

Plans to Speed up Planning Process Announced

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After a successful pilot scheme in partnership with Derry City Council, Environment Minister Sammy Wilson has announced that a streamlined scheme speeding up the planning process could be rolled out across Northern Ireland by Spring 2009.

Previously all applications for planning permissions were processed with agreed procedures which add weeks to the processing time for minor applications. Under the new streamlined consultation scheme those applications which are considered to be of a straightforward and non-contentious nature will be circulated to Councils on a weekly basis. These applications can then be determined without the need to formally place them on a schedule for discussion at monthly council planning committee meetings.

An approval can only be issued if no objections have been received from third parties and there has been no formal request from the council to discuss the application at a planning committee meeting.

It is thought that those applicants involved in small and medium sized business enterprises will benefit most from the scheme.

Extensions and alterations to dwellings, shop fronts and advertising have been among the non-contentious planning applications to have already been approved under the new scheme.

The Environment Minister hopes to have all councils operating the new scheme in conjunction with the Planning Service by 31 March 2009.

Please note: The content of this article is for information purposes only and further advice should be sought from a professional advisor before any action is taken.