

# Planning Applications: March Quarter 2009, (England)

26 June 2009

### In the March quarter 2009:

- The number of planning applications received by district level planning authorities decreased by 30 per cent when compared with the March 2008 quarter.
- District level planning authorities also saw a decrease of 29 per cent in the number of applications decided (granted or refused) when compared with the same quarter a year ago.
- Decisions on planning applications for residential developments (dwellings) decreased by 36 per cent in the March quarter 2009 compared with the March quarter 2008. Decisions on major residential developments (10 or more dwellings) fell by 46 per cent over the same period.
- The percentage of major applications determined within the 13 week target was 71 per cent compared with 72 per cent in the March 2008 quarter.
- Authorities that undertake county level planning activity determined 393 applications; an increase of 15 per cent when compared with the same quarter a year ago.



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## Introduction

This quarterly 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, regional and local authority level and are based on information for the March quarter 2009 reported to Communities and Local Government as at 2 June 2009. 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 2009, authorities undertaking district level planning in England received 111,000 applications for planning permission (**Table 1**); this represents a decrease of 30 per cent compared with the corresponding quarter in 2008. 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 East of England (33 per cent) whilst the lowest decrease was in London, the West Midlands and the North West (all 28 per cent). National Park authorities also saw a decrease of 27 per cent. In the year ending March 2009, authorities received 507,000 applications; a decrease of 22 per cent compared with the year ending March 2008 figure.

### Planning decisions

District level planning authorities determined 93,000 planning applications in the March quarter 2009; 29 per cent lower than in the March quarter last year and 20 per cent lower than the December 2008 quarter. All regions, including National Park authorities, saw a decrease in the number of applications determined; the largest decrease was in the East of England and in Yorkshire and the Humber (both 32 per cent). Other large decreases were in West Midlands (31 per cent), and the South East and East Midlands (both 30 per cent). The lowest decrease was in London, the North East and the South West (all 27 per cent). National Parks also saw a decrease of 25 per cent (**Table 2**). In the year ending March 2009, 489,000 applications were determined; a decrease of 18 per cent compared with the corresponding period a year ago.

### Applications granted

83 per cent of all decisions in the March quarter 2009 were granted; a decrease of 2 percentage points when compared with the March quarter 2008. Approval rates across the region ranged from 76 per cent in London to 90 per cent in the North East (**Table 2**). These percentages represent a one percentage point decrease in the approval rate for authorities in London and no change in the approval rate for authorities in the North East when compared with the same quarter a year ago.

**Table A: District level planning applications received, decided and granted**

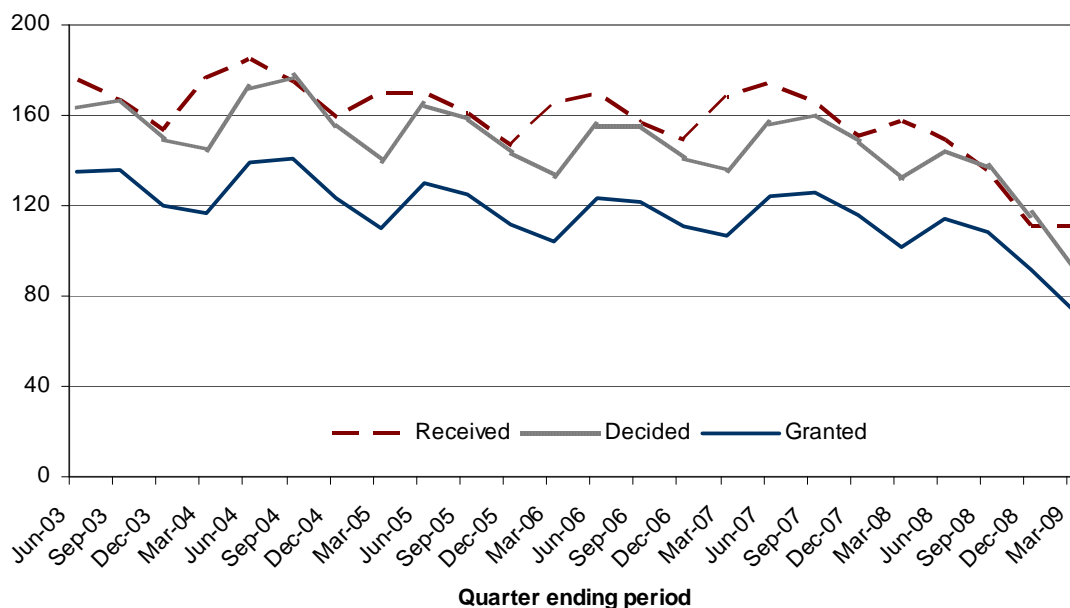
Financial Year	Quarter	Received		Decided		Granted <sup>1</sup>	
		Number ('000s)	% change on corresponding quarter last year	Number ('000s)	% change on corresponding quarter last year	Number ('000s)	% change on corresponding quarter last year
2005-06	June	170	-8%	164	-5%	130	-6%
	Sept	161	-8%	158	-11%	125	-11%
	Dec	147	-8%	143	-8%	112	-9%
	Mar	165	-3%	134	-4%	105	-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%	126 <sup>R</sup>	2%
	Dec	151 <sup>R</sup>	1%	148	5%	116	5%
	Mar	158	-6%	132	-3%	102	-5%
2008-09 <sup>P</sup>	June	150	-14%	144	-8%	114	-8%
	Sept	135	-19%	136	-15%	108	-14%
	Dec	111	-26%	116	-22%	91	-21%
	Mar	111	-30%	93	-29%	73	-28%
Year to Mar 2009 <sup>P</sup>		507	-22%	489	-18%	387	-17%

<sup>1</sup> Excludes planning applications which cannot be granted or refused.

P Provisional.

R Revised.

**Figure 1: Number of planning applications received, decided and granted by district authorities**



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## Residential and householder decisions

Decisions made on householder developments were down by 36 per cent from 62,800 in the March quarter 2008 to 39,900 in the March quarter 2009 and accounted for 43 per cent of all decisions. Decisions on applications for residential developments decreased from 19,200 in March quarter 2008 to 12,300 in March quarter 2009; a decrease of 36 per cent (**Table 3**).

In the March quarter 2009, authorities granted 67 per cent of major residential applications and determined 68 per cent of them within 13 weeks. Also 66 per cent of decisions on minor residential applications were granted and 71 per cent determined within 8 weeks (**Table 8**).

## Planning Applications for Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

From April 2008, local authorities have been required to provide information on decisions relating to planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. Information on Gypsy and Traveller pitches are shown in **Table 8a** and are as reported by local planning authorities. In the March quarter 2009, local planning authorities determined 8 major applications and granted 63 per cent of those applications; however 38 per cent were determined within 13 weeks. Also, in the March quarter 2009 authorities determined 41 minor applications on Gypsy and Traveller pitches and granted 63 per cent; the percentage of applications determined within 8 weeks was 44 per cent.

In the year ending March 2009, authorities determined 191 applications for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. 69 per cent of the major applications were granted and 61 per cent were determined within 13 weeks. Also, 63 per cent of minor Gypsy and Traveller pitches were granted and 46 per cent were determined within 8 weeks.

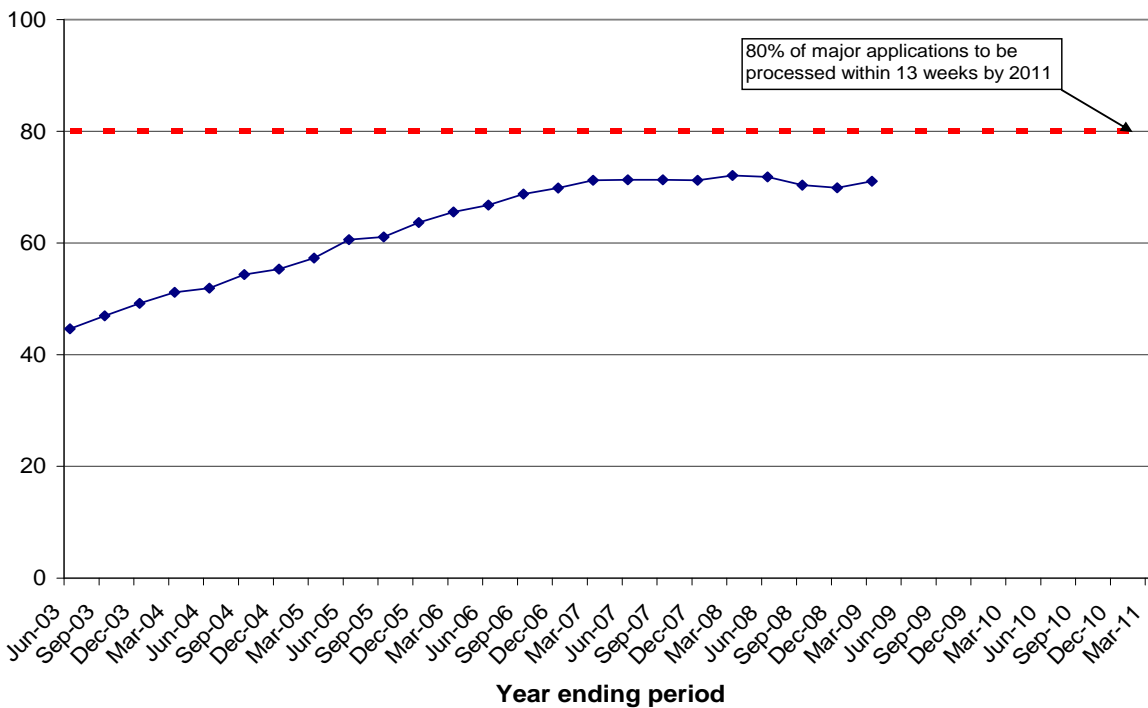
The highest number of major Gypsy and Traveller pitches determined in the year ending March 2009 was in the East of England and East Midlands (8 applications each). Authorities in the South East determined the highest number of minor applications (39 applications); 62 per cent of those applications were granted and 51 per cent were determined within 8 weeks.

## Departmental Strategic Objective on Development Control (DSO 5.4)

The Department's Strategic Objective is that local authorities, across the country as a whole, should process 80 per cent of major applications within 13 weeks by 2011. In the March quarter 2009, the number of applications processed was 71 per cent compared with 72 per cent in the March 2008 quarter. The figure represents a one percentage point decrease when compared with the March quarter 2008 (**Table 1**). Also, 77 per cent of minor applications and 87 per cent of other applications were processed within 8 weeks.

In the year ending March 2009, 71 per cent of major applications were processed within 13 weeks; 9 percentage points short of the target of 80 per cent by 2011. The chart below shows the percentage of major applications processed within 13 weeks.

**Figure 2: Percentage of major applications processed within 13 weeks**



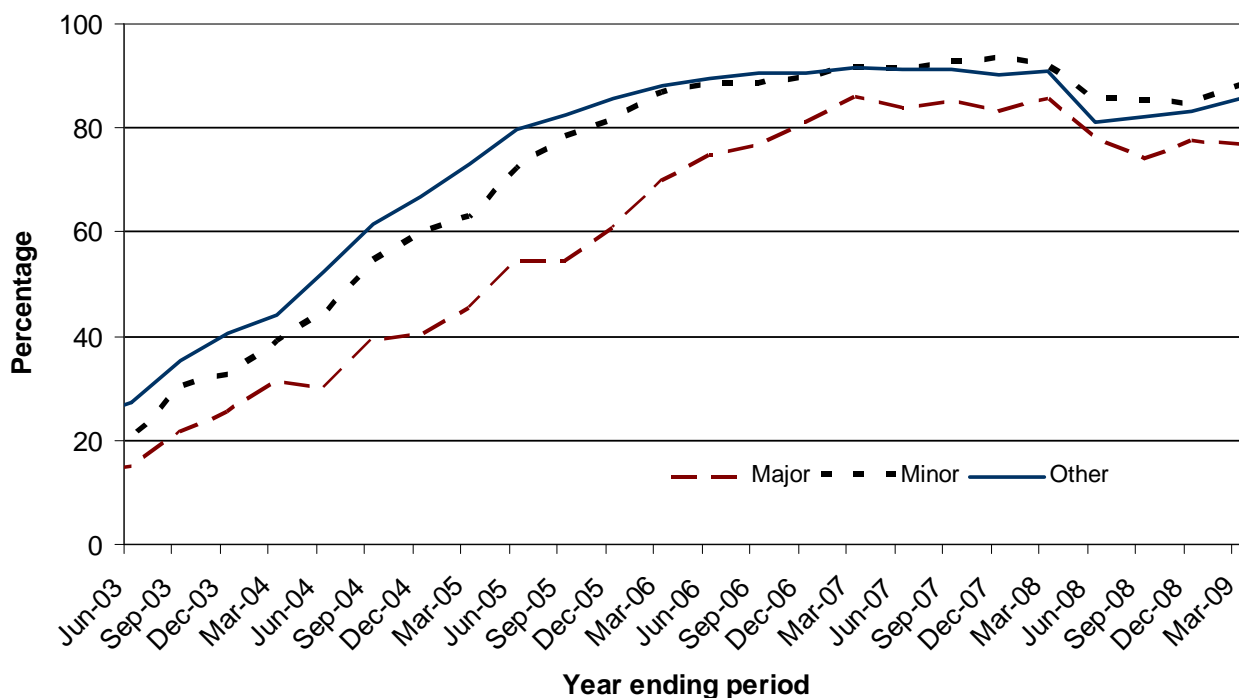
**Local Authority performance (Table 7)**

National Indicator 157 a, b and c reports on the speed at which major, minor and other planning applications are processed by district level planning authorities (for more information see page 8 of this release).

The March quarter 2009 saw 256 authorities (70 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 317 authorities (86 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 2009 compared with performance in the same quarter a year ago represents a decrease of 6 percentage points on major applications, no change on minor applications and an increase of 3 percentage points on other applications.

In the year ending March 2009, the percentage of authorities meeting the target on major applications was 77 (282 authorities) and for minors 88 (323 authorities). These represent a decrease of 9 percentage points on major applications and 4 percentage points on minor applications when compared with the year ending March 2008 figure. The percentage of authorities meeting the target for other applications was 86 (315 authorities); a decrease of 5 percentage points when compared with the corresponding period a year ago. The chart below shows the percentage of district level planning authorities meeting the performance targets for major, minor and other applications.

**Figure 3: Percentage of district level authorities meeting the performance targets**



**Enforcement action**

**Table 4** shows statistics on formal enforcement action taken by responding authorities in each year since 1999-00. In the March quarter 2009, authorities issued 1,502 Enforcement Notices and served 1,339 Planning Contravention Notices, 235 Breach of Condition Notices, 24 Stop Notices and 57 Temporary Stop Notices. In the March quarter 2009 16 Enforcement Injunction were granted by the High/County Court.

**Regulation 3 and 4 consents**

**Table 5** shows the number of Regulation 3 and 4 Consents granted since 1999-00. Under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, SI 1992/1492, a local planning authority makes an application to it self for permission to develop land within its area, and determines that application. In the March 2009 quarter, 893 Regulation 3 consents and 74 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.

**Applications for determination**

Authorities received 1,397 applications for determination on whether local authority approval is required for certain works in the March quarter 2009 (**Table 6**). Local authorities decided to intervene in 154 cases (11 per cent).

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## 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. 359 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 received around 1,700 'county matters' applications in the year ending March 2009. This compared with the 510,000 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.

### Planning applications

In the March quarter 2009, authorities received 431 'county matter' applications, a decrease of 9 per cent compared with the same quarter last year and an increase 6 per cent when compared with the December quarter 2008. County councils accounted for 90 per cent of total applications, unitary authorities for 6 per cent and metropolitan districts for 3 per cent (**Table 9**). The highest number of applications was received by Cumbria and Norfolk (both 26 applications). Others were Kent (20 applications) and Surrey (18 applications) (**Table 12**).

### Planning decisions

County matter authorities determined 393 planning applications in the March quarter 2009; an increase of 15 per cent compared with the same quarter last year and 9 per cent when compared with the December quarter 2008. Of these, 91 per cent were granted; down by 2 percentage points when compared with the same quarter last year and the December quarter 2008 (**Table 9**). Hampshire determined the highest number of planning applications (26 applications) followed by Cumbria (20 applications) (**Table 12**). Waste developments accounted for 68 per cent of the total decisions and minerals developments accounted for 27 per cent (**Table 10**).

### Speed of decision

In the March quarter 2009, 19 per cent of all decisions on 'county matters' applications were made within 8 weeks; a 3 percentage point decrease when compared with the corresponding quarter of 2008. County-level planning authorities also determined 62 per cent of applications within 13 weeks; a 4 percentage point decrease when compared with the corresponding quarter of 2008 (**Table 11**).

**Table B: County level planning applications granted, received and decided**

Financial Year	Quarter	Planning Applications		Planning Decisions		Applications Granted	
		Number	% change on corresponding quarter last year	Number	% change on corresponding quarter last year	Number	% change on corresponding quarter last 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 <sup>R</sup>	473	2%	341	-12%	317	-13%
2008-09 <sup>P</sup>	June	372	-20%	346	-12%	318	-13%
	Sept	437	-2%	377	1%	346	-1%
	Dec	405	-9%	361	-7%	334	-6%
	Mar	431	-9%	393	15%	358	13%
Year to Mar 2009 <sup>P</sup>		1645	-10%	1477	-1%	1356	-2%

R Revised.

P Provisional.

### 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 (72 consents), Suffolk (47 consents) and Derbyshire and Norfolk (both 39 consents).

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 2009, the highest number of decisions under Article 21 was reported by Leicestershire (71 decisions). The number of determinations under the review of mineral planning permissions was also collated; however only 3 were determined.

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## Enforcement action

In the March quarter 2009 authorities issued 18 Enforcement Notices. County level planning authorities also served 7 Temporary Stop Notices, 31 Planning Contravention Notices and 16 Breach of Condition Notices (**Table 13**).

## Development control targets

The Department reports on National Indicator 157 - *Processing of Planning Applications* and the targets for individual local planning authorities are as follows:

- 60% of major (**large-scale and small-scale**) 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.

Also, the Department's Strategic Objective on Development Control (DSO 5.4) is that local authorities, across the country as a whole, should process 80% of major applications within 13 weeks by 2011.

## Environmental Impact Assessments and the 16 week target for non 'county matter' applications

Local authorities have been encouraged to **decide 60 per cent, not 100 per cent, of major applications within 13 weeks** in order to achieve the target. This flexibility provides for cases where an EIA is required and this is to continue. Provided less than forty per cent of its casework comes into that category, the authority would not be penalised by abatement of grant.

In respect of large-scale major applications the introduction of Planning Performance Agreements provides a further opportunity to agree a determination period more suited to the character and complexity of a scheme. A Planning Performance Agreement or 'PPA' is a voluntary agreement between a local planning authority and an applicant to provide a project management framework for handling a large-scale major planning application. This framework should improve and speed up the planning process by committing both parties to an agreed timetable containing 'milestones', by clarifying in advance what level of evidence, resources and community engagement are required, and by ensuring that all relevant aspects such as sustainability assessments and design standards are properly considered. The timetable devised for each Agreement means that a local planning authority is no longer under pressure to determine the application within 13 weeks as applications with PPAs (where the agreed timescale has been adhered to) are excluded from this target.

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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). From the June quarter 2008, the PS1, PS2 and the Fee1 (revenue collected in respect of PS1 and PS2) returns, are now combined as a single return, the PSF return. Information on planning applications for authorities that undertake county level planning activities are collated on the CPS1/2 General Development Control statistical returns (County Matters). These are reported to the department via *Interform* – the department’s housing and planning electronic data collection system.

## Data quality

Both the PSF 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.

360 (98 per cent) authorities that undertake district level planning activities and 154 (97 per cent) authorities that undertake county level planning activities submitted data in time for this publication. Therefore the data includes imputation for the small number of non-responding authorities and are included in Tables 1-3 where national and regional totals are presented. Performances of individual local authorities are presented in tables 7 and 8. Authorities for which partial data have been received (i.e. they did not submit information for all four quarters) are not shown in these tables.

**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.

## Accompanying tables

Accompanying tables are available to download alongside this release. These are:

### 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

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- 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
  - 8a Planning decisions on Major and Minor Gypsies and Travellers Pitches 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/livetableslivetablesondevelopmentcontrolst/>

## 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:** Householder developments are defined as those within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse 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 applications relating to any work to one or more flats, 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).

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5. This Release is a web-only publication.

6. Details of officials who receive pre-release access to this statistical release 24 hours before publication can be found at

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7. 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.

## Further Information

### Date of next publication

The publication date for the March quarter 2009 of this Statistical Release is **Friday 25 September 2009**.

## Enquiries

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

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/planningapplicationsq12009](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/planningapplicationsq12009)

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.

Telephone: 020 7944 5502. Email: [developmentcontrol@communities.gov.uk](mailto:developmentcontrol@communities.gov.uk)

### Media enquiries:

Office hours: 020 7944 3049

Out of hours: 020 7944 5495

Email: [press@communities.gov.uk](mailto:press@communities.gov.uk)

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