

# Planning Applications: March Quarter 2008, (England)

In the March quarter 2008:

- Nationally, authorities that undertake district level planning activity saw a decrease of 3 per cent in the proportion of applications decided when compared with the same quarter a year ago. However, applications determined in London increased by 5 per cent and National Park Authorities by 27 per cent.
- Decisions on planning applications for residential developments (dwellings) increased by 3 per cent in the March quarter. However, the proportion of applications granted remained unchanged when compared with the corresponding quarter last year.
- 76 per cent of all authorities that undertake district level planning activity made at least 60 per cent of major decisions within the 13 week period; a decrease of 5 percentage points compared with the same quarter a year ago and the lowest since the June quarter 2006.

In the year-ending March 2008:

- Authorities that undertake county level planning determined 1,496 applications; the lowest since 2000/01. However, 93 per cent of these applications were granted; the highest proportion to date.

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planning

## Introduction

This release presents quarterly figures 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. These are provided at national, regional and local authority level. The figures quoted in this release are based on information for the March quarter 2008 reported to Communities and Local Government as at 30 May 2008 and hence do not include information reported subsequently. The background notes section provides more detail of the terms used within this release.

Due to seasonal variation, quarterly figures in this release are compared with the corresponding quarter in the previous year.

## Authorities undertaking district level planning

### Planning applications

In the March quarter 2008, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 158,000 applications for planning permission (Table 1); this represents a decrease of 6 per cent compared with the corresponding quarter in 2007. All regions, including National Park authorities, saw a decrease in the number of planning applications received when compared with the same quarter a year ago. The largest decrease was in the North East (17 per cent). Other large decreases were in the North West and West Midlands (both 11 per cent) and East Midlands (10 per cent).

**Figure 1: District level planning applications received, granted and decided**

Financial Year	Quarter	Planning Applications		Planning Decisions		Applications Granted <sup>1</sup>	
		Number ('000s)	% change on corresponding quarter in previous year	Number ('000s)	% change on corresponding quarter in previous year	Number ('000s)	% change on corresponding quarter in previous year
2005/06	June	170	-8%	164	-5%	130	-6%
	Sept	161	-8%	158	-11%	125	-11%
	Dec	147	-8%	143	-8%	112	-9%
	Mar	165	-3%	134	-4%	104	-5%
2006/07	June	170	0%	155	-5%	123	-5%
	Sept	157	-2%	155	-2%	122	-2%
	Dec	149	1%	141	-1%	111	-1%
	Mar	168	2%	136	1%	107	3%
2007/08	June	174	2%	156	1%	124	1%
	Sept	166	6%	160	3%	125	2%
	Dec	150	1%	148	5%	116	5%
	Mar	158	-6%	132	-3%	102	-5%

<sup>1</sup>Does not include planning decisions which can neither be granted nor refused

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## Planning decisions

These authorities determined 132,000 planning applications in the March quarter 2008; 3 per cent lower than in the March quarter last year. However, the number of planning applications determined by National Park authorities increased by 27 per cent, London by 5 per cent and the East of England by 0.3 per cent. All other regions saw a decrease; the largest was in North East (12 per cent). Other decreases were in West Midlands (8 per cent) and East Midlands and North West (both down 7 per cent).

Decisions relating to applications from householders were down by 5 per cent from 66,400 in the March quarter 2007 to 62,900 in the March quarter 2008 and accounted for 48 per cent of all decisions. Decisions on applications for residential developments increased from 18,700 to 19,200; an increase of 3 per cent on the corresponding quarter last year.

## Applications granted

81 per cent of all decisions in the March quarter 2008 were granted; down marginally from 80 per cent in the March quarter 2007. Approval rates across the region ranged from 75 per cent in London to 90 per cent in the North East.

## Speed of decision

Authorities that undertake district level planning, on average, determined 72 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks, 76 per cent of minor applications within 8 weeks, and 87 per cent of other applications within 8 weeks. This represents a 1 percentage point decrease in determining major applications and a 2 percentage point decrease in determining minor and other applications when compared with the corresponding quarter a year ago (Table 7).

The March quarter 2008 saw 280 authorities (76 per cent of all authorities) make at least 60 per cent of their decisions on major applications within the 13 week period; 314 authorities (86 per cent) made at least 65 per cent of their decisions on minor applications within the statutory 8 week period; and 305 authorities (83 per cent) made at least 80 per cent of their decisions on other applications within the statutory 8 week period. The number of authorities meeting the performance target in the March quarter 2008 compared with performance in the same quarter a year ago represents a decrease of 5 percentage points on major and minor applications and a 10 percentage point decrease on other applications.

In the year-ending March 2008, the proportion of authorities meeting the target on majors (60 per cent of applications processed within 13 weeks) was 86 per cent (314 authorities) and for minors (65 per cent of applications processed within 8 weeks) 92 per cent (338 authorities). These remain unchanged when compared with the year-ending March 2007 figure. The proportion of authorities meeting the target for other applications (80 per cent of applications processed within 8 weeks) was 91 per cent (333 authorities); a decrease of 1 percentage point when compared with the corresponding period a year ago.

**Figure 2: Trends in local authority performance, England (year-ending period)**

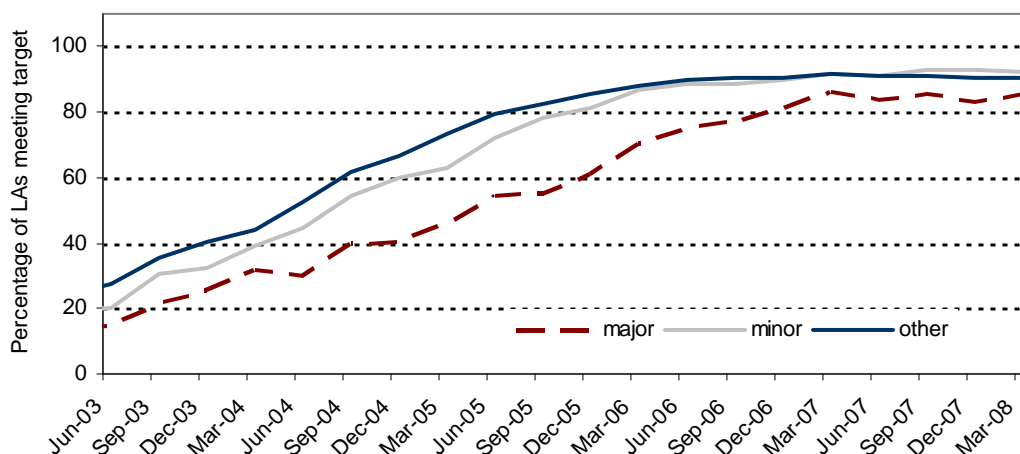


Table 8 shows the number of major and minor decisions on applications relating to residential developments and the speed at which they were determined in the year and quarter ending March 2008. In January to March 2008, authorities granted 65 per cent of major decisions and determined 68 per cent of them within 13 weeks. Also 63 per cent of decisions for minor residential applications were granted and 71 per cent determined within 8 weeks.

### Enforcement action

Table 4 shows statistics on formal enforcement action taken by responding authorities in each year since 1998/99. In the March quarter 2008, authorities issued 1,390 Enforcement Notices and served 1,436 Planning Contravention Notices, 252 Breach of Condition Notices, 45 Stop Notices and 105 Temporary Stop Notices. The High/County Court granted 12 Enforcement Injunctions.

### Regulation 3 and 4 consents

Table 5 shows the number of Regulation 3 and 4 Consents granted since 1998/99. Under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, SI 1992/1492, a local planning authority makes an application to itself for permission to develop land within its area, and determines that application. In the first quarter of 2008, 1,042 Regulation 3 consents and 50 Regulation 4 consents were granted. Regulation 4 is concerned with planning permission for development of land in which the local planning authority has an interest but which it does not itself propose to carry out.

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## **Applications for determination**

Authorities received 1,359 applications for determination on whether local authority approval is required for certain works in the March quarter 2008 (Table 6). Local authorities decided to intervene in 151 cases (11 per cent).

## **Departure applications**

Authorities also provided information on the number of applications decided which were advertised as departures from the development plan in force, and the number of departure applications which were granted.

Of the planning decisions made by local planning authorities, 515 (less than 0.5 per cent) were advertised as departures from the development plan. Dwellings accounted for 43 per cent of departure decisions. An average of 54 per cent of departure applications were granted, compared with 81 per cent of planning applications overall.

## **Applications decided under delegated powers**

The final column in Table 7 shows the percentage of applications decided by planning officers under a scheme of delegation and without referral to committee or councillors on such decisions. 360 authorities (out of 367) provided information on delegated decisions in this quarter. On average, authorities delegated 90 per cent of decisions to planning officers.

## Authorities undertaking county level planning

Authorities that undertake county level planning activity receive around 2,000 'county matters' applications each year. This compares with 650,000 planning applications received by authorities that undertake district level planning activities. Quarterly figures for 'county matters' decisions are likely to be much more variable than those for districts because of the smaller numbers of such decisions.

**Figure 3: County level planning applications granted, received and decided**

Financial Year	Quarter	Planning Applications		Planning Decisions		Applications Granted	
		Number	% change on corresponding quarter in previous year	Number	% change on corresponding quarter in previous year	Number	% change on corresponding quarter in previous year
2005/06	June	466	-14%	390	-3%	353	-4%
	Sept	510	-6%	416	-17%	375	-19%
	Dec	398	-22%	458	-1%	417	0%
	Mar	483	-7%	419	-1%	386	0%
2006/07	June	450	-3%	416	7%	376	7%
	Sept	448	-12%	389	-6%	347	-7%
	Dec	441	11%	399	-13%	349	-16%
	Mar	466	-4%	387	-8%	363	-6%
2007/08	June	464	3%	393	-6%	364	-3%
	Sept	446	0%	375	-4%	348	0%
	Dec	444	1%	389	-3%	357	2%
	Mar	462	-1%	339	-12%	315	-13%

### Planning applications

In the March quarter 2008, authorities received 462 'county matter' applications, a decrease of 0.9 per cent compared with the same quarter last year. County councils accounted for 87 per cent of total applications, unitary authorities for 6 per cent and metropolitan districts for 5 per cent (Table 9). The highest numbers of applications were received in Nottinghamshire (23 applications) and Leicestershire (21 applications). Others were Cheshire, Cumbria and Staffordshire (all 19 applications) and North Yorkshire (18 applications) (Table 12).

### Planning decisions

County matter authorities determined 339 planning applications in the March quarter 2008; a decrease of 12 per cent compared with the same quarter last year. Of these, 93 per cent were granted (Table 9). Lancashire determined the highest number of planning applications (17 applications) whilst Devon and Nottinghamshire determined 16 applications (Table 12). Waste developments accounted for 69 per cent of the total decisions and minerals developments 24 per cent (Table 10).

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## **Speed of decision**

In the March quarter 2008, 22 per cent of all decisions on 'county matters' applications were made within 8 weeks; a 3 percentage point increase when compared with the corresponding quarter of 2007. Authorities also determined 64 per cent of applications within 13 weeks; 3 percentage points higher than in the corresponding quarter of 2007 (Table 11).

## **Regulation 3 and 4 consents**

Table 12 shows the number of permissions granted by authorities under Regulations 3 and 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992. The highest numbers of Regulation 3 consents were granted by Kent (69) and Somerset (39).

In order to better reflect the workload of authorities, information on the total number of decisions on applications for consent, agreement or approval of details or schemes required by conditions, as defined by Article 21 of the General Development Procedure Order 1995 have been collected from April 2000 and is also published in this table.

In the March quarter 2008, the highest number of decisions under Article 21 was reported by Leicestershire (43). The number of determinations under the review of mineral planning permissions (ROMPs) was also collated; however only 8 were determined.

## **Enforcement action**

In the March quarter 2008, authorities issued 27 Enforcement Notices and served 2 Stop Notice. 17 Temporary Stop Notices, 42 Planning Contravention Notices and 14 Breach of Condition Notices were also served (Table 13).

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## Development control targets

In April 2002, Best Value Performance Indicator 109 was introduced concerning the speed with which authorities undertaking district level planning activity determine planning applications. The targets for BV109 were drawn up to encourage authorities to give higher priority to dealing with more complex applications which may have a bigger local impact than simpler applications. Following Spending Review 2004, these targets were incorporated in the Department's Public Service Agreement 6 (SR04) and are as follows:

- 100% of authorities to process a minimum of 60% of major applications within 13 weeks by 31 March 2007;
- 100% of authorities to process a minimum of 65% of minor applications within eight weeks by 31 March 2007; and
- 100% of authorities to process a minimum of 80% of other applications within eight weeks by 31 March 2007.

From the June quarter 2008, BV109 will be replaced with National Indicator 157 - Processing of Planning Applications which was introduced following the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07). The targets for individual local planning authorities remain as previously (under SR04) and are as follows:

- 60% of major applications to be processed within 13 weeks;
- 65% of minor applications to be processed within 8 weeks; and
- 80% of other applications to be processed within 8 weeks.

For authorities that undertake county level planning activity, the target is:

- 60% of all applications to be processed within 13 weeks.

However, the Department's PSA 6 target (under SR04) which was previously for 100% of local authorities to meet their targets has been changed and is now for local authorities, across the country as a whole, to be processing 80% of major applications within 13 weeks by 2011.

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## Data collection

Statistics of planning applications received and decided by authorities that undertake district level planning activity have been collated, on a quarterly basis, since April 1979 on the PS1 and PS2 General Development Control statistical returns (District). Information on planning applications for authorities that undertake county level planning activity are collated on the CPS1/2 General Development Control statistical returns (County Matters). These are however reported to the department via Interform – the housing and planning electronic data collection system.

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## Data quality

All PS1, PS2 and CPS1/2 returns submitted by local planning authorities undergo thorough validation and checks. Inconsistent data highlighted during validation and checks are verified by contacting the local authority. Late returns are pursued to ensure the overall response rate is as high as possible. Where a response rate of 100% is not achieved estimates are imputed for non-responding authorities.

362 (99 per cent) authorities that undertake district level planning activities and 159 (98 per cent) authorities that undertake county level planning activities submitted data in time for this publication. Therefore the data includes imputation for the small amount of non-responding authorities and are included in Tables 1-3 where national and regional totals are presented.

All figures included in the commentary have been calculated using unrounded data. As a result, there may be some apparent discrepancy with figures shown in the accompanying tables.

From April 2007 an indication on the level of quality assurance undertaken by the local authority is recorded as part of the final sign-off for these returns.

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## Accompanying tables

Accompanying tables are available to download alongside this release:

**Tables:**

1. Planning applications and decisions of district planning authorities by speed of decision
2. Planning decisions of district planning authorities by speed of decision, Government Office Region and type of authority
3. Planning decisions of district planning authorities by speed of decision, type and size of development
4. Enforcement actions by district planning authorities
5. Regulation 3 and 4 Consents granted by district planning authorities
6. Applications for determination by district planning authorities
7. Planning decisions, by development type and speed of decision
8. Planning decisions on Major and Minor residential development by district authority
9. 'County matters' planning applications and decisions
10. 'County Matters' planning decisions by type and size of development
11. 'County matters' decisions by speed of decision
12. 'County matter' planning applications received and decided
13. Enforcement actions of county planning authorities

Additional tables, earlier quarterly data and historic series can be accessed in the 'Live Tables' section ("Live Tables on Development Control Statistics") at

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningbuilding/planningstatistics/livetables/livetablesondevelopmentcontrolst/>

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## Background notes

1. County level planning applications are predominantly concerned with minerals extraction and waste disposal developments, as set out in Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and in the Town and Country Planning (Prescription of County Matters) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/1033).
2. Authorities undertaking county level planning include county councils, metropolitan districts, unitary authorities, London boroughs, national park authorities and urban development corporations. However, because of the nature of county matters applications, the large majority are handled by the county councils.
3. District level planning is undertaken by metropolitan and non-metropolitan districts, unitary authorities, national park authorities and urban development corporations. These authorities deal with all other planning applications that are not classified as county matters and mainly include applications for planning permissions on residential, offices, industrial, retail and householder developments.
4. Householder developments are defined as those within the curtilage of a house which require an application for planning permission and are not a change of use. Included in householder developments are extensions, conservatories, loft conversions, dormer windows, alterations, garages, car ports or outbuildings, swimming pools, walls, fences, domestic vehicular accesses including footway crossovers, porches and satellite dishes. Excluded from householder developments are any work relating to a flat(s), applications to change the number of dwellings (flat conversions, building a separate house in the garden), changes of use to part or all of the property to non-residential (including business) uses, anything outside the garden of the property (including stables if in a separate paddock).
5. This Release is a web-only publication.
6. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs.

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## Further Information

### **Date of next publication**

The publication date for the June quarter 2008 of this Statistical Release is **Friday 26 September 2008**.

## Enquiries

1. This Statistical Release, as well as previous Releases, can be accessed from the Communities and Local Government website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningbuilding/planningstatistics/statisticsplanning/>

2. Any query regarding this Release should be addressed to: Development Control Statistics Branch, Housing Markets and Planning Analysis Division, Communities and Local Government, Zone 2/A4, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU.

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