

The authorities that approved the most 'class MA' commercial-to-residential applications between October and December 2021 – and those with the highest refusal rates

25 April 2022 by Samantha Eckford

An East Midlands authority received the most applications for the new “class MA” permitted development (PD) right between October and December 2021 but it was one of five councils that refused all the applications it received over the quarter, government figures show.



Leicester's city centre (Credit: Mat Fascione c/o Creative Commons Licence via geograph.org)

The latest planning application statistics, published last month by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), reveal that Leicester City Council received the most prior approval applications for the new class MA PD right in the three months from October to December 2021.

However, the authority refused 100 per cent of the 15 applications it received in the quarter.

This is the first quarter of available data for the new class MA right, which allows the conversion of commercial, business and service use buildings to residential.

It allows any building designated in the recently introduced Class E use class, which includes a wide range of commercial uses, from office and shops to restaurants and gyms, to be converted to residential without a full planning application.

Under the streamlined prior approval process, councils can only refuse applications on a limited number of considerations, unlike a normal planning application.

Across England, 138 applications for class MA were submitted between October and December.

The authorities with the joint highest number of approvals - meaning they either granted approval or decided it was not required - were Elmbridge, Buckinghamshire and the New Forest, each with five consents.

Meanwhile, five authorities refused all of the applications they received, excluding seven that received just one application between October and December 2021, which was then rejected.

Leicester refused each of its 15 applications, while Swale refused six and East Herfordshire refused all four of the applications it received.

The authorities that received the most class MA commercial, business and service to residential prior approval applications, October to December 2021

Rank	Planning authority	Region	Total applications
1	Leicester	East Midlands	15
2=	Elmbridge	South East	6
2=	Swale	South East	6
2=	Buckinghamshire	South East	6
5=	New Forest	South East	5
5=	Cornwall	South West	5
7	East Hertfordshire	East of England	4
8=	Basingstoke and Deane	South East	3
8=	Bexley	London	3
8=	Bromley	London	3
8=	Ealing	London	3
8=	Haringey	London	3
8=	Redbridge	London	3
8=	Waltham Forest	London	3
8=	Bristol, City of	South West	3
8=	Southend-on-Sea	East of	3

The authorities where the most class MA commercial, business and service to residential prior approval conversions were allowed, October to December 2021

Rank	Planning authority	Region	Total approved
1=	Elmbridge	South East	5
1=	Buckinghamshire	South East	5
1=	New Forest	South East	5
4=	Cornwall	South West	3
4=	Haringey	London	3
4=	Bristol, City of	South West	3
7=	Basingstoke and Deane	South East	2
7=	Bexley	London	2
7=	Bromley	London	2
7=	Ealing	London	2
7=	Cambridge	East of England	2
7=	Cheltenham	South West	2
7=	Hastings	South East	2
7=	Maidstone	South East	2
7=	Norwich	East of England	2
7=	Bradford	Yorkshire and the Humber	2

The authorities with the highest refusal rates for class MA commercial, business and service to residential prior approval conversions, October to December 2021

Rank	Planning authority	Region	Total applications refused	Total applications received	Refusal rate
1=	Leicester	East Midlands	15	15	100%
1=	Swale	South East	6	6	100%
1=	East Hertfordshire	East of England	4	4	100%
1=	Camden	London	2	2	100%
1=	Tower Hamlets	London	2	2	100%
6=	Redbridge	London	2	3	67%
6=	Waltham Forest	London	2	3	67%
6=	Southend-on-Sea	East of England	2	3	67%
9=	East Hampshire	South East	1	2	50%
9=	Harrogate	Yorkshire and the Humber	1	2	50%
9=	Mole Valley	South East	1	2	50%
9=	Birmingham	West Midlands	1	2	50%
9=	Kirklees	Yorkshire and the Humber	1	2	50%
9=	Bath and North East Somerset	South West	1	2	50%
9=	Brighton and Hove	South East	1	2	50%

Shows the approval rate for authorities that received two or more applications in the quarter from October

Applications for all types of permitted development in the quarter between October and December 2021 were down 12 per cent year on year, according to the government's planning data update, published last month.

Some 7,300 applications were submitted in the last three months of 2021, compared to 8,300 in the equivalent period in 2020.