

NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

Third Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin

October to December 2024: Provisional Figures



Theme: People and Places
Coverage: Northern Ireland
Frequency: Quarterly
Date of Publication: 27 March 2025

Published by: Analysis, Statistics & Research
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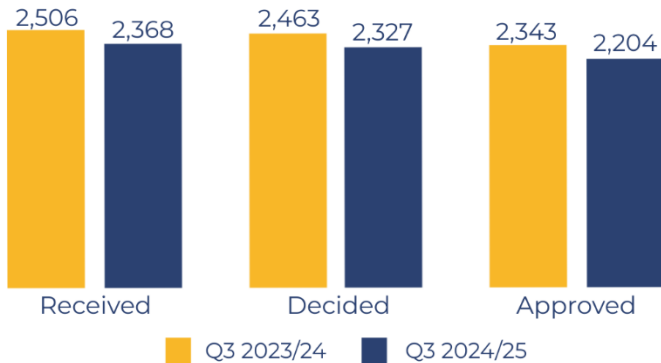
Key points

- There were 2,368 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during the third quarter of 2024/25; similar to the number received in the previous quarter and down by six percent when compared to the same period a year earlier. This comprised of 2,321 local, 46 major and one regionally significant planning applications.
- In the third quarter of 2024/25, 2,327 planning applications were decided, an increase of one percent from the previous quarter and down by six percent from the same period a year earlier. Decisions were issued on 2,286 local and 41 major applications during the most recent quarter.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first nine months of 2024/25 was 19.2 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target but represents a decrease from the average processing time reported for the same period a year earlier (20.4 weeks). Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first nine months of 2024/25.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first nine months of 2024/25 was 39.7 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 30 week target but represents a decrease of over five weeks from the average processing time reported for the same period a year earlier (45.2 weeks).
- Across councils 70.3% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first nine months of 2024/25, meeting the 70% target. This represents a decrease from the rate recorded for the same period in 2023/24 (77.9%). Individually, six of the 11 councils were meeting the 70% target after the first nine months of 2024/25.



Overall planning applications

Applications received, decided & approved



Comparing Q3 2024/25 with Q3 2023/24:



Applications received

A total of 2,368 planning applications were received during Q3 2024/25:



2,321
(98%)
Local

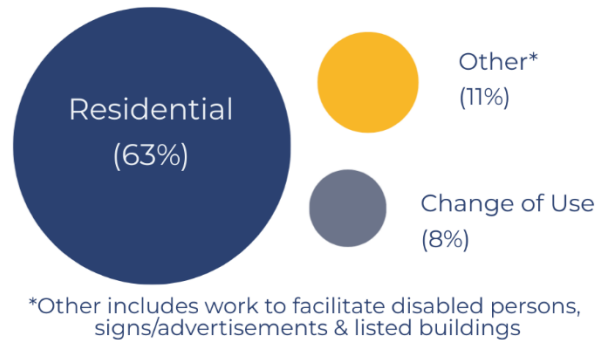


46
(2%)
Major



1
(<0.1%)
Regionally significant

3 largest development types



Planning statutory targets - April to December 2023 & 2024

Average processing times (weeks) - major



Average processing times (weeks) - local



% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks



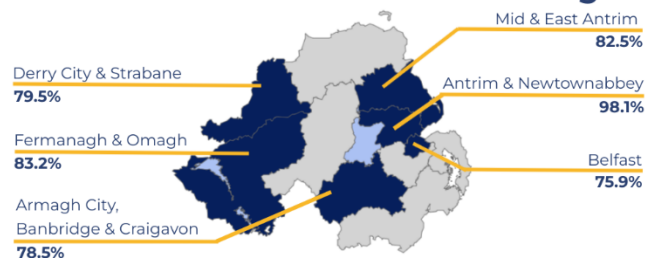
Councils within major target



Councils within local target



Councils within enforcement target



Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Third 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 third 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 31 December 2024 were transferred in January 2025 from live databases. This included all live planning applications in the Northern Ireland and Mid Ulster Planning Portal. 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 February 2025.

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

Future releases

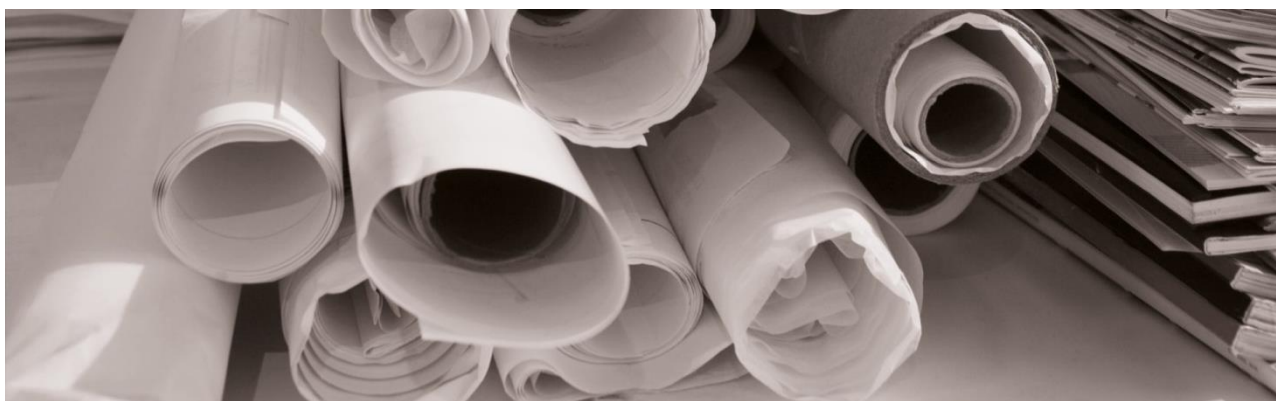
The next report will be an annual report covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The annual report is planned for release in July 2024. The next quarterly report covering the period 1 April 2025 to the 30 June 2025 is planned for release in September 2025. See [GOV.UK](#) Release Calendar 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

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Chapter 1:

Overall Northern Ireland planning activity

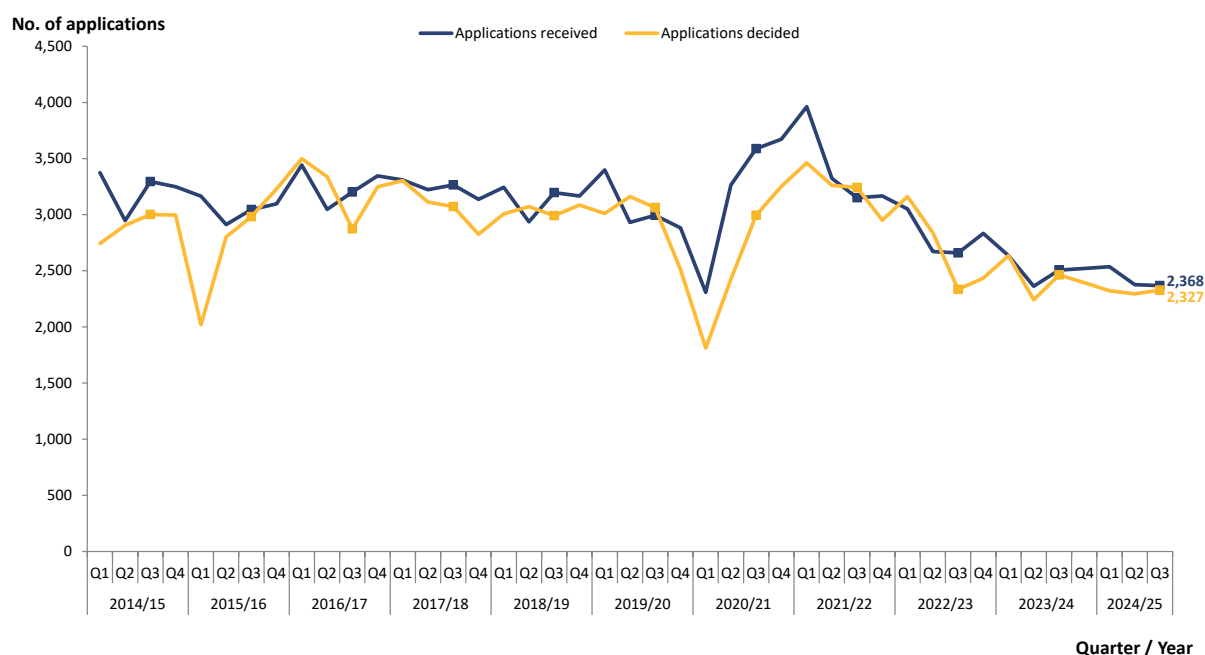
The volume of planning applications received in the third quarter of 2024/25 was similar to the number received in the previous quarter and down on the level recorded in the third quarter of 2023/24. For applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) the volume processed increased slightly over the quarter but decreased slightly from the same period a year earlier. The number of enforcement cases opened in the third quarter of 2024/25 was lower than both the previous quarter and the same period a year earlier. Enforcements closed in the third quarter of 2024/25 was also lower than the previous quarter and the same period a year earlier.

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 Q3 2024/25 was 2,368; similar to the previous quarter (2,377) and down on the same period a year earlier (2,506), (Figure 1.1). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

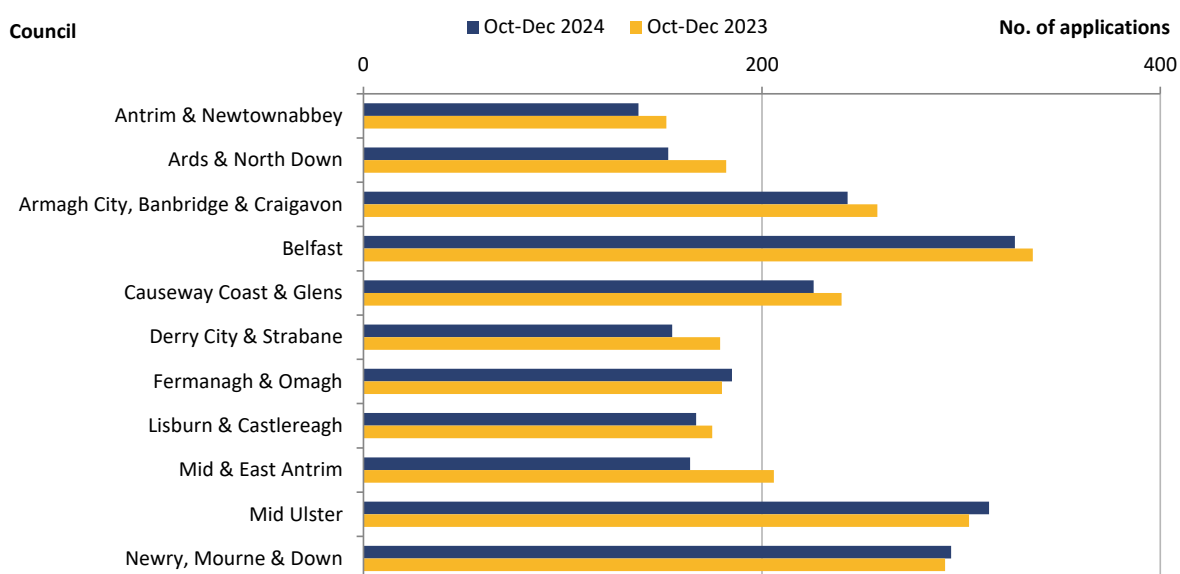
Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, quarterly, April 2014 to December 2024



Seven councils reported a decrease in the number of planning applications received in Q3 2024/25 compared with the previous quarter, with the greatest decrease in Fermanagh and Omagh (-14.7%). Four councils reported an increase over the quarter, with the percentage increase greatest in Lisburn and Castlereagh (22.8%).

Comparing Q3 in 2024/25 with the same period in 2023/24, eight of the eleven councils reported a decrease in the number of applications received, with the greatest decrease reported by Mid and East Antrim (-20.4%). Three councils reported an increase over the quarter, with the increase greatest in Mid Ulster (3.3%). See Figure 1.2

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, October – December 2023 & 2024

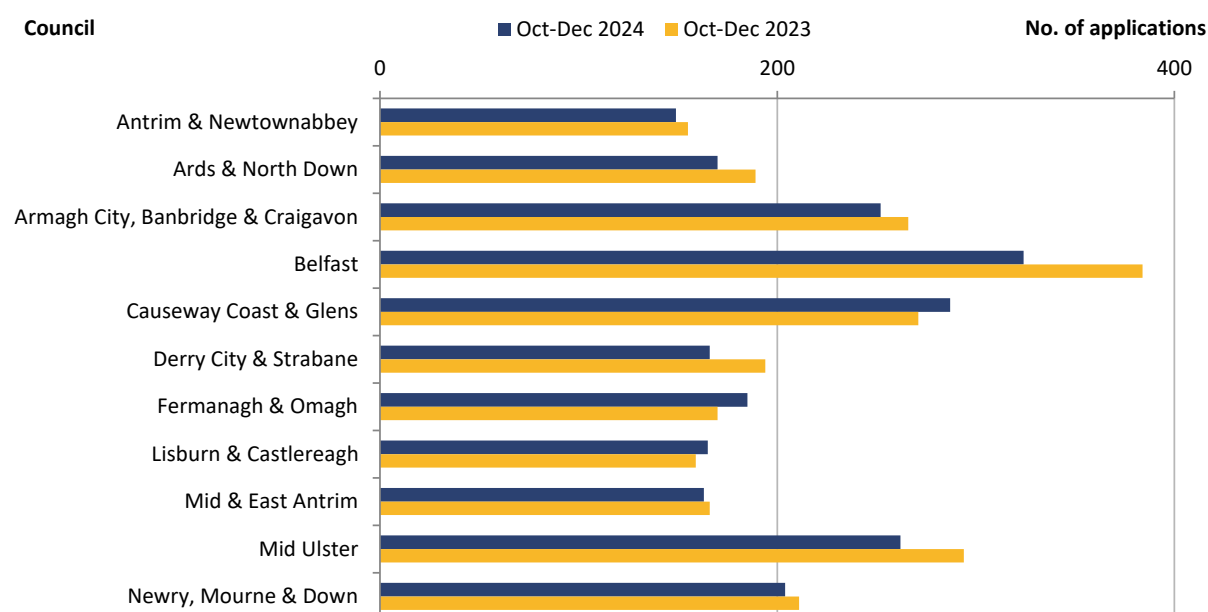


Applications decided

The number of planning decisions issued during Q3 2024/25 was 2,327; an increase of 1.4% on Q2 2024/25 (2,295) and down by 5.5% when compared with the same period a year earlier (2,463). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Comparing Q3 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 decrease recorded in Belfast (-15.6%). Three councils reported an increase over the year, with the greatest percentage increase in Fermanagh and Omagh (8.8%). See Figure 1.3.

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, October – December 2023 & 2024



In Q3 2024/25, 182 applications were withdrawn, an increase from both the previous quarter (163) and Q3 2023/24 (153).

Approval rates

The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for all planning applications was 94.7% in Q3 2024/25. This was like the previous quarter (95.0%) the same quarter a year earlier (95.1%). [Refer to Table 1.1.](#)

Approval rates varied across councils during Q3 2024/25, from 89.3% in Antrim and Newtownabbey to 97.8% in Fermanagh and Omagh. 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 7,573 live applications in the planning system across NI at the end of December 2024, down from the end of September 2024 (7,714), and down from the count at the end of the December 2023 (7,899).

Three out of every ten live applications at the end of December 2024 were over one year old (32.3%); an increase from the proportions reported at the end of September 2024 (31.0%) and the end of December 2023 (28.9%). [Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

Departmental activity

One departmental application was received in Q3 2024/25, two were received in the previous quarter and four received during the same period last year. There were no decisions in Q3 2024/25, one was decided in the previous quarter and four were decided in the same quarter last year. No departmental applications have been withdrawn since Q1 2022/23.

At the end of December 2024 there were 24 live Departmental applications; 20 of the 24 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 six RSD applications live in the planning system at the end of December 2024, three have been progressed to ministerial recommendation but the 30 week period for recommendation/withdrawal has been exceeded. Of the remaining three awaiting ministerial recommendation, the 30 week period has been exceeded for two of them.

Development type

Most planning applications received and decided in NI are for residential development. Residential applications accounted for over three-fifths (1,485; 62.7%) of applications received in Q3 2024/25, followed by 'Other' (251; 10.6%) and 'Change of Use' (197; 8.3%). The top three development types decided in Q3 2024/25 were 'Residential' (1,491), 'Other' (278) and 'Government and Civic' (173). [Refer to Tables 5.1, 5.2.](#)

Renewable energy activity

Twenty-three renewable energy applications were received in Q3 2024/25; similar to the previous quarter (19) and down on the number received during the same period last year (41). Nineteen renewable energy applications were decided during Q3 2024/25; this compares to 26 in the previous quarter and 20 in the same period last year.

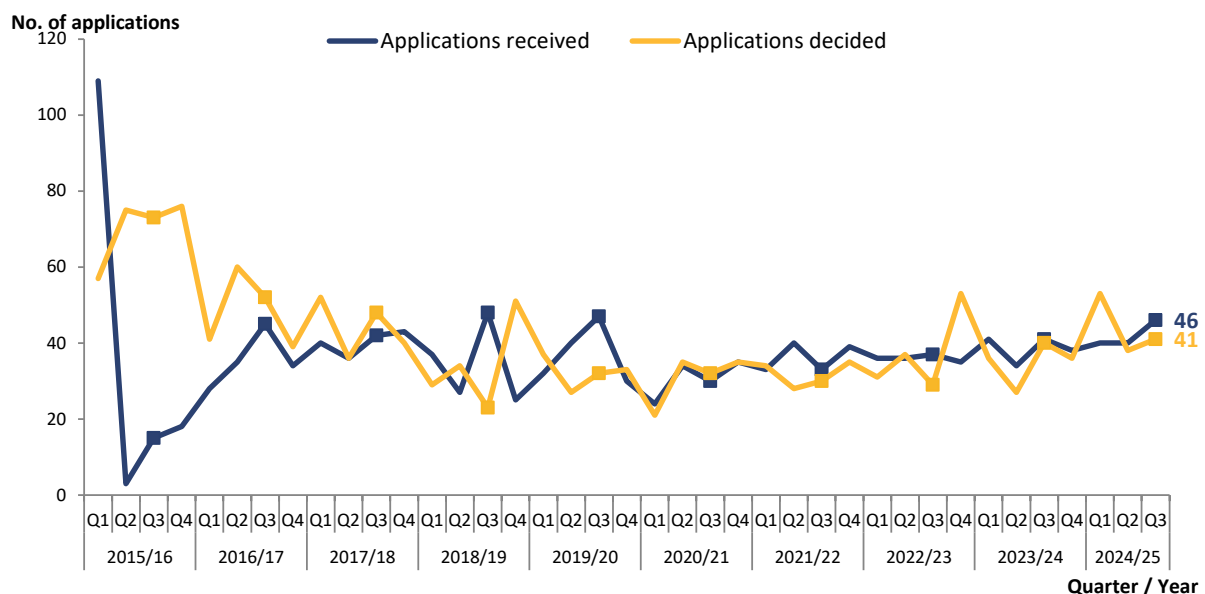


Chapter 2:

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 46 major planning applications were received in NI during Q3 2024/25, up from the number received in the previous quarter (40) and the same period a year earlier (41). [Refer to Table 3.1.](#)

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



During Q3 2024/25, 41 major planning applications were decided; similar to the numbers decided in the previous quarter (38) and the same quarter last year (40). See Figure 3.1.

The approval rate for major applications decided upon in NI during Q3 2024/25 was 97.6%. [Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.](#)

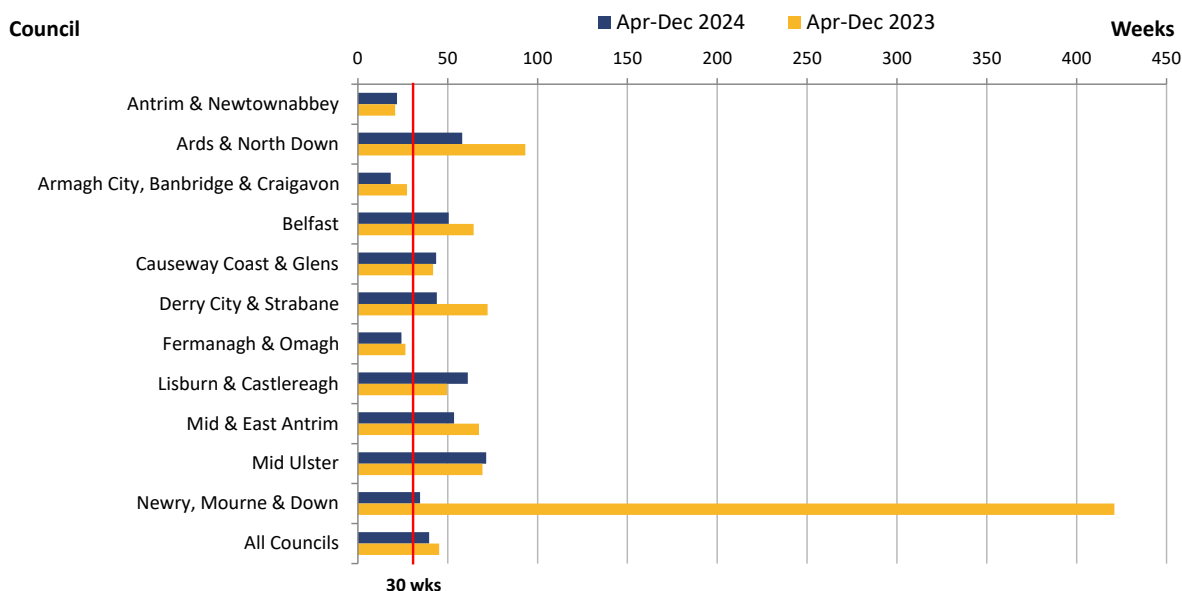
Major planning applications statutory target



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 the first nine months of 2024/25 was 39.7 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 30 week target but represents an decrease of 5.5 weeks compared with the same period in 2023/24 (45.2 weeks). In total, 138 major planning applications were decided or withdrawn by councils during the first nine months of 2024/25, the figure for the same period last year was 108.

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, April to December 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.](#)

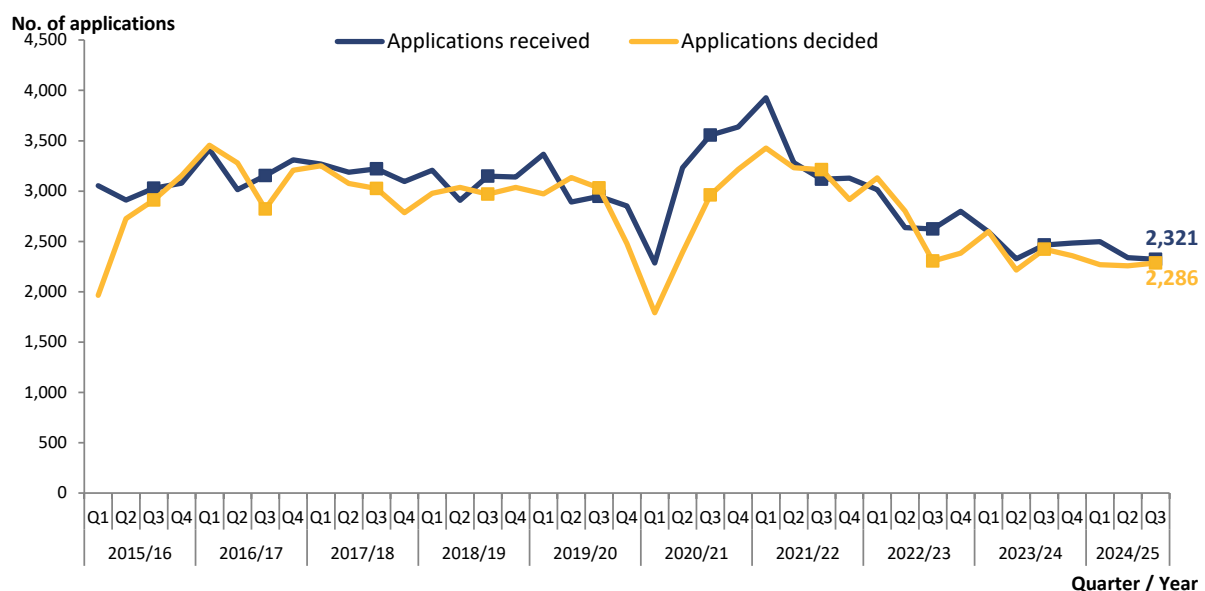


Chapter 3:

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 Q3 2024/25 was 2,321; similar to the number received in the previous quarter (2,337: -0.7%) and down by 5.8% when compared to the same the same period a year earlier (2,465). [Refer to Table 4.1.](#)

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



The number of local applications decided in Q3 2024/25 was 2,286; up over the quarter (2,257) by 1.3% and down by 5.7% when compared with the same period a year earlier (2,423); [refer to Table 4.1.](#) The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for local applications was 94.7% in Q3 2024/25; similar to the rate reported for the previous quarter (94.9%) and the same period a year earlier (95.1%).

Local planning applications statutory target

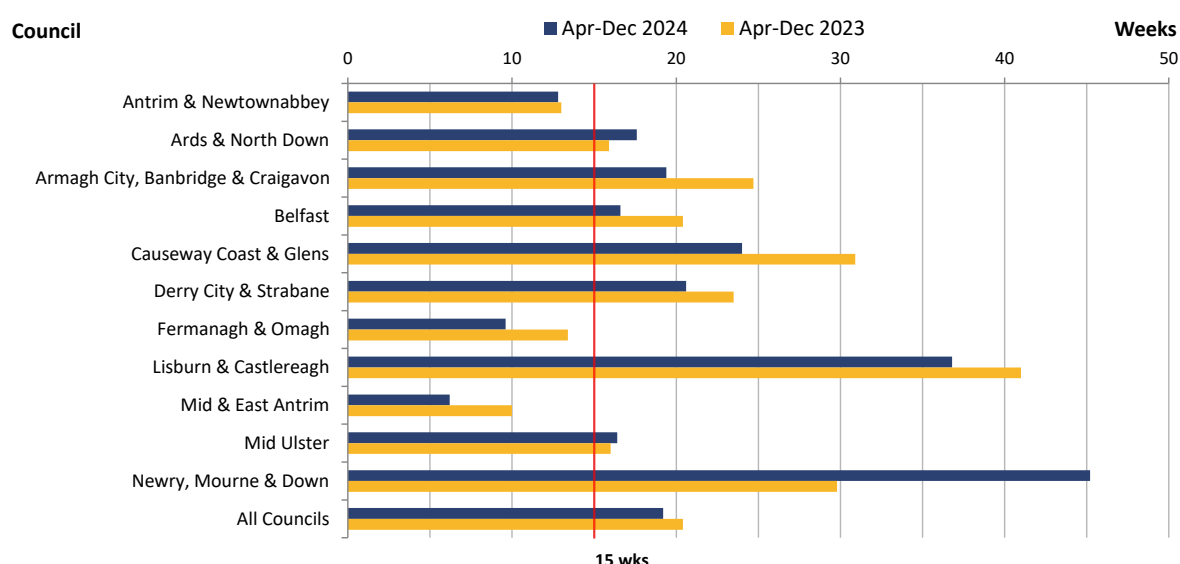


It is a statutory target for each council that local development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first nine months of 2024/25 was 19.2 weeks; this is down when compared with the same period a year earlier (20.4 weeks). This exceeds the statutory target of 15 weeks. There were 7,296 local applications decided or withdrawn by councils during the first nine months of 2024/25, the figure for the same period last year was 7,640.

Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first nine months of 2024/25: Mid and East Antrim (6.2 weeks), Fermanagh and Omagh (9.6 weeks), Antrim and Newtownabbey (12.8 weeks) see Figure 4.1. [Refer to Table 4.2.](#)

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

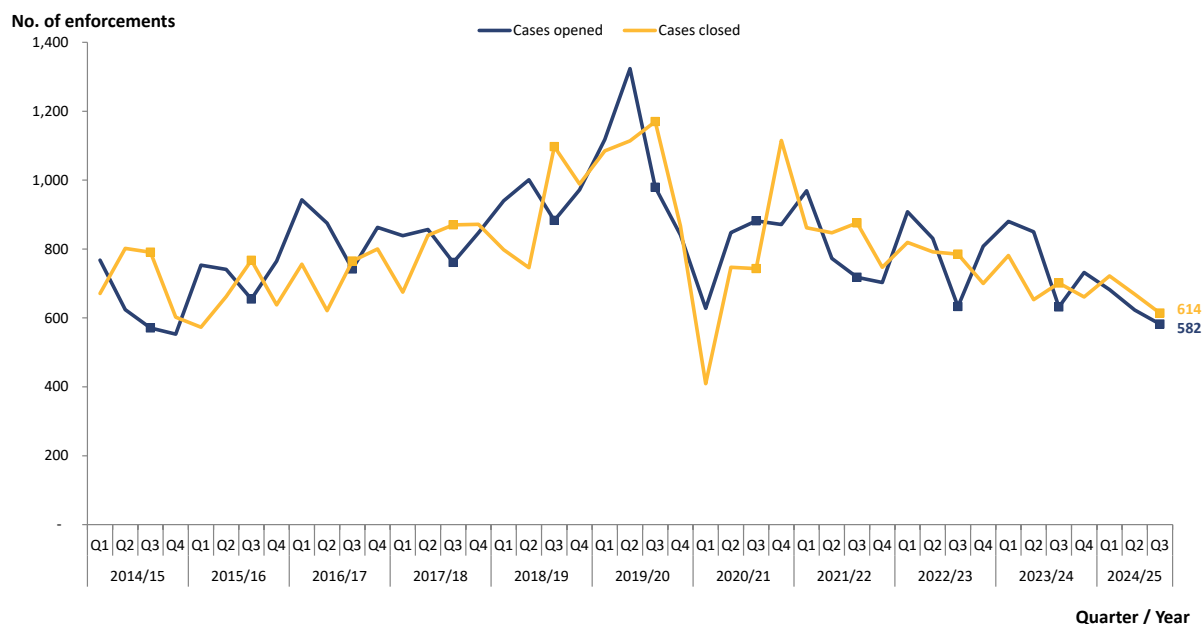




Chapter 4: Enforcement activity

The number of enforcement cases opened in NI during the third quarter of 2024/25 was 582; down by 6.6% over the quarter (623) and down by 7.9% when compared to the same period a year earlier (632). The number of cases closed during Q3 2024/25 was 614; down by 8.2% from the previous quarter (669) and down by 12.4% from the same period a year earlier (701) (Figure 6.1). [Refer to Table 6.1.](#)

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



The number of enforcement cases over two years old stood at 1,594 at the end of December 2024, accounting for 40.6% of all live cases. This compared with 39.8% of live cases at the end of September 2024 and 37.2% at the end of December 2023. [Refer to Table 6.4.](#)

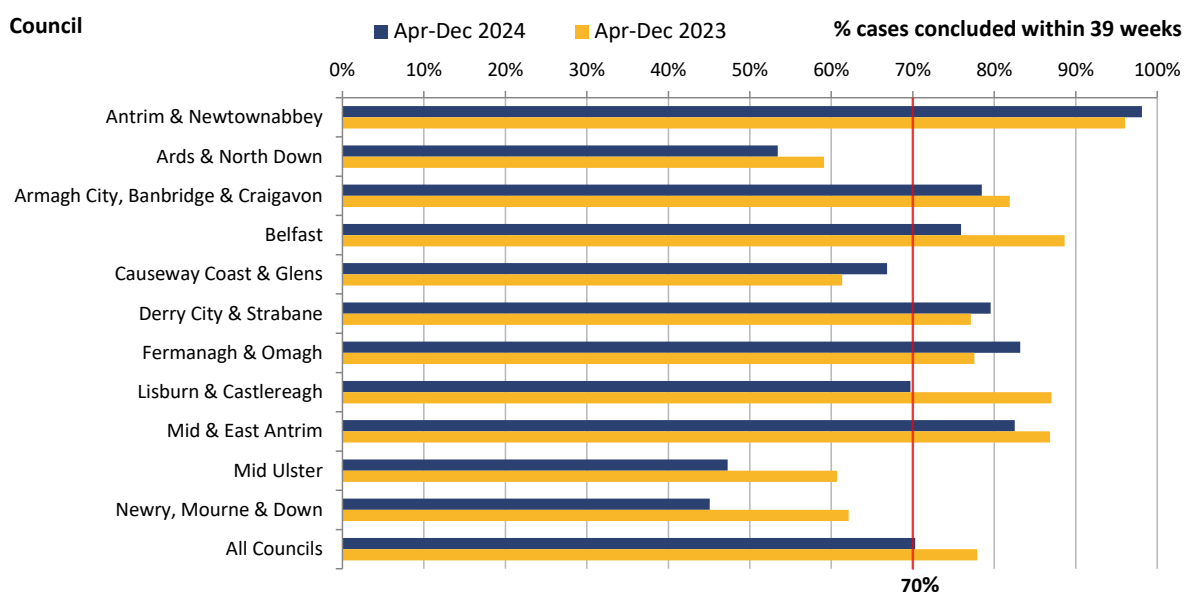
Enforcement cases statutory target



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, 70.3% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first nine months of 2024/25 meeting the statutory target of 70%. This represents a decrease from the rate reported for the same period last year (77.9%).

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



Six of the 11 councils were individually meeting the statutory target at the end of the first nine months in 2024/25.

Antrim and Newtownabbey recorded the highest percentage of cases processed within 39 weeks, with 98.1% processed within target during the first nine months 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-statistics) and should be labelled '[accredited official statistics](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-statistics).