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Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde



Department for
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An Roinn
Bonneagair

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Northern Ireland Planning Monitoring Framework 2019/20



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Introduction

The planning system in Northern Ireland has undergone a period of considerable change in recent years. Under the [Planning Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#), from 1 April 2015 the majority of planning functions were devolved from the former Department of the Environment¹ to 11 newly re-organised councils².

While there are currently three statutory planning indicators, it is considered that these do not fully reflect all the work carried out by planning authorities. This framework aims to address this by presenting additional data on other planning-related activity.

The bulletin and accompanying [Excel tables](#) present a summary of the current framework indicators for Northern Ireland, as well as relevant indicator data for each local planning authority, for 2019/20³. Comparable data from 2018/19, the first year the framework was published, are also included where available.

This framework has been developed by the Department for Infrastructure (the 'Department') in collaboration with local planning authorities, and has been informed by best practice in other jurisdictions. The agreed list of indicators under the new framework include the three existing statutory indicators and an existing departmental indicator. These indicators⁴ are:

Indicator 1	Average processing time taken to determine major applications ⁵
Indicator 1.1	Average time taken to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)
Indicator 2	Average processing time taken to determine local applications ⁵
Indicator 2.1	Average time taken to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)
Indicator 3	Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks ⁵
Indicator 4	Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers
Indicator 5	Number of applications decided by planning committee and percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation
Indicator 6	Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that are dismissed ⁶
Indicator 7	Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) and number of claims awarded ⁶
Indicator 8	The Department to progress regionally significant planning applications (RSD) from date valid to a ministerial recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks ⁷
Indicator 9	Number of applications notified to the Department and the number of these processed within the period of 28 days

¹ Note that from 8 May 2016, Ministerial responsibility for planning transferred from the former Department of the Environment to the newly-formed Department for Infrastructure following departmental re-organisation.

² There are currently 12 planning authorities in Northern Ireland – the Department for Infrastructure and the 11 councils (local planning authorities).

³ For the purposes of this bulletin, 2019/20 refers to the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

⁴ For more detailed information on each of the indicators, please see [Appendix 1: Notes on indicators](#).

⁵ This is an existing statutory indicator.

⁶ Data are available for 2019/20 only.

⁷ This indicator has been revised for 2019/20. Please see [Appendix 1: Notes on indicators](#) for further information.

The Department also retains responsibility for production and publication of [quarterly Official Statistics bulletins](#) relating to the volume of planning and enforcement activity for the planning authorities and Northern Ireland as a whole.

These bulletins also report on local planning authorities' and overall NI performance against the three existing statutory indicators, mentioned above, as set out in Schedules 3 and 4 of [The Local Government \(Performance Indicators and Standards\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#):

- Major applications to be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 30 weeks;
- Local applications to be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks;
- 70% of all enforcement cases dealt with by councils are progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.

Future Releases

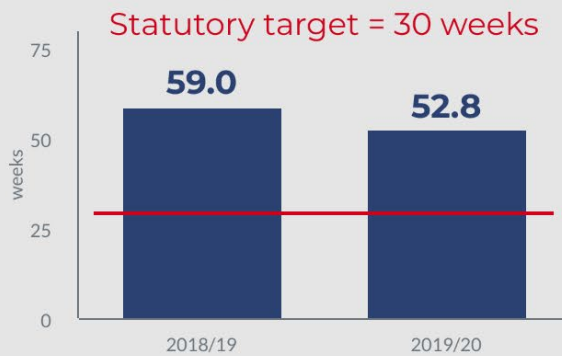
The next update of the Northern Ireland Planning Monitoring Framework, with data for 2020/21, is due to be published in Autumn 2021. The Department, in conjunction with local planning authorities will review indicators and definitions based on lessons learnt, trends, priorities and aspirations. As such, it is envisaged that this framework will evolve over time.

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

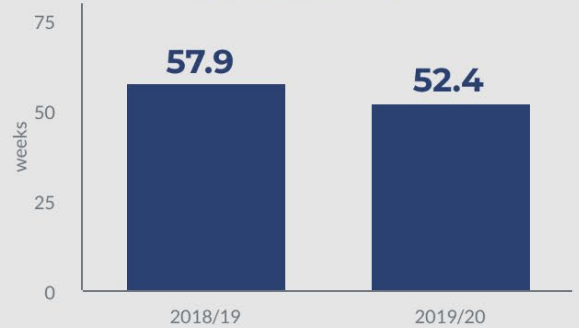
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications*

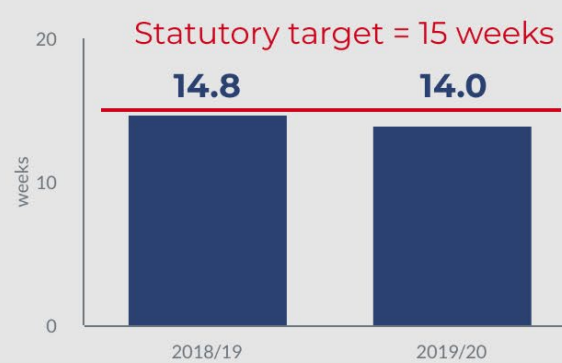


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)*

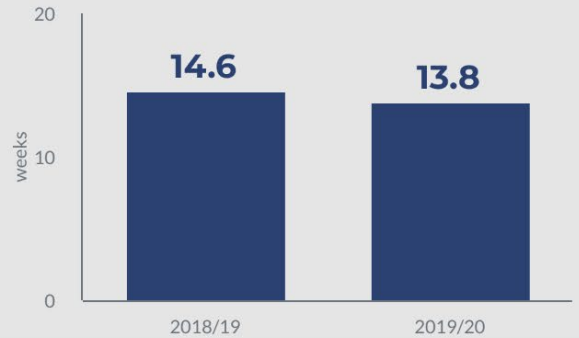


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications*

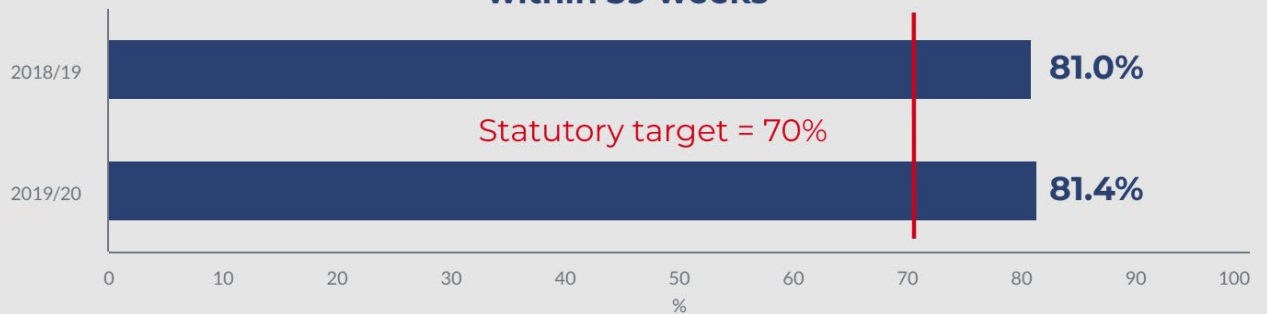


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)*



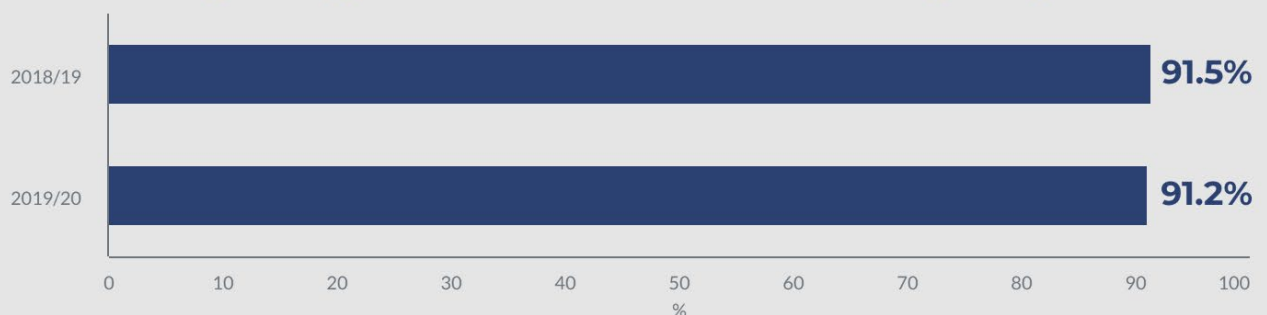
Enforcement

Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks*



Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers*



*Excludes Department for Infrastructure

Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee*:

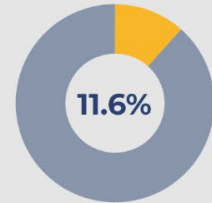
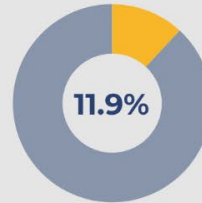


2018/19	2019/20
1,084	1,060

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation*:

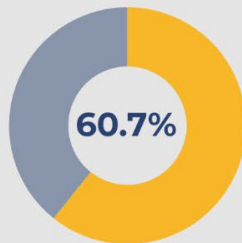
2018/19

2019/20



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed* in 2019/20**



108 out of **178** appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in **2019/20** were dismissed (**60.7%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20**:



45

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20**:



36

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



9

awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

Department for Infrastructure activity

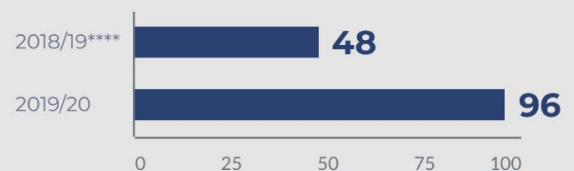
The Department to progress regionally significant planning applications (RSD) from date valid to a ministerial recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks***



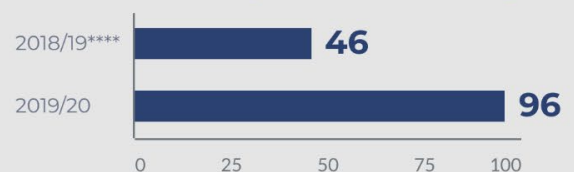
0 RSD applications progressed in 2019/20

Further details can be found on page 11 of the Northern Ireland planning statistics 2019/20: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-2019-march-2020>

Number of applications notified to the Department:



Number of these processed within the period of 28 days:



*Excludes Department for Infrastructure

**Data available for 2019/20 only

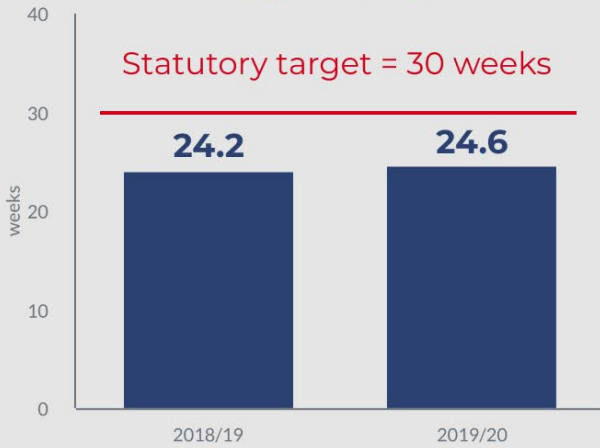
***From 2019/20 onwards, this replaces the previous indicator. See Appendix 1 - Notes and Definitions for further information.

****The time period for these data is August 2018 - March 2019 (inclusive).

Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications



Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

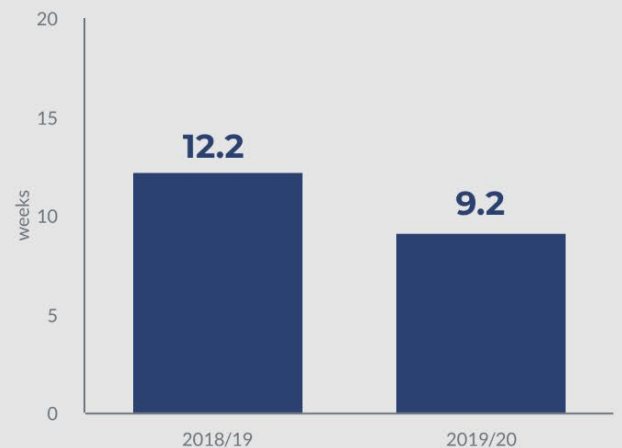


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

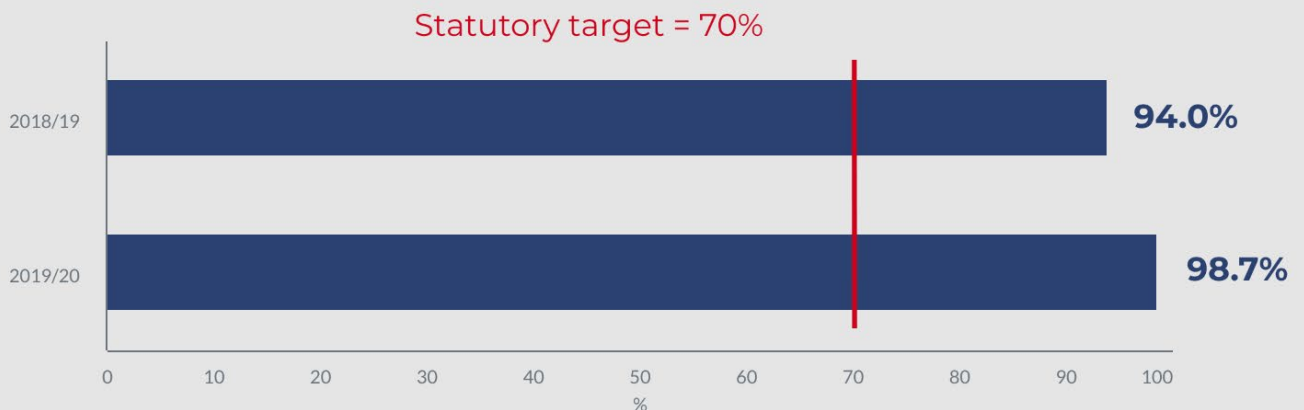


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

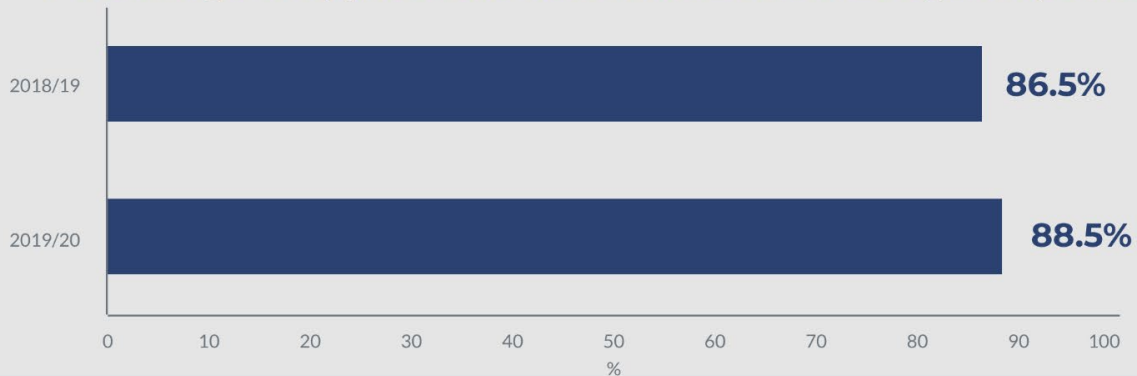
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



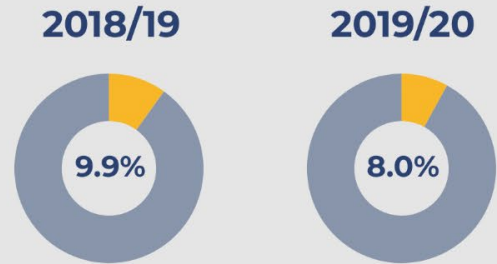
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



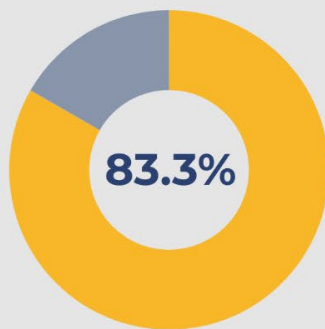
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	101
2019/20	87

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



10 out of **12** appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in **2019/20** were dismissed (**83.3%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



5

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



3

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



2

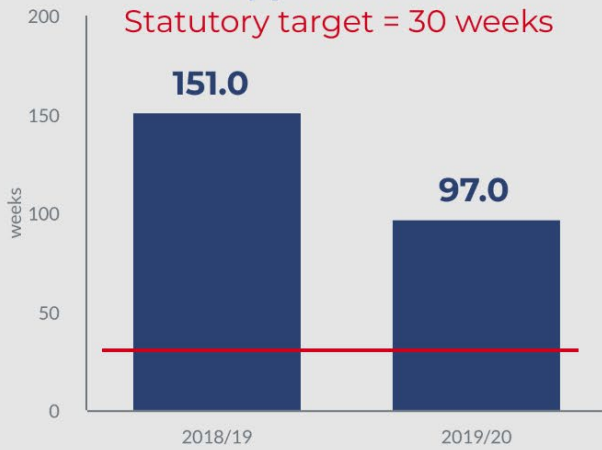
awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

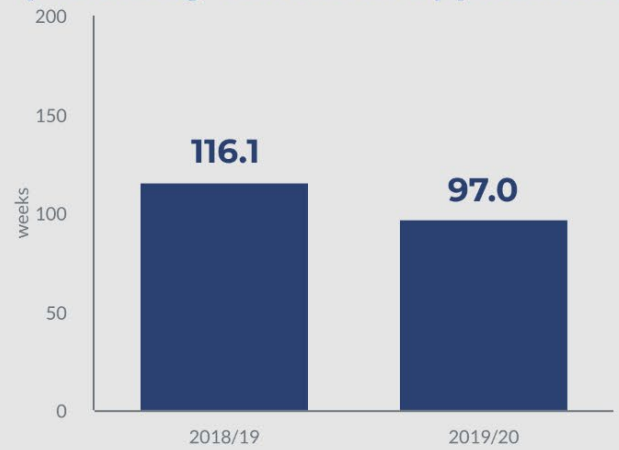
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

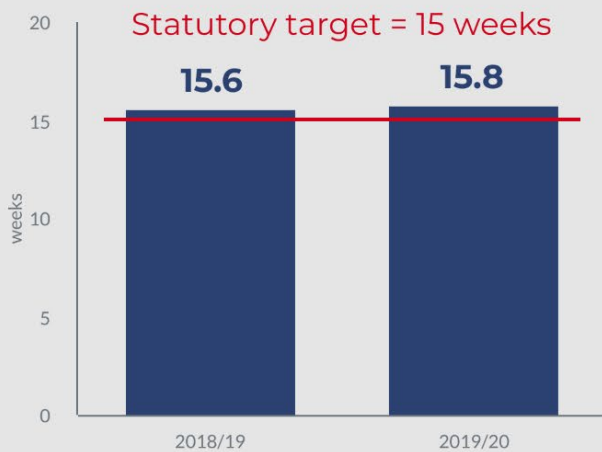


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

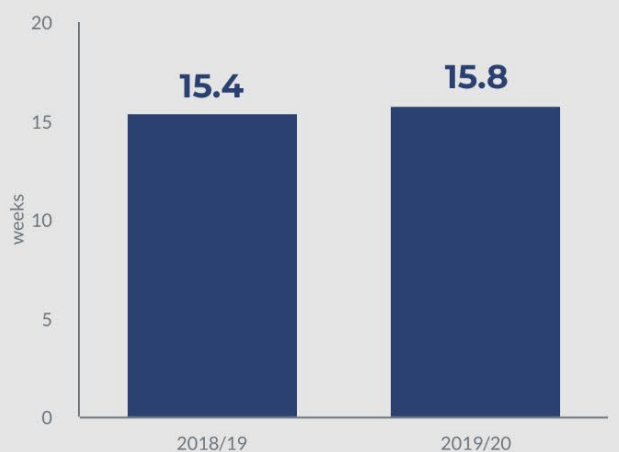


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

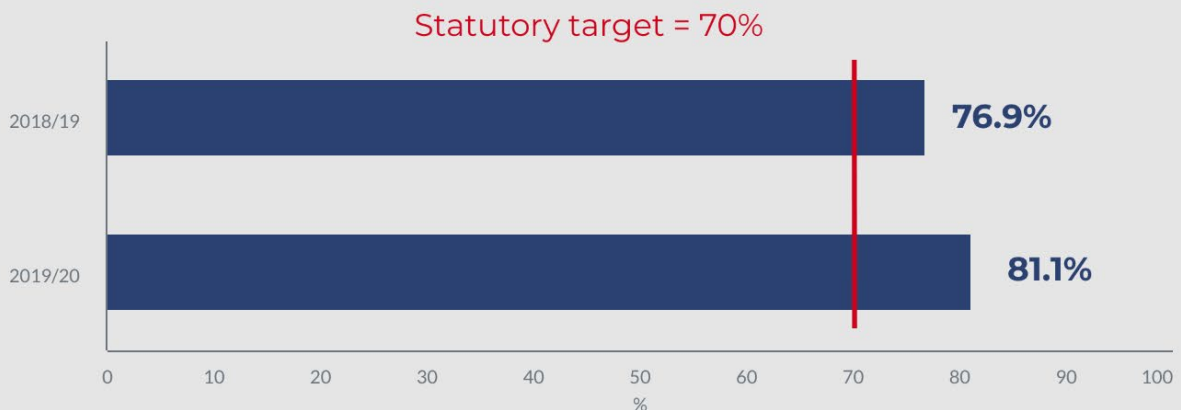


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

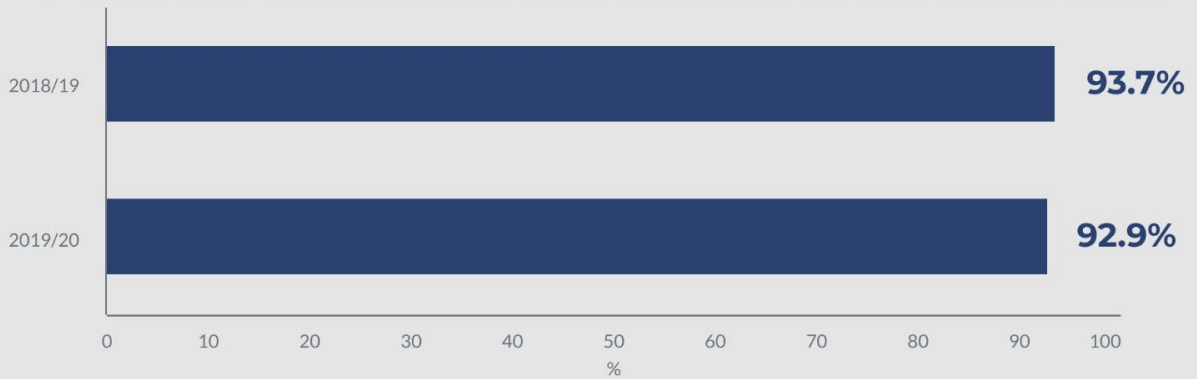
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



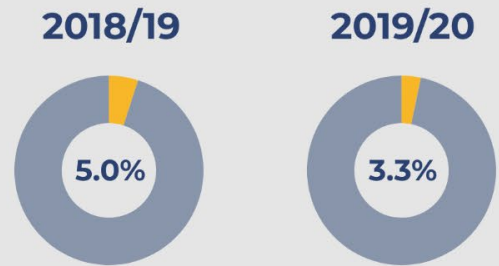
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



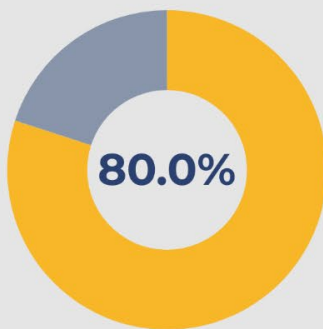
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	60
2019/20	60

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



4 out of 5 appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in 2019/20 were dismissed (80.0%)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



1

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



1

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



0

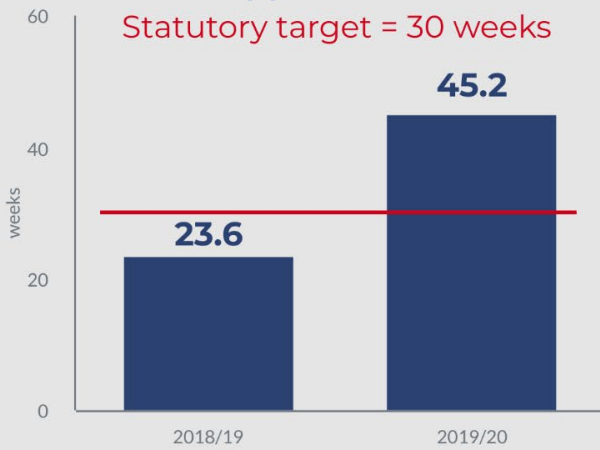
awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

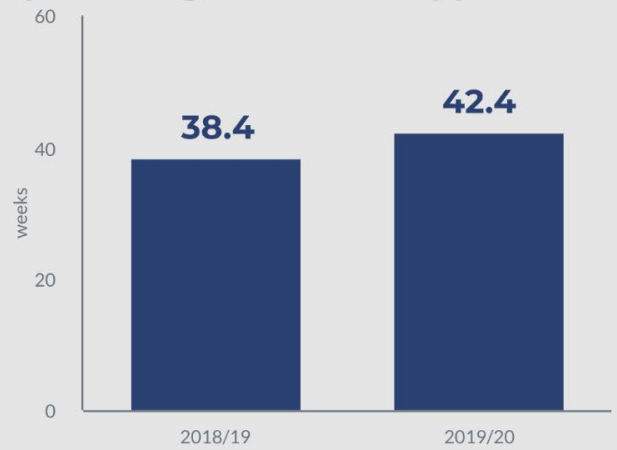
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

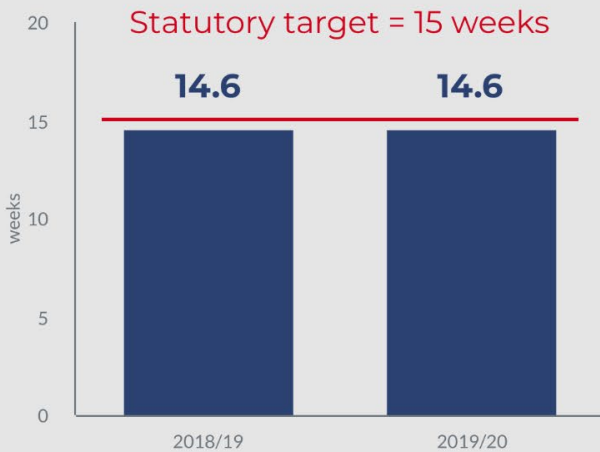


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

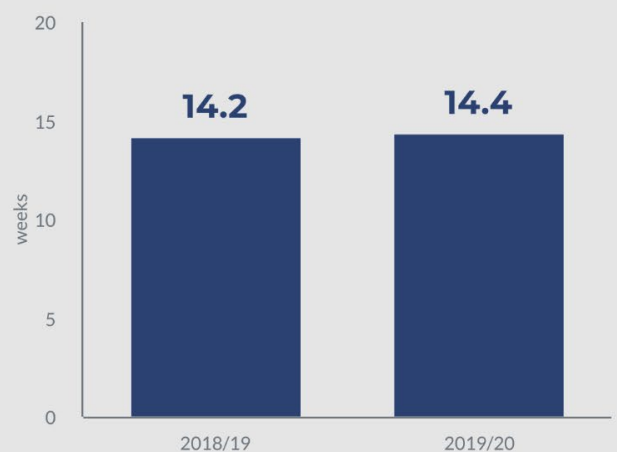


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

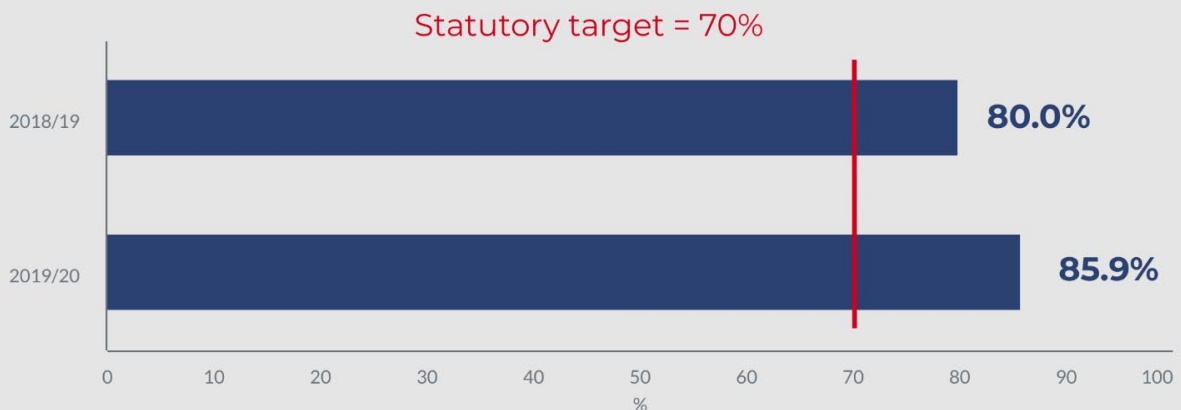


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

Enforcement

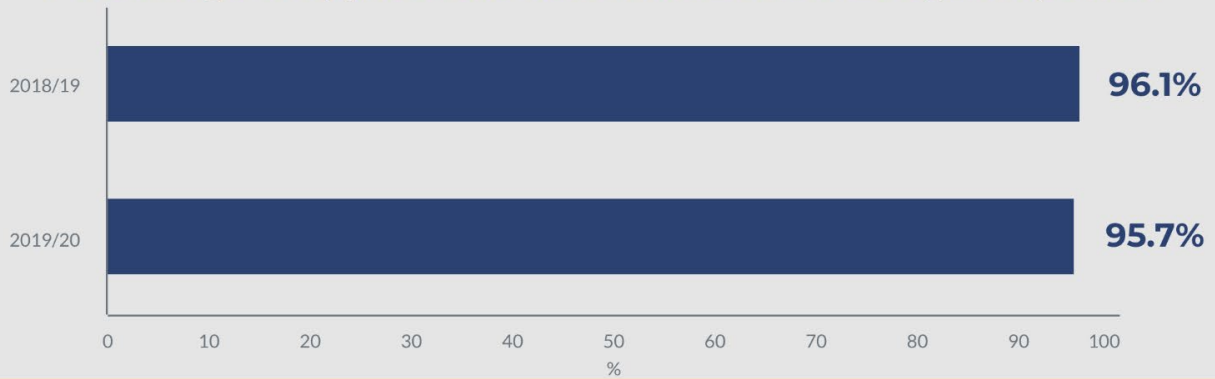




Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



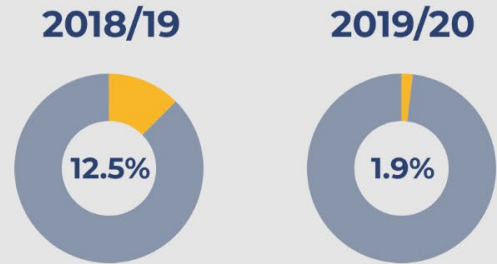
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



Year	Number of applications
2018/19	48
2019/20	53

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



12 out of **12** appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in **2019/20** were dismissed (**100.0%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



4

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



1

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



3

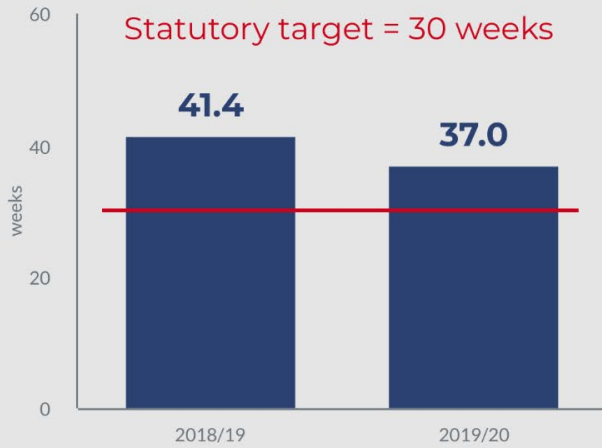
awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

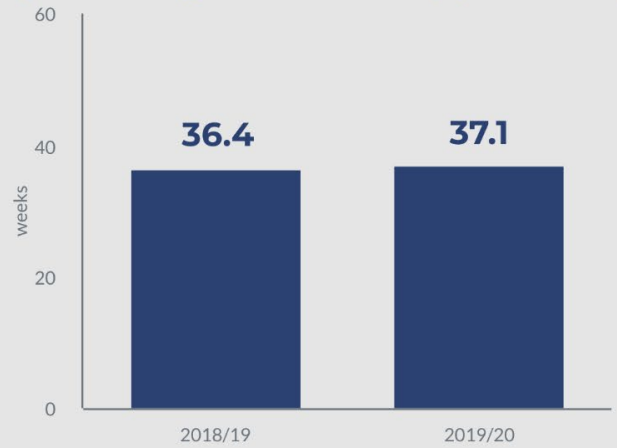
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

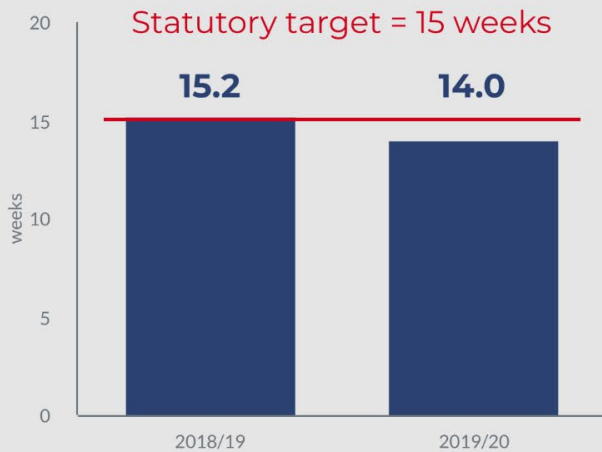


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

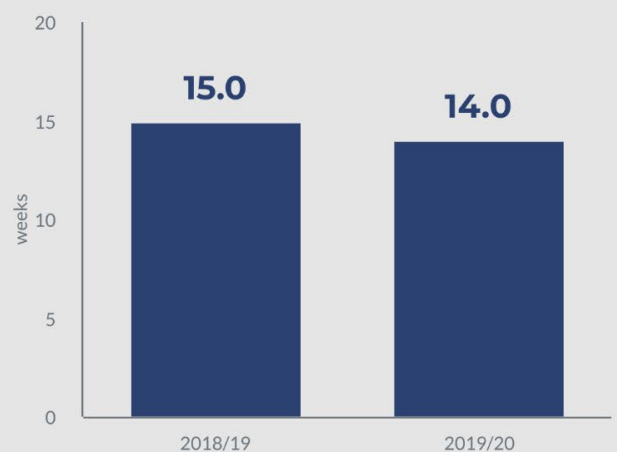


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

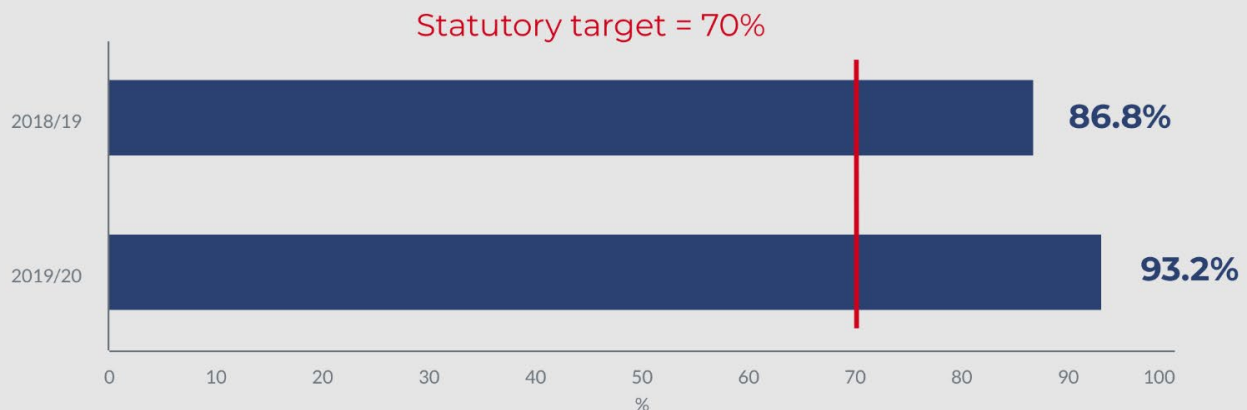


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

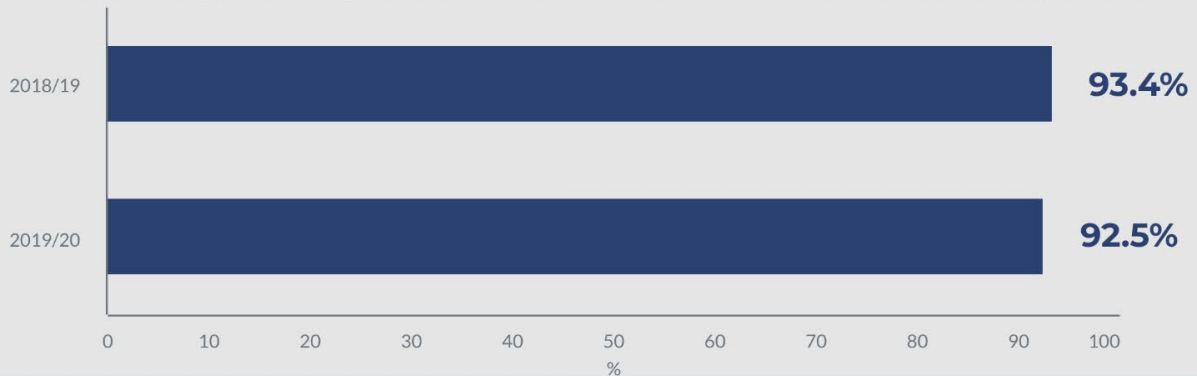
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



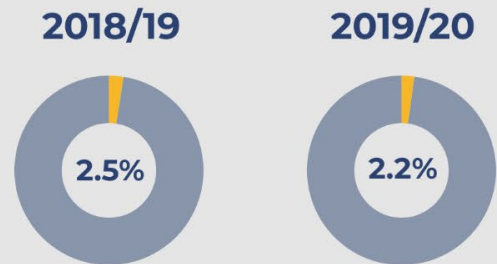
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



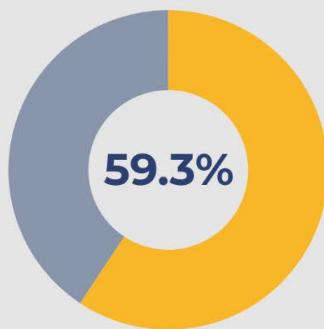
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	118
2019/20	139

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



16 out of 27 appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in 2019/20 were dismissed (59.3%)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



3

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



2

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour

1

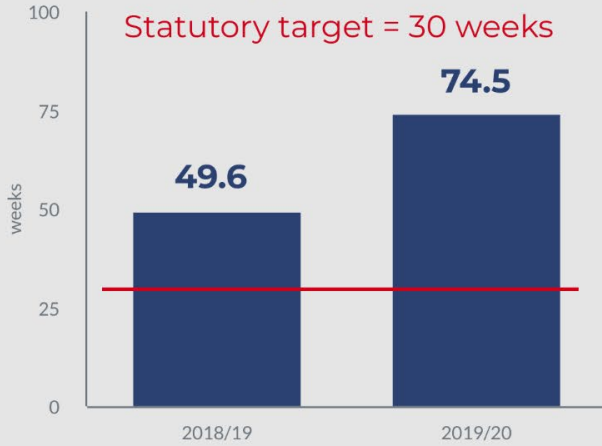
awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

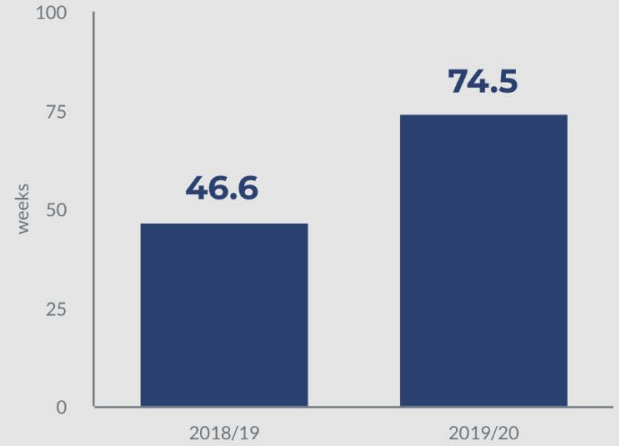
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

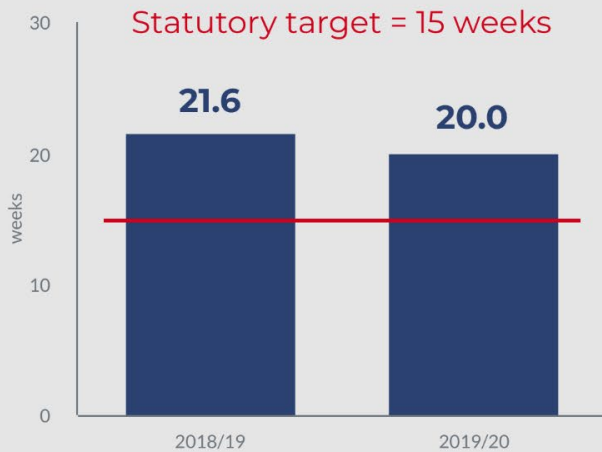


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

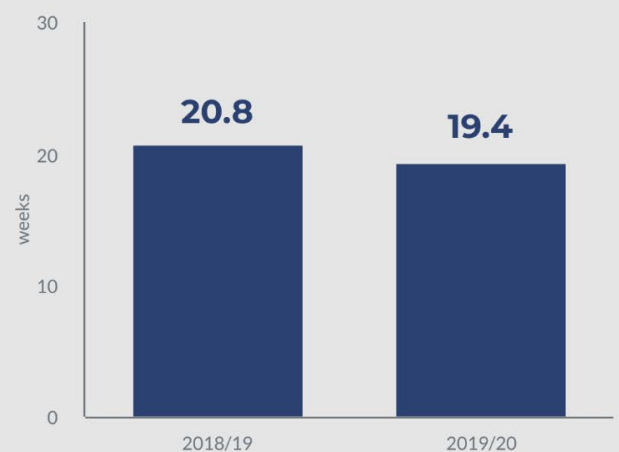


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

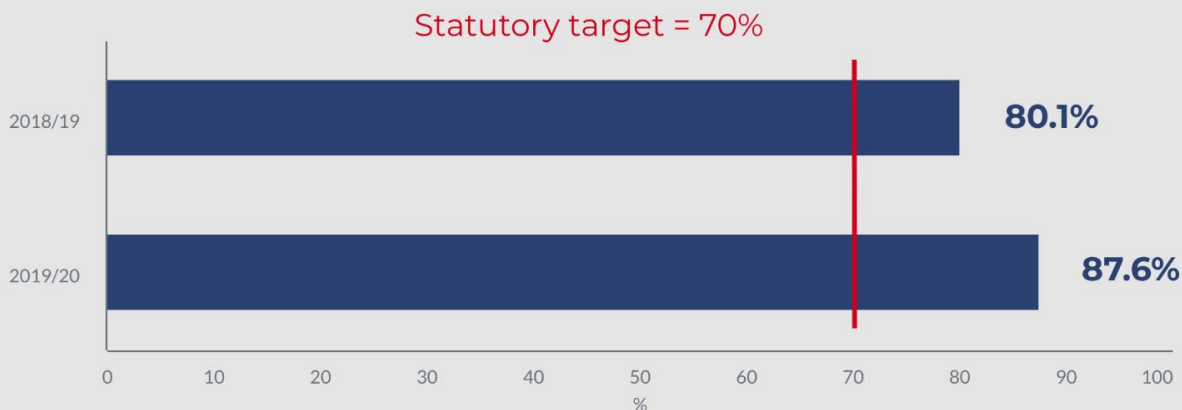


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

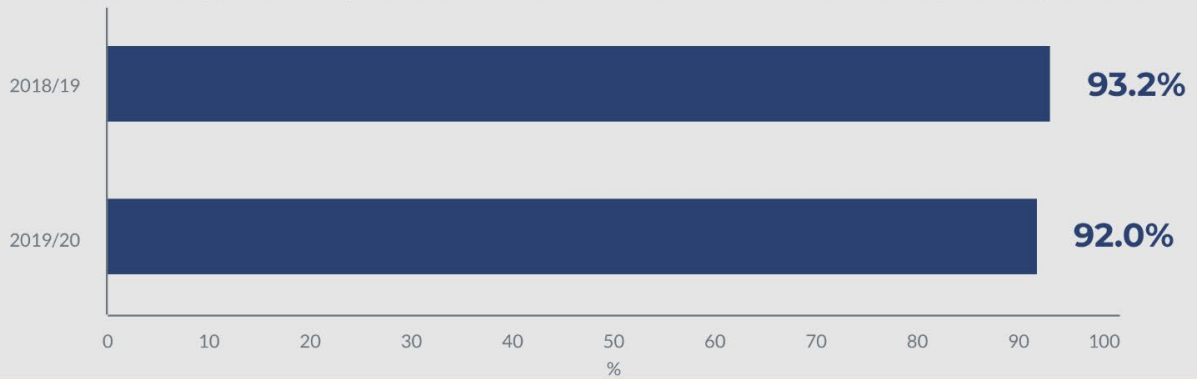
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



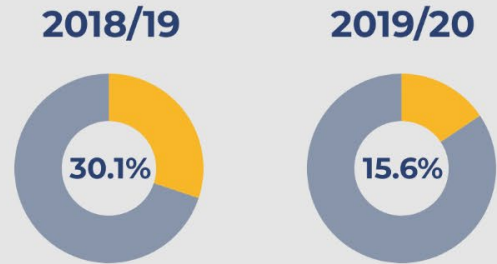
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



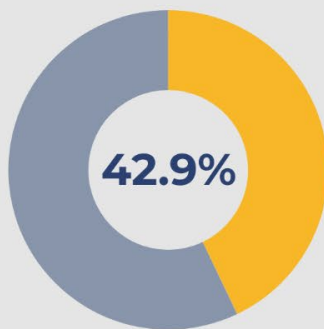
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	93
2019/20	90

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



6 out of 14 appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in 2019/20 were dismissed (42.9%)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



6

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



5

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour

1

awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.



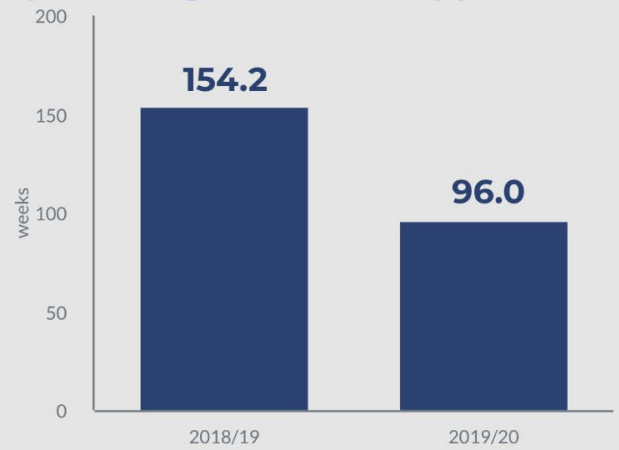
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

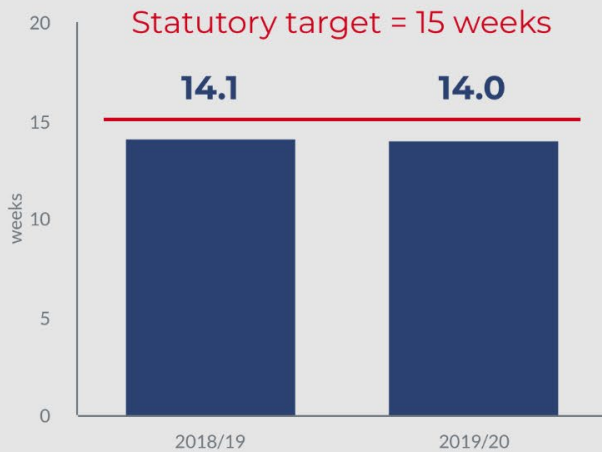


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

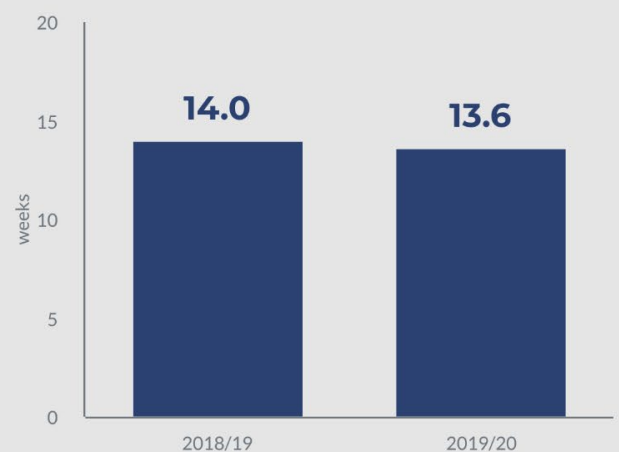


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

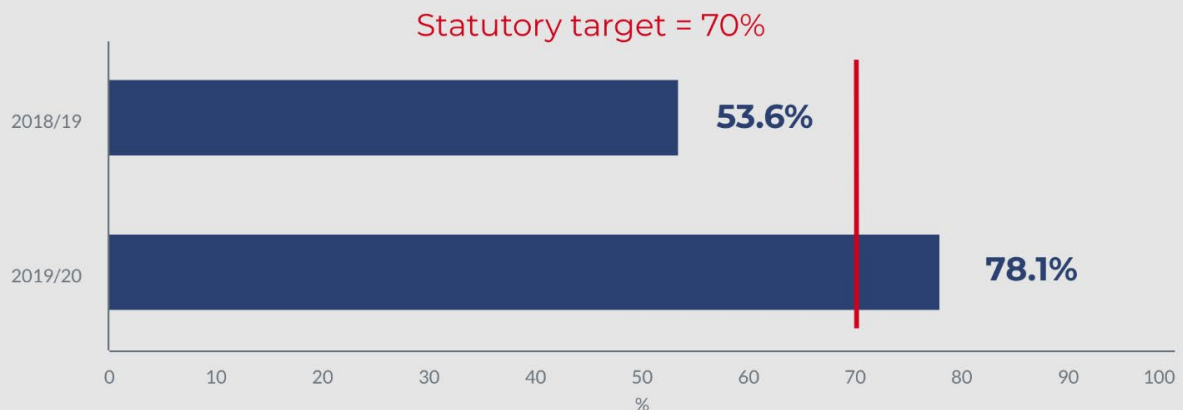


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

Enforcement

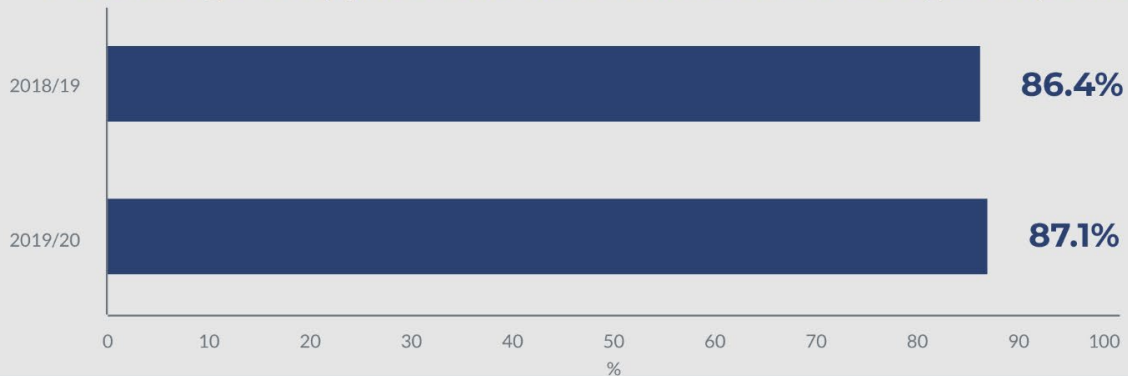




Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



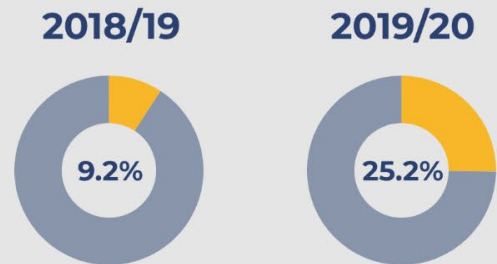
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



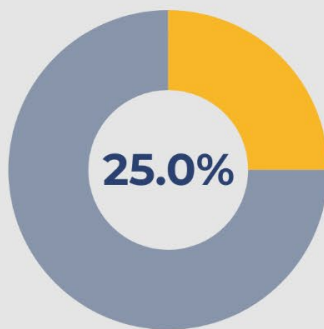
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	119
2019/20	103

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



2 out of 8 appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in 2019/20 were dismissed (25.0%)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



4

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



3

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



1

awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

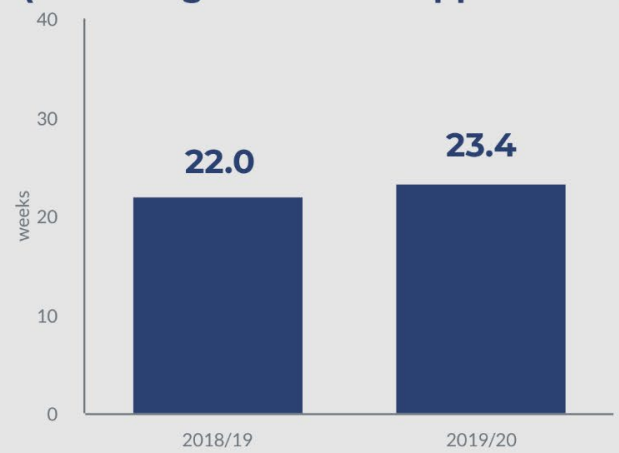
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

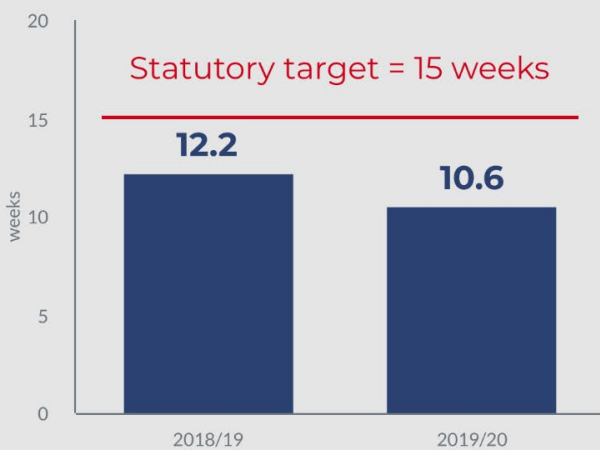


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

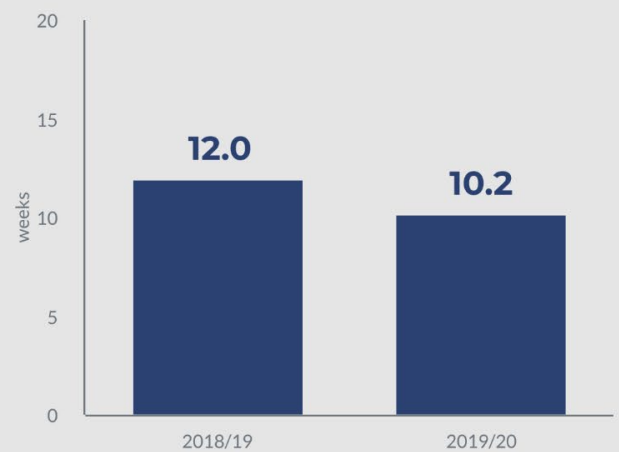


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

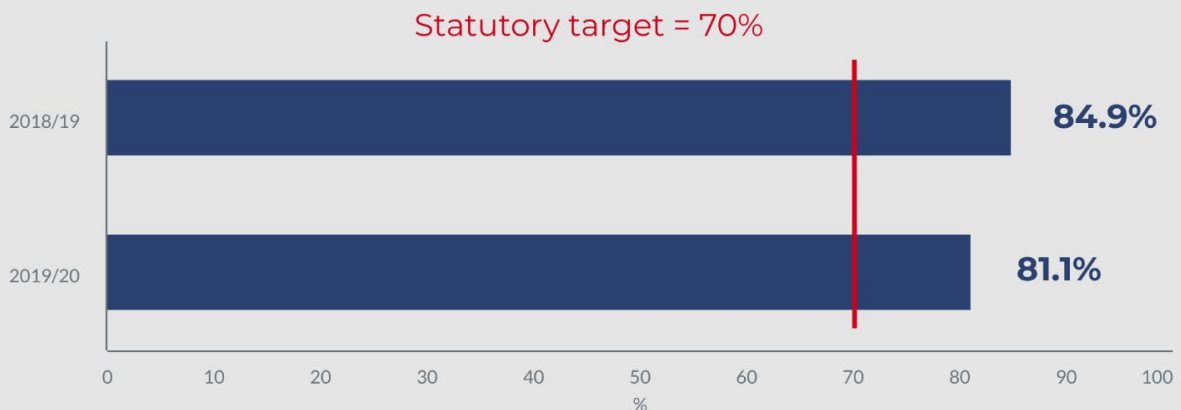


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

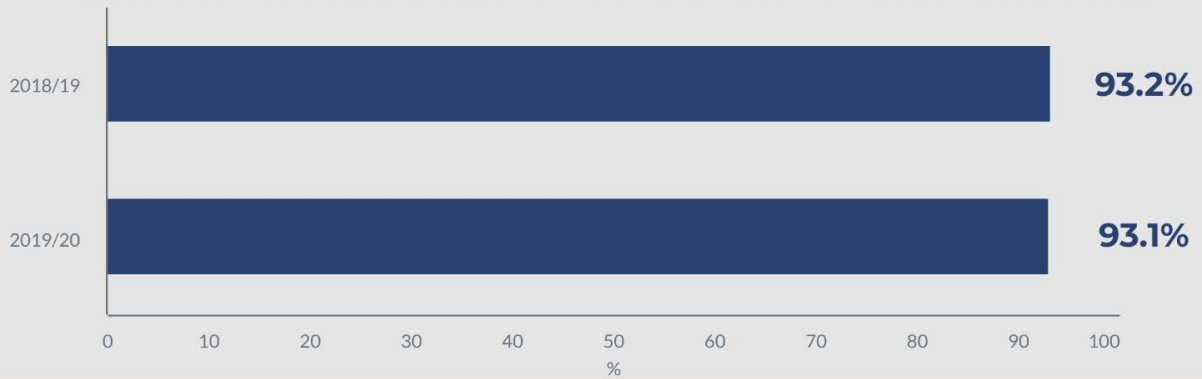
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



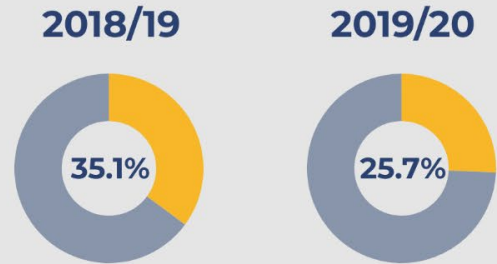
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



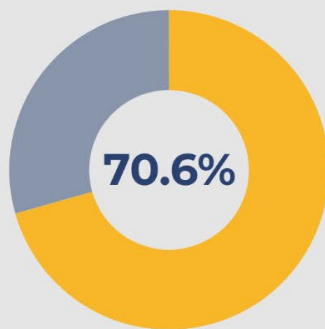
2018/19 **77**
2019/20 **70**

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



12 out of **17** appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in **2019/20** were dismissed (**70.6%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



11

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



11

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



0

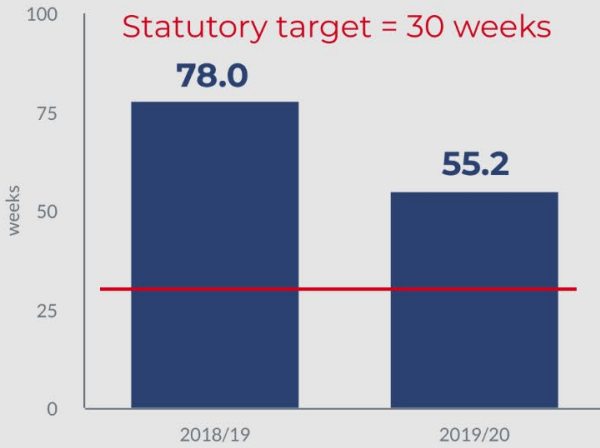
awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

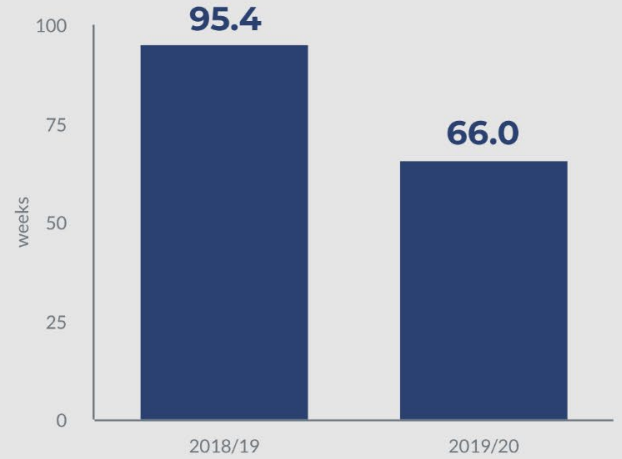
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

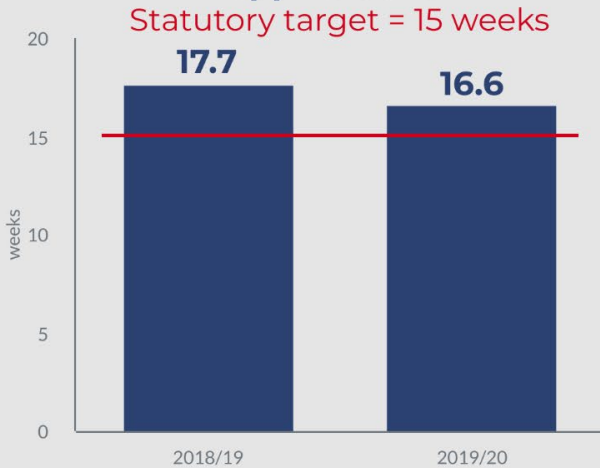


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

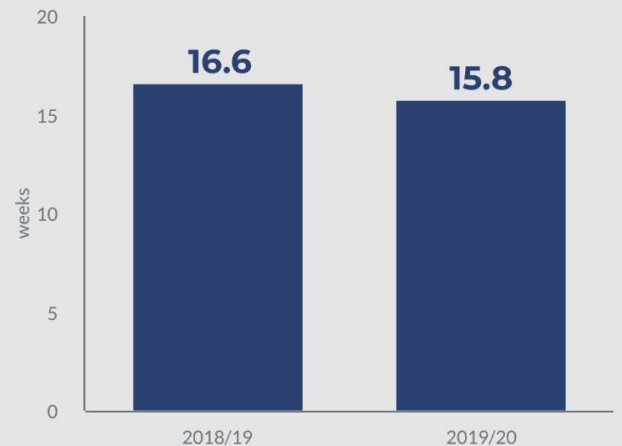


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

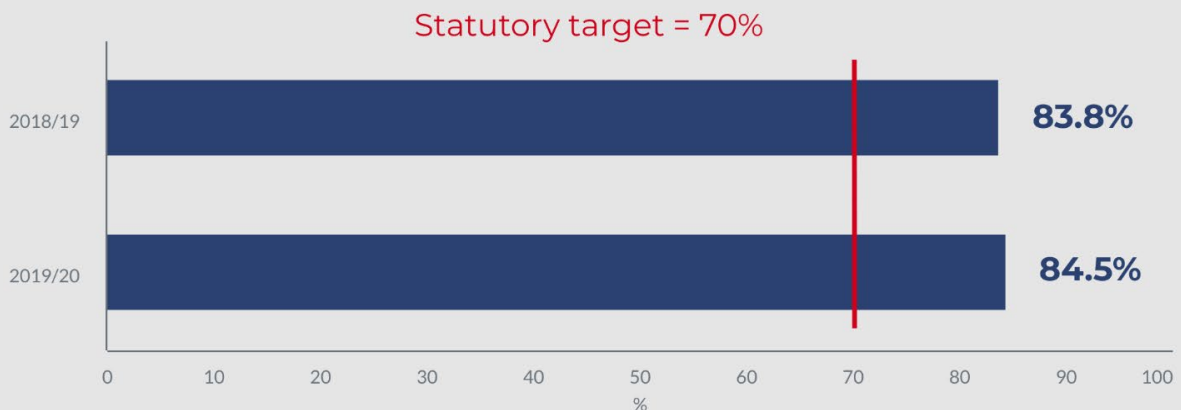


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

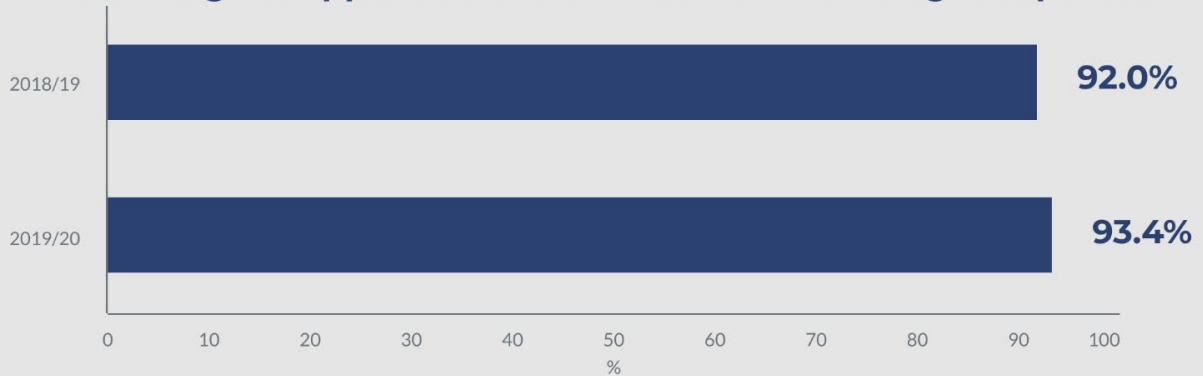
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



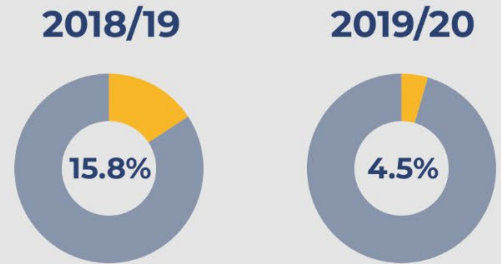
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



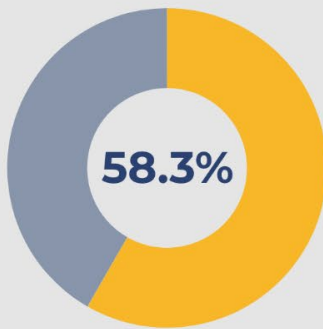
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	76
2019/20	67

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



7 out of **12** appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in **2019/20** were dismissed (**58.3%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



1

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



1

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



0

awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.



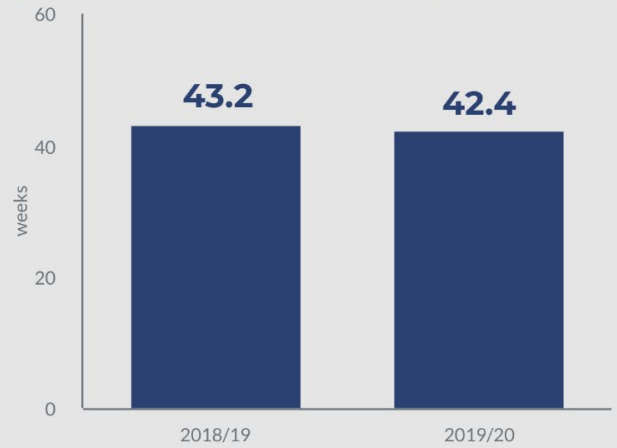
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

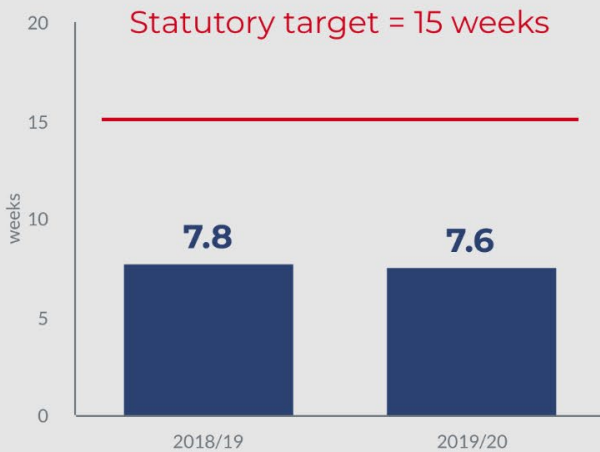


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

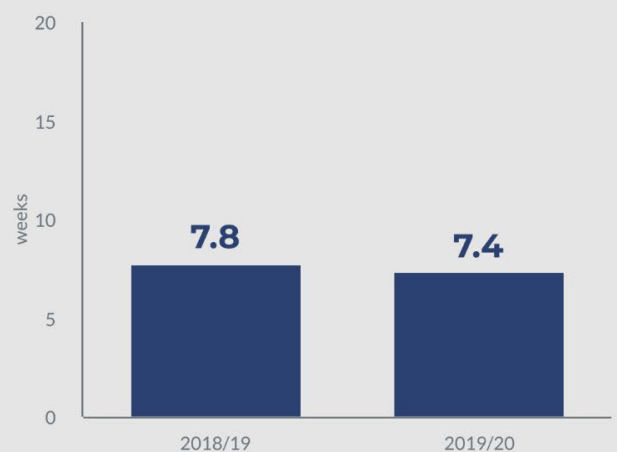


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

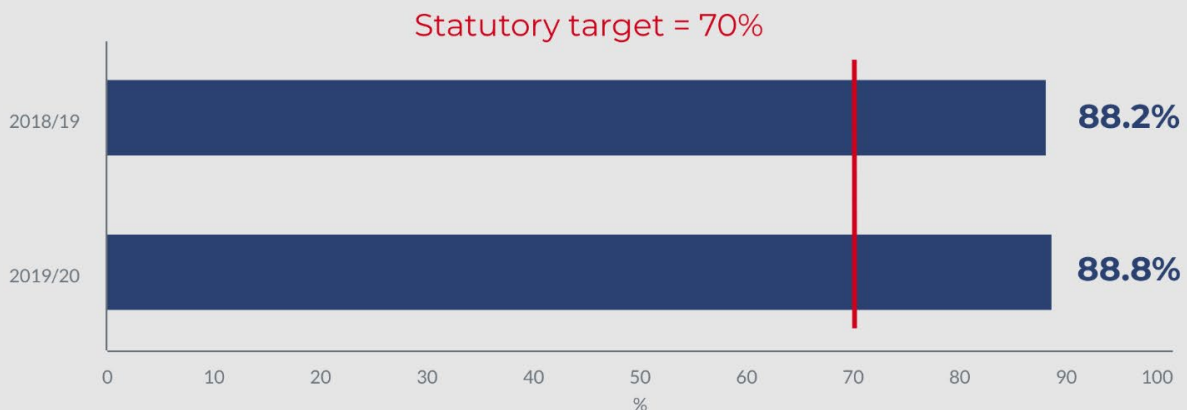


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

Enforcement

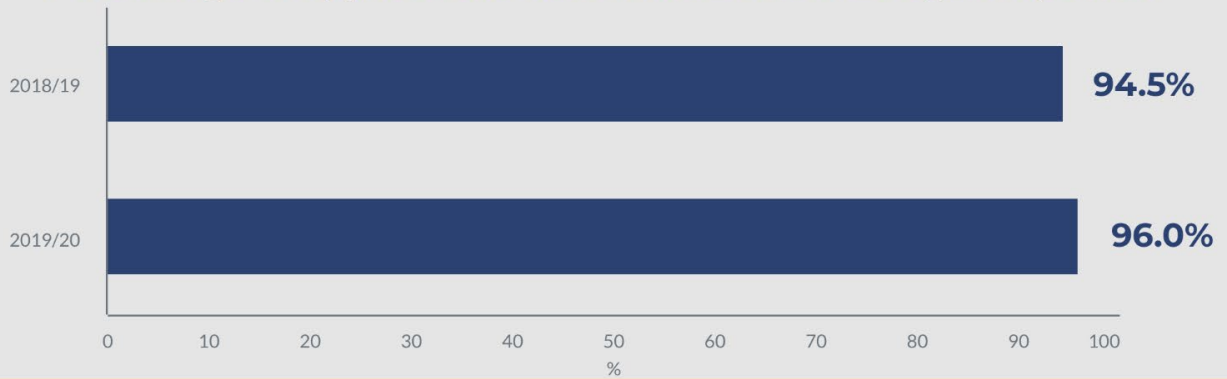




Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



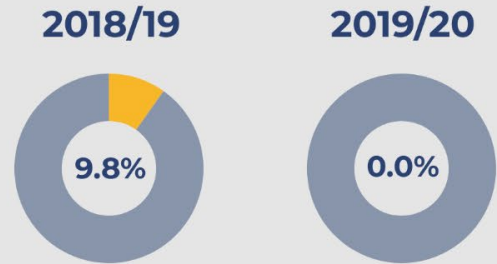
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



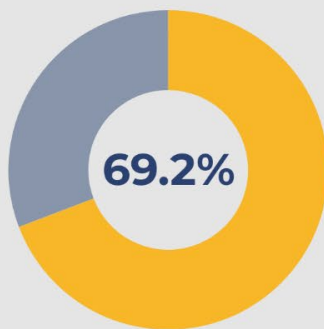
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	51
2019/20	27

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



9 out of **13** appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in **2019/20** were dismissed (**69.2%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



1

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



1

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



0

awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

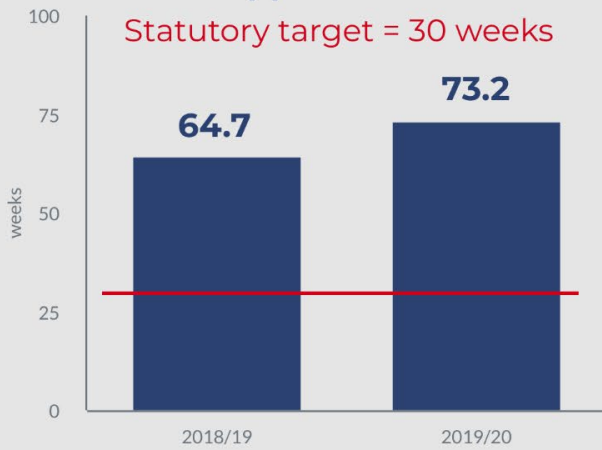
*Data available for 2019/20 only.



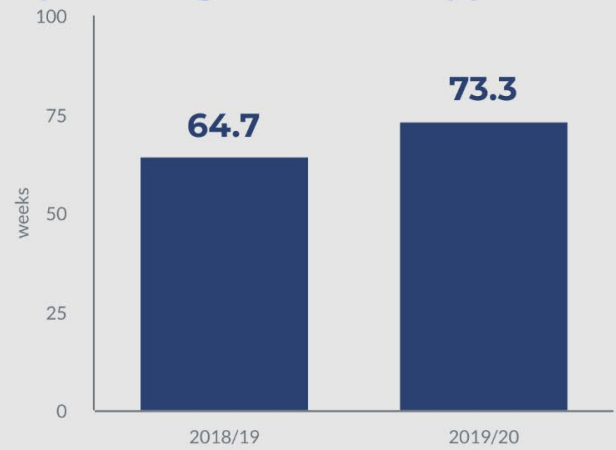
Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

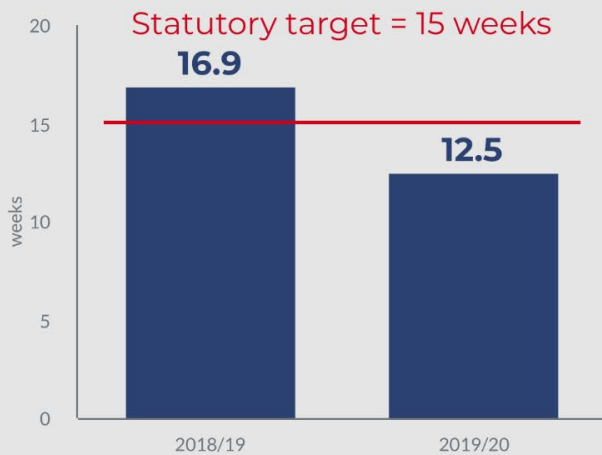


Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

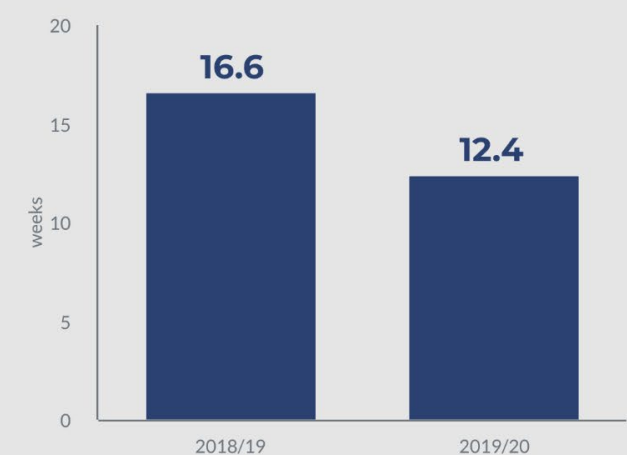


Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

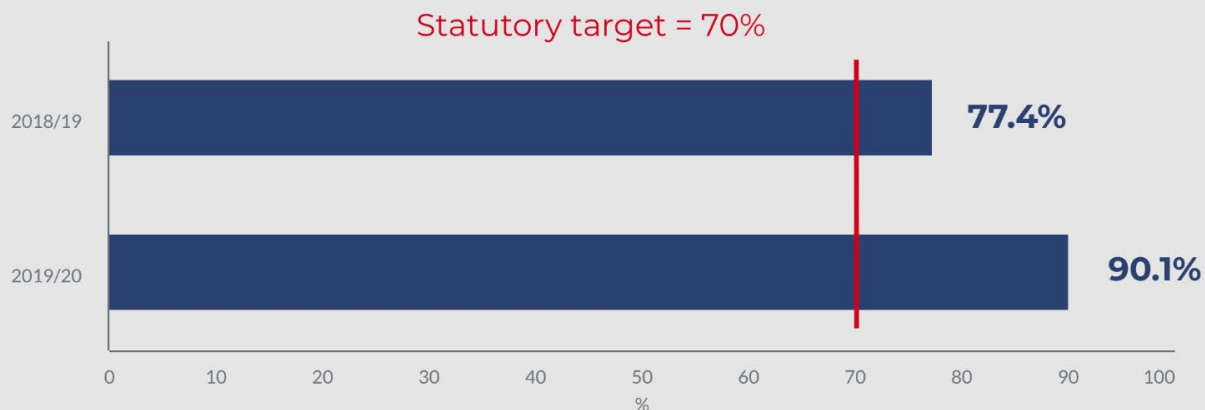


Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

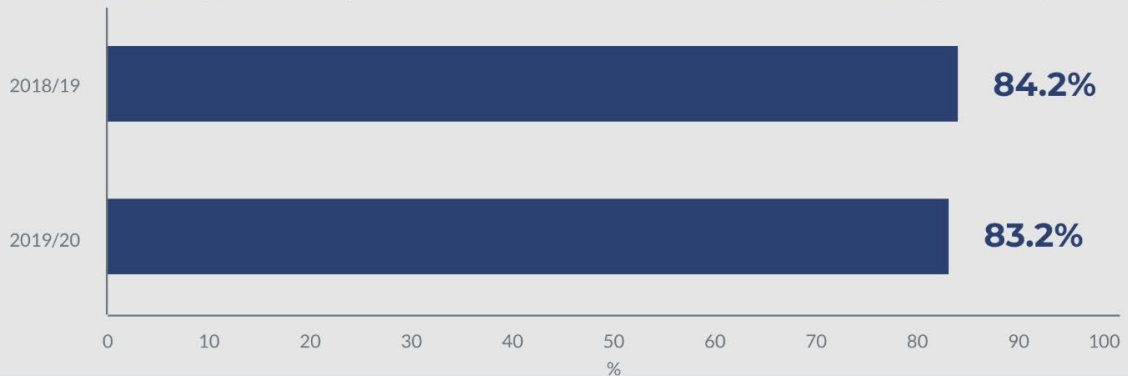
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



Year	Number of applications
2018/19	224
2019/20	221

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



1 appeal against refusal of planning permission was decided in **2019/20** and this was dismissed (**100.0%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



2

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



2

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour



0

awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

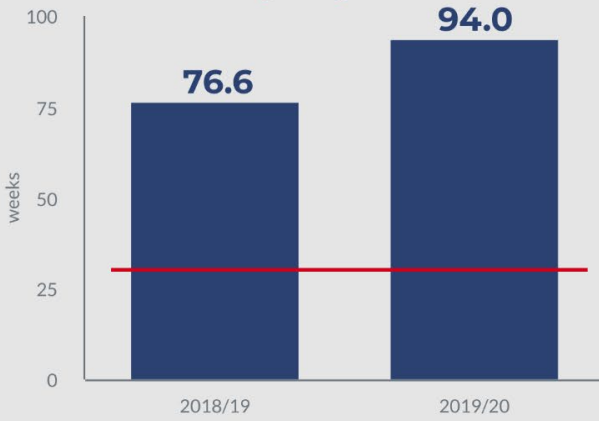


Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

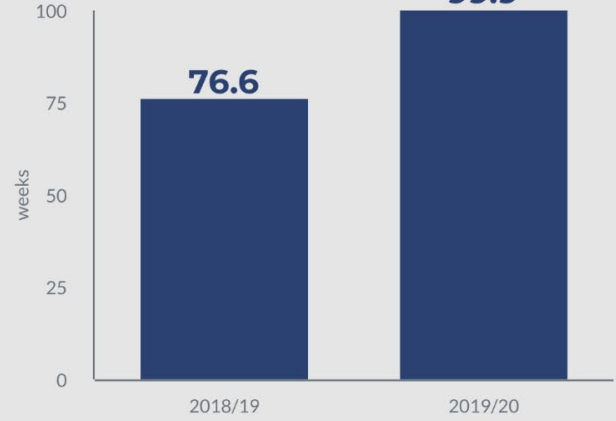
Major applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine major applications

Statutory target = 30 weeks



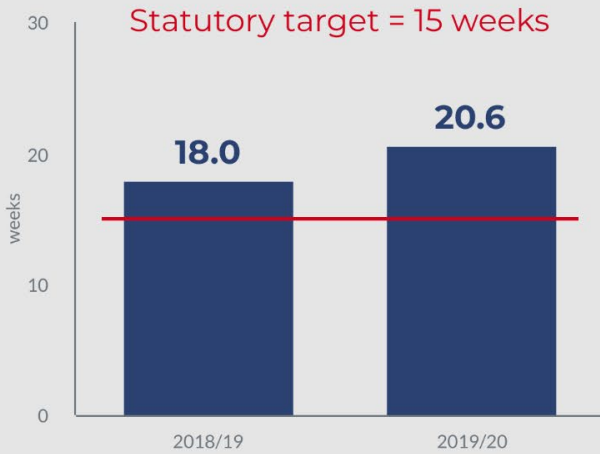
Average time taken (weeks) to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



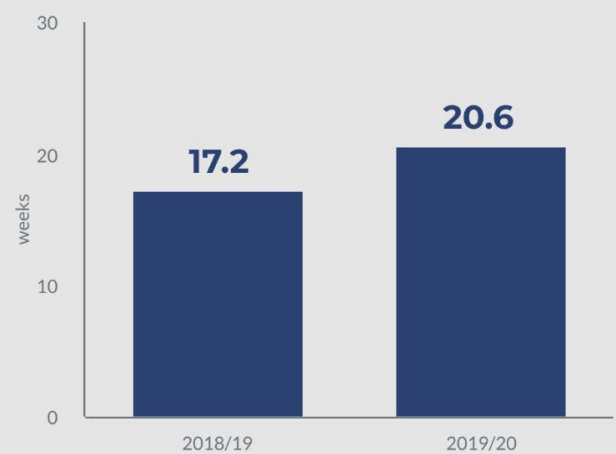
Local applications

Average processing time taken (weeks) to determine local applications

Statutory target = 15 weeks



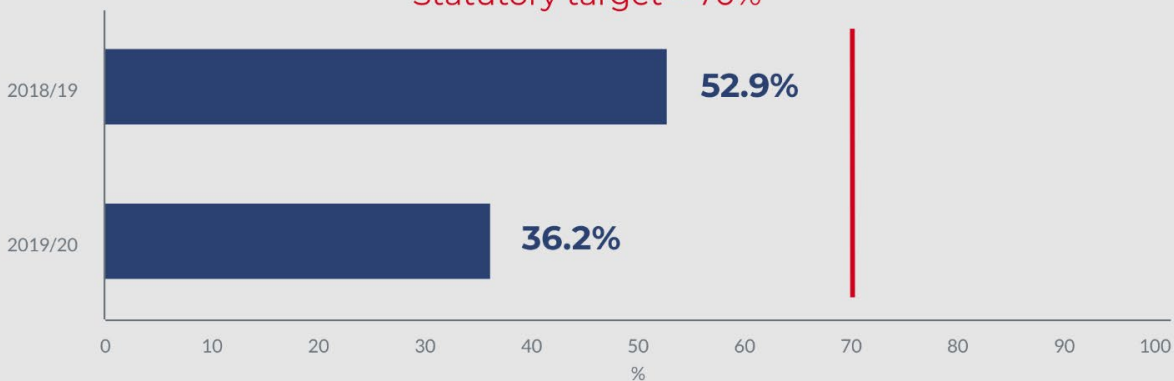
Average time taken (weeks) to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)



Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

Statutory target = 70%

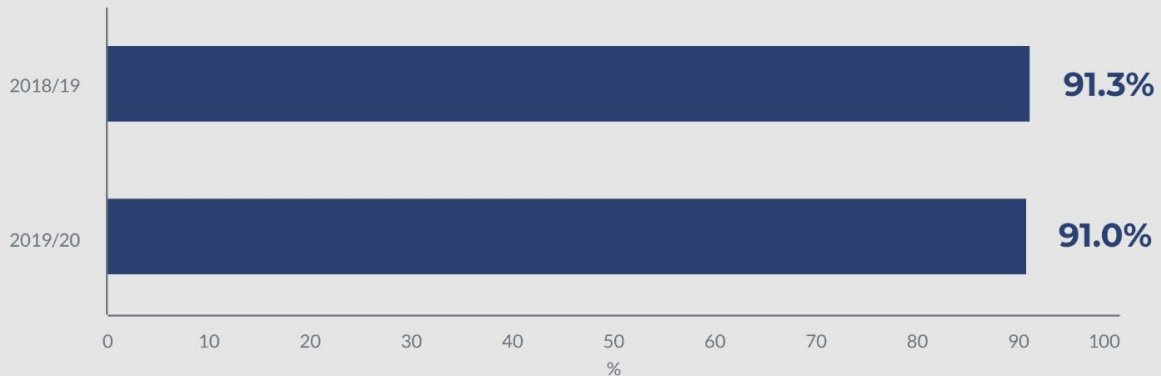
Enforcement



Planning Monitoring Framework Indicators

Delegated powers

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers



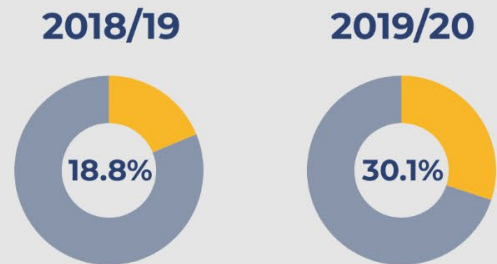
Planning committee

Number of applications decided by planning committee:



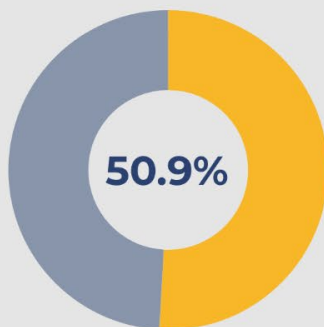
Year	Number of applications
2018/19	117
2019/20	143

Percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation:



Appeals

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that were dismissed in 2019/20*



29 out of **57** appeals against refusal of planning permission decided in **2019/20** were dismissed (**50.9%**)

Claims for costs

Number of claims for costs received by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in 2019/20*:



7

Number of claims awarded in 2019/20*:



6

awarded either fully or partially in the planning authority's favour

1

awarded either fully or partially against the planning authority

*Data available for 2019/20 only.

Appendix 1 – Notes and Definitions

Notes on data sources

The data presented in this report have been collected from a number of different sources. The [Notes on Indicators](#) section below describes each individual indicator and its data source.

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal

Informing: Indicators 1, 1.1, 2, 2.1, 3, 4, 8

Data presented in this publication sourced from the Northern Ireland Planning Portal are consistent with the [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics 2019/20 Official Statistics bulletin](#), published in July 2020.

The records of all planning applications from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 were transferred in April 2020 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 as part of the quality assurance process for the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics 2019/20 bulletin. On completion of ASRB and council validation, a final extract was taken in May 2020.

In advance of the publication of the Northern Ireland Planning Monitoring Framework bulletin, local councils were again provided with data for their council for each of the relevant indicators sourced from the Northern Ireland Planning Portal, as part of the quality assurance process.

Source: Department for Infrastructure, Planning Applications to Committee database

Informing: Indicators 4, 5

This database records all decisions on planning applications taken by planning committees, sourced from published committee meeting minutes. An extract of all applications taken to planning committee from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2020 was taken by ASRB in August 2020. The data were validated by ASRB, which involved quality checks and the removal of duplicate decisions. In advance of this publication, local councils were provided with their own data for the relevant indicators for 2019/20, sourced from the Planning Applications to Committee database, as part of the quality assurance process. On completion of ASRB and council validation, a final extract was taken in October 2020.

Source: Planning Appeals Commission

Informing: Indicators 6, 7

Data for these indicators were provided by the Planning Appeals Commission, from their own internal records.

Source: Department for Infrastructure, Planning Records - Regionally Significant Applications

Informing: Indicator 8

Data for this indicator were sourced from internal Departmental records. The data were then validated by ASRB prior to analysis. Staff within the Department were provided with the indicator data, as part of the quality assurance process.

Source: Department for Infrastructure, Applications Notified to the Department – Case Management system

Informing: Indicator 9

Data for this indicator were sourced from internal Departmental records. The data were then validated by ASRB prior to analysis. Staff within the Department were provided with the indicator data, as part of the quality assurance process.

Hierarchy of development

The [Planning \(Development Management\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) provide for a hierarchy of development based on a three-tier classification consisting of regionally significant, major and local.

Regionally significant developments (RSD) in effect form the top slice of the major development category and 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. RSD proposals will be subject to pre-application consultation with the community⁸.

Major developments have important economic, social and environmental implications. Applications for major developments will primarily be dealt with by councils under the new planning system and will be subject to pre-application consultation with the community⁸.

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.

⁸ Note: From 1 May 2020, the requirement to hold a public event as part of the pre-application community consultation was temporarily removed for five months (extended to 31 March 2021 in October 2020) in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This falls outside the reference period for this report and therefore data presented are unaffected by this change.

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 (where applicable). 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.

Enforcement activity

Compliance and enforcement are important functions of the planning system. An enforcement case is opened when there has been an alleged breach of planning control. An enforcement case is concluded when one of the following occurs: a notice is issued; legal proceedings commence; a planning application is received; or the case is closed.

Scheme of delegation

In accordance with the [Local Government \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2014](#) and [Section 31 of The Planning Act \(NI\) 2011](#), each local planning authority has a Scheme of Delegation which sets out:

- the types of planning application to be delegated to a planning officer for a decision; and
- the types of planning application to be presented to the Council Planning Committee for a decision.

As each council has an individual scheme of delegation the types of applications that are delegated to planning officers for decision may differ across councils. This should be borne in mind in relation to 'Indicator 4: Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers'.

Notes on exclusions

Certificates of Lawful Use or Development, Tree Preservation Orders, Non Material Changes, Pre-Application Discussions, Proposal of Application Notices and Discharge of Conditions have been excluded from all application figures presented in this bulletin. This applies to indicators 1, 1.1, 2, 2.1, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

Notes on indicators

Indicator 1: Average processing time taken to determine major applications

Data source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal

Description: This measures the average (median) time taken to process major applications to a decision or withdrawal. It is an existing 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. This indicator excludes departmental applications.

Indicator 1.1: Average time taken to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

Data source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal

Description: This measures the average (median) time taken to process major applications to a decision. This indicator excludes departmental applications and applications withdrawn prior to the decision notice being issued.

Indicator 2: Average processing time taken to determine local applications

Data source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal

Description: This measures the average (median) time taken to process local applications to a decision or withdrawal. It is an existing 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. This indicator excludes departmental applications.

Indicator 2.1: Average time taken to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)

Data source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal

Description: This measures the average (median) time taken to process local applications to a decision. This indicator excludes departmental applications and applications withdrawn prior to the decision notice being issued.

Indicator 3: Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks

Data source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal

Description: The time taken to conclude an enforcement case is calculated from the date on which the complaint is received to the earliest date of the following: a notice is issued; legal proceedings commence; a planning application is received; or the case is closed. It is an existing statutory target that 70% of all enforcement cases dealt with by councils are progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint. This indicator excludes departmental enforcement cases.

Indicator 4: Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers

Data source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal and Department for Infrastructure, Planning Applications to Committee database

Description: To calculate this indicator, the numerator is the number of applications decided under delegated powers, i.e. those made by a planning officer under the council's Scheme of Delegation, during the reference period. The denominator is the total number of decisions issued on planning applications by the council during the reference period.

The total number of decisions issued during the reference period is sourced from the Northern Ireland Planning Portal, in line with figures on decisions issued as published in the [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics bulletin](#).

The number of applications decided under delegated powers is calculated by first identifying those applications determined by planning committee, sourced from the Planning Applications to Committee database. Once planning committee decisions have been identified, by default the remainder are marked as delegated decisions.

Only applications with a decision issued date within the reference period entered on the Northern Ireland Planning Portal are included in the calculation of this indicator. Therefore committee decisions made during an earlier period but with a decision issued date within the reference period will be included in the calculations. Similarly, committee decisions made during the reference period without a decision issued date within the same period will be excluded.

This indicator also excludes departmental applications.

Indicator 5: Number of applications decided by planning committee and percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation

Data source: Department for Infrastructure, Planning Applications to Committee database

Description: This measures the number of decisions (i.e. approvals or refusals) made by a council's planning committee within the reference period, and the percentage of these decisions that were contrary to the planning officer recommendation. The indicator includes all applications decided by planning committee within the reference period, including those that do not have a decision issued date entered on the Northern Ireland Planning Portal within the same period, and those applications which were subsequently withdrawn following a planning committee decision. Departmental applications are excluded.

Indicator 6: Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that are dismissed

Data source: Planning Appeals Commission (PAC)

Description: To calculate this indicator, the numerator is the number of appeals against refusal of planning permission that were dismissed (i.e. the council's decision was upheld) within the reference period. The denominator is the total number of appeals against refusals determined by the PAC during the reference period. This indicator excludes appeals against: non-determinations; enforcement notices; conditional grants of planning permission; and those categorised as 'other' (includes advertisements, roads and listed buildings consent). This indicator excludes the Department for Infrastructure.

Note: Data for this indicator are available for 2019/20 only.

Indicator 7: Number of claims for costs received by the PAC and number of claims awarded

Data source: Planning Appeals Commission (PAC)

Description: The indicator measures the number of instances of costs awards, not the amount of money. It measures the number of claims for costs involving the planning authority received by the PAC within the reference period. It then measures the number of instances where costs were either awarded fully or partially in the planning authority's favour, or fully or partially against the planning authority. The number of claims awarded fully or partially in the planning authority's favour include claims made by the planning

authority where there was a partial or full award and claims made against the planning authority where costs were denied. The number of claims awarded fully or partially against the planning authority include claims made by the planning authority where costs were denied and claims made against the planning authority where there was a partial or full award.

As claims for costs are received and awarded on different days, the number of claims received and awarded within a time period may differ. However, claims for costs are usually received at the end of the appeal process and therefore close to the date the costs are awarded. In 2019/20, all claims for costs received in 2019/20 were awarded in 2019/20.

Note: Data for this indicator are available for 2019/20 only.

Indicator 8: The Department to progress regionally significant planning applications (RSD) from date valid to a ministerial recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks

Data source: Northern Ireland Planning Portal and Department for Infrastructure, Planning Records - Regionally Significant Applications

Description: The time to progress to ministerial recommendation⁹ or withdrawal is measured from the date the application was made valid. The median is used for the average processing time, as any extreme values have the potential to inflate the mean, leading to a result that may not be considered as "typical". The calculation of this indicator includes all regionally significant applications progressed to ministerial recommendation or withdrawal within the reference period.

Note: From 2019/20 onwards, this indicator was revised. The previous indicator was:

Percentage of regionally significant planning applications processed to a ministerial recommendation within 30 weeks (subject to pre-application discussions having taken place and meeting the requirements of relevant Environmental Legislation)

Reporting on the revised indicator commenced in the [Quarter 1 2019/20 Northern Ireland Planning Statistics bulletin](#).

Indicator 9: Number of applications notified to the Department and the number of these processed within the period of 28 days

Data source: Department for Infrastructure, Applications Notified to the Department – Case Management system

Description: Under the [Planning Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#) and subsequent legislative directions, councils have a duty to notify the Department for particular categories of applications and circumstances before they can grant planning permission or consent.

This indicator measures the number of applications notified to the Department within the reference period and the number of these processed within 28 calendar days. The 28 day period is measured from the date

⁹ Or Permanent Secretary in the absence of a Minister.

the Department receives the notification or, where applicable, the date where all required information from the council is received.

In the context of this indicator, a notification is considered processed on the earliest date of the following: the Department has issued a direction to the council requiring unlimited further time to consider whether to refer the application or not; the Department has issued a letter of notification to the council stating that a referral is not required; or the Department has issued a direction to the council referring the application to the Department. Where the 28th day falls on a Sunday or Public Holiday, the next working day is treated as the 28th day.

Only notifications received by the Department during the reference period are included in the calculations for this indicator, regardless of what date they are processed.

Note: The data reported for 2018/19 for this indicator cover the period 1 August 2018 to 31 March 2019 only. The data reported for 2019/20 cover the entire year, i.e. 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

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