

## 'Improve not move' as Home Improvement Figures Continue to Grow

With many households having just undertaken a spring clean over Easter, home improvement figures continued to increase in popularity across 2016, as planning applications saw an upsurge in every region & country in Great Britain, except for Scotland.

Published today, the '[Home Improvers of Great Britain 2017](#)' report, compiled by construction industry analysts [Barbour ABI](#) in collaboration with the Federation of Master Builders, shows that London led all regions with 3.8 home improvement applications for every one-hundred private homes last year, with the East of England seeing the biggest growth in applications with a 14 per cent increase. At the other end of the spectrum, the North East & Scotland made up the bottom of the table, with only 1.1 applications for every one-hundred households (see figure 1.1).

### Home improvement across Britain's regions and countries

Number of home improvement applications for every 100 private homes.

Rank	Region/Country	2014	2015	2016	Growth (%)*
★	London	3.5	3.8	3.8	4
2	South East	2.6	2.7	2.8	6
3	East of England	2.2	2.5	2.7	14
4	South West	2.0	2.0	2.1	4
5	East Midlands	1.4	1.5	1.6	7
6	Yorkshire & Humber	1.3	1.4	1.5	6
7	West Midlands	1.2	1.4	1.4	9
8	North West	1.2	1.2	1.3	6
9	Wales	1.1	1.2	1.2	7
10	North East	1.1	1.1	1.1	3
11	Scotland	1.1	1.1	1.1	-4
	England	2.0	2.1	2.2	6
	Great Britain	1.9	2.0	2.0	6

\*2016 compared with average of 2014 and 2015

Source: Barbour ABI, ONS

(Figure 1.1)

There was no change at the top from last year for the best performing district, as Kensington & Chelsea continued its dominance with 6.8 applications for every one-hundred private households in 2016, albeit a decrease of eight per cent on its figure from 2015. However, nowhere exemplified more in 2016 the 'improve not move' stance than Cambridge. After a rapid surge in prices, sales in the city have fallen back sharply while home improvement has rocketed. Outside of Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea, Cambridge has the highest ratio of home improvement planning applications to home sales of any borough, whilst only squeezing into the top seventy for home improvement figures just two years ago.

Overall, districts with the most home improvement applications was dominated by Southern England, with 18 of the top 25. Whereas 21 of the bottom 25 districts for home improvement were located north of the Midlands. A lack of home improvement outside of Southern England can be characterised by the first northern district, Harrogate, only placing 84<sup>th</sup> in the Barbour ABI league table.

Brian Berry, Chief Executive of the Federation of Master Builders (FMB), commented: "Demand for home improvement work is particularly vulnerable to dips in consumer confidence but at present, there's no sign of a negative "Brexit effect". Indeed, the results of this year's Home Improvers Report show that there was a 6% rise in home improvement work that requires planning permission in 2016 compared to 2015 in Great Britain and these results chime with the FMB's own research. Despite gloomy predictions from many economists in the run up to the EU referendum last summer, construction SME workloads have not only held up, they are in rude health. Even as we approached Article 50 being served at the end of last month, the results of the FMB's State of Trade Survey for Q1 2017 show that construction workloads continued to grow and 50% of firms expect this trend to continue into the second quarter of this year."

Michael Dall, Lead Economist at Barbour ABI, said: "2016 saw continued growth of home improvement in areas expected, such as around the capital and other southern English regions. However it is encouraging to see considerable growth in the East of England with many of its boroughs making their way up the table."

"Looking forward, much will depend on the growth in the economy, as the link between it and home improvement is very evident. In addition, the shortage of housing across Great Britain generally is set to continue, which will undoubtedly help fuel home improvement activity as home owners look to 'improve not move'."

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**About Barbour ABI:**

Barbour ABI is a leading provider of construction intelligence services. With a team of in-house research specialists and a dedicated economics team, it provides commercially relevant insight and unique analysis of trends and developments within the building and construction industry.

Barbour ABI is the chosen provider of Construction New Orders estimates data to the Office for National Statistics, provider of the Government's Construction and Infrastructure Pipeline and provides the planning application and development data to the Department for Communities and Local Government. Barbour ABI also provides data for independent organisations, such as the Construction Products Association.

Barbour ABI is part of UBM and is headquartered in Cheshire Oaks, Cheshire. For more information, go to [www.barbour-abi.com](http://www.barbour-abi.com) or follow on Twitter @BarbourABI for all the latest construction data news.

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**About the Federation of Master Builders**

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is the largest trade association in the UK construction industry representing thousands of firms in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Established in 1941 to protect the interests of small and medium-sized (SME) construction firms, the FMB is independent and non-profit making, lobbying for members' interests at both the national and local level. The FMB is a source of knowledge, professional advice and support for its members, providing a range of modern and relevant business building services to help them succeed. The FMB is committed to raising quality in the construction industry and offers a free service to consumers called 'Find a Builder'. Please visit [www.fmb.org.uk](http://www.fmb.org.uk).