



Update on our Planning Service

Contacting Planning Officers

Our Planning Officers are currently working predominantly from home, but they are attending the Council Offices on a limited rota basis. As a result, Officers' direct line telephone numbers have been redirected to their work mobile phones where they have one. Officers will endeavour to respond to your queries as quickly as possible but please make contact via e-mail in the first instance if you can.

Validation of New Applications

The Planning Service is currently working to validate all applications received since the 23rd March 2020. To speed uploading to the Planning Portal, it would be helpful if you could also e-mail digital copies of drawings, forms and accompanying documentation to planning@nmandd.org including the site address as the e-mail subject. In addition, you are requested to ensure that all submitted plans and associated documents have accurate references. This will assist the Planning Service when issuing formal decisions in the new and more efficient way described below. Please also continue to submit hard copies of all forms, plans and documents along with the appropriate Planning Fee.

Processing Applications

Applications will now be publicised in the Newry Democrat and the Down Recorder whilst Neighbour Notification Letters will be sent out by second class post. Where necessary, Case Officers will contact you by e-mail or phone to request amendments to progress applications positively. Such amendments should be submitted to the Case Officer via e-mail in the first instance, followed by hard copies once agreed. Again, this approach will improve the efficiency of uploading submissions to the Planning Portal. We continue to produce Delegated Lists each week. We are also re-evaluating our Agreed Scheme of Delegation and examining ways in which Planning Committee can safely reconvene.

Site Visits

Since the lockdown was imposed by Government, Case Officers have not been undertaking site visits. However, in his latest Update to Heads of Planning dated 1st May 2020, Northern Ireland's Chief Planner has advised that certain site visits can take place provided current public health guidelines are followed and social distancing requirements are maintained. A Site Visit Protocol has been devised to protect the safety of staff and the general public which is now being implemented. Case Officers will be contacting you to arrange site visits where appropriate.

Issuing of Decisions

As part of our drive for a more efficient Planning Service, we will shortly be issuing electronic Decision Notices which specifically reference the plans upon which determinations are based. We are moving away from the issuing of stamped hard copy plans. Whilst there will clearly be a transition to this more efficient process, we request that from now, you provide an e-mail address and that all plans and associated documents (including any subsequent amendments) are accurately referenced and are sent in both digital and hard copy form. Our aim is to move to a predominantly digital system when our infrastructure and systems allow.

Finally, please be assured that we fully recognise the important role the Planning Service will play in facilitating the recovery of the wider economy. We are constantly reviewing our procedures and processes to ensure that your applications progress as positively and swiftly as they can in these very challenging times.