



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Planning application statistics

Technical Notes



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If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, complete the form at

<http://forms.communities.gov.uk/> or write to us at:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Fry Building

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Telephone: 030 3444 0000

For all our latest news and updates follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mhclg>

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# National Statistics Status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value as set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). It is the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's statisticians' responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was first confirmed in June 2012, following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority.

## Data collection

From 1962 to March 1979, annual statistics of planning applications received and decided by authorities that undertake district level planning activity were submitted by local planning authorities in response to a request made by the department (Circular 52/61). Since April 1979, they have been collated, on a quarterly basis, on the PS1 and PS2 General Development Control statistical returns (District). From the March quarter 2008 until the March quarter 2014, the PS1, PS2 and the Fee1 (revenue collected in respect of PS1 and PS2) returns were combined as a single return, the PSF return, with the Fee element being dropped from the June quarter 2014 but the PS1 and PS2 continuing. 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). Since January to March 2019, the PS1/2 and CPS1/2 forms have been submitted to the department via DELTA – the department's housing and planning electronic data collection system. Previously the Interform system was used.

The data collected have been chosen to provide useful and relevant information on the level and trends in planning applications and decisions to users while ensuring that the burden of completing the returns placed on local authorities is not excessive. The analysis carried out by the department aggregates the raw data and calculates percentages to allow comparison between authorities and between different quarters or years. In particular, the percentage of decisions permitted, and the percentage of decisions made in a specified period allow the performance and efficiency of local authorities to be judged.

# Data quality

## Things to note on this release

### Assessment of data quality

In 2015, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published a [regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data](#). To assess the quality of the data provided for this release, the department has followed that standard.

In the January to March quarter of 2021, 324 out of 327 planning authorities (99.1 per cent) submitted district-level planning data and 161 out of 163 planning authorities (98.8 per cent) submitted county-level planning data in time for this publication<sup>1</sup>.

For the January to March 2021 publication, district-level planning data have also been refreshed and re-imputed for the previous seven quarters going back to April to June 2019. This takes account of data submitted or revised since figures were last published and is in line with departmental statisticians' agreed revisions policy for housing and planning statistics.

Although - for most local planning authorities - the area for which the planning statistics are published relates to the entire geographical extent of the authority, they relate to only part of the authority's area for those local authorities which include part of national park or a development corporation, which are planning authorities in their own right – e.g. planning applications for the part of Ryedale District Council's area within the North Yorkshire Moors National Park are decided by the North Yorkshire Moors National Park Authority. This needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the published local authority level figures.

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers of authorities are affected by the reorganisation of some local planning authorities on 1 April 2020, whereby the four Buckinghamshire districts (Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe) merged with Buckinghamshire County Council to form the Buckinghamshire unitary authority.

In 2015, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) published a [regulatory standard for the quality assurance of administrative data](#). To assess the quality of the data provided for this release the department has followed that standard.

The standard is supported with an [Administrative Data Quality Assurance Toolkit](#), which provides useful guidance on the practices that can be adopted to assure the quality of the data they utilise.

The planning applications statistical release is produced by MHCLG based on data provided via its Interform data collection system by 352 local planning authorities<sup>2</sup>. An assessment of the level of risk based on the Quality Assurance Toolkit is as follows:

Risk/Profile Matrix Statistical Series	Administrative Source	Data Quality Concern	Public Interest	Matrix Classification
Planning Application Statistics	Local planning authorities individual planning systems	Low	Medium	Low Risk [A1]

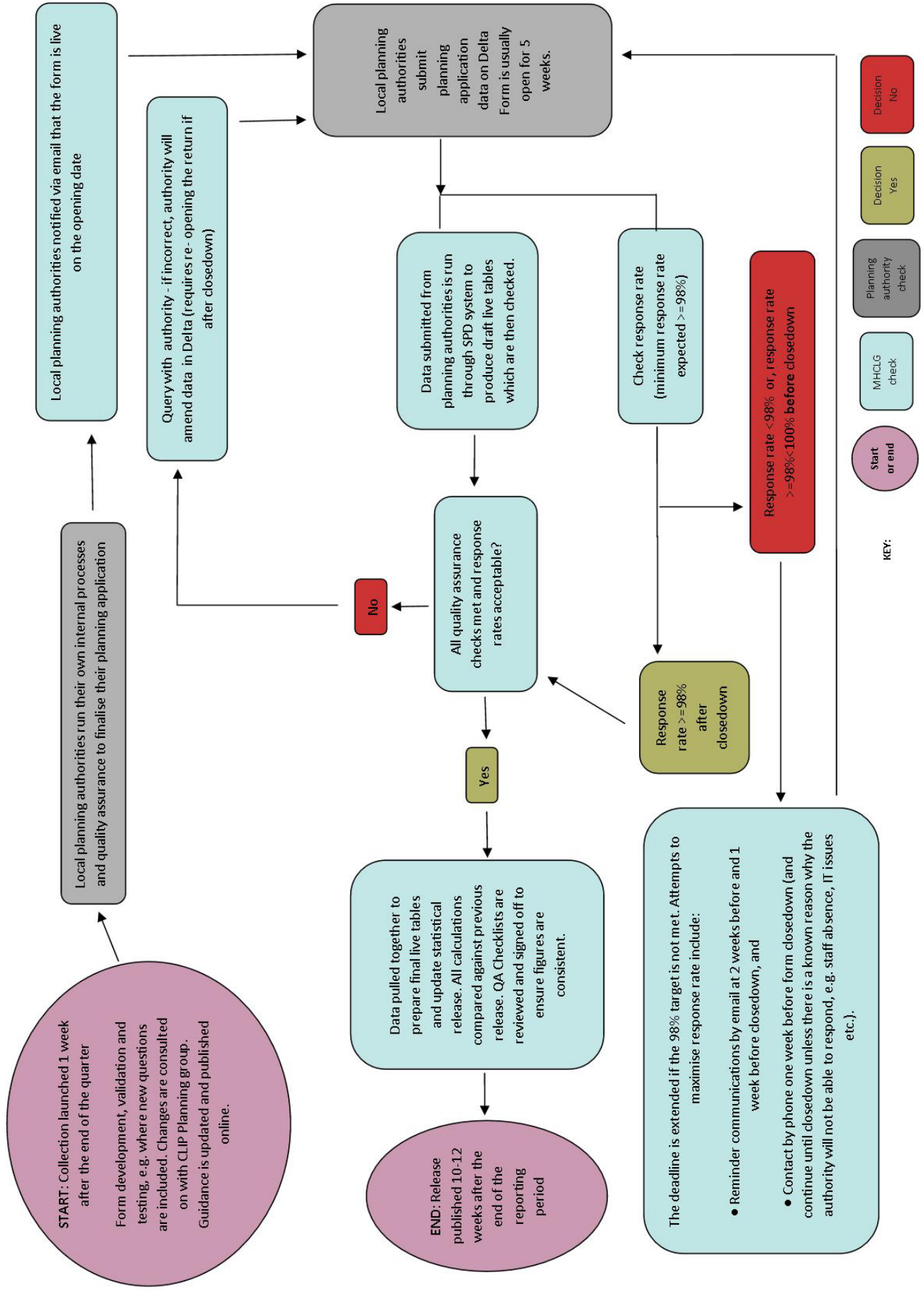
The publication of planning application statistics can be considered as medium profile, as there is some media interest, with moderate political sensitivity especially at the local level.

The data quality concern is considered a low concern given that the data is collected from each local planning authority, via the data collection system Interform which includes built in quality assurance checks. The data are then further quality assured by the responsible statisticians, who perform further detailed validation and checks, spotting and correcting any errors.

Overall, the Planning application statistics have been assessed as A1: Low Risk. A full outline of the statistical production process and quality assurance carried out is provided in the flow chart in the figure below. Further details are also provided against each of the four areas outlined in the Quality Assurance Toolkit.

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<sup>2</sup> Since 1 April 2020, 327 local planning authorities have completed the PS1/2 return and 163 complete the CPS1/2 return. This involves 352 separate local planning authorities: the 327 completing the PS1/2 and additionally 25 county councils that complete only the CPS1/2.



## **Operational context and administrative data collection**

The department and its predecessor departments have collected information on planning applications since as far back as 1962.

Information on planning applications is collected as part of the routine administration of the planning system in England. Local government administers much of the planning system, including preparing Local Plans, determining planning applications and carrying out enforcement against unauthorised development.

A helpful guide to the planning system in England is available online

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plain-english-guide-to-the-planning-system>.

In particular, the flow chart in Annex C on page 20 of the guide shows the stages in the planning application process.

For this statistical publication, the department collects aggregate level information on planning applications from local planning authorities via its PS1/PS2 and CPS1 /CPS2 Interform collections for 'district matters' and 'county matters' data respectively. This information is then published to provide up to data information on the number and type of applications received as well as the relevant performance and timeliness of planning authorities

The latest versions of the data collection forms which are returned by the local planning authority are available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/district-planning-matters-return-ps1-and-ps2>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/county-planning-matters-return-cps1-and-cps2>

## **Communication with data supply partners**

Planning authorities are supplied with comprehensive guidance to ensure that there is a common understanding of what information is to be supplied. Feedback on the return/statistical release is regularly sought from data providers and user. The department regularly meets with data providers via the Central Local Information Partnership (CLIP) Planning Statistics Sub-group and has a data collection and planning alert mailing list. This



allows any changes or issues with the data to be clearly communicated to data providers and interested users.

The form is usually 'live' for five weeks. Should the minimum response rate of 98% not be met by the deadline, an extension may be agreed and the Data Collection team will continue attempts to maximise the response rate until the new deadline. However, regular contact with local authorities as well as reminder emails throughout the time the form is 'live', result in relatively high response rates, as outlined in the table below. Errors are minimised by the high response rate on the return, nonetheless they may also occur due to authorities not submitting information in time. The historic response rate on planning application statistics has been high: averages of 99.7% for PS1/2 and 99.4% for CPS1/2 over the seventeen quarters since January to March 2017.

### Response rates for PS1/2 and CPS1/2 returns <sup>1</sup>

Quarter	Response rate for PS1/2 <sup>2</sup>	Response rate for CPS1/2 <sup>3</sup>
January to March 2017	100.0%	100.0%
April to June 2017	100.0%	100.0%
July to September 2017	99.4%	98.8%
October to December 2017	100.0%	99.4%
January to March 2018	99.7%	99.4%
April to June 2018	99.7%	98.8%
July to September 2018	100.0%	100.0%
October to December 2018	100.0%	100.0%
January to March 2019	100.0%	100.0%
April to June 2019	100.0%	100.0%
July to September 2019	100.0%	100.0%
October to December 2019	99.7%	99.4%
January to March 2020	99.7%	98.8%
April to June 2020	99.4%	99.4%
July to September 2020	99.4%	98.8%
October to December 2020	98.8%	97.5%
January to March 2021	99.1%	98.8%

1. The rates shown are calculated using the latest data, taking account of any returns received since the quarter's statistics were initially published.
2. 339 authorities to 31 March 2019; 330 authorities from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020; 327 authorities from 1 April 2020
3. 164 authorities to 31 March 2019; 163 authorities from 1 April 2019.

## **Quality assurance principles, standards and checks by data suppliers**

Local planning authorities capture their planning application data using different software providers. As there are 352 different organisations supplying data to the department, it is not possible to fully understand and monitor each individual provider's practical processes. To mitigate this lack of direct oversight, the department ensures additional effort is put into the quality assurance checks carried out when the data is received. There are extensive validations in place on the data inputted by local authorities.

The department also reviews and updates guidance put out to local authorities each year, maintaining regular communication with providers throughout. Any anticipated changes to the forms will be discussed in detail and give specific regard to the providers data collections and storage systems where required.

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

## **Producers' quality-assurance investigation and documentation**

Whilst local authorities are expected to carry out their own checks on the data submitted, and there are validations in place issues may still pass through the collection system. These errors could be due to data input or software errors.

To detect any errors after data submission further checks will be carried out by the department's statisticians including monitoring for extreme values and comparing submitted figures against historical submissions.

Further final quality checks are then performed when producing the final end product of the statistical release and live tables. These checks use a clear checklist approach to ensure published figures are consistent across the release and live tables, with each check being systematically signed off when it has been completed. Once this final check has been signed off then the data is ready to be published.

## Imputation

Some variables for the small number of non-responding authorities are imputed using data from similar authorities, although some information, such as the number of enforcement notices issued, is not imputed. In particular, missing values are imputed for four questions on the PS1 form (number of applications received; withdrawn; decided and delegated) and all questions on the PS2 form. No imputation is carried out for county level planning data from the CPS1/2 forms.

Where a particular local planning authority has not submitted data for a particular quarter, an imputed figure is derived by: i) calculating the average percentage change since an earlier period for similar local planning authorities<sup>3</sup> and then: ii) applying that percentage change to the figure reported by the non-responding authority for the earlier period. For the four variables that are imputed for the PS1, the earlier period used is the corresponding quarter of the previous year, whereas for the PS2 variables, the earlier quarter used is the immediately preceding one.

## Definitions

### **Data on housing approvals provided by Glenigan**

Units granted residential planning permission are recorded when a residential development site receives:

- detailed residential planning permission; or
- approval of reserved matters.

The figures exclude retirement homes, hostels, student accommodation and tourist accommodation. They include residential units on mixed use developments (commercial and residential). They are for England only.

Other details:

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<sup>3</sup> Groups of similar local planning authorities are defined by splitting local planning authorities into 13 groups: these are based on the nine former Government Office Regions. Four of them (London, North East, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber) are split into two areas – e.g. whether inside or outside the former metropolitan county area, in the case of the West Midlands.

- Units granted permission through a permitted development right are not included.
- Units from different phases of a single residential development site are included in these figures only when planning permission is obtained for that phase.
- To avoid double counting, units on residential development sites with planning permission are excluded where the residential development site has already received a planning permission within the previous twelve months.
- Where multiple planning permissions are given to a residential development site in the same quarter, only the most recent planning permission is included for the purpose of counting units with permission.
- Where a planning permission has been granted amending the terms of an existing permission, such as the construction operating times of the site, the permission is excluded to avoid double counting.

It is not possible to use these annual figures to estimate the total stock of units on uncompleted sites with permission.

Other definitions used in this publication can be found in the **‘Housing statistics and English Housing survey’ glossary** published by MHCLG and that can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-statistics-and-england-housing-survey-glossary>

## Revisions policy

This policy has been developed in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority’s Code of Practice for Statistics and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Revisions Policy and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistical-notice-dclg-revisions-policy>.

It defines two types of revision that the policy covers, as follow:

### Non-Scheduled Revisions

Where a substantial error has occurred as a result of the compilation, imputation or dissemination process, the statistical release, live tables and other accompanying releases will be updated with a correction notice as soon as is practical.

## Scheduled Revisions

Local authorities can submit missing data or revise their PS1/2 and CPS1/2 returns following publication of the data. Data are revised for the previous seven quarters each release. A decision on whether to revise will be made based on the impact of any change and the effect it has on the interpretation of the time series. Provisional figures are labelled in the tables with a “P”.

Revisions to historic data (all data older than that currently due for scheduled revision) are made only where there is a substantial revision, such as a change in methodology or definition. Where small changes have been identified that do not substantially change the data and are not regarded as big enough to warrant a change to the published figures, internal updates are maintained by the department. Previously published information is not revised unless there has been a systematic error.

### **Scale of revisions**

Actual revisions to submitted data that are big enough to result in changes to published national figures are rare, with specific details of any significant revisions being given in this technical note. However, due to the Government’s policy of designating authorities based on their performance over the past two years, there are circumstances where it is more important than usual for the detailed published figures to be accurate at a local authority level. In such circumstances, the department allows authorities to resubmit missing or incorrect data for previous quarters, particularly for Live Tables P151, P152, P153 and P154. These local authority level changes would not normally merit a non-scheduled revision but may be recorded or marked in the published table with a change or footnote. This is to improve the transparency of the performance system in this particular policy area rather than indicating a change to the general approach to making revisions to published statistics. In some cases, the department may require supporting evidence from a local planning authority before it makes these changes, as part of the data checking process.

## Revisions in this release

The only revisions reflected in this quarter’s release are some that have been made routinely as a result of some local planning authorities taking the opportunity given to them

to revise data previously submitted by them for any of the seven previous quarters (April to June 2019 to October to December 2020), and for a few local planning authorities that had not previously submitted a return for a particular quarter to do so.

## Other information

### Uses of the data

The data in this statistical release are used for a variety of purposes. Ministers and officials in the department use this information for policy formulation and development and for decisions on designating poorly-performing local planning authorities. The figures are also of interest to the Planning Inspectorate, local government, planning and development professionals, academics, house builders and developers, other businesses, charities and campaign groups, members of the public and the media. Examples of the uses made of the data by these users are given in the user engagement strategy on planning and land use statistics referred to below. The data are also used to ensure democratic accountability in answers to Parliamentary Questions, ministerial correspondence, Freedom of Information Act cases and queries from the public.

### Related Statistics

Details of some related central government statistics are given in the table below:

<b>Publication (and footnote to link)</b>	<b>What do the statistics show?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Where do the data come from?</b>	<b>What are these figures most appropriate for?</b>
Land Use Change Statistics <sup>4</sup>	The amounts and location of land changing use in England	Annual	Two underlying data sets from Ordnance Survey: i) residential address-based change; and ii) land use-based change	Monitoring development such as changes to residential use. They also provide information on the percentage of new dwellings built on previously developed land and non-previously developed land, the percentage of housing

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/land-use-change-statistics>

				development in flood risk areas, on agricultural land and in the Green Belt and the density (dwellings per hectare) of new housing
Land Use Statistics <sup>5</sup>	Summaries of developed and non-developed land uses and land use within designated Green Belt	Annual	A snapshot of land use taken from Ordnance Survey's Address Base and Mastermap Topography products.	Examining how different land uses are distributed across England.
Generalised Land Use Statistics <sup>6</sup>	Land types within England in 2005	No plans to update	Ordnance Survey Mastermap land categories: nine simplified land categories and an additional 'unclassified' category.	Examining land use within England in 2015: figures available for each Census ward
English Local Authority Green Belt statistics <sup>7</sup>	Information on designated Green Belt land in England by local authority. Digital boundary files (shapefiles) are also available	Annual	Annual Green Belt (AGB) returns from local authorities	Monitoring the size and location of designated Green Belt land, including recent changes
Provision of new build additional affordable housing on Rural Exception sites <sup>8</sup>	Number of completions in England, by local authority	Annual	Local Authority Housing Statistics returns from local authorities: question i2a of Section I: Affordable Housing Supply	Monitoring one type of rural housing development
Affordable housing units granted final planning permission <sup>5</sup>	Numbers of units granted planning permission during the year in England, by local authority, broken down by seven	Annual	Local Authority Housing Statistics returns from local authorities	Monitoring the granting of planning permission for affordable housing units

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-in-england-2018>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/generalised-land-use-database-statistics-for-england-2005>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/green-belt-statistics> (release and tables) and <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/d0337f1b-4ed9-4711-bb2f-7e4ddf569b0e/english-local-authority-green-belt-dataset> (boundary files)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-housing-data>

	ownership/tenure categories			
Local authority development control expenditure and income <sup>9</sup>	Outturn figures reported by individual local authorities for: i) expenditure on employees; ii) running expenses; iii) income from sales, fees & charges and iv) other income	Annual	Annual RO5 returns	Monitoring levels of, and trends in, local authority planning income and expenditure
Public attitudes to house building <sup>10</sup>	Findings from several public attitude questions asked on house building within the British Social Attitudes survey, including whether people support homes being built in their local area	Annual	British Social Attitudes survey 2018 (latest year: published 24 October 2019)	Monitoring public attitudes to house building
Land value estimates for policy appraisal <sup>11</sup>	Residential land value estimates by local authority and average industrial and agricultural values for England	Annual	From a Valuation Office Agency model	Provided specifically for the purpose of policy appraisal
Aggregate Minerals Survey <sup>12</sup>	Information on the national and regional sales, inter-regional flows, transportation, consumption and permitted reserves of	Every four years	The Aggregate Minerals Survey, completed by mineral planning authorities and operators/owners of mineral sites	Providing information to enable monitoring of the aggregates guidelines, which support the National Planning Policy Framework; also monitoring and developing planning policies for the managed

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing> - individual local authority outturn data, published separately for individual financial years, in 'Revenue outturn cultural, environment, regulatory and planning services (RO5)'

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-attitudes-to-house-building-findings-from-the-british-social-attitudes-survey-2018>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/land-value-estimates-for-policy-appraisal-2019> - guidance, rather than official statistics

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/minerals>; independent report, rather than official statistics



	primary aggregates in England.			supply of aggregates in England.
Annual Minerals Raised Survey <sup>13</sup>	Data on non-energy mineral production in Great Britain	Last survey published was for 2014	A survey of mineral operators carried out by the Office for National Statistics under Section 1 of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947	To assist land use planning and decision-making for the supply of minerals in Great Britain. The data are also used by the Office for National Statistics to compile the national accounts.
Non-domestic rating: business floorspace statistics <sup>14</sup>	Statistics on the floorspace and rateable value of a range of classes of properties liable for business rates	Varies: latest publication was in November 2019; previous one was in December 2016	Valuation Office Agency	Monitoring levels of, and trends in, floorspace and rateable values
Planning Inspectorate – monthly statistical release and statistical tables <sup>15</sup>	Figures relating to the work of the Planning Inspectorate, including on infrastructure, development plans, called-in applications and planning appeals	Quarterly	Planning Inspectorate	Monitoring the work of the Planning Inspectorate
Planning Inspectorate appeals data <sup>16</sup>	Detailed information on a selection of the Planning Inspectorate's appeals casework decisions over a five-year rolling period.	Quarterly	Planning Inspectorate	Detailed monitoring of the Planning Inspectorate's appeals decisions.

## Devolved administration statistics

A summary of the planning system in each of the devolved administrations is given below,

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/minerals>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/non-domestic-rating-business-floorspace-statistics>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-inspectorate-statistics>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-inspectorate-appeals-database>

together with a link to their published statistics.

**Scotland:** the Scottish Government establishes overarching land use policies and principles in Scottish Planning Policy, which is applied spatially in the National Planning Framework for Scotland. In the four largest city regions in Scotland, Strategic Development Planning Authorities prepare strategic development plans which set out the vision for long term development and which should address important land use issues that cross local authority boundaries or involve strategic infrastructure. There are 34 planning authorities in Scotland, 32 local authorities and two national park authorities, who must deliver local development plans, in these plans they must identify sites for new development and set decision-making policies.

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/planning-statistics/>

**Wales:** the context for planning in Wales is established by Planning Policy Wales. There are 25 planning authorities in Wales and each must prepare a local development plan. These plans must conform to the national context and the plans must set out proposals and land use policies for the development of the area. Regional planning is a discretionary layer of the planning system, the Welsh Government has powers to identify “Strategic Planning Areas”, who have planning powers to produce strategic plans.

<https://gov.wales/planning-services-performance>

**Northern Ireland:** the Northern Ireland Executive, through its Department for Infrastructure, has responsibility for the monitoring and implementation of the Regional Development Strategy 2035, the development of strategic planning policy and legislation and promoting good place making, including acting as the planning authority for regionally significant planning applications and overseeing the effectiveness of the two tier system that came into effect in 2015. Responsibility for developing Local Development Plans and processing the majority of other planning applications lies with Northern Ireland’s 11 local councils.

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>

The department is part of a cross-government working group, including devolved administrations and the Office of National Statistics, working to improve the

trustworthiness quality and value of housing and planning statistics across the UK. This working group has published action plan to make the planned improvements on house building and planning statistics clear and transparent to users. Details of this work and how you can provide feedback are available via the Government Statistical Service website: <https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/guidances/working-with-users-2/housing-and-planning-statistics/>.

## User engagement

Users are encouraged to provide feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. Responses should be addressed to the contact given in the first page of the release.

The Department's engagement strategy to help it to meet the needs of statistics users is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/engagement-strategy-to-meet-the-needs-of-statistics-users>

The user engagement strategy on planning and land use statistics can be found at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7514/1757090.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7514/1757090.pdf).