscaping details, known as 'reserved matters', will be required before building work can commence. The reserved matters application must be consistent with the outline planning permission and take into account any conditions that have been attached to it. If the development proposal changes, then it may be necessary to submit a new planning application.

Consent to Display an Advertisement

Advertisement consent is normally required to display an advertisement, particularly large signs and illuminated adverts.

Listed Building Consent

Works that would affect the character of a listed building need listed building consent. This includes work to the internal or external fabric of the building or any demolition. It should be noted that the requirement for Listed Building Consent is in addition to any requirement for planning permission for works to a listed building.

Conservation Area Consent

Works that would entail the full or partial demolition of a non-listed building in a conservation area need conservation area consent. It should be noted that the requirement for Conservation Area Consent may be in addition to any requirement for planning permission.

Hazardous Substances Consent

The Planning (Hazardous Substances) (No2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 are concerned with the storage and use of hazardous substances which could, in quantities at or above specified limits, present a risk. Hazardous Substances Consent ensures that hazardous substances can be kept or used in significant amounts only after the council or, as the case may be, the Department has had the opportunity to assess the degree of risk arising to persons in the surrounding area and to the environment.

Reader Information

This document may be made available in alternative formats, please contact us to discuss your requirements.