

How to contact us

Director of Local Planning Division or
Director of Strategic Planning Division
Department of the Environment
Millennium House, 17-25 Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7BN

Telephone: 0300 200 7830
Textphone 028 9054 0642
Fax: 028 9041 6802
Email: planning@doeni.gov.uk

Strategic Planning Division – re: Article 31 planning applications, minerals / waste / other specialist planning applications - Contact details as above

Local Area Planning Offices

For all Offices telephone 0300 200 7830

Ballymena office - Antrim, Ballymena,
Carrickfergus, Larne, Magherafelt
County Hall,
182 Galgorm Road
Ballymena BT42 1QF

Fax: 028 2566 2127
Email: ballymena.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Belfast office - Belfast, Castlereagh,
Newtownabbey
Bedford House,
16-22 Bedford Street
Belfast BT2 7FD

Fax: 028 9025 2828
Email: belfast.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Craigavon office - Armagh, Banbridge,
Craigavon, Newry & Mourne
Marlborough House,
Central Way
Craigavon BT64 1AD

Fax: 028 3832 0004
Email: craigavon.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Downpatrick office - Ards, Down, Lisburn,
North Down
Rathkeltair House,
Market Street
Downpatrick BT30 6EA

Fax: 028 4461 8196
Email: downpatrick.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Londonderry office - Derry, Limavady
Orchard House,
40 Foyle Street
Londonderry BT48 6AT

Fax: 028 7131 9777
Email: londonderry.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Coleraine office - Ballymoney, Coleraine, Moyle
County Hall,
Castlerock Road
Coleraine BT51 3HS

Fax: 028 7034 1434
Email: coleraine.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Omagh office - Cookstown, Dungannon & South
Tyrone, Omagh, Strabane
County Hall,
Drumragh Avenue
Omagh BT79 7AF

Fax: 028 8225 4009
Email: omagh.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Enniskillen office - Fermanagh
County Buildings,
15 East Bridge Street
Enniskillen BT74 7BW

Fax: 028 6634 6550
Email: enniskillen.planning@doeni.gov.uk

Making a Complaint about Planning

A guide to our Complaints Procedure

Introduction

The purpose of the planning system is to plan and manage development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment. The planning functions are set out primarily in the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Since April 2011, the planning functions of the Department of the Environment have been shared between two Divisions, one with responsibility for local issues (Local Planning Division) and the other for strategic issues (Strategic Planning Division). Each Division is under the control of a Director.

Our aim is to provide a quality service to our customers. We take all complaints very seriously and place great importance on what our customers have to say. If you feel any aspect of the service we have provided falls short of what you can reasonably expect we would like to hear from you. We will make every effort to resolve complaints at an early stage. This leaflet explains how our complaints procedure works and sets out the steps to follow.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction by any person, however made, about our service, actions or inactions, for example:

- how we have handled your enquiries or your correspondence;
- how we have processed an application; or
- the contact you have had with our staff.

If you are an applicant dissatisfied with a decision on your application, there is a separate procedure for appealing to the Planning Appeals Commission (see further details at pacni@gov.uk). There is currently no system in Northern Ireland providing for third parties to appeal against a planning decision.

It should also be noted that land ownership disputes are not a matter for the Department and should be pursued through the appropriate legal channels as the grant of planning permission does not interfere with property rights.

How and when to make a complaint

A complaint can be formal or informal and should be made to the relevant Planning Manager within 6 months of you first becoming aware of the matters you are complaining about. We may agree to waive the 6 month time limit if there is good reason why the complaint could not be made within that timescale.

Informal complaints

Staff in the relevant Area Planning Office will be able to deal with most complaints informally and quickly by telephone. We aim to respond to informal verbal complaints within 3 working days.

Formal Stage 1

If you wish to make a formal complaint, you should put this in writing to the relevant Planning Manager in the Area Offices or in Strategic Planning Division (see contact details on reverse of leaflet). It would be helpful if you were to detail the nature of the complaint and explain how you consider we should have done our job better.

The Manager will investigate your complaint and will respond to you within 15 working days. The Manager will also give you details of the Director to contact if you remain unhappy with the response.

Formal Stage 2

Following the response from the Manager (Stage 1), you can write to the relevant Director (see contact details on reverse of leaflet) who will review your complaint and respond directly to you.

In these formal stages we shall:

- acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days of receipt; and
- aim to provide a full reply within 15 working days.

If there is going to be a delay we will let you know the reason and when you may expect to receive a reply.

Our Commitment

In all cases we will:

- deal with your complaint promptly; investigate your complaint fully and fairly;
- provide a full explanation of the circumstances; and
- seek an early resolution and, if we are at fault, issue a full apology and remedy the situation where appropriate.

If you are still not satisfied

If you are still not satisfied after receiving a response from the relevant Director, you can ask an Assembly Member to sponsor your complaint to the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. The Ombudsman can investigate complaints against government departments and their agencies. The service is free and totally independent. The Ombudsman will expect you to have used our complaints procedure before he will accept a complaint.

How to contact the Ombudsman

You may contact the Ombudsman at:

Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Telephone: 028 9023 3821

Freefone: 0800 343424

Fax: 028 9023 4912

e-mail: ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk

website: <http://ni-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Or you may write to:

The Ombudsman
Freepost BEL 1478
Belfast, BT1 6BR