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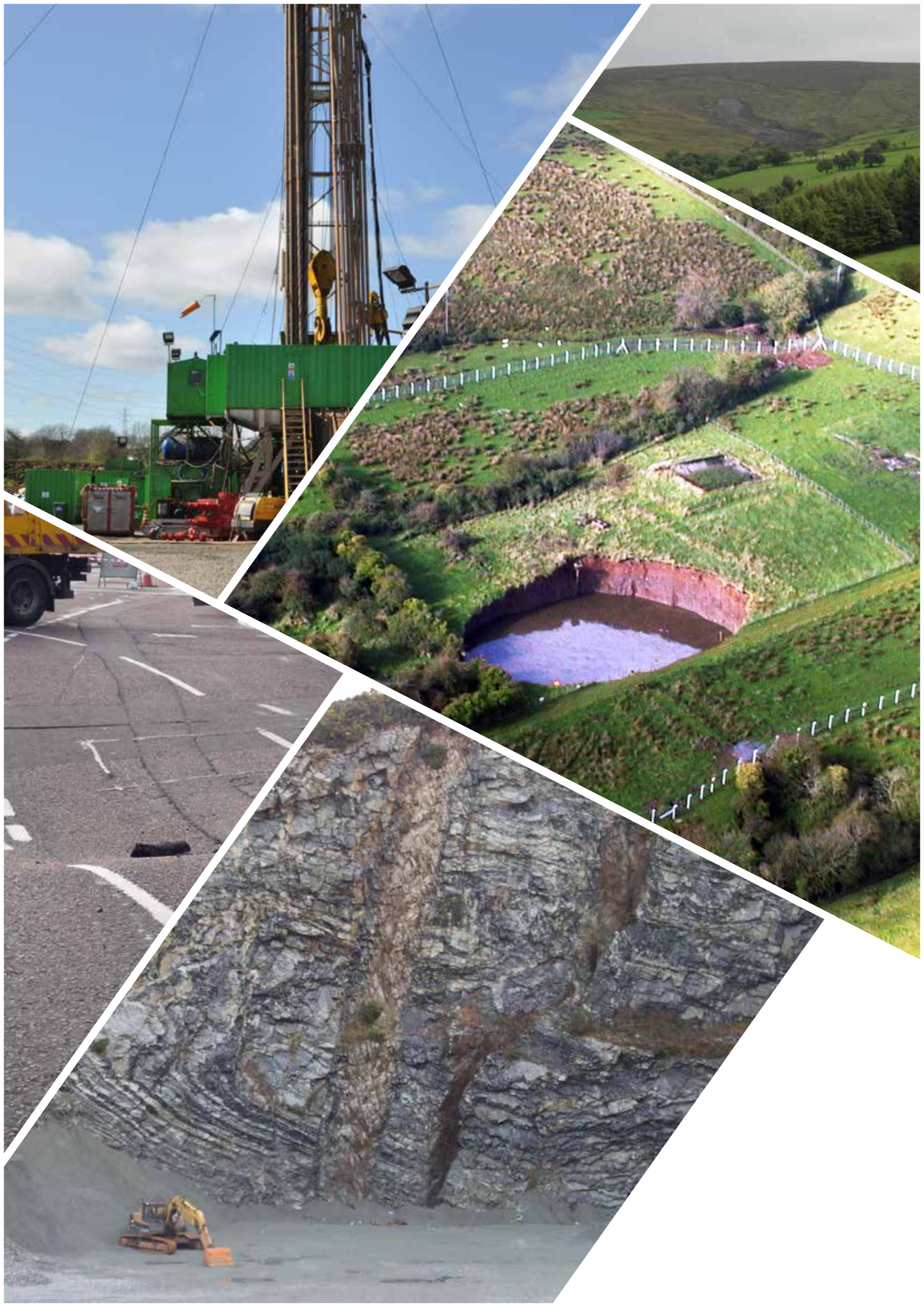
GSNI Geological
Survey of
Northern
Ireland
www.bgs.ac.uk/gsni

Consulting with the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland

A guide for planners

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Introduction

The Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) is an office of the Department for the Economy (DfE) staffed by scientists of the British Geological Survey (BGS). We provide data, information and advice to support legislative responsibilities and strategic priorities of the DfE and other government departments and agencies.

GSNI, through the DfE, is a statutory consultee for development proposals, requiring planning permission for all mineral applications and for all applications for hydrocarbon exploration or extraction. The circumstances in which we are consulted upon applications are set out in the following legislation.

- The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015
» <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/72/contents>
- The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015
» <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/74/contents>

GSNI, through the DfE, is a non-statutory consultee for development proposals for a number of other topics including but not limited to abandoned mines, compressible ground, and geological hazards.

This good practice guide gives advice to planning authorities on when to consult GSNI. It also sets out the information we require to provide a substantive consultation response to planning authorities.

How has this document been structured?

The guidance document has been structured in two parts:

Part 1. When to consult the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland

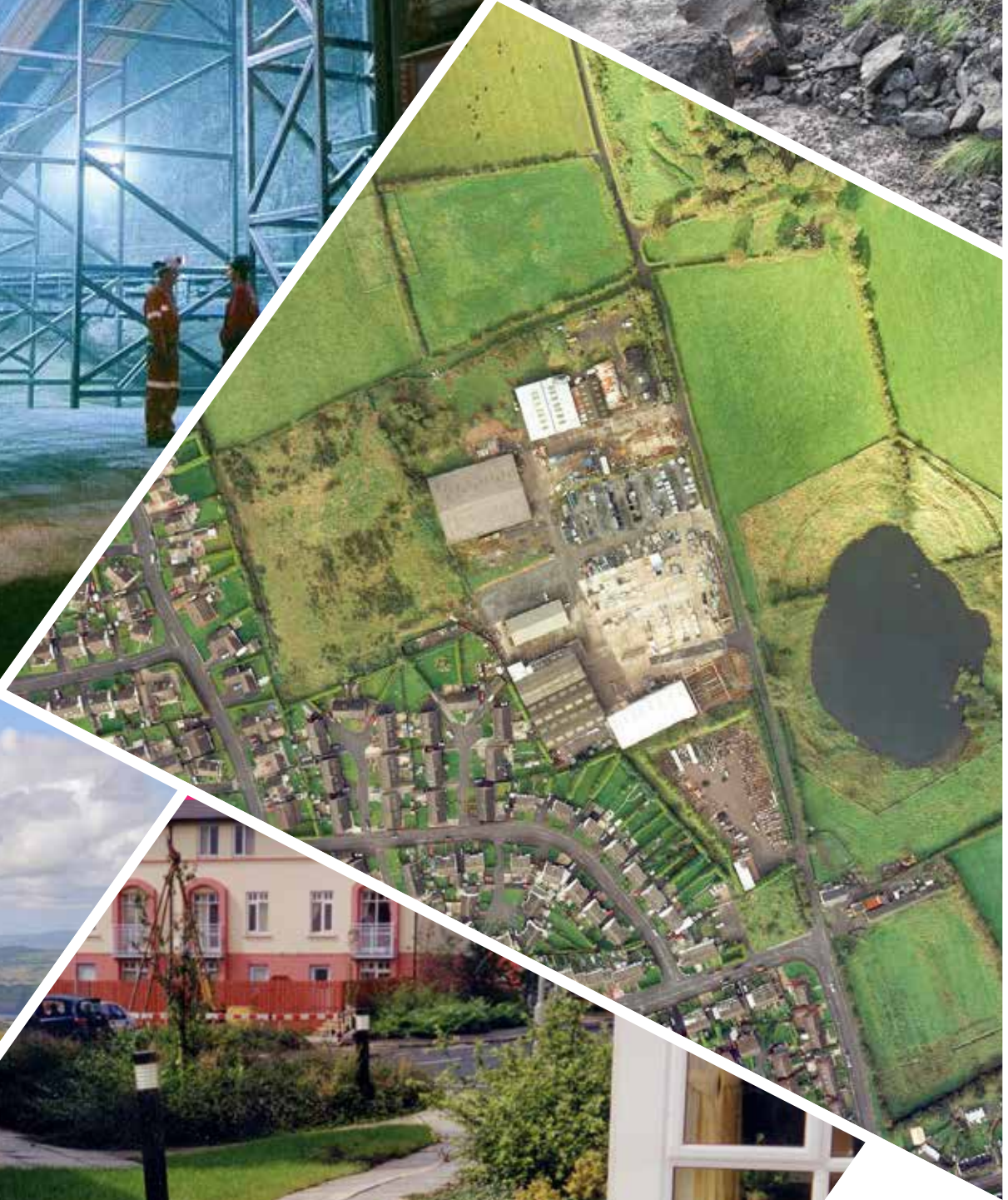
Part 2. Information we require for planning consultations

Who is this document for and when should it be used?

Part 1 is a reference guide for planning authorities when deciding if the GSNI should be consulted on an application for planning permission. It provides a checklist to assist planning authorities in screening planning applications prior to issuing a consultation to GSNI.

Part 2 is a checklist for applicants and agents when preparing a planning submission. It is recommended that planning authorities also refer to this information prior to issuing a consultation to GSNI.

Comprehensive applications will assist decision making by facilitating a more streamlined consultation process for both planning authorities and consultees.



Part 1: When to consult the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland

- 1.1 Statutory Consultations
- 1.2 Non-statutory Consultations
- 1.3 Exemptions
- 1.4 Consultation Process
- 1.5 Our Consultation Responses

1.1 Statutory Consultations

The table below sets out when the GSNI is statutorily required to be consulted by planning authorities on a planning application:

| Legislation | Description | When to consult |
|--|--|---|
| The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 2015 | All mineral applications (where the term 'mineral' refers to those substances covered by planning requirements i.e. aggregates, sand, gravel, etc.). | Applications for development related to mineral activity |
| | All applications for hydrocarbon exploration or extraction | Applications for development related to hydrocarbon exploration or extraction |
| The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 | A development proposal accompanied by an Environmental Statement | <p>Those developments defined as Schedule 1 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraction of petroleum or natural gas for commercial purposes • Quarries and open-cast mining • Installations for carbon capture and storage (CCS) <p>Those developments defined as Schedule 2 under the Extractive Industry including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarries, open-cast mining and peat extraction • Extraction of minerals by fluvial or marine dredging • Deep drilling • Surface industrial installations for the extraction of coal, petroleum, natural gas and ores |

Note: All of the above consultations should be classified as **'Statutory'** on the NI Planning Portal.

1.2 Non-Statutory Consultations

As the main authority for providing geoscience information for Northern Ireland, it is appropriate for the GSNI to be consulted on other non-statutory applications that may have impacts on or be impacted by geoscience-related issues.

1.2.1 Abandoned Mines

For development within areas of abandoned mines, please consult the **standing advice** document for abandoned mines, providing a risk based approach to assist the Planning Authorities and developers. This guidance document provides details on additional information that is required and assessments that are needed to accompany any application.

| Application Type | When to consult |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major/regionally-significant applications that may be impacted by the ground conditions or the subsurface geology • Other applications impacted by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <i>Abandoned mines</i> » <i>Areas overlying active mine lease</i> » <i>Landslides</i> » <i>Areas of mineral reserve</i> |
| EIA Determinations / Scoping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major applications with potential to be impacted by ground conditions or the subsurface geology including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <i>Abandoned mines</i> » <i>Areas overlying active mine lease</i> » <i>Landslides</i> » <i>Areas of mineral reserve</i> |
| Discharge of Conditions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All applications where conditions relate to ground conditions or the subsurface geology |
| Outline Planning Permission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All applications with potential to be impacted by ground conditions or the subsurface geology including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <i>Abandoned mines</i> » <i>Areas overlying active mine lease</i> » <i>Landslides</i> » <i>Areas of mineral reserve</i> |
| Reserved Matters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All applications where conditions relate to the ground conditions or the subsurface geology |
| Full Planning Permission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All applications that have potential to be impacted upon by the ground conditions or the subsurface geology not covered by the statutory consultee process including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » <i>Abandoned mines</i> » <i>Areas overlying active mine lease</i> » <i>Landslides</i> » <i>Areas of mineral reserve</i> |

1.3 Exemptions

The nature of some developments, where the building and/or engineering operations are minimal, mean that it is not necessary to consult with GSNI. Below is a list of examples but if there is any doubt, contact GSNI for further clarification.

| Nature of development | Example | Justification |
|--|---|--|
| Change of Use with no associated works (land or buildings) where no engineering works or ground works are proposed | Agriculture to garden; office to residential | No significant ground works / scale of groundworks |
| Non-permanent structures with no ground works | Back-up generators; portacabins; decking | No significant ground works |
| Means of enclosure | Fences; walls | No significant ground works |
| Street type furniture | Signage; public art; lighting | No significant ground works |
| Alterations to existing buildings that create no new floor space | New shop frontages; new windows or door openings; signage | No significant ground works |

This list is not exhaustive but is an illustration based upon some examples.

GSNI does not require formal consultations on a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN). Pre-application discussion is however encouraged for development proposals outlined in Section 1.2.

Consultations that do not meet either the statutory or non-statutory consultation guidelines as set out above, or fall within the exemption category will be returned to the respective planning authority stating that GSNI has no comment to make.

1.4 Consultation Process

To enable an effective consultation process and facilitate timely decision making, GSNI requests that planning authorities consider the following:

1.4.1 When issuing a consultation:

- Provide **clear and specific reasons** for consultation in the consultation letter
 - » *Consultation reasons should be clearly defined and classified as either statutory or non-statutory in accordance with the legislation outlined in Sections 1.1 and 1.2.*
- Withhold issuing consultations until **all information** has been received
 - » *The statutory consultation response time period commences on the day the last piece of information has been received.*
- **Identify documentation clearly** on the NI Planning Portal
 - » *All drawings and maps should be labelled correctly for consultees.*
- Provide **contact details** for the planning case officer
 - » *Direct contact details allows any consultation issues to be dealt with promptly by the GSNI.*

1.4.2 Submission of additional information during the consultation period:

- Contact GSNI
 - » *Planning authorities should contact GSNI to make them aware that new information has been received.*
- Agree extension
 - » *If the additional information is uploaded within 10 days of receipt of the consultation, a new response target should be entered on the NI Planning Portal, calculated as 21 days from the date this information was uploaded.*

- Accepting consultation and issuing a re-consultation
 - » *If GSNI advises that the response is nearing completion or has already been uploaded to the portal when new information is received, planning authorities should accept and close the consultation response and issue a re-consultation.*

1.4.3 Extension Requests

For certain statutory reasons, GSNI may request an extension to the statutory consultation response time.

All requests for extension will be made from GSNI and will clearly state one of the following reasons:

- Complex case
 - » *A large complex planning application that requires significant input from GSNI.*
- Resources
 - » *Staff pressures arising from annual leave over holiday periods e.g. Christmas, Easter, and summer months.*
- IT issues
 - » *Two or more consecutive day's failure of the NI Planning Portal, or in house IT systems or services.*
- Additional information
 - » *See 1.4.2.*

1.5 Our Consultation Responses

GSNI provides one consultation response for all planning consultations, addressing geological issues where applicable. Our responses are structured to assist planning authorities understand the potential impacts of relevant ground conditions and subsurface geology, to facilitate a planning determination in line with relevant planning policies and statutory requirements.

In preparing our responses we refer to data that GSNI holds such as:

- Abandoned and active mine plans
- Abandoned mine database
- Borehole database
- Geological datasets
- Geological reports

In preparing a consultation response, GSNI will provide a substantive response that states one of the following:

1. That GSNI has **no comment** to make.
2. That on the basis of the information available, GSNI is **content with the development proposed**.
3. That GSNI has **material consideration** (an important issue that the planning authority is advised to take into account in determining the application).
4. The GSNI has **substantive concern** (a significant concern which might be overcome with a change to the scheme, or the imposition of a planning condition).
5. That GSNI has **fundamental concern** (concerns so significant that no reasonable action is likely to address the concern).

Where applicable, the substantive response may also refer to the **current standing advice** on the subject of the consultation (such as abandoned mines) and / or provide **bespoke advice**.

All our substantive consultation responses are classified in accordance with the then Department for Communities Local Government consultation document: 'Improving Engagement by Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees' published December 2009.

All of our consultation responses are publicly available to view on the NI Planning Portal, with the exception of Pre-Application Consultation responses.

For general queries in relation to a planning application, applicants should first contact their local planning authority. For queries specific to our consultation advice, please contact:

Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI)
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3SB
Tel: 028 9038 8462
e-mail: gsni@economy-ni.gov.uk



Part 2: Information we require for planning consultations

2.1 Information we require

The type and extent of information we require will vary depending on the scale and complexity of the application.

This guide is not a checklist of information required by planning authorities. It does however aim to provide clarity to planning authorities and applicants on the information we need to provide a substantive response and should minimise delays incurred through requests for additional information during the consultation process.

This chapter outlines the information we require for:

- Pre-Application Discussions (PADs)
- General information requests

2.2 Pre-Application Discussions

Formal pre-application discussions are co-ordinated through your local council planning authority. For major and regionally significant planning applications that need substantial geological consideration, GSNI welcomes pre-application discussions with applicants and agents.

The table below is a guide to the information we will require for a PAD consultation, to provide effective and constructive pre-application advice to applicants and agents.

| Application Type | Information we require |
|---|--|
| Pre-Application Discussions (major and regionally significant applications) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed description of the proposal. • A site location map showing the application site clearly outlined in red and any other land owned by the applicant close to or adjoining the application site outlined in blue. • Site layout plans of the existing and proposed site that show the direction of North and proposed development in relation to existing surroundings. • Site photographs dated, numbered and cross-referenced to a plan, showing the site and setting in general. • Other plans and drawings as necessary to fully describe the development to which it relates. |

2.3 General information requirements

To provide a substantive response to a planning consultation, for most development proposals, GSNI requires the following information:

| Application Type | Information we require |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| All development planning applications | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site location plan with centre Easting and Northing in Irish Grid.• Proposed site layout map including existing and planned structures.• Other information necessary to provide a full understanding of the potential geological impacts on the development.• An Environmental Impact Assessment (for large-scale developments or where applications are likely to have a significant impact on the local environment). |

Note: Zoomed in ACE maps of application areas with no spatial reference (location) information are not acceptable. GSNI is not responsible for georeferencing site location maps.

Useful links and information sources

Open Data NI

GSNI publish a number of datasets on Open Data NI that are useful to planners.

www.opendatani.gov.uk

[Department for Communities and Local Government \(UK\) \(2009\). Improving engagement by statutory and non-statutory consultee.](#)

Spatial NI

GSNI publish a number of datasets in the Geology theme on Spatial NI that are useful to planners.

www.spatialni.gov.uk

GSNI GeoIndex

GSNI publish a number of datasets across different themes on the GeoIndex that are useful to planners.

http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/GSNI_Geoindex/home.html

Historical Maps and Mine Plans

GSNI publish historical maps and mine plans on the Geological Maps website.

www.geologicalmaps.net

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