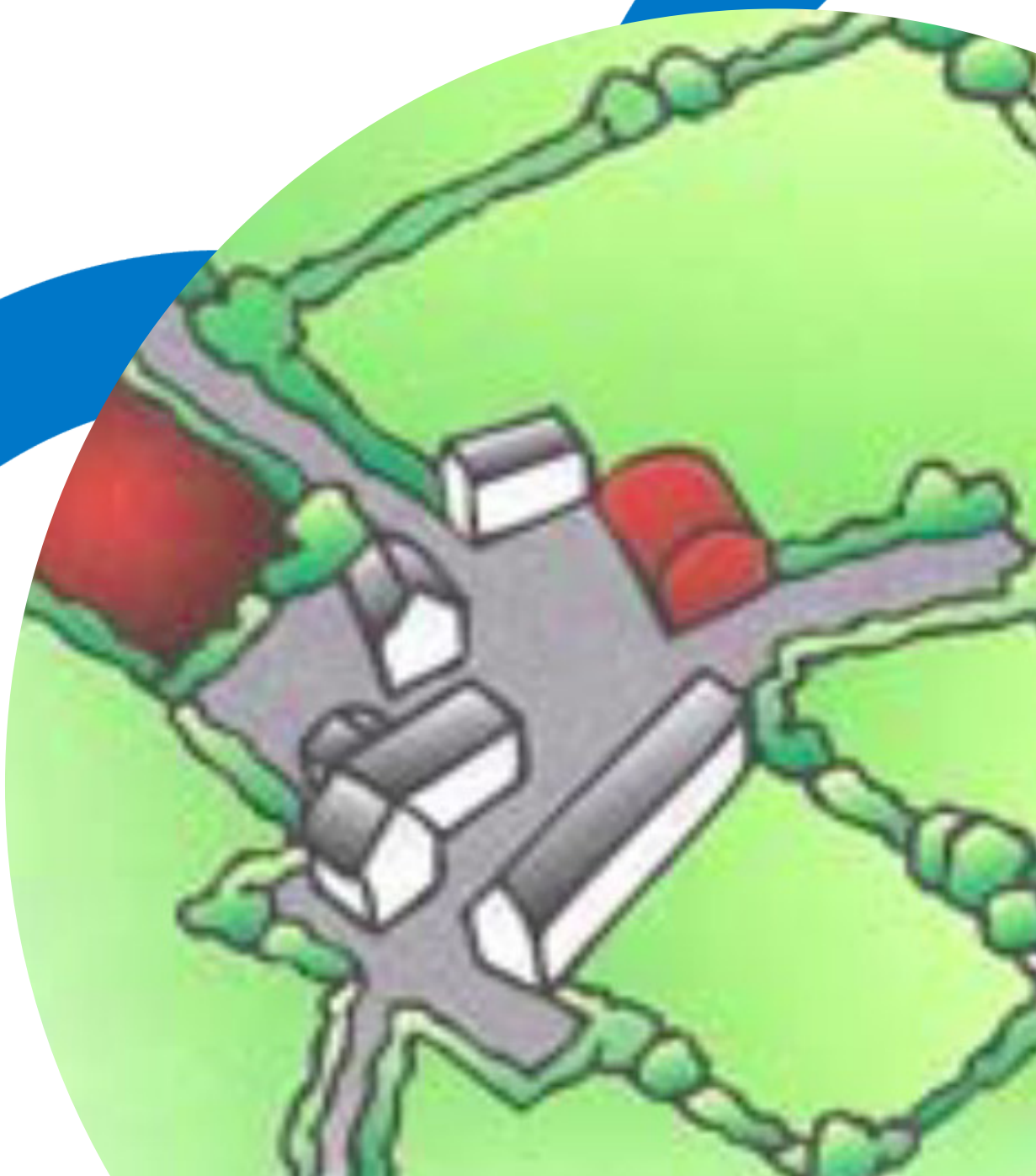


Housing in the Countryside



A Guide to Planning and Housing
in the Countryside

May 2021



Introduction

This is an introductory guide to help people and communities who may want to build housing in the countryside.

The guide:

- lists the main opportunities for housing in the countryside;
- identifies the main planning policies which apply to housing in the countryside;
- sets out the criteria under each type of housing;
- outlines the different types of planning application and type of information to be submitted;
- provides details on how to obtain further information and advice.

As an introductory guide this does not provide all the details relating to planning and housing in the countryside. If, having read it, you want more information on any aspect or advice on building a house in the countryside, please contact us.

Opportunities for Housing

There are some potential opportunities to build a house in the countryside under current planning policies.

These opportunities include:

1. [a dwelling on a farm](#)
2. [a replacement dwelling](#)
3. [conversion of an existing building](#)
4. [a dwelling in a gap or infill site](#)
5. [a dwelling in a cluster](#)
6. [a dwelling for personal or domestic circumstances](#)
7. [a dwelling for a non-agricultural business](#)
8. [temporary residential caravans and mobile homes](#)
9. [social and affordable housing](#)
10. [housing in a Dispersed Rural Community](#)

If your proposal does not fall within one of the opportunities above, it will not be possible to get planning approval for a house in the countryside at this time. For advice on other types of development in the countryside, please contact us.

Opportunities for Housing

The relevant policies and guidance include:

- Planning Policy Statement 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside (PPS 21);
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS);
- Building on Tradition - A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside.

Please see the [Resources](#) with links to the relevant policies. These policies apply until each council adopts its own Local Development Plan (LDP); at which point the LDP will be the primary document used by councils in deciding planning applications.

Is your site on a farm?

May be eligible for a house on a farm every ten years.

Is there a building on the site?

May be eligible for a replacement or conversion.

Is your site within a row of houses along the road?

May be eligible for an infill or gap site dwelling.

Is your site within a cluster of buildings?

May be eligible for a house in an existing cluster.

As a result of your personal circumstances, is it essential that you live at a specific location in the countryside?

May be eligible for a house based on your personal circumstances.

All proposals for a house in the countryside need to comply with general criteria (see guidance on Page 4).

General Criteria

All development proposals in the countryside need to comply with the following criteria:

The dwelling reflects the traditional pattern of development in the area - that is, the dwelling should not result in suburban style build up

The dwelling blends with the landform, existing trees, buildings, slopes and other natural features which provide a backdrop - (the dwelling should not be a prominent feature in the landscape and break the skyline)

The design of the dwelling is suitable for the site and the locality - (the finishes and the materials should be appropriate for a rural setting)

Any new dwelling should not mar the distinction between a settlement and the surrounding countryside - that is, a 'visual break' allows a clear separation between development and agricultural land

The dwelling does not create or add to ribbon development -

Ribbon development is detrimental to the appearance of the countryside and sterilises backland, often making access to agricultural land difficult

Any new dwelling would not negatively impact upon residential amenity of neighbouring properties - (noise, overlooking, dominance, overshadowing)

Any ancillary works would not damage rural character - (a laneway should integrate with the surrounding landscape)

Any new dwelling relying on non-mains sewerage should be able to provide satisfactory physical arrangements for onsite sewage arrangements -

You may need to submit information on the means of sewerage and ground conditions (this will be checked by the planning authority via consultation with NI Water, Environmental Health and NIEA).

The site has long-established natural boundaries that provide integration for any new dwelling - (integration should not rely solely on new landscaping)

Design and Access Statement

If the proposed dwelling is located within an AONB or involves replacing or converting a listed building, you will need to submit a 'Design and Access Statement' with the application.

This should include: the design principles that have been applied to the development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 13 - Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside
- PPS 21 - CTY 14 - Rural Character
- PPS 21 - CTY 16 - Development Relying on Non-Mains Sewerage
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside
- Building on Tradition: A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside (supplementary planning guidance)

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.



Dwelling on a Farm

If your site is on a farm, or associated with an equine business, there may be the opportunity for a farmhouse.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

You haven't been granted planning permission for another house on the farm within the past ten years -

Only one farmhouse will be allowed every ten years (this will be checked by the planning authority using your DAERA Farm Business ID)

Dwellings or development opportunities on the farm should not have been sold off in the past ten years -

This may require submission of current and previous farm maps (this will be checked by the planning authority)

The farm business or equine business should have been established for at least six years -

Your DAERA Farm Business ID is at least six years old (this will be checked by the planning authority via consultation with DAERA)

The new farm dwelling will be sited to cluster or be visually linked with an established group of buildings on the farm -

When approaching the site does the proposed dwelling and existing farm buildings appear as one entity?

The farm business or equine business should be currently active -

You are currently claiming Single Farm Payment (this will be checked by the planning authority via consultation with DAERA)

Exceptionally, an alternative site on the farm will be considered where there are demonstrable health and safety reasons or verifiable plans to expand the farm business at the existing building group. These plans, for example planning approval and/or information about health and safety, should be provided.

If you are not claiming Single Farm Payment, other evidence of active farming over the previous six years should be provided, for example: receipt of the Basic Payment Scheme; invoices and receipts; utility bills; farm accounts; bank statements. Active farming is considered to include production, rearing or growing of agricultural products including harvesting, milking, breeding animals and keeping animals for farming purposes, or maintaining the land in good agricultural and environmental condition.

Access should be from an existing lane where possible -

Try not to create a new access onto the public road and any access should be safe and not inconvenience the flow of traffic (this will be checked by the planning authority via consultation with Roads)

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside.

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 10 - Dwellings on Farms
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside - Dwellings on Farms

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.



Replacement Dwelling

If you have a building on your site there may be the opportunity for a replacement dwelling.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

The original dwelling should be substantially intact -

Preferably the original building should still have a roof but as a minimum all external walls should be intact (this will be checked by the planning authority as part of the site inspection and may also be checked using aerial photographs)

The original dwelling should exhibit the essential characteristics of a dwelling -

for example a chimney breast and windows (this will be checked by the planning authority as part of the site inspection)

The replacement dwelling should be located within the curtilage of the original dwelling -

The replacement dwelling should be located within the original boundaries (such as the established hedge line or fence, of the site)

Exceptionally:

- *if the curtilage of the original dwelling is too small the replacement dwelling may be located outside the curtilage (that is, the new site location should provide clear amenity benefits)*
- *if a nearby site, outside the curtilage of the original dwelling, would provide landscape, heritage, access or amenity benefits, the replacement dwelling may be sited outside the curtilage of the original dwelling (for example more visual integration due to mature established boundaries or safeguarding of a built heritage site).*

The replacement dwelling should not have a visual impact that is significantly greater than the original dwelling -

(that is, the replacement dwelling should be similar in size, scale and massing to the original dwelling)

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside

In cases where the originally building is retained this building will not be eligible for replacement again or be eligible for conversion to a residential dwelling (that is, the original building should be ancillary to the replacement).

Listed Building or Vernacular Building

Planning permission will not be granted for the replacement of a listed building and/or a vernacular building unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Vernacular Buildings reflect the local 'folk tradition' and are typical of a common type of building in a particular locality, generally pre-1925. The retention and sympathetic refurbishment of vernacular building will be encouraged. If the vernacular building is not capable of being made structurally sound or does not make an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the area, planning permission may be granted for a replacement dwelling. The vernacular building may be conditioned to be retained as ancillary to the new replacement dwellings.

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 3 - Replacement Dwellings
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside - Replacement Dwellings

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.



Conversion of an Existing Building

If you have a building on your site there may be the opportunity to convert it to a dwelling.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

The existing building is of permanent construction -

such as a stone building. Buildings of temporary construction, such as sheds or agricultural buildings, will not be eligible

If converting the existing building into more than one dwelling, the conversion should involve minimal intervention and the intensity of use should be appropriate to the locality.

The existing building is a Locally important building -

such as a former schoolhouse, church or an older traditional barn

Converting the building would not have an adverse impact on the continued agricultural use of adjoining Land or buildings

Converting the building would maintain or enhance the form, character, design and setting of the existing building -

(that is, any new element should blend with the existing structure)

Access to the public road can be achieved safely and would not inconvenience the flow of traffic - (this will be checked by the planning authority via consultation with Roads)

Converting the building would not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality -

(that is, the conversion should respect the architectural traditions and characteristics in the area)

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside.

Any new extensions are sympathetic to the scale, massing, style and finishes of the existing building -

(the height, width and general size of the extension should not dominate the existing building)

Listed Building

If you are converting a listed building it will be assessed against the relevant architectural and historical buildings policy. You will also have to submit an accompanying application for Listed Building Consent (this will be checked by the planning authority via consultation with NIEA Historic Environment Division).

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 4 - The Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside - The Conversion and Re-use of Buildings for Residential Use

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.



Dwelling in a Gap or Infill Site

If you have a site is between a row of buildings along a road there may be the opportunity for a dwelling in a gap or infill site.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

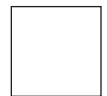
There is a small gap in a substantially and continuously built up frontage -

A substantially and continuously built up frontage is a line of three or more buildings without accompanying development to the rear with a small gap between them



Any new dwelling will respect the size, scale, siting and plot size of existing developments in the ribbon -

For example, it would not be acceptable to build a large two-storey house if there are smaller bungalows on either side



Planning permission will be refused for any development which adds to a ribbon of development.

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside.



The gap is only wide enough to fit one or two houses -

When comparing the frontages of the existing houses in the line of development the gap would not accommodate more house



Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 8 - Ribbon Development
- SPPS -Development in the Countryside - Infill/Ribbon Development

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.

Dwelling in a Cluster

If your site is within a cluster of development, there may be the opportunity for a dwelling in a cluster.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

The site for the new dwelling lies outside of a farm -

Established or new agricultural buildings cannot be considered as part of the cluster

The new dwelling can be absorbed into the existing cluster -

that is, any new dwelling is suitable for the existing cluster in terms of size, scale and is appropriately designed to integrate with the existing development.

The site for the new dwelling consists of four or more buildings of which at least three are dwellings -

This excludes garages, outbuildings and open sided structures.

The new dwelling will not significantly alter the existing character of the cluster -

that is, any new dwelling should be similar in scale, size, massing, design and materials as the existing buildings in the cluster.

The cluster appears as a visual entity in the landscape -

Visual entity will be determined by: visual linkages - does it read with other buildings? and physical proximity - are the buildings all close together?

The new dwelling will not visually intrude into the open countryside -

that is, any new dwelling should not mar the distinction between development and the countryside

The cluster is associated with a focal point -

for example associated with a community building or located at a crossroads

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside.

The site is enclosed -

The site should be bounded on at least two sides with other development in the cluster

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 2a - New Dwellings in Existing Clusters
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside - New Dwellings in Existing Clusters

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.

Dwelling for Personal or Domestic Circumstances

If, as a result of personal circumstances such as long-term needs, it is essential that you live at a particular location in the countryside, there may be an opportunity for a dwelling.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

The new dwelling is a necessary response to the particular circumstances of the case - such as long-term needs (you will need to submit evidence which might include medical information)

Genuine hardship would be caused if planning permission for the new dwelling was refused

There are no alternative solutions to meet the particular circumstances of the case - such as an extension or annex, a temporary mobile home or conversion of another building

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside.

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 6 - Personal and Domestic Circumstances
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside - A Dwelling where there are Personal and Domestic Circumstances

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.

Only the person named on the application and their dependents will be able to live in the dwelling (the planning authority will add a condition to the planning approval stating this).

Dwelling for a Non-Agricultural Business

If you have a non-agricultural business, there may be the opportunity for a dwelling associated with this business

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

The business is established

There is a site specific need that makes it essential for one of the firm's employees to live at the site of their work -

security of the site is not a sufficient reason

The new dwelling is located beside or within the boundaries of the business enterprise -

for example the site for the dwelling cannot be separate from this business enterprise

The new dwelling integrates with existing buildings on the site -

for example, when approaching the site, does the proposed dwelling and existing buildings appear as one entity?

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 7 - Dwellings for Non-Agricultural Business Enterprises
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside - Dwellings for Non-agricultural Business Enterprises

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.

If the business has been operating satisfactorily without a house on site, evidence should be submitted as to why a house is needed now.

Temporary Residential Caravans and Mobile Homes

Planning permission may be granted for a mobile home or caravan, for a temporary period only, in exceptional circumstances.

If you are considering a residential caravan or mobile home, you will need to comply with the following criteria:

There are exceptional circumstances that require a mobile home or caravan for a temporary period (usually three years) -

for example you are building your permanent home or there are compelling site-specific reasons related to personal and domestic circumstances.

A modular dwelling, such as a log cabin, does not meet the criteria of CTY 9 and the SPPS, as it is not considered to be a caravan or mobile home.

The siting of a modular dwelling will be subject to the same planning and environmental considerations as a permanent dwelling in the countryside.

The mobile home or caravan will need to integrate with its surroundings -

(the mobile home or caravan should be sited within an existing group of buildings and use existing landscape features to integrate better)

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 9 - Residential Caravans and Mobile Homes
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside - A Temporary Caravan

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside.

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.

Social and Affordable Housing

If you have a site adjacent to, near a small settlement or within a DRC, there may be the opportunity for social and/or affordable housing.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

The proposal is for up to 14 houses	<input type="checkbox"/>	A demonstrable need has been identified by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, or a relevant Housing Authority, which cannot be met within an existing settlement in the Locality.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The site is adjacent to or near a small settlement, or within a Designated Dispersed Rural Community (DRC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	This is the only application for this type of development in close proximity to any particular rural settlement or within any particular Dispersed Rural Community (DRC)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>A sequential test in terms of location will be applied when assessing the acceptability of sites outside a small settlement:</i>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. Land adjacent to the existing settlement limit [subject to amenity and environmental considerations];</i><i>2. Land close to the existing settlement limit which already contains buildings or where the site is derelict and there is the opportunity to improve the environment;</i><i>3. Land close to the existing settlement limits on an undeveloped site which could visually integrate into the landscape</i>		The proposal complies with the <u>general criteria</u> for building in the countryside	<input type="checkbox"/>
The application is made by a registered Housing Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy and Guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PPS 21 - CTY 5 - Social and Affordable Housing• SPPS - Development in the Countryside - Social and Affordable Housing Development	

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.

Housing in a Dispersed Rural Community

If you have a site in a Dispersed Rural Community [DRC] there may be the opportunity for a small cluster of houses.

You will need to comply with the following criteria:

The site is located at a Dispersed Rural Community (DRC) -

A DRC is a community identified and designated in the adopted Local Development Plan within Fermanagh and Omagh District Council or within Mid Ulster District Council which acts as a physical and social focus for the surrounding townlands

Policy and Guidance

- PPS 21 - CTY 2 - Development in Dispersed Rural Communities
- SPPS - Development in the Countryside

Where there is any conflict between the SPPS and any policy within PPS 21, the SPPS takes priority.

The proposal is for a small cluster or 'clachan' style development of up to six houses

The proposal is sited at an identified focal point - (such as a church, a school or a hall)

There is only one cluster per focal point

The proposal complies with the general criteria for building in the countryside

Submitting a Planning Application

If you are submitting a planning application, you may choose to either submit: a **Full Application** or an **Outline Application** (followed by a Reserved Matters Application).

Full Application

Full applications are appropriate when the principle of the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms. An application for full planning permission should include all the particulars needed to assess a development in such a way that when permission is granted the development can proceed immediately.

- P1 Application Form (4 copies completed and signed/date)
- P1c (if applying for a house on a farm)
- Site Location Plan (at a scale of 1:2500 or 1:1250 with the site outlined in red)
- Block Plan (at a scale of 1:500)
- Floor Plan (annotated detailed drawings at an appropriate scale)
- Elevations (annotated detailed drawings at an appropriate scale)
- Existing and Proposed Levels
- Landscaping Scheme (existing and proposed vegetation)
- Planning Fee

Outline Application

An application for outline planning permission establishes the principle of development and as such detailed plans will not normally be required. There are circumstances when you may want to make an outline application - for example, to test the principle of development on the site.

Outline planning applications can only be made when the proposal involves the erection of buildings. Note that outline applications cannot be accepted for change of use developments. One benefit of outline planning permission is reduced initial expenditure, due to a lesser fee and less detailed plans are required.

- P1 Application Form (4 copies completed and signed/dated)
- P1c (if applying for a house on a farm)
- Site Location Plan (at a scale of 1:2500 or 1:1250 with the site outlined in red)
- Plans (if required for illustrative purposes only)
- Planning Fee

Submitting a Planning Application

If you are submitting a planning application, you may choose to either submit: a **Full Application** or an **Outline Application** (followed by a Reserved Matters Application).

Reserved Matters Application

Once your development proposal has received outline planning permission, a reserved matters application should be submitted to receive permission for the details of the proposal or 'reserved matters'. The reserved matters application should fully comply with all the conditions attached to the outline permission and should be submitted **within three years of outline permission being granted**. A reserved matters application will require the submission of detailed plans and drawings to include details such as the siting, design and external appearance of the development, the means of access to the development and landscaping of the proposal.

These are not comprehensive lists but indicate the information and plans that you may need to submit as part of your planning application. Also, you should note that you will have to submit plans to your local council Building Control Department to ensure that your proposals comply with the Building Regulations.

Checklist

P1 Application Form (4 copies completed and signed/dated)	<input type="checkbox"/>
P1c (if applying for a house on a farm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site Location Plan (at a scale of 1:2500 or 1:1250 with the site outlined in red)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Block Plan (at a scale of 1:500)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floor Plan (annotated detailed drawings at an appropriate scale)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elevations (annotated detailed drawings at an appropriate scale)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Existing and Proposed Levels	<input type="checkbox"/>
Landscaping Scheme (existing and proposed vegetation)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning fee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you complied with all the conditions on the outline approval?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional Information (All Applications)

You may also need to submit the following information and reports as part of your planning application:

Checklist

Flood Risk Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tree Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biodiversity Survey and Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Archaeological Survey and Report	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listed Building Consent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design and Access Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resources

Planning Policy Statement 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside (PPS 21)

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/PPS21%20Sustainable%20Development%20in%20the%20Countryside.pdf>

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/strategic-planning-policy-statement>

Building on Tradition - A Sustainable Design Guide for the NI Countryside

https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/Building%20on%20Tradition%20-%20A%20Sustainable%20Design%20Guide%20for%20the%20Northern%20Ireland%20Countryside_0.pdf

Development Management Practice Note 4 - Types of Planning Application

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/dmpn04-types-of-planning-applications.pdf>

Development Management Practice Note 12 - Design and Access Statements

https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/dmpn-12-design-and-access-statements-v1-april-2015_0.pdf

Image Credits 'Building on Tradition - A Sustainable Design Guide for the NI Countryside'



**community
places**

This guidance is not intended to be a definitive source of planning advice and reference should be made to the appropriate legislation and policy. If you need any clarification or further information please contact us.

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