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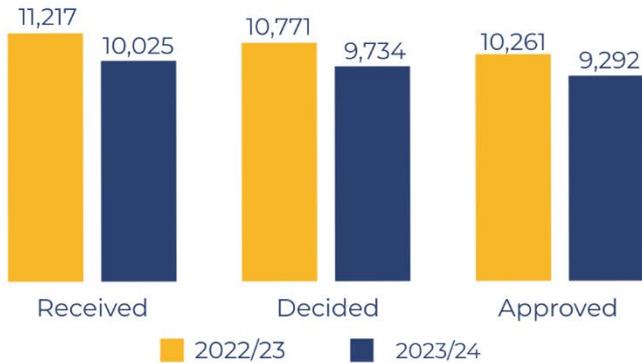
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Key points

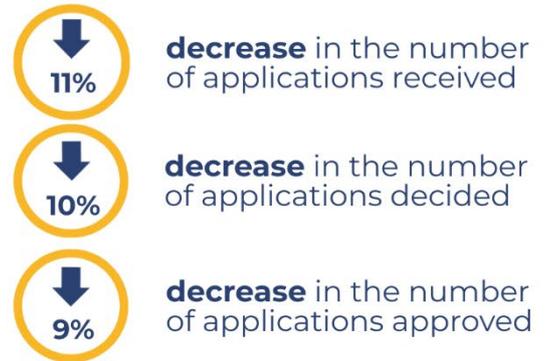
- There were 10,025 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during 2023/24; an 11% decrease from the previous financial year. This comprised of 9,870 local, 154 major and one regionally significant application.
- A total of 9,734 planning applications were decided during 2023/24; a decrease of 10% from the previous financial year. Decisions were issued on 9,595 local and 139 major applications during 2023/24.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during 2023/24 was 20.8 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represents an increase of 1.8 weeks from the same period a year earlier. Three of the 11 councils met the 15 week target in 2023/24.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during 2023/24 was 46.5 weeks across all councils. While exceeding the 30 week target, this represents a decrease of 11.3 weeks compared with the same period a year earlier. Three of the 11 councils met the 30 week target in 2023/24.
- Across councils 76.4% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during 2023/24. This represents an increase from the rate recorded in 2022/23 (74.2%) and meets the statutory target of 70%. Individually, seven of the 11 councils met the target in both 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Overall planning applications

Applications received, decided & approved



Comparing 2023/24 with 2022/23:



Applications received 2023/24

A total of 10,025 planning applications were received during 2023/24:



9,870
(98%)
Local

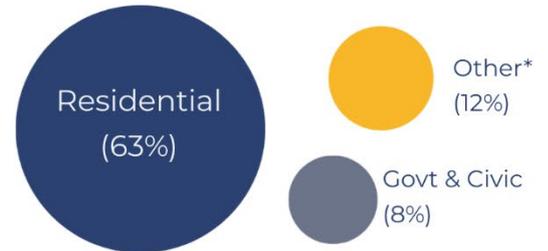


154
(2%)
Major



1
(<1%)
Regionally significant

3 largest development types



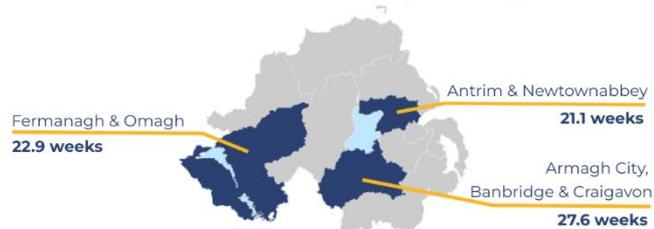
*Other includes work to facilitate disabled persons, signs/advertisements & listed buildings

Planning statutory targets 2023/24

Average processing times (weeks) - major



Councils within major target



Average processing times (weeks) - local



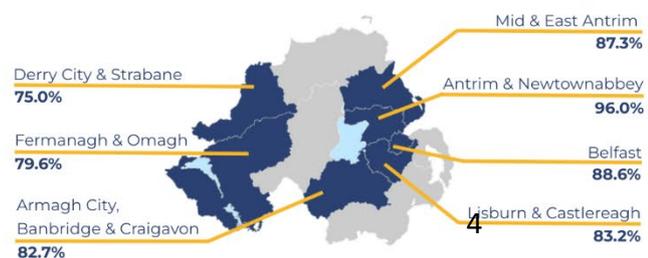
Councils within local target



% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks



Councils within enforcement target



Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Annual Statistical Bulletin 2023/24

Introduction

This statistical bulletin presents a summary of Northern Ireland (NI) planning volumes and processing performance for councils and the Department for Infrastructure for 2023/24.

Figures for 2023/24 are now final and will not be subject to further scheduled revisions. Enforcement figures for 2022/23 are now published in full within the [accompanying excel tables](#) and are now final.

The records of all planning applications from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 were transferred in May 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, final extracts were taken in July 2024.

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

Future releases

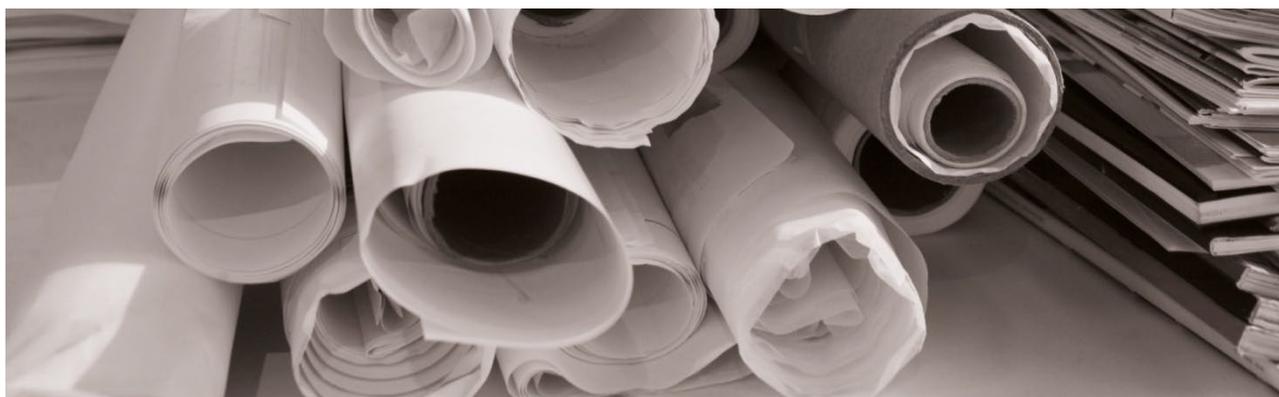
The next report will be a quarterly report covering the period 1 April to 30 June 2024. This quarterly report is planned for release in September 2024. The next annual report covering 2024/25 is planned for release in July 2025. See [GOV.UK](#) Release Calendar and [upcoming statistical releases](#) 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. The reporting of data relating to the number of enforcements concluded and processing times has recommenced in this report. Enforcement data for 2022/23 and 2023/24 is fully published in the accompanying excel tables.

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

In 2023/24 the volume of planning applications received and processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) was the lowest since the series began in 2002/03. The number of enforcement cases opened and closed during 2023/24 was the lowest annual figures recorded since 2015/16.

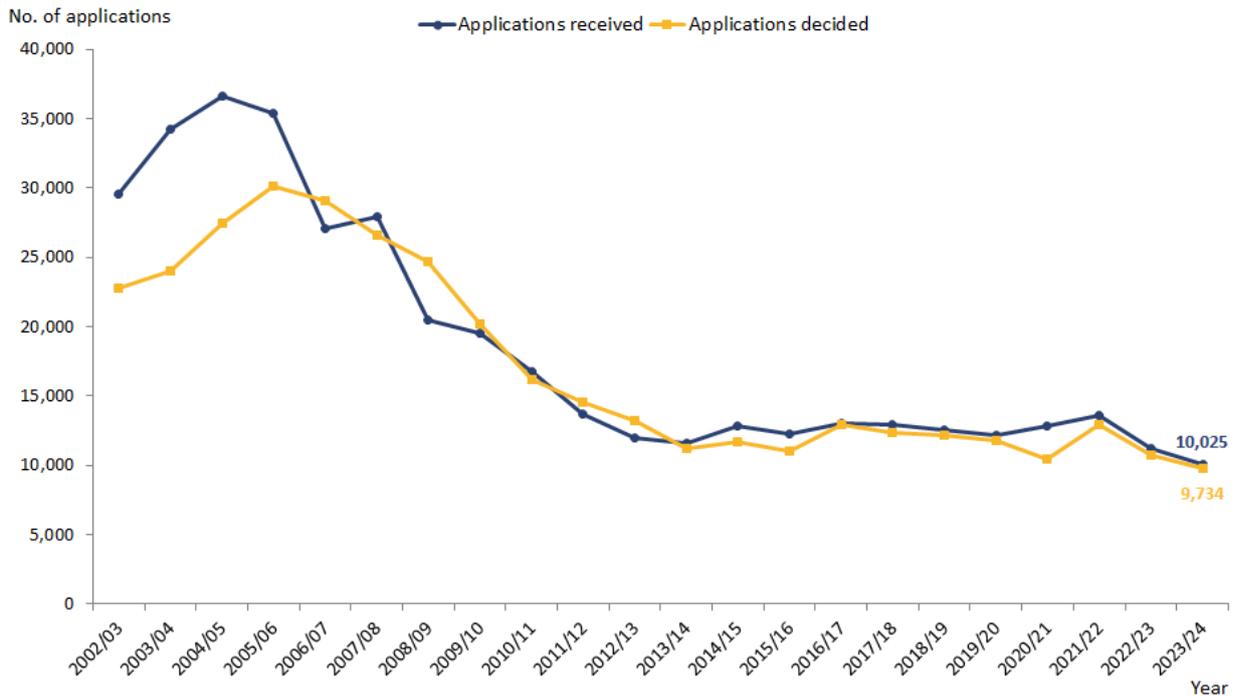
There have been some key events in recent years that will have impacted on planning activity and processing performance. These were the coronavirus pandemic with varying restrictions in place up until February 2022; the accessibility of the planning system for some users for a period during January and 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 2023/24 was 10,025; a decrease of 10.6% from the previous financial year (11,217) and the lowest level on record. See Figure 1.1 and [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Almost three-quarters of the planning applications received in 2023/24 were for full planning permission (74.5%); a decrease on the proportion reported for 2022/23 (75.5%).

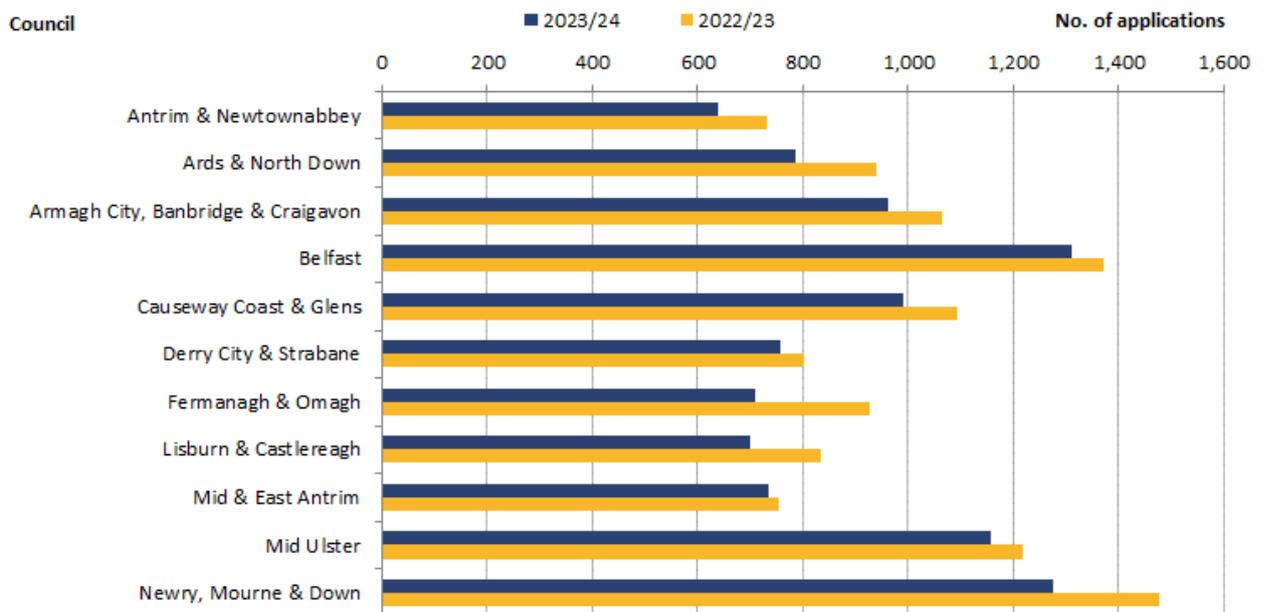
Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, annually, 2002/03 to 2023/24



All councils reported a decrease in the number of planning applications received in 2023/24 compared with the previous quarter, with the greatest decrease in Fermanagh and Omagh (-23.5%).

During 2023/24, the number of planning applications received varied across councils, ranging from 1,311 in Belfast (accounting for 13.1% of all applications received across NI) to 639 in Antrim and Newtownabbey (6.4% of all applications received). See Figure 1.1 and [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, 2022/23 & 2023/24



Applications decided

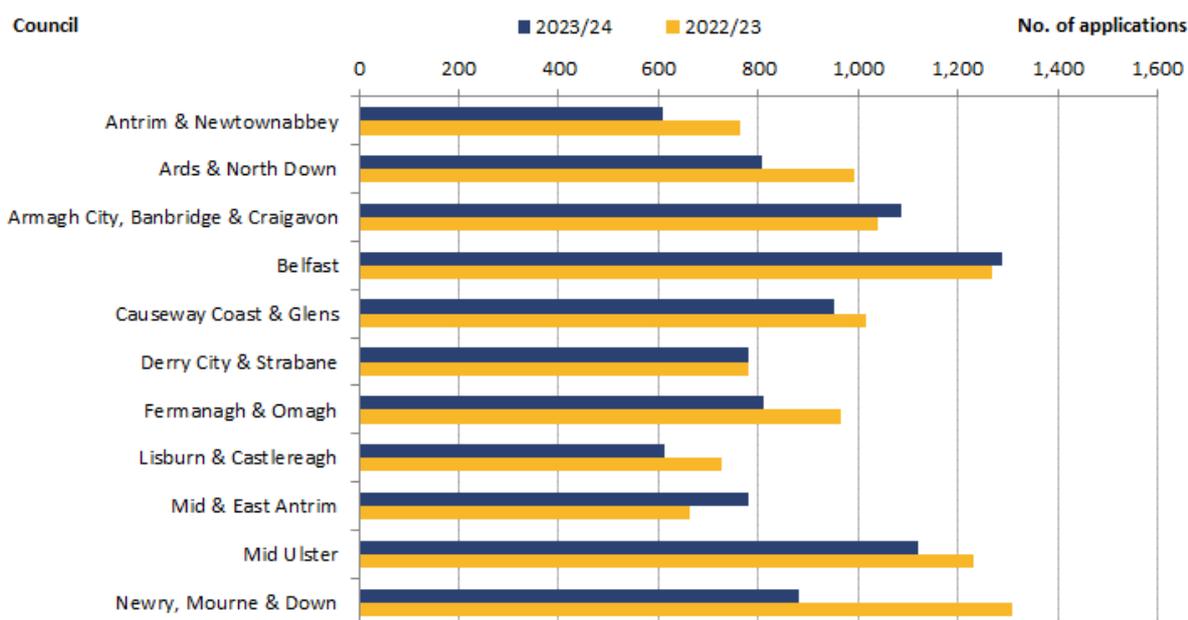
The number of planning decisions issued by councils and the Department in 2023/24 was 9,734; a decrease of 9.6% from the previous financial year (10,771) and the lowest level on record. See Figure 1.1 and [Tables 1.1, 1.2](#).

Almost three quarters of planning decisions in 2023/24 (74.8%) were for full planning permission. This was a decrease from the proportion recorded for the previous financial year (75.2%).

Across councils the number of decisions issued during 2023/24 ranged from 1,289 in Belfast (accounting for 13.2% of all decisions across NI) to 609 in Antrim and Newtownabbey (6.3% of all decisions).

Seven of the 11 councils reported a decrease in the number of applications decided in 2023/24 when compared with the previous year, with the greatest decrease recorded in Newry, Mourne and Down (-32.6%). See Figure 1.3 and [Table 1.2](#).

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, 2022/23 & 2023/24



In 2023/24, 569 applications were withdrawn, this was similar to the number withdrawn in the previous year (565).

Approval rates

The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for all planning applications was 95.5% in 2023/24. This was similar to the rate in 2022/23 (95.3%). [Refer to Table 1.1](#).

Approval rates varied across councils during 2023/24, from 99.2% in Mid Ulster to 89.3% in Antrim and Newtownabbey. 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 7,869 live applications in the planning system across NI at the end of March 2024, a decrease over the year from the end of March 2023 (8,092).

Three in every ten live applications at the end of March 2024 were over one year old (30.3%); an increase from the proportion reported at the end of March 2023 (25.8%). [Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

Departmental activity

There were seven applications received by the Department in 2023/24, up from the two received during 2022/23. Four applications were decided during the year, compared with 15 decided in the previous year. No departmental applications have been withdrawn since Q1 2022/23. At the end of March 2024 there were 22 live Departmental applications; 15 out 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 March 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 for one of them.

Development type

Most planning applications received and decided in NI are for residential development. Residential applications accounted for over three-fifths (6,307; 62.9%) of applications received in 2023/24, followed by 'Other' (1,174; 11.7%) and 'Government and Civic' (821; 8.2%).

The top three development types decided in 2023/24 were 'Residential' (6,156), 'Other' (1,226) and 'Government and Civic' (782). [Refer to Tables 5.1, 5.2.](#)

Renewable energy activity

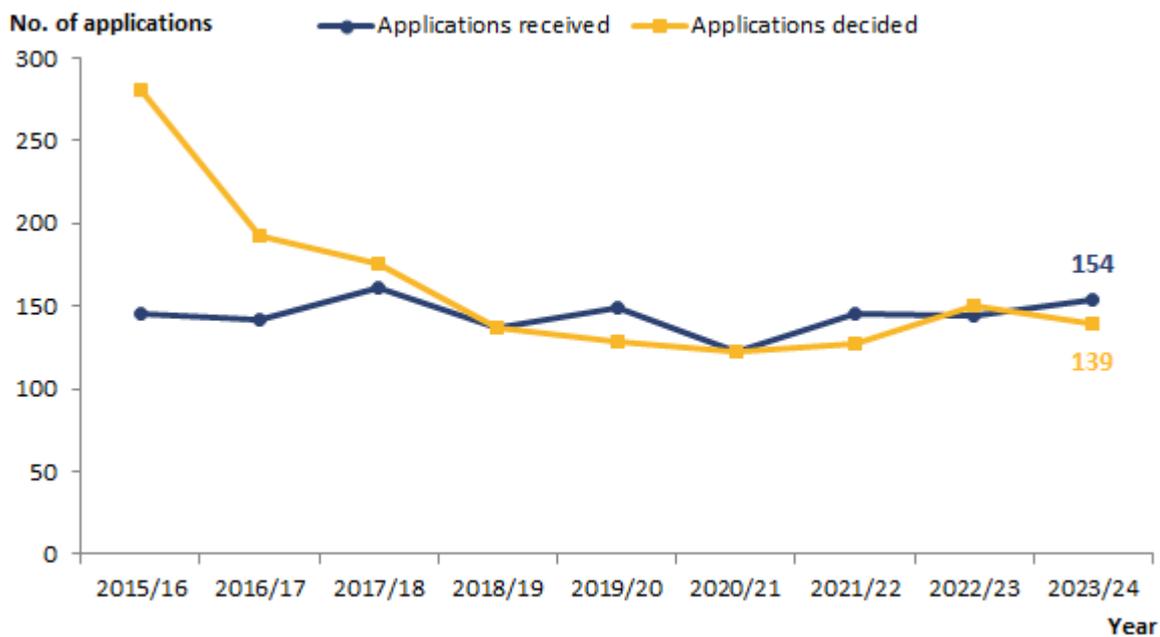
There were 126 renewable energy applications received in 2023/24; a slight increase from the previous year (121). Eighty-seven renewable energy applications were decided during 2023/24; this compares to 82 in 2022/23.



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 154 major planning applications were received in NI during 2023/24; up from the previous year (144). [Refer to Table 3.1.](#)

Fig 3.1 Major development applications, annually, 2015/16 to 2023/24



During 2023/24, 139 major planning applications were decided; down from the 150 decided in the previous year (Figure 3.1). The approval rate for major applications decided upon in NI during 2023/24 was 98.6%. [Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.](#)

Major planning applications statutory target

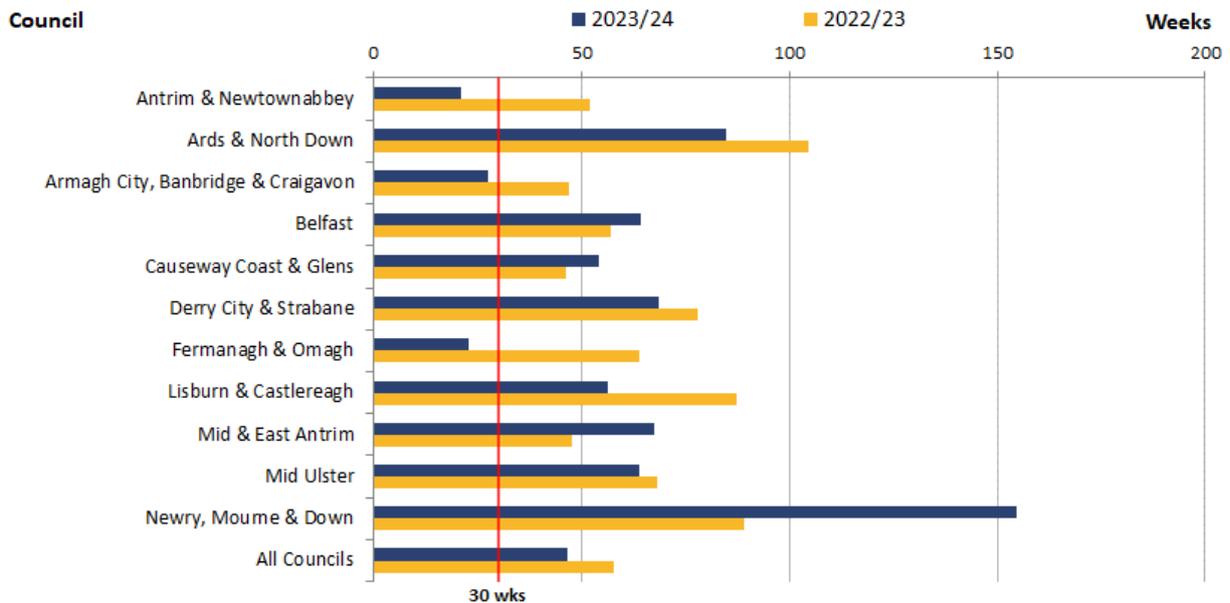


It is a statutory target for each council that major development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 30 weeks.

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 2023/24 was 46.5 weeks across all councils. While exceeding the 30 week target, this represents a decrease of 11.3 weeks when compared with 2022/23 (57.8 weeks).

The processing time in 2023/24 (46.5 weeks) for major planning applications is the second lowest annual processing time recorded across the series since reporting started in 2015/16.

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, 2022/23 & 2023/24



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.

Three of the eleven councils met the 30 week target in 2023/24; these were Antrim and Newtownabbey (21.1 weeks; 20 applications) and Fermanagh and Omagh (22.9 weeks: 12 applications) and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (27.6 weeks: 11 applications). See Figure 3.2.

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

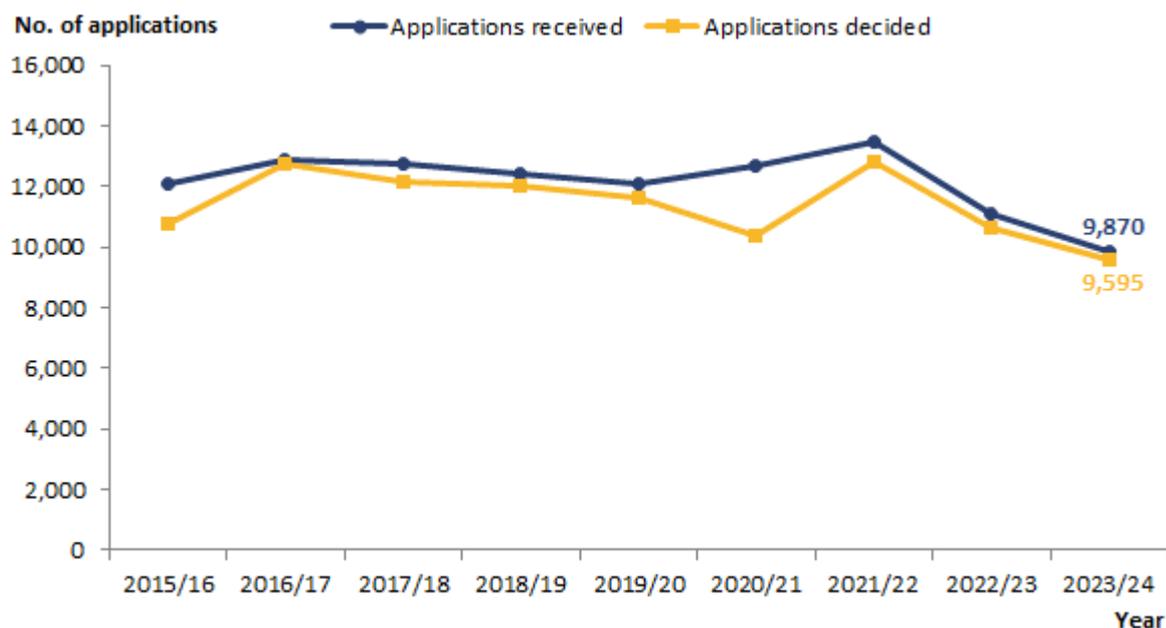


Chapter 3:

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 2023/24 was 9,870; a decrease of 10.9% on the previous year (11,072). [Refer to Table 4.1.](#)

Fig 4.1 Local development applications, annually, 2015/16 to 2023/24



The number of local applications decided in 2023/24 was 9,595; down by 9.7% on the previous year (10,620); [refer to Table 4.1.](#) The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for local applications was 95.4% in 2023/24; similar to the rate reported in 2022/23 (95.2%).

Local planning applications statutory target



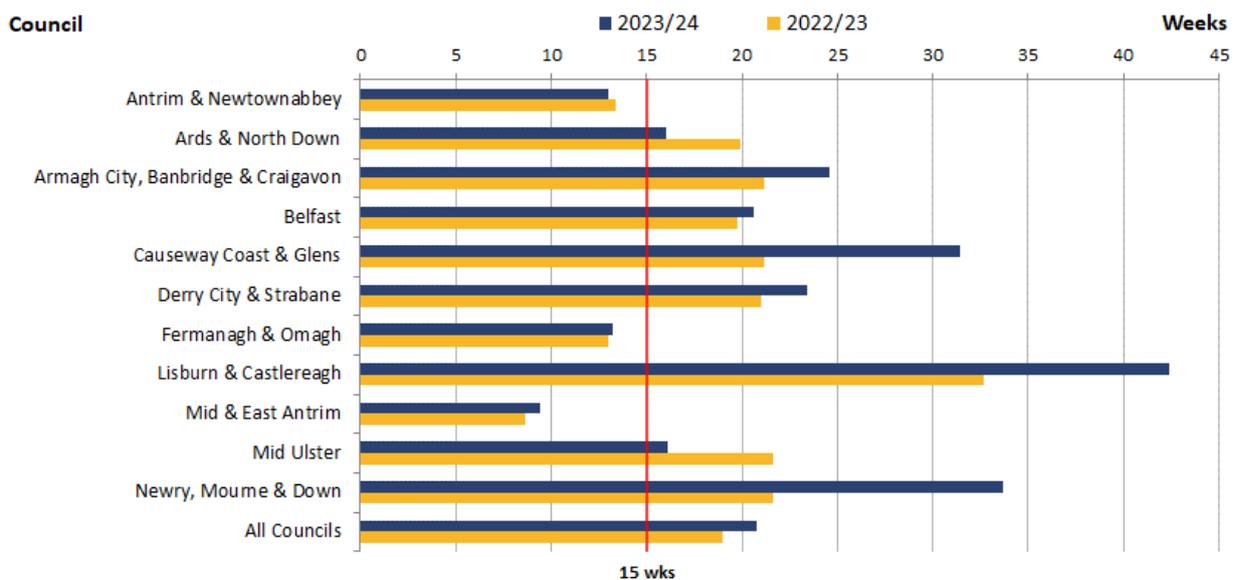
It is a statutory target for each council that local development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during 2023/24 was 20.8 weeks. This exceeds the statutory target of 15 weeks, and represents an increase of 1.8 weeks from the average processing time reported for 2022/23 (19.0 weeks).

Three of the 11 councils met the 15 week target in 2023/24; these were Mid and East Antrim (9.4 weeks), Antrim and Newtownabbey (13.0 weeks) and Fermanagh and Omagh (13.2 weeks). See Figure 4.1.

[Refer to Table 4.2 for further information.](#)

Fig 4.2 Local development average processing times by council, 2022/23 & 2023/24

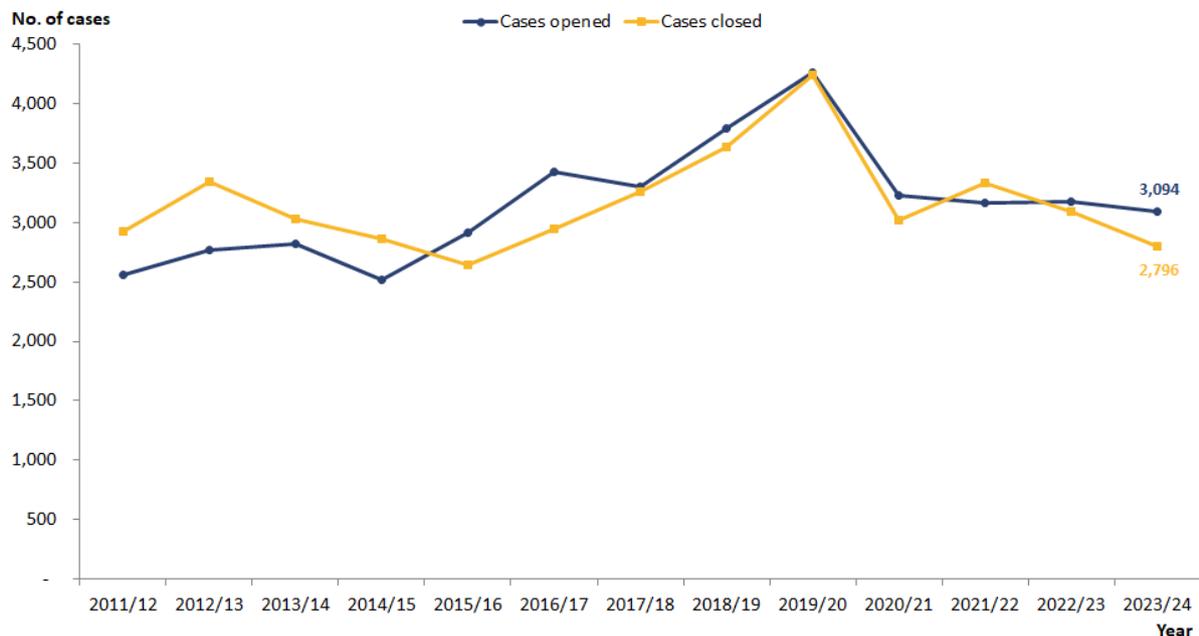




Chapter 4: Enforcement activity

The number of enforcement cases opened in NI during 2023/24 was 3,094; down by 2.7% over the year (3,180). [Refer to Table 6.1.](#)

Fig 6.1 Enforcement cases opened & closed, annually, 2011/12 to 2023/24



The number of enforcement cases closed during 2023/24 was 2,796; down by 9.7% over the year from 3,096. See Figure 6.1.

The number of enforcement cases over two years old stood at 1,478 at the end of March 2024, accounting for 36.6% of all live cases. This compared with 35.0% of live cases at the end of March 2023.

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

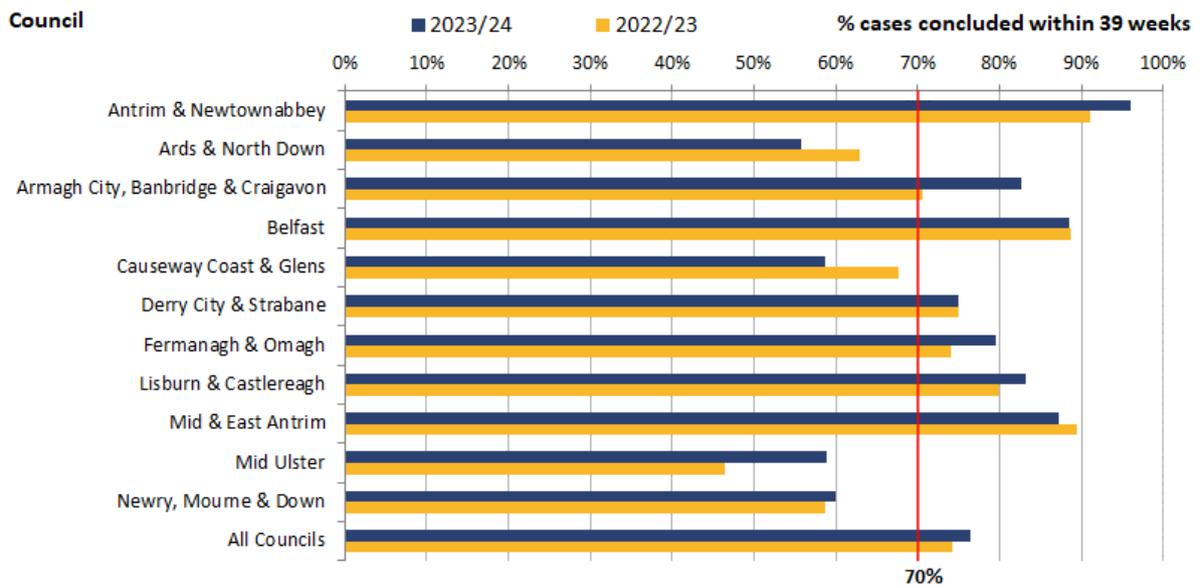
Enforcement cases statutory target



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, 76.4% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during 2023/24, meeting the statutory target of 70%. This represents an increase from the rate reported for 2022/23 (74.2%).

Fig 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, 2022/23 and 2023/24



During both 2022/23 and 2023/24 seven of the 11 councils individually met the statutory target.

One council has exceeded 90% of enforcements being progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks. This was Antrim and Newtownabbey recording 91.2% in 2022/23 and 96.0% in 2023/24. 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](#)'¹.

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 or via the OSR website.

¹ National Statistics are [accredited official statistics](#).