
PUBLICATION OF PPS 21

ON THE 27 MAY, IN A STATEMENT TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, MR EDWIN POOTS MLA, DELIVERED HIS FINAL PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 21.

He said that the publication of PPS21 will end the uncertainty about development in the countryside in Northern Ireland and will provide new planning policy for deciding upon applications in rural areas.

The Minister stated that his officials had gone to great lengths to ensure that as many people as possible had had the chance to learn about draft PPS21 and to comment on it. Information days attracted over 2,500 people, including rural dwellers, farmers, developers and public representatives.

Whereas Draft PPS21 provided for grouped development outside settlement limits, grouped development in Dispersed Rural Communities, groups of affordable/social housing and infilling of gaps in ribbons of development, the final version of PPS21 introduces further opportunities by defining a ribbon as a minimum of three buildings, rather than the previous six.

Minister Poots also stated that he had won Executive support for a new policy, which provides for rounding-off or consolidation of clusters of development. This refers to existing clusters of at least four buildings that have developed around focal points like churches or at crossroads.

For farm dwellings, the final statement recognises that it is not always possible to

build new dwellings on farms close to existing buildings. The statement has been revised to allow for an alternative site to be used where it can be demonstrated that there are health and safety issues or that the applicant has genuine plans for business expansion.

The Minister said that he has invited Ministers on the Executive Subcommittee to continue to work with him on the issue of non-farming rural dwellers. He added that they will bring forward an addendum to PPS21 to further address the issue. He said that as this not an easy subject, the addendum will take time but will be transparent, subject to public consultation and to debate in the Executive.

There are currently 2,500 deferred planning cases, which will now be looked at in the context of the new PPS21. Minister Poots stated that PPS21 would be reviewed after two years.

He said: "IN DEVELOPING PPS21 WE HAVE DONE WHAT WE PROMISED. WE HAVE BALANCED THE NEED TO PROTECT THE COUNTRYSIDE FROM UNNECESSARY OR INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT, WHILE SUPPORTING RURAL COMMUNITIES. WE HAVE DEVELOPED A POLICY WHICH IS RIGHT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND."

The full content of the new policy is available to view on the Department's website: <http://www.doeni.go.uk/>