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Second Quarter 2022/23 Statistical Bulletin

July to September 2022: Provisional Figures



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National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that the 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](#).

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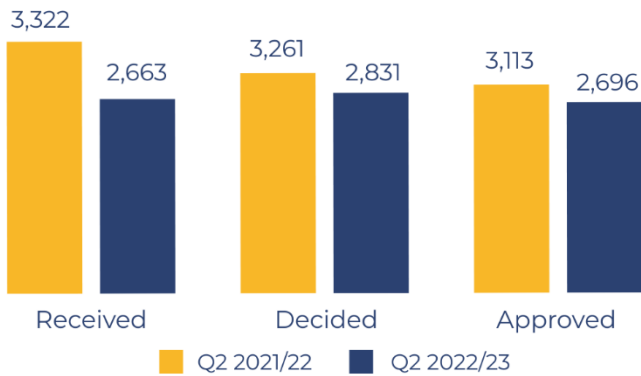
Key points

- There were 2,663 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during the second quarter of 2022/23; a decrease of nearly thirteen percent on the previous quarter and down by almost twenty percent on the same period a year earlier. This comprised of 2,627 local and 36 major applications.
- In the second quarter of 2022/23, 2,831 planning applications were decided upon; down by over ten percent from the previous quarter and down by more than thirteen percent from the same period a year earlier. Decisions were issued on 2,792 local and 39 major applications during the most recent quarter.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2022/23 was 17.0 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represents an increase of 1.0 week from the same period a year earlier. Four of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first six months of 2022/23.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2022/23 was 50.0 weeks across all councils. This represents a decrease of 6.4 weeks compared with the same period a year earlier but is still considerably higher than the 30 week target.
- Across councils 73.4% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first six months of 2022/23. This meets the statutory target of 70% and represents an increase from the rate reported for the same period in 2021/22 (72.3%). Seven of the 11 councils were within target after the first six months of 2022/23.
- Planning activity and processing performance during 2020/21 and 2021/22 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. Also, during January and February of 2022 the Northern Ireland Planning Portal was inaccessible for a period of time. These factors should be borne in mind and caution taken when interpreting figures and when making comparisons with other time periods.

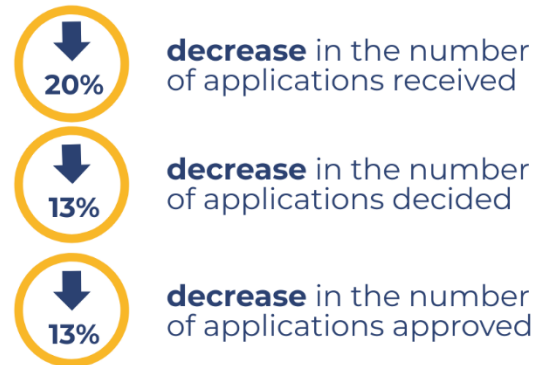
Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: Planning activity and processing performance during 2020/21 and 2021/22 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. This should be borne in mind when interpreting these figures.

Overall planning applications

Applications received, decided & approved



Comparing Q2 2022/23 with Q2 2021/22:

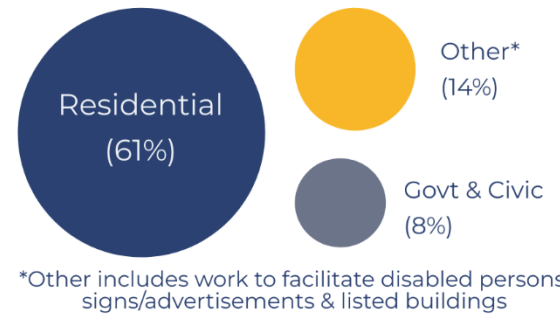


Applications received Q2 2022/23

A total of 2,663 planning applications were received during Q2 2022/23:



3 largest development types



Planning statutory targets April - September 2021 and 2022

Average processing times (weeks) - major



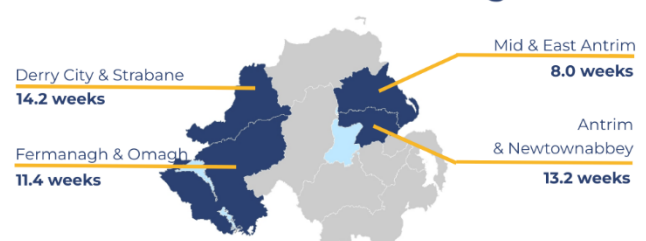
Councils within major target



Average processing times (weeks) - local



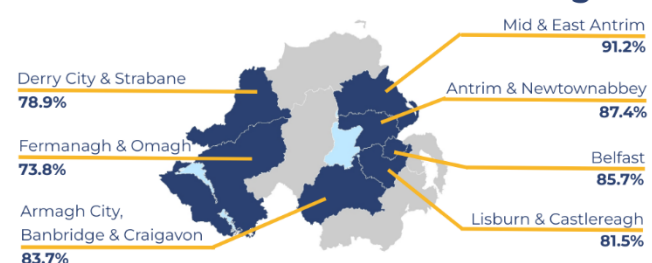
Councils within local target



% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks



Councils within enforcement target



Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second Quarter 2022/23 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 2022/23. From the 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 tables](#) report data for the second quarter of 2022/23, the detailed tables also include comparable data from previous periods. Commentary will be mainly focussed on changes over the last quarter and comparing the current quarter with the same period a year earlier. Please note that these quarterly figures for 2022/23 are provisional and will be subject to scheduled revisions ahead of finalised annual figures, to be published in July 2023.

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. 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 continues 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 data 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 data 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 data 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 data 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 due in March 2022. This will contain provisional planning data up to 31 December 2022. The next annual report covering 2022/23 is planned for release in July 2023. 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 the 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 [New Planning Portal](#) for 10 of the 11 councils and the Department for Infrastructure went live on 5 December 2022. Updates about the project can be found in the [Planning Portal Newsletters](#). At this stage it is unclear if there will be any impact to the NI Planning Statistics. Updates on the new system and any impacts on statistical reporting will be included within future NI Planning Statistics publications.

Alongside this, Mid Ulster council chose to move forward independently and develop an [independent planning system](#) which went live on 22 June 2022. Information reported for Mid Ulster within this bulletin has been extracted from the new Mid Ulster planning portal.

Planning Monitoring Framework

The [Northern Ireland Planning Monitoring Framework 2020/21](#) was published at the beginning of December 2021. The next edition of this report, with data for 2021/22, is planned for publication on 15 December 2022.

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

This bulletin and the accompanying [data tables](#) present data for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 September 2022.

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 2020, varying levels of restrictions continued to be in place up to 15 February 2022.

Planning activity and processing performance was impacted by these restrictions, with the number of planning applications received in 2021/22 exceeding the levels recorded for any year since the transfer of planning powers. Therefore, caution should be taken when interpreting planning figures from 2020/21 and 2021/22, and when making comparisons with other time periods.

Restrictions in place for the pandemic have now ceased. Future Northern Ireland Planning Statistics reports will consider the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on planning activity where relevant.



Chapter 1: Overall Northern Ireland planning activity

Chapter 1: Overall NI planning activity

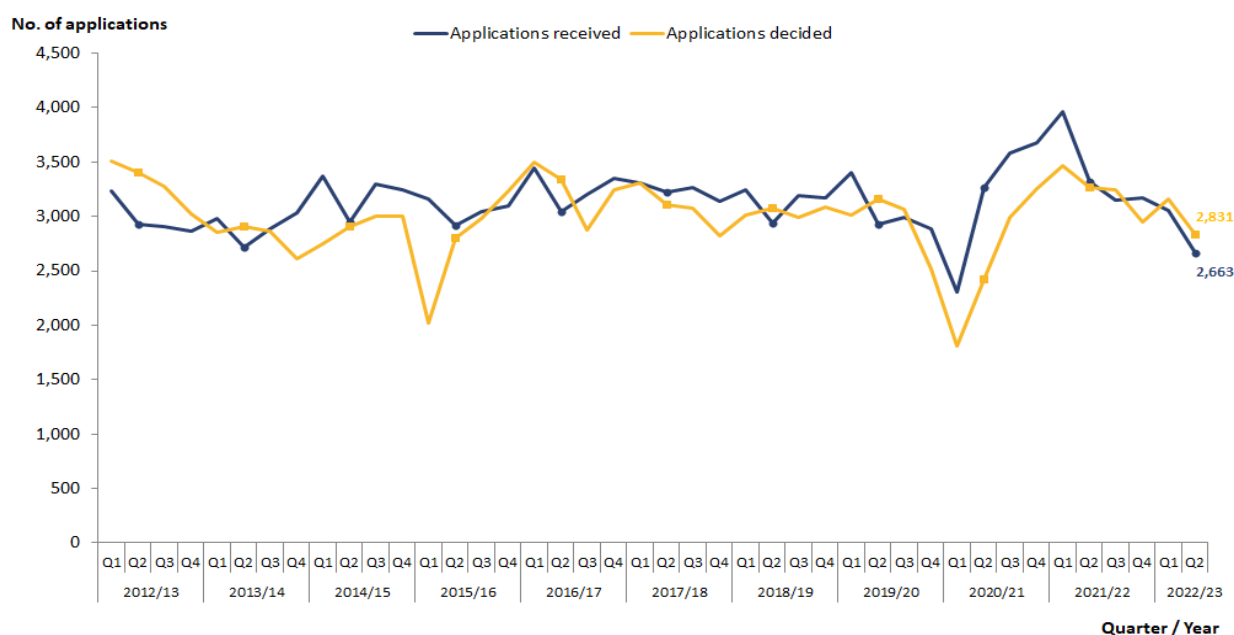
The volume of planning applications received in the second quarter of 2022/23 has decreased from the previous quarter and from the same period last year. For applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) the volume processed has also decreased from the levels recorded during the previous quarter and the same period the previous year.

Planning activity and processing performance during 2020/21 and 2021/22 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. Also, during January and February of 2022 the Northern Ireland Planning Portal was inaccessible for a period of time. These factors should be borne in mind and caution taken when interpreting 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 2022 (Q2) was **2,663**; decreases of 12.7% on the previous quarter (3,052) and 19.8% on the same period a year earlier (3,322). ([Figure 1.1](#)). [Refer to Table 1.1](#).

Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, quarterly, April 2012 to September 2022



During Q1 2020/21, the first full quarter impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, the number of applications received was 2,309. This was the lowest number received in any quarter since the series began in April 2002. The following four quarters recorded consecutive increases, peaking in Q1 2021/22. With the exception of a small increase in Q4 2021/22, the number of planning applications received has decreased in each quarter since that peak.

Just under three-quarters of the planning applications received in Q2 2022/23 were for full planning permission (73.6%); down over both the quarter (76.4%) and the same period a year earlier (75.7%).

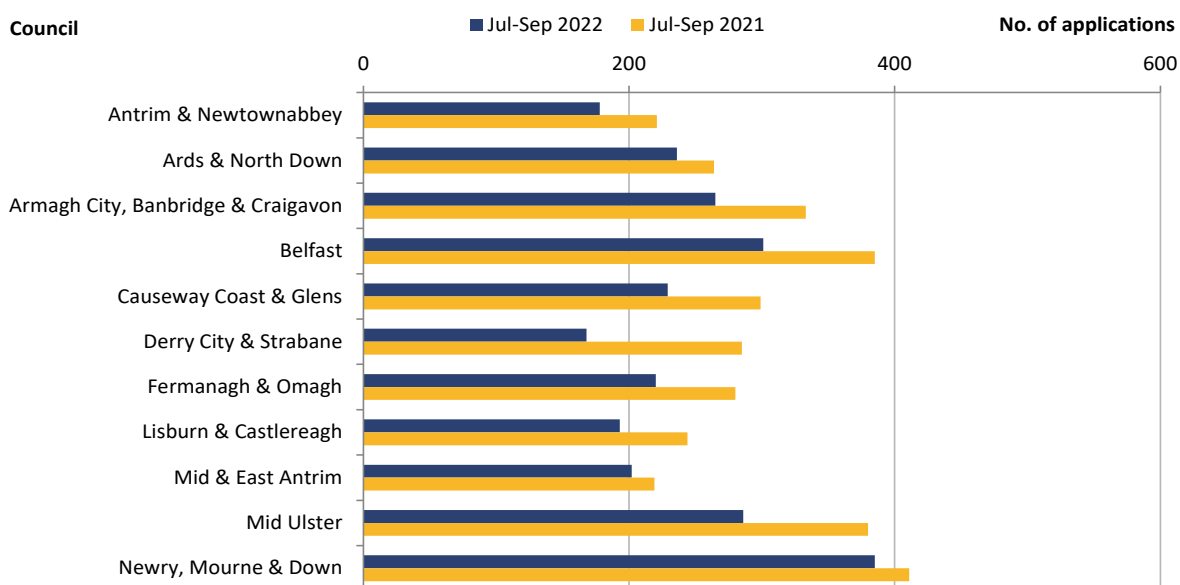
In Q2 2022/23, the number of planning applications received varied across councils, ranging from 385 in Newry, Mourne and Down (accounting for 14.5% of all applications received across NI) to 168 in Derry City and Strabane (6.3% of all applications received).

Eight councils reported a decrease in the number of planning applications received in Q2 2022/23 compared with the previous quarter, with the percentage decrease greatest in Derry City and Strabane (-23.6%). Three councils reported an increase over the quarter with the increase greatest in Ards and North Down (2.2%).

Comparing Q2 in 2022/23 with the same period in 2021/22, all eleven councils reported a decrease in the number of applications received, with the greatest percentage decrease reported by Derry City and Strabane (-41.1%). ([Figure 1.2](#)).

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

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, July to September 2021 & 2022



Applications decided

The number of **planning decisions issued** during Q2 2022/23 was **2,831**; down by 10.3% on Q1 2022/23 (3,157) and down by 13.2% when compared with the same period a year earlier (3,261) ([Figure 1.1](#)).

Over three quarters of planning decisions in Q2 2022/23 (76.1%) were for full planning permission; this was up over the quarter from 75.5% but down from the same period a year earlier (78.9%).

Across councils the number of decisions issued during Q2 2022/23 ranged from 364 in Belfast (accounting for 12.9% of all decisions across NI) to 176 in Mid and East Antrim (6.2% of all decisions).

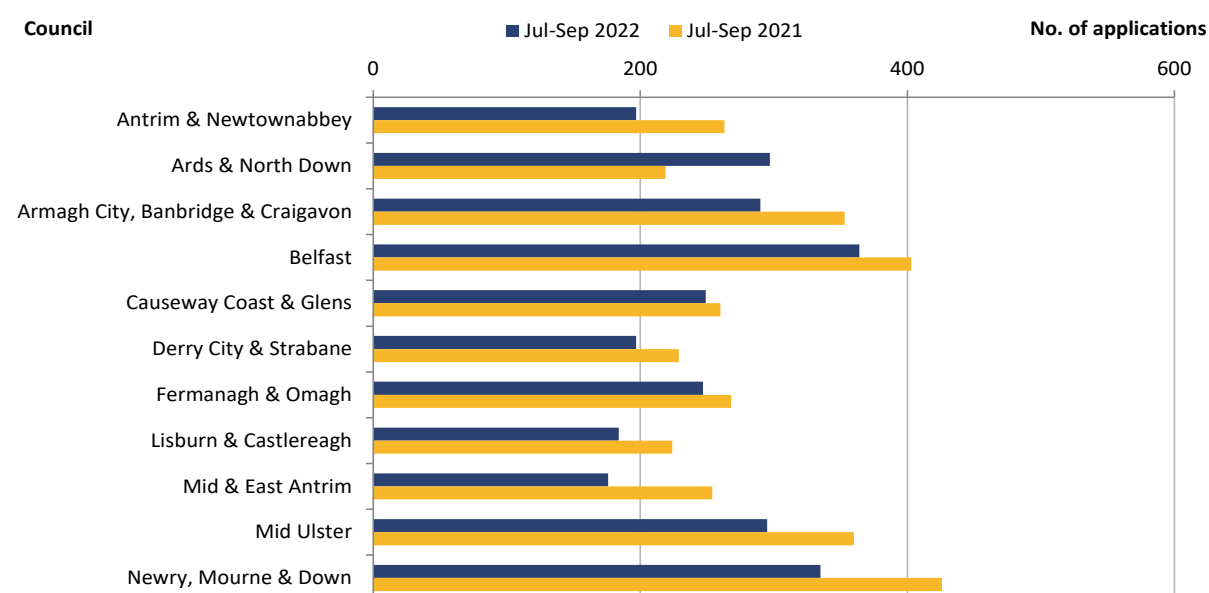
During Q1 2020/21, the first full quarter impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, the number of applications decided was 1,811. This was the lowest number decided in any quarter since the series began in April 2002. During the following four quarters, however, there were consecutive increases in the number of applications decided, with the 3,461 decided in Q1 2021/22 the highest number reported for any quarter since Q1 2016/17. There were then consecutive decreases in the number of decisions issued during the next three quarters. In Q1 2022/23 the number of decisions issued increased to 3,153, but again decreased in Q2 to 2,831, the lowest quarterly total since Q2 2020/21.

[Refer to Table 1.1.](#)

Eight of the 11 councils reported a decrease in the number of applications decided in Q2 2022/23 compared with the previous quarter, with the decrease greatest in Fermanagh and Omagh (-28.6%). The number of decisions issued increased over the quarter in three councils, with the largest increase reported in Mid Ulster (23.9%).

Comparing Q2 in 2022/23 with the same period in 2021/22, ten councils reported a decrease in the number of applications decided, with the largest percentage decrease recorded in Mid and East Antrim (-30.7%). Ards and North Down was the only council to report an increase over the same period (35.6%). ([Figure 1.3](#)).

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, July to September 2021 & 2022



The number of applications received exceeded the number of decisions issued in three out of the 11 councils during Q2 2022/23.

In Q2 2022/23, **151** applications were **withdrawn**; increases of 2.0% on the previous quarter (148) and 2.7% when compared with the same period a year earlier (147).

Overall, the number of applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) in Q2 2022/23 was 2,982; a decrease of 9.8% from the previous quarter (3,305) and down by 12.5% when compared with the same period a year earlier (3,408).

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

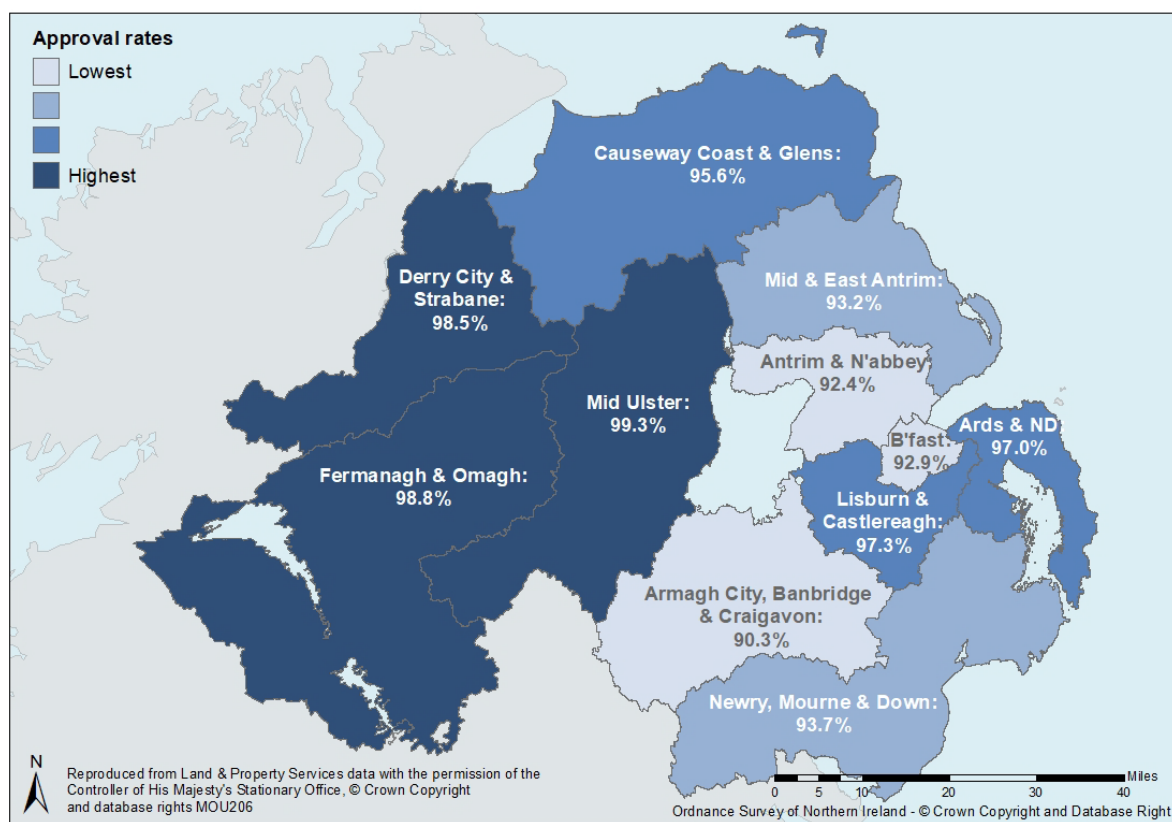
In addition to processing applications, planning authorities deal with a range of other planning related work. For example, during Q2 2022/23 they processed to decision or withdrawal: 269 discharge of conditions; 252 certificates of lawfulness; 108 non-material changes; and 48 tree preservation orders. 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 **95.2%** in Q2 2022/23; similar to the rates reported for the previous quarter (95.0%) and the same period a year earlier (95.5%). [Refer to Table 1.1.](#)

Approval rates varied across councils during Q2 2022/23, from 99.3% in Mid Ulster to 90.3% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon ([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, July to September 2022



In Q2 2022/23 eight councils reported a decrease in approval rate when compared with the same period a year earlier (Q2 2021/22), with the largest decrease occurring in Armagh City,

Banbridge and Craigavon (down from 94.6% to 90.3%). Approval rates increased over this period in the remaining three councils, with Newry, Mourne and Down (up from 87.1% to 93.7%) reporting the largest increase. [Refer to Table 1.2.](#)

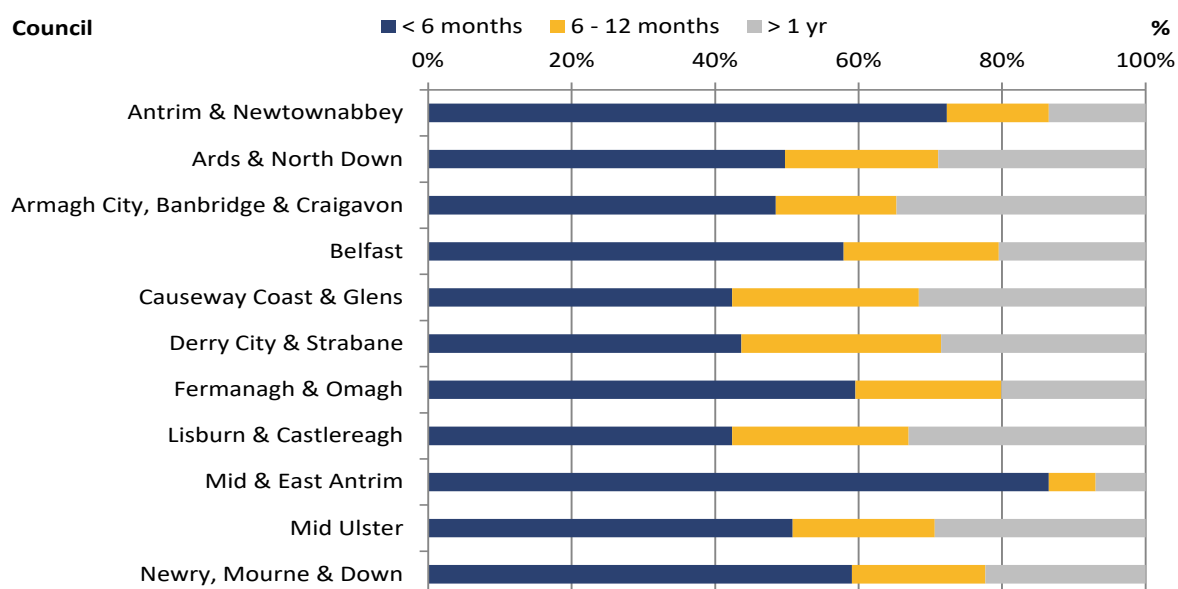
Live applications

There were **7,625 live applications** in the planning system across NI at the end of September 2022, representing decreases of 4.0% from 7,944 at the end of June 2022, and 9.6% from 8,431 at the end of the September 2021. A decrease in the live count is due to fewer applications being received compared with applications processed, i.e. decided or withdrawn, over a given period.

Over one-quarter of all live applications in the planning system at the end of September 2022 were over one year old (27.1%); an increase from the proportions reported at the end of June 2022 (24.7%) and the end of September 2021 (19.5%). [Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

The proportion of live applications over one year old at the end of September 2022 varied across councils, ranging from 34.7% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon to 7.0% in Mid and East Antrim ([Figure 1.5](#)).

Fig 1.5 Live applications by council & time in the planning system at end of September 2022



Comparing the end of September 2022 with the same point a year earlier, the proportion of live cases in the system for over a year increased across all eleven councils, with the increase greatest in Lisburn and Castlereagh (up from 19.0% to 33.0%). [Refer to Table 1.4.](#)



Chapter 2: Departmental activity

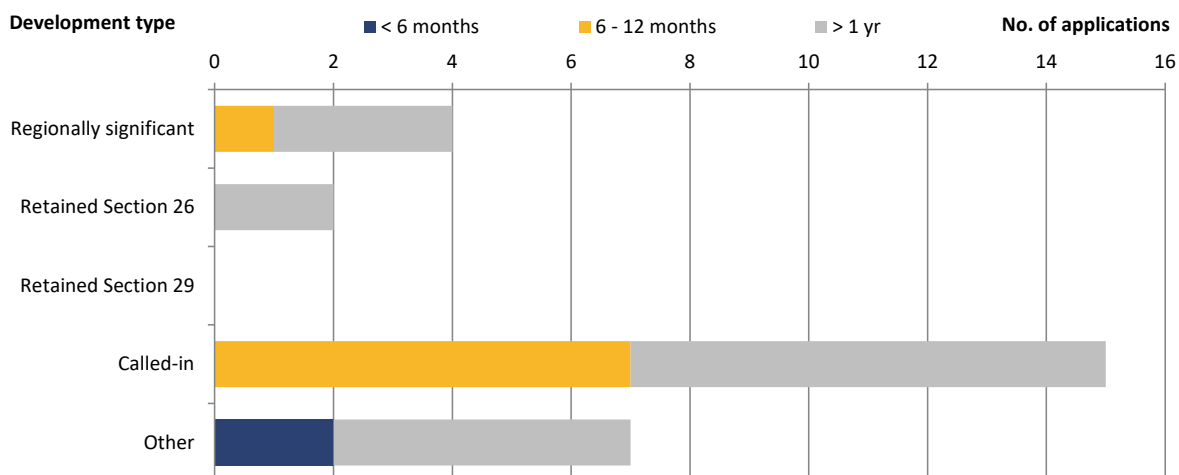
Chapter 2: Departmental activity

Departmental planning activity

During Q2 2022/23 there were no applications received by the Department. There was one application received during the previous quarter and one during the same period a year earlier. There were no applications decided during the second quarter of 2022/23. This compares to four decisions during the previous quarter and two decisions during the same period a year earlier. There were no applications withdrawn during Q2 2022/23.

At the end of September 2022 there were **28 live Departmental applications**: four ongoing regionally significant development (RSD) applications; two retained applications; 15 called-in applications; and seven other applications. Nearly two thirds of these applications (18 out of 28) were in the planning system for over a year at the end of September 2022 ([Figure 2.1](#)). [Refer to Tables 2.1, 2.2.](#)

Fig 2.1 Live Departmental applications by development type & time in system at end of September 2022



Departmental target

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 weeks.

Of the four RSD applications live in the planning system at the end of September 2022, two had been progressed to Ministerial recommendation prior to Q2 2022/23. Of the remaining two awaiting Ministerial recommendation, the 30 week period has been exceeded for both.

Progress on these applications, and any new RSD applications received, will continue to be assessed in future reports.



Chapter 3: Major development planning applications

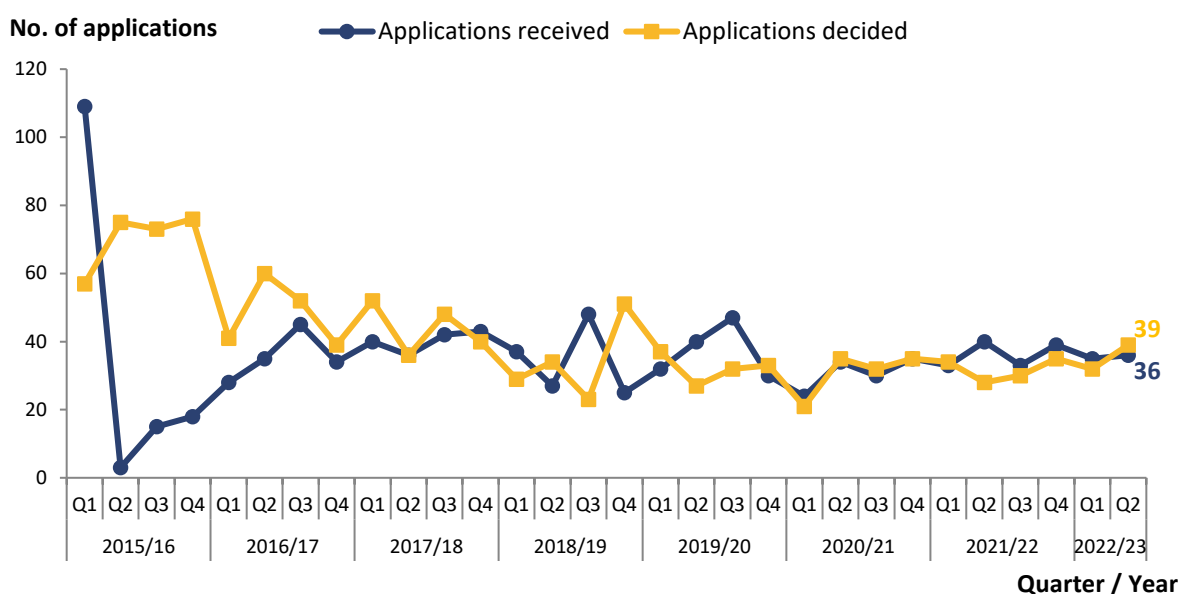
Chapter 3: Major development planning applications

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.

Major applications received

A total of **36** major planning applications were **received** in NI during Q2 2022/23; up slightly from the previous quarter (35) and down from Q2 2021/22 (40) ([Figure 3.1](#)).

Fig 3.1 Major development applications, quarterly, April 2015 to September 2022



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, particularly when considering quarterly data.

Q2 2015/16 had the lowest number of major applications received across the whole series but this can be attributed to the introduction of the community consultation requirement. From Q3 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 six years.

From 1 May 2020, the requirement to hold a public event as part of the pre-application community consultation was temporarily removed until 31 March 2022¹.

¹ For more information, see the [Departmental website](#).

All eleven councils received major planning applications during the second quarter of 2022/23, with Mid Ulster receiving the most (eight).

Major applications decided

During Q2 2022/23, **39** major planning applications were **decided**; up from 32 decided in the previous quarter and 28 decided during the second quarter of 2021/22 ([Figure 3.1](#)). Three major applications were withdrawn during Q2 2022/23.

Ten of the eleven councils issued decisions on major applications during Q2 2022/23, with Belfast issuing the most (12).

The approval rate for major applications decided upon in NI during Q2 2022/23 was 97.4%. [Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.](#)

Major planning applications statutory target

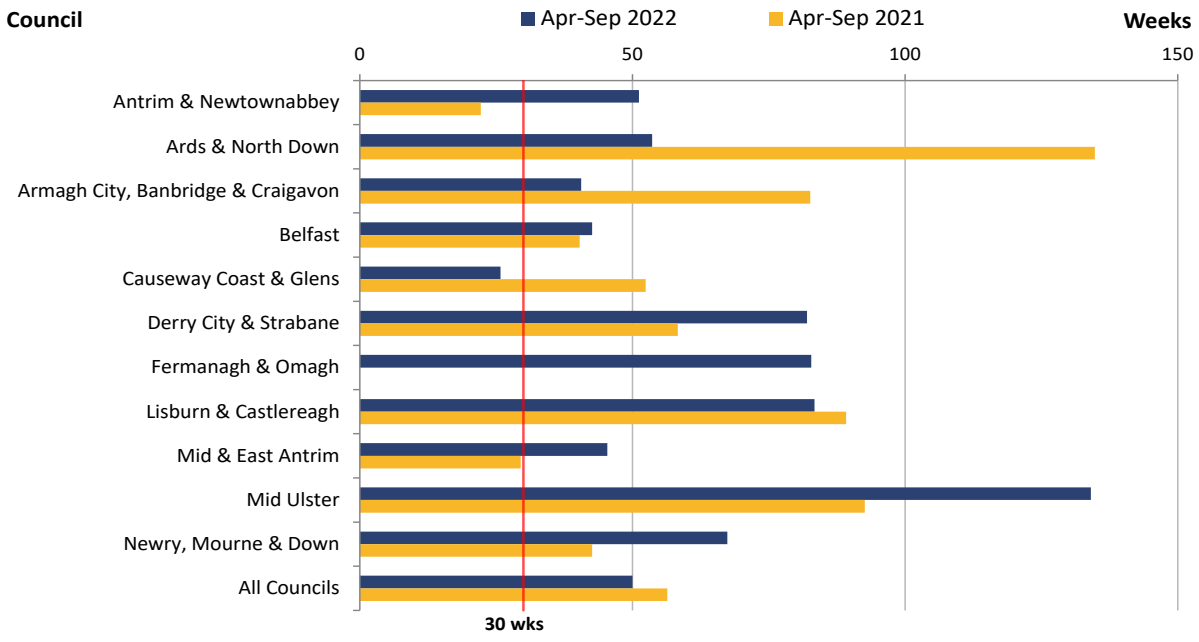


It is a statutory target for each council that major development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 30 weeks.

[Figure 3.2](#) presents annual average processing times for major applications. The **average processing time** for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2022/23 was **50.0 weeks** across all councils. This represents a decrease of 6.4 weeks compared with the same period in 2021/22 (56.4 weeks) but is still considerably higher than the 30 week target.

Whilst [Figure 3.2](#) below has been provided 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 becomes more robust as the year progresses, with more applications being processed. With this in mind, one council was within the 30 week target time in the first six months of 2022/23, Causeway Coast and Glens (with an average of 25.8 weeks across 9 applications).

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, April to September 2021 & 2022



[Refer to Table 3.2 for further information.](#)

A 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](#).



Chapter 4: Local development planning applications

Chapter 4: Local development planning applications

Local Development planning applications are mostly residential and minor commercial applications and are largely determined by the councils. The number of **local** applications **received** in NI during Q2 2022/23 was **2,627**; a decrease of 12.9% on the previous quarter (3,017) and down by 20.0% on the same the same period a year earlier (3,282) ([Figure 4.1](#)).

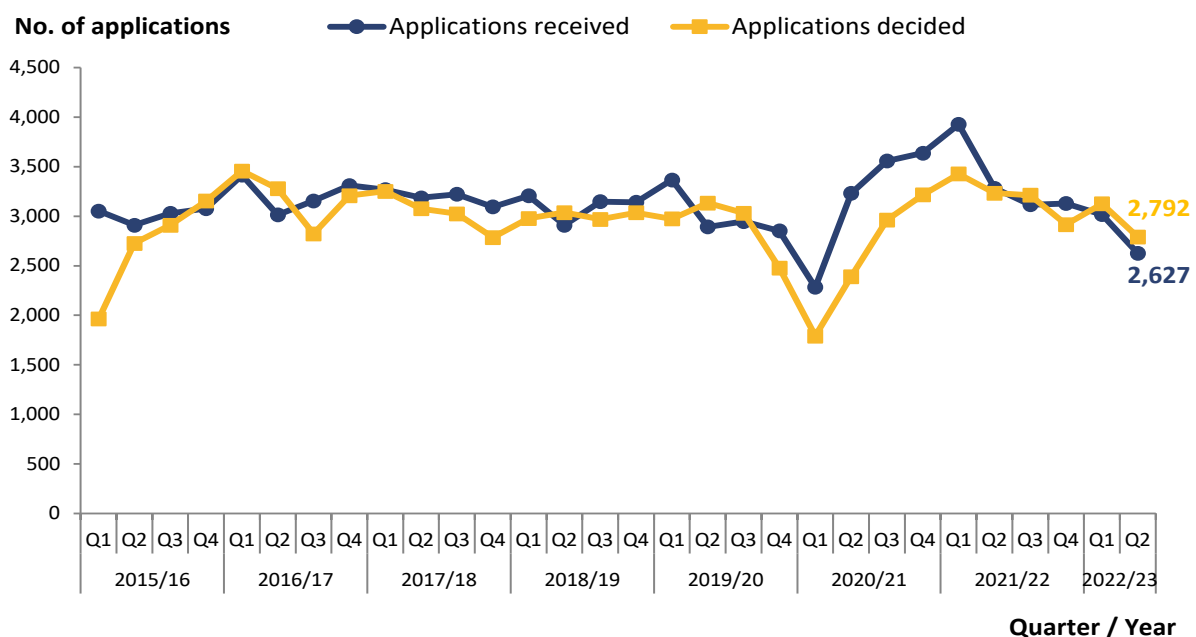
Local applications received

In Q1 2020/21, the first full quarter impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, the number of local applications received was 2,284. This was the lowest number received in any quarter since the transfer of planning powers. During the following four quarters there were consecutive increases in the number of local applications received, with the 3,928 received in Q1 2021/22 the highest quarterly total since transfer. The number of local applications received over the latest five quarters have declined from this peak. [Refer to Table 4.1.](#)

Across councils the number of local applications received during Q2 2022/23 ranged from 382 in Newry, Mourne and Down to 165 in Derry City and Strabane.

Eight councils reported a decrease in the number of local applications received in Q2 2022/23 compared with the previous quarter. The percentage decrease was greatest in Derry and Strabane, where the number of local applications received was down by 24.3%. Over the same period two councils reported an increase with the largest increase reported in Ards & North Down (2.2%). In Mid & East Antrim there was no change from the previous quarter.

Fig 4.1 Local development applications, quarterly, April 2015 to September 2022



Comparing Q2 in 2022/23 with the same period in 2021/22, all eleven councils reported a decrease in the number of local applications received, with the largest decrease reported in Derry City and Strabane, where the number of local applications received was down by over two-fifths (-41.3%).

Local applications decided

The number of **local** applications **decided** in Q2 2022/23 was **2,792**; down by 10.7% on Q1 2022/23 (3,125) and down by 13.6% compared with the same period a year earlier (3,233). Refer to [Figure 4.1](#).

In Q1 2015/16, immediately following the transition of planning functions to councils, the number of local applications received was much higher than the number of decisions made. By 2016/17 this gap had narrowed substantially, however the number of local applications received has generally exceeded the number decided. During 2020/21 the gap between the numbers received and decided again widened, suggesting that the pandemic and resulting restrictions had impacted on the ability of planning authorities to issue decisions on local applications. In Q1 2022/23 the number of applications decided exceeded the number received; this has continued in Q2, with 2,792 applications decided and 2,627 received. ([Figure 4.1](#)).

During the second quarter of 2022/23 the number of local planning decisions issued across councils ranged from 352 in Belfast to 175 in Mid and East Antrim.

Eight of the 11 councils reported a decrease in the number of local applications decided in Q2 2022/23 compared with the previous quarter, with the decrease greatest in Fermanagh and Omagh (-29.3%). In the remaining three councils the number of decisions issued on local applications increased over the same period, with the greatest increase in Mid Ulster (23.2%).

Comparing Q2 in 2022/23 with the same period in 2021/22, ten of the 11 councils reported a decrease in the number of local applications decided, with the greatest percentage decrease in Mid and East Antrim (-30.3%). The remaining council, Ards & North Down reported an increase of 35.3% over the same period.

In Q2 2022/23, **148** local applications were **withdrawn**; similar to the previous quarter (146) and the same period a year earlier (147).

The **overall Northern Ireland approval rate** for **local** applications was **95.2%** in Q2 2022/23; similar to the rates reported for the previous quarter (95.0%) and the same period a year earlier (95.5%).

Local planning applications statutory target



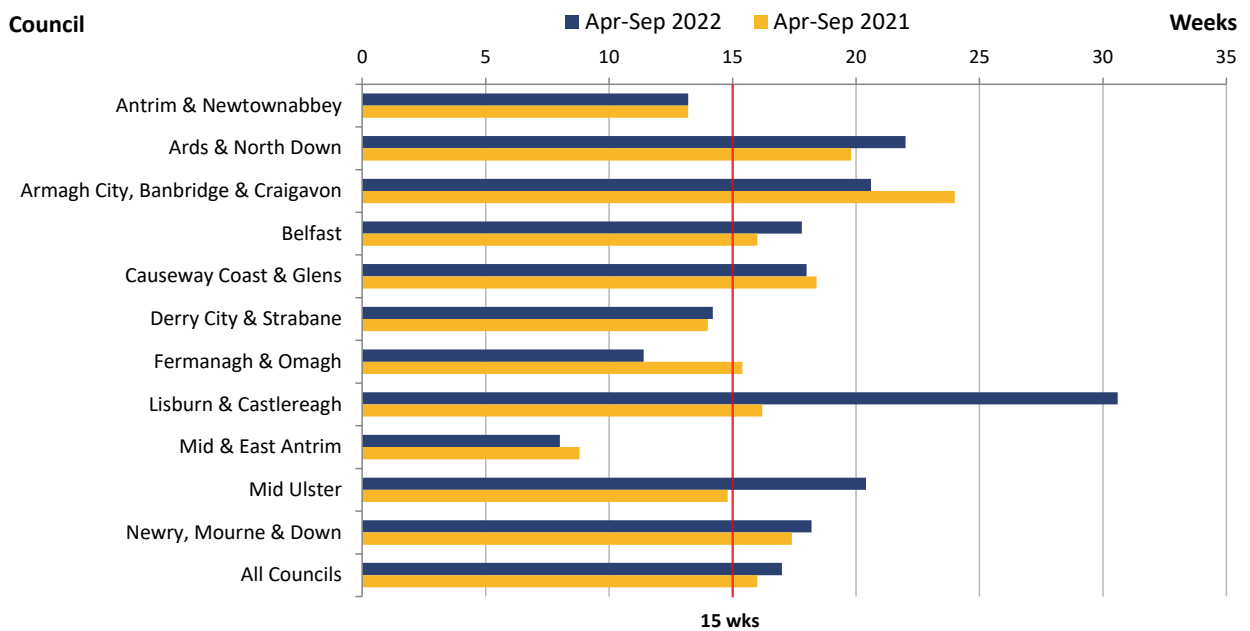
It is a statutory target for each council that local development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

The **average processing time** for **local** applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first six months of 2022/23 was **17.0 weeks** across all councils. This exceeds the statutory target of 15 weeks and represents an increase of 1.0 week from the same period a year earlier (16.0 weeks). Six of the 11 Councils show an increase from the same period a year earlier.

Four of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first six months of 2022/23: Mid and East Antrim (8.0 weeks), Fermanagh and Omagh (11.4 weeks), Antrim and Newtownabbey (13.2 weeks) and Derry City and Strabane (14.2 weeks).

[Refer to Table 4.2.](#)

Fig 4.2 Local development average processing times by council, April to September 2021 & 2022



A 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.](#)



Chapter 5: Development type

Chapter 5: Development type

Generally, the majority of planning applications received are for residential development. During Q2 2022/23, **residential** applications accounted for **three-fifths (60.6%)** of all planning applications received in NI; a decrease on the proportion reported for the previous quarter (66.2%) and a decrease on the same period a year earlier (66.7%).

Residential applications accounted for the largest percentage of applications received in each council during the second quarter of 2022/23; ranging from 70.3% in Mid Ulster, to 40.5% in Belfast.

The overall number of planning applications received during Q2 2022/23 was 2,663; a decrease of 19.8% on the same period a year earlier (3,322). While the number of applications received decreased across most development types during this period, residential applications accounted for most of the decline (down 27.2%; from 2,217 to 1,615).

Over the quarter, the number of planning applications received decreased by 12.7%. This was primarily due to a decline in the number of residential planning applications received.

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

A higher proportion of applications received in Belfast (27.9%), Derry City and Strabane (22.0%) and Lisburn and Castlereagh (21.2%) were categorised as 'other'² in Q2 2022/23, compared with the other councils. See [Appendix 1 – Definitions](#) for a description of the types of applications included in this category.

Residential applications received

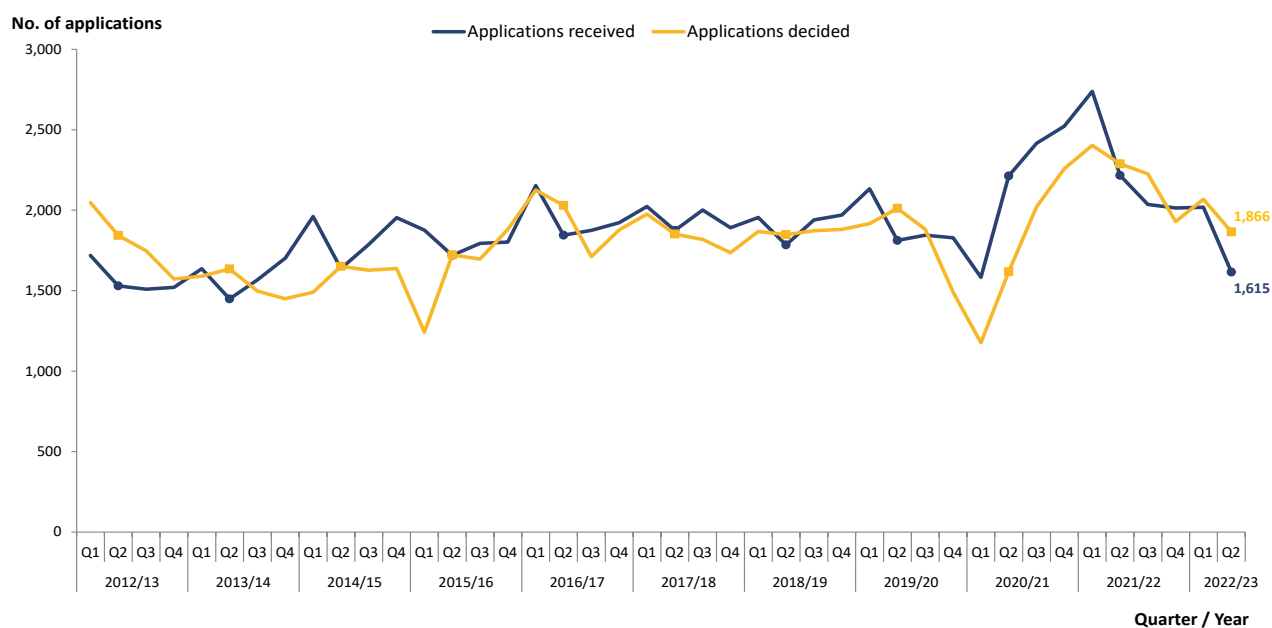
The overall number of **residential** planning applications **received** in NI during Q2 2022/23 was **1,615**; a decrease of 20.0% over the quarter (from 2,019) and a decrease of 27.2% from the same period a year earlier (from 2,217). [See Figure 5.1.](#)

In Q1 2020/21, the first full quarter impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, the number of residential applications received was 1,583; this was the lowest number received in any quarter since Q3 2013/14. During the following four quarters there were consecutive increases in the number of residential applications received, with the 2,739 received in Q1 2021/22 the highest number reported for any quarter since Q2 2010/11. The number of residential applications received have declined since then, with Q2 2022/23 reporting a substantial decrease from the peak in Q1 2021/22.

[Refer to Table 5.3.](#)

² See [Appendix 1 – Definitions](#) for a description of the types of applications included in this category

Fig 5.1 NI Residential applications, quarterly, April 2012 to September 2022



Residential applications decided

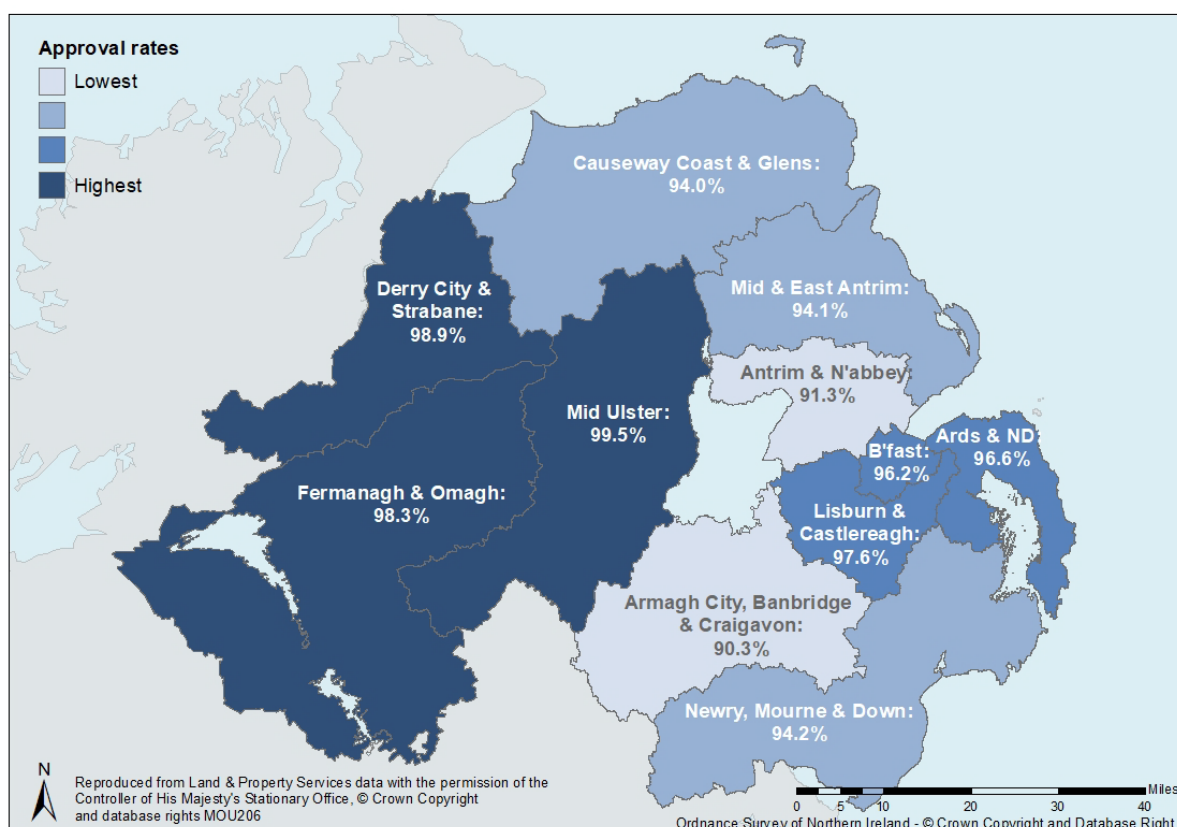
There were **1,866 residential** planning applications **decided** during the second quarter of 2022/23; decreases of 9.8% over the quarter (2,068) and 18.4% on the same period the previous year (2,288). [See Figure 5.1.](#)

In Q1 2020/21, decisions were issued on 1,177 residential planning applications; the lowest number of decisions issued in any quarter since the series began in April 2002. Consecutive increases in the number of residential applications decided were recorded during the following four quarters, with the 2,403 decisions issued in Q1 2021/22 the highest number reported for any quarter since Q1 2011/12. The number of decisions issued on residential applications declined from this point, with 1,866 decided in the most recent quarter. [Refer to Table 5.3.](#)

The **Northern Ireland approval rate** for **residential** planning applications was **95.5%** in Q2 2022/23; similar to the rates for the previous quarter (95.1%) and the same period a year earlier (95.8%).

Approval rates for residential planning applications varied across councils in the most recent quarter, ranging from 99.5% in Mid Ulster to 90.3% in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon ([Figure 5.2](#)).

Fig 5.2 Residential approval rates by council, July to September 2022



In Q2 2022/23 approval rates for residential planning applications decreased in seven councils when compared with the same period in 2021/22, with the largest decrease occurring in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (down from 94.1% to 90.3%). Four councils reported an increase in residential approval rates over the same period with the greatest of these reported in Newry, Mourne and Down (up from 87.7% to 94.2%).

During Q2 2022/23, 85 residential applications were withdrawn across NI; a decrease on both the previous quarter (97) and the same period a year earlier (92).

[Refer to Tables 5.3 and 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 2022/23 was 489; a decrease from the previous quarter (down 25.1%; from 653) and a decrease from the same period a year earlier (down 29.7%; from 696).

In rural areas, within settlements of less than 5,000 population, there were decreases in the number of residential applications received in Q2 2022/23 (172) compared with the previous quarter (down 24.9%; from 229) and the same period a year earlier (down 41.1%; from 292).

In the open countryside (outside population settlements), the number of residential applications received in Q2 2022/23 (954) also decreased over the quarter (down 16.1%; from 1,137) and the same period a year earlier (down 22.4%; from 1,229).

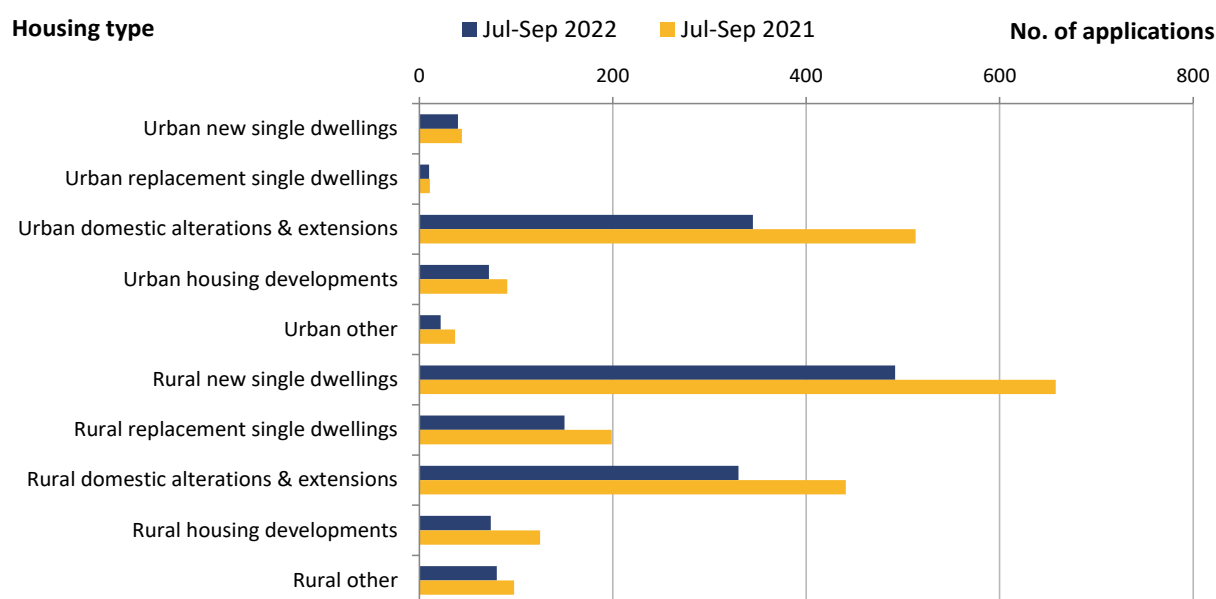
Residential applications – urban and rural

Figure 5.3 shows the number of residential applications received in the second quarter of both 2021/22 and 2022/23, broken down by urban and rural housing type. 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.

New single dwellings in rural areas (492) and alterations/extensions in urban areas (345) and rural areas (330) were the most common types of residential application received during the second quarter of 2022/23, together accounting for 72.3% of all residential applications.

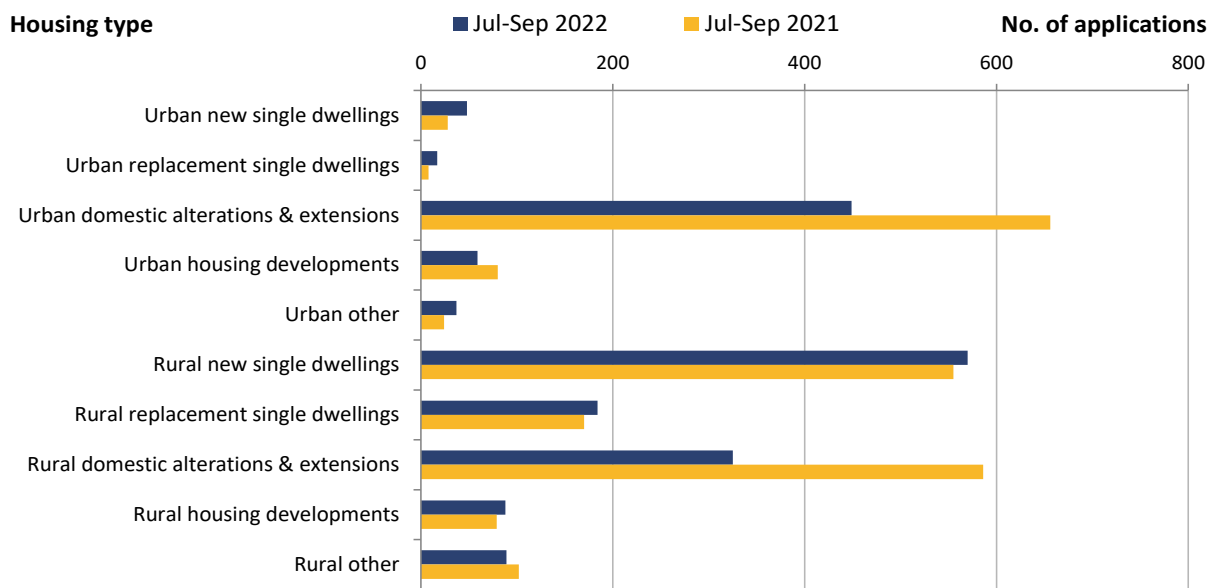
Comparing Q2 in 2022/23 with the same period in 2021/22 the number of residential applications received decreased (-27.2%). Decreases were reported across every housing type with the largest decrease in numerical terms in urban domestic alterations and extensions (down 32.7% from 513 to 345), see Figure 5.3.

Fig 5.3 NI Residential applications received by urban/rural, July to September 2021 & 2022



Comparing Q2 in 2022/23 with the same period in 2021/22 the number of residential applications decided decreased by 18.4%. This was driven in large part by decreases in the number of decisions issued on domestic alterations and extensions in rural areas (down 44.5%; from 586 to 325) and in urban areas (down 31.6%; from 656 to 449). Refer to Table 5.5 and Figure 5.4.

Fig 5.4 NI Residential applications decided by urban/rural, July to September 2021 & 2022





Chapter 6: Compliance and enforcement activity

Chapter 6: Compliance and enforcement activity

Enforcement cases

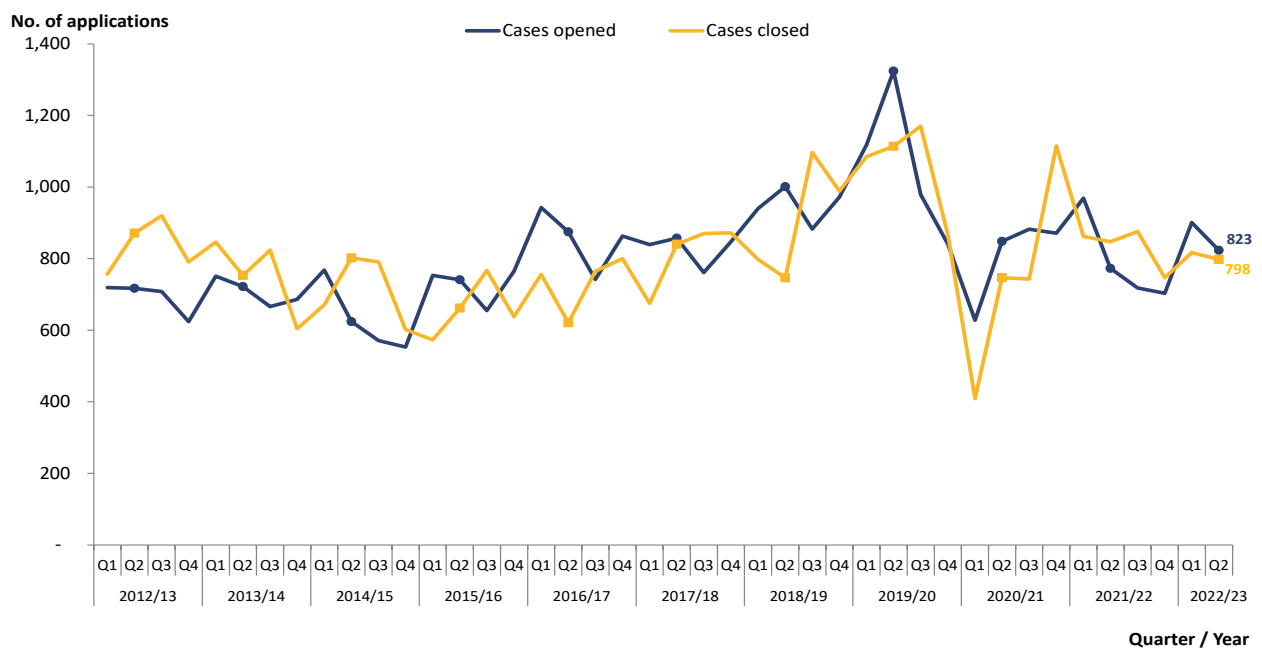
The number of **enforcement cases opened** in NI during the second quarter of 2022/23 was **823**; down by 8.7% over the quarter (901) and up by 6.5% from the same period a year earlier (773) ([Figure 6.1](#)).

During Q1 2020/21, the first full quarter impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, 628 enforcement cases were opened; the lowest number opened in any quarter since Q4 2014/15. The levels increased to a peak of 969 in Q1 2021/22, followed then by consecutive declines for the next three quarters, with 703 cases opened in Q4 2021/22. In the first quarter of 2022/23 there were 901 enforcement cases opened, declining to 823 in the second quarter of the year. [Refer to Table 6.1](#).

Across the councils, the number of enforcement cases opened in Q2 2022/23 ranged from 100 in Newry, Mourne and Down to 31 in Mid Ulster. The number of enforcement cases opened increased in six of the 11 councils between Q2 2022/23 and the same period in 2021/22, with the increase greatest in Derry City and Strabane (up 94.9%; from 39 to 76). Five councils reported a decrease in the number of enforcement cases opened over the same period, with Mid Ulster reporting the greatest percentage decrease (down 22.5% from 40 to 31).

The number of **enforcement cases closed** during Q2 2022/23 was **798**; down by 2.3% over the quarter (817) and down by 5.8% from the same period a year earlier (847) ([Figure 6.1](#)).

Fig 6.1 Enforcement cases opened & closed, quarterly from April 2012 to September 2022



The number of cases closed in Q2 2022/23 varied across councils, ranging from 124 in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, to 37 in Mid Ulster. Seven of the 11 councils reported a decrease in the number of enforcement cases closed in Q2 2022/23 compared with the same period a year earlier. This decrease was greatest in Belfast, down 40.5%, where the number of cases closed decreased from 153 to 91. Four councils reported an increase in the number of cases closed with the greatest of these, in percentage terms, in Derry City and Strabane, up 115.0% (from 20 to 43).

The most common reasons for enforcement cases closing in Q2 2022/23 were that no breach had actually occurred (38.7%) or that the case had been remedied or resolved (22.8%). Together these accounted for over three-fifths (491; 61.5%) of the 798 cases closed during the quarter.

A total of **813 enforcement cases** were **concluded**³ during the second quarter of 2022/23; a decrease of 2.3% from the previous quarter (832) and down by 2.6% from the same period a year earlier (835). Across councils, the number of cases concluded during Q2 2022/23 ranged from 113 in Ards and North Down to 36 in Mid Ulster.

Six councils recorded increases in the number of enforcement cases concluded in Q2 2022/23 compared with the same period the previous year, with the greatest percentage increase occurring in Derry City and Strabane (up 142.1% from 19 to 46). Five councils reported a decrease in the number of enforcement cases concluded over the same period with the largest decrease reported in Belfast (down 38.5%; from 156 to 96).

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

Enforcement cases statutory target



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.

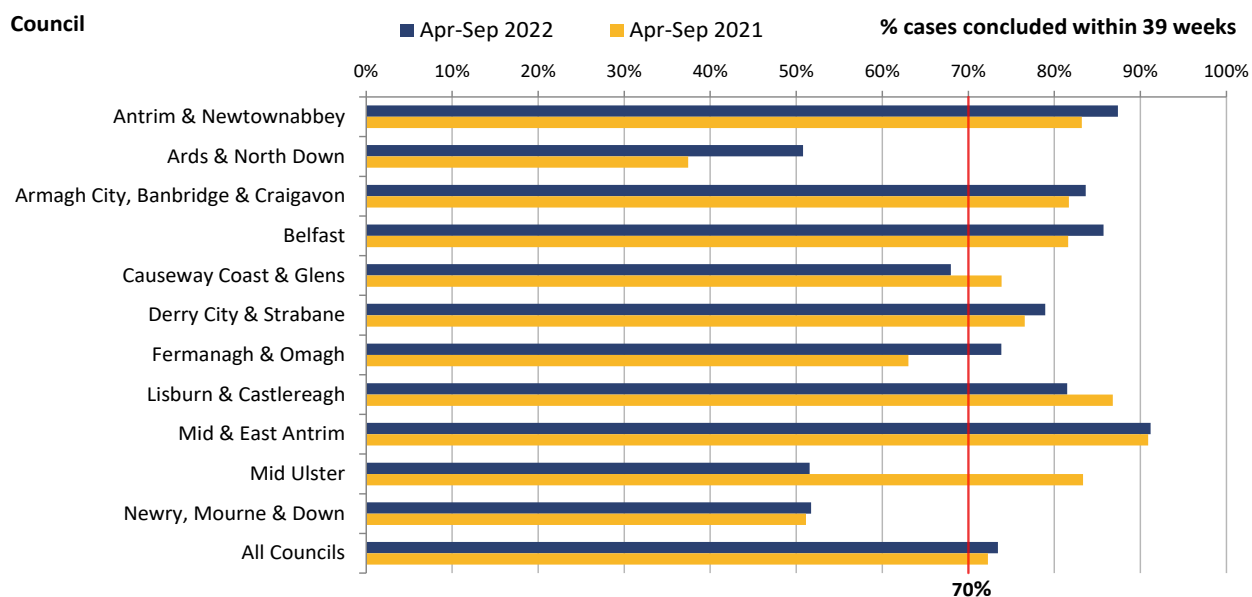
Across all councils, **73.4%** enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first six months of 2022/23, meeting the statutory target of 70%. This represents an increase from the rate reported for the first six months of 2021/22 (72.3%).

During the first six months of 2022/23 seven of the 11 councils were meeting the statutory target ([Figure 6.2](#)).

[Refer to Table 6.2.](#)

³ Refer to [User Guidance – Enforcement activity](#) for definitions of closed and concluded enforcement cases.

Fig 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, April to September 2021 & 2022



The number of **live enforcement cases** at the end of September 2022 was **3,756**. Examining the last two years in more detail reveals that the number of live enforcement cases increased during the first three quarters of 2020/21, as the number of cases opened exceeded the number closed. The number of live enforcement cases peaked at the end of December 2020 with 4,074 live cases. In the following quarters the level fluctuated, but overall it has declined from the Q3 2020/21 peak, with 3,756 live enforcement cases at the end of September 2022.

The number of **cases over two years old** stood at **1,231** at the end of September 2022, accounting for 32.8% of all live cases. This compared with 31.2% of live cases at the end of September 2021.

[Refer to Tables and 6.1 and 6.4.](#)

Across councils, Newry, Mourne and Down had the highest number of live cases at the end of September 2022 (720), with 43.6% of these in the system for over two years. Mid and East Antrim had the smallest number of live cases (97) at the end of September 2022, with 22.7% of these in the system for over two years.

The number of live enforcement cases decreased in six of the 11 councils between the end of September 2021 and the end of September 2022. The decrease in percentage terms was greatest in Antrim and Newtownabbey, where the number of live cases decreased by 39.2% over the year (from 194 to 118).

The overall decrease in the enforcement live count recorded across the year was offset by increases reported in the remaining five councils, with the greatest of these reported in Derry City and Strabane (up 45.4%; from 251 to 365).

[Refer to Table 6.5.](#)

Compliance activity

There were seven prosecutions initiated during Q2 2022/23, across four councils, with Causeway Coast and Glens initiating the most (three).

During the second quarter of 2022/23, there were two convictions across NI, one in Antrim and Newtownabbey and the other in Causeway Coast and Glens.

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



Chapter 7: Renewable energy activity

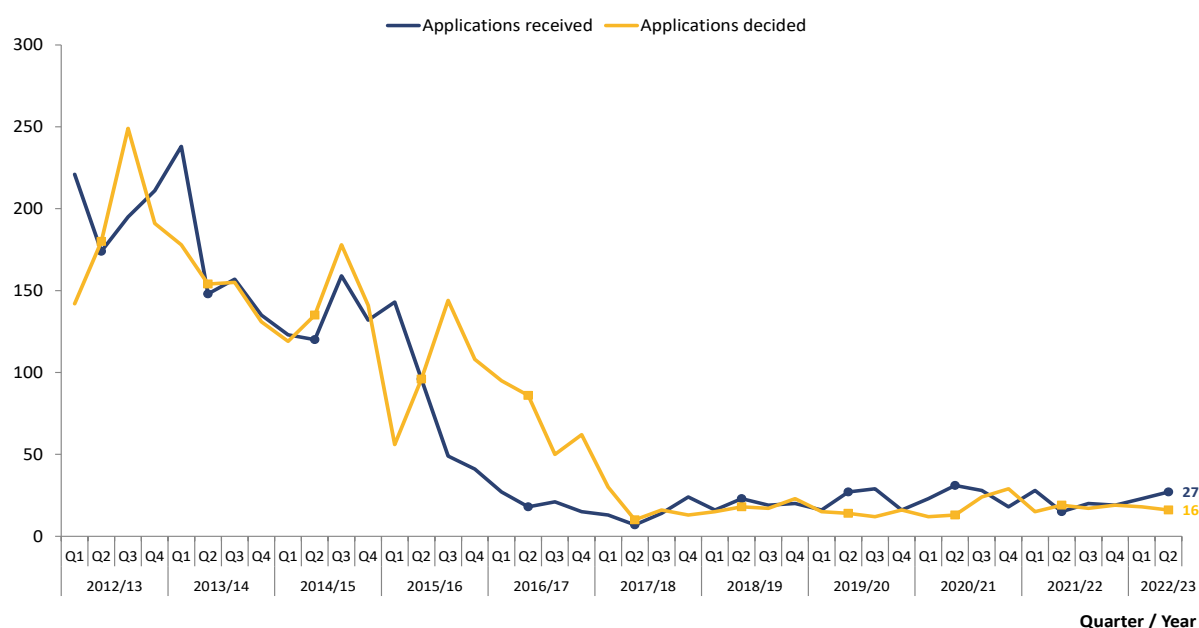
Chapter 7: Renewable energy (RE) activity

Renewable energy applications received

Twenty-seven renewable energy applications were received in Q2 2022/23; up from the previous quarter (23) and the same period the previous year (15).

The number of applications received during July to September 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 (a **88.7%** decrease from 238 applications in Q1 2013/14 to 27 applications in Q2 2022/23) 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 ([Figure 7.1](#)).

Fig 7.1 Renewable Energy applications, quarterly from April 2012 to September 2022



Renewable energy applications decided

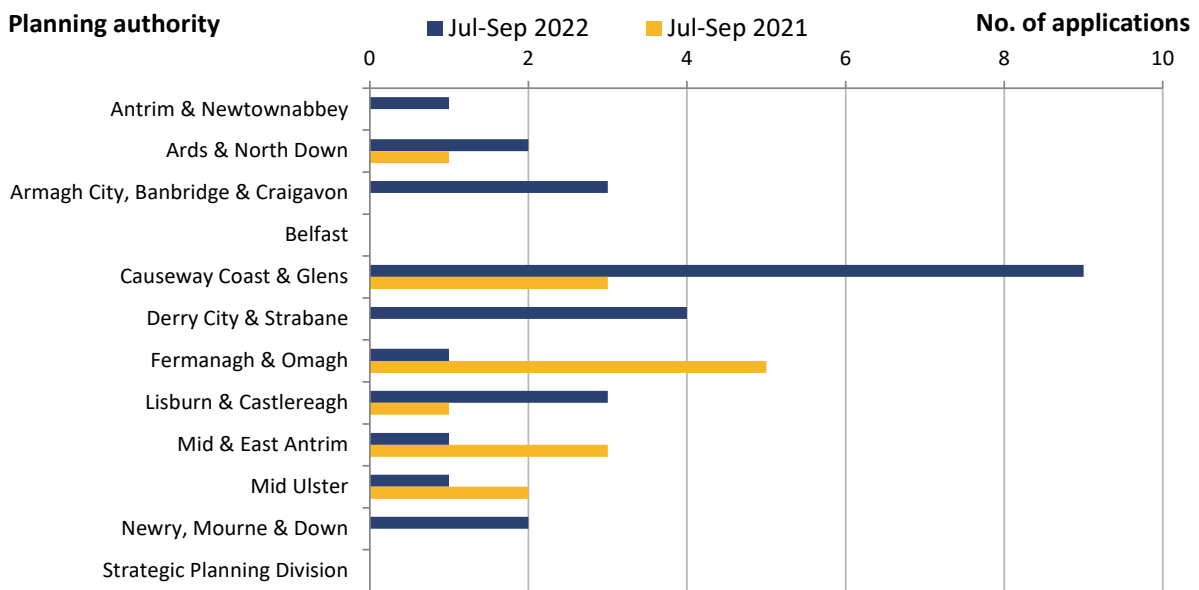
The number of renewable energy applications **decided** during Q2 2022/23 was **16**; compared to 18 in the previous quarter and 19 in the same period last year; representing a **93.6%** decrease from the series peak of 249 applications decided in Q3 2012/13 ([Figure 7.1](#)). **Four** renewable energy applications were **withdrawn** during Q2 2022/23. [Refer to Table 7.1.](#)

The average processing time for the 20 renewable energy applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the second quarter of 2022/23 was 51.5 weeks across NI; with processing times increasing over the latest quarter (from 50.0 weeks) and from the same period a year earlier (44.6 weeks).

Single wind turbines continue to be the most common renewable energy application, accounting for 20 out of 27 applications received during Q2 2022/23. In addition, 11 of the 16 renewable energy decisions issued during the most recent quarter were for single wind turbines. [Refer to Table 7.2.](#)

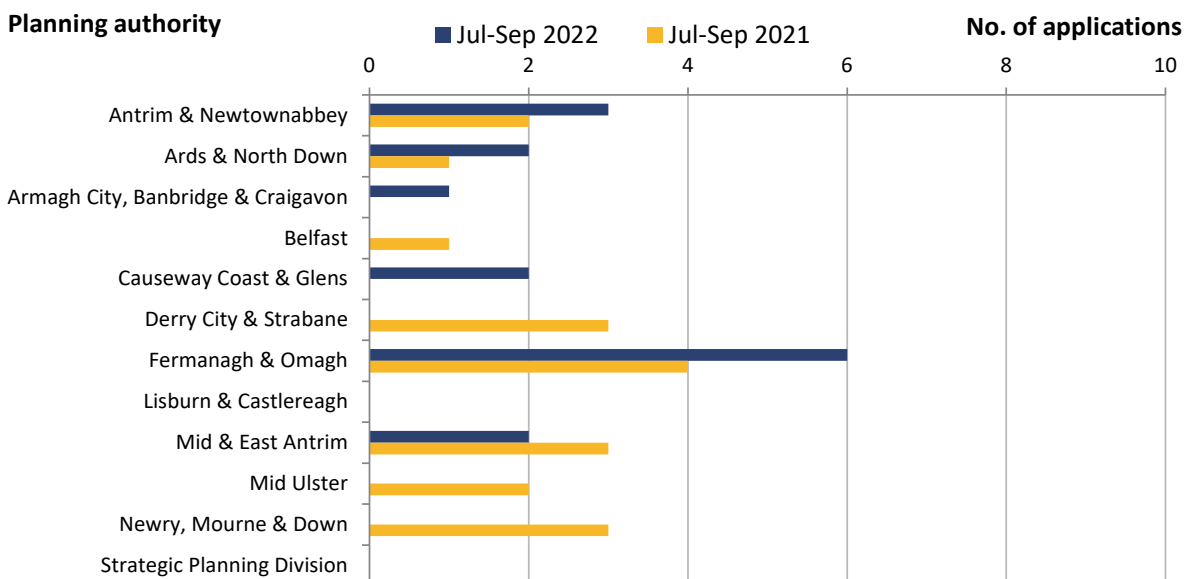
[Figure 7.2](#) shows the distribution of renewable energy applications received across the planning authorities, with Causeway Coast and Glens (nine) receiving the most in Q2 2022/23.

Fig 7.2 Renewable Energy applications received by authority, July to September 2021 & 2022



[Figure 7.3](#) shows the distribution of decisions issued on renewable energy applications across the different planning authorities, with Fermanagh and Omagh (six) issuing the most during the second quarter of 2022/23.

Fig 7.3 Renewable Energy applications decided by authority, July to September 2021 & 2022

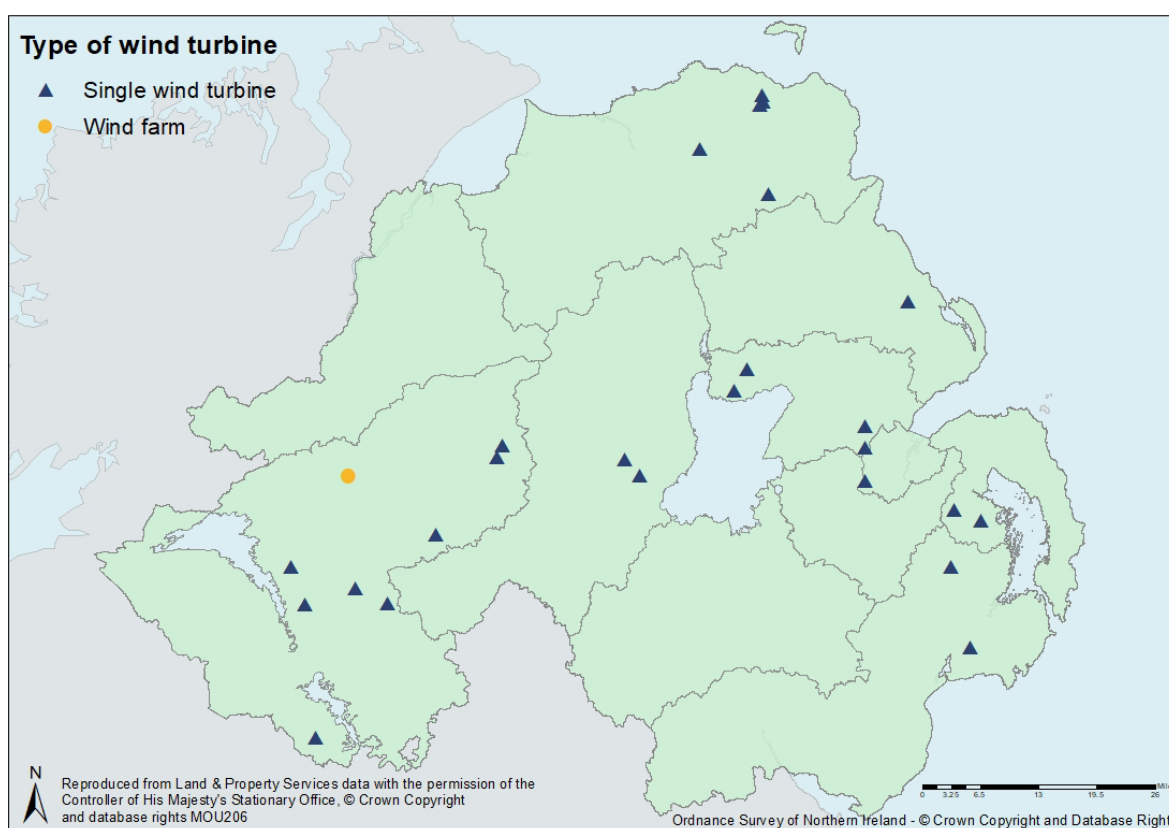


At the end of September 2022, there were **133 live renewable energy applications** in the planning system across NI; almost three-quarters of these (74.4%, 99 of 133) were for single wind turbines. Of these 133 live applications, 45.9% were in the planning system for over a year; an increase from the proportion reported for the same point in 2021 (44.8%).

The **NI approval rate** for renewable energy applications was **93.8%** in Q2 2022/23, with 15 out of the 16 decisions issued during this period being approved.

[Figure 7.4](#) displays the locations of wind energy applications approved during the first six months of 2022/23. There were 25 single wind turbines approved during this period, as well as one wind farm.

Fig 7.4 Location of approved wind energy applications by council, April to September 2022



[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 2022 to 30 September 2022 were transferred in October 2022 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 the coding of classifications in the Planning Portal. Local councils and the Department were provided with their own headline planning statistics as part of the quality assurance process. On completion of ASRB and planning authority validation, a final extract was taken in October 2022. Quarterly data for 2022/23 are regarded as provisional and will retain this status until the annual report is published in July 2023.

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 a biannual basis, with the most recent update published in December 2021.

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 a biannual basis, with the most recent update published in December 2021.

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 until [31 March 2022](#).

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 until 31 March 2022.

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 Chapter 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) where a decision had not issued before 1 April 2015. These are now 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 Chapter 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 Chapter 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 in the NI Planning Statistics publication 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 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 Chapter 6 of report](#)

Compliance and enforcement are important functions of the planning process. The summary data presented in this report and [accompanying data tables](#) covers enforcement cases opened, enforcement cases closed and concluded, court action taken and the live caseload as at the end of the quarter. A case is closed for one of the following 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; or
- 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 is considered 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 plot the location and subsequently determine the urban/rural banding.

From Q3 2016/17, an additional split was introduced which reports 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 coordinates 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 planning applications and enforcement activity, planning authorities deal with a range of other planning related work. Data on this 'non-application' workload is generally excluded from the main publication as it does not inform any of the calculation of performance against relevant statutory targets. Information on this part of the planning authorities' workload is included in [Table 9.1](#) of the accompanying data 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 main NI Planning Statistics bulletin since 2012/13. 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 the transfer of planning powers, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) were excluded. In the interests of consistency TPOs are excluded from the main NI Planning Statistics bulletin.

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

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

Feedback to Government Statistical Service (GSS): Planning statistics support a large and diverse user community in the UK. Statisticians from across central government and the devolved administrations are working together to improve the public value of [official statistics](#) related to the planning process. As part of this work the GSS are looking for feedback to help ensure that our planning statistics are valuable in informing policy and important questions for the public. You can [complete the user survey here](#) which is open until 12 January 2023.

This survey is being conducted by the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Housing coherence team and responses may be shared with devolved administrations and central government departments. Your responses will shape the work of statisticians to improve the quality and value of these statistics.

Survey responses will be used and stored securely as outlined in the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) Privacy Policy](#).

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

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 the number of planning 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 the release of each NI 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 [Chapter 5](#) and [Data 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 [Data Table 5.6](#) are defined below.

Outline permission

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

Full permission

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

Approval of reserved matters

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

Consent to display an advertisement

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

Listed building consent

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

Conservation area consent

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

Hazardous substances consent

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

Reader information

This document may be made available in alternative formats, please contact us to discuss your requirements. Contact details are available on the cover page of this report.