



Chief Executives of District Councils

DoE Private Office
8th Floor
Goodwood House
44 - 58 May Street
Town Parks
BELFAST
BT1 4NN

Telephone: 028 902 56019

Email: private.office@doeni.gov.uk

Your reference:

Our reference: COR/629/2012

10 October 2012

Dear Chief Executive

I wrote to you in January 2012 to highlight how successful our joint local government Streamlined Consultation Scheme has been in terms of improved performance in delivering faster planning decisions and assisting the economy and to introduce my proposals for an enhanced Streamlined Scheme.

The scope of the existing scheme is being extended to include all applications currently included along with:-

- 1) all other minor and intermediate applications ;
- 2) housing applications up to a maximum of 25 units ; and
- 3) office accommodation up to a maximum of 200 sq metres

This will result in around 75% of all planning applications being streamlined.

Streamlined approvals issue significantly faster than non-streamlined applications; during the business year 2011-12, 64% of all planning applications (9313) were streamlined, with 50% of streamlined applications being processed in just over 15 weeks and non streamlined applications processed in just over 40 weeks.

To date, the majority of Councils have agreed to the enhanced scheme and have accepted that it will improve efficiencies as well as improving working relationships between the Department and the Council. Adopting the enhanced streamlined proposals will provide the opportunity and time for the Planning Committee to become involved in more strategic planning issues and major planning applications which would have a strategic impact on your local area.

I must reiterate my aspiration that you will support these proposals, helping to build consistency of approach in the planning system in relation to non-contentious applications and to enable Councillors to play a very active role in the planning of their area by freeing up more time to devote to contentious applications and those of strategic importance to your council area.

Should you have any concerns in relation to the enhanced proposals, your local Area Planning Manager would be pleased to discuss these with you and provide any additional information or reassurances you may require.

I would reassure you that the current system, under which the streamlining scheme operates, whereby a Councillor can request that a particular application be removed from streamlining, is not subject to change. The Council can therefore be assured that applications which may cause concern to constituents can be removed from the streamlining process and be subjected to full council consultation. Furthermore the scheme relates only to planning applications that are approved and attract no objection.

I will ask your Area Planning Manager to contact you in the near future to further discuss your Council's position with regard to the enhanced Streamlining Scheme.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Attwood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALEX ATTWOOD MLA
Minister of the Environment