

NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

SECOND QUARTER 2020/21 STATISTICAL BULLETIN

(July – September 2020: Provisional figures)



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National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value as set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). It is the Department for Infrastructure's responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The Northern Ireland Planning Statistics were designated as National Statistics in December 2020, following a full assessment of compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

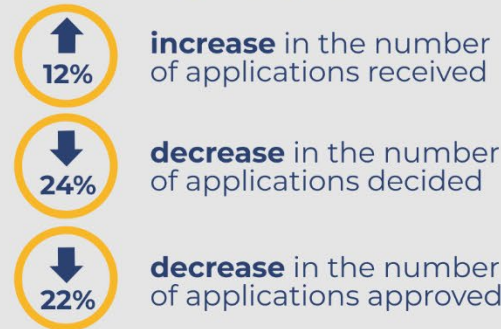
Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: Planning activity and processing performance during the first and second quarters of 2020/21 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. This should be borne in mind when interpreting these figures.

Overall planning applications

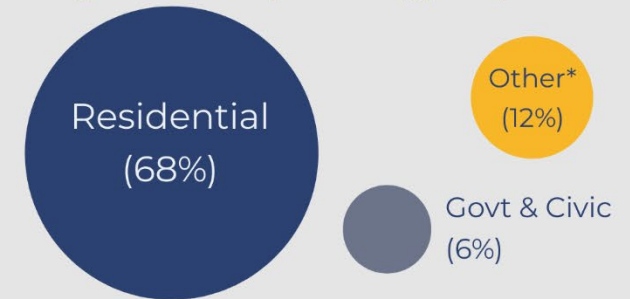
Applications received/decided/approved



Comparing Q2 2020/21 with Q2 2019/20:



3 largest development types (received)



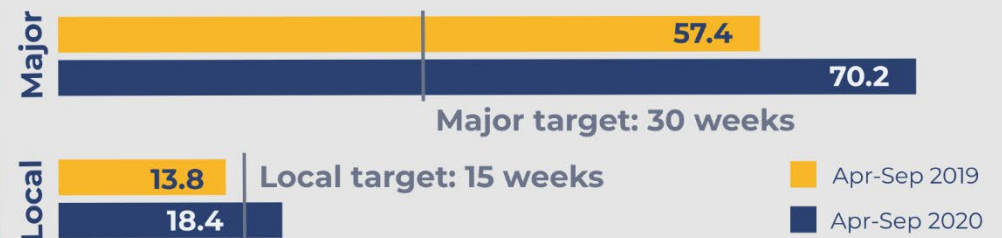
*Other includes work to facilitate disabled persons, signs/advertisements and listed buildings

Local planning applications

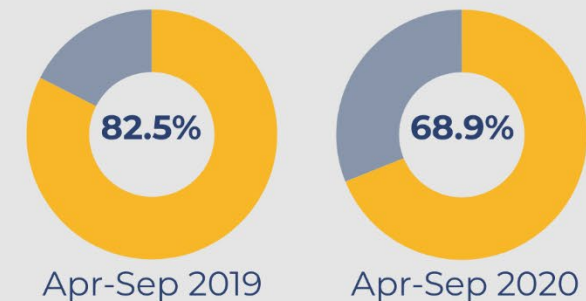


Planning statutory targets (Apr-Sep)

Major & local average processing times (weeks)



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



Key Points

- **Planning activity and processing performance during the first and second quarters of 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 3,288 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during the second quarter of 2020/21; an increase of 42% on the previous quarter and 12% on the same period a year earlier. This comprised 3,255 local and 33 major applications.
- In the second quarter of 2020/21, 2,410 planning applications were decided upon; up one-third from the previous quarter but down almost one-quarter from the same period a year earlier. Decisions were issued on 2,375 local and 35 major applications during the second quarter of 2020/21.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2020/21 was 18.4 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represented an increase of 4.6 weeks from the same period a year earlier. Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first two quarters of 2020/21.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2020/21 was 70.2 weeks across all councils. This represents an increase of 12.8 weeks compared with the same period a year earlier, and is more than double the 30 week target.
- Across councils 68.9% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first six months of 2020/21. This falls just outside the statutory target of 70% and represents a considerable decrease from the rate reported for the same period in 2019/20 (82.5%). Individually, seven of the 11 councils were within the 39 week target after the first two quarters of 2020/21.

Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second Quarter 2020/21 Statistical Bulletin

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 second 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 second quarter of 2020/21, the detailed tables also include comparable data from previous periods. Commentary will be mainly focussed on changes over the last quarter and 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 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 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 \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#). 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 March 2021. This will contain planning data up to 31 December 2020 (i.e. for Q3 2020/21). The next annual report covering 2020/21 is planned for release in July 2021. See [GOV.UK Release Calendar](#) and [Upcoming statistical releases](#) on the Department's website for future publication dates.

National Statistics designation

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, enabled the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics to be designated as new National Statistics. Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB) has published [an action plan](#), detailing how and by when these requirements were met. This includes a forward work plan which outlines scheduled work and further developments over the coming years, and this will be updated on an ongoing basis.

In [December 2020](#), the UK Statistics Authority Regulatory Committee confirmed National Statistics designation for the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics. This designation means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value as set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

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 scheduled to be published on 22 December 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 July to 30 September 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. Although lockdown was gradually eased from May, certain restrictions remained in place over the summer, before new restrictions were introduced in September.

While the volume of planning applications received in the second quarter of 2020/21 increased considerably from the previous quarter (and exceeded comparable figures from the previous year), the number of applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) did not increase by the same degree. Enforcement activity also remained at a lower level compared with the same period in 2019/20.

Overall processing performance presented in this report (for the first six months of 2020/21) was impacted considerably by the restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting these figures and when making comparisons with other time periods.

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 access to their offices. Although this presented challenges in collecting and verifying data, 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 the second quarter of 2020/21 continued to be impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic.

While the volume of planning applications received increased considerably from the previous quarter (and exceeded comparable figures from the previous year), the number of applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) did not increase by the same degree. Enforcement activity also remained at a lower level compared with the same period in 2019/20.

Overall processing performance presented in this report (for the first six months of 2020/21) was impacted considerably by the restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting these figures and when making comparisons with other time periods.

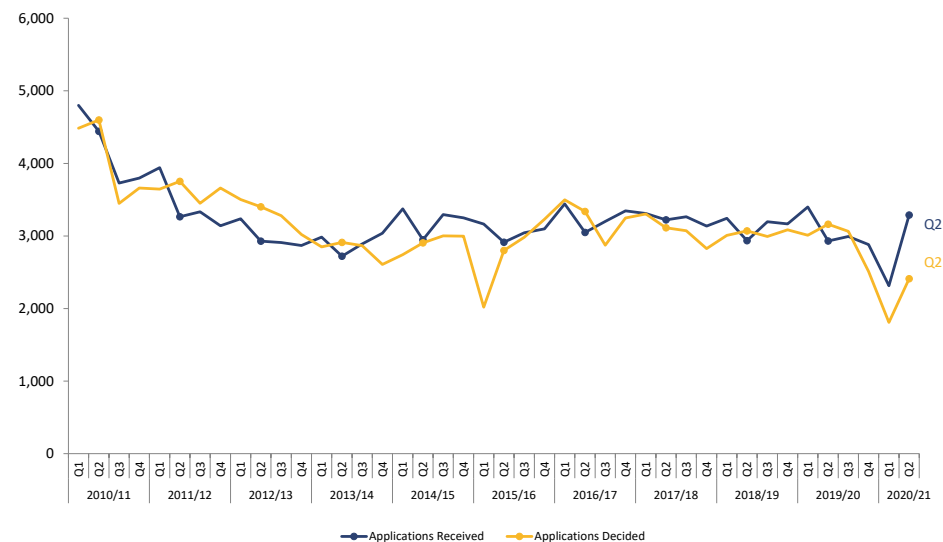
Applications received

The number of planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) by councils and the Department in the period July to September 2020 (Q2) was 3,288; an increase of 42.1% on the previous quarter (2,314) and 12.1% on the same period a year earlier (2,932) (Figure 1.1).

The increase in the number of applications received in Q2 compared with Q1 is the largest quarter-on-quarter change since the series began in April 2002, with the number recorded in Q1 the lowest over the entire series (see [Table 1.1](#)).

Approximately three-quarters of planning applications received in Q2 2020/21 were for full planning permission (74.8%); similar to the proportions reported for earlier quarters.

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

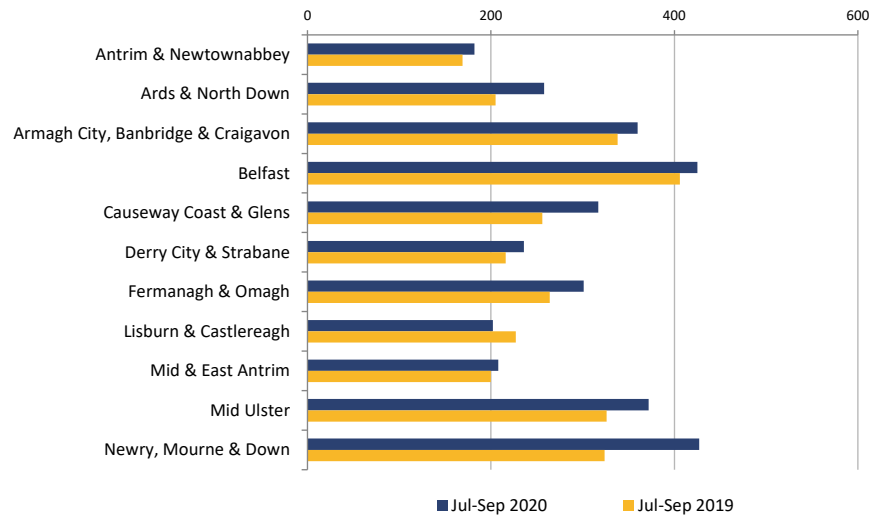


In Q2 2020/21, the number of planning applications received varied across councils, ranging from 427 in Newry, Mourne and Down (accounting for 13.0% of all applications received across NI) to 182 in Antrim and Newtownabbey (5.5% of all applications received).

All councils reported a considerable increase in the number of applications received in Q2 2020/21 compared with the previous quarter, with percentage increases ranging from 20.2% in Lisburn and Castlereagh to 61.4% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon.

Over the year, 10 councils reported an increase in the number of applications received, with the largest evident in Newry, Mourne and Down (31.8%). Lisburn and Castlereagh was the only council to report a decrease in the number of applications received in Q2 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier (-11.0%) (Figure 1.2). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2, 5.6.](#)

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, Q2 2019/20 & Q2 2020/21



Applications decided

The number of planning **decisions issued** during Q2 2020/21 was **2,410**; up one-third (33.1%) on the previous quarter (1,810), but down almost one-quarter (23.8%) compared with the same period a year earlier (3,162) (Figure 1.1).

Over three-quarters of planning decisions in Q2 2020/21 (76.7%) were for full planning permission; the same proportion as reported for Q2 2019/20.

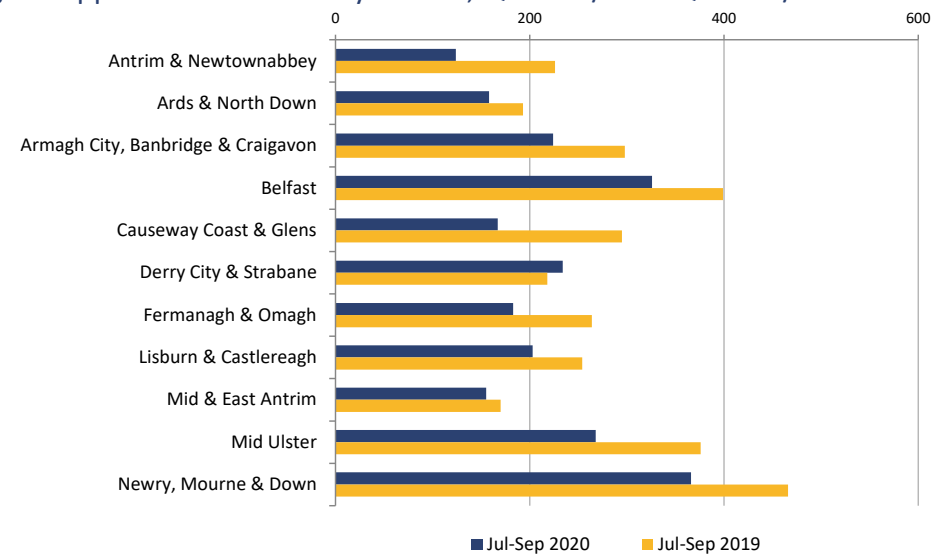
Across councils the number of decisions issued Q2 2020/21 ranged from 366 in Newry, Mourne and Down (accounting for 15.2% of all decisions across NI) to 124 in Antrim and Newtownabbey (5.1% of all decisions).

Nine of the 11 councils reported an increase in the number of applications decided in Q2 2020/21 compared with the previous quarter, with the number of decisions issued more than doubling in both Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (up from 86 to 224; 160.5%) and Belfast (up from 162 to 326; 101.2%). The number of decisions issued decreased over this

period in Antrim and Newtownabbey (down from 148 to 124; -16.2%) and Mid and East Antrim (down from 167 to 155; -7.2%).

Over the year 10 councils reported a decrease in the number of applications decided, with the decrease greatest, in percentage terms, in Antrim and Newtownabbey (-45.1%). Derry City and Strabane was the only council to report an increase in the number of decisions issued in Q2 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier (up 7.3%) (Figure 1.3).

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, Q2 2019/20 & Q2 2020/21



The number of applications received exceeded the number of decisions issued in 10 of the 11 councils during Q2 2020/21. The exception was in Lisburn and Castlereagh, where 202 applications were received during the quarter compared with 203 decisions issued.

In Q2 2020/21, **106** applications were **withdrawn**; an increase of 45.2% on the previous quarter (73) but down 23.2% compared with the same period a year earlier (138).

Overall, the number of applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) in Q2 2020/21 was 2,516; an increase of just over one-third (33.6%) from the previous quarter (1,883) but down almost one-quarter (-23.8%) compared with the same period a year earlier (3,300).

This was the third lowest number of applications processed for any quarter since the series began in April 2002 (see [Table 1.1](#)). Only Q1 2020/21 and Q1 2015/16 reported lower totals; evidence that the ability of planning authorities to process applications continued to be affected by the restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic in the second quarter of 2020/21.

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

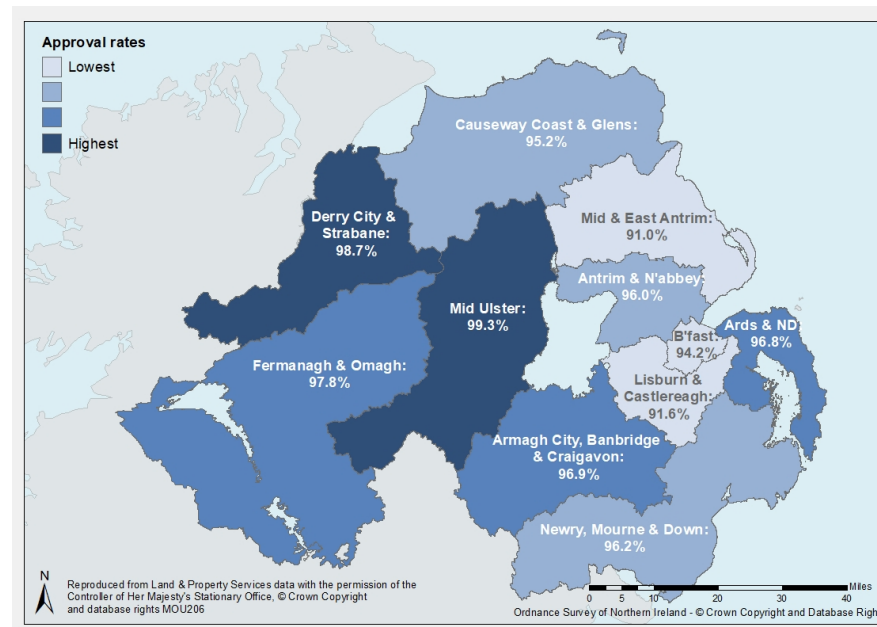
In addition to processing applications, planning authorities deal with a range of other planning related work. For example, during Q2 2020/21 they processed to decision or withdrawal: 224 certificates of lawfulness; 198 discharge of conditions; 100 tree preservation orders; and 84 non-material changes. 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 **95.9%** in Q2 2020/21; an increase from the rates reported for the previous quarter (95.7%) and the same period a year earlier (94.1%). This also represents the highest approval rate for any quarter since Q2 2002/03.

Approval rates varied across councils during Q2 2020/21, from 99.3% in Mid Ulster to 91.0% in Mid and East Antrim (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, Q2 2020/21



Nine councils reported an increased approval rate when compared with Q2 2019/20, with the largest increase occurring in Newry, Mourne and Down (up from 90.3% to 96.2%). Approval rates declined over the year in Mid and East Antrim (down from 94.1% to 91.0%) and remained similar in Causeway Coast and Glens (95.3% in Q2 2019/20 and 95.2% in Q2 2020/21).

[Refer to Table 1.2.](#)

Live applications

There were **7,591** live applications in the planning system across NI at the end of September 2020; an increase of just over one-fifth (20.2%) from 6,317 at the end of September 2019, and the highest end-of-quarter live count since December 2015.

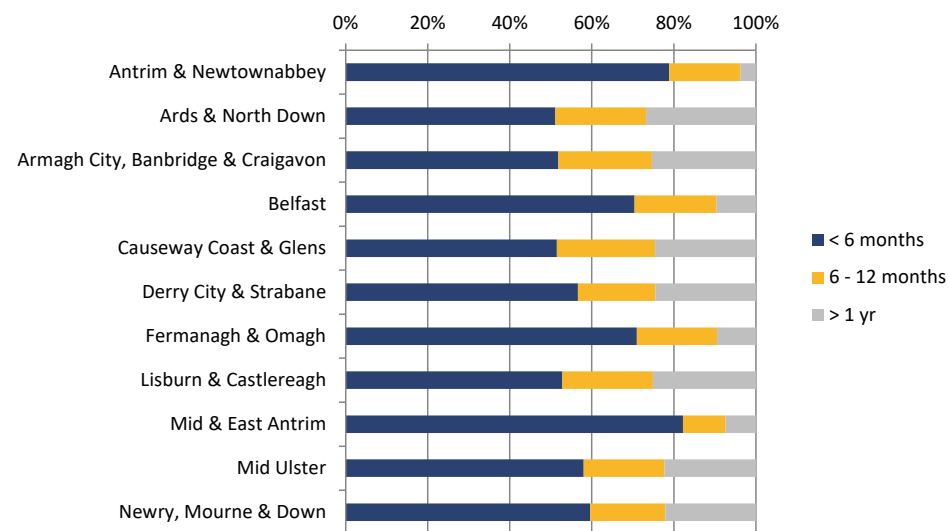
The increase in the live count is due to fewer applications being processed, i.e. decided or withdrawn, compared with applications received. In Q2 2020/21, 2,516 applications were processed compared with 3,288 received. This suggests that the coronavirus pandemic and resulting restrictions have had a greater impact on the ability of planning authorities to process applications.

Just over one-fifth of all live applications in the planning system at the end of September 2020 were over one year old (1,553; 20.5%); an increase from the proportion reported for the end of September 2019 (1,214; 19.2%).

[Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

The proportion of live applications over one year old at the end of September 2020 varied across councils, ranging from 26.7% in Ards and North Down to 3.8% in Antrim and Newtownabbey (Figure 1.5).

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



Comparing the end of September 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 20.9% to 26.7%). This proportion decreased in Derry City and Strabane over the same period (down from 28.8% to 24.5%).

[Refer to Table 1.4.](#)

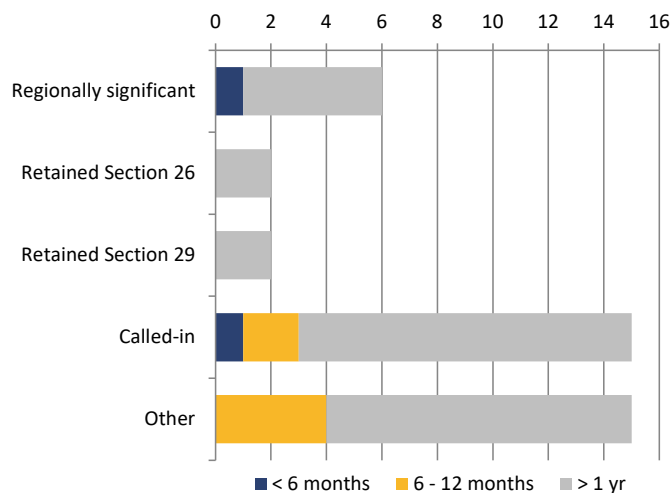
2. Departmental Activity

During Q2 2020/21 the Department **did not receive any** applications; this compares with three received during the same period a year earlier.

The Department reached **decisions** on **two** applications during the second quarter of 2020/21; both retained Section 26 applications. This compares with three decisions issued by the Department during the same period in 2019/20. **One** called-in application was **withdrawn** during Q2 2020/21.

At the end of September 2020 there were 40 live Departmental applications: **six** ongoing **regionally significant development (RSD)** applications; **four retained** applications; **15 called-in** applications; and **15 other**¹ applications. Four-fifths of these applications (32 out of 40) 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 Sep 2020



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

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



It is a target for the Department to contribute to sustainable economic growth by processing Regionally Significant Planning Applications from date valid to a Ministerial Recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks².

Of the six RSD applications live on the planning system at the end of September 2020, four had already been progressed to Ministerial Recommendation prior to Q2 2020/21. The 30 week period for recommendation / withdrawal has been exceeded for one of the two remaining applications, while the other was made valid at the end of September 2020. Progress on these two applications and any new RSD applications received, will continue to be assessed in future reports².

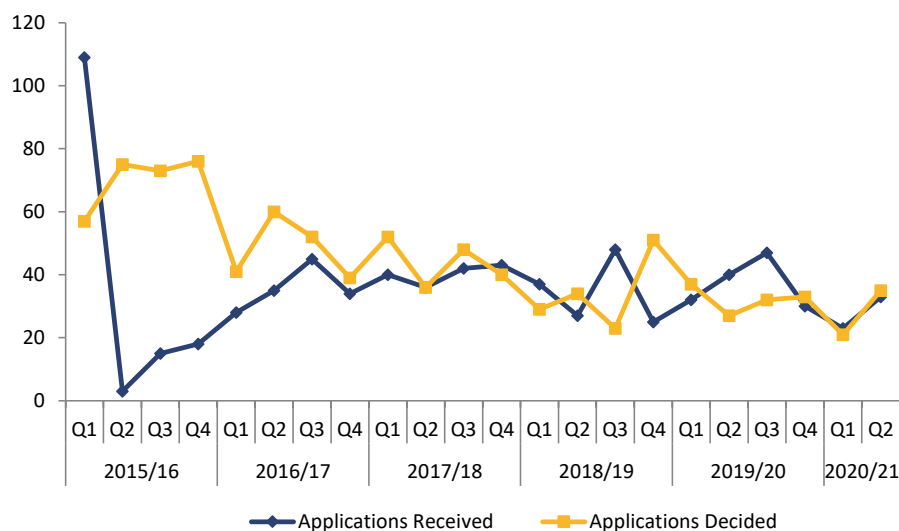
² This is the Departmental target from Q1 2019/20. Please see User Guidance section for more information on this.

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 **33 major** planning applications were **received** in NI during Q2 2020/21; an increase on the previous quarter (23) but a decrease on the same period a year earlier (40).

Fig 3.1 Major development applications, quarterly, Apr 2015 – Sep 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 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.

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. This has subsequently been extended until 31 March 2021³. While it is too early to fully assess the impact of this change, the number of major applications received did increase in Q2 when compared with the previous quarter. Examining year-to-date figures, the number of major applications received was lowest in April (seven) and May (five), before increasing in June (11) and July (15). A further nine major applications were received in both August and September.

Nine councils received major applications during the second quarter of 2020/21, with Belfast receiving the most (10).

During Q2 2020/21, **35 major** planning applications were **decided**; an increase from the previous quarter (21) and the same period a year earlier (27). **Three** major applications were **withdrawn** during the most recent quarter.

Nine councils issued decisions on major applications during Q2 2020/21, with Belfast issuing the most (10).

Thirty-four of the 35 major applications decided upon in NI during Q2 2020/21 were approved, meaning the overall approval rate was 97.1%. Nine councils issued decisions on major applications during the quarter; in

³ For more information, see: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/dfi-plannings-response-covid-19

eight of these, 100% of the major applications decided upon were approved.

[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.

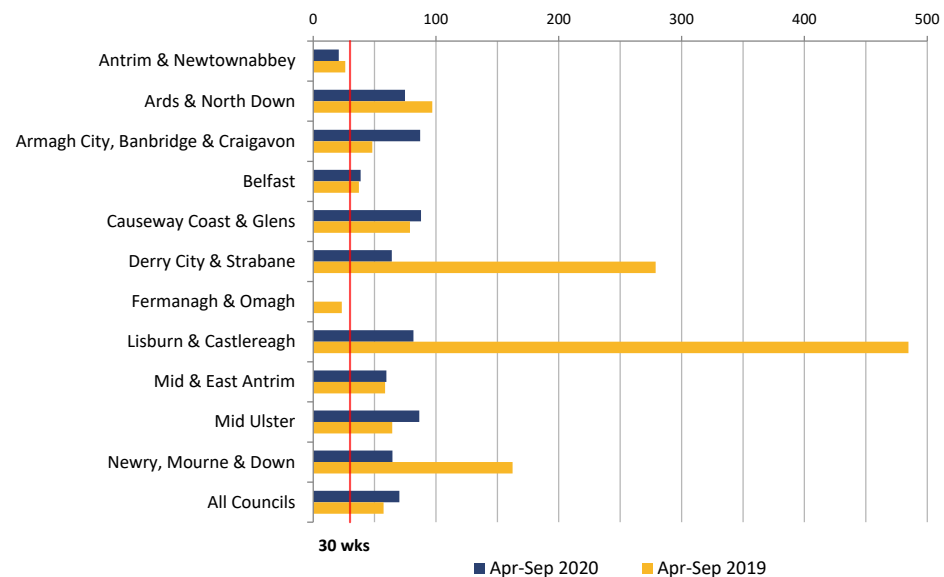
The **average processing time** for **major** applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2020/21 was **70.2 weeks** across all councils. This represents an increase of 12.8 weeks compared with the same period in 2019/20 (from 57.4 weeks) and is more than double the 30 week target, as councils' ability to process major planning applications was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

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 six months 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 after the first six months of 2020/21, with two applications processed in an average of 20.8 weeks. The average processing time for Belfast, which processed more than twice as many major applications (17) as any other council during this period, was 38.6 weeks.

[Refer to Table 3.2.](#)

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, Apr - Sep 2019 & 2020



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

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 2020/21 was **3,255**; an increase of 42.1% on the previous quarter (2,290) and 12.6% on the same period a year earlier (2,892).

The increase in the number of local applications received in Q2 compared with Q1 is the largest quarter-on-quarter change since the transfer of planning powers, with the number recorded in Q1 the lowest over the entire series (Figure 4.1).

Across councils the number of local applications received during the second quarter of 2020/21 ranged from 424 in Newry, Mourne and Down to 179 in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

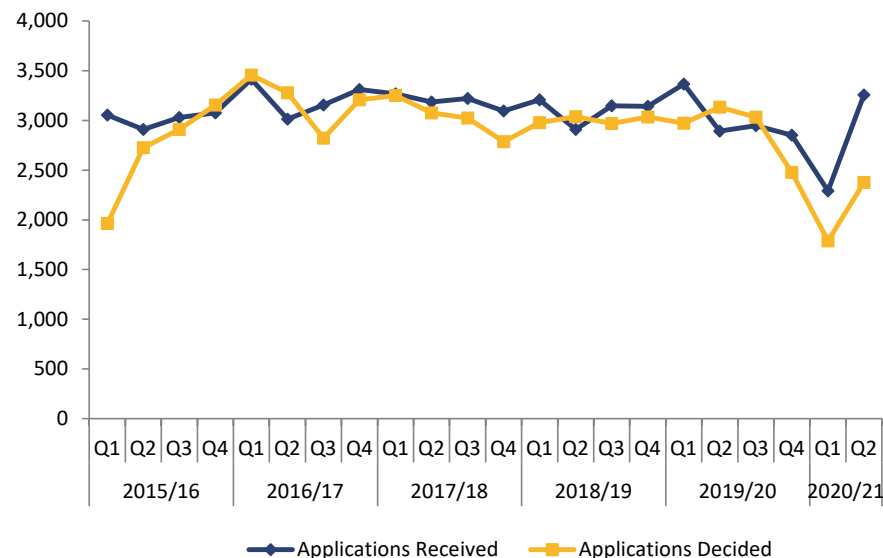
All councils reported an increase in the number of local applications received in Q2 2020/21 compared with the previous quarter, with percentage increases ranging from 18.6% in Lisburn and Castlereagh to 61.8% in Fermanagh and Omagh. Over the year, 10 councils reported an increase in the number of local applications received, with the largest evident in Newry, Mourne and Down (31.3%). Lisburn and Castlereagh was the only council to report a decrease in the number of local applications received in Q2 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier (-12.0%).

The number of **local** applications **decided** in Q2 2020/21 was **2,375**; an increase of almost one-third (32.8%) on the previous quarter (1,789) but down almost one-quarter (-24.2%) compared with the same period a year earlier (3,134) (Figure 4.1).

In Q1 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 Q2 2020/21, with the gap widening over the last two quarters. (Figure 4.1).

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



During Q2 2020/21, the number of local planning decisions issued ranged from 364 in Newry, Mourne and Down to 123 in Antrim and Newtownabbey.

Nine of the 11 councils reported an increase in the number of local applications decided in Q2 2020/21 compared with the previous quarter, with the number of decisions more than doubling in both Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (up from 85 to 220; 158.8%) and Belfast (up from 157 to 316; 101.3%). In contrast, 10 councils reported a decrease in the number of local applications decided over the year, with the decrease greatest, in percentage terms, in Antrim and Newtownabbey (-45.6%).

In Q2 2020/21, 103 local applications were withdrawn in NI; an increase from the previous quarter (71) but a decrease from the same period a year earlier (135). [Refer to Tables 4.1, 4.2.](#)

Overall, the number of local applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) in Q2 2020/21 was 2,478; up one-third (33.2%) from the previous quarter (1,860) but down almost one-quarter (-24.2%) compared with the same period a year earlier (3,269).

This was also the third lowest number of local applications processed in any quarter since the transfer of planning powers, with only Q1 2020/21 and Q1 2015/16 reporting lower totals; evidence that the ability of planning authorities to process local applications continued to be affected by the restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The **overall Northern Ireland approval rate** for **local** applications was **95.9%** in Q2 2020/21; the highest rate recorded for any quarter since the transfer of planning powers.



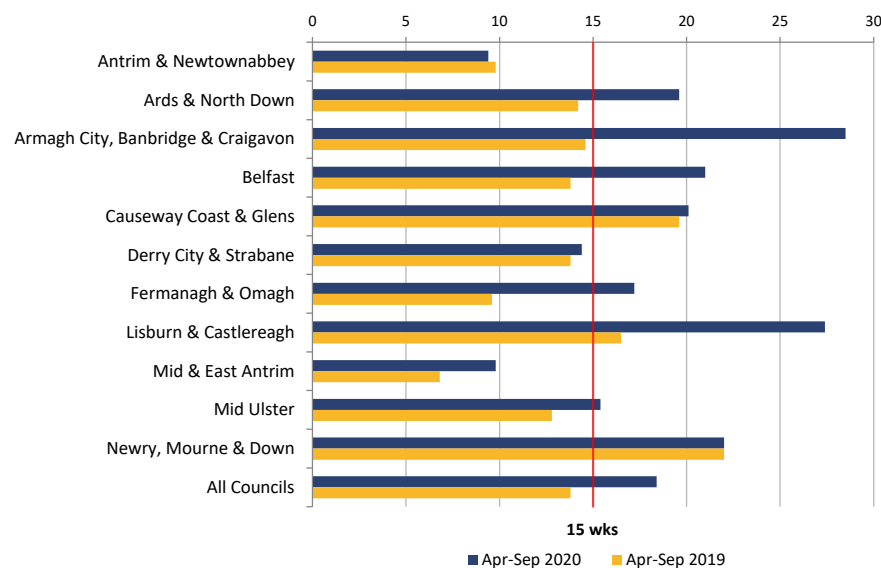
It is a statutory target for each council that their local development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

The **average processing time** for **local** applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2020/21 was **18.4 weeks** across all councils, exceeding the statutory target of 15 weeks. This represents an increase of 4.6 weeks compared with the same period last year (13.8 weeks), as councils' ability to process applications was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first two quarters of 2020/21: Antrim and Newtownabbey (9.4 weeks); Mid and East Antrim (9.8 weeks); and Derry City and Strabane (14.4 weeks).

Antrim and Newtownabbey was the only council where the average processing time for local applications decreased during April to September 2020, compared with the same period a year earlier (down 0.4 weeks, from 9.8 to 9.4). Over the same period, average processing times for local applications increased in nine councils, with the increase greatest in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (almost doubling, from 14.6 to 28.5 weeks). In Newry, Mourne and Down, the average processing time for local applications remained unchanged at 22.0 weeks over the year (Figure 4.2). [Refer to Table 4.2.](#)

Fig 4.2 Local development average processing times by council, Apr - Sep 2019 & 2020



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.](#)

5. Development Type

Generally the majority of planning applications received are for residential development. During Q2 2020/21, **residential** applications accounted for **over two-thirds (67.6%)** of all planning applications received in NI; an increase from the proportion reported for Q2 2019/20 (61.8%).

Residential was the most commonly received application type in each council in Q2 2020/21. The proportion of all applications received that were residential ranged from 78.4% in Mid and East Antrim to 49.6% in Belfast.

Reflecting the overall increase in the number of planning applications received at NI level in Q2 2020/21 compared with the previous quarter (up 42.1%), all development types recorded increases over this period.

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

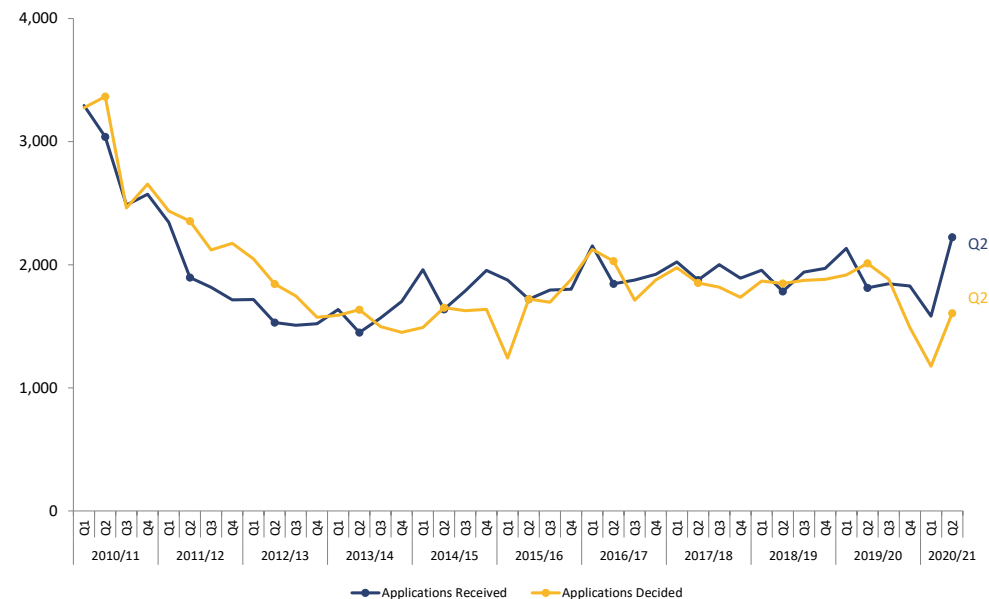
Residential applications

The overall number of **residential** planning applications **received** in NI during Q2 2020/21 was **2,223**; an increase of two-fifths (40.4%) over the quarter (1,583) and over one-fifth (22.7%) over the year (1,812). This represents the highest number of residential applications received in any quarter since Q1 2011/12.

During the second quarter of 2020/21, **1,606 residential** planning applications were **decided** upon; an increase of 36.6% on the previous quarter (1,176) but down by one-fifth (20.2%) on the same period a year earlier (2,012). This suggests that planning authorities' ability to process residential applications continued to be impacted by the restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic (Figure 5.1).

[Refer to Table 5.3.](#)

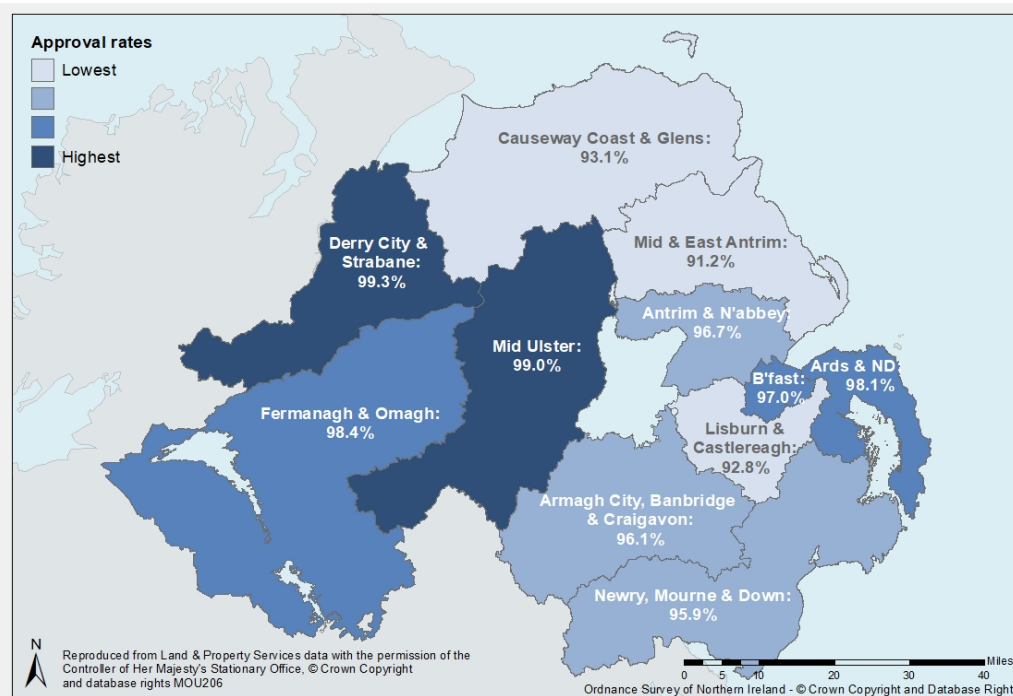
Fig 5.1 NI Residential applications, quarterly, Apr 2010 – Sep 2020



The **Northern Ireland approval rate** for residential planning applications was **96.3%** in Q2 2020/21; the highest rate for any quarter since Q1 2010/11.

Approval rates for residential planning applications varied across councils in Q2 2020/21, ranging from 99.3% in Derry City and Strabane to 91.2% in Mid and East Antrim (Figure 5.2).

Fig 5.2 Residential approval rates by council, Q2 2020/21



Approval rates for residential planning applications increased in eight councils between Q2 2019/20 and Q2 2020/21. The largest increase over this period was in Fermanagh and Omagh (up from 93.0% to 98.4%).

Approval rates declined in three councils over the year, with the largest decrease occurring in Causeway Coast and Glens (down from 96.1% to 93.1%).

During Q2 2020/21, 66 residential applications were withdrawn across NI; an increase from 45 in the previous quarter but down from 73 during the same period a year earlier.

[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 Q2 2020/21 was 738; an increase from the previous quarter (41.9%; from 520) and the same period a year earlier (26.4%; from 584).

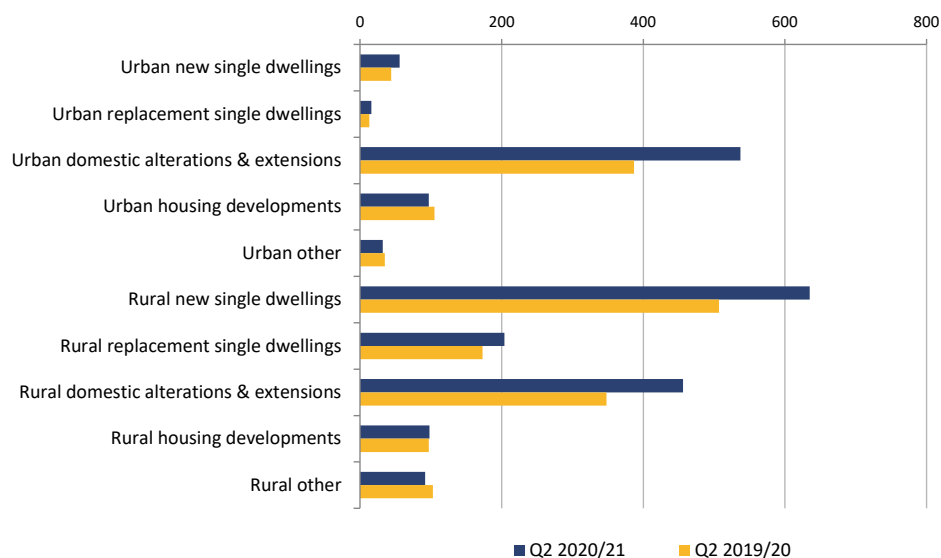
In rural areas, within settlements of less than 5,000 population, there was an increase in the number of residential applications received in Q2 2020/21 (239) compared with the previous quarter (45.7%; from 164) and the same period a year earlier (17.7%; from 203).

In the open countryside (outside population settlements), the number of residential applications received in Q2 2020/21 (1,246) also increased over the quarter (38.6%; from 899) and the year (21.6%; from 1,025).

Residential applications – urban and rural

Figure 5.3 shows a breakdown of the type of residential applications received in the second 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, Q2 2019/20 & Q2 2020/21

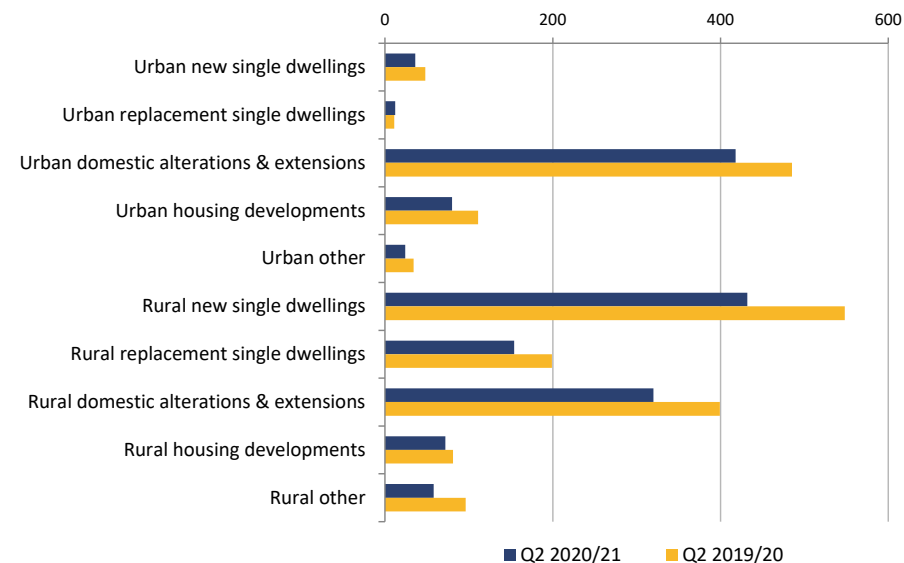


New single dwellings in rural areas (635) and alterations/extensions in urban areas (537) continue to be the most common types of residential application, together accounting for over half (52.7%) of all residential applications received during the second quarter of 2020/21.

The overall increase over the year in the number of residential applications received (22.7%) was driven in large part by increases in the number of applications received for domestic alterations and extensions in both

urban (up 38.8%; from 387 to 537) and rural (up 31.0%; from 348 to 456) areas, and new single dwellings in rural areas (up 25.2% from 507 to 635).

Fig 5.4 NI Residential applications decided by urban/rural, Q2 2019/20 & Q2 2020/21



The number of applications decided for each housing type decreased between Q2 2019/20 and Q2 2020/21, with the exception of replacement single dwellings in urban areas (where the number of decisions increased from 11 to 12). The largest decrease, in absolute terms, was for decisions on new single dwellings in rural areas (down from 548 to 432; -21.2%) (Figure 5.4).

[Refer to Table 5.5.](#)

6. Compliance and Enforcement Activity

The number of **enforcement cases opened** in NI during the second quarter of 2020/21 was **849**; an increase of more than one-third (35.0%) from the previous quarter (629) but down by a similar proportion (-35.9%) from the same period a year earlier (1,324) (Figure 6.1).

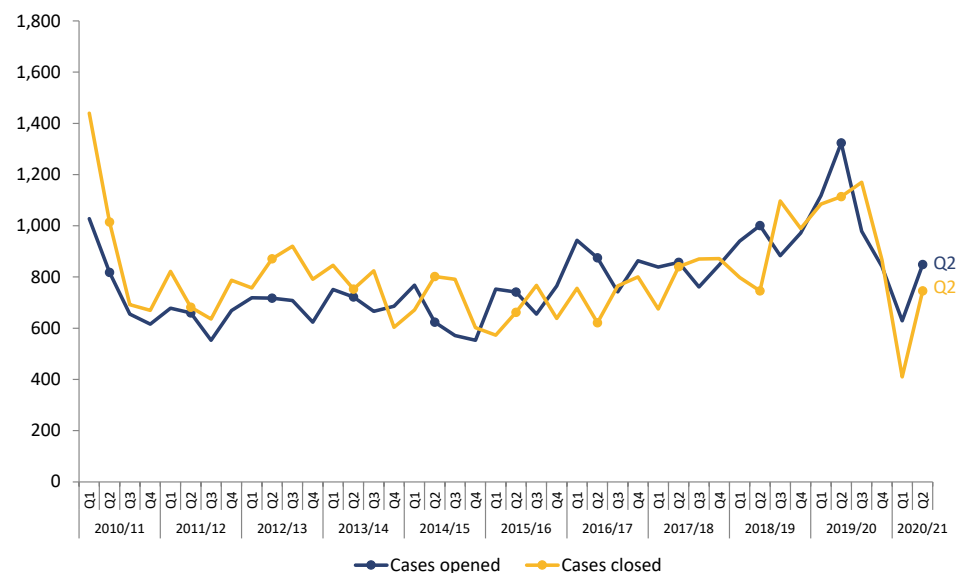
Across the councils, the number of enforcement cases opened in Q2 2020/21 ranged from 133 in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 38 in Derry City and Strabane.

The volume of enforcement cases opened increased in all councils between Q1 and Q2 2020/21. In contrast, between Q2 2019/20 and the same period a year later, nine of the 11 councils reported decreases in the number of enforcement cases opened. The decrease was greatest in Belfast, where the number of cases opened fell by two-thirds over the year (-66.9% from 326 to 108).

The number of **enforcement cases closed** during Q2 2020/21 was **746**; an increase of more than four-fifths (82.0%) from the previous quarter (410) but down by one-third (-33.0%) on the same period a year earlier (1,114) (Figure 6.1).

The number of cases closed in Q2 2020/21 varied across councils, ranging from 173 in Belfast to 15 in Antrim and Newtownabbey. Eight of the 11 councils reported decreases in the number of enforcement cases closed in Q2 2020/21 compared with the same period a year earlier. This decrease was greatest in Antrim and Newtownabbey, where the number of cases closed fell by 90.9% over the year (from 165 to 15).

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



The most common reasons for enforcement cases closing in Q2 2020/21 were that no breach had actually occurred (34.0%) or that the case had been remedied or resolved (26.1%). Together these accounted for more than three-fifths (449; 60.2%) of the 746 cases closed during the quarter.

[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.

Across all councils, **68.9%** enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first six months of 2020/21. This falls just outside the statutory target and represents a considerable decrease from the rate

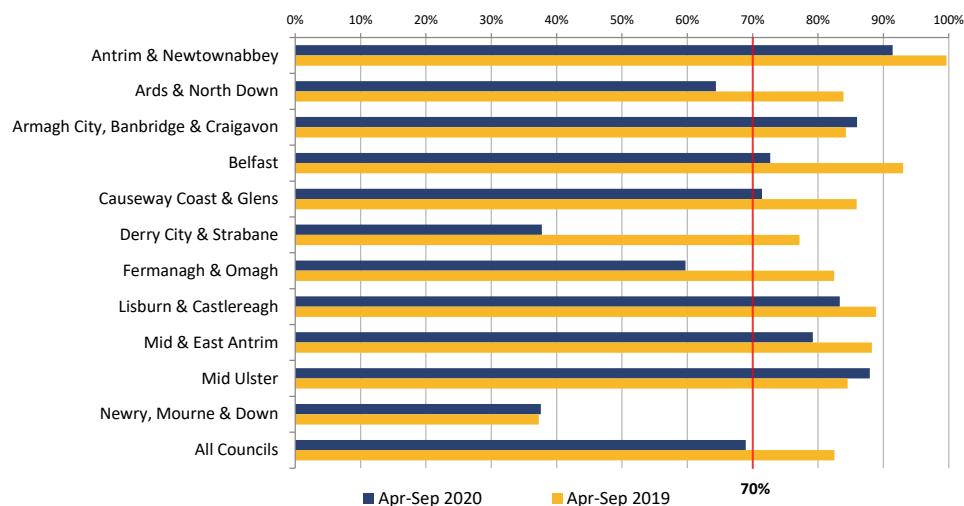
reported for the first six months of 2019/20 (82.5%), as councils' ability to progress cases to conclusion was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The 68.9% reported for the first six months of the year was, however, an improvement on the position at the end of the first three months, when approximately three-fifths of cases (59.9%) were concluded within 39 weeks.

The impact on councils' ability to process cases to conclusion varied, with seven within the target after the first six months of 2020/21: Antrim and Newtownabbey (91.4% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks); Mid Ulster (87.9%); Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (86.0%); Lisburn and Castlereagh (83.3%); Mid and East Antrim (79.2%); Belfast (72.7%); and Causeway Coast and Glens (71.4%) (Figure 6.2).

[Refer to Table 6.2.](#)

Fig 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, Apr - Sep 2019 & 2020



During Q2 2020/21, three councils initiated a total of eight prosecutions: Fermanagh and Omagh (four); Causeway Coast and Glens (three); and Lisburn and Castlereagh (one).

There were two convictions across NI during Q2 2020/21; one each in Mid Ulster and Newry, Mourne and Down.

[Refer to Tables 6.1 and 6.3.](#)

The number of **live enforcement cases** at the end of September 2020 was **3,937**; an increase over the quarter (2.7%; from 3,834) and the year (4.0%; 3,787), 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 restrictions have had a greater impact on the ability of planning authorities to close enforcement cases than open cases.

The number of **cases over two years old** stood at **1,093** at the end of September 2020, accounting for 27.8% of all live cases; similar to the proportion reported for the end of September 2019 (27.7%).

[Refer to Table 6.4.](#)

Across councils, Newry, Mourne and Down had the highest number of live cases at the end of September 2020 (835), with just over half (50.5%) of these in the system for over two years; the highest proportion across all councils.

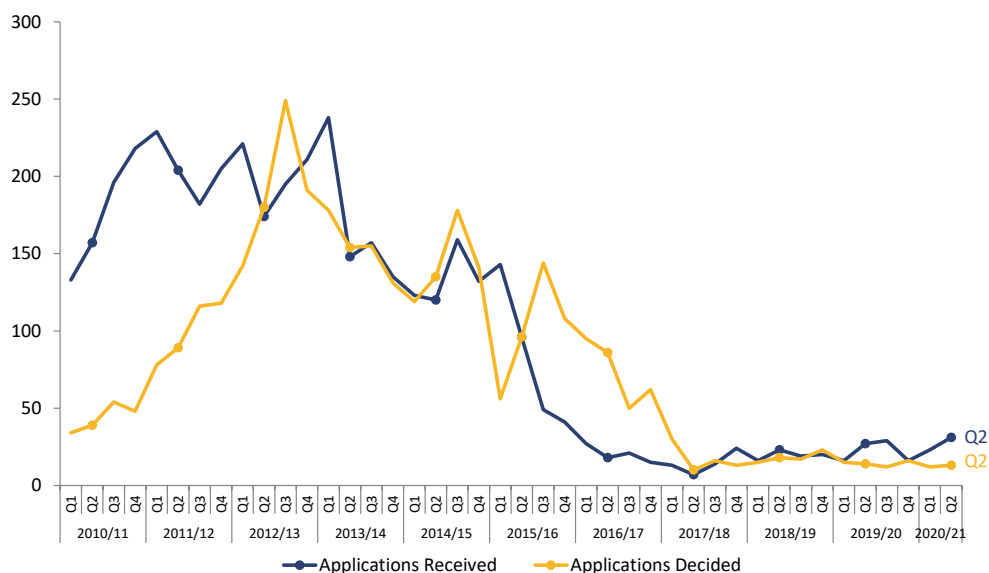
Mid and East Antrim had the smallest number of live cases (113) at the end of September 2020, with 7.1% of these in the system for over two years; the lowest proportion across all councils.

[Refer to Table 6.5.](#)

7. Renewable Energy (RE) Activity

Thirty-one renewable energy applications were **received** in Q2 2020/21; an increase of four applications compared with the same period the previous year (27). The number of applications received during July to September peaked in 2011/12 at 204. 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 **84.8%** decrease from 204 applications in Q2 2011/12 to 31 applications in Q2 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 – Sep 2020



The number of renewable energy applications **decided** during Q2 2020/21 was **13**; a small decrease from 14 in Q2 2019/20 and a **92.8%** decrease from the series’ second quarter peak of 180 applications decided in

2012/13. **Two** renewable energy applications were **withdrawn** during Q2 2020/21. [Refer to Table 7.1.](#)

During the second quarter of 2020/21 the average time taken to process a renewable energy application to decision or withdrawal was 36.0 weeks across NI; a decrease of 7.6 weeks over the year (from 43.6 weeks).

Single wind turbines continue to be the most common renewable energy application, accounting for 28 out of 31 applications received during Q2 2020/21. In addition, 10 of the 13 renewable energy decisions issued during the quarter were for single wind turbines. [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 (five) receiving the most in Q2 2020/21.

Fig 7.2 Renewable Energy applications received by authority, Q2 2019/20 & Q2 2020/21

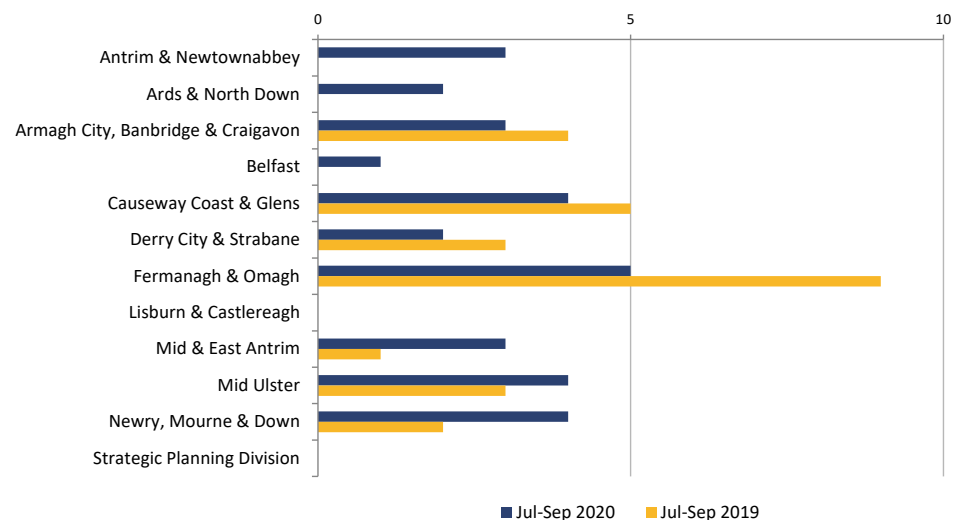
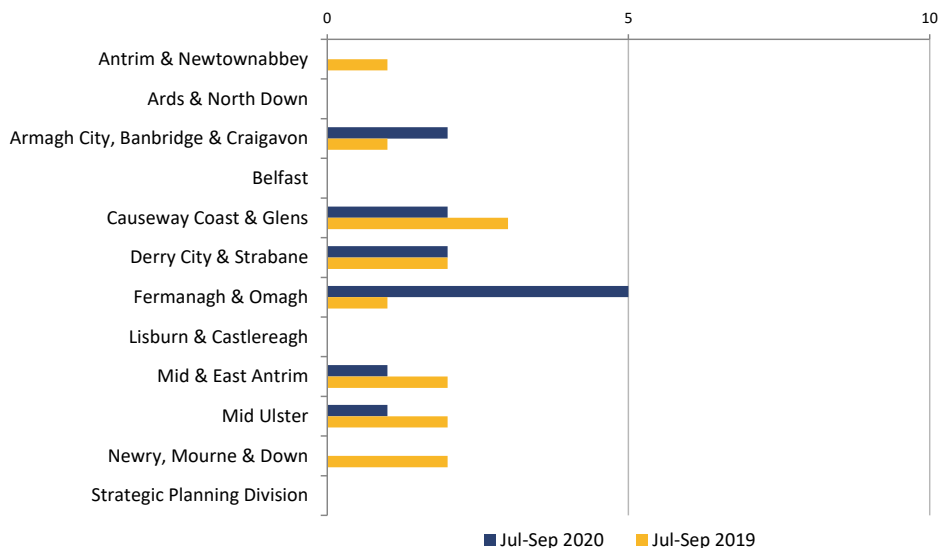


Figure 7.3 shows Fermanagh and Omagh also issued five decisions on renewable energy applications during the second quarter of 2020/21; again the most across all planning authorities.

Fig 7.3 Renewable Energy applications decided by authority, Q2 2019/20 & Q2 2020/21

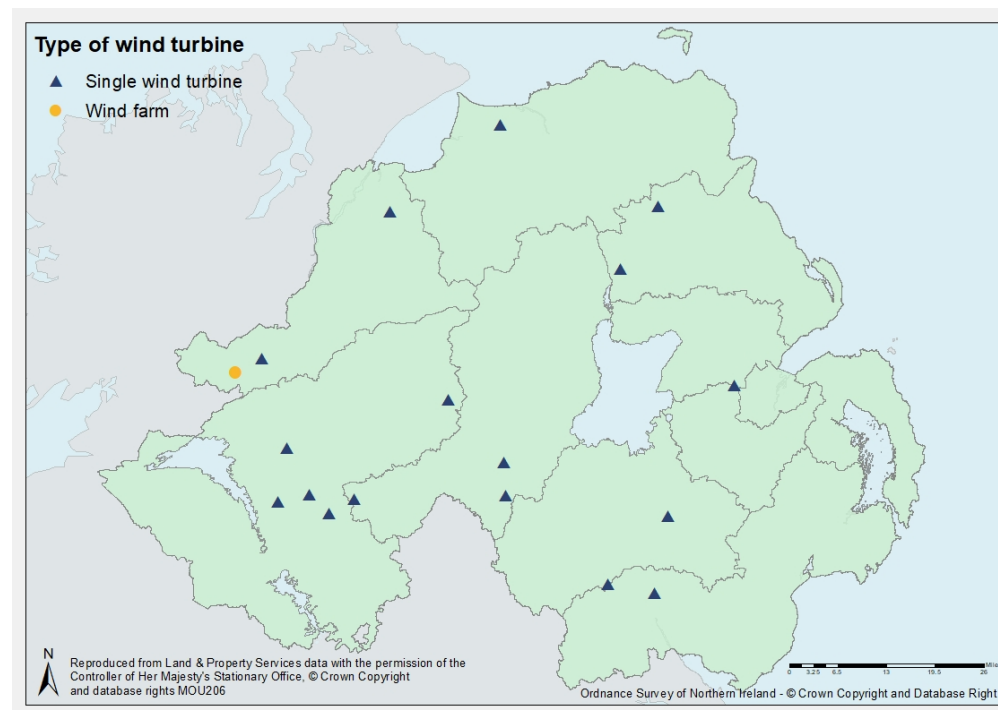


At the end of September 2020, there were **142 live renewable energy applications** in the planning system across NI; over three-quarters (76.8%; 109 of 142) were for single wind turbines. Of these 142 live applications, 42.3% were in the planning system for over a year; a decrease from the proportion reported for the same point in 2019 (44.7%).

The **NI approval rate** for renewable energy applications was **84.6%** in Q2 2020/21, with 11 out of the 13 decisions issued during this period being approvals.

Figure 7.4 displays the locations of wind energy applications approved during the first six months of 2020/21. A total of 17 single wind turbines and one wind farm were approved during this period.

Fig 7.4 Location of approved wind energy applications by council, Apr – Sep 2020



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 September 2020 were transferred in October 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 November 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, with the most recent update published in September 2020.

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, with the most recent update published in September 2020.

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. In October 2020 this was extended to 31 March 2021.

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. In October 2020 this was extended to 31 March 2021.

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 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.

Reader information

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