

NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

SECOND QUARTER 2018/19 STATISTICAL BULLETIN

(July – September 2018: Provisional figures)



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

An Official Statistics Publication
Date of Publication: 20th December 2018

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: Suzanne Napier

Telephone: 028 90540390

Email: ASRB@nisra.gov.uk

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



© Crown copyright 2018

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.

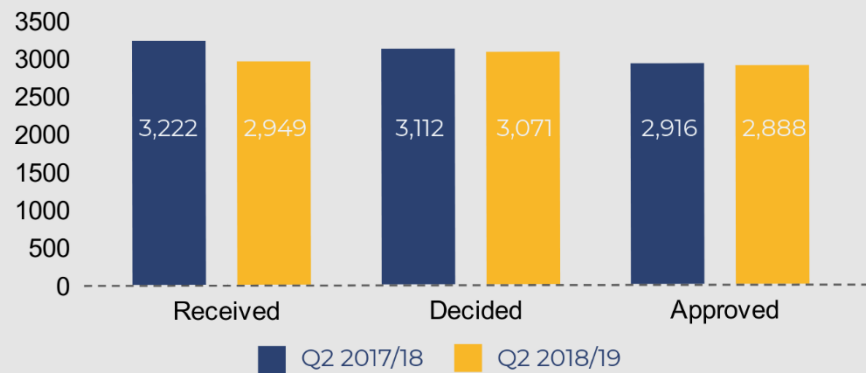
Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

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

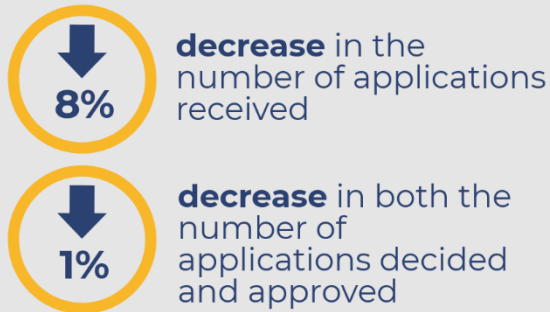
Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at ASRB@nisra.gov.uk.

Overall planning applications

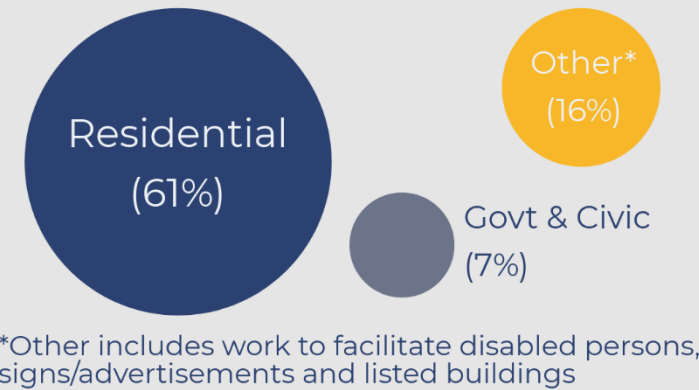
Applications received/decided/approved



Comparing Q2 2018/19 with Q2 2017/18:



3 largest development types



Local planning applications

Q2 2017/18: **3,186**

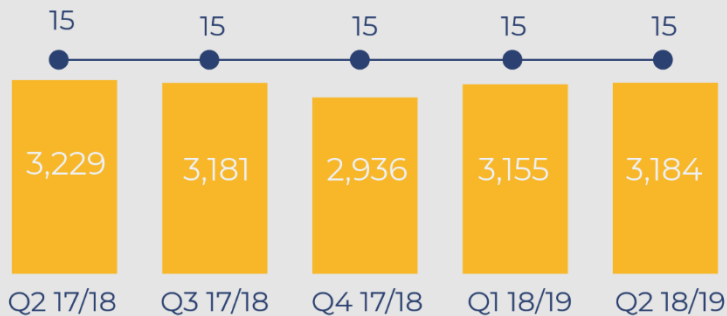
Q2 2018/19: **2,919**

8%



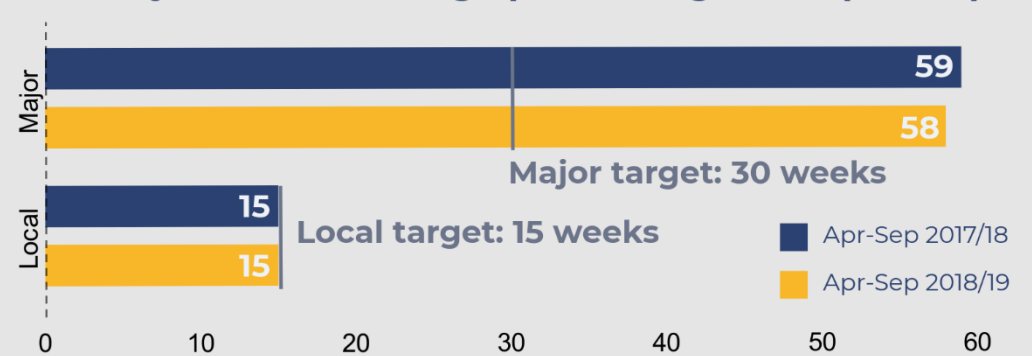
99%

of all received applications were local planning applications in Q2 2018/19



Planning statutory targets (Apr-Sep)

Major & local average processing times (weeks)



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

75%

Apr-Sep 17/18

81%

Apr-Sep 18/19

Key Points

- There were 2,949 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during July to September 2018 (Q2), down by 9% on the previous quarter and over 8% on the same period a year earlier. This comprised 2,919 local and 30 major applications.
- During the second quarter of 2018/19, 3,071 planning applications were decided, an increase of 2% over the quarter but a decrease of over 1% when compared with the same period a year earlier.
- The average processing time for major applications during the first six months of 2018/19 was 58 weeks across all councils; down slightly from the 59 weeks reported for the same period last year. Average processing times for major planning applications are almost double the statutory processing time target of 30 weeks.
- The number of local planning applications received in NI during Q2 2018/19 was 2,919, down by 9% on the previous quarter and over 8% on the same period last year. Across councils, Belfast City (390), Newry, Mourne and Down (336), and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (325) received the highest number of local planning applications during Q2 2018/19.
- In the first six 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. Five of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target during the first six months of 2018/19. The shortest average processing time for local applications was just over 7 weeks in Mid and East Antrim, whilst the longest was just over 23 weeks in Causeway Coast and Glens.
- The number of enforcement cases opened in NI during the second quarter of 2018/19 was 999; an increase of more than 6% over the quarter and nearly 17% when compared with the same period a year earlier. Across the councils, Belfast City (170) and Antrim and Newtownabbey (119) opened the largest number of cases in Q2.
- In the first six months of 2018/19 over four-fifths (81%) of enforcement cases in NI were concluded within 39 weeks. This is 11 percentage points above the statutory target and is 6 percentage points higher than the same period last year. At the mid-year point of 2018/19, eight of the 11 councils are on track to meet the target, with highs of 92% concluded within 39 weeks in Antrim and Newtownabbey, followed by 88% in Mid and East Antrim, and 86% in Lisburn and Castlereagh. Across all councils, the proportion of enforcement cases concluded ranged from a high of 92% to a low of 55%.
- The NI approval rate for all planning applications for the second quarter of 2018/19 was 94%, similar to the rate for the previous quarter and up slightly for the same quarter a year earlier. Second quarter approval rates varied across councils from 85% to 99%.
- There were 23 renewable energy applications received in Q2 2018/19, 16 more than the same period last year. During Q2 2018/19, 18 renewable applications were decided and 3 withdrawn. The average processing time for these applications was just over 32 weeks in Q2; down from almost 88 weeks in the same quarter last year.

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 second 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 second 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 being published in June 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 next quarterly release is due in March 2019. This will contain planning data up to 31st December 2018 (i.e. for Q3 2018/19).

The next annual report covering 2018/19 is planned for release in late June 2019. Development of a planning monitoring framework is ongoing and progress on that framework will be published in September 2019.

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

1. Overall NI Planning Activity

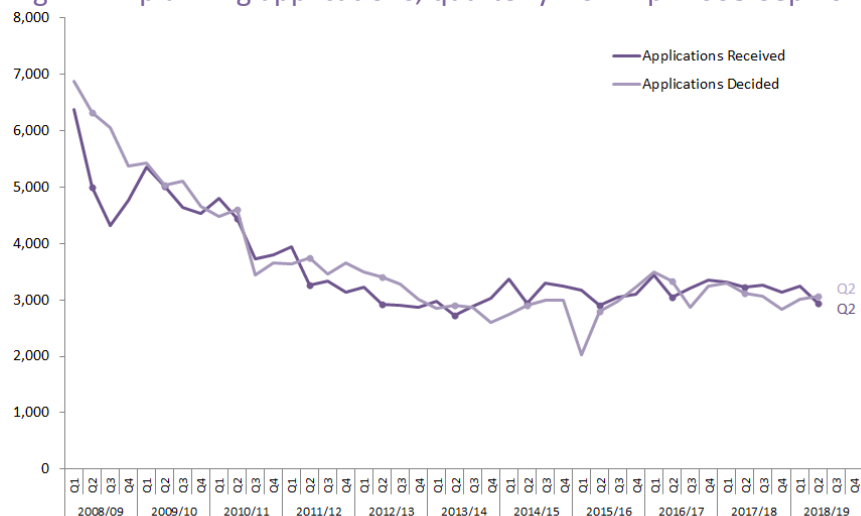
Applications Received

The number of planning applications **received** in Northern Ireland (NI) by councils and the Department in the period July to September 2018 (Q2), was **2,949**, a decrease of 9.2% on the previous quarter (3,247) and by 8.5% on the same period a year earlier (3,222).

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 with relatively small changes quarter on quarter; although the change in Q2 2018/19 was the largest quarter-on-quarter change since Q2 2016/17.

Of the 2,949 applications received in Q2, three quarters were for full planning permission (75.1%), up from 72.6% at the same point last year.

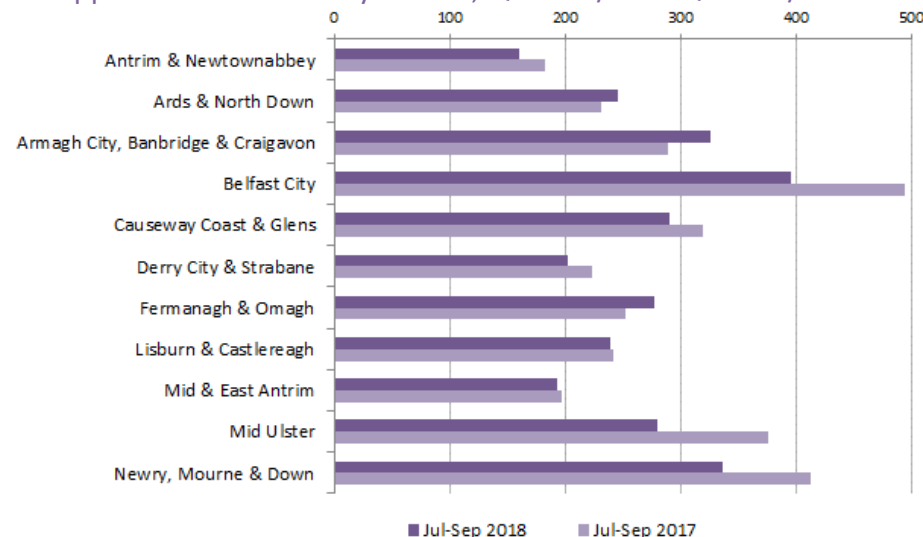
Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, quarterly from Apr 2008-Sep 2018



In Q2, Belfast City council received the most (396) planning applications, followed by Newry, Mourne and Down (337) and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (326); between them accounting for over one third (35.9%) of all applications received across NI. Belfast City and Newry, Mourne and Down also received the most applications during the same period last year. The councils receiving the lowest number of applications were Antrim and Newtownabbey (160), Mid and East Antrim (193) and Derry City and Strabane (203); the same councils listed in Q2 2017/18.

In Q2, eight of the 11 councils recorded a decrease compared with the same period last year, with the greatest decreases in percentage terms occurring in Mid Ulster (-25.5%), Belfast City (-20.0%) and Newry, Mourne and Down (-18.4%). Three councils reported increases over the year: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (12.8%); Fermanagh and Omagh (9.5%); and Ards and North Down (6.5%).

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, Q2 2017/18 & Q2 2018/19



[Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2](#)

Applications Decided

The number of planning decisions issued during July to September 2018 was **3,071** representing an increase of 2.1% over the quarter (3,007), but a decrease of 1.3% when compared with the same period a year earlier (3,112). Over three quarters of planning decisions in Q2 (75.3%) were for full planning permission.

In the first quarter of 2015/16, immediately following the transition of planning authority out to councils, the level of decisions issued dropped sharply. However, they quickly recovered in subsequent quarters. The second quarter of 2018/19 is the first since Q2 2016/17 where the number of decisions exceeded the number of applications received (Fig 1.1).

In Q2 2018/19, **151** applications were **withdrawn**, representing a decrease of 16.6% over the quarter (181) and a 3.2% decrease from the same period the previous year (156). Applications can be withdrawn at any stage prior to a decision being made.

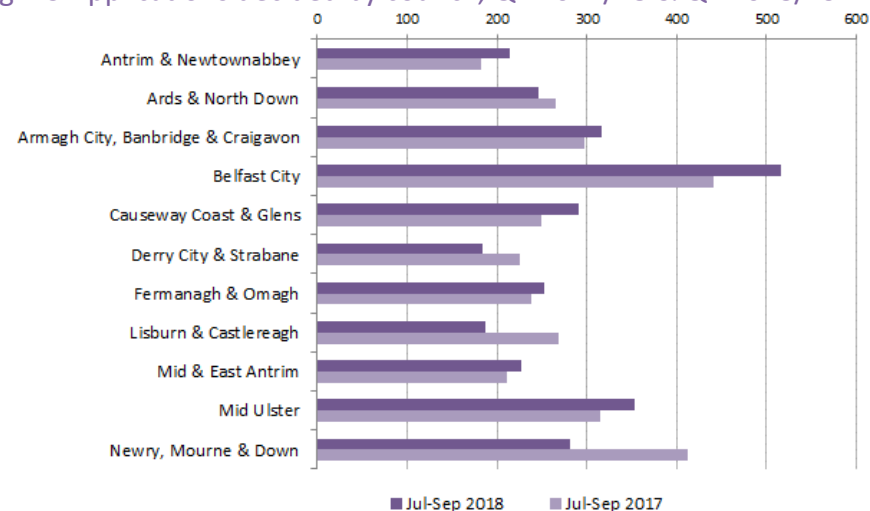
Applications Decided by Council

The volume of planning decisions issued across councils during Q2 varied. Belfast City issued the highest number of decisions (517) followed by Mid Ulster (353) and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (316). Derry City and Strabane (184) and Lisburn and Castlereagh (187) issued the least.

Although the volume of 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 Antrim and Newtownabbey (18.1%), Belfast City (17.0%), and Causeway, Coast and Glens (16.4%). Four councils reported decreases over the year, with the largest occurring in Newry, Mourne and Down (-32.0%), Lisburn and Castlereagh (-30.5%), and Derry City and Strabane (-18.6%).

Six of the eleven councils issued more decisions than they received during Q2 2018/19. The greatest difference in percentage terms occurred in Antrim and Newtownabbey, where 34.4% more decisions were issued compared with applications received, followed by Belfast City (30.6%). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, Q2 2017/18 & Q2 2018/19

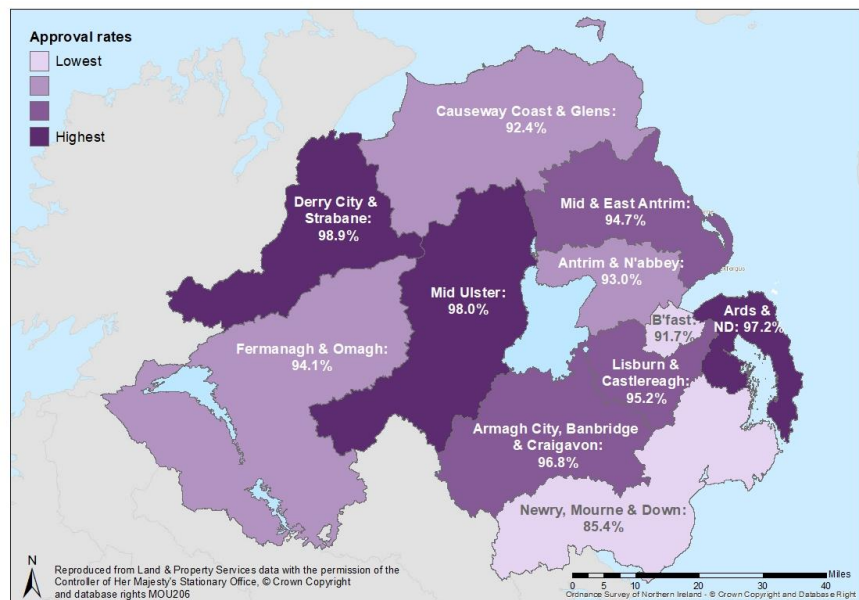


In addition to processing applications, councils deal with a range of other planning related work. For example, during Q2 2018/19, they processed to decision or withdrawal 177 discharge of conditions, 145 non material changes and 144 certificates of lawfulness, all of which have increased compared with the same period a year earlier. A further breakdown of these figures is provided in [Table 9.1](#).

Approval Rates

The **overall Northern Ireland approval rate** for all planning applications for Q2 2018/19 was **94.0%**, which was similar to the rate for the previous quarter (94.1%) and a small increase from the same quarter a year earlier (93.7%).

Fig 1.4 Approval rates by council, Q2 2018/19



Planning approval rates varied across councils during Q2 2018/19 from highs of 98.9% in Derry City and Strabane and 98.0% in Mid Ulster to lows of 85.4% in Newry, Mourne and Down and 91.7% in Belfast City.

Eight of the eleven councils reported an increased approval rate over the year with the most notable occurring in Belfast City (up 3.2 percentage points to 91.7%). Three councils reported a decreased approval rate when compared with the same quarter a year earlier. The largest of these was in Newry, Mourne and Down (down by 4.7 percentage points to 85.4%) and Causeway Coast and Glens (down by 4.4 percentage points to 92.4%).

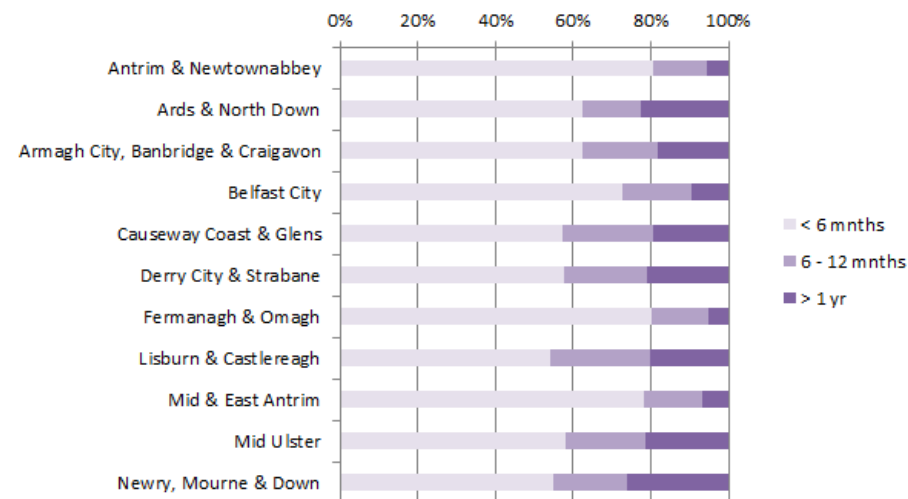
[Refer to Table 1.2](#)

Live applications

At the end of September 2018, there were **6,465** live applications in the planning system across NI, a decrease of 1.3% over the previous twelve months from 6,552 at the end of September 2017. Nearly one fifth of all

live applications in the planning system at the end of September 2018 was over one year old (1,186: 18.3%); an increase of 1.4 percentage points from the proportion reported for the end of September 2017 (1,110: 16.9%). [Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

Fig 1.5 Live applications by council at end of Sep 2018



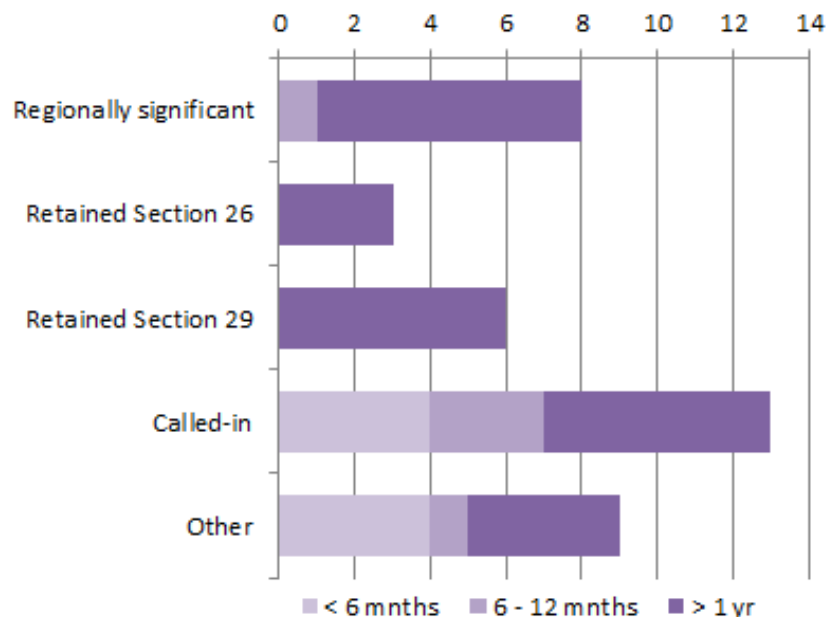
The proportion of live applications over one year old at the end of September 2018 varies across councils, as shown in Figure 1.5. Fermanagh and Omagh had the lowest proportion of cases over one year old (5.0%), followed by Antrim and Newtownabbey (5.5%) and Mid and East Antrim (6.7%). Newry, Mourne and Down had the largest proportion of applications in the system for over a year (26.1%) followed by Ards and North Down (22.5%) and Mid Ulster (21.5%).

Compared with the same period last year, five of the eleven councils have reduced the proportion of live cases in the system for over a year, with the greatest change occurring in Belfast City (-5.0 percentage points). The proportion of applications over a year increased in six councils, with the greatest of these increases in Causeway Coast and Glens (7.4 percentage points). [Refer to Table 1.4.](#)

2. Departmental Activity

At the end of September 2018, there were **8 ongoing regionally significant development (RSD) applications, 13 called-in; 9 retained applications and 9 other applications**¹. Two-thirds of these applications (26 of 39) were in the system over a year.

Fig 2.1 Live Departmental applications by development type at end Sep 18



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

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

developments which have significant effects beyond Northern Ireland or involve a substantial departure from a local development plan.

During Q2 2018/19, the Department received **2** new applications.

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

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.

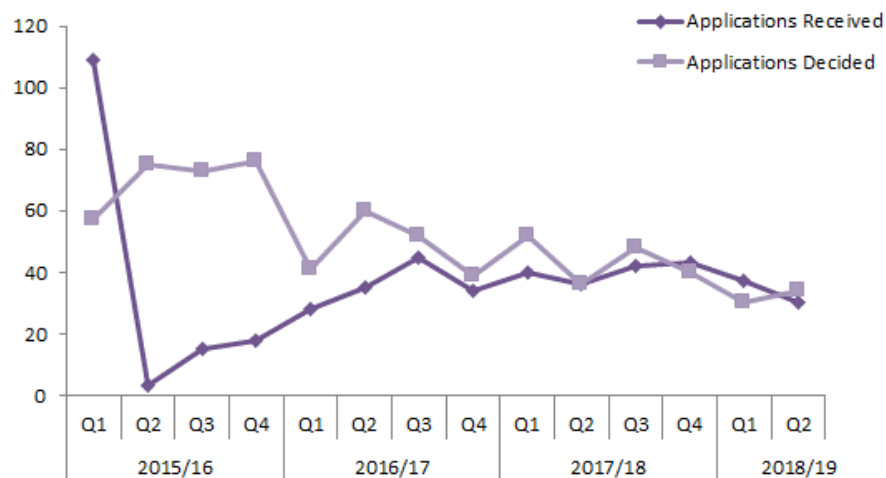
At 30 September 2018, of the **8** RSD applications currently live in the planning system, four were not subject to Pre-Application Discussions and therefore fell outside the remit of the target. Of the remaining four applications, one had a recommendation during Q4 2017/18 to go to public inquiry where 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.

There were no applications decided or withdrawn during Q2 2018/19.

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 Q2 2018/19 was **30**.

Fig 3.1 Major Development applications, quarterly Apr 2015 – Sep 2018



From 1st July 2015, pre-application community consultation became a prerequisite 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 with Q3 2016/17 reporting 45 across Northern Ireland, the highest number since

Q1 2015/16. The number of major applications received each quarter over the last two years suggests a levelling out, although this number has decreased over consecutive quarters since Q4 2017/18.

Of the 30 major applications received in Q2, Belfast City (6), Causeway Coast and Glens (5) and Mid Ulster (4) received the most.

Over the quarter, **34 major** planning applications were **decided** and **4 withdrawn**. Although this is an increase from 30 decisions and 3 withdrawals in Q1 2018/19, it represents the second lowest number of decisions issued quarterly for major applications since the transfer of planning powers.

At council level, Antrim and Newtownabbey (6), Causeway Coast and Glens and Lisburn and Castlereagh (both 5) issued the most decisions on major applications.

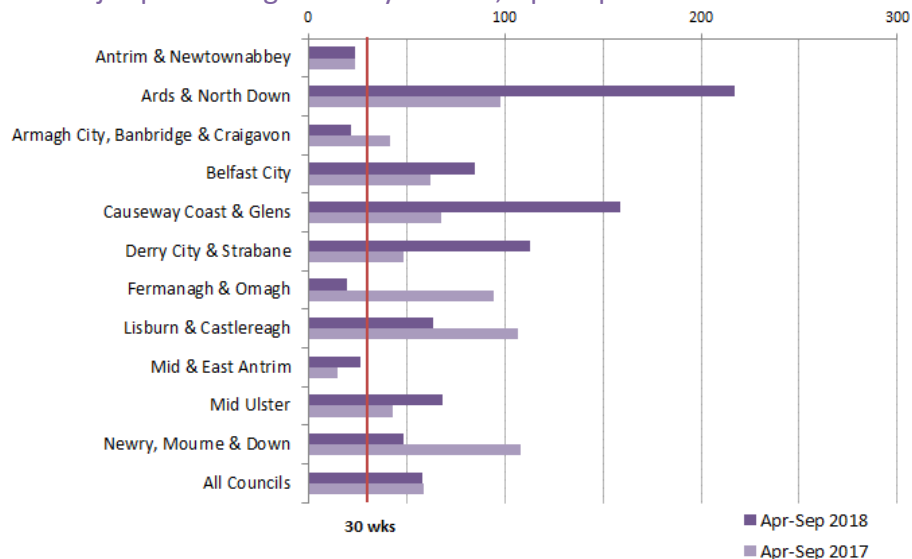
[Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2](#)

Since Q2 2015/16, the number of planning decisions issued for major applications has generally exceeded the numbers being received. The exceptions are the last two quarters immediately preceding Q2 2018/19, where the numbers received were higher than the numbers decided, and Q2 2017/18, where the total received and decided were equal.

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 September 2018), the **average processing time** to bring **major** applications to a decision or withdrawal was **58.0 weeks** across all councils, a small decrease (0.7 weeks) from the 58.7 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-Sep 2017 & 2018



Whilst Fig 3.2 has been provided for completeness, across councils an insufficient number of major applications have been processed during the first half of both the current and previous year to allow any meaningful assessment of individual council performance. Comparison against the target and across councils will become more robust as we get further into the financial year with more applications being processed. With that in mind, it is still worth noting that during the first six months of the year, four of the councils are processing 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 Q2 2018/19, 97.1% of major planning applications decided upon were approved. Ten councils issued decisions on major applications during the second quarter of the year, and for nine 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 Q2 2018/19 was **2,919**, down 9.1% on the previous quarter (3,210) and 8.4% compared with the number received in the same quarter last year (3,186).

Across councils, Belfast City (390), Newry, Mourne and Down (336), and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (325) received the highest number of local planning applications during Q2. Belfast City and Newry, Mourne and Down also received the most applications during the same period last year.

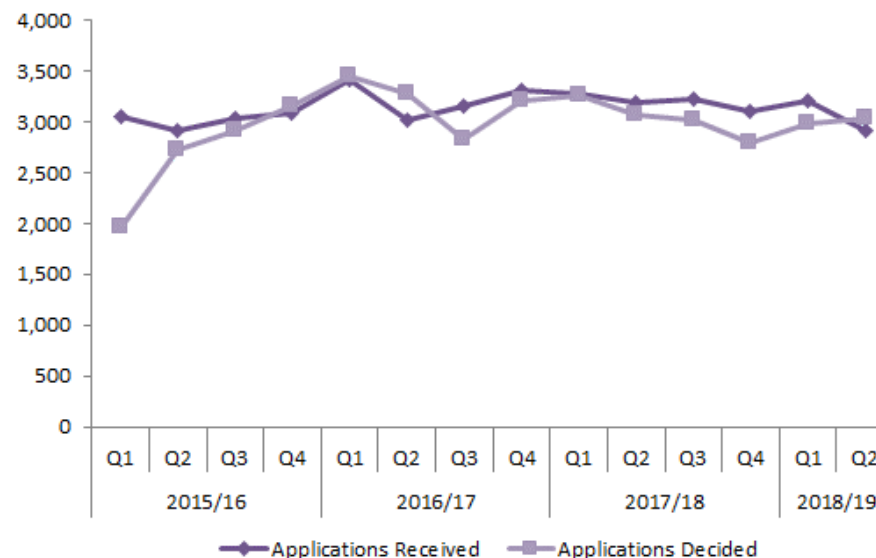
For eight of the eleven councils, the number of local applications received in Q2 2018/19 was lower than the same period a year earlier, with the greatest decreases in percentage terms occurring in Mid Ulster (-25.8%), Belfast City (-20.6%) and Newry, Mourne and Down (-18.0%). Three councils reported increases over the year: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (13.6%); Fermanagh and Omagh (9.6%); and Ards and North Down (6.6%).

The number of **local** applications **decided** in Q2 2018/19 was **3,037**, a decrease of 1.3% over the year (3,076) but up by 2.0% when compared with the previous quarter (from 2,977).

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 the end of 2016/17 until Q1 2018/19, the numbers of local applications received was higher than the number decided; the opposite was true for Q2 2018/19 (Fig 4.1).

Fig 4.1 Local applications, quarterly Apr 2015 – Sep 2018



During Q2 2018/19, Belfast City (513), Mid Ulster (350) and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (312) issued the most local decisions across councils.

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 Belfast City (17.7%), Antrim and Newtownabbey (15.5%) and Causeway Coast and Glens (15.3%). Four councils reported decreases over the year, with the largest occurring in Newry, Mourne and

Down (-31.6%), Lisburn and Castlereagh (-31.3%), and Derry City and Strabane (-17.9%).

Over the quarter, there were 147 local applications withdrawn across NI, this ranged from 29 applications withdrawn in Belfast City to 5 in 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 September 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.

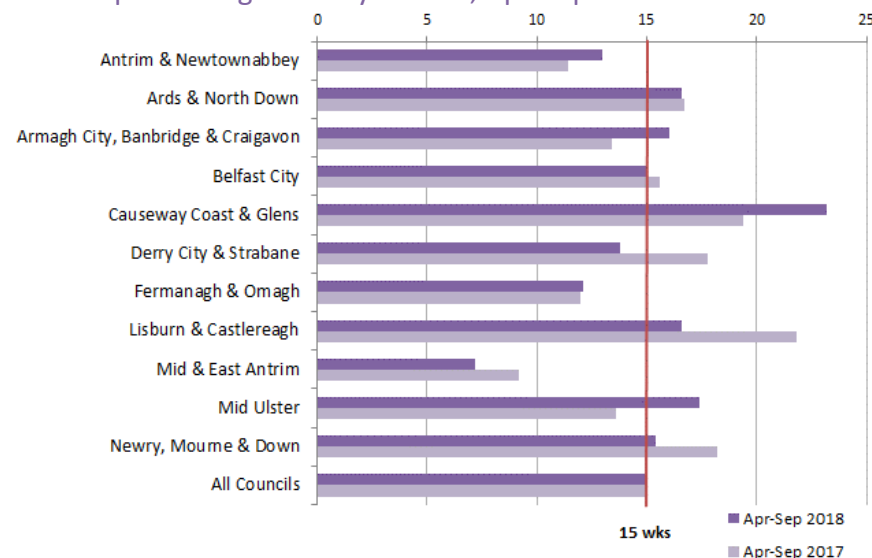
The shortest average processing time for local applications during the first six months of 2018 was 7.2 weeks in Mid and East Antrim (based on 466 local applications decided and 10 withdrawn), whilst the longest was 23.2 weeks in Causeway Coast and Glens (based on 577 local applications decided and 39 withdrawn). Five of the 11 councils, namely Mid and East Antrim (7.2), Fermanagh and Omagh (12.1), Antrim and Newtownabbey (13.0), Derry City and Strabane (13.8) and Belfast City (15.0) were within the 15 week target at the end of September 2018.

Average processing times in five of the 11 councils increased during April to September 2018 when compared with the same period a year earlier. This was most notable in both Causeway Coast and Glens, and Mid Ulster; where average processing times for local applications increased by 3.8 weeks 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 5.2 weeks (from 21.8 weeks to 16.6 weeks), and Derry City and Strabane, where average processing times decreased from 17.8 to 13.8 weeks (4.0 weeks).

[Refer to Table 4.2](#)

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



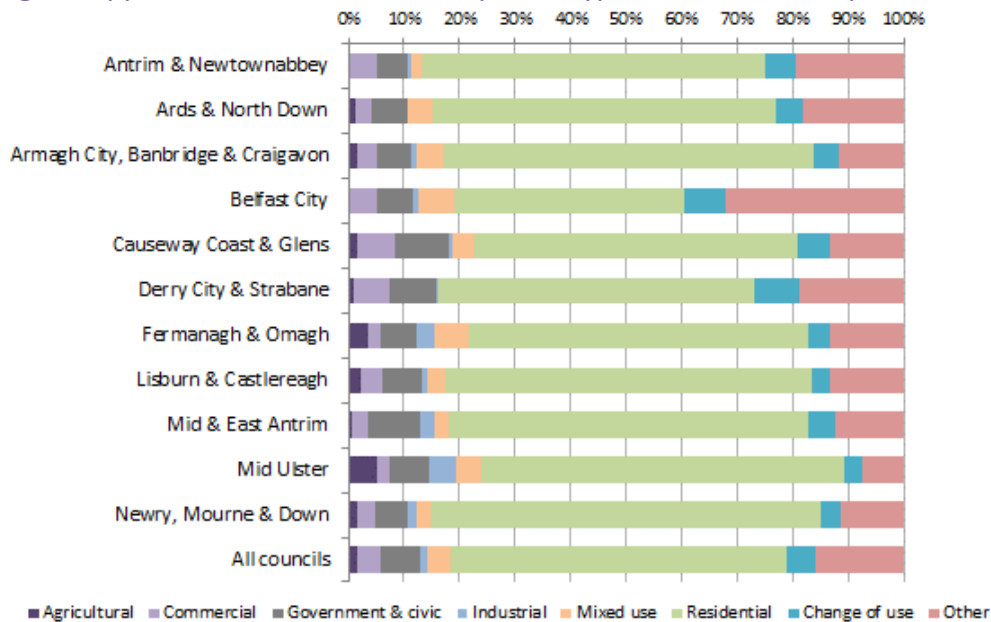
A further breakdown of these figures by legacy cases (those applications received prior to transition of planning powers) and council received cases is provided in [Table 8.2](#).

Across Northern Ireland, 94.0% of local planning applications decided upon were approved in Q2 2018/19, a small increase on the rate for the same period last year (93.7%).

5. Development Type

Generally the majority of planning applications received are for residential development. During Q2 2018/19, **residential** applications made up **60.6%** of all Northern Ireland planning applications received, an increase of 2.4pp from the same period last year (58.2%). Fig. 5.1 illustrates the profile of development across councils and at the regional level.

Fig 5.1 Applications received - development type & council, Jul-Sep 2018



During Q2 2018/19, residential was the most common application type in all councils. Belfast City received the lowest proportion of residential applications (41.7%).

During the same period, Belfast City (32.1%) received a much higher proportion of applications in the 'Other' category. See Appendix 1 –

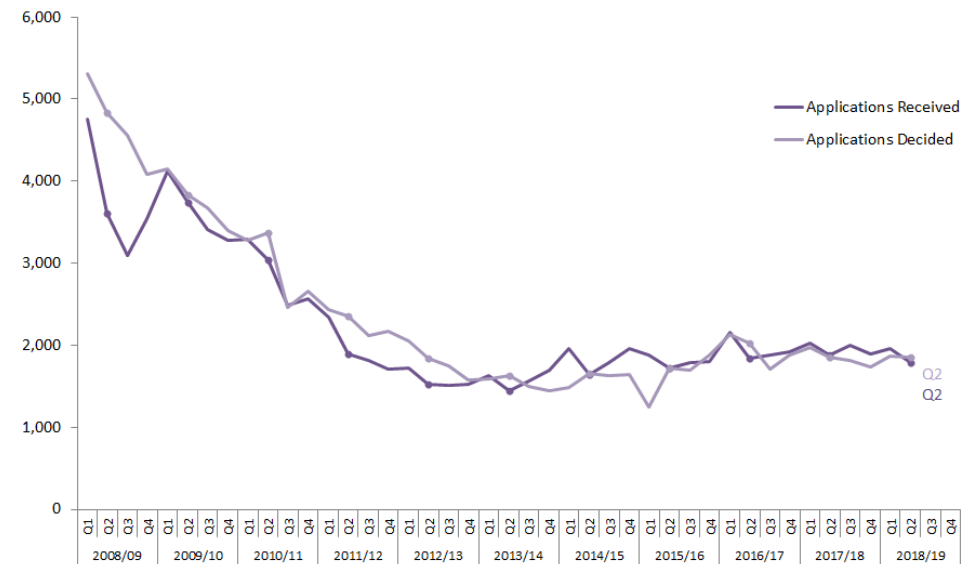
'Definitions' for a description of the types of applications included in these categories.

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

Residential applications

The overall number of **residential** planning applications **received** for Northern Ireland in Q2 2018/19 was **1,787**, a decrease of 8.6% on the previous quarter (1,955) and by 4.7% on the same period a year earlier (1,875).

Fig 5.2 NI Residential applications, quarterly from April 2008 to Sep 2018

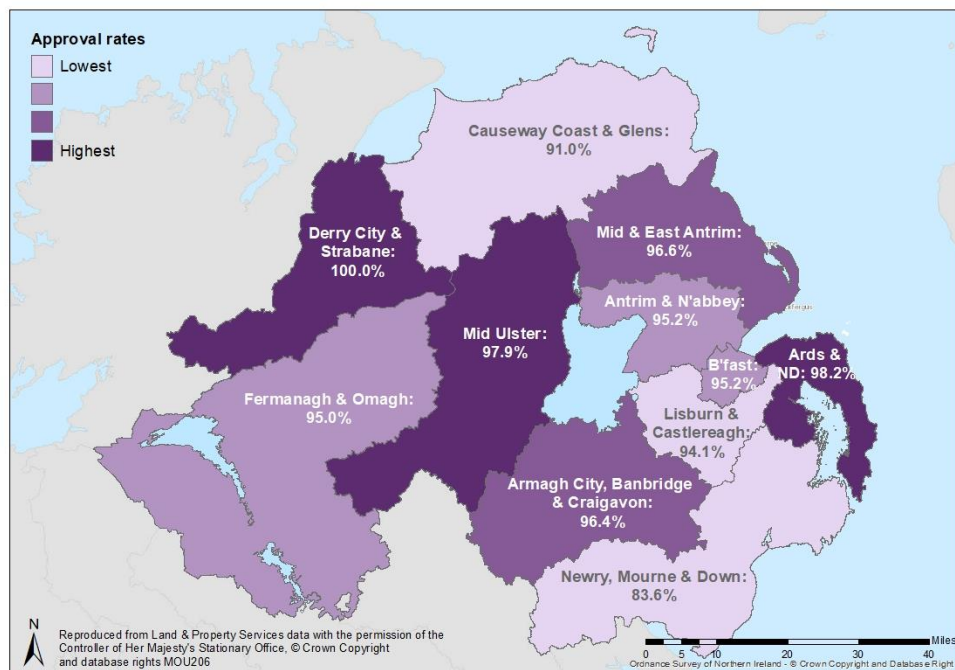


[Refer to Table 5.3](#)

The **Northern Ireland approval rate** for residential planning applications in Q2 2018/19 was **94.6%**, similar to the previous quarter (94.5%) and up by nearly one percentage point from the same period a year earlier (93.7%).

Approval rates for residential planning applications varied across councils in Q2, from 100.0% in Derry City and Strabane to 83.6% in Newry, Mourne and Down (Fig 5.3).

Fig 5.3 Residential approval rates by council Apr-Jun 2018



In Q2 2018/19, eight councils reported increased approval rates for residential planning over the year, with the most notable increases in Antrim and Newtownabbey (up from 89.0% to 95.2%), Mid and East Antrim (up from 91.3% to 96.6%), and Belfast City (up from 90.0% to 95.2%). Approval rates declined in three of the eleven councils over the year, with Causeway Coast and Glens decreasing by 6.2pp (from 97.1% to

91.0%) and Newry, Mourne and Down decreasing by 5.7pp (from 89.3% to 83.6%).

During Q2, there were 77 residential applications withdrawn, a decrease of 26.0% from Q1 (104), but an increase of 6.9% from the same period a year earlier (72).

[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 Q2 (620) decreased by 10.1% from the previous quarter (690), but increased by 2.6% compared with the same period a year earlier (604).

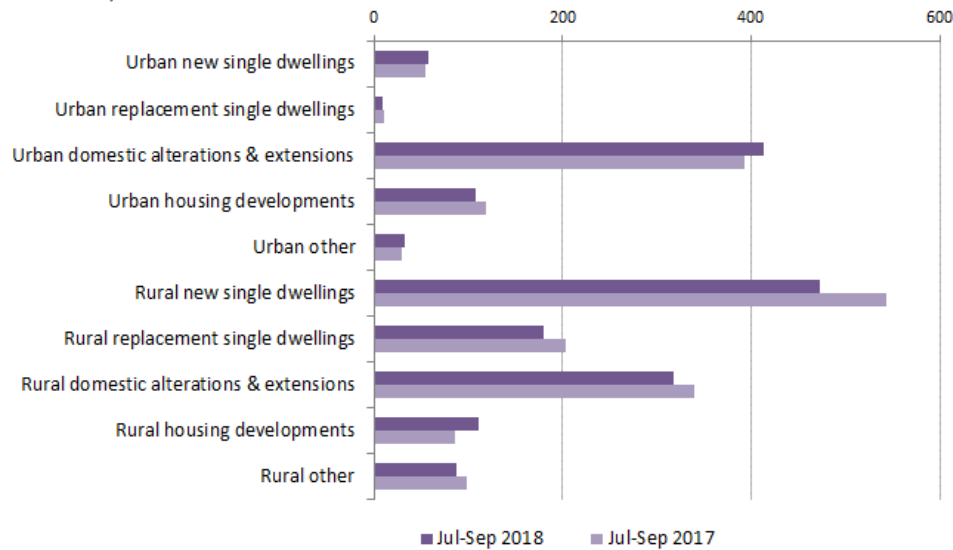
In rural areas, within settlements of less than 5,000 population, there was also a decrease over the quarter (from 254 in Q1 to 230 in Q2; a decrease of 9.4%). Over the year, the number of residential applications received for these areas increased by 10.0% (from 209 to 230).

In the open countryside, the level of residential applications in Q2 (937) decreased over the quarter (from 1,011; 7.3%) and the year (from 1,062; 11.8%).

Residential applications – Urban and Rural

Fig 5.4 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 5.4 NI Residential applications received by urban/rural, Q2 2017/18 & Q2 2018/19



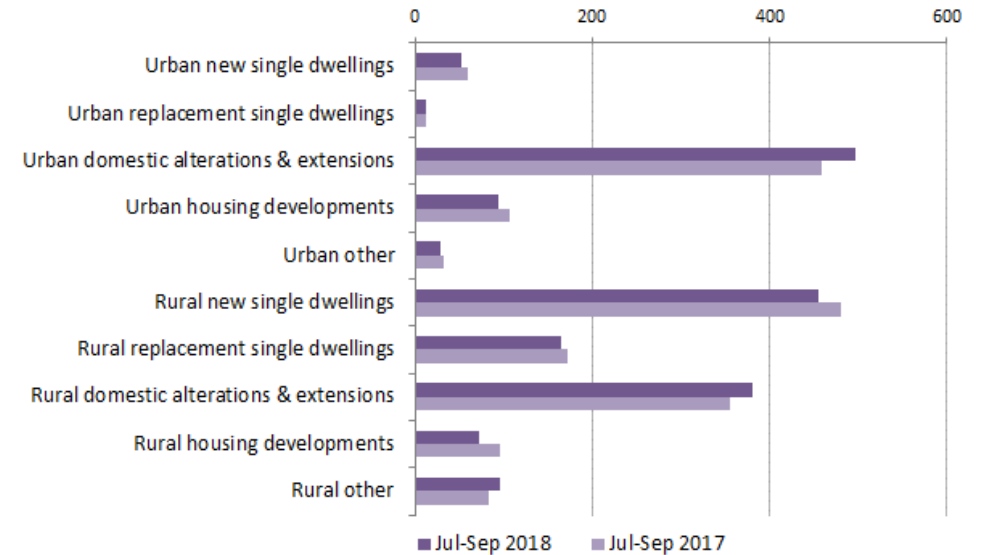
New single dwellings in rural areas (473) and alterations/extensions in urban areas (414) continue to dominate, together making almost half of (49.6%) of all residential applications received during Q2 2018/19.

Despite being the most common application type, the number of residential applications received for new single dwellings in rural areas decreased over the year, from 543 in Q2 2017/18 to 473 in Q2 2018/19 (-12.9%). This decrease has driven the overall decrease recorded in the number of residential applications received across NI over the year (-4.7%).

The number decisions on residential applications made in Q2 2018/19 (1,848) was similar to the previous quarter (1,868) and year (1,852). In terms of the categories presented in Fig 5.5, increases over the year in some categories were offset by decreases in others. For example, there were increases in the number of decisions for domestic alterations and extensions in both urban (from 458 to 497; 8.5%) and rural (356 to 380; 6.7%) areas. Decreases were evident for new single dwellings in rural areas

(from 481 to 455; -5.4%) and housing developments in urban (from 106 to 94; -11.3%) and rural (from 95 to 71; -25.3%) areas.

Fig 5.5 NI Residential applications decided by urban/rural, Q2 2017/18 & Q2 2018/19



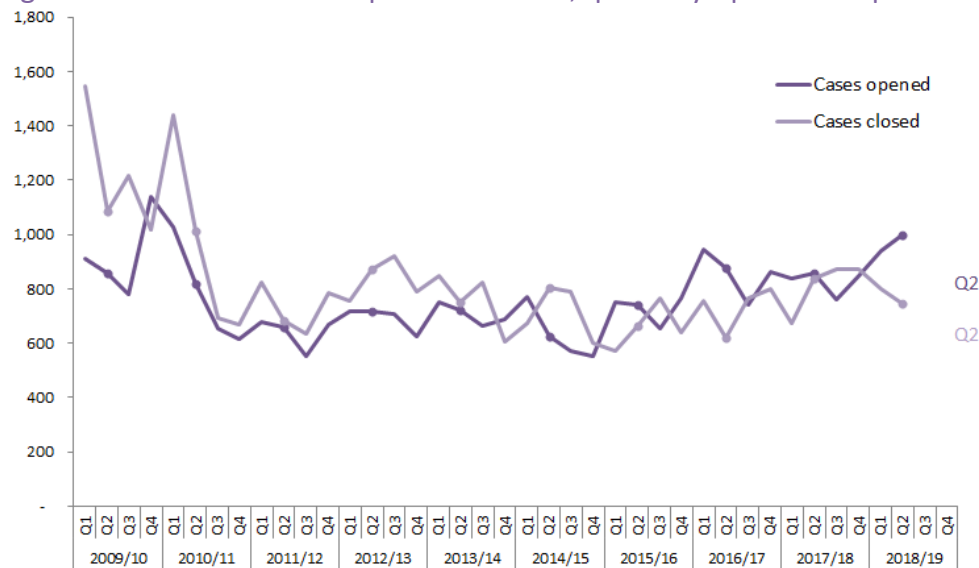
[Refer to Table 5.5.](#)

6. Compliance and Enforcement Activity

The number of **enforcement cases opened** in Northern Ireland during Q2 of 2018/19 was **999**, an increase of 16.6% compared with the same period a year earlier and 6.2% over the last quarter.

Across the councils, Belfast City (170), Antrim and Newtownabbey (119), and Ards and North Down (116) opened the largest number of cases in Q2, whilst Derry City and Strabane (37), Mid Ulster (41) and Mid and East Antrim (67) opened the least.

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



The number of **enforcement cases closed** during Q2 2018/19 was **745**, a decrease of 11.3% compared with the same period a year earlier and 6.8% over the last quarter.

Belfast City (143), Antrim and Newtownabbey (120), and Ards and North Down (91) closed the highest number of cases in the second quarter of

2018/19, whilst Newry, Mourne and Down (13), Derry and Strabane (27) and Mid Ulster (37) closed the least.

The most common reasons for enforcement cases closing in Q2 2018/19, were that the cases had been remedied or resolved (31.1%) or that no breach had actually occurred (28.9%). Together these accounted for exactly three-fifths (447) of the **745** enforcement cases closed in Q2 2018/19.

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

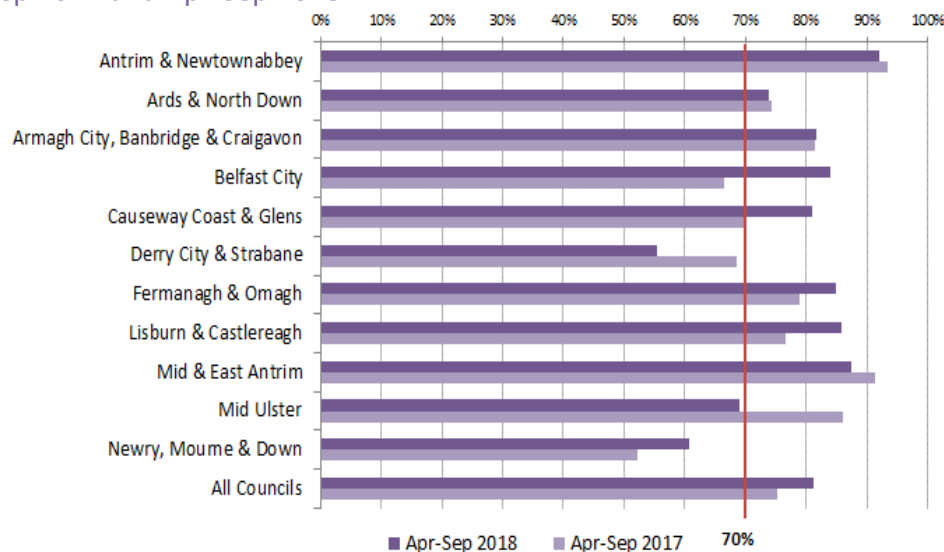
It is a statutory target that 70% of all enforcement cases dealt with by councils are progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.

For the year-to-date (April to September 2018), **over four-fifths (81.3%)** of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks. This is 11.3 percentage points above the statutory target, and is 6.1pp higher than the same period last year.

At the end of September 2018, eight of the 11 councils were on track to meet the target. Antrim and Newtownabbey (92.0%), Mid and East Antrim (87.5%), and Lisburn and Castlereagh (85.8%) had the highest proportion of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks. Derry City and Strabane (55.4%), Newry, Mourne and Down (60.7%), and Mid Ulster (69.0%) are currently below the target level. Compared with the same period last year, the proportion of cases concluded within 39 weeks decreased considerably in both Derry City and Strabane (-13.3pp) and Mid Ulster (-17.0pp), but increased in Newry, Mourne and Down (8.5pp).

[Refer to Table 6.2](#)

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



During Q2 2018/19, there were **16 prosecutions** initiated, a decrease from 22 in the previous quarter, and a small increase from the same period the previous year (14).

Between July and September 2018, four of the 11 councils initiated prosecutions, with Mid Ulster (7), Causeway Coast and Glens, and Fermanagh and Omagh (both 4) initiating the most.

There were six convictions during the same period; two in Belfast City and one each in Fermanagh and Omagh, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Mid Ulster, and Newry, Mourne and Down.

[Refer to Table 6.3.](#)

The number of **live enforcement cases** at the end of September 2018 was **3,768**, an increase of 7.3% from the end of June 2018 (3,513) and 7.4% from the same point last year (3,507).

The number of **cases over two years old** stood at **1,021**, accounting for over a quarter (27.1%) of all live cases. Although this was down from 28.0% the previous quarter, it represented the second highest proportion of any quarter since the transfer of planning powers.

[Refer to Table 6.4.](#)

Across the councils, Newry, Mourne and Down had the largest number of live cases at the end of September 2018 (1,073), with almost two-fifths of these (39.6%) in the system for over 2 years; the second highest proportion, after Derry and Strabane (40.6%), across all councils.

Antrim and Newtownabbey had the smallest number of cases (161), with 8.7% of these in the system for over 2 years; only Mid and East Antrim (8.2%) had a lower proportion.

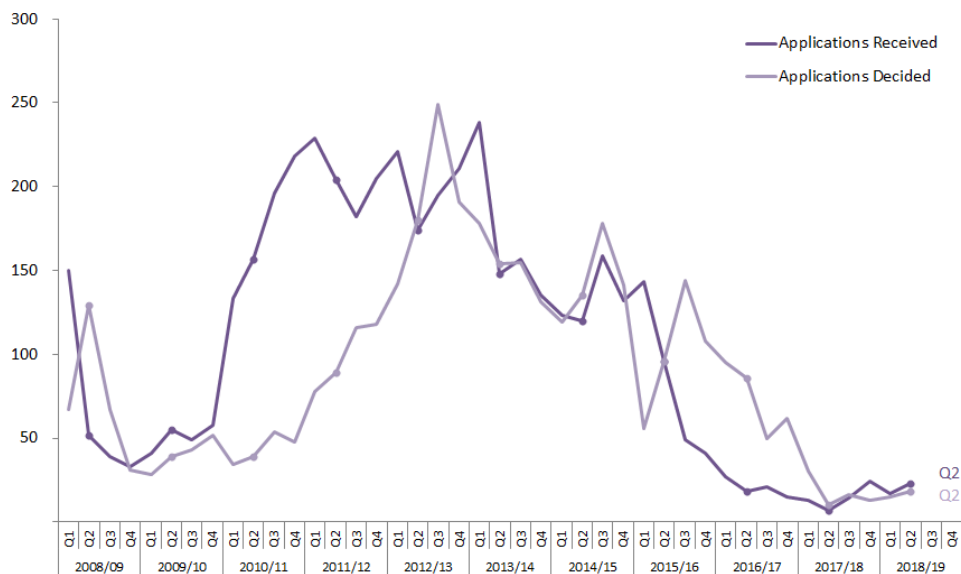
The number of live enforcement cases increased over the year in six of the 11 councils, with the greatest percentage increases in Mid and East Antrim (40.8% - up by 53 enforcements), Newry Mourne and Down (32.5% - up by 263 enforcements), and Fermanagh and Omagh (16.2% - up by 37 enforcements). Causeway Coast and Glens reported the most notable reduction during the year, reducing the number of live enforcement cases by 18.5% (down 69 enforcements).

[Refer to Table 6.5.](#)

7. Renewable Energy (RE) Activity

The overall number of **renewable energy** applications **received** in Q2 2018/19 was **23**, an increase of 16 from the same period last year (7). The number of applications received during July to September peaked in 2011/12 with 204 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 **88.7%** decrease from Q2 peak of 204 to 23 applications in Q2 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 from Apr 2008 – Sep 2018



The number of applications **decided** between July and September 2018 was **18**, an increase from 10 during the same period in the previous year, but down by 90.0% when compared with the series second quarter peak of

180 applications decided in Q2 of 2012/13. During the second quarter of 2018/19, the average processing time for these applications was 32.4 weeks across NI, 55.3 weeks shorter than the equivalent quarter last year (87.7 weeks).

Applications for single wind turbines continue to be the most common for renewable energy applications. In the second quarter of 2018/19, 15 of the 23 renewable applications received were for wind turbines (65.2%).

[Refer to Tables 7.1, 7.2](#)

Fig 7.2 RE applications received by authority, Q2 2017/18 & Q2 2018/19

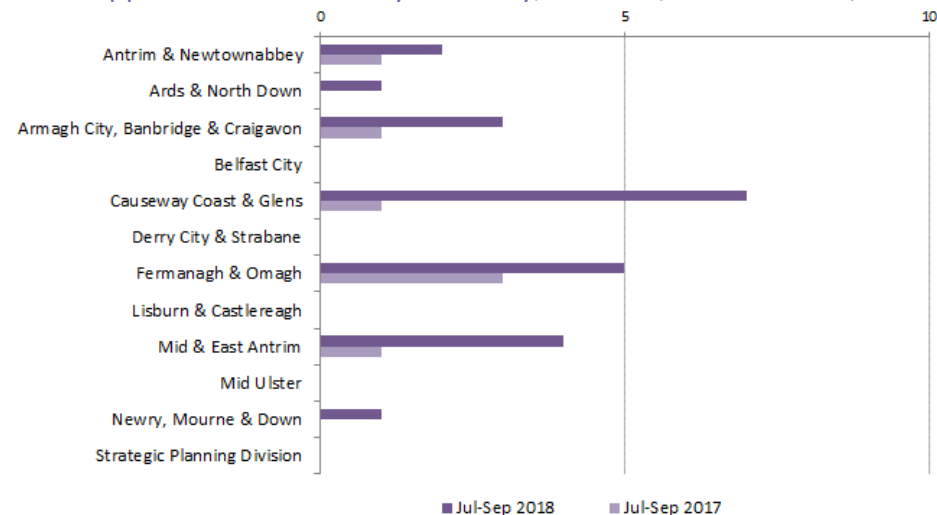


Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of renewable energy applications across councils, with Causeway Coast and Glens (7), Fermanagh and Omagh (5) and Mid and East Antrim (4) receiving the most applications in Q2 2018/19.

Of the 18 decisions issued in the second quarter of 2018/19, over half (10 out of 18) were for single wind turbines.

Fermanagh and Omagh, and Mid and East Antrim both issued four renewable energy decisions during Q2 2018/19; the most across all councils (Fig 7.3).

Fig 7.3 RE applications decided by authority, Q2 2017/18 & Q2 2018/19

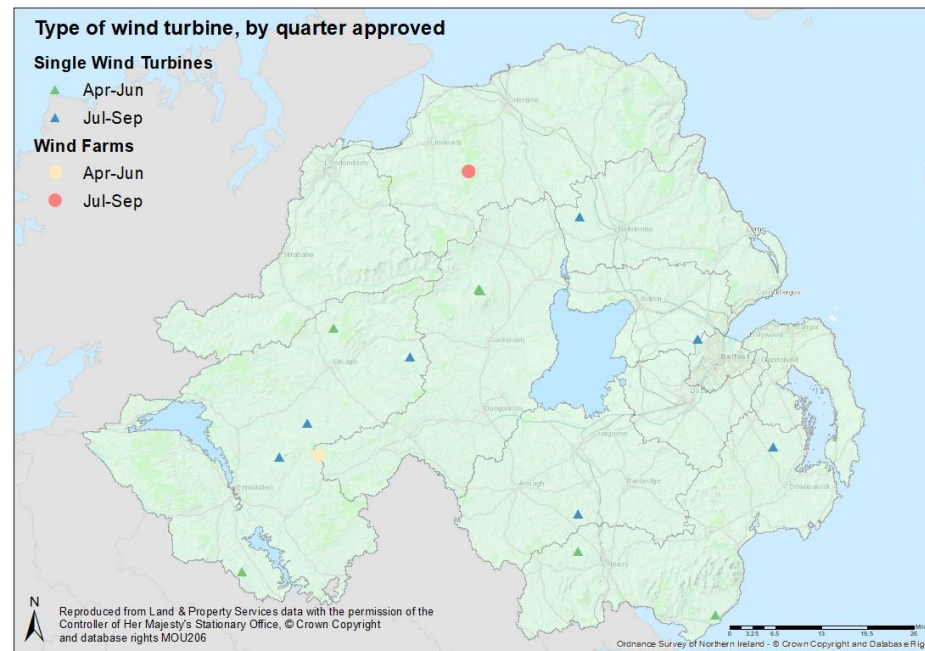


Three renewable energy applications were withdrawn during Q2 2018/19; half of the number withdrawn during the same period last year (6). These withdrawn applications were recorded in Derry City and Strabane (2) and Causeway Coast and Glens (1).

At the end of September 2018, there were **101 live renewable energy applications**. Of these, 45.5% were in the planning system for over a year; a decrease of 7.0 percentage points from the previous quarter (52.5%) and 25.6 percentage points from the end of September 2017 (71.2%). The majority (54.5%) of the live applications at the end of September 2018 were for single wind turbines.

The overall **NI approval rate** for renewable energy in Q2 2018/19 was **83.3%**. This figure is down 10 percentage points from Q1 (93.3%), but up 13.3 percentage points from the same point a year earlier (70.0%).

Fig 7.4 Location of approved wind energy applications by council, 1st Apr – 30th Sep 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 30th September 2018 were transferred in October 2018 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 at the end of November 2018. 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 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) inflate the mean and the result is 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 DSD:

<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, '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, 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.