

Local Development Plan -  
**Timetable**



**Ards and  
North Down**  
Borough Council

## **Getting in Touch**

Should you have a planning query, you can contact the Council's Planning Department in the following ways:

**By email to:**                    [planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

**By post to:**                    Planning Department,  
2 Church Street,  
Newtownards  
BT23 4AP

**By telephone on:**    03000133333  
(Main switch at Council Office – Church Street) **028 91824000**

Should you require a copy of this Timetable in an alternative format, it can be made available on request in large print, audio format, or Braille. It may also be made available in minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

The timetable is not intended to be a source of definitive legal advice. Reference should be made to the actual legislation referred to in this statement and if any discrepancy exists the provisions of the legislation will prevail.

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this timetable is to set out the key stages and the indicative schedule for the production of the Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 1.2 The timetable meets the legislative requirements of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the associated Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015. In preparation of the timetable consultation<sup>1</sup> shall be undertaken with the Planning Appeals Commission and the Department for Infrastructure<sup>2</sup>.

## **2 Purpose of the Local Development Plan**

- 2.1 The purpose of the Ards and North Down Borough Local Development Plan is to inform the general public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested parties of the policy framework and land use proposals that will guide development decisions within the Borough for a 15-year time frame.
- 2.2 The new LDP will be prepared in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and shall take account of the Community Plan. It shall enable us to plan in a positive manner for the Borough.
- 2.3 The LDP will take account of the regional policy context set by the Northern Ireland Executive and Central Government Departments. This includes, among others, the Sustainable Development Strategy, the Regional Development Strategy, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement and Planning Policy Statements.
- 2.4 The LDP shall be produced in two stages and will comprise two separate documents that will shape development within the Borough in the next 15 years. The first new development plan document will be the Plan Strategy which will be followed by a Local Policies Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Regulation 5 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

<sup>2</sup> Regulation 7 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

**Plan Strategy** – The strategic policy framework for the plan area as a whole across a range of topics. It will set out a vision for the Borough as well as the objectives and strategic policies required to deliver that vision. A spatial strategy that indicates in broad strategic terms the locations where different types of development will be promoted. Establishing this strategic direction early in the plan process will provide a level of certainty on which to base key development decisions in the area as well as the necessary framework for the preparation of the Local Policies Plan; and

**Local Policies Plan** – The Council’s local policies and site specific proposals in relation to the development and use of land across the Borough. It will contain the local policies, including site specific proposals, designations and land use zonings required to deliver the Council’s vision, objectives and strategic policies, as set out in the Plan Strategy.

- 2.5 Before the development plan documents are prepared, key planning issues will be identified and a range of options defined for addressing these issues. This will culminate in the publication of a Preferred Options Paper (POP).
- 2.6 Once the Plan Strategy (PS) is adopted, the Council shall prepare a Local Policies Plan (LPP) consistent with the PS. This will include the site-specific proposals, policy designations and land use zonings that will be required to deliver our vision, objectives, spatial strategy and strategic policies that will be defined in our Plan Strategy.
- 2.7 Parallel to the preparation of the Preferred Options Paper, the Plan Strategy and the Local Policies Plan is the process of **Sustainability Appraisal**. This appraisal process aims to ensure that the policies and proposals in the LDP are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Relevant reports will be published at each of the key stages of the plan making process. This will include consultation on the scope of the appraisal at the Preferred Options Paper stage.

### 3 The Timetable

3.1 The timetable provides indicative dates<sup>3</sup> for each stage in the production of the Local Development Plan. These are set out briefly below:

**Statement of Community Involvement** – This sets out how the Council intends to engage with the local community and others during the preparation of our new LDP.

**Preferred Options Paper (POP)** - The POP is a public consultation document which will set out the key plan issues for the Borough and the preferred options available to address them. The publication of the POP represents the formal statutory start on the LDP. The POP seeks to promote debate on issues of strategic significance which are likely to influence the shape of future development within the Borough. Any representations or views received as a consequence of its publication will be considered whilst formulating the draft Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan.

**Draft Plan Strategy (PS)** - The Draft Plan Strategy is a public consultation document (not the final plan). It shall give an indication of the Council's intentions regarding the future development of the Borough and is a key part of the public participation process.

**Independent Examination – (IE)** An IE will be held to determine the 'soundness' of the Draft Plan Strategy, taking into account any representations or counter representations. An Advisory Report of the findings from the Independent Examiner will be issued to Central Government<sup>4</sup>.

- **Binding Report** – following consideration of Advisory Report, Central Government will issue a Binding Report to the Council. The Council must incorporate any changes outlined in the Binding Report into the Plan Strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> In accordance with Regulation 6 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015,

<sup>4</sup> There is no statutory timeframe for this period of time.

- **Adoption of Plan Strategy-** Following the Independent Examination, and direction from the Central Government, the Plan Strategy will formally adopted by the Council.

**Local Policies Plan** - The Local Policies Plan is the second document comprising the LDP. The Draft Local Policies Plan is a public consultation document and will contain the Council's detailed land use proposals regarding the future development of the Borough.

- **Independent Examination** - An Independent Examination will be also held to determine the 'soundness' of the Draft Local Policies Plan, taking into account any representations or counter representations. Following the Independent Examination, an Advisory Report of its findings will be issued to Central Government.
- **Binding Report** – following consideration of Advisory Report, Central Government will issue a Binding Report to the Council. The Council must incorporate any changes outlined in the Binding Report into the Local Policies Plan.
- **Adoption of Local Policies Plan** - Following the Independent Examination and direction from Central Government, the Local Policies Plan shall be formally adopted by the Council.

3.2 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out the methods of engagement in the Local Development Plan process.

3.3 As part of LDP preparation the Council is also required to carry out a number of assessments to accompany the LDP.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** – A tool for appraising policies to ensure they reflect sustainable development objectives (that is social, environmental and economic factors). This is required in relation to both development plan documents and will involve consultation on the scope of the appraisal alongside the POP consultation.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** – A procedure to follow that contributes to the integration of environmental considerations in the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes. It will be undertaken in relation to both development plan documents as an integral part of the SA process above. Prior to completing an SEA, an initial screening exercise will be undertaken at the POP stage to determine if the LDP requires a full SEA.

**Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)** – This considers the potential impact of LDP policies and proposals on European designated nature conservation sites. Prior to completing an HRA, an initial screening exercise will be undertaken at the POP stage to determine if the LDP requires a full HRA.

**Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)** – In line with the Council’s Equality Scheme, an Equality Screening exercise will be undertaken at the POP stage to assess if the LDP is likely to have an impact on specific groups identified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. If required, a full EqIA will be undertaken for both the Plan Strategy and the Local Policies Plan. Views on any equality screening documents or draft EqIAs will also be sought as part of the formal consultation processes.

**Rural Proofing** - Rural proofing is the process by which all major policies and proposals (including LDPs) are assessed to determine whether they will have a differential impact on rural areas. If so, potential mitigation measures need to be considered.

## 4 **Delivery of the Local Development Plan**

- 4.1 There are a number of factors that could potentially impact upon the timescale for delivery of the Local Development Plan. Meeting the indicative timescales set out within the timetable is dependent upon a number of factors, including effective governance arrangements, involvement of Elected Members, a robust level of resourcing (within the LDP team, consultees and that of the Independent Examiner) and the management of risk.

4.2 It is essential to set out that there are a number of factors which are outwith the Council's control that may impact on the delivery of the LDP within the indicative timescales set out. This includes input from consultees, the duration of the Independent Examination and reporting period, subsequent consideration by the Department,<sup>5</sup> and any potential judicial proceedings.

4.3 This timetable sets out a number of steps to manage the plan making process and bring forward any early warning signs to the attention of the Council. These steps are set out below:

- A work programme will be presented to Elected Members for each key stage of the plan process.
- Papers will be presented to Elected Members on a regular basis regarding local development plan matters, including key planning topics and findings as they emerge.
- A Steering Group will be established acting as a high level co-ordinating body that will ensure oversight and strategic input on behalf of the whole community, as well as from planning professionals.
- A Project Management team will be established comprising Senior Officers from the Council and the Principal Planning Officer. The team will invite representatives from the key statutory/government departments and adjoining councils where appropriate. The purpose of the team is to ensure key consultees co-operate in the plan making process. The Project Management team will be consulted on and act as the screening and scoping group for the SA, incorporating SEA, and EQIA.
- An annual monitoring report will be produced to inform Elected Members and Central Government on progress in meeting the timetable.
- Progress reports on the LDP will be submitted on a quarterly basis to the Planning Committee.

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<sup>5</sup> There is no provision in legislation in relation to statutory timeframes for the length of the duration of IE, the timeframe for the Independent Examiner to provide a report to the Department; nor a timeframe for the reporting to Council by Central Government.

## **5 Risks**

5.1 The delivery of a successful LDP is extremely challenging and there are a number of risks that could slow down the production of the LDP. In order to manage risk, a Risk Register will be established for the project and risks identified.

Appendix A sets out the key risks identified in relation to the overall project plan and proposed mitigation measures to be implemented in order to ensure that sound documents are prepared in a timely manner.

## **6 Review**

6.1 An annual monitoring report will be produced by the Council to inform Elected Members and relevant Central Government Departments on progress in meeting the timetable. If progress on plan production has become impeded, the timetable will need to be revised and agreed with the Department in accordance with the Development Plan Regulations. In the event that the Plan timetable requires amendment, the Council has the power under the Planning Act 2011 to publish a revised timetable. Any amendments will be publicised and made available on the Council's website.

## LDP Timetable

Accompanying Assessments		INDICATIVE TIMESCALES (financial quarter)
<b>Key Stage 1 – Plan preparation</b>		
<b>Agree Timetable</b>		Quarter 1- 2 2017/18
(following resolution of Full Council and consultation with PAC timetable shall issue to Dfl for agreement)		
	Invite comments from Consultation Body (NIEA) on draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating SEA) Scoping Report	Quarter 4      2017/18
<b>Publication of Preferred Options Paper (POP)</b>	Publication of SA Interim Report comprising Scoping Report and appraisal of alternatives.	Quarter 2 – 3    2018/19
Statutory Public Consultation (12 weeks)	Screening for HRA and EQIA	
<b>Key Stage 2 – Plan Strategy</b>		
<b>Publication of draft Plan Strategy (PS)</b>	Publication of SA Report (incorporating SEA)	Quarter 1-3      2019/20
Statutory Public Consultation (8 weeks: Representations) (8 weeks: Counter-representations)	Publication of draft HRA, Rural Proofing Report & EQIA where relevant	
<b>Independent Examination (IE) of Plan Strategy</b>	IE advisory report to Dfl. Dfl issues Binding Report to Council (See Note 2)  Council considers Dfl report	Quarter 4    2019/20 - Quarter 2    2020-21

<b>Adoption of Plan Strategy</b>	Publication of SA Adoption Report (incorporating SEA), HRA, EQIA and Rural Proofing	Quarter 1 2021/22
<b>Stage 3 - Local Policies Plan (LPP)</b>		
	Invite comments from Consultation Body (NIEA) on updated SA (incorporating SEA) Scoping Report	
<b>Publication of draft Local Policies Plan (LPP)</b>	Publication of SA Report (incorporating SEA)	Quarter 2-3 2021/22
Statutory Public Consultation (8 weeks: Representations) (8 weeks: Counter-representations)	Publication HRA, Rural Proofing & EQIA where relevant	
Independent Examination of Local Policies Plan (4 week notification period required prior)		Quarter 1-3 2022/23
<b>Adoption of Local Policies Plan</b>	Publication of SA Adoption Report (incorporating SEA)  Publication of Habitats Regulation Assessment and EQIA and Rural proofing where relevant	Quarter 3 2022/23 - Quarter 1 2023/24
<b>Stage 4 – Monitoring and Review</b>		
<b>Prepare New timetable and Monitoring and Review of LDP</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Monitor</li> <li>• 5 &amp; 10 Year Review</li> </ul>	Monitoring of SA and other Assessments as required.	On going

**Note 1:** SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment); HRA (Habitats Regulation Assessment); EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment); SA (Sustainability Appraisal)

**Note 2:** Timescales are indicative only and do not take account of any factors which may delay the progress of the plan such as any legislative changes, any regional policy changes, the availability of resources and other factors outside the control of the Council. The progress to the LPP stage is dependent on receipt of report from Independent Examiner to DfI and subsequent issue of Direction by DfI to Council (of which there is no statutory timeframe - thus the timetable is estimated to best possible turnaround thereafter).

## Appendix A - Risk

Issue	Risk	Mitigation
Scale and nature of work – LDP timeframe too exacting to match resources. Staff resource levels to match task	Scale and uncertainty of new LDP process. Impediments to delivery could pose reputational harm.	Continued corporate commitment to a robust level of resourcing the LDP work. The LDP will continue to be recognised as a high priority. Robust management of staff resources and cross service and Partnership working. Ensure sufficient staff resources to match work requirement. Further recruitment potential.
Lack of specialist resources	Elements of the LDP will require specialist technical skills and there is a risk that some of this work cannot be progressed in-house.	Close working with partners who have the necessary skills. Use of external consultants to support LDP team as appropriate.
Financial resources	Sufficient resources required for all elements- especially consultancy.	Financial planning and resourcing.
Unquantifiable level of likely public interest	Number and nature of representations is not quantifiable.	Resources required to manage consultation process. (Including ICT requirements to manage representations).
Lack of capacity of other statutory agencies	Statutory agencies will need to be adequately resourced to ensure there is capacity to engage with and respond to multiple LDP preparation processes across the region.	The LDP Timetable provides forward notice. Maintain contact with key stakeholders to minimise prospective slippage. Need for effective and timely engagement raised at a regional level with Senior Officers.

<p>Changes to regional policy, legislation or guidance during the preparation of the LDP</p>	<p>Changes in regional statutory or non-statutory policy guidance and advice could affect the content and direction of local policy preparation and decisions may cause delays in the LDP. Similarly, changes to planning legislation and/or subordinate regulations could introduce amendments to the plan making process, introducing new obligations and necessitating additional work. Unforeseen additional work may also be required as a result of new emerging evidence at a local or regional level.</p>	<p>Monitoring of likely changes. Engagement with central government and PAC/IE body.</p>
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<p>Potential delays associated with the Independent Examination &amp; subsequent Binding Report</p>	<p>The timescales associated with the Soundness Based Independent Examination are beyond the control of the Council and could vary considerably depending on the capacity of the Planning Appeals Commission or other independent body, the scale and complexity of the LDP or the level of public interest. Potential to result in prolonged timescales associated with both the holding of public examinations and the subsequent issuing of the Binding Reports.</p>	<p>LDP Timetable provides forward notice of the resource requirements from DfI and PAC.</p> <p>Early notice will be given to DfI and PAC/Independent Examiner of the request to hold a public examination. Close liaison with DfI/PAC/IE to highlight any potential issues/problems at an early stage.</p>
<p>Tests of soundness</p>	<p>Potential risk of the LDP documents being unsound, which could result in major delays to the implementation of the policies or an inability to adopt the LDP.</p>	<p>Effective scoping of work and development of a robust evidence base to provide evidence to support the soundness of the LDP.</p>
<p>Legal challenge</p>	<p>Potential Risk of legal challenge to process of LDP. Likely potential impact as a result – additional work or delay to adoption.</p>	<p>Compliance of LDP process against legislative requirements.</p>