

NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

FIRST QUARTER 2020/21 STATISTICAL BULLETIN

(April – June 2020: Provisional figures)



Theme: People and Places

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Frequency: Quarterly

An Official Statistics Publication

Date of Publication: 24 September 2020



Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency

Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

Contents:

Summary Infographic	3
Key Points	4
Introduction	5
Overall NI Planning Activity	8
Departmental Activity	12
Major Development	13
Local Development	15
Development Type	17
Compliance & Enforcement	20
Renewable Energy	22
User Guidance	24

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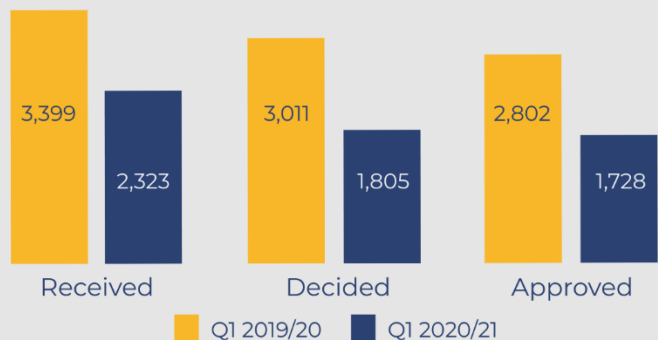
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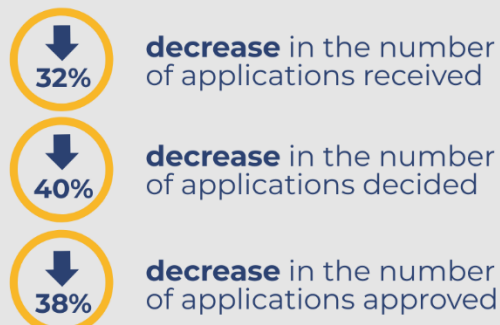
Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: Planning activity and processing performance during Q1 2020/21 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. This should be borne in mind when interpreting these figures.

Overall planning applications

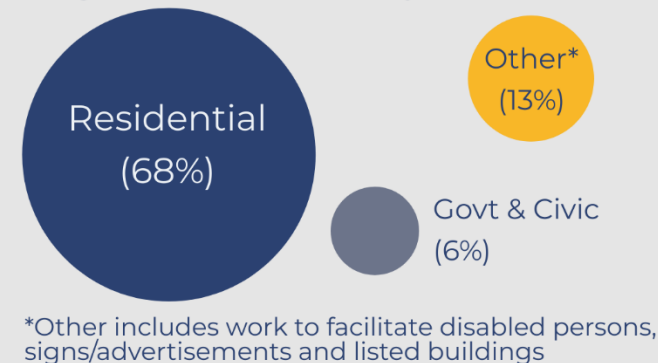
Applications received/decided/approved



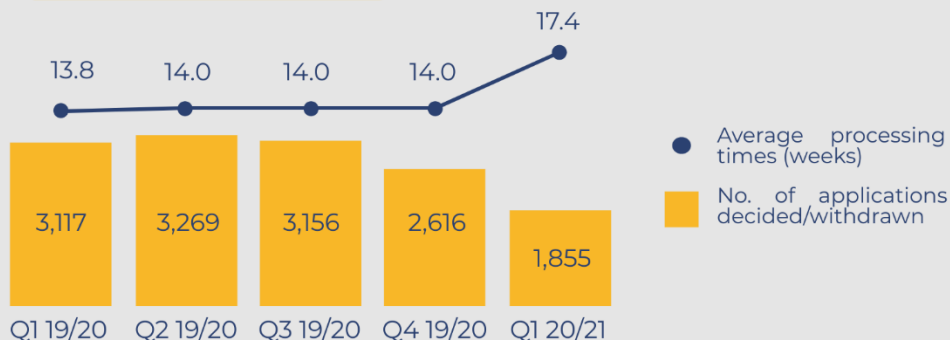
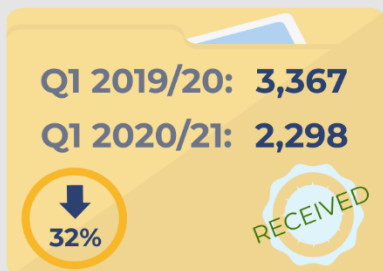
Comparing Q1 2020/21 with Q1 2019/20:



3 largest development types (received)



Local planning applications

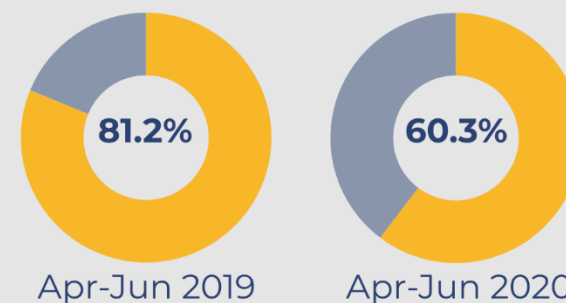


Planning statutory targets

Major & local average processing times (weeks)



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



Key Points

- **Planning activity and processing performance during Q1 2020/21 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. This should be borne in mind and caution should be taken when interpreting these figures and when making comparisons with other time periods.**
- There were 2,323 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during the first quarter of 2020/21; a decrease of almost one-fifth on the previous quarter and almost one-third on the same period a year earlier. This comprised 2,298 local, 24 major and one regionally significant application.
- In the first quarter of 2020/21, 1,805 planning applications were decided upon; a decrease of 28% from the previous quarter and 40% from the same period a year earlier. Decisions were issued on 1,784 local and 21 major applications during the first three months of 2020/21.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first three months of 2020/21 was 17.4 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represented an increase of 3.6 weeks from the same period a year earlier. Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first quarter of 2020/21.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first quarter of 2020/21 was 54.8 weeks across all councils. This represents an improvement of one week compared with the same period a year earlier, but is still considerably higher than the 30 week target.
- Across councils, just over three-fifths (60.3%) of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first three months of 2020/21. This represents a considerable decrease from the rate reported for the first three months of 2019/20 (81.2%) and falls outside the statutory target. Individually, seven of the 11 councils were within the 39 week target at the end of the first quarter of 2020/21.

Introduction

This statistical bulletin presents a summary of Northern Ireland (NI) planning volumes and processing performance for councils and the Department for Infrastructure during the first quarter of 2020/21. Note that from 8 May 2016, Ministerial responsibility for planning transferred from the former Department of the Environment to the Department for Infrastructure (the 'Department') following departmental re-organisation.

Whilst the bulletin and accompanying Excel tables report data for the first quarter of 2020/21, the detailed tables also include comparable data from previous years. Commentary will be mainly focussed on changes over the last year. Please note that these quarterly figures for 2020/21 are provisional and will be subject to scheduled revisions ahead of finalised annual figures, to be published in July 2021.

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 largely 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 12 planning authorities).

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 were a number of significant 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 three 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) 2015¹. It also provides information relating to Departmental performance against a quantitative corporate business plan target.

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 detail and further analysis 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 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 Excel 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 Excel tables. [Table 8.1](#) shows the volume of legacy work which each council inherited on 1 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 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 provisionally due in December 2020. This will contain planning data up to 30 September 2020 (i.e. for Q2 2020/21). The next annual report covering 2020/21 is planned for release in July 2021. See [GOV.UK](#) Release Calendar for release dates of future publications.

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Between November 2019 and March 2020, the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics underwent an assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation. A [report](#) detailing the findings of this assessment was published in May 2020.

The assessment report identified four requirements which, once met, will enable the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics to be designated as new National Statistics. Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB) have published [an action plan](#), detailing how and by when these requirements will be met. This action plan will be updated on an ongoing basis.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/327/contents/made>

New Northern Ireland regional planning IT system

The Department and 10 councils have recently awarded a contract for a new regional planning IT system. It is expected that this new system will be phased into operation from late 2021 to early 2022. Relevant updates on the development of this new system and any potential impacts on statistical reporting will be included within future NI Planning Statistics publications. However, currently the project is at too early a stage to include any further information on potential impacts to NI Planning Statistics.

Planning Monitoring Framework 2019/20

The next edition of the Northern Ireland Planning Monitoring Framework, providing data for 2019/20, is provisionally scheduled to be published in November 2020. The [first edition of this report](#), with data for 2018/19, was published in September 2019.

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

This bulletin and the accompanying Excel tables present data for the period 1 April to 30 June 2020.

Restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic commenced on 12 March 2020 with the start of the delay phase, before lockdown was applied on 23 March 2020.

This impacted the ability of planning authorities to receive and process applications and enforcement cases during the period covered by this bulletin. This had a considerable impact on overall activity and processing performance presented in this report and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting these figures and when making comparisons with other time periods.

Additional analysis by month is also included and provides some evidence that activity levels began to increase again towards the end of the quarter.

The ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic will continue to be assessed in future Northern Ireland Planning Statistics reports.

The data for this report were collected while staff in planning authorities had restricted or no access to their offices. Although this presented challenges in collecting and verifying data, including a longer validation period, there are no concerns that the quality of data presented in this report have been adversely affected.

1. Overall NI Planning Activity

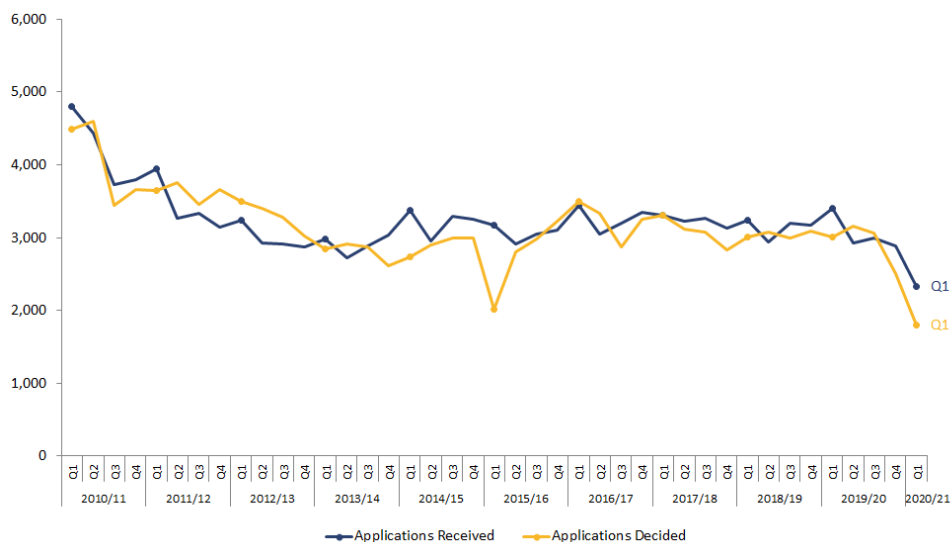
Planning activity and processing performance during Q1 2020/21 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. As would be expected given the circumstances in the period, numbers for almost all aspects of planning were lower compared with previous quarters and with the same period last year.

Applications received

The number of planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) by councils and the Department in the period April to June 2020 (Q1) was 2,323; a decrease of 19.4% on the previous quarter (2,882) and 31.7% on the same period a year earlier (3,399) (Figure 1.1).

The 2,323 applications received in Q1 2020/21 is the lowest number received for any quarter since the series began in April 2002 (see [Table 1.1](#)).

Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, quarterly, Apr 2010 – Jun 2020



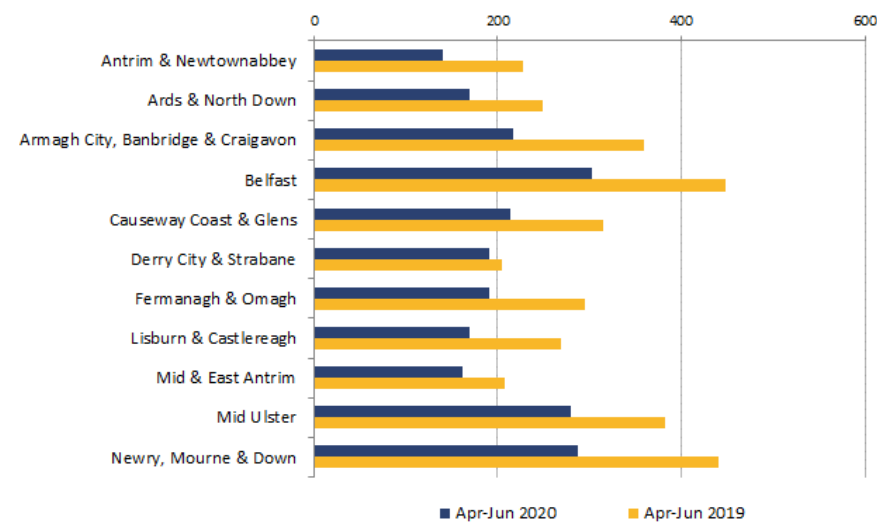
Examining the quarter in more detail, the number of applications received was lowest in April 2020 (529), with consecutive increases recorded in the following months (756 received in May and 1,038 in June).

Three-quarters of planning applications received in Q1 2020/21 were for full planning permission (75.4%); down from 76.6% reported for the same period a year earlier.

In Q1 2020/21, the number of planning applications received varied across councils, ranging from 302 in Belfast (accounting for 13.0% of all applications received across NI) to 140 in Antrim and Newtownabbey (6.0% of all applications received).

All councils reported a decrease in the number of applications received in Q1 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier. Decreases, in percentage terms, ranged from 39.6% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 6.4% in Derry City and Strabane (Figure 1.2). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2, 5.6.](#)

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21



Applications decided

The number of planning **decisions issued** during Q1 2020/21 was **1,805**; a decrease of 28.1% on the previous quarter (2,511) and 40.1% on the same period a year earlier (3,011) (Figure 1.1).

The 1,805 applications decided in Q1 2020/21 is the lowest for any quarter since the series began in April 2002 (see [Table 1.1](#)), as planning authorities' ability to process applications was impacted by the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. This impact was greatest in April 2020, the first full month of lockdown, when 394 applications were decided. Consecutive increases in the number of applications decided were reported for May (594) and June (817).

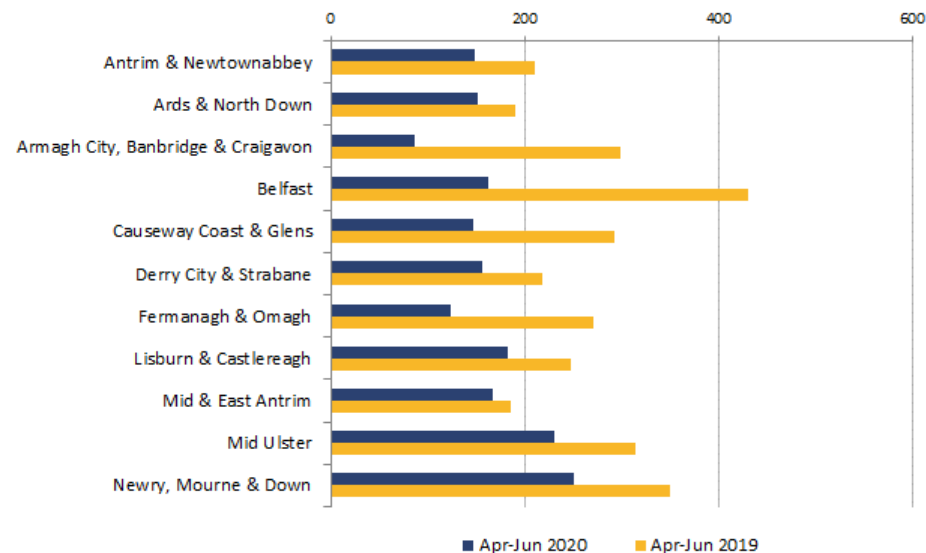
Over three-quarters of planning decisions in Q1 2020/21 (75.7%) were for full planning permission; down from 77.8% reported for the same period a year earlier.

Across councils the number of decisions issued Q1 2020/21 ranged from 251 in Newry, Mourne and Down (accounting for 13.9% of all decisions across NI) to 86 in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (4.8% of all decisions).

All councils reported a decrease in the number of decisions issued in Q1 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier. Decreases, in percentage terms, ranged from 71.1% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 9.7% in Mid and East Antrim (Figure 1.3).

[Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2, 5.6.](#)

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21



In Q1 2020/21, **73** applications were **withdrawn**; approximately half the number recorded during the previous quarter (141) and the same period a year earlier (147). This represents the lowest number withdrawn during any quarter since the series began in April 2002 (see [Table 1.1](#)).

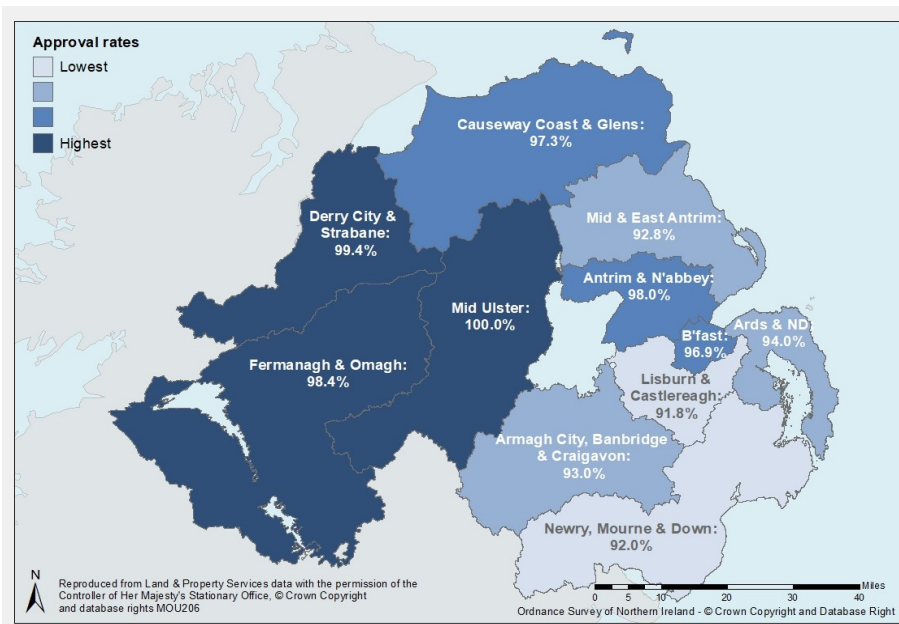
In addition to processing applications, councils deal with a range of other planning related work. For example, during Q1 2020/21, they processed to decision or withdrawal: 155 discharge of conditions; 118 certificates of lawfulness; 70 non-material changes; and 29 tree preservation orders. In each case this represented a considerable decrease from the number reported for Q1 2019/20. A further breakdown of these figures is provided in [Table 9.1](#).

Approval rates

The **overall Northern Ireland approval rate** for all planning applications was **95.7%** in Q1 2020/21; an increase from the rates reported for the previous quarter (94.7%) and the same period a year earlier (93.1%). This also represents the highest approval rate for any quarter since Q2 2002/03.

Approval rates varied across councils during Q1 2020/21, from 100.0% in Mid Ulster to 91.8% in Lisburn and Castlereagh (Figure 1.4). These rates are dependent on many factors and care should be taken in making any comparisons.

Fig 1.4 Approval rates by council, Q1 2020/21



Eight councils reported an increased approval rate when compared with Q1 2019/20, with the largest increase occurring in Newry, Mourne and Down (up from 78.6% to 92.0%). The remaining three councils reported a

decline in approval rates over the year, with Ards and North Down reporting the largest decrease (down from 99.5% to 94.0%).

[Refer to Table 1.2.](#)

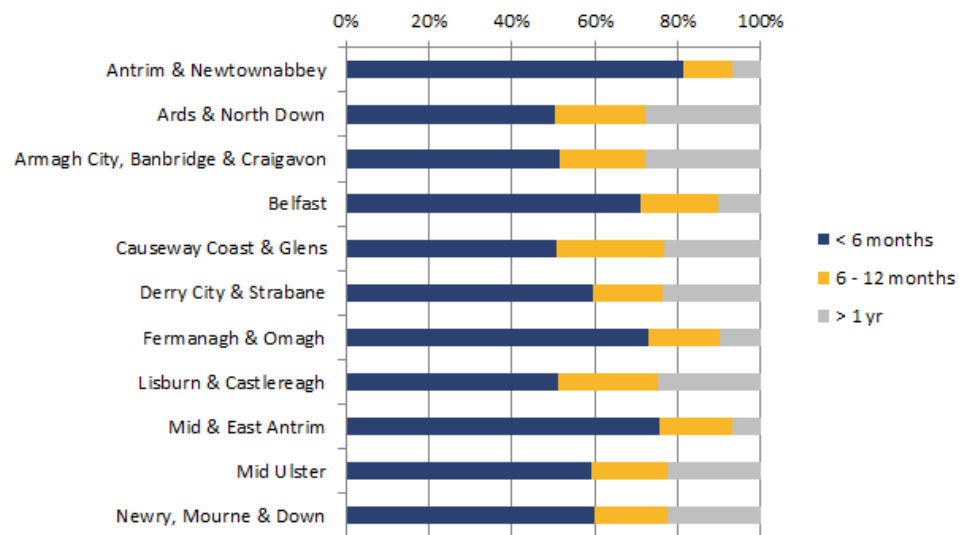
Live applications

There were **6,841** live applications in the planning system across NI at the end of June 2020; an increase of 2.3% from 6,685 at the end of June 2019, and the highest end-of-quarter live count since December 2016. The increase in the live count is due to less applications being processed, i.e. decided or withdrawn, in Q1 2020/21 (1,878) compared with applications received (2,323). This suggests that the coronavirus pandemic and resulting lockdown had a greater impact on the ability of planning authorities to process applications during Q1 2020/21.

Just over one-fifth of all live applications in the planning system at the end of June 2020 were over one year old (1,449; 21.2%); an increase from the proportion reported for the end of June 2019 (1,207; 18.1%).

[Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

Fig 1.5 Live applications by council and length of time in the planning system at end of Jun 2020



The proportion of live applications over one year old at the end of June 2020 varied across councils, ranging from 27.9% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 6.7% in Antrim and Newtownabbey (Figure 1.5).

Comparing the end of June 2020 with the same point a year earlier, the proportion of live cases in the system for over a year increased for 10 councils, with the increase greatest in Ards and North Down (up from 19.1% to 27.7%). This proportion decreased in Derry City and Strabane over the same period (down from 24.5% to 23.6%).

[Refer to Table 1.4.](#)

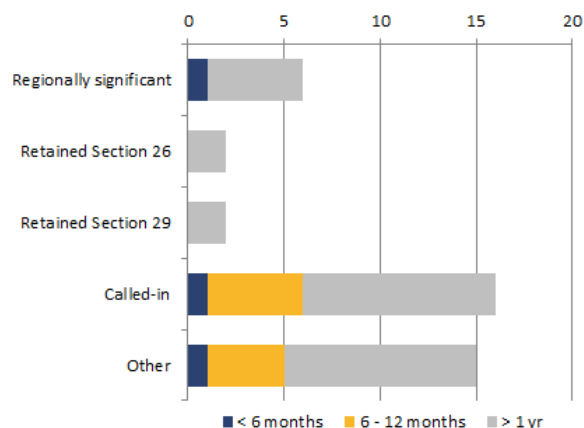
2. Departmental Activity

During Q1 2020/21 the Department **received two** applications; one regionally significant and one called-in application. The Department also received two applications during the same period a year earlier.

The Department **did not issue any decisions** during Q1 2020/21; this compares with five decisions issued during the same period in 2019/20. **No** Departmental applications were **withdrawn** during Q1 2020/21.

At the end of June 2020 there were 41 live Departmental applications: **six** ongoing **regionally significant development** (RSD) applications; **four retained** applications; **16 called-in** applications; and **15 other**² applications. The majority of these applications (29 out of 41) were in the system for over a year (Figure 2.1). [Refer to Tables 2.1, 2.2.](#)

Fig 2.1 Live Departmental applications by development type and length of time in the planning system at end of Jun 2020



² 'Other' applications include Conservation Area Consents, Variation of Conditions and Reserved Matters.

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

It is a target for the Department to contribute to sustainable economic growth by processing Regionally Significant Planning Applications from date valid to a Ministerial Recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks³.

Of the six RSD applications live on the planning system at the end of June 2020, four had already been progressed to Ministerial Recommendation prior to Q1 2020/21. The 30 week period for recommendation / withdrawal has been exceeded for one of the two remaining applications, while the other was awaiting information to complete validation at the end of June 2020.³

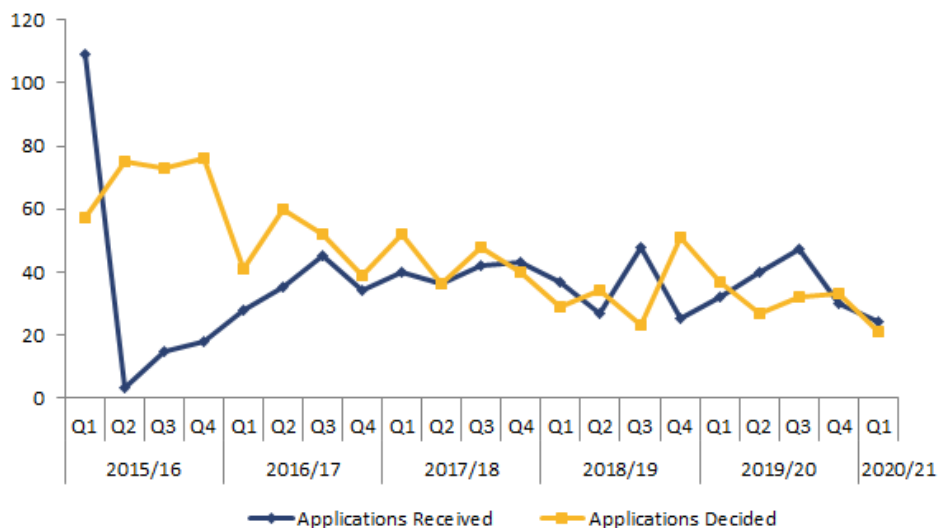
³ This is the Departmental target from Q1 2019/20. Please see User Guidance section for more information on this.

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.

A total of **24 major** planning applications were **received** in NI during Q1 2020/21; a decrease from the previous quarter (30) and the same period a year earlier (32).

Fig 3.1 Major development applications, quarterly, Apr 2015 – Jun 2020



From 1 July 2015, pre-application community consultation became a pre-requisite to a major application. All major applications now go through a minimum 12 week consultation process before being accepted. The

⁴ For more information, see:

https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/news/dfi_planning_news/news_releases_2015_onwards/news-guidance-pacc-covid19.htm

impact of this requirement should be borne in mind when considering the longer term trend in major applications received.

Q2 2015/16 had the lowest number of major applications received across the whole series but this can be attributed to the new community consultation requirement. From Q2 2015/16, the number of major applications received steadily increased quarter on quarter until Q3 2016/17. Since then, the number of major applications received each quarter suggests something of a levelling out, with some quarterly fluctuations over the last two years. The 24 major applications received in Q1 2020/21 was the lowest in any quarter since Q4 2015/16.

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 in response to the coronavirus pandemic.⁴ It is too early to assess the impact of this change but the number of major applications received in June (12) was an increase on both April (seven) and May (five).

Ten councils received major applications during Q1 2020/21, with Belfast receiving the most (six).

During Q1 2020/21, **21 major** planning applications were **decided**; a decrease from the previous quarter (33) and the same period a year earlier (37). This is the lowest number of major applications decided in any quarter since the transfer of planning powers. **Two** major applications were **withdrawn** during the most recent quarter.

Nine councils issued decisions on major applications during Q1 2020/21, with Belfast and Derry City and Strabane issuing the most (five each). [Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.](#)

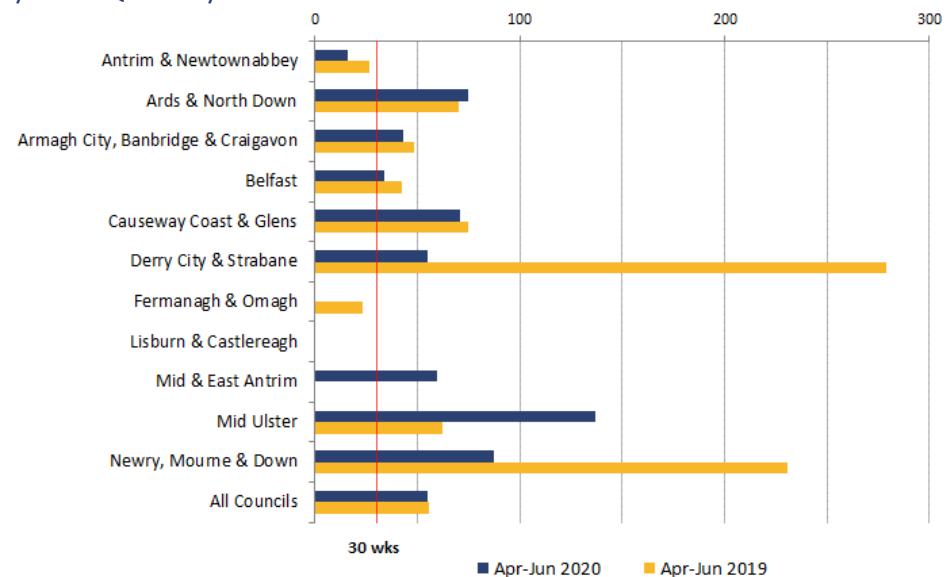
It is a statutory target for each council that their major development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 30 weeks.

The **average processing time** for **major** applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during Q1 2020/21 was **54.8 weeks** across all councils. This represents an improvement compared with the same period in 2019/20 (down one week from 55.8 weeks), but is still considerably higher than the 30 week target.

Although Figure 3.2 has been included for completeness, across councils there was an insufficient number of major applications processed to decision or withdrawal during the first quarter of both the current and previous year to allow any meaningful assessment of their individual performance. Comparison against the target and across councils will become more robust as the year progresses, with more applications being processed. With this in mind, Antrim and Newtownabbey was within the 30 week target time in Q1 2020/21, with one application processed in 15.8 weeks.

[Refer to Table 3.2.](#)

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21



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

Twenty of the 21 major applications decided upon in Northern Ireland during Q1 2020/21 were approved, meaning the overall approval rate was 95.2%. Nine councils issued decisions on major applications during Q1 2020/21; in eight of these, 100% of the 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 Q1 2020/21 was **2,298**; a decrease of 19.4% on the previous quarter (2,852) and 31.7% on the same period a year earlier (3,367), and the lowest number received in any quarter since the transfer of planning powers (Figure 4.1).

Examining the quarter in more detail, the number of local applications received was lowest in April 2020 (522), with consecutive increases recorded in the following months (751 in May and 1,025 in June).

Across councils the number of local applications received during Q1 2020/21 ranged from 296 in Belfast to 140 in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

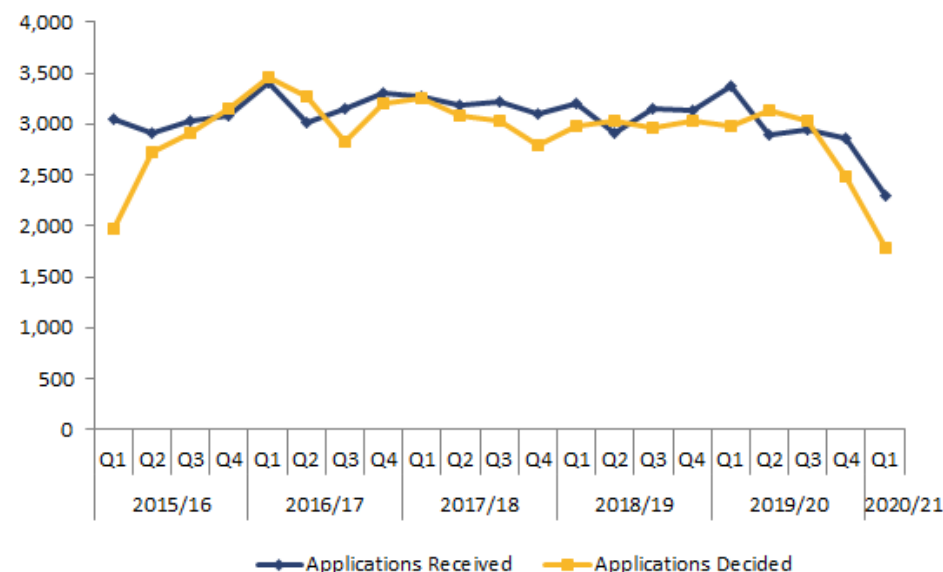
All councils reported a decrease in the number of local applications received in Q1 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier. Decreases, in percentage terms, ranged from 39.2% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 5.5% in Derry City and Strabane.

The number of **local** applications **decided** in Q1 2020/21 was **1,784**; a decrease of 28.0% on the previous quarter (2,478) and 40.0% on the same period a year earlier (2,973) (Figure 4.1).

The 1,784 local applications decided in Q1 2020/21 is the lowest for any quarter since the transfer of planning powers, as planning authorities' ability to process applications was impacted by the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. This impact was greatest in April, the first full month of lockdown, when 393 local applications were decided. Consecutive increases in the number of local applications decided were reported for May (591) and June (800).

In the first quarter of 2015/16, immediately following the transition of planning functions to councils, the number of local applications received was considerably higher than the number of decisions made. In 2016/17 this gap narrowed considerably. Since Q3 2016/17 the number of local applications received has generally exceeded the number decided and this was true in Q1 2020/21 (Figure 4.1).

Fig 4.1 Local development applications, quarterly, Apr 2015 – Jun 2020



During Q1 2020/21, the number of local planning decisions issued ranged from 248 in Newry, Mourne and Down to 85 in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon.

All councils reported a decrease in the number of local planning decisions issued in Q1 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier. Decreases, in percentage terms, ranged from 71.2% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 10.8% in Mid and East Antrim.

Over the quarter, 71 local applications were withdrawn in NI; the lowest quarterly total reported since the transfer of planning powers. [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.

The **average processing time** for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during Q1 2020/21 was **17.4 weeks** across all councils, exceeding the statutory target of 15 weeks. This represented an increase of 3.6 weeks compared with Q1 2019/20 (13.8 weeks) as councils' ability to process applications was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

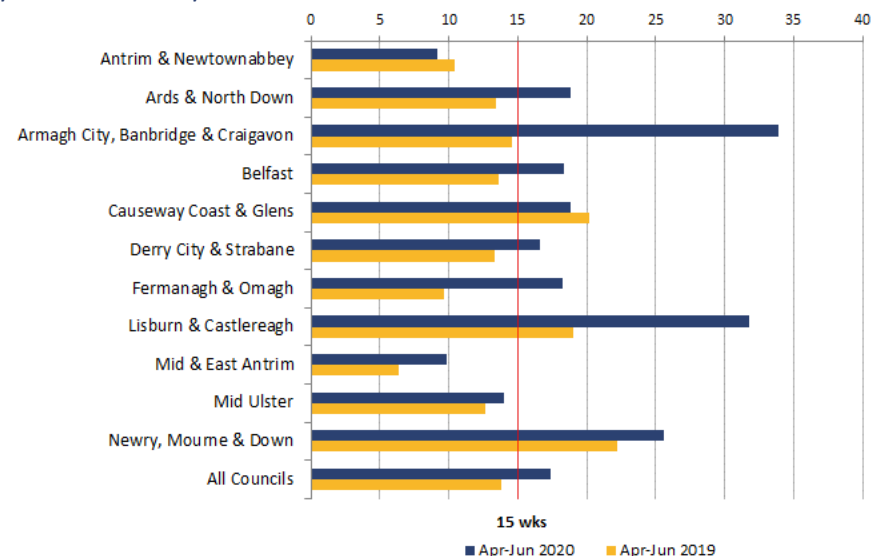
This impact varied across councils; average processing times for local applications ranged from 9.2 weeks in Antrim and Newtownabbey to 33.9 weeks in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon in Q1 2020/21.

Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first three months of 2020/21: Antrim and Newtownabbey (9.2 weeks); Mid and East Antrim (9.8 weeks); and Mid Ulster (14.0 weeks).

Average processing times for local applications decreased in just two councils during April to June 2020, compared with the same period a year earlier: Causeway Coast and Glens (down 1.4 weeks, from 20.2 to 18.8 weeks); and Antrim and Newtownabbey (down 1.2 weeks, from 10.4 to 9.2 weeks).

Over the same period, average processing times for local applications increased in nine councils, with the increase greatest in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (more than doubling, from 14.6 to 33.9 weeks). (Figure 4.2). [Refer to Table 4.2.](#)

Fig 4.2 Local development average processing times by council, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21



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.](#)

The **overall Northern Ireland approval rate** for local applications was **95.7%** in Q1 2020/21; the highest rate recorded for any quarter since the transfer of planning powers. Across councils, approval rates for local applications ranged from 100.0% in Mid Ulster to 91.8% in Lisburn and Castlereagh in Q1 2020/21.

5. Development Type

Generally the majority of planning applications received are for residential development. During Q1 2020/21, **residential** applications accounted for **over two-thirds (68.3%)** of all planning applications received in NI; an increase from the proportion reported for Q1 2019/20 (62.8%).

Residential was the most commonly received application type in every council in Q1 2020/21. The proportion of all applications received that were residential ranged from 78.8% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 48.3% in Belfast.

Consistent with previous periods, Belfast (25.5%) and Derry City and Strabane (23.6%) received a higher proportion of applications categorised as ‘other’ in Q1 2020/21, compared with the other councils. See [Appendix 1 – Definitions](#) for a description of the types of applications included in this category.

Reflecting the overall decrease in the number of planning applications received at NI level in Q1 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier (down 31.7%), all development types recorded decreases over the year.

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

Residential applications

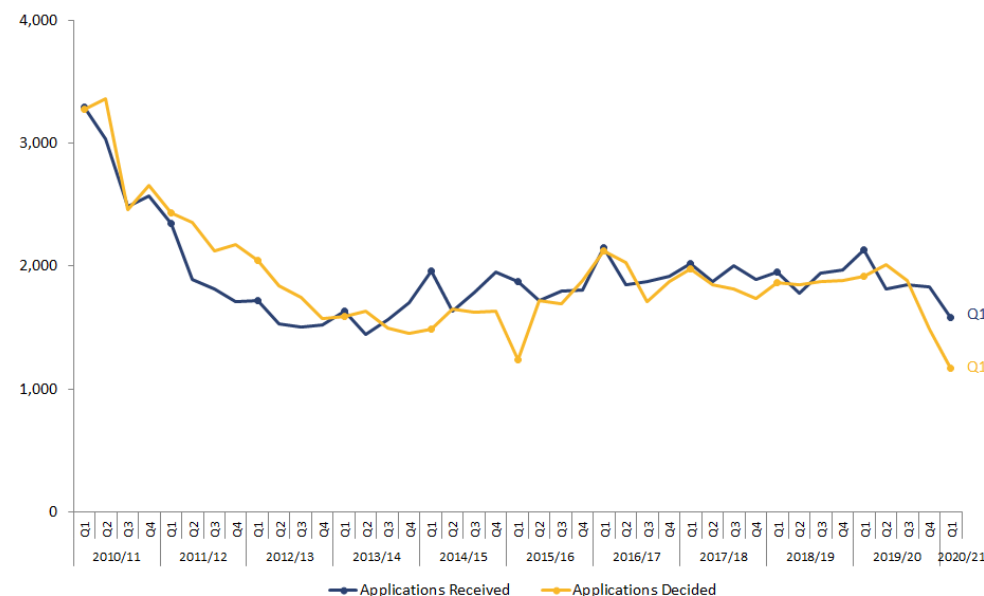
The overall number of **residential** planning applications **received** in NI during Q1 2020/21 was **1,586**; a decrease of 13.2% over the quarter (1,828) and 25.6% over the year (2,133). This represented the lowest number received in any quarter since Q3 2013/14.

Examining the quarter in more detail, the number of residential applications received was lowest in April (335), with consecutive increases recorded in the following months (515 in May and 736 in June).

During Q1 2020/21, **1,173 residential** planning applications were **decided** upon; a decrease of 21.3% on the previous quarter (1,490) and 38.8% on the same period a year earlier (1,917) (Figure 5.1). This also represents the lowest number of decisions issued on residential applications in any quarter since the series began in April 2002 (see [Table 5.3](#)).

Within the quarter, the number of residential applications decided was lowest in April (261). This increased to 373 in May, before increasing again to 539 in June.

Fig 5.1 NI Residential applications, quarterly, Apr 2010 – Jun 2020

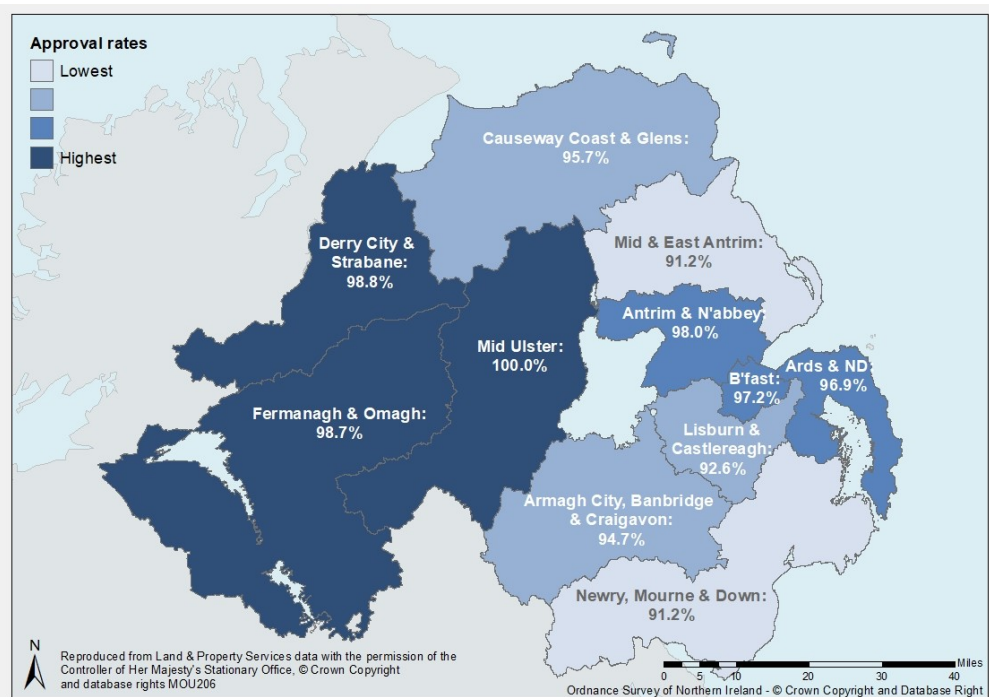


[Refer to Table 5.3.](#)

The **Northern Ireland approval rate** for residential planning applications was **95.7%** in Q1 2020/21; the highest rate for any quarter since Q4 2016/17.

Approval rates for residential planning applications varied across councils in Q1 2020/21, ranging from 100.0% in Mid Ulster to 91.2% in both Mid and East Antrim, and Newry, Mourne and Down (Figure 5.2).

Fig 5.2 Residential approval rates by council, Q1 2020/21



Approval rates for residential planning applications increased in nine councils between Q1 2019/20 and Q1 2020/21. The largest increase over this period was in Newry, Mourne and Down (up from 78.8% to 91.2%).

Approval rates declined in two councils over the year, with the largest decrease occurring in Mid and East Antrim (down from 94.8% to 91.2%).

During Q1 2020/21, 45 residential applications were withdrawn across NI; the lowest number of any quarter since Q1 2015/16.

[Refer to Table 5.4.](#)

Residential applications – urban, rural and open countryside

Across urban areas (*settlements greater than or equal to 5,000 population*), the number of residential applications received in Q1 2020/21 was 524; a decrease from the previous quarter (-12.7%; from 600) and the same period a year earlier (-29.8%; from 746).

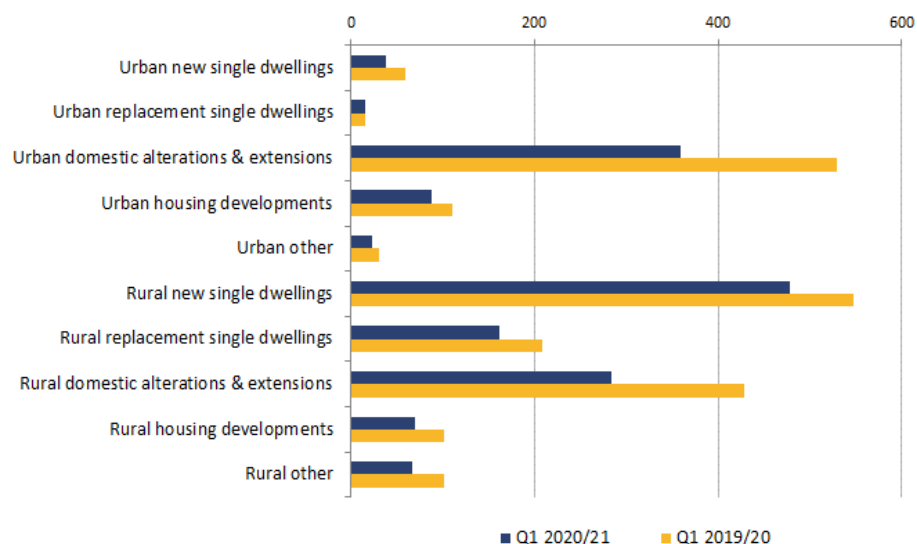
In rural areas, within settlements of less than 5,000 population, there was a decrease in the number of residential applications received in Q1 2020/21 (161) compared with the previous quarter (-23.0%; from 209) and the same period a year earlier (-37.6%; from 258).

In the open countryside (outside population settlements), the number of residential applications received in Q1 2020/21 (901) also decreased over the quarter (-11.6%; from 1,019) and the year (-20.2%; from 1,129).

Residential applications – urban and rural

Figure 5.3 shows a breakdown of the type of residential applications received in the first quarter of both 2019/20 and 2020/21. Urban is based on areas with settlements greater than 5,000 population while rural is a combination of settlements below 5,000 population and the open countryside.

Fig 5.3 NI Residential applications received by urban/rural, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21

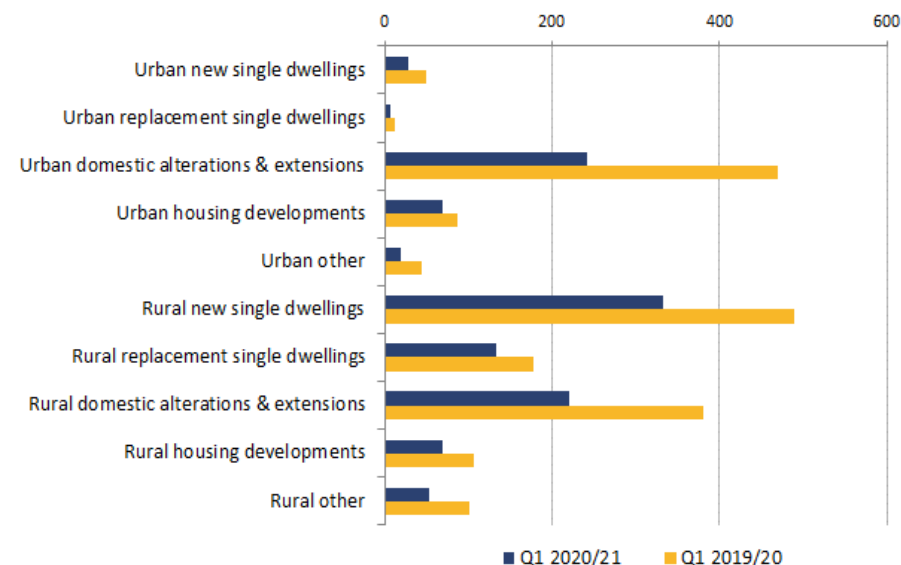


New single dwellings in rural areas (479) and alterations/extensions in urban areas (360) continue to be the most common types of residential application, together accounting for over half (52.9%) of all residential applications received during Q1 2020/21.

The number of applications received for each housing type decreased between Q1 2019/20 and Q1 2020/21, with the exception of replacement single dwellings in urban areas (where the number received remained

unchanged at 15). The largest decreases, in absolute terms, over the year were evident for domestic alterations and extensions in urban (down from 530 to 360; -32.1%) and rural areas (down from 428 to 284; -33.6%). Together these decreases accounted almost three-fifths of the overall decrease in the number of residential applications received over the year.

Fig 5.4 NI Residential applications decided by urban/rural, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21



The number of decisions issued for each housing type decreased between Q1 2019/20 and Q1 2020/21. The largest decrease, in absolute terms, was for decisions on domestic alterations and extensions in urban areas, which almost halved over the year (down from 470 to 241; -48.7%).

[Refer to Table 5.5.](#)

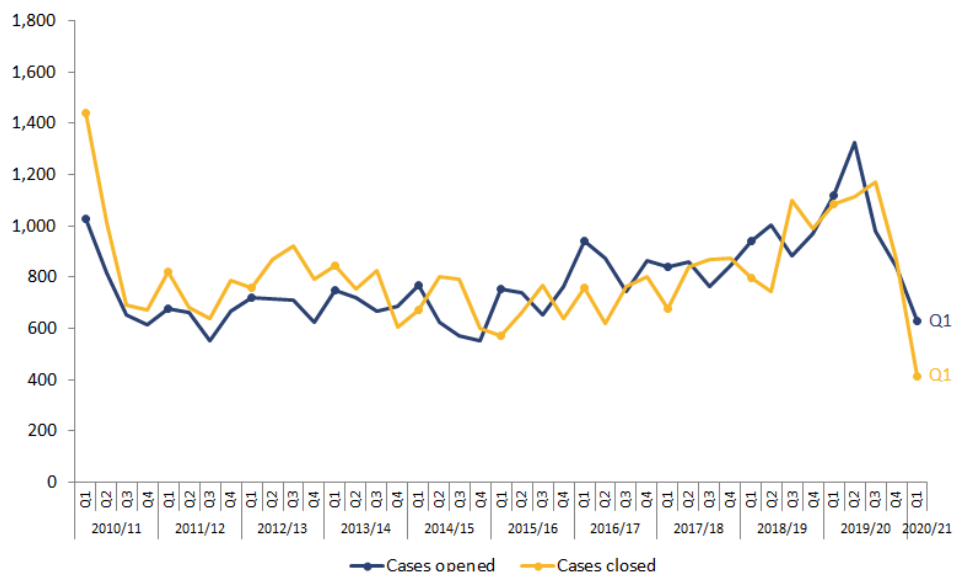
6. Compliance and Enforcement Activity

The number of **enforcement cases opened** in Northern Ireland during Q1 2020/21 was **630**; a decrease of 25.1% from the previous quarter (841) and 43.6% from the same period a year earlier (1,118). This is also the lowest number opened in any quarter since Q4 2014/15 (Figure 6.1).

Examining the quarter in more detail, 117 enforcement cases were opened in April; this increased to 175 in May and 338 in June.

Across the councils, the number of enforcement cases opened in Q1 2020/21 ranged from 87 in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 36 in Derry City and Strabane. Nine of the 11 councils reported decreases in the volume of enforcement cases opened in Q1 2020/21 compared with the same period the previous year. The decrease was greatest in Belfast, where the number of cases opened fell by four-fifths (from 299 to 59).

Fig 6.1 Enforcement cases opened & closed, quarterly, Apr 2010 – Jun 2020



The number of **enforcement cases closed** during Q1 2020/21 was **411**; less than half the number closed in the previous quarter (867) and a decrease of over three-fifths from the same period year earlier (1,085). This also represents the lowest number closed in any quarter since the series began in April 2009 (see [Table 6.1](#)).

Examining the quarter in more detail, the number of cases closed was lowest in April (110), with a higher number closed in both May (153) and June (148).

The number of cases closed in Q1 2020/21 varied across councils ranging from 133 in Newry, Mourne and Down to 15 in Derry City and Strabane. All 11 councils reported decreases in the number of enforcement cases closed in Q1 2020/21 compared with the same period the previous year. This decrease was greatest in Belfast, where the number of cases closed fell by 90.9% over this period (from 175 to 16).

The most common reason for enforcement cases closing in Q1 2020/21 was that no breach had actually occurred; accounting for over one-quarter (118; 28.7%) of the 411 cases closed.

[Referto Tables 6.1, 6.2.](#)

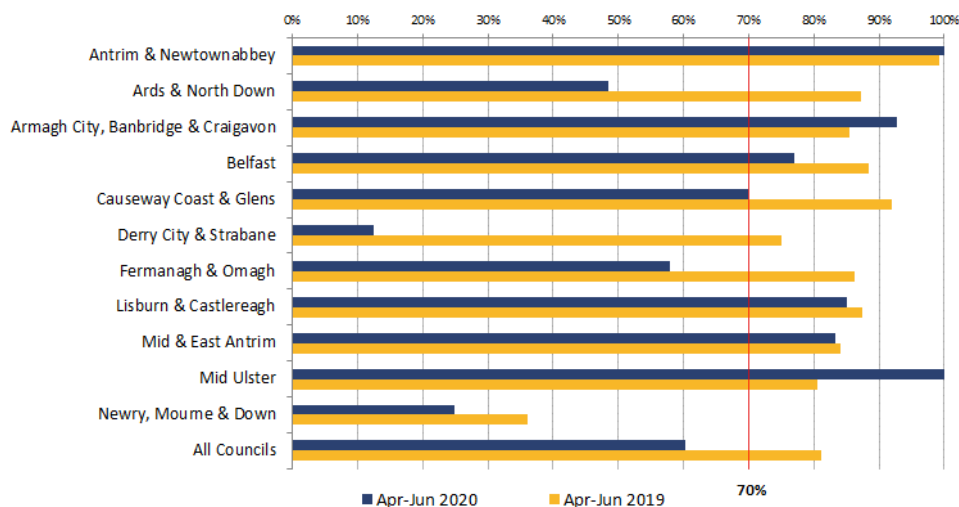
It is a statutory target that 70% of all enforcement cases dealt with by councils are progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.

Across all councils, **just over three in every five (60.3%)** enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first three months of 2020/21. This falls outside the statutory target and represents a considerable decrease from the rate reported for the first three months of 2019/20 (81.2%), as councils' ability to progress cases to conclusion was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

This impact varied across councils, with seven of the 11 within the target after the first three months of 2020/21: Antrim and Newtownabbey (100.0% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks); Mid Ulster (100.0%); Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (92.7%); Lisburn and Castlereagh (85.0%); Mid and East Antrim (83.3%); Belfast (76.9%); and Causeway Coast and Glens (70.0%) (Figure 6.2).

[Refer to Table 6.2.](#)

Fig 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21



There were **no prosecutions** nor **convictions** recorded across NI in Q1 2020/21; this compares with 16 and five respectively during the same period a year earlier. [Refer to Tables 6.1 and 6.3.](#)

The number of **live enforcement cases** at the end of June 2020 was **3,828**; an increase over the quarter (7.2%; from 3,570) and the year (7.0%; 3,577), and the highest end-of-quarter total since live enforcement cases were first recorded in Q3 2012/13. This suggests that the coronavirus pandemic

and resulting lockdown had a greater impact on the ability of planning authorities to close enforcement cases than open cases during the first three months of 2020/21.

The number of **cases over two years old** stood at **1,010** at the end of June 2020, accounting for 26.4% of all live cases. This compares with 29.6% of live cases at the end of June 2019.

[Refer to Table 6.4.](#)

Across councils, Newry, Mourne and Down had the highest number of live cases at the end of June 2020 (802), with 47.3% of these in the system for over two years; the highest proportion across all councils. Newry, Mourne and Down was, however, the only council where the number of live enforcement cases decreased between the end of June 2019 and June 2020 (-22.1%; down by 228 enforcements).

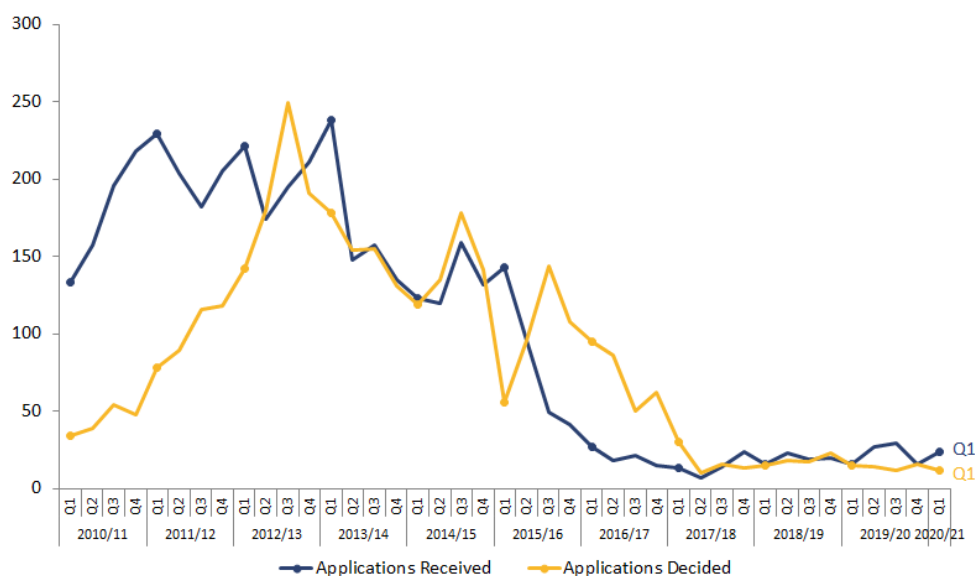
Mid and East Antrim had the smallest number of live cases (141) at the end of June 2020, with 7.8% of these in the system for over two years.

[Refer to Table 6.5.](#)

7. Renewable Energy (RE) Activity

Twenty-four renewable energy applications were **received** in Q1 2020/21; an increase of eight applications compared with the same period the previous year (16). The number of applications received during April to June peaked in 2013/14 at 238. 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. The sharp decline in recent years (an **89.9%** decrease from 238 applications in Q1 2013/14 to 24 applications in Q1 2020/21) may be partly due to a reduction in government funding available, as well as a lack of capacity on the power grid to allow for new connections.

Fig 7.1 Renewable Energy applications, quarterly, Apr 2010 – Jun 2020



The number of renewable energy applications **decided** during Q1 2020/21 was **12**; a decrease from 15 in Q1 2019/20 and a **93.3%** decrease from the series’ first quarter peak of 178 applications decided in 2013/14. One

renewable energy application was withdrawn during Q1 2020/21. [Refer to Table 7.1.](#)

During the first three months of 2020/21, the average time taken to process a renewable energy application to decision or withdrawal was 37.6 weeks across NI; an increase of 14.8 weeks over the year (from 22.8 weeks).

Single wind turbines continue to be the most common renewable energy application, accounting for five-sixths of the renewable applications received (20 out of 24) and decided (10 out of 12) during Q1 2020/21. [Refer to Table 7.2.](#)

Figure 7.2 shows the distribution of renewable energy applications received across the different planning authorities, with Fermanagh and Omagh receiving the most in Q1 2020/21.

Fig 7.2 Renewable Energy applications received by authority, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21

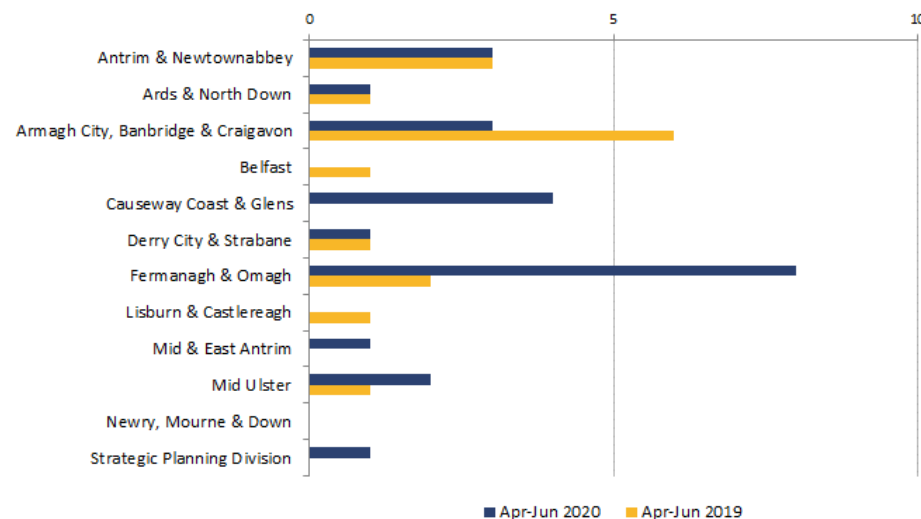
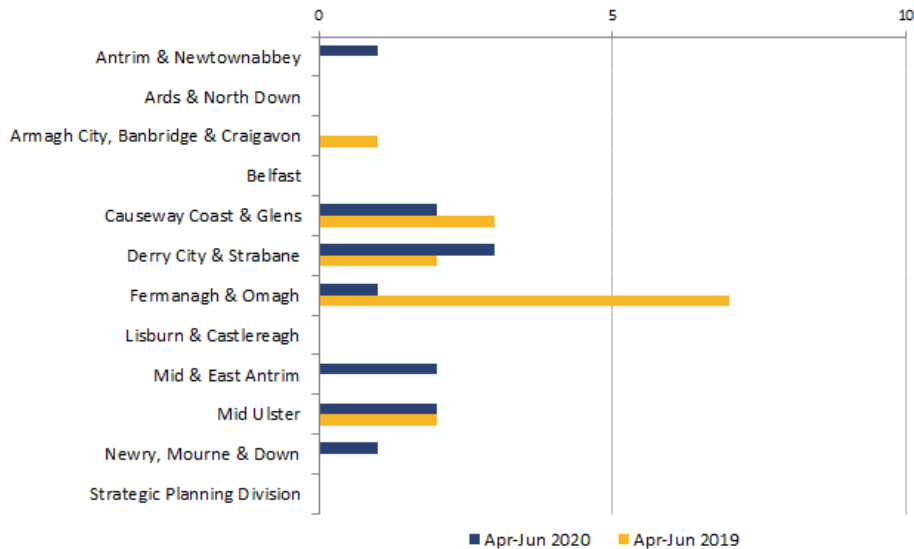


Figure 7.3 shows that across all planning authorities, Derry City and Strabane issued the most decisions on renewable energy applications during Q1 2020/21 (three).

Fig 7.3 Renewable Energy applications decided by authority, Q1 2019/20 & Q1 2020/21

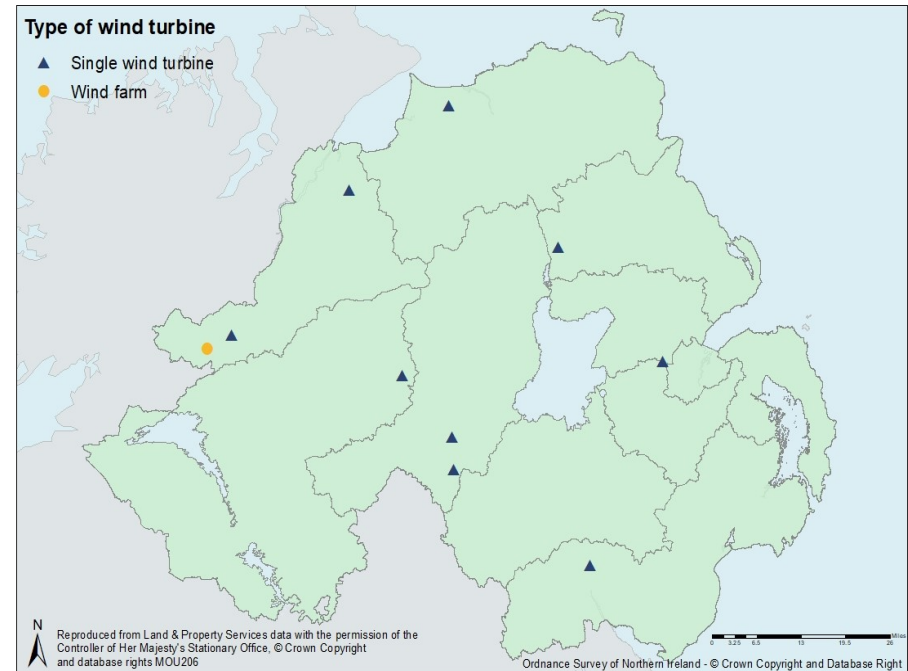


At the end of June 2020, there were **128 live renewable energy applications** in the planning system across NI. Nearly three-quarters (95 of 128) were for single wind turbines. Of these 128 live applications, 38.3% were in the planning system for over a year; a decrease from the proportion reported for the same point in 2019 (47.8%).

The **NI approval rate** for renewable energy applications was **91.7%** in Q1 2020/21, with 11 out of the 12 decisions issued during this period being approvals.

Figure 7.4 displays the locations of wind energy applications approved during Q1 2020/21. A total of nine single wind turbines and one wind farm were approved during this period.

Fig 7.4 Location of approved wind energy applications by council, Q1 2020/21



Note: Some approved wind energy applications are in close proximity to each other and may not be individually identifiable on the map.

[Refer to Tables 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4.](#)

User Guidance

Notes on data source and quality

The records of all planning applications from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020 were transferred in July 2020 from a live database. This included all live planning applications in the Northern Ireland 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 and the Department 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 planning authority validation, a final extract was taken in August 2020. Quarterly data for 2020/21 are regarded as provisional and will retain this status until the annual report for 2020/21 is published in July 2021.

Quality assurance of administrative data sources

In 2015 the UK Statistics Authority published a regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data (QAAD). This standard is supported with an [Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit](#) which provides useful guidance to assure the quality of administrative data used in the production of statistics. ASRB have carried out a QAAD assessment on the Northern Ireland Planning Portal application – the administrative data source that is used to produce the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics. [This report](#) will be reviewed and updated as necessary on an annual basis.

Background quality report

In order to provide users with further information on how the statistics in the NI Planning Statistics report have been compiled and detail on the quality of the data used, a [background quality report has been published](#). This report will be reviewed and updated as necessary on an annual basis.

Regionally significant / major / local development applications after 1 April 2014

A new classification hierarchy of development for planning applications came into effect on 1 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 1 April 2015. It should be noted that there are some differences between the initial administrative hierarchy classifications in place from 1 April 2014 and the final classifications set out in the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (S.R.2015 No.71). Data and analysis based on this new hierarchy is available from 1 April 2015.

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. Note that 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 in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Major developments have important economic, social and environmental implications. The majority of applications for major developments will be

dealt with by councils and will be subject to pre-application consultation with the community. Note that 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 in response to the coronavirus pandemic

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

[Refers to Section 2 of report](#)

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 and 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.

Departmental target

From Q1 2019/20 the Departmental target for Regionally Significant planning applications reported on in the NI Planning Statistics changed. The previous target was:

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.

From Q1 2019/20 onwards, this was been replaced by:

It is a target for the Department to contribute to sustainable economic growth by processing Regionally Significant Planning Applications from date valid to a Ministerial Recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks.

Enforcement activity

[Refers to Section 6 of report](#)

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

- case has been remedied or resolved (the breach may have been removed or amended accordingly);

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

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

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

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

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

Processing times

The time taken to process a decision/withdrawal is calculated from the date on which an application is deemed valid to the date on which the decision is issued or the application is withdrawn. The average processing time is the median. The median is determined by sorting data from its lowest to highest values and then taking the data point in the middle of the sequence. The median is used because some planning applications can take several years to reach a decision. As a consequence, these extreme

cases (outliers) can inflate the mean to the extent that the mean may not be considered as 'typical'. Therefore the median may be taken to better represent the 'average' or 'typical' processing time.

Geographical classification

The method of classifying the urban and rural marker has been updated to reflect the latest [NISRA guidance](#) using the 2015 Settlement limits. This is preferred to the previous method as it more accurately considers which of the eight settlement bands (A-H) 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, 'housing developments' and 'other' residential applications have been included within the urban and rural breakdowns.

In line with NISRA guidance, the following definitions have been used in this report:

- Urban settlements - settlements with a population greater than or equal to 5,000 (bands A-E);
- Rural settlements - settlements with a population less than 5,000 (bands F, G and part of H); and
- Rural countryside - the open countryside which falls outside population settlements (part of band H).

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' and 'rural settlements' together.

To obtain rural figures in line with the NISRA definition users should add 'rural settlements' and 'rural 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).

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.

Note on exclusions

In addition to processing applications, planning authorities deal with a range of other planning related work. Data on this 'non-application' workload, whilst excluded from the publication and the calculation of performance against relevant statutory targets, are included in [Table 9.1](#) of the accompanying Excel tables. Details of these exclusions are:

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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

Uses of the data

The data in this statistical release are used by a wide variety of users for a range of purposes. For example, the Department uses the information to inform policy and monitor performance in relation to planning in Northern Ireland, as required in legislation. Local councils use the information for policy briefing and development, and to monitor performance. The data are also used to ensure democratic accountability in answers to Northern Ireland Assembly Questions, ministerial correspondence, Freedom of Information Act cases and queries from the public.

User engagement

Users are encouraged to provide feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. Comments on any issues relating to this statistical release are welcomed and encouraged. Feedback can be provided through an [ongoing customer survey](#).

Alternatively users can email ASRB directly at: ASRB@nisra.gov.uk.

During 2019, ASRB undertook a specific user consultation exercise and [results of this were published](#) in October 2019.

Further information

Information and statistics for England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, as well as other relevant NISRA statistics, can be found at the following links:

England:

This [statistical release](#) presents National Statistics on authorities that undertake district and county level planning activities in England. It covers information on planning applications received and decided, including decisions on applications for residential developments (dwellings) and

enforcement activities. Data are provided at national and local planning authority level.

Scotland:

The Scottish Government establishes overarching land use policies and principles in Scottish Planning Policy, which is applied spatially in the National Planning Framework for Scotland. In the four largest city regions in Scotland, Strategic Development Planning Authorities prepare strategic development plans which set out the vision for long term development and which should address important land use issues that cross local authority boundaries or involve strategic infrastructure. There are 34 planning authorities in Scotland, 32 local authorities and two national park authorities, who must deliver local development plans, in these plans they must identify sites for new development and set decision-making policies. [Published planning statistics](#) include data on planning performance and vacant and derelict land.

Wales:

The context for planning in Wales is established by Planning Policy Wales. There are 25 planning authorities in Wales and each must prepare a local development plan. These plans must conform to the national context and the plans must set out proposals and land use policies for the development of the area. Regional planning is a discretionary layer of the planning system, the Welsh Government has powers to identify "Strategic Planning Areas", who have planning powers to produce strategic plans. Data on planning services performance are [published](#) on the Welsh Government website.

Republic of Ireland:

[Central Statistics Office provides](#) a number of tables which present number of permissions granted, floor area and units. Region and County data is available in associated tables.

Northern Ireland:

Building Control (LPS Starts and completions):

Land & Property Services (LPS) receives information from Building Control in each council in Northern Ireland. [This information](#) contains the number of recorded new dwellings (houses and apartments) started and completed.

Housing Bulletin, Department for Communities (DfC):

[DfC produce](#) quarterly and annual compendium publications of housing statistics, as well as biannual homelessness statistics and an ongoing review of data included in these publications and their proposed changes. The Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin is a quarterly bulletin containing information on new housing starts and completions, homelessness, the House Price Index and new house sales and prices.

Cross-government working group on housing and planning

The Department for Infrastructure is part of a cross-government working group, working to improve the trustworthiness, quality and value of housing and planning statistics across the UK. ASRB's involvement in this group ensures continuous engagement with producers of similar and related statistics across the UK, ensuring opportunity for collaboration and improvement of this publication through understanding the wider UK picture. More information can be found on the [Government Statistical Service website](#).

OpenDataNI

Datasets accompanying the finalised Northern Ireland Planning Statistics annual reports are made available on [the OpenDataNI website](#). These datasets contain information on received and decided planning applications during the year, as well as details of pending applications at the end of the financial year. Datasets are available from 2016/17.

NINIS

Finalised annual data on planning applications and enforcements are also available on the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service, from 2002/03 (where applicable). These data can be found under the 'People and Places' theme on the [NINIS website](#).

Planning readership list

An email alert is sent after each Northern Ireland Planning Statistics publication to readers who wish to be informed of new / updated planning statistics. To sign up for this free service, please email: ASRB@nisra.gov.uk.

Pre-release access

Details of persons who receive pre-release access to this statistical release up to 24 hours prior to publication can be found on the [Department for Infrastructure website](#).

Appendix 1 – Definitions

The statistical categories referred to in [Section 5](#) and [Excel Tables 5.1 and 5.2](#) are defined below.

Agricultural

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

Commercial

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

Government and civic

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

Industrial

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

Mixed use

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

Residential

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

Change of use

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

Other

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.

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