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Department for  
**Infrastructure**

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# NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

## First Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin

### April to June 2024: Provisional Figures



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1<sup>st</sup> Floor, James House, Gasworks Site,  
2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA

Statistician: Suzanne Napier  
Telephone: 028 90540390  
Email: [ASRB@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:ASRB@nisra.gov.uk)



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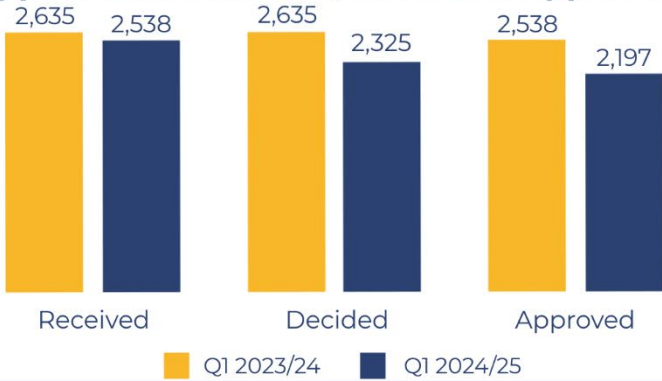
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## Key points

- There were 2,538 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during the first quarter of 2024/25; an increase of one percent on the previous quarter and down by four percent on the same period a year earlier. This comprised of 2,500 local and 38 major applications.
- In the first quarter of 2024/25, 2,325 planning applications were decided, a decrease of three percent from the previous quarter and down by twelve percent from the same period a year earlier. Decisions were issued on 2,271 local and 54 major applications during the most recent quarter.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first three months of 2024/25 was 19.0 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and is the same as the average processing time reported for the same period a year earlier. Five of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first three months of 2024/25.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first three months of 2024/25 was 38.6 weeks across all councils. While exceeding the 30 week target, this represents a decrease of 21.0 weeks compared with the same period a year earlier.
- Across councils 69.7% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first three months of 2024/25. This represents a decrease from the rate recorded in 2023/24 (77.2%). Individually, seven of the 11 councils were meeting the 70% target in after the first three months of 2024/25.

## Overall planning applications

### Applications received, decided & approved

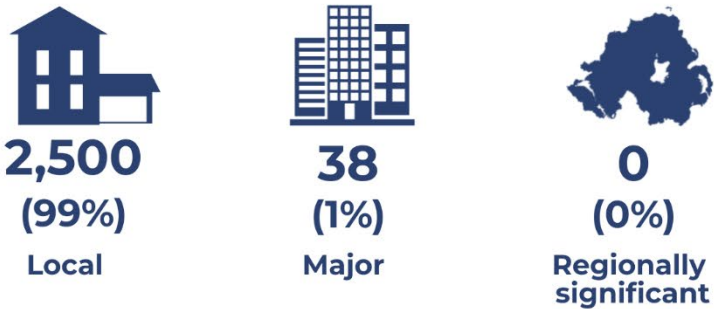


### Comparing Q1 2024/25 with Q1 2023/24:

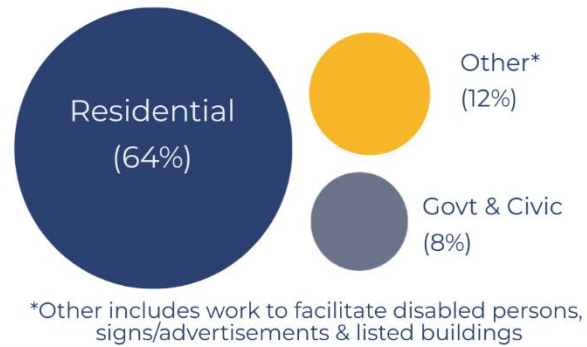


## Applications received

A total of 2,538 planning applications were received during Q1 2024/25:

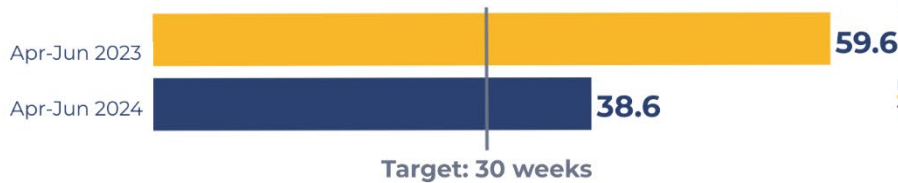


### 3 largest development types

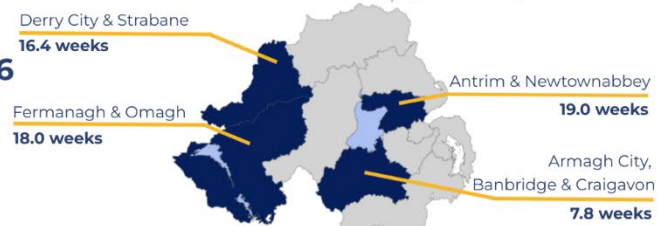


## Planning statutory targets - April to June 2023 & 2024

### Average processing times (weeks) - major



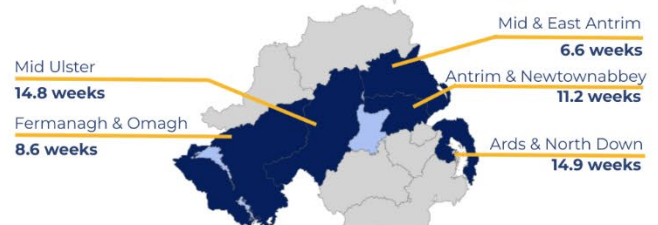
### Councils within major target



### Average processing times (weeks) - local



### Councils within local target



### % of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks



### Councils within enforcement target



# Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2024/25 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 first quarter of 2024/25.

Quarterly figures for 2024/25 are provisional and will be subject to scheduled revisions ahead of finalised annual figures, to be published in July 2025.

The records of all planning applications from 1 April to 30 June 2024 were transferred in August 2024 from live databases. This included all live planning applications in the Northern Ireland and Mid Ulster Planning Portals. The data were validated by Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB). Local councils and the Department were provided with their own headline planning statistics as part of the quality assurance process. Once validations were complete, a final extract was taken in September 2024.

Detailed notes on the background of NI Planning Statistics and user guidance for this publication can be found [here](#).

## Future releases

The next report will be a quarterly report covering the period 1 July to 30 September 2024. This quarterly report is planned for release in December 2024. The next annual report covering 2024/25 is planned for release in July 2025. See [GOV.UK Release Calendar and upcoming statistical releases](#) on the Department's website for future publication dates.

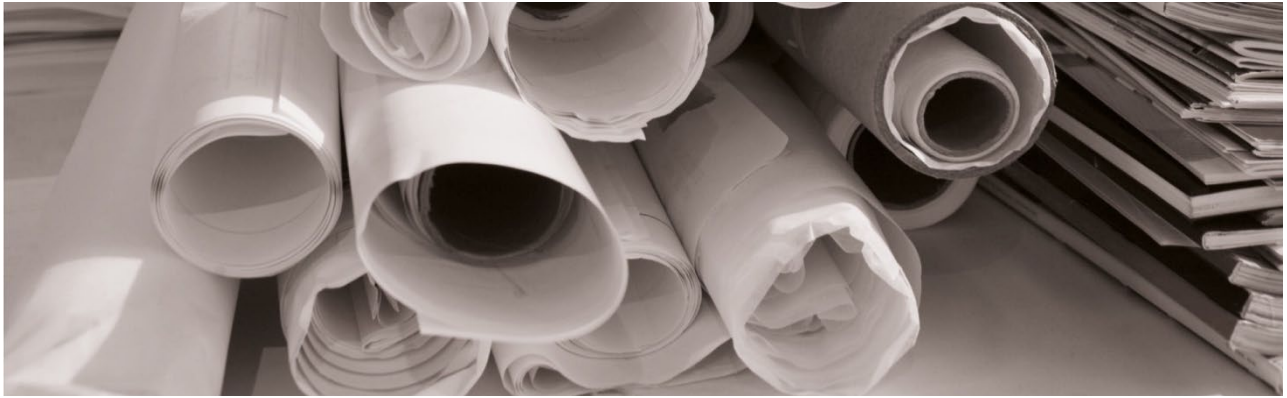
## Northern Ireland regional planning IT systems

In 2022, two new planning portals were introduced; the [Northern Ireland Planning Portal](#) for 10 councils and the Department for Infrastructure, and the [Mid Ulster planning portal](#). The transfer to the new planning portals will have impacted on planning activity and processing performance; this should be borne in mind when making comparisons with other time periods.

## Alternative formats

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.





## Chapter 1: Overall Northern Ireland planning activity

The volume of planning applications received in the first quarter of 2024/25 has increased from the previous quarter and decreased from the level recorded in the first quarter of 2023/24. For applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) the volume processed has decreased from both the previous quarter and the same period a year earlier. The number of enforcement cases opened in the first quarter of 2024/25 was lower than both the previous quarter and the same period a year earlier, whereas the number of enforcement cases closed was higher than the previous quarter but lower than Q1 last year.

There have been some key events in recent years that will have impacted on planning activity and processing performance. These were the coronavirus pandemic with varying restrictions in place up until February 2022; the accessibility of the planning system for some users for a period during January and February 2022, and a significant change in IT planning systems with the development and implementation of two new planning systems in June and December 2022. All these factors should be borne in mind 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 Q1 2024/25 was 2,538; an increase of 0.7% on the previous quarter (2,521) and a decrease of 3.7% on the same period a year earlier (2,635) (Figure 1.1). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

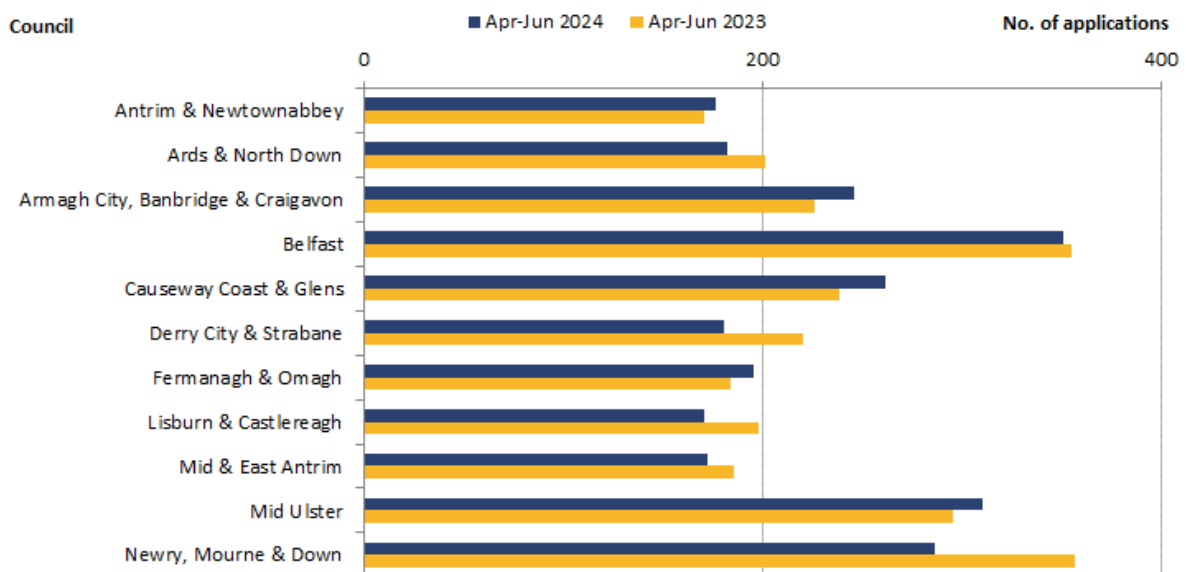
Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, quarterly, April 2014 to June 2024



Six councils reported an increase in the number of planning applications received in Q1 2024/25 compared with the previous quarter, with the greatest increase in Fermanagh and Omagh (21.0%). Five councils reported a decrease over the quarter, with the decrease greatest in Ards and North Down (-16.4%).

Comparing Q1 in 2024/25 with the same period in 2023/24, six of the eleven councils reported a decrease in the number of applications received, with the greatest decrease reported by Newry, Mourne and Down (-19.6%). Five councils reported an increase over the year, with the increase greatest in Causeway, Coast and Glens (9.6%) (Figure 1.2).

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, April – June 2023 & 2024

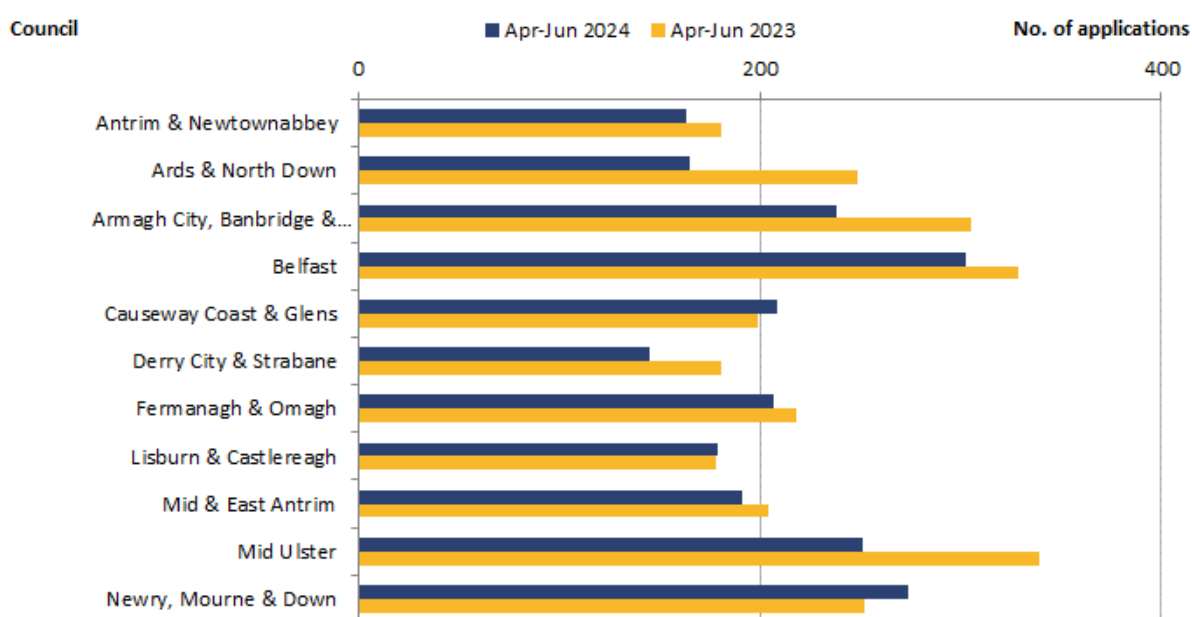


## Applications decided

The number of planning decisions issued during Q1 2024/25 was 2,325; a decrease of 2.9% on Q4 2023/24 (2,395) and down by 11.8% when compared with the same period a year earlier (2,635). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Comparing Q1 in 2024/25 with the same period in 2023/24, eight of the eleven councils reported a decrease in the number of applications decided, with the largest percentage decrease recorded in Ards and North Down (-33.7%). The remaining councils reported an increase over the year, with the greatest increase in Newry, Mourne and Down (8.7%) (Figure 1.3).

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, April to June 2023 & 2024



In Q1 2024/25, 135 applications were withdrawn: a decrease from both the previous quarter (156) and Q1 2023/24 (137).

## Approval rates

The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for all planning applications was 94.5% in Q1 2024/25. This was like the previous quarter (94.6%) and lower than the same period a year earlier (96.3%). [Refer to Table 1.1.](#)

Approval rates varied across councils during Q1 2024/25, from 90.1% in Newry, Mourne and Down to 100.0% in Mid Ulster. These rates are dependent on many factors and care should be taken in making any comparisons. [Refer to Table 1.2.](#)



## Live applications

There were 7,951 live applications in the planning system across NI at the end of June 2024, up from the end of March 2024 (7,869), and down from the count at the end of the June 2023 (8,010).

Three out of every ten live applications at the end of June 2024 were over one year old (31.1%); an increase from the proportions reported at the end of March 2024 (30.3%) and the end of June 2023 (26.9%). [Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

## Departmental activity

No departmental applications were received, decided or withdrawn during Q1 2024/25. There was one application received in the previous quarter, none were received during the same period last year. The latest decisions taken by the Department were in Q3 2023/24. No departmental applications have been withdrawn since Q1 2022/23.

At the end of June 2024 there were 22 live Departmental applications; 15 of the 22 were in the planning system for over a year.



**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 five RSD applications live in the planning system at the end of June 2024, three have been progressed to ministerial recommendation but the 30 week period for recommendation/withdrawal has been exceeded. Of the remaining two awaiting ministerial recommendation, the 30 week period has been exceeded.

## Development type

Most planning applications received and decided in NI are for residential development. Residential applications accounted for over three-fifths (1,619; 63.8%) of applications received in Q1 2024/25, followed by 'Other' (312; 12.3%) and 'Government and Civic' (203; 8.0%). The top three development types decided in Q1 2024/25 were 'Residential' (1,528), 'Other' (253) and 'Government and Civic' (183). [Refer to Tables 5.1, 5.2.](#)

## Renewable energy activity

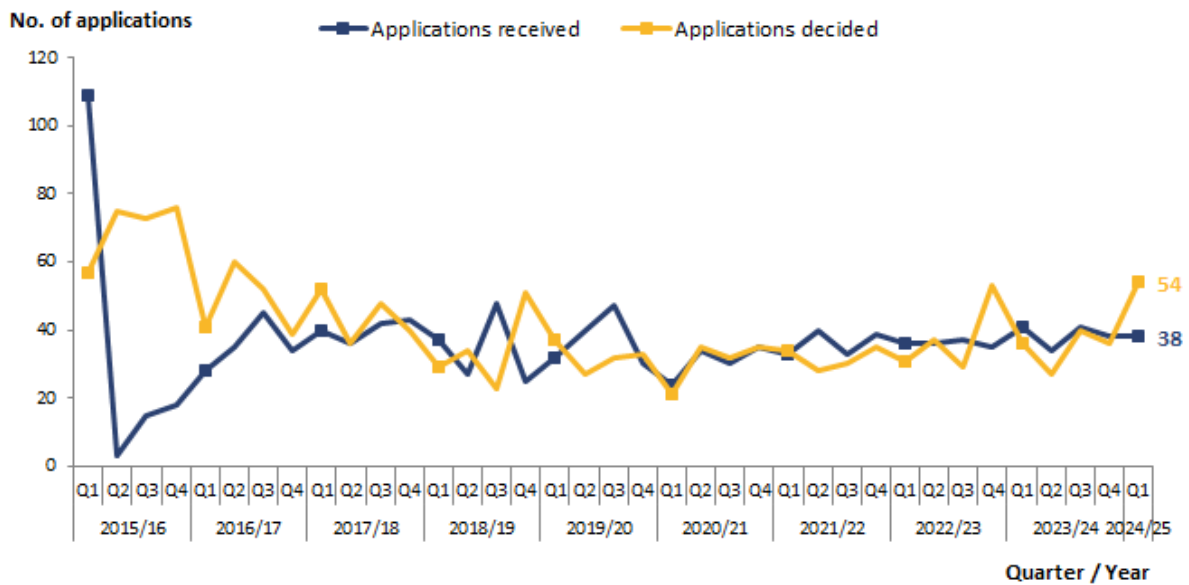
Twenty-four renewable energy applications were received in Q1 2024/25; down from the previous quarter (39) and like the number received during the same period last year (25). Twenty-seven renewable energy applications were decided during Q1 2024/25; this compares to 32 in the previous quarter and 20 in the same period last year.



## Chapter 2: Major development planning applications

Major Developments have important economic, social, and environmental implications. Most major applications are multiple housing, commercial, and government and civic types of development. A total of 38 major planning applications were received in NI during Q1 2024/25, the same number as received in the previous quarter (38) and down from the same period a year earlier (41). [Refer to Table 3.1.](#)

Fig 3.1 Major development applications, quarterly, April 2015 to June 2024



During Q1 2024/25, 54 major planning applications were decided; up from 36 decided in the previous quarter and from the 36 decided during the first quarter of 2023/24 (Figure 3.1). The approval rate for major applications decided upon in NI during Q1 2024/25 was 96.3%. [Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.](#)

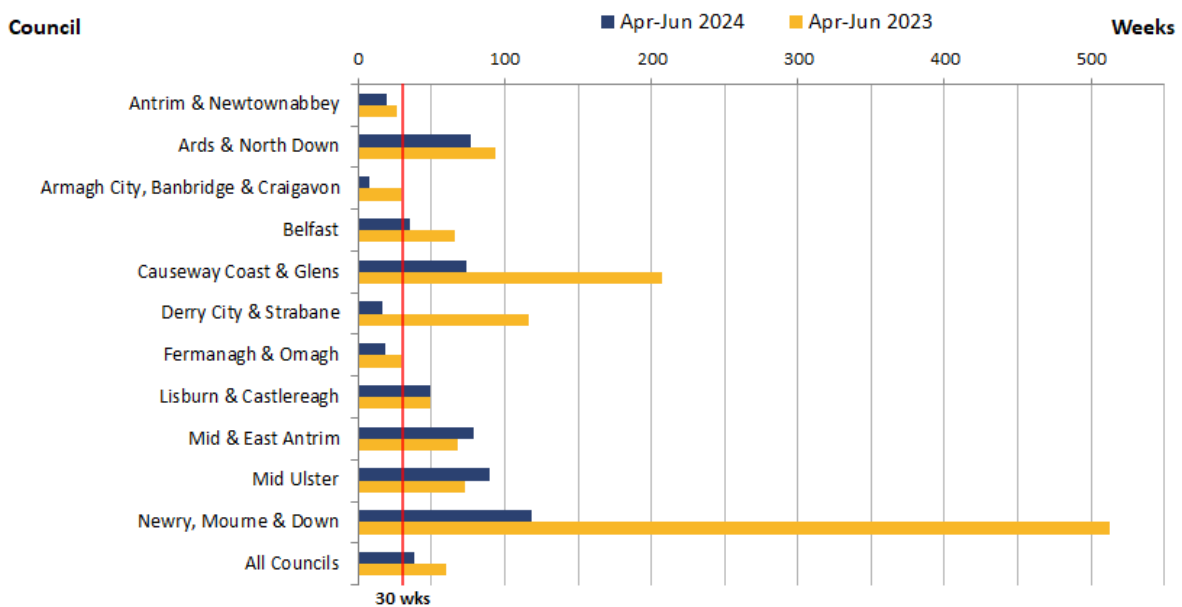
### Major planning applications statutory target



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.

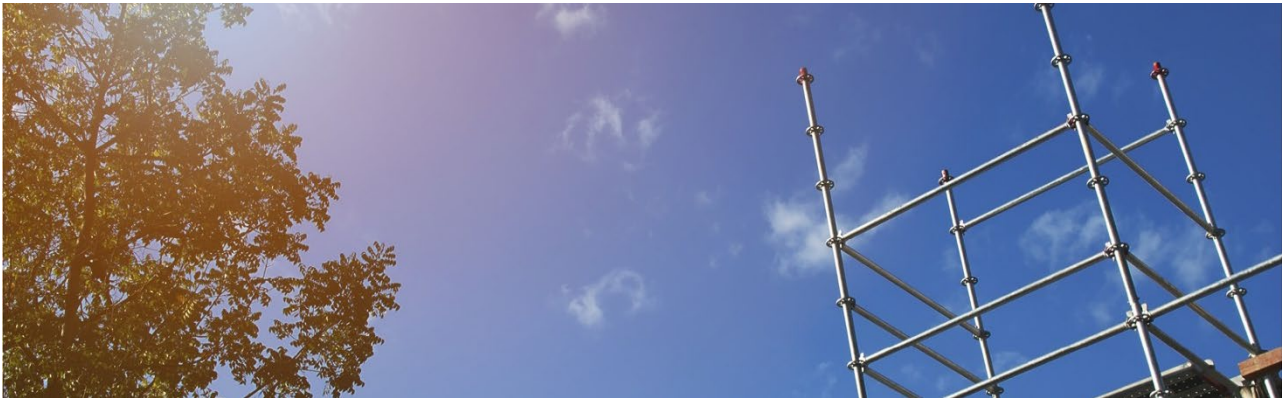
Figure 3.2 presents annual average processing times for major applications. The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first three months of 2024/25 was 38.6 weeks across all councils. While exceeding the 30 week target, this represents a decrease of 21.0 weeks compared with the same period in 2023/24 (59.6 weeks).

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, April to June 2023 & 2024



Note: Whilst Figure 3.2 has been provided for completeness, across councils there may be an insufficient number of major applications processed during the period reported to allow any meaningful assessment of their individual performance.

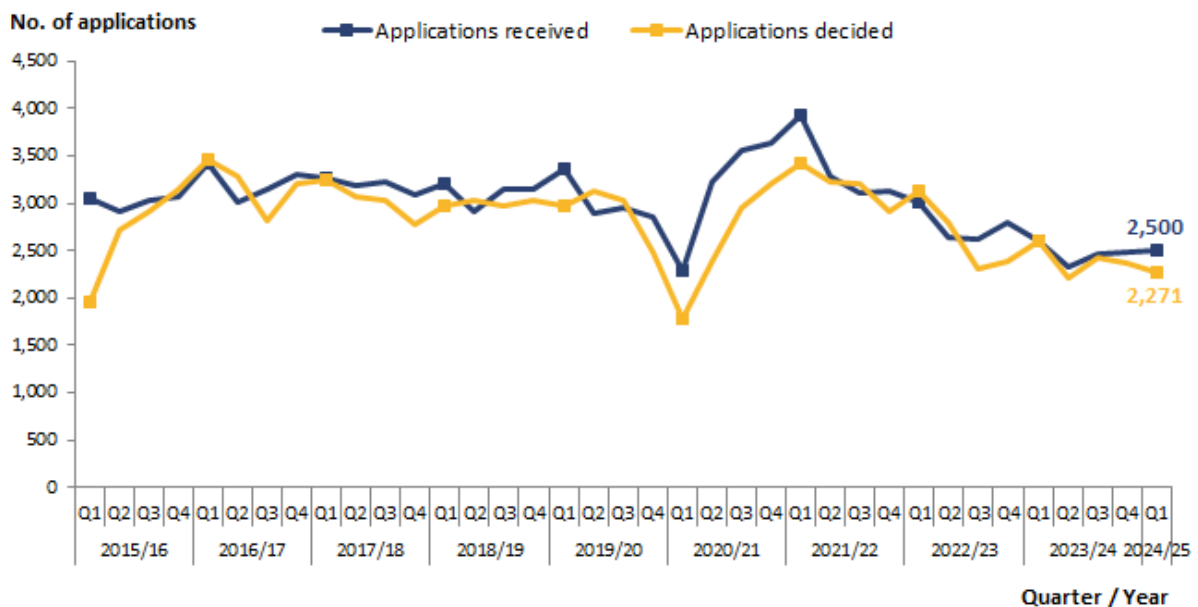
[Refer to Table 3.2 for further information.](#)



## Chapter 3: 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 Q1 2024/25 was 2,500; an increase of 0.7% on the previous quarter (2,483) and down by 3.6% on the same the same period a year earlier (2,594). [Refer to Table 4.1.](#)

Fig 4.1 Local development applications, quarterly, April 2015 to June 2024



The number of local applications decided in Q1 2024/25 was 2,271; down by 3.7% on Q4 2023/24 (2,359) and down by 12.6% when compared with the same period a year earlier (2,599); [refer to Table 4.1.](#) The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for local applications was 94.5% in Q1 2024/25; the same as the rate reported for the previous quarter and down from the rate for the same period a year earlier (96.3%).

## Local planning applications statutory target

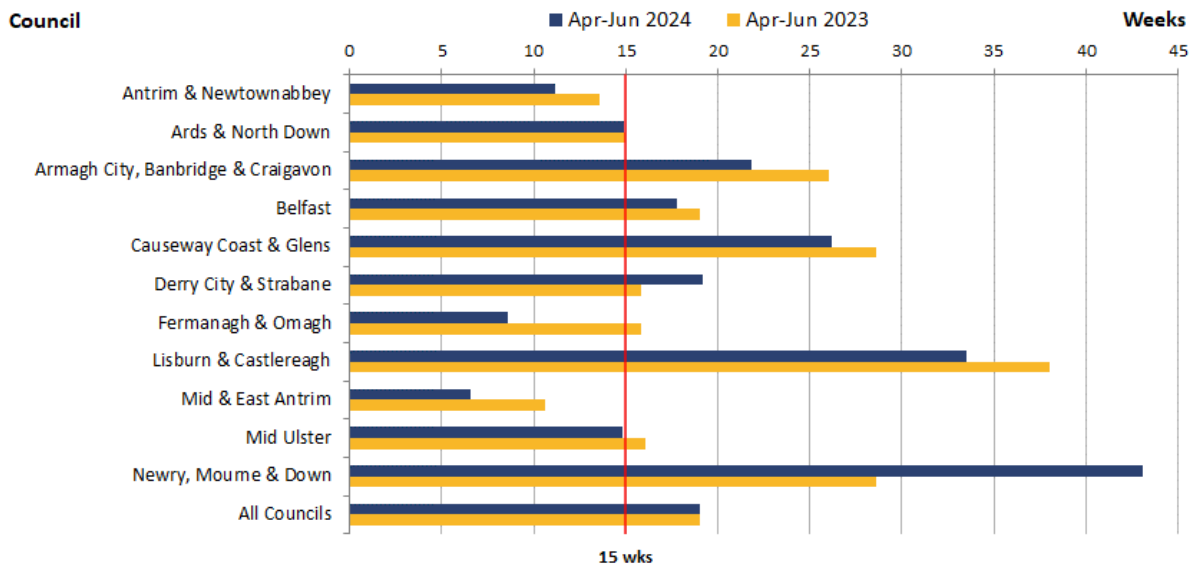


It is a statutory target for each council that local development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first three months of 2024/25 was 19.0 weeks; this is the same time as recorded for the same period a year earlier. This exceeds the statutory target of 15 weeks.

Five of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first three months of 2024/25: Mid and East Antrim (6.6 weeks), Fermanagh and Omagh (8.6 weeks), Antrim and Newtownabbey (11.2 weeks), Mid Ulster (14.8 weeks) and Ards and North Down (14.9 weeks) (Figure 4.1). [Refer to Table 4.2.](#)

Fig 4.2 Local development average processing times by council, April to June 2023 & 2024



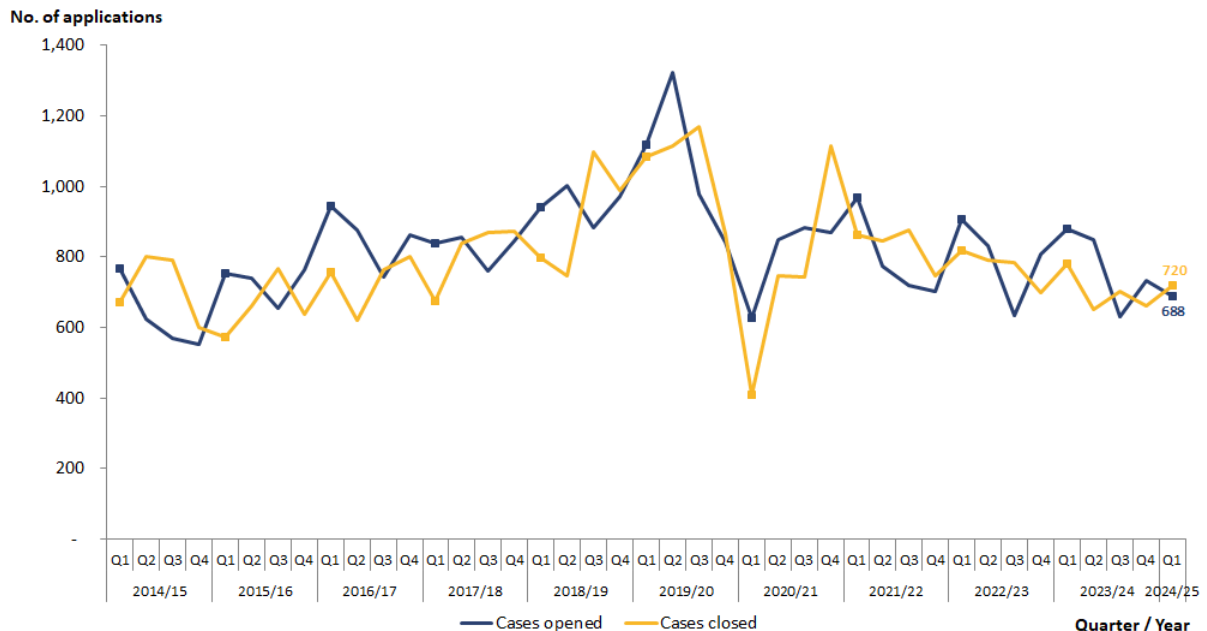




## Chapter 4: Enforcement activity

The number of enforcement cases opened in NI during the first quarter of 2024/25 was 688; down by 6.0% over the quarter (732) and down by 21.8% when compared to the same period a year earlier (880). The number of cases closed during Q1 2024/25 was 720; up by 8.9% over the quarter (661) and down by 7.8% from the same period a year earlier (781) (Figure 6.1). [Refer to Table 6.1.](#)

Fig 6.1 Enforcement cases opened & closed, quarterly from April 2014 to June 2024



The number of enforcement cases over two years old stood at 1,520 at the end of June 2024, accounting for 38.0% of all live cases. This compared with 36.6% of live cases at the end of March 2024 and 36.3% at the end of June 2023. [Refer to Table 6.4.](#)

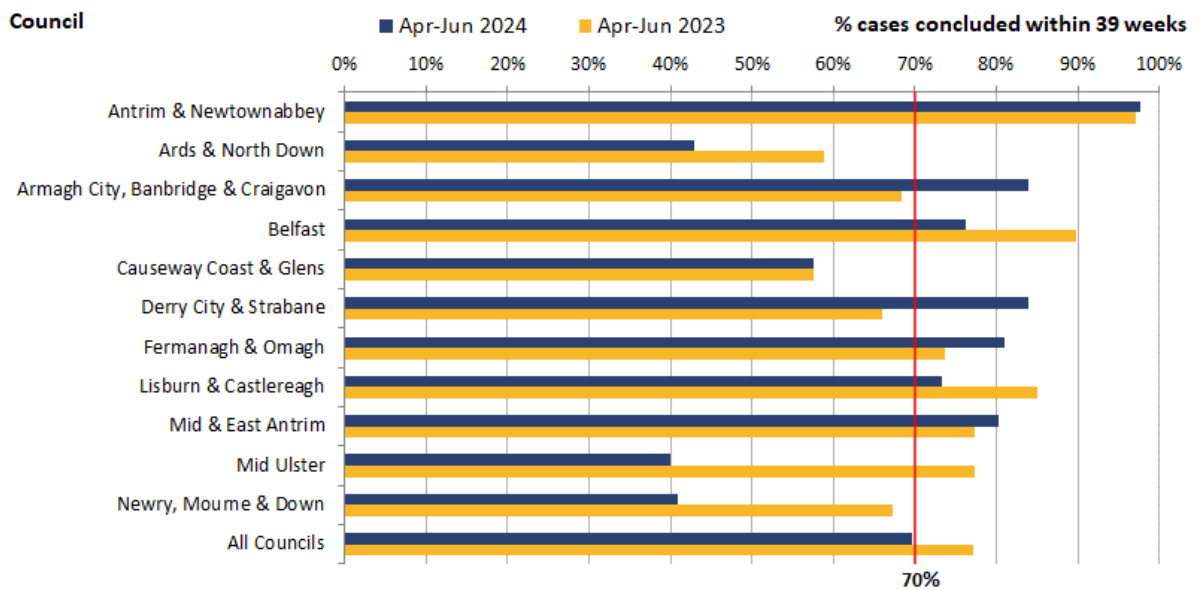
### Enforcement cases statutory target



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, 69.7% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first quarter of 2024/25. This represents a decrease from the rate reported for the same period last year (77.2%).

Fig 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, April to June 2023 & 2024



Seven of the 11 councils were individually meeting the statutory target at the end of the first quarter in 2024/25.

Antrim and Newtownabbey recorded the highest percentage of cases processed with 97.7% of all cases processed within 39 weeks during the first quarter of 2024/25. See Figure 6.2 and [Refer to Table 6.2.](#)



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## Accredited Official Statistics

The Northern Ireland Planning Statistics were accredited in December 2020, following an independent review by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). This means that the statistics comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and should be labelled '[accredited official statistics](#)'<sup>1</sup>.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the OSR who sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

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<sup>1</sup> National Statistics are [accredited official statistics](#).