Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann um Staitisticí agus Taighde

Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn Bonneagair
Depairtment fur Infrastructure
www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS

Third Quarter 2025/26 Statistical Bulletin

October to December 2025: Provisional Figures







Theme: People and Places
Coverage: Northern Ireland
Frequency: Quarterly
Date of Publication: 1 April 2026

Published by: Analysis, Statistics & Research Branch
Department for Infrastructure
1st Floor, James House, Gasworks Site,
2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA

Statistician: Nicole Edgar-Fitzsimons
Telephone: 028 90540804
Email: ASRB@nisra.gov.uk

OFFICIAL STATISTICS
Accredited

Contents

Key points	3
Infographic	4
Introduction	5
Chapter 1: Overall NI planning activity	6
Chapter 2: Major development	10
Chapter 3: Local development	12
Chapter 4: Enforcement activity	14

Key points

- There were 2,489 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during the third quarter of 2025/26; an increase of six percent from the previous quarter and nearly six percent on the same period a year earlier. This comprised of 2,426 local, 61 major and two regionally significant planning applications.

- In the third quarter of 2025/26, 2,309 planning applications were decided, an increase of eighteen percent from the previous quarter and similar to the number of applications decided in the same period a year earlier. Decisions were issued on 2,282 local and 27 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 2025/26 was 19.6 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represents an increase from the average processing time reported for the same period a year earlier (19.2 weeks). Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first nine months of 2025/26.

- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first nine months of 2025/26 was 38.6 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 30 week target but represents a decrease of one week from the average processing time reported for the same period a year earlier (39.6 weeks).

- Across councils 75.2% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first nine months of 2025/26, meeting the 70% target. This represents an increase from the rate recorded for the same period in 2024/25 (70.1%). Individually, five of the 11 councils were meeting the 70% target after the first nine months of 2025/26.

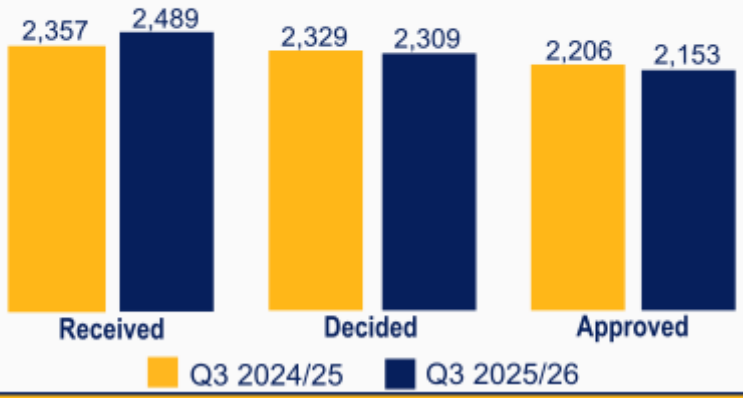
Northern Ireland Planning Statistics Q3 2025/26

NISRA Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann um Staitistíocht agus Taighde

Department for Infrastructure
An Roinn Bonneagair
Department fur Infrastructure
www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Overall planning applications

Applications received, decided & approved



Comparing Q3 2025/26 with Q3 2024/25:

- ⬆ 5.6% **increase** in the number of applications received
- ⬇ 0.9% **decrease** in the number of applications decided
- ⬇ 2.4% **decrease** in the number of applications approved

Applications received

A total of 2,489 planning application were received during Q3 2025/26

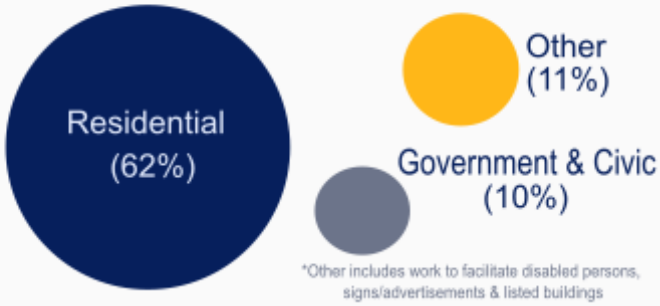


2,426 (97%) Local

61 (2%) Major

2 (<0.1%) Regionally Significant

3 largest development types



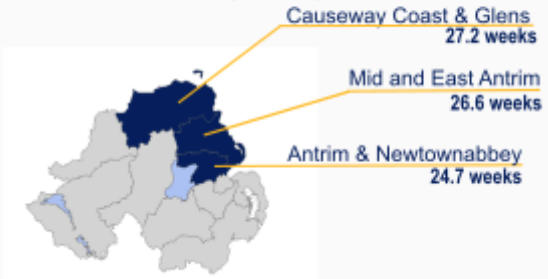
*Other includes work to facilitate disabled persons, signs/advertisements & listed buildings

Planning statutory targets - April to December 2024 & 2025

Average processing times (weeks) - major



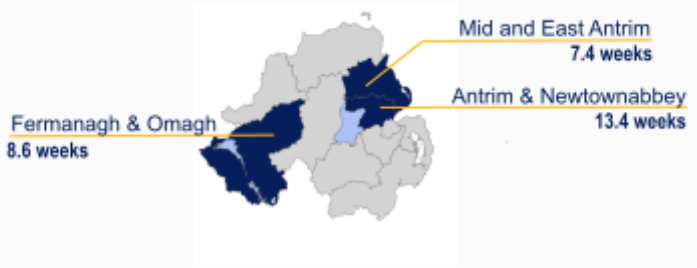
Councils within major targets



Average processing times (weeks) - local



Councils within local targets



% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks



Councils within enforcement targets



For further information please contact ASRB@nisra.gov.uk or view reports at: https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics

Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Third Quarter 2025/26 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 2025/26.

Quarterly figures for 2025/26 are provisional and will be subject to scheduled revisions ahead of finalised annual figures, to be published in July 2026.

The records of all planning applications from 1 April to 31 December 2025 were transferred in January 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 February 2026.

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

Future releases

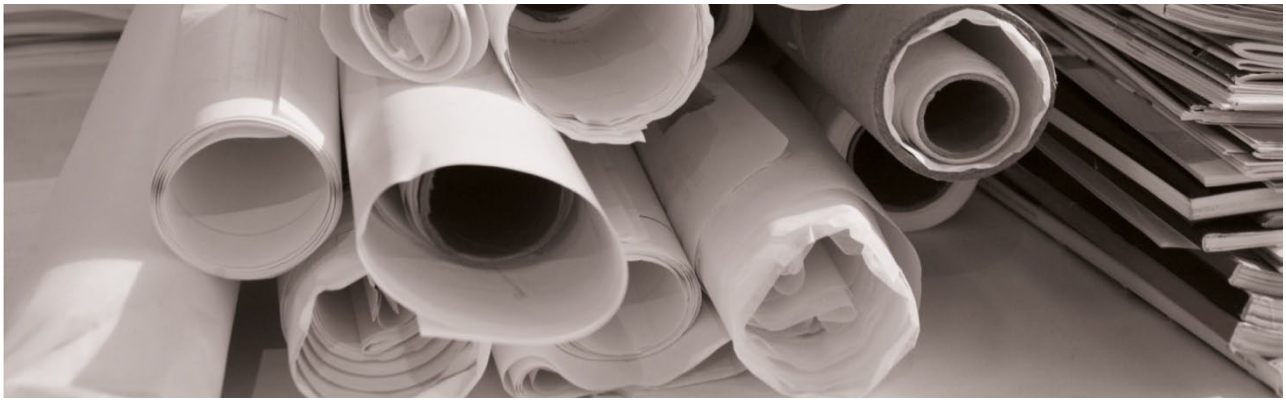
The next report will be an annual report covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The annual report is planned for release in July 2026. See GOV.UK Release Calendar and upcoming statistical releases on the Department's website for future publication dates.

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

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

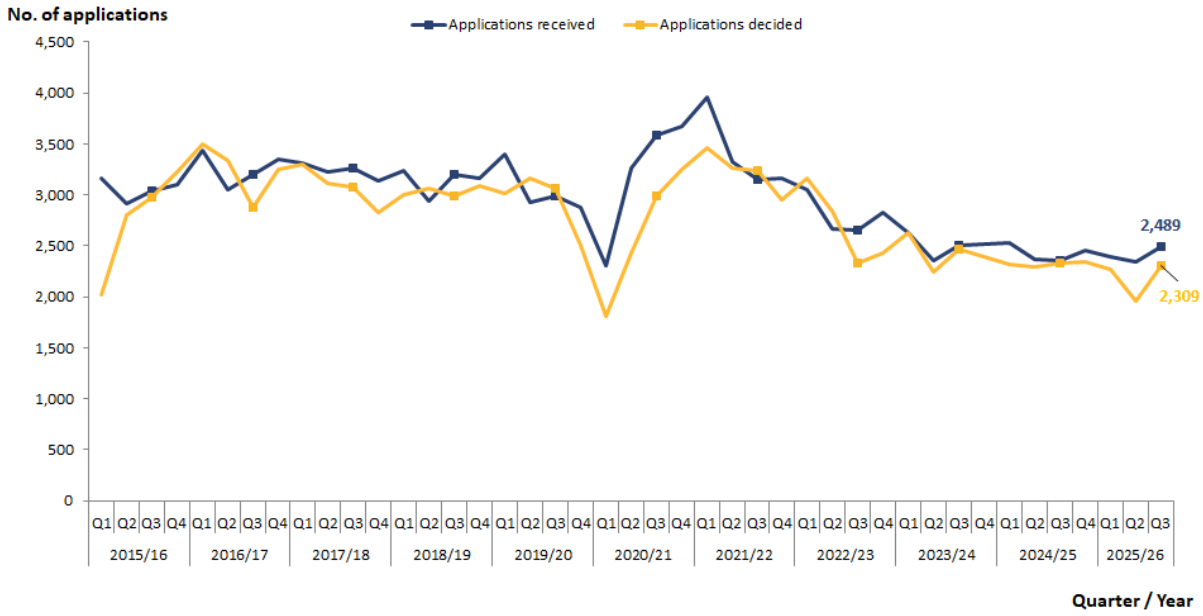
The volume of planning applications received in the third quarter of 2025/26 has increased from the previous quarter and is higher than the level recorded in the third quarter of 2024/25. For applications processed (i.e. decided or withdrawn) the volume processed increased over the quarter but decreased from the same period a year earlier. The number of enforcement cases opened in the third quarter of 2025/26 was down on the previous quarter but higher than the same period a year earlier. Enforcements closed in the third quarter of 2025/26 was higher 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 2025/26 was 2,489; up from the previous quarter (2,347) and up from the same period a year earlier (2,357), (Figure 1.1). Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.

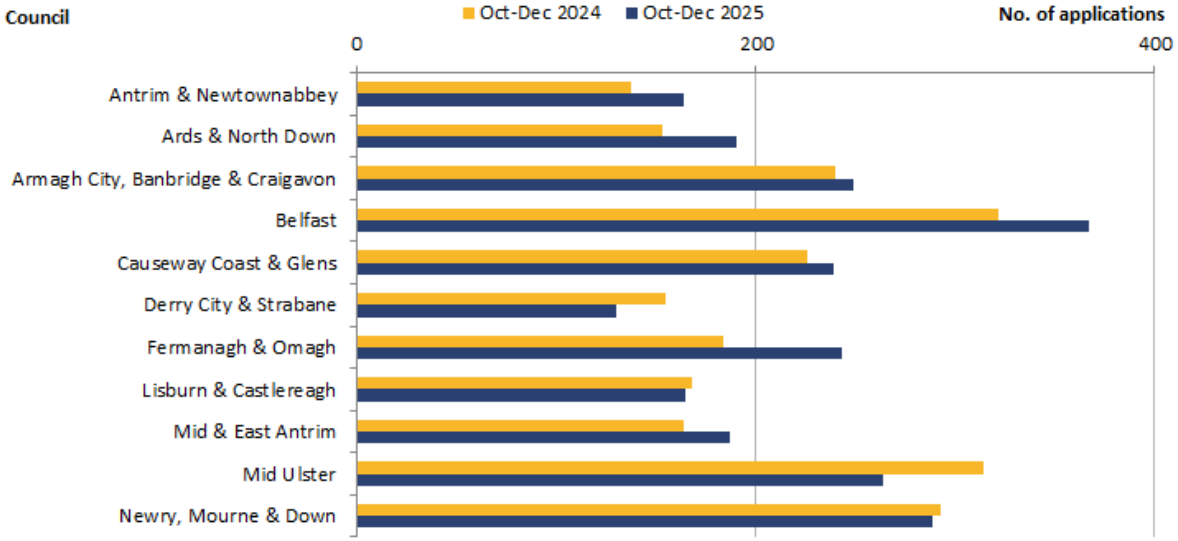
Fig 1.1 NI planning applications, quarterly, April 2015 to December 2025



Two councils reported a decrease in the number of planning applications received in Q3 2025/26 compared with the previous quarter, with the greatest percentage decrease in Derry and Strabane (-19.3%). 9 councils reported an increase over the quarter, with the increase greatest in Fermanagh and Omagh (35.8%).

Comparing Q3 2025/26 with the same period in 2024/25, four of the eleven councils reported a decrease in the number of applications received, with the greatest decrease reported by Mid Ulster (-16.7%). Seven councils reported an increase over the year, with the increase greatest in Fermanagh and Omagh (27.3%). See Figure 1.2

Fig 1.2 Applications received by council, October – December 2024 & 2025



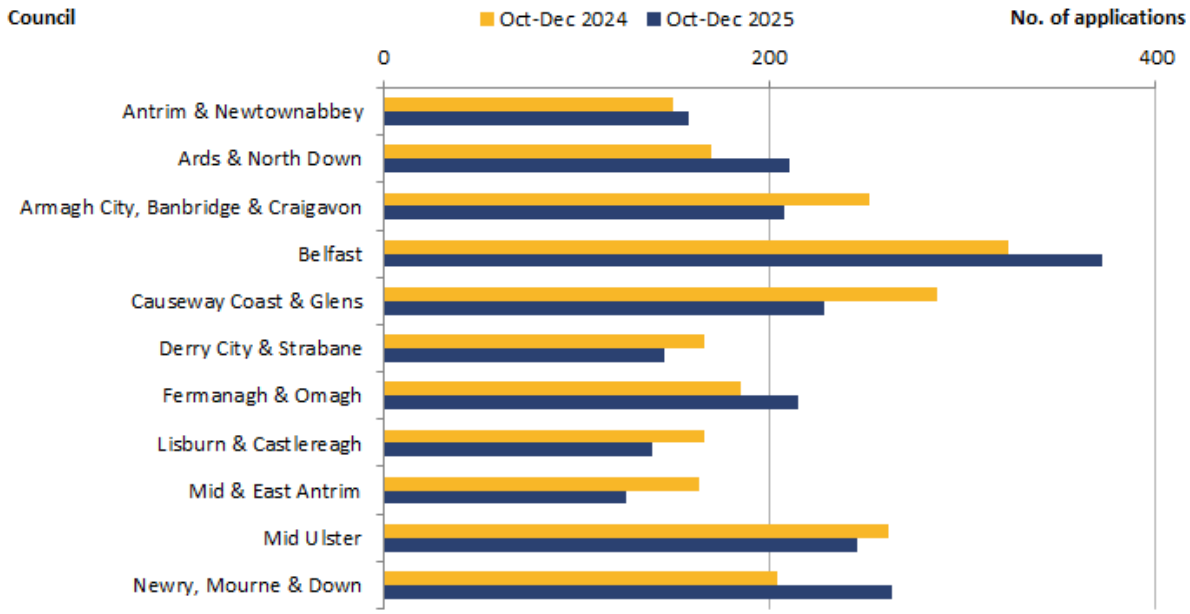
Applications decided

The number of planning decisions issued during Q3 2025/26 was 2,309; an increase of 18.1% on Q2 2025/26 (1,955) and similar to the same period a year earlier (2,329). Refer to Tables 1.1, 1.2.

Three councils reported a decrease in the number of planning applications decided in Q3 2025/26 compared with the previous quarter, with the greatest decrease in Lisburn and Castlereagh (-18.7%). Eight councils reported an increase over the quarter, with the increase greatest in Belfast (121.4%).

Comparing Q3 2025/26 with the same period in 2024/25, six of the eleven councils reported a decrease in the number of applications decided, with the largest decrease recorded in Mid and East Antrim (-22.7%). Five councils reported an increase over the year, with the greatest percentage increase in Newry, Mourne and Down (28.9%). See Figure 1.3.

Fig 1.3 Applications decided by council, October – December 2024 & 2025



In Q3 2025/26, 140 applications were withdrawn, an increase the previous quarter (132) and substantially lower than the same period in 2024/25 (181).

Approval rates

The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for all planning applications was 93.2 % in Q3 2025/26. This was a decrease on the previous quarter (95.5%) and the same quarter a year earlier (94.7%). Refer to Table 1.1.

Approval rates varied across councils during Q3 2025/26, from 84.0% in Newry, Mourne and Down to 96.9% in Causeway Coast & Glens. 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 7,725 live applications in the planning system across NI at the end of December 2025, up from the end of September 2025 (7,685) and from the count at the end of the December 2024 (7,544).

Three out of every ten live applications at the end of December 2025 were over one year old (32.5%); like the proportion reported at the end of September 2025 (32.0%) and similar to the figure at the end of December 2024 (32.3%). Refer to Table 1.3.

Departmental activity

Two departmental applications were received in Q3 2025/26, an increase from the previous quarter (1), and one was received in the same period last year. There were no decisions in Q3 2025/26, one decision was made in the previous quarter, and none in the same quarter last year. No departmental applications have been withdrawn since Q4 2024/25.

At the end of December 2025 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 nine RSD applications live in the planning system at the end of December 2025, 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 four of them.

Development type

Most planning applications received and decided in NI are for residential development. Residential applications accounted for over three-fifths (1,541; 61.9 %) of applications received in Q3 2025/26, followed by 'Other' (271; 10.8%) and 'Government and Civic (243; 9.8%).

The top three development types decided in Q3 2025/26 were 'Residential' (1,517), 'Other' (254) and 'Government and Civic' (171). Refer to Tables 5.1, 5.2.

Renewable energy activity

Twenty-nine renewable energy applications were received in Q3 2025/26; an increase on the previous quarter (20) and the number received during the same period last year (22). Twenty-one renewable energy applications were decided during Q3 2025/26**;** this compares to 15 in the previous quarter and 19 in the same period last year.

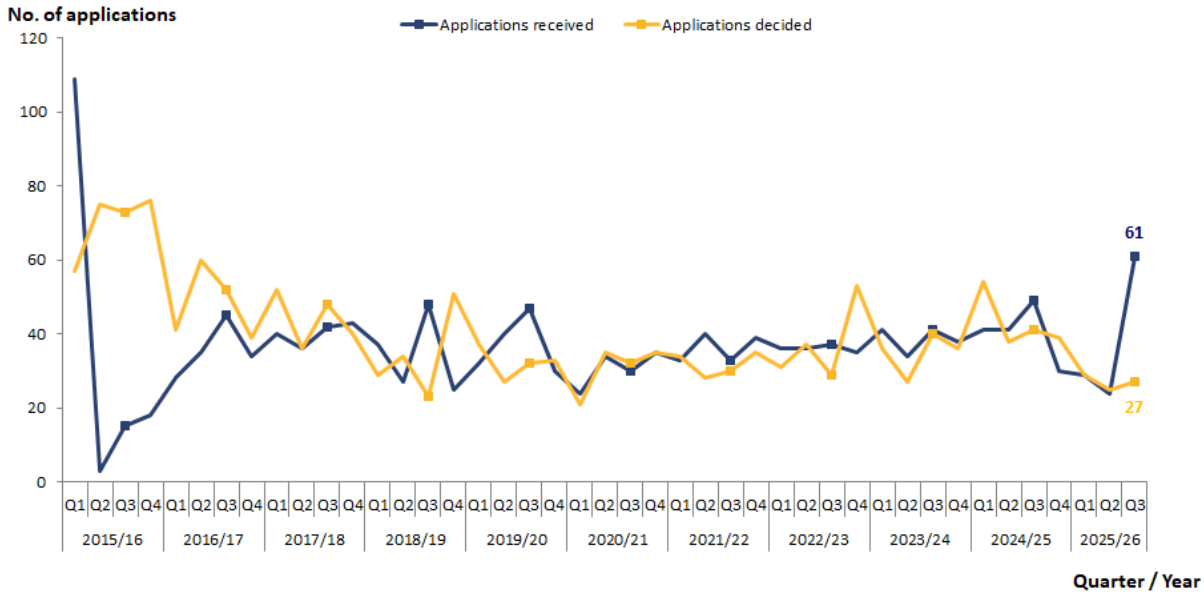


Chapter 2:

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 61 major planning applications were received in NI during Q3 2025/26, up from the number received in the previous quarter (24) and the same period a year earlier (49). Refer to Table 3.1.

Fig 3.1 Major development applications, quarterly, April 2015 to December 2025



During Q3 2025/26, 27 major planning applications were decided; up from the numbers decided in the previous quarter (25) and down from the numbers in the same quarter last year (41), see Figure 3.1.

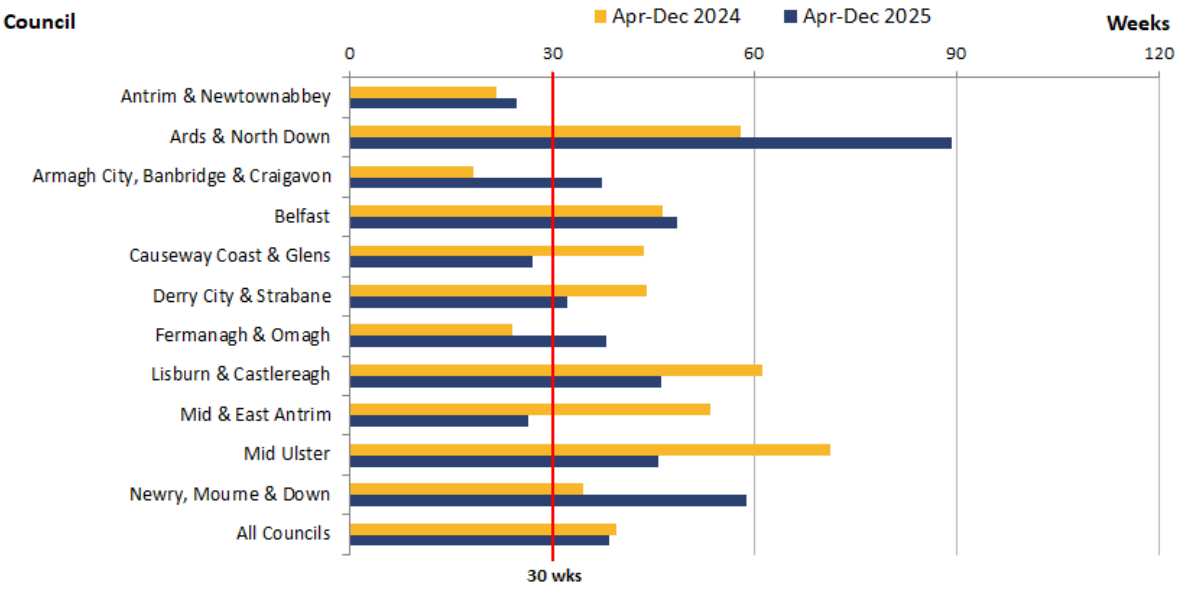
The approval rate for major applications decided upon in NI during Q3 2025/26 was 96.3%. Refer to Tables 3.1, 3.2.

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.

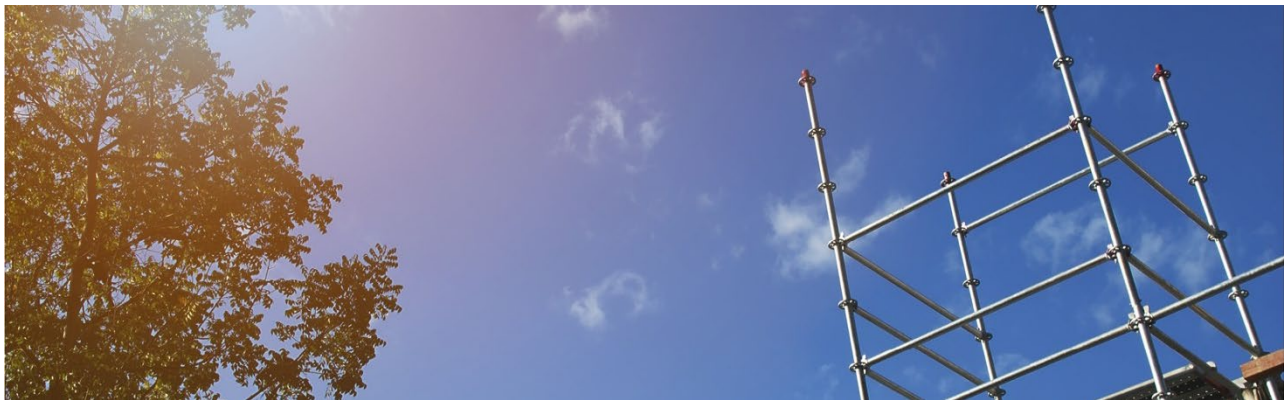
Figure 3.2 presents annual average processing times for major applications. The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first nine months of 2025/26 was 38.6 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 30 week target but represents a decrease of one week compared with the same period in 2024/25 (39.6 weeks). In total, 89 major planning applications were decided or withdrawn by councils during the first nine months of 2025/26, the figure for the same period last year was 139.

Fig 3.2 Major development average processing times by council, April to December 2024 & 2025



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.

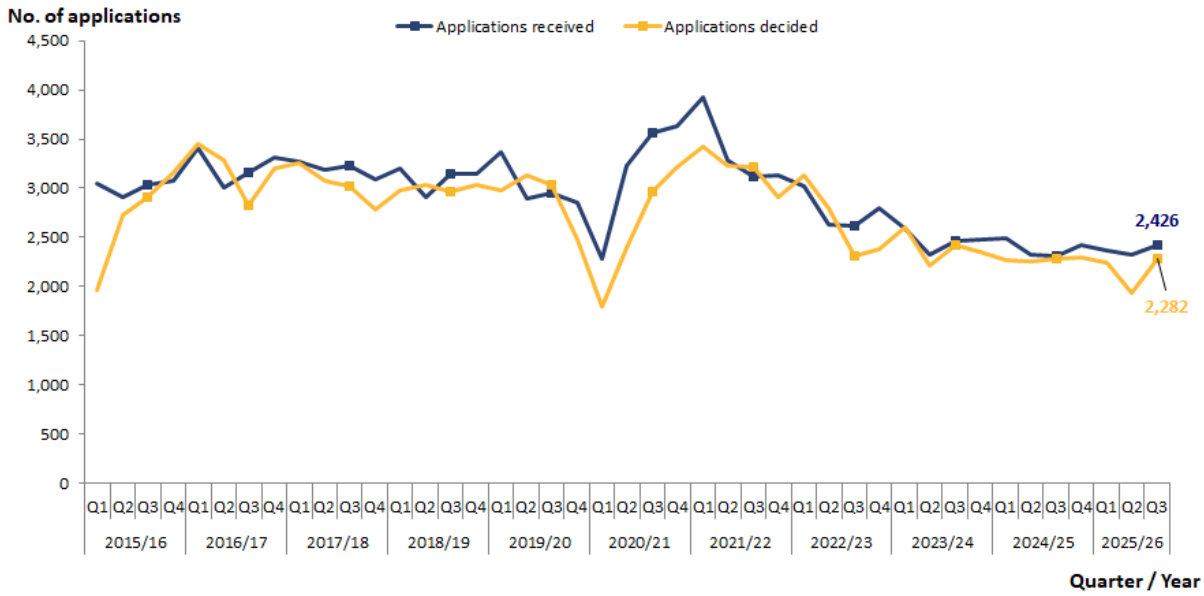


Chapter 3:

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 2025/26 was 2,426; an increase on the number received in the previous quarter (2,322: 4.5%) and up 5.2% when compared to the same period a year earlier (2,307). Refer to Table 4.1.

Fig 4.1 Local development applications, quarterly, April 2015 to December 2025



The number of local applications decided in Q3 2025/26 was 2,282; up over the quarter (1,930) and down marginally when compared with the same period a year earlier (2,288); refer to Table 4.1. The overall Northern Ireland approval rate for local applications was 93.2% in Q3 2025/26; a decrease on the rates reported for the previous quarter (95.4%) and the same period a year earlier (94.7%).

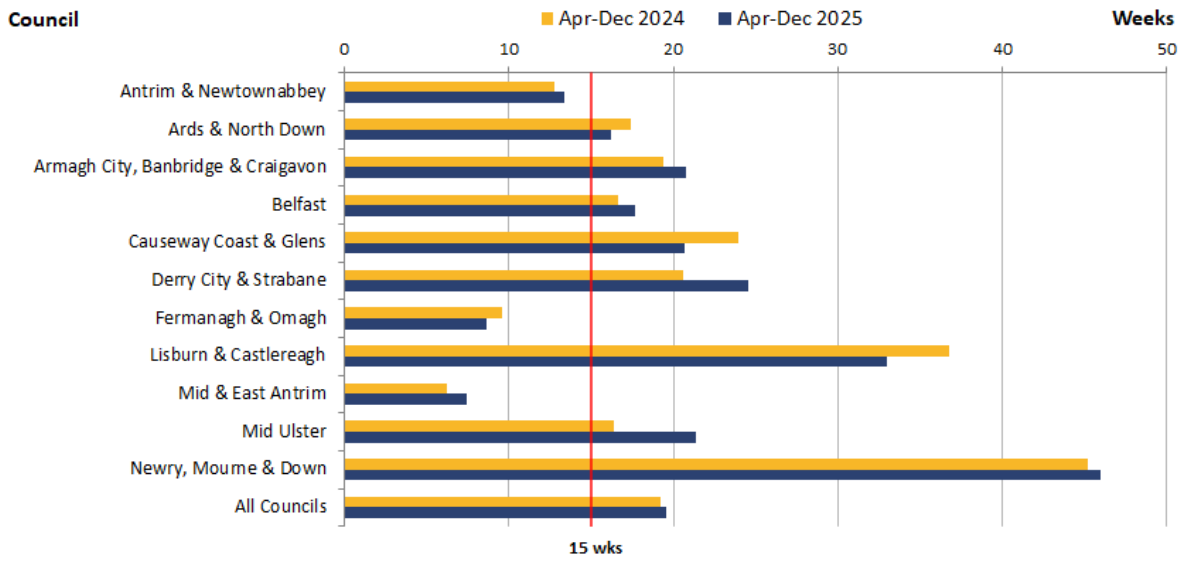
Local planning applications statutory target

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 2025/26 was 19.6 weeks; a slight increase when compared with the same period a year earlier (19.2 weeks). This exceeds the statutory target of 15 weeks. There were 6,871 local applications decided or withdrawn by councils during the first nine months of 2025/26, the figure for the same period last year was 7,287.

Three of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first nine months of 2025/26: Mid and East Antrim (7.4 weeks), Fermanagh and Omagh (8.6 weeks) and Antrim and Newtownabbey (13.4 weeks), see Figure 4.1. Refer to Table 4.2.

Fig 4.2 Local development average processing times by council, April to December 2024 & 2025



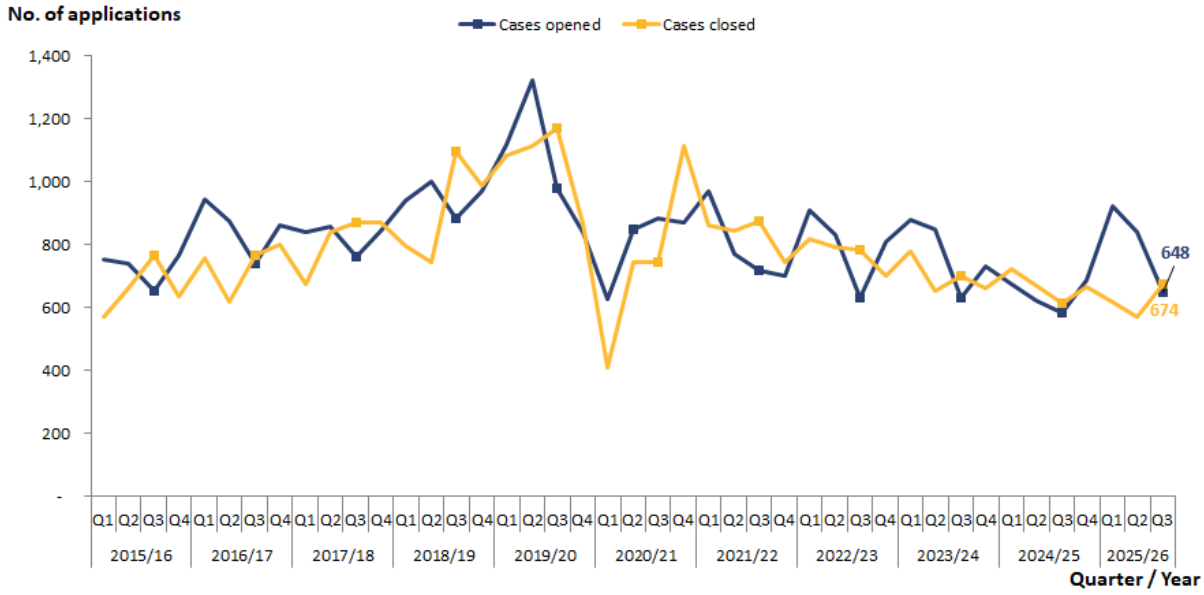


Chapter 4:

Enforcement activity

The number of enforcement cases opened in NI during the third quarter of 2025/26 was 648; down by 23.0% over the quarter (842) and up by 11.1% when compared to the same period a year earlier (583). The number of cases closed during Q3 2025/26 was 674; up by 17.8% from the previous quarter (572) and 9.4 % from the same period a year earlier (616), see Figure 6.1. Refer to Table 6.1.

Fig 6.1 Enforcement cases opened & closed, quarterly from April 2014 to December 2025



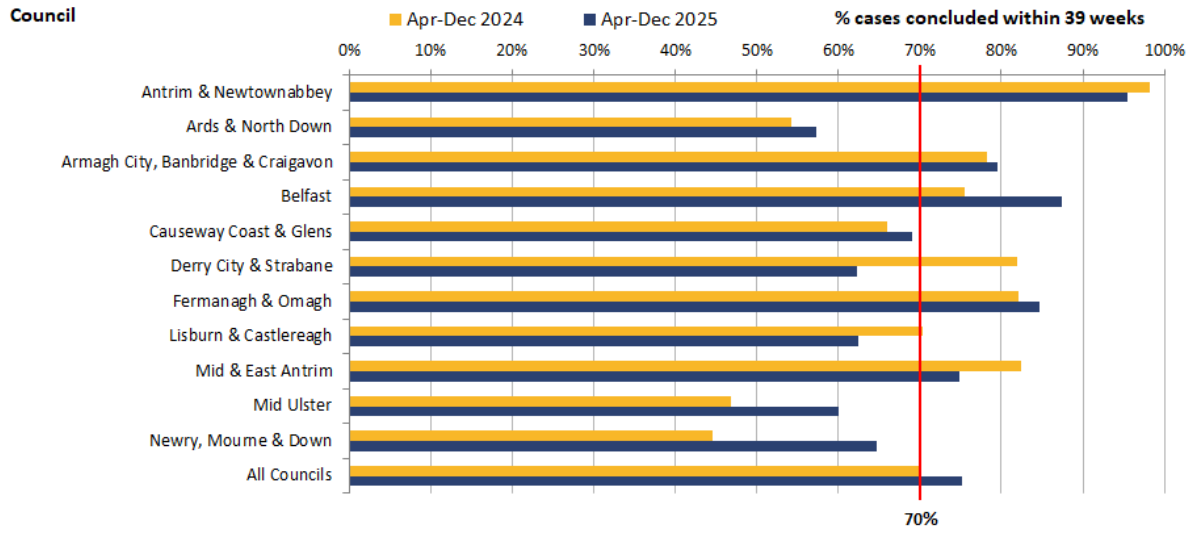
The number of enforcement cases over two years old stood at 1,797 at the end of December 2025, accounting for 40.5% of all live cases. This compares with 39.4% of live cases at the end of September 2025 and 40.1% at the end of December 2024. Refer to Table 6.4.

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, 75.2% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first nine months of 2025/26 meeting the statutory target of 70%. This represents an increase from the rate reported for the same period last year (70.1%).

Fig 6.2 Percentage of cases concluded within 39 weeks by council, April to December 2024 & 2025



Five of the 11 councils were individually meeting the statutory target at the end of the first nine months in 2025/26.

Antrim and Newtownabbey recorded the highest percentage of cases processed within 39 weeks, with 95.5% processed within target during the first nine months of 2025/26. See Figure 6.2 and Refer to Table 6.2.

© Crown copyright 2026

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit the national archives website or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk. Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned. This publication is also available on the Department for Infrastructure website. Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at ASRB@nisra.gov.uk.

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.