

NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

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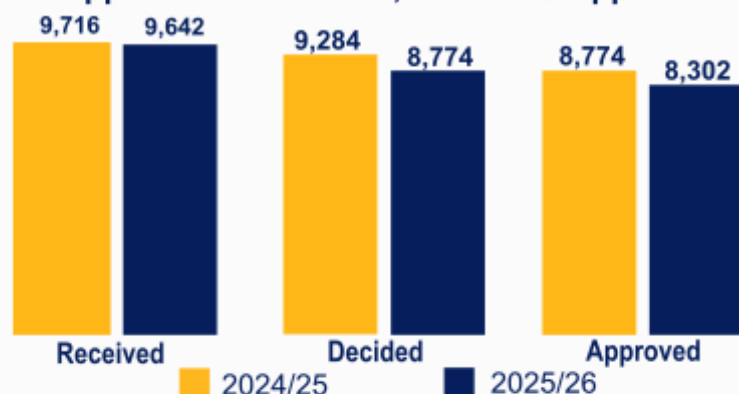
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Key points

- There were 9,642 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during 2025/26; this is a similar number to the previous year. This comprised of 9,473 local, 165 major and four regionally significant planning applications.
- In 2025/26, a total of 8,774 planning applications were decided, a decrease of five percent from the previous year. Decisions were issued on 8,658 local and 116 major applications during 2025/26.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during 2025/26 was 19.6 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represents an increase of 0.6 weeks from the previous year. Three of the 11 councils met the 15 week target in 2025/26.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during 2025/26 was 41.4 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 30 week target and represents an increase of 1.8 weeks from the previous year (39.6 weeks). Two of the 11 councils met the 30 week target in 2025/26.
- Across councils 75.1% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during 2025/26, meeting the 70% target. This represents an increase of 4.4 percentage points from the rate recorded for 2024/25 (70.7%). Individually, seven of the 11 councils met the 70% target in 2025/26.

Overall planning applications

Applications received, decided & approved



Comparing 2025/26 with 2024/25:

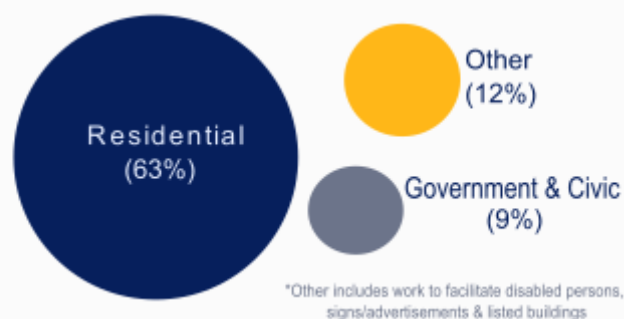


Applications received

A total of 9,642 planning applications were received during 2025/26:



3 largest development types:



Planning statutory targets - 2025 & 2026

Average processing times (weeks) - major



Councils within major targets



Average processing times (weeks) - local



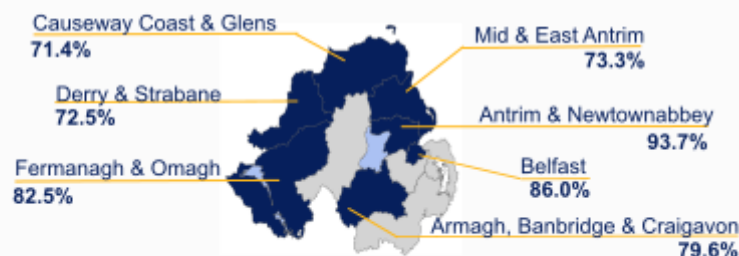
Councils within local targets



% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks



Councils within enforcement targets



Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Annual Statistical Bulletin 2025/26

Introduction

This statistical bulletin presents a summary of Northern Ireland (NI) planning volumes and processing performance for councils and the Department for Infrastructure for 2025/26.

Figures for 2025/26 are now final and will not be subject to further scheduled revision.

The records of all planning applications from 1 April 2025 to 30 March 2026 were transferred in April 2026 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 May 2026.

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

Future releases

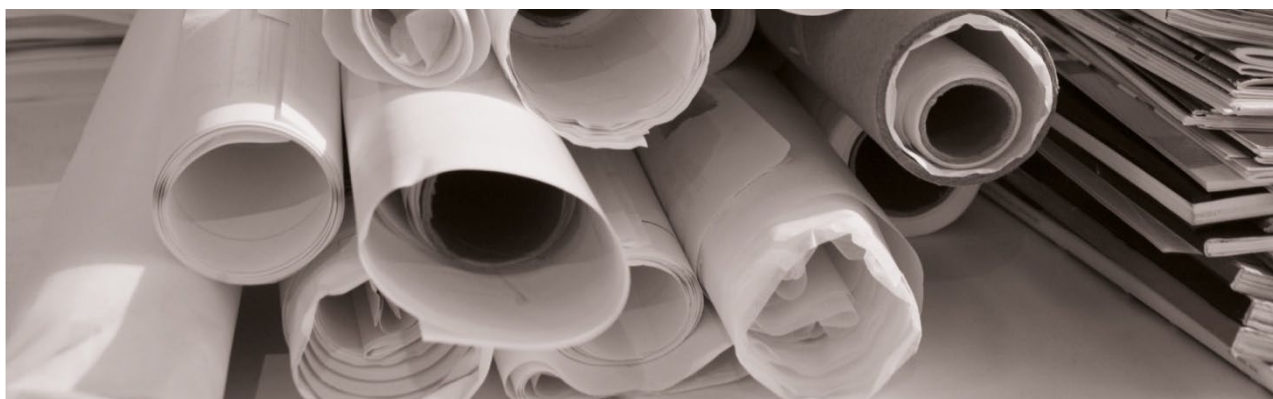
The next report will be a quarterly report covering the period 1 April to 30 June 2026. This quarterly report is planned for release in September 2026. The next annual report covering 2026/27 is planned for release in June 2027. See [GOV.UK](#) Release Calendar and [upcoming statistical releases](#) 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

Planning activity has continued to decline in 2025/26, with the volume of applications received and processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) the lowest since the series began in 2002/03. The number of enforcement cases opened in 2025/26 was the highest annual figure since 2019/20. Enforcements closed in 2025/26 was the lowest annual figure recorded since the series began.

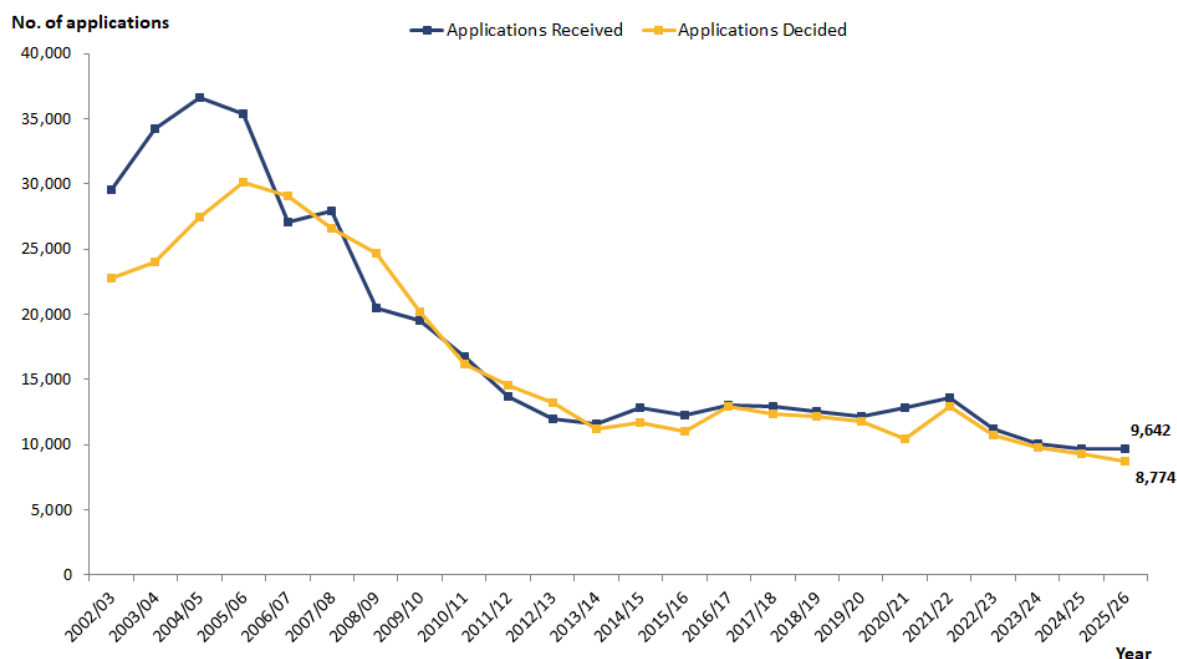
There have been some key events in recent years that will have impacted on planning activity and processing performance. These were the coronavirus pandemic with varying restrictions in place up until February 2022; the accessibility of the planning system for some users for a period during January and 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 by councils and the Department in 2025/26 was 9,642; similar to the previous year (9,716) and the lowest figure recorded in the time series (Figure 1.1). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Over three-quarters of the planning applications received in 2025/26 were for full planning permission (75.9%); an increase on the proportion reported for 2024/25 (73.4%). [Refer to Tables 5.6.](#)

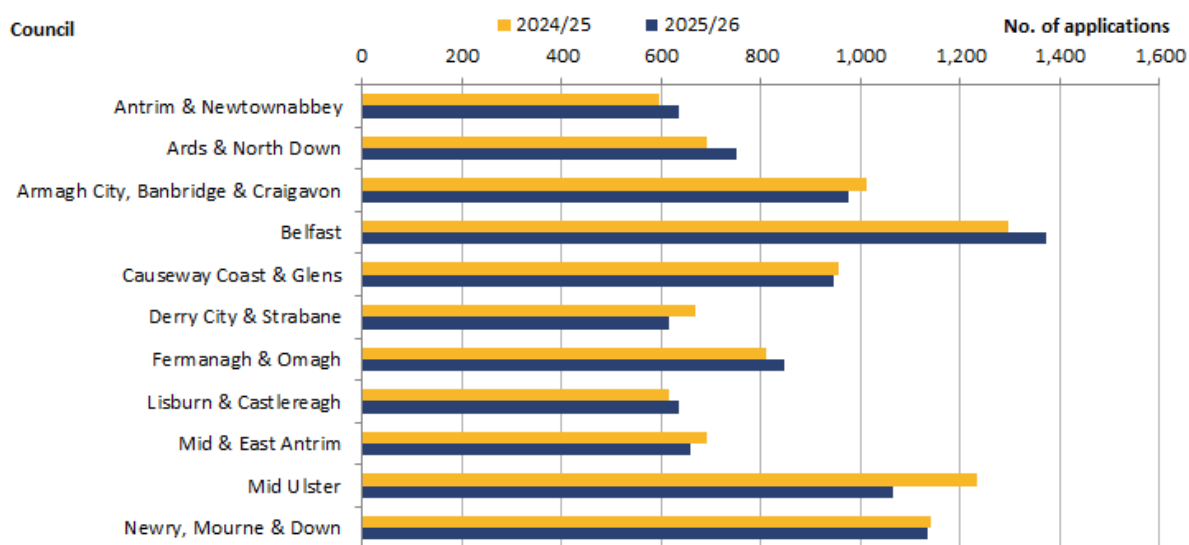
Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, annually, 2002/03 to 2025/26



Six councils reported a decrease in the number of planning applications received in 2025/26 compared with 2024/25, with the greatest percentage decrease in Mid Ulster (-13.7%). Five councils reported an increase over the year, with the percentage increase greatest in Ards and North Down (8.7%).

During 2025/26, the number of planning applications received varied across councils, ranging from 1,371 in Belfast (accounting for 14.2% of all applications received across NI) to 617 in Derry and Strabane (6.4% of all applications received). See Figure 1.2.

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, 2024/25 & 2025/26



Applications decided

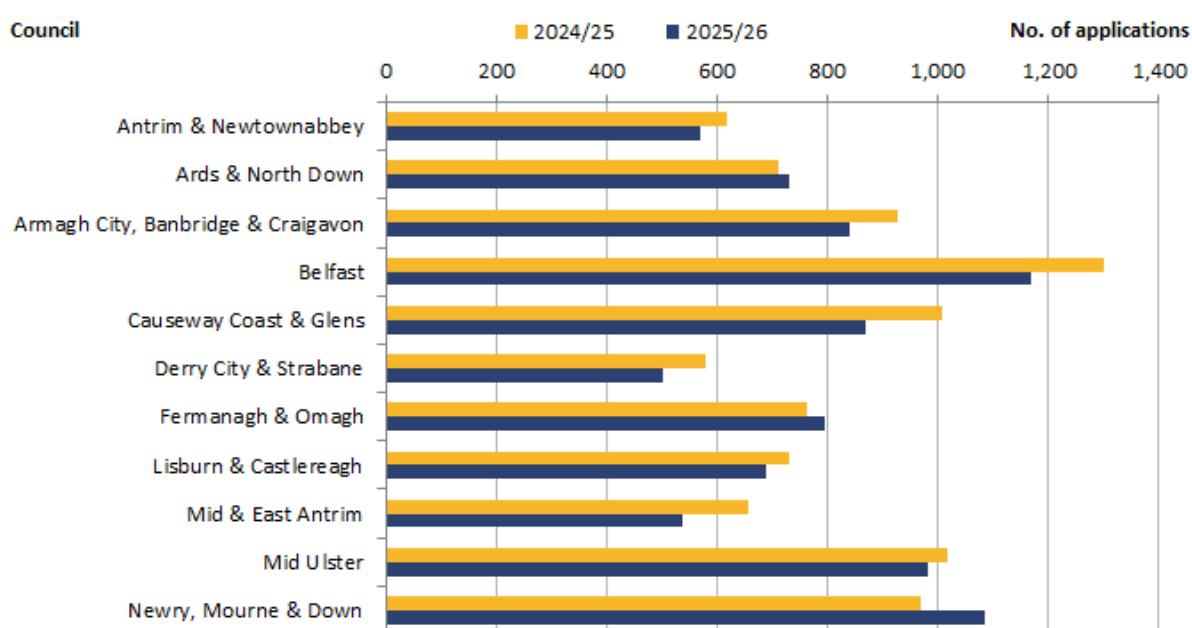
The number of planning decisions issued by councils and the Department in 2025/26 was 8,774; a decrease of 5.5% on 2024/25 (9,284). [Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.](#)

Three quarters of planning decisions in 2025/26 (75.4%) were for full planning permission; similar to the proportion recorded for 2024/25 (74.7%). [Refer to Tables 5.6.](#)

8 of the 11 councils reported a decrease in the number of applications decided in 2025/26 when compared with the previous year, with the greatest decrease recorded in Mid and East Antrim (-18.5%). Three councils reported an increase over the year, with Newry, Mourne and Down reporting the largest increase (11.9%).

Across councils the number of decisions issued during 2025/26 ranged from 1,170 in Belfast (accounting for 13.3% of all decisions across NI) to 503 in Derry City and Strabane (5.7% of all decisions). See Figure 1.3 and [Table 1.2.](#)

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, 2024/25 & 2025/26



In 2025/26, 558 applications were withdrawn, an 11.4% decrease over the year from the 630 applications withdrawn in 2024/25.

Approval rates

The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for all planning applications was 94.6 % in 2025/26. Similar to the approval rate in 2024/25 (94.5%). [Refer to Table 1.1.](#)

Approval rates varied across councils during 2025/26, from 88.6% in Newry, Mourne and Down to 97.5% 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 7,752 live applications in the planning system across NI at the end of March 2026, an increase over the year from the end of March 2025 (7,514).

Three out of every ten live applications at the end of March 2026 were over one year old (32.1%); the same proportion reported at the end of March 2025 (32.1%), remaining the highest end of March rate since reporting began in 2010/11. [Refer to Table 1.3.](#)

Departmental activity

There were five applications received by the Department in 2025/26, up from the three received during 2024/25. Three applications were decided during the year, compared with two decided in the previous year. There were no departmental applications withdrawn in 2025/26.

At the end of March 2026 there were 24 live Departmental applications; 19 out 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 nine RSD applications live in the planning system at the end of March 2026, two have been progressed to ministerial recommendation but the 30-week period for recommendation/withdrawal has been exceeded. Of the remaining seven awaiting ministerial recommendation, the 30-week period has been exceeded for five of them.

Development type

Most planning applications received and decided in NI are for residential development. Residential applications accounted for over three-fifths (6,034; 62.6 %) of applications received in 2025/26, followed by 'Other' (1,152; 11.9%) and 'Government and Civic' (858; 8.9%).

The top three development types decided in 2025/26 were 'Residential' (5,755), 'Other' (914) and 'Government and Civic' (693). [Refer to Tables 5.1, 5.2.](#)

Renewable energy activity

There were 84 renewable energy applications received in 2025/26; a decrease from the previous year (97). Sixty-eight renewable energy applications were decided during 2025/26; a decrease from 2024/25 (86).

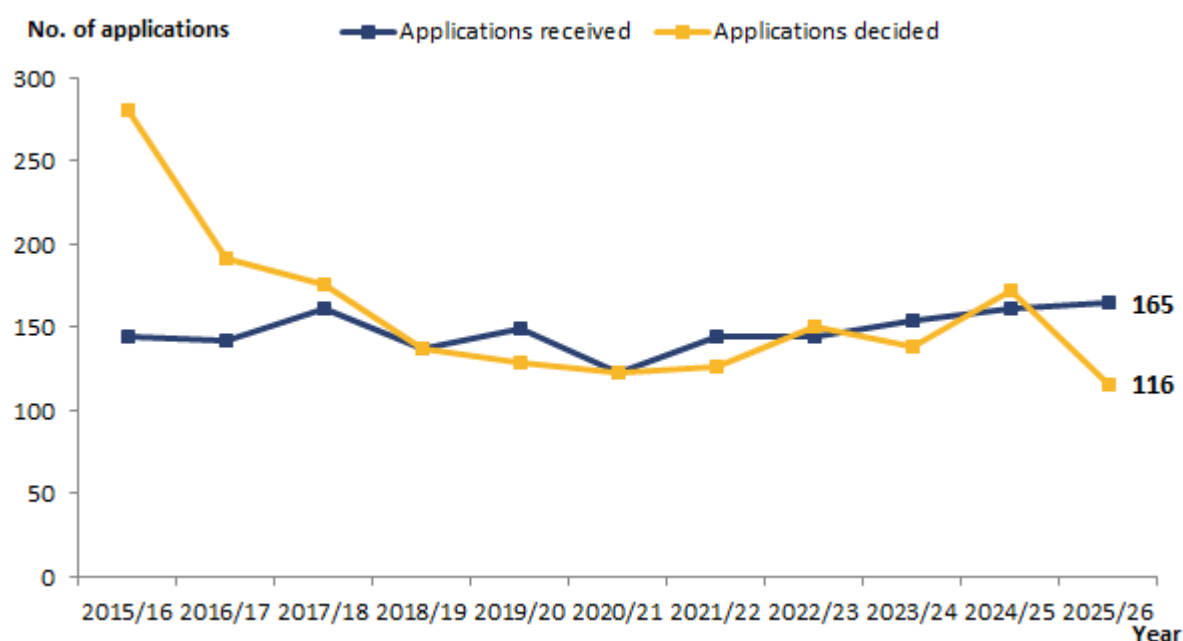


Chapter 2:

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 165 major planning applications were received in NI during 2025/26, up from the number received in the previous year (161). [Refer to Table 3.1.](#)

Fig 3.1 Major development applications, annually, 2015/16 to 2025/26



During 2025/26, 116 major planning applications were decided; down from the numbers decided in the previous year (172). See Figure 3.1.

The approval rate for major applications decided upon in NI during 2025/26 was 99.1%. [Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.](#)

Major planning applications statutory target

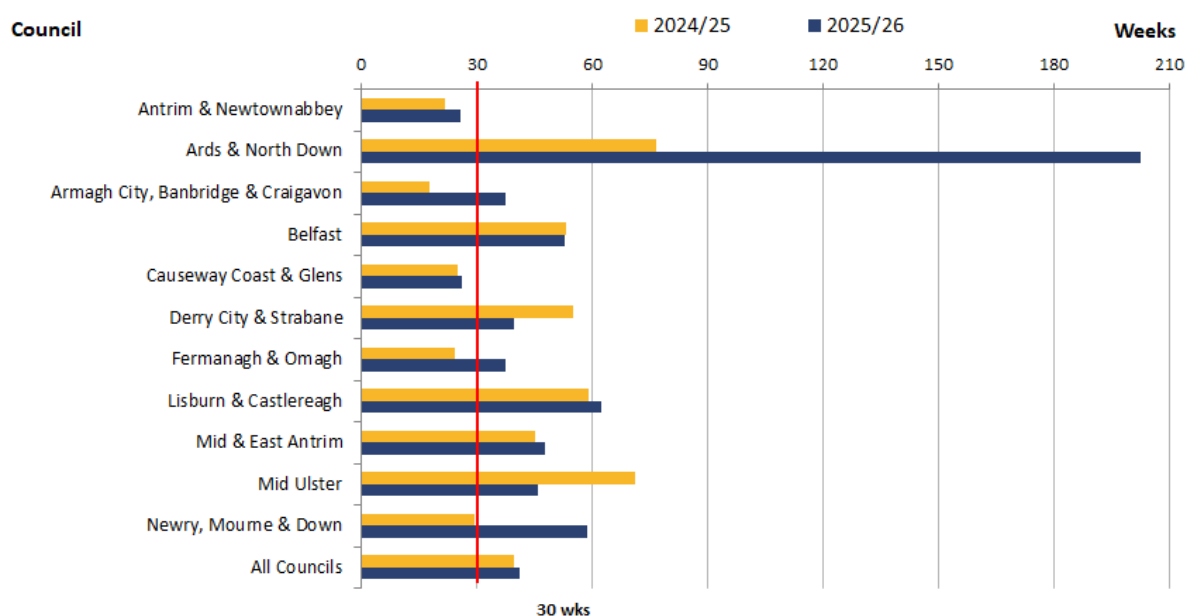


It is a statutory target for each council that major development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 30 weeks.

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 2025/26 was 41.4 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 30 week target and represents an increase of 1.8 weeks compared with 2024/25 (39.6 weeks).

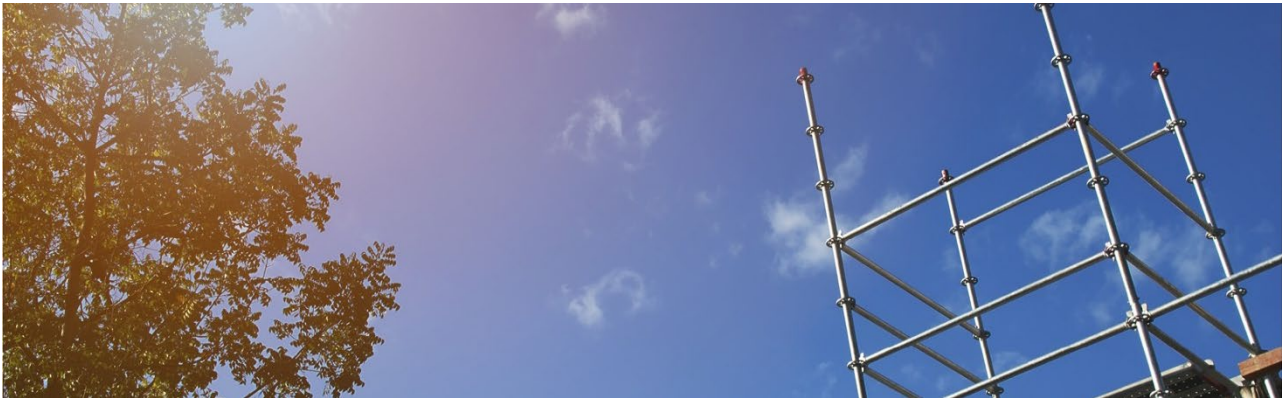
In total, 116 major planning applications were decided by councils and 8 were withdrawn during 2025/26, the figures for 2024/25 were 172 decided and eleven withdrawn.

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, 2024/25 & 2025/26



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.](#)

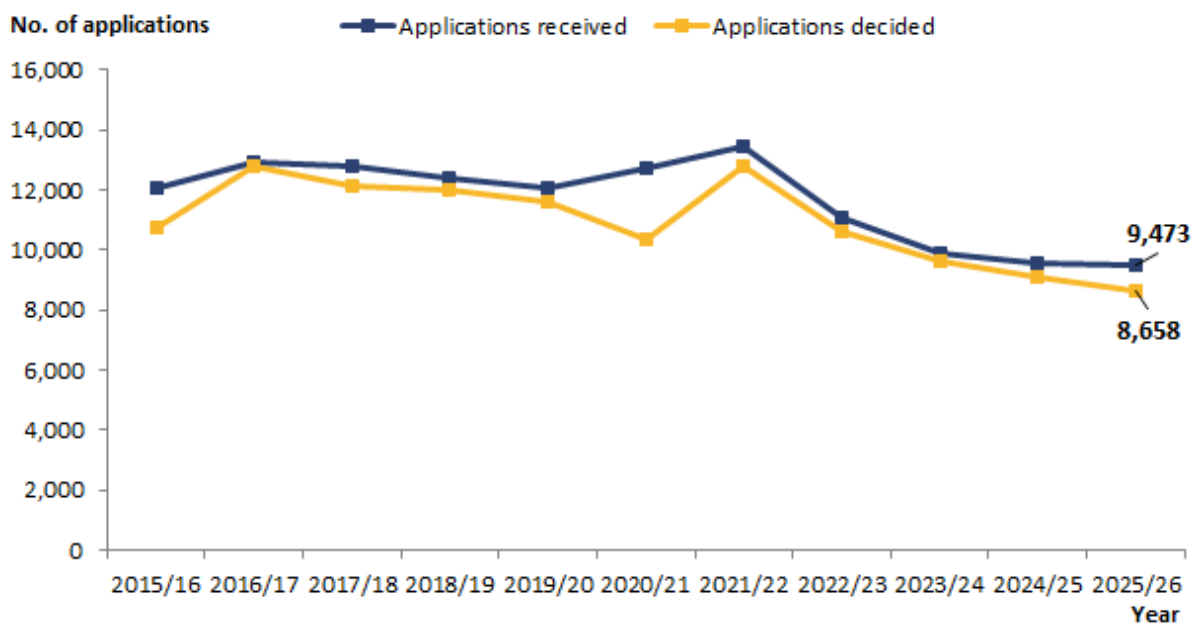


Chapter 3:

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 2025/26 was 9,473; a decrease on the number received in the previous year (9,554: - 0.8%). [Refer to Table 4.1.](#)

Fig 4.1 Local development applications, annually, 2015/16 to 2025/26



The number of local applications decided in 2025/26 was 8,658; down by 5.0% on the previous year (9,112); [refer to Table 4.1.](#) The overall approval rate for local applications was 94.6% in 2025/26; similar to the rate reported in 2024/25 (94.4%).

Local planning applications statutory target

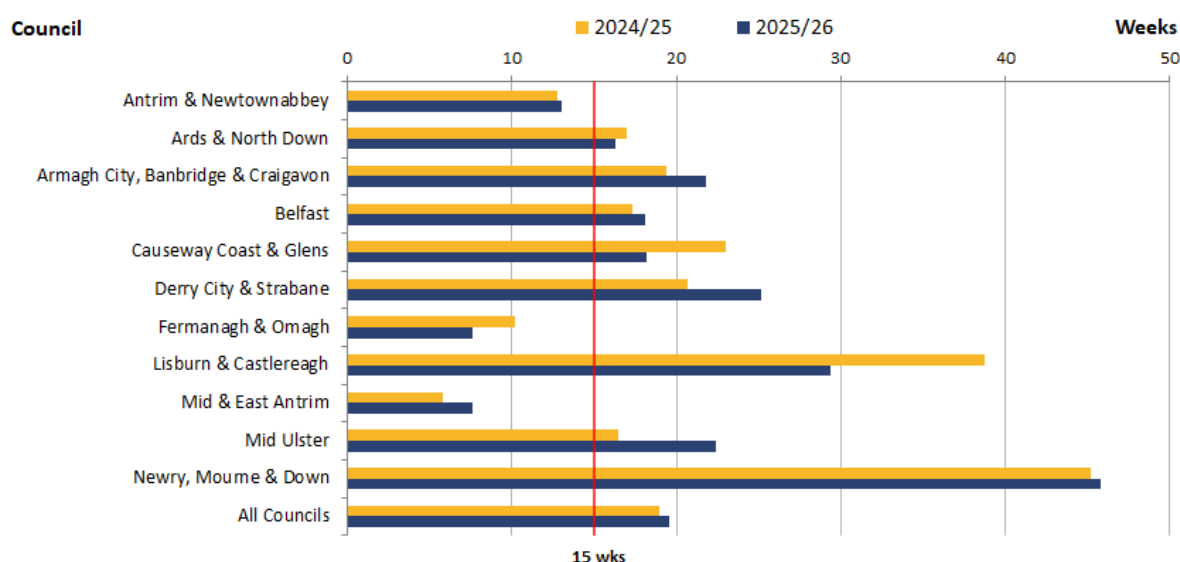


It is a statutory target for each council that local development planning applications will be processed from the date valid to decision issued or withdrawal date within an average of 15 weeks.

The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during 2025/26 was 19.6 weeks. This exceeds the statutory target of 15 weeks and represents an increase of 0.6 weeks from the average processing time reported for 2024/25 (19.0 weeks).

Three of the 11 councils met the 15 week target in 2025/26; these were Mid and East Antrim (7.6 weeks), Fermanagh and Omagh (7.6 weeks) and Antrim and Newtownabbey (13.0 weeks). See Figure 4.1. [Refer to Table 4.2.](#)

Fig 4.2 Local development average processing times by council, 2024/25 & 2025/26

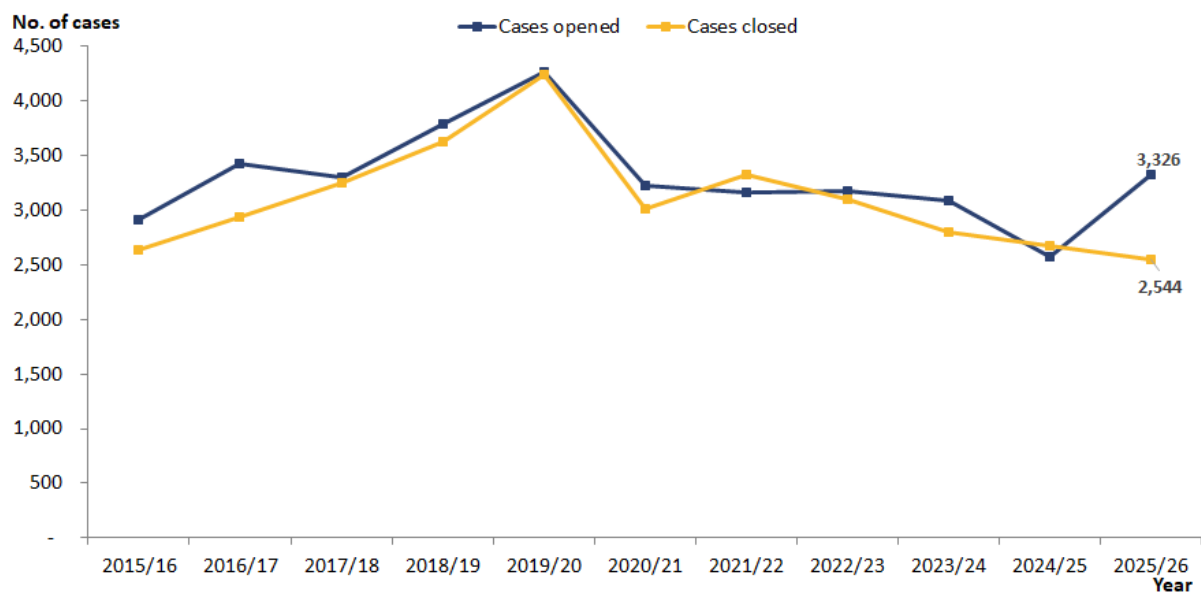




Chapter 4: Enforcement activity

The number of enforcement cases opened in NI during 2025/26 was 3,326; up by 29.3% over the year (2,572). The number of cases closed during 2025/26 was 2,544; down by 4.8% over the year from 2,673 (Figure 6.1). [Refer to Table 6.1.](#)

Fig 6.1 Enforcement cases opened & closed, annually, 2015/16 to 2025/26



The number of live enforcement cases over two years old stood at 1,826 at the end of March 2026, accounting for 39.1% of all live cases. This compared with 40.8% of live cases at the end of March 2025. [Refer to Table 6.4.](#)

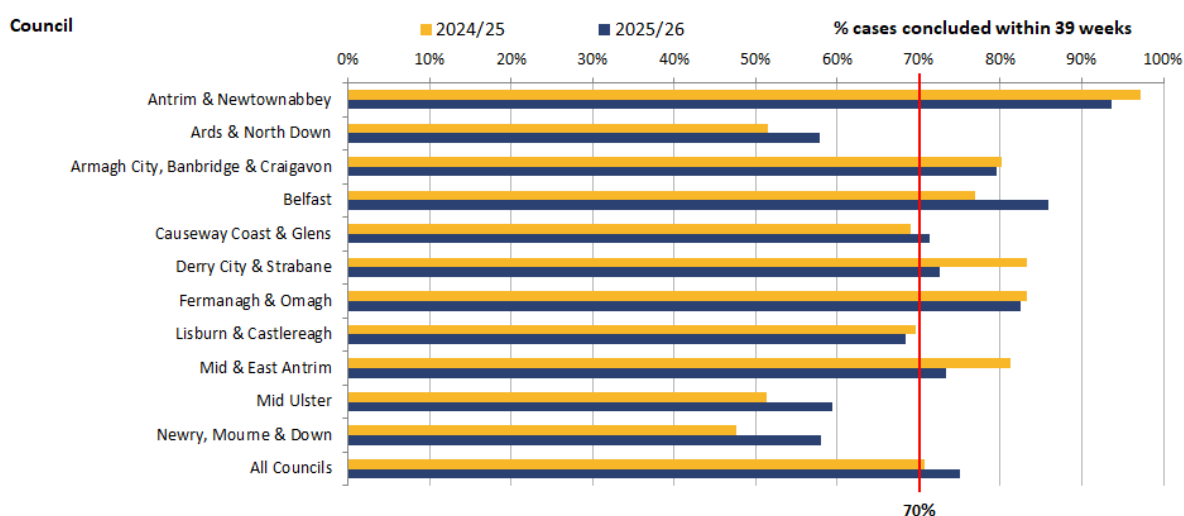
Enforcement cases statutory target



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, 75.1% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during 2025/26 this exceeds the statutory target of 70%. This represents an increase from the rate reported for the same period last year (70.7%).

Fig 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, 2025 & 2026



Seven of the 11 councils individually met the statutory target in 2025/26, one more than the previous year.

Antrim and Newtownabbey recorded the highest percentage of cases processed within 39 weeks, with 93.7% processed within target during 2025/26. 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](#).