Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032

Ards and North Down Borough Council



draft Plan Strategy





Foreword



Susie McCullough
Chief Executive



Mayor of Ards and North Down,
Councillor Gillian McCollum

We are pleased to share the draft **Plan Strategy** for our **Local Development Plan (LDP)**. This important document sets out the planning policy framework that will guide how our Borough grows and develops in the years ahead. It marks the first publication of our own distinct Local Development Plan for **Ards and North Down**, providing an up-to-date foundation for a plan-led approach to decision-making in planning for the Borough. It will help shape a better future for everyone who lives, works, invests in, or visits our area.

The draft Plan Strategy is the first of two key documents that make up our Local Development Plan. The second, the Local **Policies Plan**, will follow. Once adopted, the Plan Strategy will represent a major milestone, setting the overall direction for sustainable economic growth in the Borough while also promoting social and environmental goals. These include enabling healthier lifestyles, improving connections between places and creating high-quality, sustainable communities.

The Plan Strategy is supported by detailed subject strategies that form the basis for our Operational Policies. These cover key areas such as housing, economic development, retail, infrastructure, the coast, open space and the natural environment, among others. Planning plays a vital role in delivering new homes, supporting business growth and providing essential infrastructure, all while protecting our unique landscapes and heritage.

This draft has been shaped by extensive research, public engagement and consultation with residents, stakeholders, statutory bodies and community groups. In particular, elected representatives for the Borough have been actively involved in discussing and agreeing each LDP topic through member workshops and committee meetings. We've worked in partnership with others and aligned our approach and vision with the Council's Community Plan, **'The Big Plan.'**

We are committed to ensuring that growth is inclusive and sustainable, while recognising the challenges ahead. The Plan also supports our ambition as a Council to drive continued economic growth and unlock the potential of all our communities. Both plans share the vision that:

‘Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be.’

We now invite you to read the draft document and share your feedback. To support this, we’re hosting a series of public drop-in sessions where you can learn more and ask questions to help inform your response to the consultation.

Your views are important and will help shape the future of our Borough.

Explanatory Note

The draft Plan Strategy document is intended to be read as a whole.

The Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy covers a range of issues, and it is often the case that several policies are relevant to a proposed development. It is important that the document is read as a whole rather than considering policies in isolation. Some cross referencing has been used, but this does not mean that other policies of the plan do not apply.

Within the broader context of relevant planning legislation and case law, the Council will also apply a proportionate approach in decision making. This means that account will be taken of such matters as the scale of the proposal and its potential economic, social and environmental impacts. Where the LDP uses terms such as 'unacceptable adverse impact', 'significant adverse impact', or 'public benefit', the interpretation of these terms remains with the Council in the exercise of its statutory planning functions.

Unless otherwise required by legislation, the information required to make decisions, including that required of applicants, will remain a matter to be determined by Council in the exercise of its statutory planning functions. In determining the information requirements, Council may consider such factors as the nature, scale and potential impact of a proposal (proportionality).

We are aware that planning involves a great deal of technical language and jargon. To help you better understand this we have included a glossary of key terms at Part F of this document.

Have Your Say

Ards and North Down Borough Council is consulting on the LDP Draft Plan Strategy 2032 to provide an opportunity for the public to influence the policies and proposals for the future planning and development of the Borough.

Pre-consultation

The Council is launching the draft Plan Strategy (DPS) four weeks in advance of a formal eight-week period of consultation. This pre-consultation period shall run from 18 September 2025 to 16 October 2025.

Please note that representations must not be made until the commencement of the formal eight-week consultation. Any representations received during the pre-consultation period set out above will be returned to the sender and will not be considered.

Formal Consultation

The formal consultation on the DPS shall commence for an eight-week period on the 17 October 2025, closing at 4.30pm on 15 December 2025.

Representations can also be submitted during the consultation period regarding the associated appraisal documents, namely the Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment), the draft Habitats Regulations Assessment, draft Equality (Section 75) Screening Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

Representations received after the closing date will not be considered.

During the formal consultation period, the Council's LDP team will host a series of drop-in public consultation events and information sessions. Further information on these events will be publicised via the Council's website, social media channels and local newspapers.

Availability of the Draft Plan Strategy

The DPS document together with its supporting documents, including the Sustainability Appraisal, is available to view on the Council's website https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/resident/planning

These documents are also available to view at the following Council offices during office hours:

- City Hall, The Castle, Bangor, BT20 4BT
- 2 Church Street, Newtownards, BT23 4AP

The DPS and supporting documents can be supplied in alternative formats; please submit your request and requirements to the above postal addresses or by emailing the LDP team at planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

How to Respond

Representations are welcomed to the DPS and supporting documents as follows:

Online (preferred)

https://ards-northdown.govocal.com/en-GB/

Email

planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Post

LDP Team
Ards and North Down Borough Council
2 Church Street,
Newtownards
BT23 4AP

Representations

The DPS is considered by the Council to be 'sound'; if you have any comments or representations to make, you should demonstrate why you consider that the DPS is not 'sound' and how any proposed changes make the document more 'sound'. Furthermore, representations should demonstrate how any proposed changes meet the requirements of the SA and are more appropriate in terms of meeting the sustainability objectives of the DPS.

Before submitting a representation, you are strongly advised to read the latest DfI guidance[1], presently contained within a series of Development Plan Practice Notes (DPPNs) including DPPN 06 'Soundness' and DPPN 09 'Submission and Handling of Representations'. It is also recommended that you read the latest guidance from the PAC available on their website[2].

Respondents should note that any representations should be made in full to the Council. Further information or clarification will not be sought unless requested by an independent examiner.

The Council recommends using the dedicated online engagement platform at https://ards-northdown.govocal.com/en-GB/ to assist you in compiling your representation.

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[1] *https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/development-plan-practice-notes*

[2] *'Procedures for Independent Examination of Local Development Plans', www.pacni.gov.uk*

Availability of Representations

The Council must publish all representations on its website and make a copy available for public inspection. This will be done as soon as reasonably practicable after the public consultation closing date.

What Happens Next?

The Council will facilitate an additional eight-week period for the submission of counter-representations. All responses will be considered by the LDP team and a Consultation Report will be prepared. Following this, any necessary amendments will be made prior to the formal submission of the DPS to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in advance of Independent Examination (IE).

Representations and counter-representations will be considered at an IE conducted by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) or other independent body that will be appointed by DfI. The IE will determine whether the DPS satisfies statutory requirements and consider its 'soundness'.

It should be noted that all forms of representation are public documents that must be published on our website and made available for public inspection and Independent Examination. All responses will therefore be held on a database in accordance with the provisions of the UK GDPR.

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Part A
Setting The Context

- Introduction and Overview
- Policy Context
- Borough Profile
- Vision And Objectives

Introduction and Overview

1.1 The Ards and North Down Local Development Plan (LDP) draft Plan Strategy covers the period 2017-2032 and is the first to be formulated by the Council since the transfer of planning powers to local government in 2015. The LDP is prepared under the provisions of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (hereafter referred to as the Planning Act) and the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (NI) 2015 (hereafter referred to as the LDP Regulations).

1.2 The Planning Act requires the LDP to be produced in two stages – the first being the Plan Strategy followed, upon adoption, by the Local Policies Plan.

1.3 The Planning Act requires that a draft Plan Strategy set out:

- The Council's objectives in relation to the development and use of land in the District (Borough);
- Its strategic policies for the implementation of those objectives; and
- Such other matters as may be prescribed.

1.4 The Council has prepared the draft Plan Strategy in accordance with the LDP Timetable and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as required by the Planning Act. Both documents are available on the Council's website[3].

1.5 In line with the Planning Act, the draft Plan Strategy has been prepared taking account of the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), the Council's Community Plan, other policies and guidance issued by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), alongside other relevant regional and local plans and strategies[4].

What is a Local Development Plan?

1.6 The Ards and North Down LDP (2017-2032) is a Borough-wide local development plan ultimately comprised of two parts – the Plan Strategy and the Local Policies Plan.

1.7 The draft Plan Strategy sets out the Council's objectives in relation to the future development of the Borough through to 2032 - how

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[3] *https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1710/LDP-Timetable*
https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1384/Community-Involvement

[4] *These are expanded upon under the 'Policy Context' section of Part A.*

the Council will respond to local priorities and meet social, economic and environmental challenges. It will help shape the future of our Council area and plays an important role in assisting other plans and strategies to achieve their outcomes.

1.8 The draft Plan Strategy provides a growth strategy for the Borough, allocating appropriate land for housing, employment and other uses to meet anticipated needs over the Plan period. Importantly, it provides a strategic policy framework to determine development proposals, replacing that provided by the current Planning Policy Statements and relevant parts of the former development plans related to the Borough and prepared prior to transfer to local government[5].

1.9 The draft Plan Strategy also sets out how the LDP will be implemented and how progress against the objectives will be monitored.

Plan-Led System

1.10 Section 6 (4) of The Planning Act (NI) 2011 provides for the plan-led system. It states:

"Where, in making any determination under this Act, regard is to be had to the local development plan, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

In other words, the LDP will be the primary consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development or use of land.

Local Policies Plan

1.11 The Local Policies Plan (LPP) must be in line with the Plan Strategy. The LPP is prepared following the adoption of the Council's Plan Strategy and will bring forward local site-specific designations, accompanying policy criteria and key site requirements.

Relationship To Other Strategies

1.12 As set out previously, the LDP has a statutory link to the Community Plan. The draft Plan Strategy has also been informed by the Council's other plans and strategies such as the Corporate Plan, and the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development

[5] *North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995, Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995, Ards and Down Area Plan (ADAP) 2015, Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP 2001), Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area dBMAP and BMAP – see note on Local Policy context.*

Strategy. Other Council strategies have informed the document and these are referred to in a non-exhaustive summary in Part A and in the Sustainability Appraisal. Furthermore, the draft Plan Strategy has been formulated with regard to regional strategic planning policy, and feedback from consultation on the Preferred Options Paper.

Links to neighbouring areas

1.13 The Council shares a common land boundary with three neighbouring councils – Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. The Council has engaged with the neighbouring councils through consultative discussions and also at a range of working groups.

1.14 The Council will continue to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with neighbouring councils and public bodies regarding strategic planning matters.

Supporting Assessments and Appraisals

1.15 The draft Plan Strategy is subject to a number of assessments and appraisals which are referred to in the summary below. in particular a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which incorporates the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). A draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The draft Plan Strategy is also accompanied by a draft Equality (Section 75) Screening Report examining the likely effects of its policies and proposals on the promotion of equality of opportunity amongst the listed groups. A Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)is also completed. Accordingly, an SA Scoping Report and a Sustainability Appraisal Report have been produced and are available to view. There is also a separate draft Habitats Regulations Report Assessment. Each of these is contained within a separate supporting document accompanying the draft Plan Strategy. Given the complex nature of the SA process the Council has engaged external specialist advice from the Shared Environmental Service in producing the report.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

1.16 In preparing the Local Development Plan, the Council is required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations of policies and proposals.

1.17 Sustainability Appraisal is a process and the draft SA for the Plan Strategy shall be updated as necessary as a result of modifications. The SA incorporates the legal requirements of SEA to consider environmental issues with a view to promoting sustainable development.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

1.18 The draft Habitats Regulation Assessment relates to the 'National Site Network' (NSN) which are areas protected for conservation value comprising Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation, and the international designation 'Ramsar' sites. Both the HRA and SA drafts shall be reviewed as necessary through the plan process including any modifications.

Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations

1.19 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Equality of Opportunity, places a statutory requirement on the Council to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and to promote good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.20 To ensure that the LDP is prepared in accordance with Section 75 statutory obligations, the Council has undertaken a draft Equality Impact screening to determine if there will be any potential impacts upon Section 75 groups as a result of the policies and proposals contained in the LDP.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

1.21 The Rural Needs Act (2016) places a duty on Council to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans and designing and delivering public services. The objective of RNIA is to ensure robust consideration and integration of rural issues at the outset of the policy making process to help ensure fair and equitable treatment for rural areas through the development of policies which are proportionate to need. RNIA has been used as part of the LDP policy making process to ensure fair and equitable treatment of rural communities and that a policy does not indirectly have a detrimental impact on rural dwellers and rural communities. 'Equitable' means policies in the LDP should treat rural areas in a fair or reasonable way. This does not mean that rural areas should have an equal level of resources as urban, but rather that policies demonstrate proportionality to rural areas, taking into account their need and unique characteristics

Using the LDP Plan Strategy

1.22 Under the new 'Plan-led system' introduced by the 2011 Planning Act, the determination of a planning application, where it is relevant to the LDP, must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Figure 1 – The Structure of the Draft Plan Strategy



1.23 A diagram showing the structure of the draft Plan Strategy (DPS) document is shown in Figure 1.

1.24 Under the transitional arrangements set out in the LDP Regulations, applications submitted following the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy will be assessed against the DPS and the relevant extant statutory Plan for the Borough. Any policy conflict between these documents shall be resolved in favour of the adopted Plan Strategy. Further information on transitional designations and zonings that will carry forward until the final stage of the LDP is formally adopted can be found in Technical Supplement 18.

1.25 Any planning application submitted to the Council following the adoption of the Plan Strategy will therefore need to be assessed against the relevant strategic planning policies and planning framework contained in this document. In order to ascertain which policies are relevant to their development proposals, applicants should firstly refer to Part B of the draft Plan Strategy which sets out strategic spatial proposals and associated policies linked to the Spatial Growth Strategy and Countryside Strategy. This gives a broad spatial indication of where development is likely to be acceptable.

1.26 Applicants should then refer to the Strategic and Operational Topic Policies set out in Part D. These policies are set out under particular subject areas linked to the themes in the LDP. Applicants should focus on the particular policies relevant to their proposal. For a proposal for housing development within a settlement, the applicant should refer to the housing policies under the theme. However, it should be noted that more than one Subject Policy may need to be taken into account. For example, if a proposal is in proximity to the coast or a river, the applicant will also need to take due account of the policies relating to coast and flood risk.

1.27 Having considered the proposal, applicants should then refer to Policy GP 1 which sets out General Policy criteria for all development. This policy criteria applies to all development proposals and the Council must consider them when taking decisions on planning applications for which it is responsible.

1.28 Applicants should check the Council website for forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance documents[6] as these will provide further information and guidance on specific areas or topics and will be a material consideration in decision making.

1.29 Applicants will also ultimately need to refer to the Local Spatial Policies applicable to particular local zonings or local designations.

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[6] *https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1380/Local-Development-Plan*

Local designations include settlement development limits, town centre boundaries, or local landscape or environmental designations. These will be reviewed and updated in the Local Policies Plan (LPP) see Transitional Plan Period Zonings and Designations Technical Supplement 18. This second document of the LDP will be published and adopted subsequent to the adoption of the Plan Strategy by the Council.

1.30 Pending adoption of the LPP, the spatial definition of local zonings and local designations in existing Development Plans and the associated policies will continue to apply during the interim period, to the extent that they do not conflict with strategic designations and policies contained within the adopted Plan Strategy.

1.31 All policies considered relevant to the proposed development will be taken into account by the Council in the determination of a planning application. In assessing the proposal, the Council will consider all relevant policies in the round. This means that applicants should not read policies in isolation, as more than one policy could apply to any proposal.

1.32 The Council wishes to emphasise the value, to the range of prospective developers, of considering all the potentially relevant policies, along with the associated spatial information, at an early stage in the development proposal process.

1.33 Engagement with the Council's Planning Service and other relevant public authorities is therefore strongly encouraged as early as possible in the preparation of development proposals. Particular to significant development proposals – the Council emphasises the benefit of early engagement with Northern Ireland Water. Those engaging shall see the greatest benefit when policies are considered in concept stage rather than design or later formal stages.

Policy Context

1.34 As required by the Planning Act 2011, the Council has taken account of the regional and local policy context in preparing its draft Plan Strategy, including the Regional Development Strategy, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement, the Big Plan (the Council's Community Plan).

Regional Policy Context

Programme for Government 2024-2027

1.35 The Northern Ireland Programme for Government (PfG) was published by The Executive Office on 9 September 2024 and agreed in February 2025. The purpose of the PfG is to improve the wellbeing of all citizens in Northern Ireland by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth.

1.36 Local Development Plans are a key delivery tool for the achievement of a number of the PFG outcomes. Accordingly, the previous iteration of the draft PfG published in May 2016 and the 'New Decade New Approach' 2020 (NDNA) document have been taken into account in preparing the draft Plan Strategy.

1.37 NDNA highlighted a range of priorities including realising the economic potential offered by City Deals (of which Ards and North Down Borough is part of the Belfast Region City Deal), and to:

- invest urgently in wastewater infrastructure which is at or nearing capacity in many places across Northern Ireland, limiting growth;
- tackle climate change head on with a strategy to address the immediate and longer-term impacts of climate change; and
- introduce legislation and targets for reducing carbon emissions in line with the Paris Climate Change Accord.

1.38 NDNA sets out that the Executive will enable Housing Associations to continue building new social housing and intermediate housing, including the Co-ownership Housing Scheme after March 2020. Housing is included as a specific priority in the Programme for Government. The Executive also committed to enhance investment and agree a target for new social and affordable home starts.

1.39 The ongoing development of the LDP will be informed by the most up to date iteration of the Programme for Government.

Regional Development Strategy 2035

1.40 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) is an overarching spatial strategy for Northern Ireland up to 2035. The RDS seeks to influence the future distribution of development throughout the Region with a view to achieving sustainable development and social cohesion. It does this primarily by setting out:

- Strategic Regional Guidance relating to society, the economy and the environment;
- A Spatial Framework; and
- Specific guidance for the components of the Spatial Framework.

1.41 The RDS also includes guidance on 'Regionally Significant Economic Infrastructure' and implementation.

1.42 The Planning Act specifically requires the draft Plan Strategy to take account of the RDS. Further information on how this has been undertaken is referred to throughout the document.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland

1.43 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) was published by the former Department for Environment in September 2015. It is in general conformity with the RDS and aims to further sustainable development and improve wellbeing through the planning system. The SPPS sets out five core planning principles to underpin the reformed planning system:

- Improving health and wellbeing.
- Creating and enhancing shared space.
- Supporting the economy.
- Supporting good design and place shaping.
- Preserving and improving the built and natural environment

1.44 The SPPS incorporates a regional planning policy framework which sets out the strategic direction for all councils in bringing forward detailed operational policies through their LDPs. This framework sets out regional strategic objectives and associated strategic policy covering 16 subject areas such as housing and economic development.

1.45 Given the direction that the SPPS provides in relation to the preparation of LDPs in order to meets its regional strategic objectives, this document has been one of the most important aspects of the regional policy context that has been taken into account by the Council in preparing the draft Plan Strategy.

Sustainable Development Strategy

1.46 The Planning Act requires that LDPs are prepared with the objective of furthering sustainable development. Accordingly, the draft Plan Strategy has taken account of the government's Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), 'Everyone's Involved', published in May 2010. The aim of the SDS is to identify and develop actions on the part of government and all other stakeholders that will help to grow the economy, promote equality and social cohesion, and utilise natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner. The SDS sets out six guiding principles of sustainable development which together are intended to deliver the Strategy. These are:

- Living within environmental limits.
- Ensuring a strong, healthy, just and equal society.
- Achieving a sustainable economy.
- Promoting good governance.
- Using sound science responsibly.
- Promoting opportunity and innovation.

1.47 In addition, the LDP will also have regard to furthering sustainable development through a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)) for both the Plan Strategy and the Local Policies Plan. This is to ensure the integration of social, economic and environmental considerations into the Plan preparation process.

Lifetime Opportunities

1.48 The Council has formulated a Local Development Plan draft Plan Strategy that creates a framework for facilitating opportunities for growth and development which is accessible to everyone. In preparing the Plan Strategy, regard is given to Lifetime Opportunities – Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Regional Transportation Strategy

1.49 Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) 'A New Approach to Regional Transportation' was published by DFI in June 2011. It complements the RDS and contains high level aims and strategic objectives to:

- Support the growth of the economy through transportation.
- Enhance the quality of life for all.
- Reduce the environmental impact of transport.

1.50 The Strategy sets out DFI's approach to regional transportation and is intended to be used to guide strategic investment decisions beyond 2015.

Regional Water Strategy

1.51 'Sustainable Water – a Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015 -2040)' was published by DFI in March 2016. It sets out a range of initiatives to deliver the Executive's long-term goal of a sustainable water sector. The strategy identifies how planning can impact on flood risk and water quality and aims to ensure that such matters, as well as existing water and wastewater infrastructure capacity and future investment proposals, inform the preparation of the LDP.

UK Marine Policy Statement

1.52 The UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) was published in September 2011. It provides the policy framework for the Marine Planning system and for taking decisions that have the potential to impact on the marine environment. The policy framework seeks to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK's marine area which includes both offshore and inshore regions including all tidal rivers and sea loughs. The draft Plan Strategy for Ards and North Down has had regard to the MPS.

Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

1.53 The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland was published in April 2018 by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The draft Marine Plan was developed within the framework of the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) in order to protect and sustainably manage the marine environment in Northern Ireland and facilitate sustainable development including coastal areas. The draft Marine Plan will inform and guide the regulation, management, use and protection of our marine area, both the offshore and inshore regions. In preparing the draft Plan Strategy, the draft Marine Plan was taken into account and will continue to inform the LDP process, until such time as a Marine Plan is adopted.

Planning Policy Statements

1.54 Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) (mostly published by the former planning authority, as the Department of the Environment (DOE)) currently provide operational planning policy across a range of subject areas and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. The existing suite of retained PPSs as they apply to Ards and North Down, will cease to have effect when the Plan Strategy is adopted. Until that time, a transitional period will operate when the PPSs continue to be applied (along with other material considerations) in the determination of planning applications. In preparing the draft Plan Strategy, the operational policies contained in all the PPS documents have been reviewed, taking due account of the SPPS, other relevant aspects of the regional and local planning policy context and the evidence base for the Borough.

A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland

1.55 A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI) was published in 1993 by the former Department of the Environment (DOE). It set out policies that have largely been superseded by the subsequent PPSs and SPPS; however, a small number of residual policies remain in operation. As with the PPSs, the small number of residual policies in a PSRNI will cease to have effect once the Plan Strategy is adopted.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

1.56 A range of supplementary planning guidance supports the regional policies contained in various PPSs and the SPPS. These are retained as material planning considerations during the transitional period until the Draft Plan Strategy is adopted.

1.57 The following DfI planning guidance will continue to have effect (where relevant) unless and until such guidance is updated, revised or replaced by new Departmental guidance on the planning issue[7].

- DCAN 10: Revised Environmental Impact Assessment;
- DCAN 12: Planning Control for Hazardous Substances;
- DCAN 14: Siting and Design of Radio Telecommunications Equipment;
- DCAN 15: Vehicular Access Standards;
- Best Practice Guidance to PPS 23 'Assessing Enabling Development for the Conservation of Significant Places';
- Building on Tradition – A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside;
- Creating Places: Achieving Quality Residential Environments;
- Living Places: An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland;
- Parking Standards;
- Transport Assessment;
- Best Practice Guidance to PPS 18 'Renewable Energy';
- Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland Landscapes;
- Supplementary Planning Guidance to Policy PED 8 'Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses'; and
- Supplementary Planning Guidance to PPS 18 'Renewable Energy' Anaerobic Digestion (Draft).

[7] *The most up to date position is available on the DfI website https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/update-extant-planning-guidance-prepared-doe*

Other Strategies and Plans

1.58 In preparing the draft Plan Strategy, regard has also been had to the following:

- EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 (May 2020)
- Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland (acting as Environment Strategy) (September 2024)
- The Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 (July 2015)
- Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy 'Delivering Resource Efficiency' (Oct 2013)
- A Guide to the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 for Public Authorities (Revised)
- Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NILCA) (1999)
- Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment (2016)
- Northern Ireland Regional Seascape Character Assessment (Jan 2014)
- Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) (Jan 2022)
- Energy Strategy – path to Net Zero Energy – Action Plan

Transitional Arrangements

1.59 As stated above, the existing suite of PPSs will no longer apply within the Council area once the Council adopts the LDP Plan Strategy. A transitional period will operate until such time as our Plan Strategy is adopted. The remaining provisions of 'A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland' (APSRNI) will also no longer apply upon adoption of the Plan Strategy and, until adoption, a transitional period will operate as in the case of the PPSs. Any relevant supplementary and best practice guidance which reflect the Council's policies will continue to apply during this time. Further information on transitional designations and zonings that will carry forward until the final stage of the LDP is formally adopted can be found in Technical Supplement 18.

Local Policy Context

Existing Development Plans

1.60 The existing development or area plans that apply to the Borough are:

- North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (NDAAP)
- Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP)
- Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995
- Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP)
- draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP)
- Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP)

1.61 It should be noted that BMAP was purportedly adopted in September 2014 but was subsequently quashed as a result of a judgment by the Court of Appeal delivered on 18 May 2017, therefore BMAP remains unadopted. As a consequence of this, the NDAAP, the BUAP, and Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995 are now the statutory Development Plans for the North Down area, with draft BMAP remaining a material consideration.

1.62 These plans remain extant until replaced by the new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the Borough.

1.63 It is worth noting that the extant plans relating to legacy North Down were adopted before the first version of the RDS was published in 2001 and also before the publication of any of the PPS documents. Accordingly, these older plans are not based upon the principles of sustainable development which underpin the more recent regional direction. This can present some difficulty in the current context of a plan-led system. The extant plans have also gone past their notional end date, nevertheless, they provide the starting point for the review of spatial planning options for the LDP and therefore are an important consideration in the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy.

1.64 Given that draft BMAP (published 2004) was at an advanced stage and had progressed through the formal public local inquiry process, the Council has also considered draft BMAP in combination with the Planning Appeals Commission Public Inquiry report into objections to draft BMAP in the preparation of this draft Plan Strategy.

1.65 The adopted Plan Strategy will replace the strategic elements of the existing development plans relevant to Ards and North Down. Local designations and associated policies will remain in place until superseded by the adoption of the Ards and North Down Local Policies Plan (the second plan document).

Corporate Plan 2024-2028

1.66 The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities and the work we will do to improve the quality of life for everyone in Ards and North Down. The Council exists to provide civic leadership, promote prosperity and deliver essential services to people who live in, work in and visit the Borough of Ards and North Down. The Corporate Plan is founded in seeking progress towards 'A Sustainable Borough' through innovation in our services and greater partnerships with our residents and other organisations.

1.67 The priorities of the corporate plan are closely aligned with those of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan). In the delivery of the Corporate Plan, the Council seeks to achieve better outcomes for

all the people of our Borough, towards the longer-term vision of the Community Plan. The plan is driven by three corporate priorities:

- Economic – Increasing economic growth by attracting more jobs and businesses
- Environmental – Reducing carbon emissions as we transition to net zero
- Social – Improving wellbeing through social inclusion and reducing inequalities

1.68 There are 7 outcomes:

- An engaged Borough with citizens and businesses who have opportunities to influence the delivery of services, plans and investment
- An environmentally sustainable and resilient Council and Borough meeting our net zero carbon targets
- A thriving and sustainable economy
- A vibrant, attractive, sustainable Borough for citizens, visitors, businesses and investors
- Safe, welcoming and inclusive communities that are flourishing
- Opportunities for people to be active and healthy
- Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation

1.69 The Corporate Plan acknowledges that the LDP, along with the Community Plan and other Council Strategies, will be key to assist in meeting the Council's objectives.

Community Plan

1.70 The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 enshrines a statutory link between the Community Plan and the LDP. The 2011 Planning Act was updated to require that the preparation of the LDP must take account of the Council's current Community Plan.

1.71 The Council's Community Plan – 'The Big Plan' was published in April 2017 with a revision in 2019. The vision of The Big Plan (that the LDP shares) is that:

"Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be."

1.72 The overarching, cross-cutting ambition of The Big Plan is: to have empowered, resilient individuals and communities; to reduce inequality; to promote good relations and sustainability; and to improve the accessibility of all public services.

1.73 The Big Plan contains five outcomes. These are ambitious statements that the Council aspires to accurately reflect the situation of the people who live in Ards and North Down by the year 2032.

- Outcome 1: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential
- Outcome 2: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Outcome 3: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure
- Outcome 4: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous and inclusive economy
- Outcome 5: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible.

1.74 The outcomes approach of our Community Plan has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy. As work on the LDP progresses, we will seek to deliver on any community planning outcomes where there is an identified spatial land use or local planning policy solution.

Council Plans and Strategies

Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Development Strategy

1.75 The 'Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Development Strategy – Blue:Green Creatively Connected' was published in May 2018 and covers the period from 2018- 2030.

1.76 The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development seeks to present a coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough of Ards and North Down. It responds to the vision and outcomes of the Community Plan and is used as the point of reference for all those contributing to the growth of our economy, the welcoming of visitors and the improvement of our places, both urban and rural.

1.77 The Strategy was researched and developed through a highly collaborative process involving stakeholders from the public, private and community sectors. It is built on an evidence base that identifies the key assets of the Borough, as well as economic and environmental challenges faced at local and regional level. The draft Plan Strategy has taken account of those strategic priorities that can be addressed through the planning system. Of particular importance to the Council is the jobs target set out in the Strategy and how the LDP can assist to deliver towards the targets of the Strategy. It sets

out a priority job target with a success scenario of 7500 jobs that the draft Plan Strategy has taken account of as the ambition for the Borough and is reflected in the Growth Strategy.

Digital Strategy: Digitally Connected 2019-2022

1.78 The Strategy recognises the different facets of digital development and the specific needs of the Borough to establish a direction and approach to maintain and strengthen the unique characteristics and ambitions of the different areas of Ards and North Down. The Strategy aims to outline the wider strategic, economic and societal background as a basis for developing three integrated strands: Digital Sector, Digital Infrastructure and Digital Skills.

Sustainability And Climate Change Policy 2022

1.79 The Sustainability and Climate Change Policy gives a commitment that Ards and North Down Borough Council will endeavour to reduce its impact on the local and global environment by demonstrating clear leadership, providing high quality services, whilst preventing pollution, reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions and saving energy and water. The Council will strive towards compliance with all sustainability, environmental and climate change legislation, guidance and best practice principles to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

Roadmap to Sustainability 2021-2028

1.80 The Council's main aspiration for the Roadmap is to enable the Borough to become an exemplar in sustainability. For this to be achieved, the Council recognises that improvements need to be made on the implementation of actions associated with its strategies. Nature-based solutions are the ways that nature can help solve social or economic problems. These include improving mental and physical health through the provision of quality green space and engagement with nature, improving water and air quality or storing carbon from the atmosphere to help mitigate climate change.

"actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits" [IUCN 2020].

"Nature-based solutions with safeguards are estimated to provide 37 per cent of climate change mitigation until 2030 needed to meet the goal of keeping climate warming below 2°C, with likely co-benefits for biodiversity" [IPBES Global Assessment Report, 2019].

1.81 All policy, strategy and investment decisions must be evaluated/ sense checked to ensure the Council isn't being 'locked in' to unsustainable choices that will affect the Council and its residents over several decades. As a climate emergency has been declared in

the Borough, climate change and sustainability remain high on the Council's agenda. They must be front and centre to all aspects of Council services from this point forward.

Climate Adaptation Plan

1.82 Northern Ireland's second Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP2) was published in September 2019 and it covers the period 2019-2024. The programme contains the NI Civil Service response to the risks and opportunities relevant to Northern Ireland as identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017, setting out the policies and strategies to deliver against the priority areas. As part of the Council's 'Roadmap to Sustainability', Action 17, is to 'Develop a Climate Adaptation Plan for the Council and Borough.' The Council has prepared an Adaptation Plan and published this in 2024.

1.83 The development of the Adaptation Plan and a future Climate Action Plan will allow the Council to meet its commitments to NICCAP, future reporting duty requirements within the Climate Change Act NI and our own Roadmap to Sustainability.

City Region Deal

1.84 Ards and North Down Borough Council is a partner in the Belfast City Region Deal (BCRD). The highly ambitious Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) was signed in December 2021. The Deal represents a new way of working between central and local government and regional partners and secures a bespoke package of investment from central government and the BRCD partners of more than £850 million to support the delivery of our shared vision of: "Inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs, a positive impact on the most deprived communities and a balanced spread of benefits across the region".

1.85 The substantial financial commitment, which will be further supplemented by the private sector, will generate up to 20,000 jobs as it is delivered over the next 10-15 years - an exciting, once in a generation opportunity to accelerate economic growth for the region in an inclusive and sustainable way.

1.86 The Belfast Region City Deal will strengthen the region's offer in growth sectors such as life and health sciences, the digital and creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. It will support next generation digital capabilities, boost tourism and support the regeneration of our region, underpinned by infrastructure developments and investment in skills to connect people to jobs and services.

1.87 As well as those set out above, the DPS has considered and taken account of the Council's other plans and strategies when formulating policy. These include:

- Town Masterplans and Village Plans
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Play Strategy
- Integrated Arts and Heritage Development Strategy
- Tree and Woodland Strategy
- Food Destination Development Plan
- Ards and North Down Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan.
- Leisure Strategy.

Borough Profile

Context, Opportunities and Challenges

Population

1.88 The Borough has a population of 163,659 (2021 Census) usually resident population. The Northern Ireland trend is that while the number of children and people aged 16 to 64 are both projected to decrease over the next 25 years, the number of people 65 and over is projected to increase. Since 2001, the number of pensioners in Ards and North Down has been above the NI average, numbers have increased and are also projected to rise further between 2018 and 2028. The projected proportion change is 23.1% whilst the proportion of working age people is projected to decrease by 1.1% over the same time period.

1.89 Northern Ireland statistical trends suggest that the number of people aged 85 and over in Northern Ireland has grown by around 28.1% between mid-year 2010 and mid-year 2020. For each of the Local Government Districts (LGD) the proportion of the population aged 65 and over is projected to increase. In mid-2018 only Ards and North Down had a population where at least one in five people were aged 65 and over. By mid-2028, this figure is projected to rise to five out of 11 local council areas, ranging from 20.3 % in Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to 25.2%in Ards and North Down Borough Council.

1.90 Census 2021 shows that Ards and North Down continues to have the highest percentage of older residents aged over 60 and is the council with lowest percentage population aged under 4 and aged 20-29. The 2021 Census recorded 31 residents aged over 100 within the Borough.

1.91 Life expectancy continues to improve for both males and females within the Borough. In 2016, Ards and North Down was the only LGD where the estimated population aged 65 and over exceeded the estimated number of children (NISRA).

1.92 The ageing population profile may have implications for the overall health of the Borough and the number of ailments commonly associated with older people. As of 2019/20, there were 1,573 people on the Dementia Register (all ages) and 455 people on the Osteoporosis Register (aged 50 plus years) within Ards and North Down (NINIS).

1.93 A total of 12,379 patients were on the Obesity Register within the Borough in 2015. The childhood obesity rate amongst Primary 1 pupils within Ards and North Down was higher than comparable figures for Northern Ireland as a whole, calculated as a three-year rolling average in 2015. However, the percentage figure of 18.4% is now lowest of all LGDs and below the NI average of 23.23%.

1.94 The largest population centres are Bangor and Newtownards, followed by Comber, Holywood and Donaghadee. There is also a vibrant network of villages and small settlements, each with their individual physical and social attributes of their communities.

1.95 The Borough has a relatively ageing population. Looking ahead over the next 20 years, the population will continue to be focused on ageing households. However, this population profile also has implications for a range of issues, such as the need for sustainable employment opportunities to have a balance of demographics and the need to provide opportunity for a mix of housing units and tenures.

Economic

1.96 The NI Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) estimates that as of September 2021, the total number of employee jobs in Ards and North Down was 40, 212, an increase of 161 from the previous year. In June 2022, the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in the Borough was 4,870, representing 6% of the Northern Ireland total. In 2018, the working age (ages 16-64) employment rate in Ards and North Down was 72.9% and the economic activity rate was 75.5%, which is higher than the Northern Ireland rate of 72.8%. (Source: Labour Force Survey, NISRA September 2019).

1.97 The largest sector in the Borough is that of the tertiary/service sector – comprising 67% of total registered business stock. Agriculture accounts for 13%, construction 13%. and production (including manufacturing) accounts for 7% of the business stock.

1.98 Set against strong attributes, the Borough is a net exporter of commuters, who live in Ards and North Down but travel outside the Borough for work. This has implications for sustainable travel and also for the ability of local people to find local employment.

1.99 Tourism is an important element of the local service economy with the Borough's attractions frequently being those most visited in Northern Ireland.

1.100 Traditionally, fishing has been a major industry in certain areas with local communities - such as Portavogie, which is the second largest fishing port in Northern Ireland, after Kilkeel, - remaining at the centre of the trade today.

1.101 Each of our city and towns has a distinct character and functions in a locally distinct way. The economy is focused on our principal settlements. Bangor is the Borough's largest town and received the honour of being in recognised in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations as a city. Newtownards has a successful town centre and benefits from a diverse range of retail units, formats and sizes.

Environmental

1.102 Ards and North Down's geographical area is nearly 567 square kilometres or 56,663 hectares with approximately 185 kilometres (115 miles) of coastline, extending from Holywood on the shores of Belfast Lough to Portaferry on the southern tip of the Ards Peninsula and Killinchy to the west of Strangford Lough.

1.103 Strangford Lough, which is of global environmental importance, forms the central geographical and landscape feature of the area. The conservation of its special natural environment is secured by a variety of statutory international and European designations such as Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar. It was the first Marine Nature Reserve in Northern Ireland and is also a Marine Conservation Zone.

1.104 The Outer Ards and Belfast Lough coastlines to the east and north of the Borough are also designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites.

1.105 Ards and North Down Borough is rich in varied landscapes, wildlife habitats and heritage features, which together make a positive contribution to its special character and identity. As mentioned above, the district is dominated by Strangford Lough, an enclosed tranquil stretch of marine water with an indented coastline of islands and half drowned drumlins and a smoother eastern coast, both backed by wooded estates which form part of the wider Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

1.106 Other highlights include Crawfordsburn Country Park, Craigantlet Escarpment, the Copeland Islands and the North Down Coastal Path. The value and importance of many of these areas are recognised and afforded protection through international, national and local environmental designations.

1.107 Northern Ireland's inshore and offshore region contains a rich archaeological record spanning 9,000 years. The principal types of heritage asset include shipwrecks, submerged prehistory such as artefacts, structures and deposits and coastal and intertidal archaeology which originated from the inhabitation or use of the coast. Given the extensive coastline of our Borough, there is a huge potential for a wealth of marine heritage assets on our shores.

1.108 There is one proposed Area of Special Archaeological Interest at Nendrum. In addition, there are 18 Areas of Townscape/Village Character and three Conservation Areas which contribute to the distinct character and quality of the settlements in which they are designated (Donaghadee, Holywood and Portaferry).



1.109 Our historic environment and built heritage includes buildings of historic architectural significance, historic monuments and archaeological remains, military and industrial heritage. Industrial heritage features include old mills, bridges, tanneries and railway stations which serve as reminders of the industrial era of the Borough. Examples include Helen's Bay Train Station, Andrews Mill in Comber and the lead mines at Whitespots between Bangor and Newtownards. The Council area contains a wide range of defence heritage features, ranging from airfields, anti-aircraft batteries, observation posts, pillboxes and hangers, to machine gun ranges.

1.110 Our water environment, including the coastline, rivers and reservoirs, is an important resource for recreation, amenity and tourism. It offers specialised habitats, adding to biodiversity.

Transportation

1.111 Ards and North Down is served by c. 1,152 kilometres of public roads. Although there are no motorways, the settlements of the northern portion of the Borough are well connected via nine Protected Routes, as well as key link corridors that cross the Borough boundary into the Belfast Metropolitan Area. Accessibility to Belfast is further enhanced by bus and NI Railways services, but reliance on the private car remains high. This is particularly true in the small settlements and more rural locations on the Ards Peninsula where public transport availability is less reliable.

1.112 The Portaferry to Strangford ferry service provides a well-used connection to Newry, Mourne and Down District, whilst links to destinations that are further afield are provided at Belfast City Airport, just outside the Borough.

1.113 Energy within our Borough is primarily produced by the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity, from power stations outside our administrative boundary. There has been a rise in planning applications for renewable energy sources such as solar farms and single wind turbines in recent years.

1.114 Access to a high-speed internet connection is critical for the economic development of the Borough and can also help to address social deprivation. Broadband connectivity improvement work has taken place across a number of settlements, meaning that most of our households have access to the internet and only 3.6% of premises are unable to get speeds greater than 10 Mbits/second.

Challenges Facing the Borough

1.115 Ards and North Down Borough offers a high quality of life. However, in continued articulation from challenges acknowledged in the Preferred Options Paper, there is a recognised need to manage a series of issues over the lifetime of the LDP to support economic prosperity and to mitigate negative impacts of development and create and maintain exemplar places and spaces.

- The LDP is emerging through continued periods of change and uncertainty. Spending cuts implications, from the time that the Plan formulation commenced, has meant reductions/limits to central government funding towards projects in the short to medium term. New fiscal challenges continue with the Region emerging from the global Covid 19 pandemic and associated outcomes.
- The Council has significant plans for the Borough and includes projects supported by the Belfast Region City Deal. There is a need to ensure that the local economy is supported and businesses Borough-wide are able to thrive and grow. It is important that appropriate employment opportunities are promoted within the Borough.
- While outside the control of the Council, it is recognised that there are issues in respect of sewerage and water infrastructure. It is important that the LDP is progressed in a compatible way to deal with these circumstances.
- Transport infrastructure remains strained in terms of public transport service provision to parts of the Borough, such as the Peninsula.

- An important part of achieving sustainable communities is the regeneration of and support for our town centres to reach full potential - places which are attractive, thriving centres, each maintaining their own distinctive role and character in our Borough.
- House prices in the Borough remain relatively high, and this can cause affordability issues, particularly for young people. There is also a continued trajectory of an aging population. New development will need to meet the changing needs of all residents.
- While overall the Borough is generally affluent, there are areas where income levels are significantly lower and/or access to local community services is not as good, and this can create social exclusion.
- Maintaining existing sustainable, attractive and inclusive communities and creating new ones to ensure that the Borough continues to benefit from low crime levels, good health and an attractive natural and historic environment.
- Supporting the mitigation and adaptation to climate change is a challenge shared by all councils and central government.

1.116 It should be noted that some of the issues identified above cannot be addressed by the planning system in isolation and collaborative approaches and wider commitments are necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.

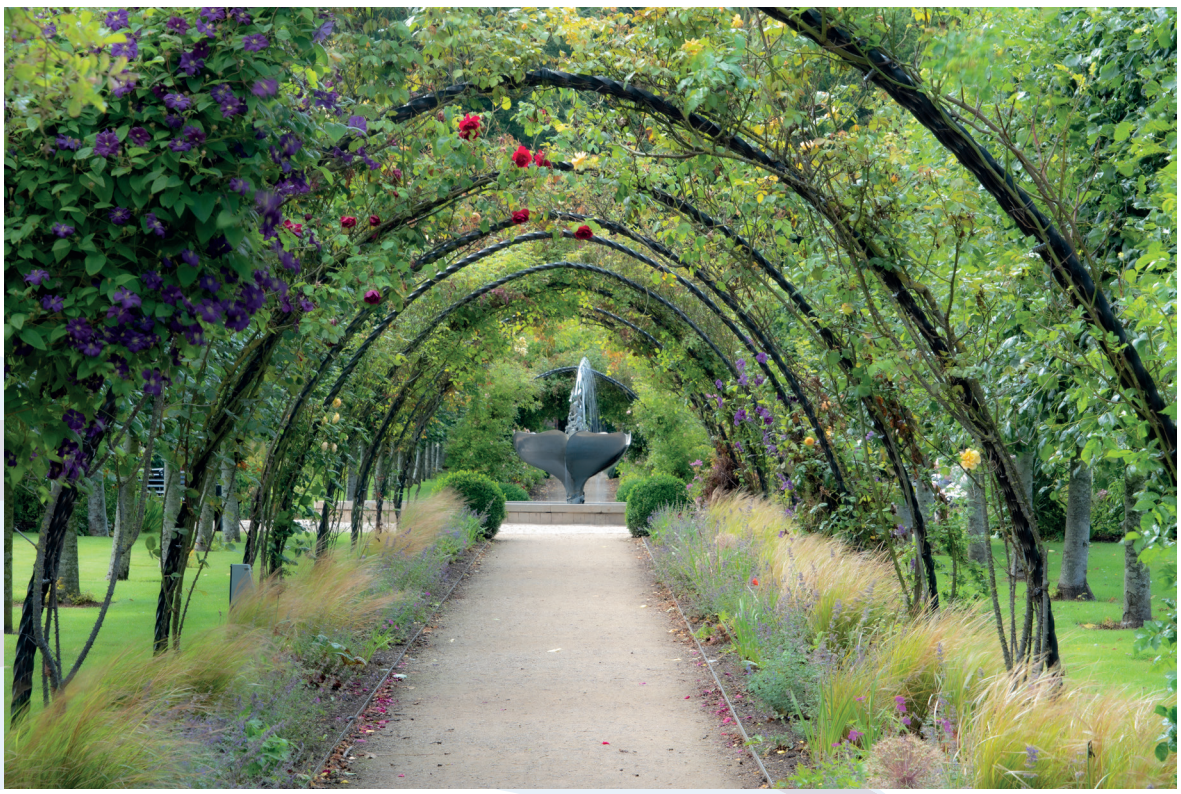
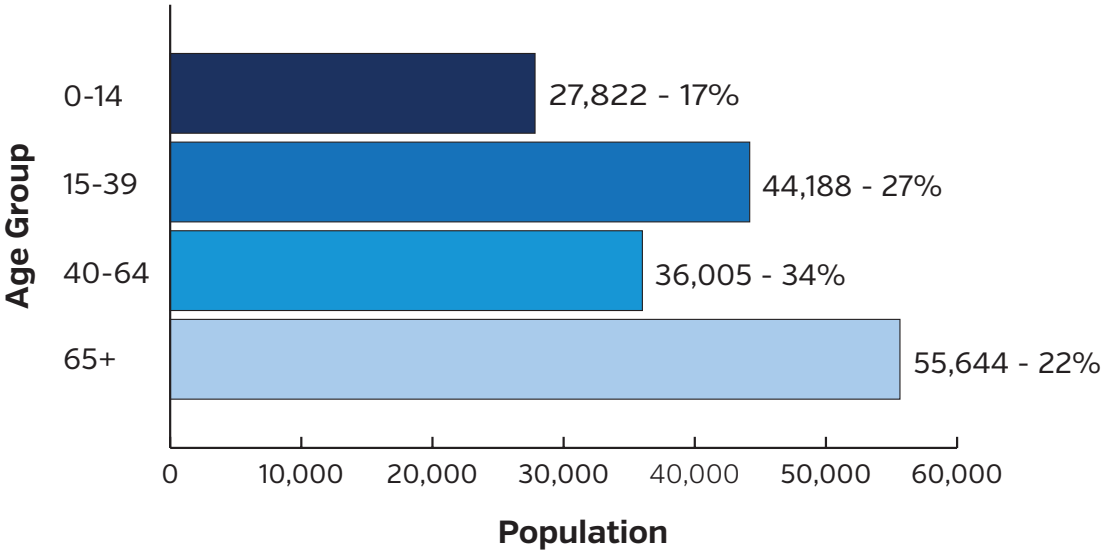


Table 1: Borough Key Facts - Population

	Population
163,659	Borough population in 2021 (up 4% since 2011)
163,396	Borough's projected population by 2038
0.83%	Projected population increase from 2020-2038 (1360 people)

Percentage of Population in Borough in 2021 by Age Group



Population in Borough by Gender

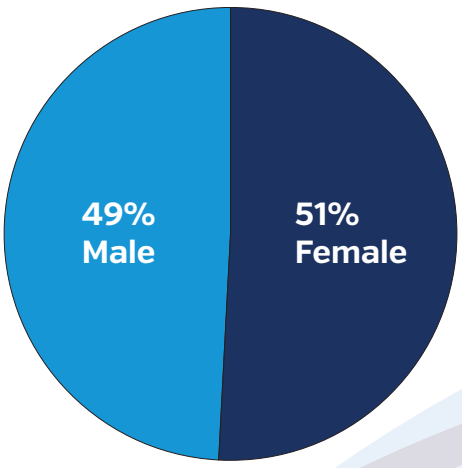


Table 1: Borough Key Facts - Population

	Population
82.3 years	Female life expectancy
78.4 years	Male life expectancy
17%	Population that are employment deprived
78%	People with good or very good health (according to 2021 Census)
30,200	Primary school age and over in full time education
70,445	Number of households in 2021 (Up 9% since 2011)
70,492	Number of households projected in 2038
2.36	Average Household size in 2021 (persons)
2.29	Average Household size projected by 2032 (persons)

Table 1: Borough Key Facts - Economy

	Economy
70,300	Aged 16 and over in employment (excluding full time students)
15,900	Work mainly at or from home (22.6%)
72,600	55% of people travel less than 20km to their work
9,979	Number of jobs in public sector BRES 2023
31,239	Number of jobs in private sector
4,835	VAT and or PAYE registered business in Borough (2024)
41,806	Employee jobs in the Borough BRES 2023
580	Employee jobs in Agriculture, Forestry, fishing 2024)
1,277	Employed in construction within the Borough
3,006	Employed in manufacturing within the Borough
36,397	Employed in Services within the Borough
537	Employed in other sectors within the Borough (source: NI Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), 2021
£459	Full time median weekly earnings of those in the Borough NISRA (2022)
5.21%	2020 AND GVA Contribution to the NI Economy (NISRA)
755	Farms within the Borough (Agricultural Census 2021
£211,630	Average House price within the Borough (Quarter 2, 2024)
17.3%	Average % of town centre vacant properties April 2022, (DfC) Bangor 23.9%, Comber 15.7%, Holywood 13.3%, Newtownards 18.3% and Donaghadee 16.1%
79.8%	School leavers achieved at least 5 GCSE's grades A*-C (incl. English and Maths (20/21)
4	Active/Operating Quarries

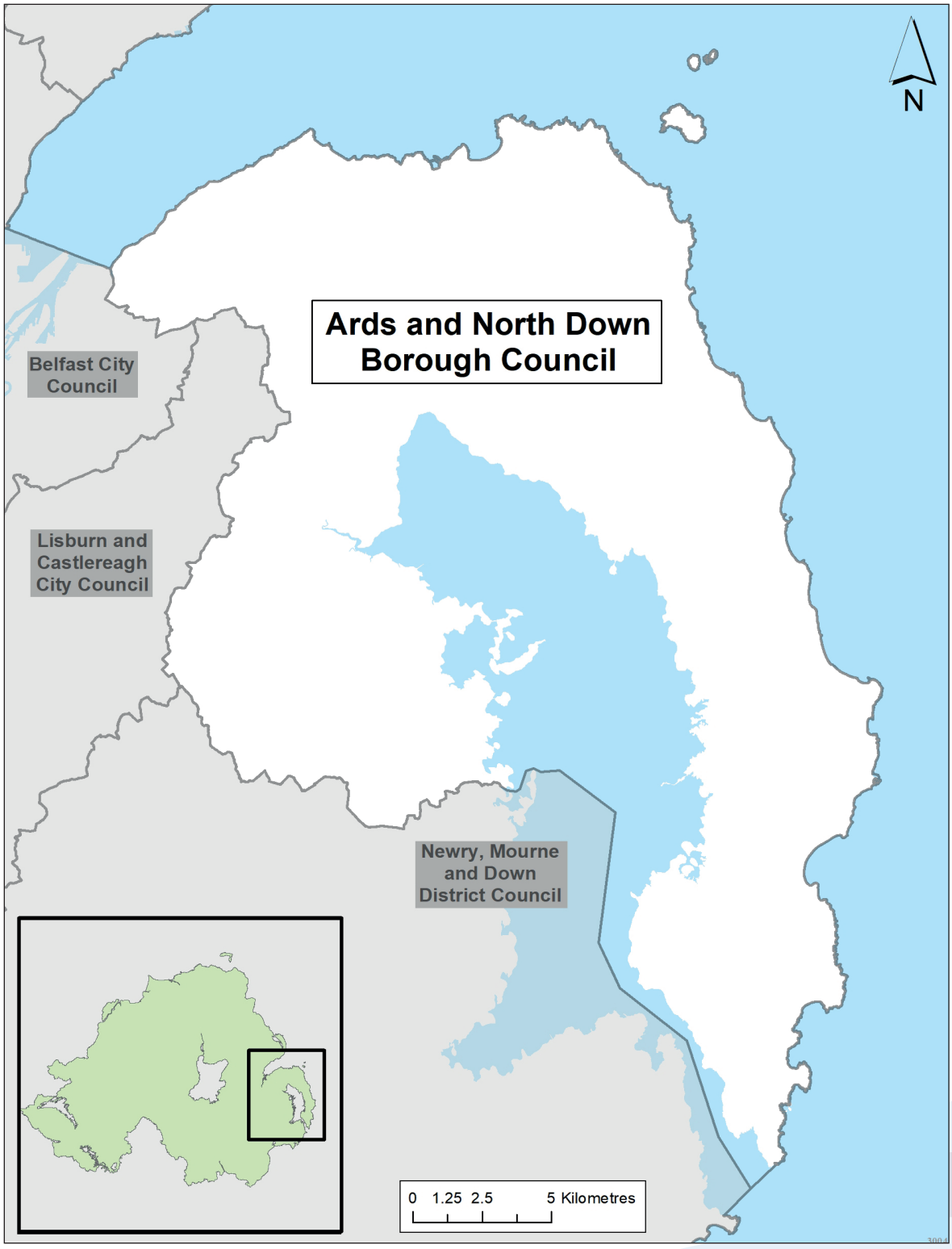
Table 1: Borough Key Facts - Settlements

	Settlements
1	City* (Bangor awarded city status in The Queen's Jubilee year)
4	Towns
17	Villages
20	Small settlements
1,152 km	Road length in the Borough
98,853	Licensed vehicles in Borough (2017)
55.5%	Of the Borough's household waste is prepared for reuse, recycled and composted (2024)
1	Railway station (Halts at Bangor West, Carnalea, Helen's Bay, Seahill, Cultra, Marino and Holywood)
9	Council operated recycling centres within the Borough
6	Fire and Rescue stations in operation within the Borough

Table 1: Borough Key Facts - Environment

	Environment
15	State Care Archaeological sites within the Borough
17	Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes
16	Grade A Listed Buildings/Structures
3	Designated conservation areas (Donaghadee, Holywood and Portaferry)
18	Areas of Townscape Character (ATC) and Areas of Village Character (AVC)
11	Landscape Character Areas

Map 1A: Plan Area Boundary



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Vision and Objectives

LDP Vision

1.117 The vision sets out what kind of Borough Ards and North should strive to be by 2032. The LDP shares that of the 'Big Plan', the Council's Community Plan.

'Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to live'

A Prosperous Place

1.118 By 2032, Ards and North Down has a sustainable, resilient, low carbon economy with sufficient jobs at all levels. Sustainable economic growth has been achieved by ensuring a range of suitable employment sites and premises, supporting key and growing employment sectors.

1.119 The gap has been narrowed between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the Borough through improvements to infrastructure and support services, by supporting employment opportunities and by supporting and encouraging community engagement in regeneration and local decisions.

A Vibrant and Connected Place

1.120 By 2032 the Borough has responded to the need for adaption and mitigation in respect of climate change. The standards of sustainable design have been raised to ensure that all new developments contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and resource use, maximise the potential for sustainable construction methods and minimise demolition and construction waste. Active travel networks connect healthier, safer communities.

1.121 By 2032 the Borough is a vibrant and attractive place for residents, businesses and visitors alike, with a higher-quality built environment and a protected and enhanced natural environment. High quality public realm accommodates the needs of all people and creates public places and spaces which are well used and where people feel safe and with reduced opportunity for crime and reduced fear of crime.

1.122 By 2032, the Borough has supported and enhanced biodiversity, including links to existing and new open spaces, and achieving improved access for all.

A Healthy and Safe Place

1.123 By 2032, healthy and safe sustainable communities have been created with a mix of housing types and tenures in suitable locations – including accessible and affordable homes. Communities offer a good range of community facilities with access to jobs, key services and infrastructure, thereby reducing the need to travel. Opportunities are realised to promote the active participation of residents of all age groups in physical and cultural activity and to enjoy good health and wellbeing.

Strategic Objectives

1.124 In order to deliver this vision and address the issues identified, a number of strategic objectives have been identified. These have been refined from those set out in the Preferred Options Paper (POP).

1.25 The aim is to achieve these objectives through the Spatial Strategy, and the implementation of the strategic and operational policies set out in the draft Plan Strategy. Most LDP objectives are cross-cutting, having different degrees of economic, social and environmental aspects, and all have differing spatial impact – which is the primary focus for the planning of development in the Borough, through the LDP.



Spatial and Cross-cutting Objectives

Promote sustainable growth in the right places and at the appropriate level, to meet the needs of all those who live, work, visit and invest in the Borough.

To create sustainable places throughout the Borough through design, layout and mix of uses that enhance the character and identity of settlements and landscape; create attractive, safe and accessible places to live, work and visit; and promote prosperity, and well-being of citizens.

To support sustainably located and designed development that supports mitigation and adaptation to climate change and increases local environmental resilience. This includes carbon reduction through the use of renewable energy development and incorporation of sustainable design principles and features.

Social Objectives

To provide a sufficient supply of land for new housing to support the Council's growth ambition and facilitate delivery to meet diverse housing needs up to 2032.

To create sustainable residential environments which are designed to a high standard, well connected and inclusive of the needs of all potential inhabitants.

To support rural communities by providing appropriate and sustainable opportunities for development in the countryside.

To build sustainable resilient communities where people have good access to housing, employment, shops, public transport, active travel, healthcare, community and cultural facilities.

To improve health and wellbeing - by facilitating health, education, community and cultural facilities in accessible locations and creating places that encourage a healthy lifestyle through the provision of high-quality open space and sporting facilities, informal leisure spaces and increase opportunities to walk, wheel, or cycle.

Economic Objectives

To support a thriving, well-connected, diverse economy to enable and encourage business growth and attract inward investment and businesses in appropriate growth sectors.

To support the Council's ambition of employment growth through the provision of accessible land for employment, including for start-ups and grow-on spaces in a choice of sites at a range of locations.

To sustain and enhance vibrant and attractive town centres, serving the needs of residents, visitors, tourists and businesses.

To support sustainable tourism in the Borough by creating and identifying opportunities for sustainable tourism development and by safeguarding key tourism assets from inappropriate development.

To facilitate sustainable minerals development through balancing specific need along with the duty to protect and conserve the environment.

Environmental Objectives

To protect, enhance and manage the natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems and the connectivity between them, while at the same time generating benefits for the economy, tourism, health and well-being. This includes the Borough's designated sites, protected habitats, species and other biodiversity, and its high quality and distinctive landscapes and seascapes.

To conserve, enhance and protect the historic environment and cultural heritage of Ards and North Down for the future while realising benefits for the economy, tourism and social well-being.

To ensure that new development in the Borough takes account of the risk of flooding, both existing and in the future, including the need to avoid inappropriate development in areas that are at risk from flooding, or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, and the need to design development, including the use of natural flood management measures and sustainable drainage, to appropriately manage flood risk and surface water run-off.

To protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate, excessive or obtrusive development that would cause harm to its visual amenity and natural and historic assets, whilst accommodating appropriate sustainable development to sensitively enhance the developed coast.

To identify and develop a network of green and blue infrastructure to encourage nature recovery and biodiversity whilst supporting resilient ecosystems and good health and wellbeing.

Infrastructure Objectives

To support more sustainable movement patterns by promoting a mix of land use allocations in accessible locations alongside improved digital connectivity, whilst providing opportunities for active travel and integrated sustainable transport above use of the private car.

To facilitate development of renewable energy infrastructure whilst minimising impact on visual amenity and the environment.

To promote and facilitate investment in physical and digital infrastructure and facilities for power, water, waste water and waste management.

To promote across the Borough the efficient use of natural resources, including providing increased opportunities for water efficiency, energy efficiency, renewable energy, recycling and waste reduction.



Part B
Strategic Approach

2 Growth Strategy

3 Countryside Strategy

4 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy

2 Spatial Growth Strategy

2.1 It is vital that the LDP provides for the appropriate level of growth in the right places and that it seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations – a sustainable approach to our local planning framework.

2.2 The Spatial Growth Strategy provides a strategic framework for realising the vision of sustainable development for the Borough.

2.3 The RDS Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel provides an illustration of the patterns of service provision that are likely to be appropriate at different spatial levels, including villages, small towns, regional towns and cities.

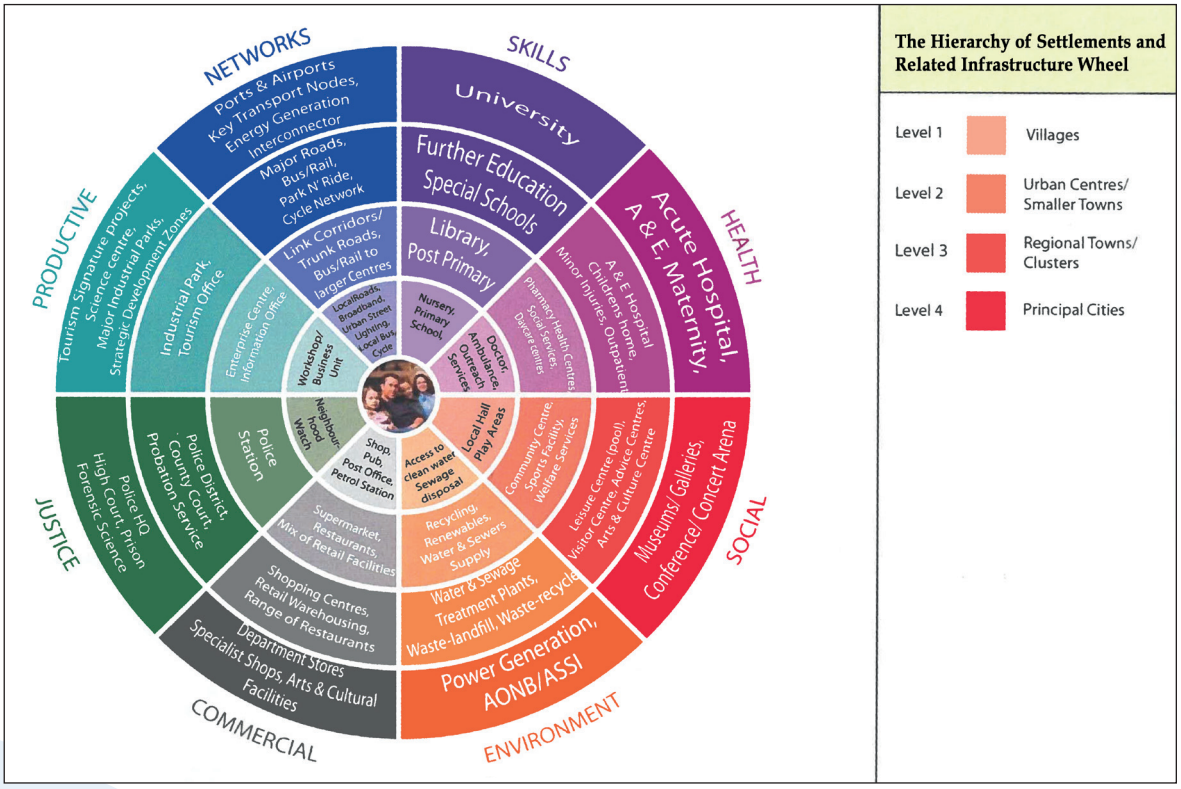


Figure 2
The Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel

2.4 Small settlements and the rural area complete the hierarchy of locations where development may take place. The model recognises the strong relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported.

2.5 The RDS also recognises that:

- Settlements often provide either a greater or lesser range of services than the core population may dictate. It is not appropriate therefore to consider 'urban' population alone in classifying settlements within the Borough – the population of rural hinterlands can also support services in urban centres.
- Service centres tend to be hierarchical, with a large number of centres providing a smaller range of services, and a smaller number of centres providing a wider range. Each class of settlement provides services lower down in the hierarchy; and
- Access to services and facilities is important. Creating a critical mass to support a level of services raises challenges for service providers in meeting the needs of spatially dispersed populations.

SGS 1: Spatial Growth Strategy

- Focus growth in Bangor and Newtownards as the principal settlements of the Borough, strengthening their roles as the primary locations for future housing and economic growth and investment in the Borough;
- Consolidate and strengthen the role of Holywood as befitting its position within the BMA and reflecting its potential to support a growing digital and creative industry within the Borough;
- Consolidate the role and function of the small towns of Comber and Donaghadee as local service centres for housing, employment, facilities and services to support the local population and their rural hinterlands;
- Consolidate Portaferry as a new small town within the settlement hierarchy to reinforce its role and function as an important local centre for housing, employment, facilities and other services serving the rural hinterland of the Ards Peninsula;
- Sustain and maintain the diversity and quality of our villages by encouraging local development which supports the population and services of local communities; and
- Sustain and maintain our rural communities in small settlements and the countryside by facilitating sustainable development of an appropriate scale and character that affords protection to rural character and our rich natural environment.

Map 2: Spatial Growth Strategy including Settlement Hierarchy



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2.6 Our Spatial Growth Strategy will help support the realisation of our LDP strategic objectives by setting out where growth should be directed, in terms of housing, employment and commercial development over the plan period. The strategy acknowledges the role and function of our settlements within Ards and North Down, the regional importance of our larger principal settlements (Bangor and Newtownards), and the need to sustain rural communities living in our smaller settlements and the countryside. The Spatial Growth Strategy will primarily be delivered through the strategic spatial proposals and policies set out in the remainder of the Plan Document.

Why we have taken this approach

2.7 Our proposed Spatial Growth Strategy will seek to achieve the RDS objectives of promoting growth and economic development opportunities in the 'main hubs' of which Newtownards is identified, and support the role of Bangor (as in the context of the RDS it is within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area, and has received an honorary city status in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations), whilst sustaining our rural communities living in villages and smaller settlements and the countryside allowing them to maximise their potential.

2.8 The focus of growth in the principal settlements/main towns recognises the need that new development is directed to the most appropriate places and that the scale of development for any given settlement is commensurate with the capacity of that settlement to support it. This will also capitalise on the benefits arising from the efficient use of existing community facilities, services and infrastructure in the large towns and their strategic location on key transport corridors.

2.9 A clear sequential town centre first approach will be adopted for retailing and commercial leisure, to help maintain the vitality and viability of our centres. Principal settlements/main towns will accommodate economic development and new residential development within the existing urban fabric, and where possible on previously developed land. Strategic Employment Locations (SEL)s shall be recognised, and where necessary providing new, economic development zonings to maintain a generous supply of economic development land.

2.10 Housing zonings and a phasing approach will ensure land availability over the Plan period to meet housing needs (see Strategic Housing Allocation).

2.11 Small towns will support the principal settlements/large towns and provide opportunities for economic development, retail and services and accommodate residential development in keeping with the location, scale, function and character of the settlement.

2.12 The villages of Ards and North Down will be sustained and revitalised and they will continue to perform a role as local service centres to meet the daily needs of the rural area and accommodate rural businesses and appropriately scaled residential development.

2.13 Small settlements will act as focal points for the rural community, particularly in the more isolated parts of the Borough. They often take the form of a rural cluster or crossroads development where consolidation of the built form can provide opportunities for single dwellings and/or small groups of houses or small rural businesses. The level of development should be proportionate to the location, size and scale of the settlement.

2.14 Within the countryside, single dwellings and appropriate types of economic development (such as farm diversification), agriculture and forestry development and sustainable tourism and minerals proposals will also be facilitated to sustain vibrant rural communities, where demonstrated as compliant with the Plan policies.

Delivery of Spatial Growth Strategy:

2.15 The Spatial Growth Strategy is largely aimed at promoting sustainable housing and economic growth throughout the Borough. Sustainable development is to the foremost of delivery in the new LDP's draft Plan Strategy with due regard to environmental considerations. It will be implemented through the Strategies associated with topic areas such as Town Centres and Retailing, Open Space, Sustainable Tourism, the Strategic approach and Policy Framework as a whole.

2.16 The Plan Strategy in tandem recognises the importance of the countryside of Ards and North Down as one of our most valuable resources. Shaped by its distinctive and attractive landscapes and cultural and environmental assets, it is plentiful in historic and natural heritage. The unique environment requires careful stewardship through the Countryside Strategy. The Countryside Strategy sets out a strategic policy approach for the countryside, including sustainable development policy for housing and non-residential development along with the policy relating to countryside designations and an overall rural design policy approach.

Settlement Hierarchy

2.17 The main purpose of the Settlement Hierarchy is to provide the spatial framework for the delivery of the Spatial Growth Strategy. Therefore, the Settlement Hierarchy defines which settlements throughout the Borough fall into the following categories:

- Principal Settlements - Large Towns
- Small Towns
- Villages
- Small Settlements

2.18 Areas not designated under these categories will, for the purposes of the LDP, be treated as the countryside.

2.19 The Spatial Growth Strategy and the Settlement Hierarchy set broad parameters for the distribution of housing, economic development and retail growth through the Borough over the Plan period. Further refinement around this will be provided by the various strategic policies set out. Together, this will ensure that new development is directed to the most appropriate places and that the scale of development for any given settlement is commensurate with the capacity of that settlement to support it.

2.20 A total of 42 settlements within the Plan area have been designated and split into four tiers based on their role, facilities and services available and their potential for accommodating development in accordance with the RDS Spatial Framework Guidance.

2.21 The two principal settlements - the city of Bangor and the large town of Newtownards have been retained at the top tier of the hierarchy. These centres have populations well in excess of any of the small towns or villages. They are also predominant in regard to the range of services they offer, the transportation links within and beyond the Borough and the strength of their economic base. All of these considerations underlie the regional status of these settlements, as set out in the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS).

2.22 A detailed settlement evaluation was carried out to determine which settlements should be classified as small towns, villages and as small settlements. Information on existing provision of education facilities, community facilities, retail provision and accessibility of all settlements was used as indicators to allow settlements to be ranked based on their sustainability. Account was also taken of other relevant factors such as population size and economic development, to refine the overall assessment.

2.23 This study has resulted in four small towns being designated, the retention of Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood in this settlement tier, plus the addition of Portaferry.

2.24 In defining settlement development limits at Local Policies Plan (LPP) stage the main objectives will be to promote and accommodate new development, and also to contain it within the limits in order to maintain a clear distinction between the permissible developable area and the surrounding countryside. Account will be taken of the RDS direction to achieve compact urban forms, concentrate resources and protect settlements from urban sprawl, and against the merging of settlements. Consideration will also be given to avoiding risk to human health and wellbeing (e.g. excluding land subject to flood risk) and protecting the natural and historic environment (e.g. important landscape features).

SGS 2: Settlement Hierarchy

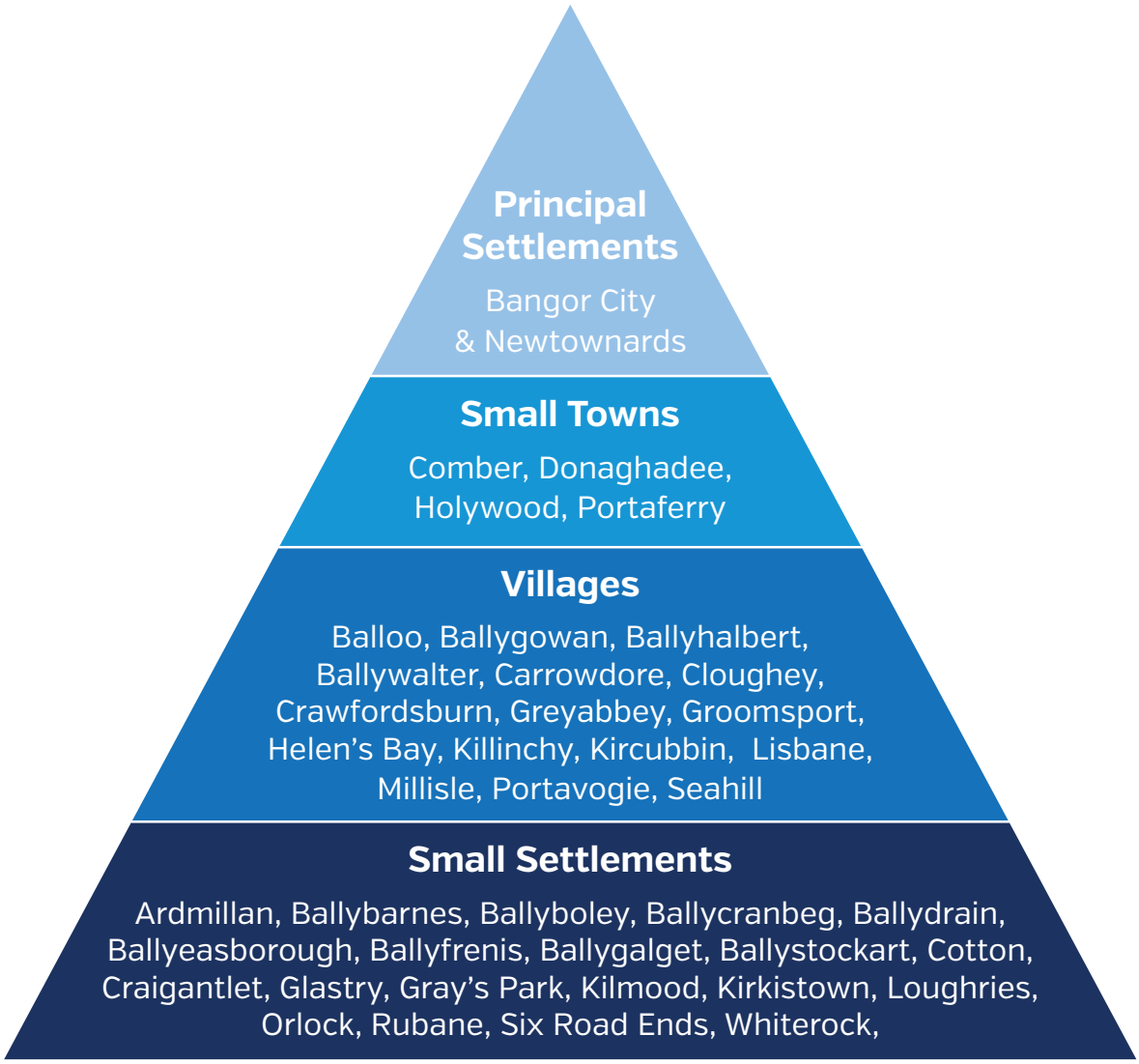


Figure 3: Settlement Hierarchy

Strategic Allocation of Economic Development/Industrial Land

An Appraisal of Future Industrial Land Requirements and Strategic Designations

2.25 A fundamental role for LDPs is to ensure there is an ample supply of suitable and available land to meet economic development needs within the plan area. This requirement is set out by Regional Guidance RG1 of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) which states that the supply of economic development land should be accessible and located to make best use of available services. The focus will be upon larger urban centres and regional gateways, taking advantage of their locations on regional transport networks.

SGS 3: Strategic Allocation of Economic and Industrial Development Land

- Allocate a minimum of 25 hectares of land for economic development purposes, focussed upon the principal settlements and most accessible locations;
- Support and promote Strategic Employment Locations as the preferred employment locations in the Borough;
- Support and promote zoned employment sites throughout the Borough to provide opportunities for a range of economic needs and businesses including business startups and Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs);
- Provide a spatial framework for the application of economic development policies, intended to deliver sustainable and environmentally sensitive economic growth across the Borough, including rural areas; and
- Monitor the uptake of employment lands to ensure that the LDP maintains a 5-year supply.

2.26 The Employment Land Evaluation Framework (ELEF) is the means by which planning authorities can identify robust and defensible portfolios of strategic and locally important employment sites in LDPs and safeguard them from encroachment by other uses.

Table 2: The Employment Land Evaluation Framework (RDS 2035)

The Employment Land Evaluation Framework (RDS 2035)	
Stage 1 **Taking stock of the existing situation**	An initial assessment of the 'fitness for purpose' including the environmental implications of the existing employment land portfolio. This is principally in order to identify the 'best' employment sites to be retained and protected and identifying sites that should clearly be released for other uses.
Stage 2 **Understanding future requirements**	Quantify the amount of employment land required across the main business sectors during the development plan period. This is achieved by assessing both demand and supply elements and assessing how they can be met in aggregate by the existing stock of business premises and by allocated sites. Account should also be taken of turnover of existing sites due to relocation or closures. Both short/medium term and strategic provision need to be considered in this process.
Stage 3 **Identifying a new portfolio of sites**	Devise qualitative site appraisal criteria to determine which sites meet the occupier or developer needs. Confirm the existing sites to be retained, replaced or released, and any gaps in the portfolio. In this allocation, consideration should be given to previously used sites, and in the reallocation, the environmental impact of one site relative to others should be included. The results of Stage 2, together with this site appraisal should provide a robust justification for altering allocations for employment land.

2.27 The supply of economic development land in the Borough is identified through a hierarchy of sites which consist of:

Strategic Employment Locations (SEL)s

2.28 Balloo Industrial Estate (Zoning BR07 in draft BMAP) and Jubilee Industrial Estate (NS33 in ADAP) are identified as Strategic Employment Locations (SELs) in recognition of their existing and future economic function.

2.29 Strategic Employment Locations can be defined as the most significant employment sites within a Plan area – both in terms of their physical size and the level of business and industry that they support. In turn, this translates to the number of jobs they provide and the number that they could potentially generate in the future. They should be located close to a large labour pool, with appropriate

service infrastructure and accessibility. Once identified as SELs, such sites must then be protected from inappropriate incremental development that would undermine their key economic function and viability. This would be implemented via strategic and operational planning policy, developed through the LDP process. Policy ED 1 contains the operational planning policy relating to SELs.

Legacy Zoned Employment Sites

2.30 These are sites that were zoned in the extant Ards and Down Plan 2015 and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 and form the basis for future assessment of land allocation. These existing zonings are carried forward under the transitional arrangements outlined in Part A.

Taking stock of the current situation

2.31 In order to take stock of the current position in respect of industrial land in the Borough (Stage 1), the Council commissioned an Employment Land Review (ELR) in 2019. This provided an assessment of current employment land in the Borough and considered how new and/or additional employment land could be delivered through the LDP process. This was supplemented by an Employment Land Monitor (carried out by the Council in April 2022 and updated in 2023), which looked in detail at the dominant Use Classes[1] in the zoned sites and calculated the supply of economic development land not yet developed.

Meeting future employment land needs

2.32 The extant Ards and Down Plan (ADAP 2015) and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP 2015) designated over 200 hectares (ha) of land for employment and industrial use in the Borough, although the vast majority of this area related to existing industrial areas such as Kiltonga, Balloo, and Greenway Industrial Estates. Bangor and Newtownards were the Borough's strategic locations for economic development land, containing the majority of the zonings and also being the focus for Invest NI's serviced sites. Further small-scale zonings were located in Comber and Donaghadee. A site of a builder's merchants in Ballywalter was designated as an Industrial Policy Area (IPA) in recognition of its role as a key employer in the village. The aforementioned studies revealed that out of 203.23 hectares zoned as either existing or proposed employment land, 63 hectares remains undeveloped.

2.33 In terms of understanding future employment land requirements, the Council's Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy ('Integrated Strategy' or 'ITRDS') sets out the growth aspirations for the Borough up until 2026. Its growth

[1] *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/40/made.*

rates have been applied and extrapolated to 2030, giving a baseline scenario of 4500 new jobs by 2030 and an ambitious 'strategy success' scenario of 7500 jobs by the same date. The extrapolation of the Council's Integrated Strategy figure to 2032 – i.e. the Plan period gives a figure of 9375 jobs.

2.34 The ELR details how the additional jobs have been apportioned to certain Use Classes based upon existing NISRA figures for each sector in Ards and North Down. The amount of floorspace required per annum for different employment sectors was taken from the Home and Communities Agency Employment Density Guidance 2015. This presents an 'Employment Density Matrix' for each Use Class. The resulting calculation produced a quantity of floorspace that would be required for both the baseline and strategy success scenarios, and this could then be converted into a number of hectares. The findings were as follows:

- Baseline Scenario (4500 jobs) – 126,000 sq. metres – 12.6 ha;
- Strategy Success Scenario – (7500 jobs) – 205,000 sq. metres – 20.5 ha.

2.35 In both of the above cases, it has been suggested that the figures are slightly increased to allow for ancillary elements such as car parking and plant and yard areas, rounding up at 15ha and 25ha respectively. The highest demand is projected to be in Use Class B1(a) - General Offices. Hotels and Storage and Distribution are also projected to have relatively high space requirements.

2.36 The LDP will align with the Councils preferred 'strategy success' scenario, and based upon the 25ha allocation figure, concludes that there is adequate existing undeveloped zoned land available to accommodate projected future employment growth in the Borough, both up to 2030 as demonstrated by the ELR, but also to the end of the Plan period in 2032, given the significant oversupply.

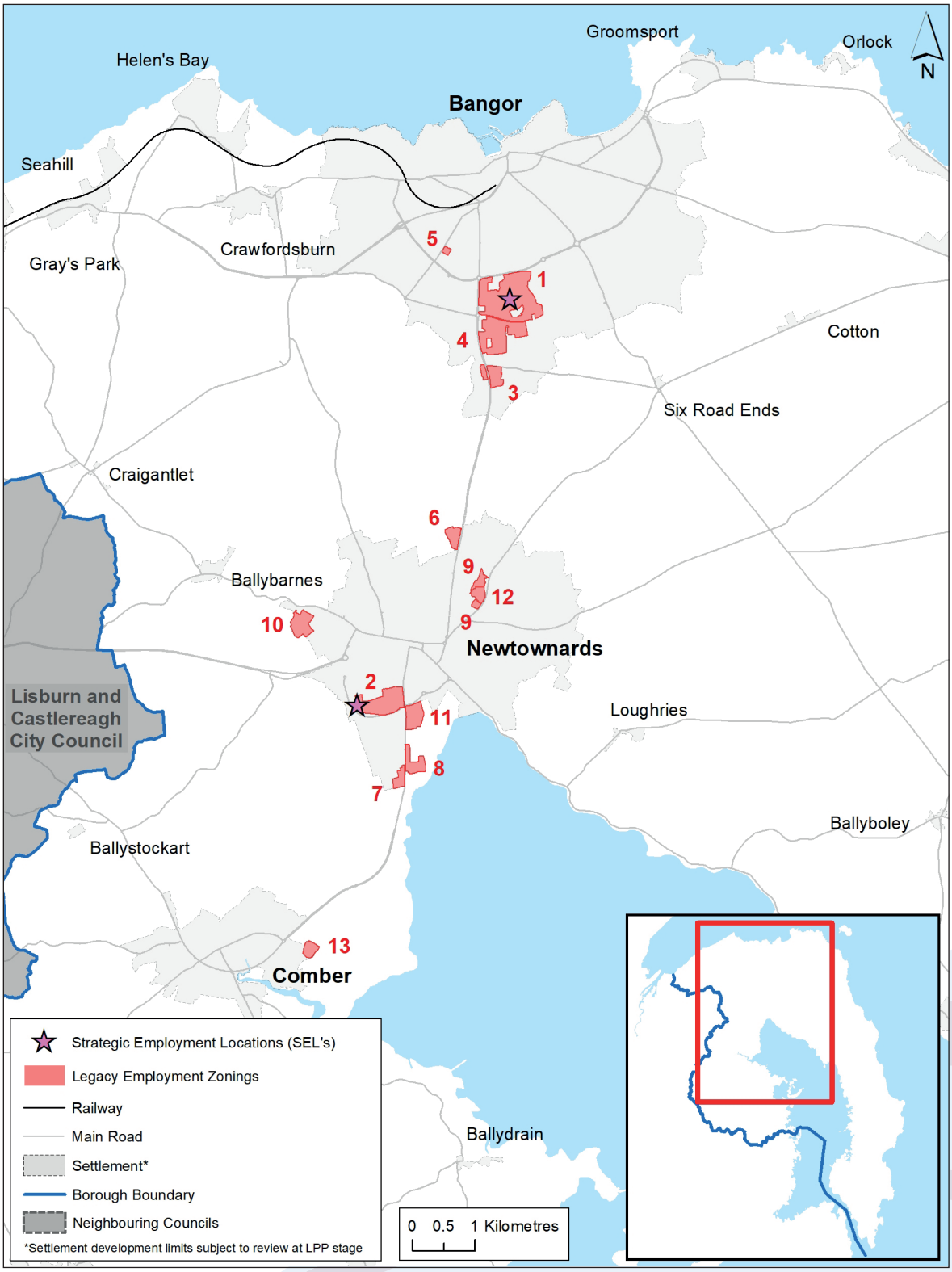
Distribution and Quality of Land Supply

2.37 The ELR recommends that the 37.28ha oversupply of zoned lands can be justified for the following reasons:

- It would allow for unexpected growth over the Plan period and ensures there is sufficient choice to accommodate changing market demand;
- It ensures flexibility of choice across a number of locations and for various types of sectoral growth;
- It ensures that an adequate supply and choice of economic development land exists for the Plan period or until such time as a review takes place; and
- It allows a flexibility allowance for the non-delivery of certain sites, due to unforeseen circumstances.

2.38 The above assessment will be reviewed at LPP stage and if it is deemed necessary, a new portfolio of sites will be identified to address Stage 3 of the ELEF, along with the site appraisal criteria used in the selection of such sites.

Map 3: Strategic Employment Land Allocation



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Table 3:
Strategic Employment Allocation

Map Ref.	Site Name	Location
Strategic Employment Locations		
1	Balloo Industrial Estate (Balloo Road, Newtownards Road/South Circular Road	Bangor
2	Jubilee Industrial Estate	Newtownards
Legacy Zoned Employment Sites		
3	Newtownards Road	Bangor
4	Balloo Rd/Newtownards Road	Bangor
5	Clandeboye Road	Bangor
6	Bangor Road	Newtownards
7	Comber Road (West)	Newtownards
8	Comber Road (East)	Newtownards
9	Donaghadee Road (North and South)	Newtownards
10	South of Belfast Road and East of Milecross Road	Newtownards
11	Comber Road Industrial Estate	Newtownards
12	Donaghadee Road	Newtownards
13	Riverside, Lands south of Comber Bypass	Comber
Totals		

Total Area Zoned (ha)	Total Area Remaining (ha)	Status
55.22	4.67	Mostly developed but with 7 separate small undeveloped portions
23.30	3.61	Pockets of undeveloped land throughout zoning
17	17	Undeveloped
28.07	12.15	Majority of undeveloped portion consists of Invest NI lands
1.22	0.23	Mostly developed
5.87	5.87	Undeveloped
4.51	4.51	Undeveloped
8.19	7.21	North section contains warehousing units but southern is vacant
5.04	3.42	Development ongoing on part of this site
2.97	2.97	Undeveloped
10.30	0.18	Mixed use approval granted but not yet implemented
4.05	0.86	Small undeveloped portion
4.66	0	Approval granted and wider development begun
170.4	62.68	

Strategic Housing Allocation

2.39 Planning for future housing growth is one of the core functions of the LDP. Housing continues to exert the greatest pressure on the Borough's land resource, and it is likely to continue to be the most widespread urban land use change for many years to come. Housing is recognised in the RDS as a key driver of physical, economic and social change in urban areas. Housing provision supports population growth and therefore provides a foundation for the delivery of health and education services, community facilities, infrastructure and other services. The relationship between the location of housing, employment, services and infrastructure is crucial if growth is to be sustainable.

2.40 The proposed Strategic Housing Allocation sets out the Council's position on the overall quantity of housing required in the Borough to support its wider aims in relation to attracting and sustaining the working population required for job creation and to meet the needs of all sections of society.

2.41 Regional Guidance RG 8 of the RDS seeks to 'manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development'. The RDS recognises that there are significant opportunities for new housing on appropriate vacant and underutilised land and sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints[2] of settlements greater than 5,000 population. In Ards and North Down this consists of Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee.

2.42 The Strategic Housing Allocation sets out the overall housing provision for each settlement to set the framework for more detailed housing requirements such as zonings, and key site requirements for specific sites in the LPP[3].

2.43 The proposed Strategic Housing Allocation is in line with the regional strategic objectives set out in the RDS and the LDP Spatial Growth Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy. It was informed by those measures set out at 6.139 of the SPPS including:

- RDS Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs);
- Use of the RDS Housing Evaluation Framework;
- Allowance for existing housing commitments;

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[2] *The urban footprint is defined as the continuous built-up area of the settlement. The boundary will be represented by an uninterrupted line, often lying inside the planned settlement limit. The urban footprint contains land which has a formal urban use including land on the edge of the settlement where it forms part of the curtilage of a building. However, this does not necessarily imply that gardens are acceptable for housing development. Undeveloped zoned land at the edge of the settlement will be excluded.*

[3] *The evidence base for housing will be reviewed and updated prior to the publication of the LPP. This will include the urban capacity study, windfalls and housing land availability.*

- Urban Capacity Studies;
- Allowance for Windfall housing;
- Application of a sequential approach and identification of suitable sites for settlements over 5,000 population;
- Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Market Analysis (HNA/HMA); and
- Transport Assessments.

SGS 4: Strategic Housing Allocation

- Allocate 15,608 new homes to meet housing need and support job creation over the Plan period;
- Manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development across the Borough (see SGS 5: Strategic Housing Allocation across settlements); and
- Management of the release of housing land to ensure the LDP maintains a 5-year supply throughout the Plan period (see SGS 6).

2.44 A number of housing growth scenarios[4] were considered for the Borough including: HGI led; demographic trend led; dwelling led (based on historic build rates); and employment led (based on the level of population growth required to support job creation targets and employment growth).

2.45 The Council's approach is to adopt an employment-led approach to setting the strategic housing requirement. This takes local growth aspirations for employment within the Borough, as expressed in the Council's 'ITRDS', and applies demographic modelling to determine the quantity of housing required to support the associated population growth.

2.46 There is a complex inter-reliance between employment growth – population growth – and housing growth. Aspirations for employment growth through job creation are normally realised through population growth in the working-age cohort of 16-64 (with an appropriate allowance for 'double jobbing'). This, in turn, should be aligned with housing growth to ensure that sufficient land is allocated to meet the housing needs of the population over the Plan period. Conversely, lack of employment opportunity may stymie in-migration to the Borough in the working-age cohort. It is likely that this would exacerbate population decline and an increasingly ageing population with accompanying decreases in the working age profile, and that of children.

[4] *See Technical Supplement 3: Housing for further details.*

2.47 Demographics within the Borough indicate an ageing population and an accompanying decline in the working age cohort of 16-64. The overall population growth of the Borough is projected to slow before eventually decreasing towards the end of the Plan period. Therefore, the Borough needs to further attract its labour force through in-migration, a trend that is already being observed and is projected by NISRA to continue towards the end of the Plan period[5]. There are wider implications for demographics as growth in the working age population is likely to concurrently generate growth in other age cohorts, namely children aged 15 and under.

2.48 As set out under the consideration of future employment land requirements (para. 2.44), the Council's ambition for job creation sets out a "success scenario" of 7,500 new jobs by 2030. As the ITRDS covers a 12-year period from 2018 to 2030, this equates to an annual job creation figure of 625. Extrapolating this annual job creation figure of 625 over the 15-year Plan period gives a total of 9,375 jobs. Demographic analysis and modelling[6] was then carried out to consider the scale of population growth required to support an increase in the labour force projected to fill the job creation target for the Borough. This concluded that to achieve the 'success' scenario of 9,375 jobs by 2032 would necessitate a population increase of 25,318 which equates to 13,372 households. This gives a total new dwelling requirement of 14,189 over the Plan period or 946 dwellings per annum.

Flexibility Allowance

2.49 The LDP must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing circumstances over time. Therefore, application of a 10% flexibility allowance on top of the overall housing requirement is considered prudent to allow for non-delivery of sites and any additional unforeseen circumstances. Applying a 10% flexibility allowance to the employment-led housing growth option of 14,189 results in a total housing requirement of 15,608 dwelling units.

Strategic Allocation of Housing across the Settlement Hierarchy

2.50 The Council will meet housing need over the Plan period by allocating 15,608 housing units across the settlement tiers as per Table 4, managing housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development across the Borough. In line with the spatial framework and guidance contained within the RDS and the Spatial Growth Strategy of this LDP, the strategic housing allocation seeks to direct the majority of housing to the principal settlements of Bangor and

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[5] *NISRA '2018-based Population Projections for Areas within Northern Ireland'*

[6] *Edge Analytics January 2023*

Newtownards to support population and employment growth. The allocation consolidates the role and function of the small towns as local centres for housing, employment and services, whilst sustaining and maintaining rural communities in the villages and smaller settlements. The allocation to the open countryside is in line with the aim of facilitating sustainable rural development of an appropriate scale.

Tier	Allocation to tier (%)
Principal settlements	63
Small towns	22
Villages	10
Small settlements	1
Countryside[7]	4
Total	**100%**

Table 4:
Strategic Housing Allocation to Settlement Tiers

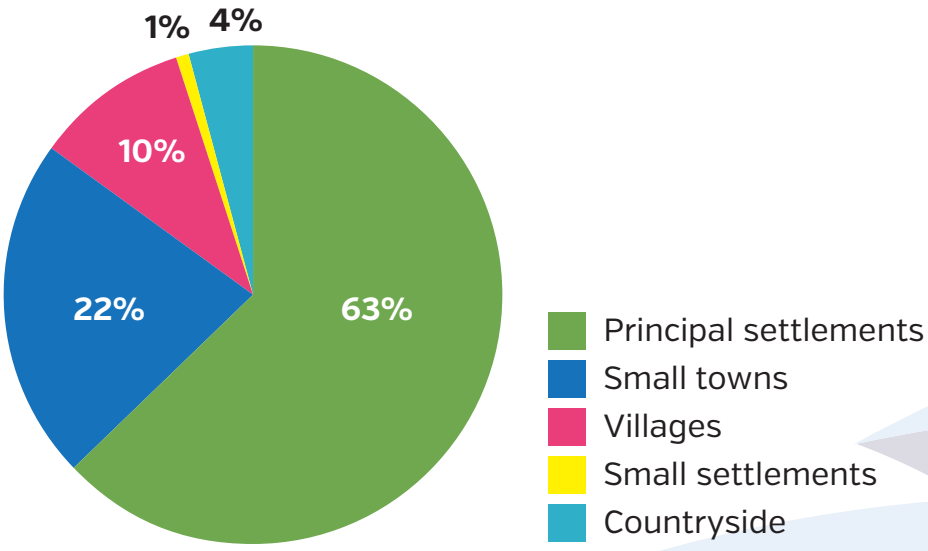


Figure 4:
Strategic Housing Allocation to Settlement Tiers

[7] *Countryside allocation is generally taken to be the average build rate, currently 36 dwellings p/a or 535 over the 15 year plan period.*

2.51 The SPPS directs the Council to the use of the RDS Housing Evaluation Framework when considering how to distribute the strategic housing allocation among settlements.

Table 5:
Housing Evaluation Framework (Source: RDS 2035)

Resource Test	Studies should be carried out to assess and detail the existence of community assets and physical infrastructure such as water, waste and sewage, including spare capacity.
Environmental Capacity Test	An assessment of the environmental assets of the settlement, the potential of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off and its potential to accommodate future outward growth without significant environmental degradation should be made.
Transport Test	Studies should be carried out to assess the potential for integrating land use and public transport and walking and cycling routes to help reduce reliance on the car.
Economic Development Test	The potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance and to unlock any major strategic development opportunities should be assessed and detailed.
Urban and Rural Character Test	Assessment should be made of the potential to maintain a sense of place, and to integrate new development in a way that does not detract from the character and identity of the settlement.
Community Services Test	The potential to underpin and, where necessary, reinforce the community service role and function of the settlement should be assessed and detailed.

2.52 As Table 5 shows, the Housing Evaluation Framework comprises a number of tests to be applied to determine which settlements are most sustainable and suitable for facilitating and absorbing new development. This informed a planning judgement on the appropriate allocation of housing among settlements in each tier of the settlement hierarchy, bearing in mind other guidance, such as RDS directions, as can be viewed in Table 6 – Strategic Housing Allocation across settlements. Villages, small settlements and the countryside each received a collective allocation.

SGS 5: Strategic Housing Allocation across settlements

Table 6:
Strategic Housing Allocation across settlements[8]

		Potential Housing Supply (units)			
	Housing Allocation 2017-2032	**Existing Commitments**	**Urban Capacity Potential**	**Windfall Allowance**	**Total Potential Housing Supply**
Bangor	4,508	1,072	412	520	2,004
Newtownards	3,381	3,323	486	520	4,329
Comber	1,193	1,068	85	190	1,343
Donaghadee	795	522	34	150	706
Holywood	398	210	23	120	353
Portaferry	398	176	75	70	321
Villages	1,265	1,076	-	690	1,766
Small Settlements	176	106	-	130	236
Countryside	535	302	-	-	302
Total	**12,649**	**7,855**	**1,115**	**2,390**	**11,360**

[8] *This is an indicative strategic allocation for settlements. More detailed analysis will take place at Local Policies Plan stage including a review of existing zonings, urban capacity sites, and an up-to-date assessment of infrastructure capacity, in particular relating to wastewater treatment works upgrades and network capacity. This may require some adjustments be made to the allocation.*

Potential Housing Land Supply

2.53 Results from the Housing Land Availability Study for 2021-2022[9] show that existing commitments from extant planning approvals and potential on sites currently zoned for housing total 7,855 units, with a further 2,959 units having been constructed since the start of the Plan period in April 2017 until the end of the monitoring period in March 2022.

2.54 In-house studies into future potential estimate that 1,115 units may come forward from Urban Capacity sites[10], and a Windfall allowance adds a further 2,390 potential housing units. As Table 7 shows, this results in a total potential housing supply of 14,319 units over the Plan period[11].

Table 7:
Potential housing supply (Source: ANDBC)

Source	Potential housing units over plan period 2017-2032
Existing commitments	7,855
Constructed since start of plan period (Apr 2017-Mar 2022)	2,959
Urban Capacity Study	1,115
Windfall	2,390
Overall Total	**14,319**

[9] *April 2021 – March 2022*

[10] *UCS total based on Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee and proposed town of Portaferry. A further 234 sites were identified in villages. This has been adjusted to 207 sites due to WWTW capacity. This exercise will be refined further prior to the Local Policies Plan.*

[11] *Subject to a review prior to the Local Policies Plan, including the desirability of identifying Phase 2 housing lands as detailed in strategic policy for the management of housing land release.*

SGS 6: Management of Housing Land Release

To provide a managed release of housing land across the Borough, the Council will zone housing land at Local Policies Plan stage within the Principal Settlements and Small Towns in two phases.

Phase 1

Phase 1 housing land will be developed first and will comprise:

- existing commitments[12]; and
- housing zonings[13] within the urban footprint[14]

Phase 2

Phase 2 housing land will be identified and zoned, at Local Policies Plan stage, to be held in reserve and will comprise:

- retained legacy housing zonings outside the urban footprint without extant residential planning permission; and
- any new housing zonings outside the urban footprint where required[15].

These Phase 2 lands may be released during the Plan period, if:

(a) monitoring indicates that there is a need to release Phase 2 sites in order to maintain a 5-year supply of available housing land; or

(b) the release of a particular site is required to meet an extreme and localised particular housing need.

Where neither of these two conditions are met, planning permission for the development of Phase 2 lands will be refused.

In smaller settlements the LPP may indicate where it is anticipated that most new housing will be located through the designation of Housing Policy Areas (HPAs).

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[12] *existing commitments may include some residential approvals on zoned housing land that is outside the urban footprint.*

[13] *to include new zonings, and any retained legacy zonings within the urban footprint.*

[14] *The urban footprint is defined as the continuous built-up area of the settlement. The boundary will be represented by an uninterrupted line, often lying inside the planned settlement limit. The urban footprint contains land which has a formal urban use including land on the edge of the settlement where it forms part of the curtilage of a building. However, this does not necessarily imply that gardens are acceptable for housing development. Undeveloped zoned land at the edge of the settlement will be excluded*

[15] *This may include greenfield settlement extensions.*

Justification and Amplification

2.55 The Borough has extensive residential commitments (comprising both legacy housing zonings and proposals with extant planning permission) which, together with sites identified through the Urban Capacity Study and the Windfall allowance, make up the majority of the strategic housing requirement for the Borough.

2.56 A phased policy approach allows the Council to promote the most sustainable locations for housing development within existing urban areas first, whilst allowing flexibility to respond to changing circumstances over the Plan period and maintain an ongoing supply of housing land to meet the needs of everyone.

2.57 Sites with existing commitments will have been considered by statutory consultees in respect of the infrastructure required to support their delivery. The identification of and release of new housing zonings will be aligned with any necessary supporting infrastructure, including transport, waste, water, energy and digital services.

2.58 Phase 2 sites will be released if monitoring indicates that it is necessary to maintain an ongoing 5-year supply of housing land.

2.59 Exceptionally, the release of Phase 2 lands shall be considered where there is an extreme, localised particular housing need e.g. affordable housing or specialist accommodation such as supported housing to meet a localised need. To enable the release of Phase 2 lands, such proposals must be supported by NIHE and must demonstrate that all other alternative forms of provision have been exhausted.

3 Countryside[1] Strategy

3.1 The countryside of Ards and North Down is one of our most valuable resources. Shaped by its distinctive and attractive landscapes and cultural and environmental assets, it is plentiful in built and natural heritage and has a rich tapestry of biodiversity. Many of the landscapes include internationally and nationally important nature conservation sites including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), and are home to listed buildings and archaeological monuments with a unique rural setting including Mount Stewart, Nendrum Monastic Site and Ballycopeland Windmill.

3.2 The landscapes of our countryside tell the story of our past and provide a unique sense of place for our residents and rural communities. Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (which straddles the administrative boundary of Newry Mourne and Down District Council) follows the Strangford Lough shore from Downpatrick to Portaferry and encompasses a range of distinctive landscapes that provide a record of the glacial development of the area, including drumlins, river valleys, mudflats, and rocky bays. The countryside is a valuable recreational asset for residents and visitors alike and acts as a key source of tourism revenue for the Borough. Outdoor recreational activities such as sailing, angling, walking, and cycling bring many visitors to the Borough.

3.3 The economic value of our countryside is also significant in that it supports important agricultural, agri-food enterprises, and creative industries with many of those living in the countryside employed in farming and local businesses. Rural based firms such as Mash Direct, Willowbrook Foods and Echlinville Distillery are key employers in the rural area. Agriculture remains one of the dominant industries in Ards and North Down.

3.4 The rural landscape provides opportunities for renewable energy installations such as wind turbines and solar farms. The countryside is also the location of the majority of the mineral reserves of the Borough such as sandstone, gravel and greywacke. Castle Espie, outside Comber was formerly a limestone quarry and is now a nature reserve and popular tourist attraction.

3.5 The LDP has the important aim of supporting rural communities by providing appropriate and sustainable opportunities for development in the countryside.

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[1] *For the purposes of the Local Development Plan (LDP), the countryside is defined as any area falling outside of the development limits of any designated settlements.*

3.6 In order to achieve this aim, the Countryside Strategy will:

- facilitate development which supports rural communities and contributes to a sustainable rural economy in Ards and North Down;
- protect, conserve, and where possible enhance the rural landscape, seascape, natural environment, and historical and cultural heritage assets associated with the countryside of Ards and North Down; and
- promote high standards in the design, siting, and landscaping of development in the countryside.

Why we have taken this approach

3.7 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG) 13 states that 'the rural community is the custodian of our exceptional natural and built environment. In rural areas, the aim is to sustain the overall strength of the rural community living in small towns, villages, small rural settlements, and the open countryside. A sustainable approach to further development will be important to ensure that growth does not exceed the capacity of the environment, or the essential infrastructure expected for modern living.'

3.8 SFG 14 also states an aim to 'improve the overall connectivity of rural communities to services and other parts of the Region by exploring innovative ways of bringing these services to the communities.' This requires the promotion of integrated rural transport initiatives which meet the needs of those living in isolated areas and in particular elderly and disabled people.

3.9 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) further states that the policy approach for the countryside must be to "cluster, consolidate, and group new development with existing established buildings, and promote the re-use of previously used buildings" (para 6.69).

3.10 This sustainable approach facilitates essential new development, which can benefit from the utilisation of existing services such as access and drainage, whilst simultaneously mitigating the potential adverse impacts upon rural amenity and scenic landscapes arising from the cumulative effect of one-off, sporadic development upon rural amenity and landscape character.

3.11 Locally, this approach both directly and indirectly supports the following outcomes of the Council's Community Plan 'The Big Plan' – that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2);
- a prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4); and
- an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

Strategic Policy for the Countryside

Policy CS 1
Sustainable Development in the Countryside

The range of types of development which are considered to contribute to the aims of sustainable development and are therefore considered, in principle, to be acceptable in the countryside are set out below.

Other types of development will only be permitted where there are overriding reasons why that development is essential and cannot be located within a settlement.

Residential Development

- A dwelling sited within an existing cluster of buildings in accordance with Policy HOU 9 New Dwellings in Existing Clusters;
- A replacement dwelling in accordance with Policy HOU 10 Replacement dwellings;
- The conversion of a non-residential building to a dwelling(s) in accordance with Policy HOU 11 Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings;
- The provision of affordable housing in accordance with Policy HOU 12 Affordable housing in the countryside;
- A dwelling based on special personal or domestic circumstances in accordance with Policy HOU 13 Personal and Domestic Circumstances;
- A dwelling to meet the essential needs of a non-agricultural business enterprise in accordance with Policy HOU 14 Dwellings for Non-Agricultural Business Enterprises;
- The development of a small gap site within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage in accordance with Policy HOU 15 Ribbon Development;
- A residential caravan or mobile home in accordance with Policy HOU 16 Residential caravans and mobile homes;
- A dwelling on a farm in accordance with Policy HOU 17 Dwellings on Farms;
- The conversion of a listed building to residential accommodation in accordance with Policy HE 7 Change of Use or Extension/Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building;
- Travellers' accommodation where this is in accordance with Policy HOU 5 Traveller Accommodation; or
- An alteration or extension to a dwelling house where this is in accordance with Policy HOU 6 Residential Extensions and Alterations.

Non-Residential Development

- Economic development proposals in accordance with Policies ED 4 – ED 9 inclusive;
- Tourism development in accordance with Policies TSM 2-TSM 8 inclusive;
- Minerals development in accordance with Policies MIN 1-MIN 9 inclusive;
- Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation proposals in accordance with Policies OS 5 Outdoor Recreation in the Countryside, OS 7 Noise Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Activities and OS 8 Development of Facilities Ancillary to Watersports;
- Renewable energy proposals in accordance with Policy RE 1 Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development;
- The conversion/reuse of a non-listed locally important/vernacular building to a non-residential use in accordance with Policy HOU 11 Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings; or
- The conversion of a listed building to non-residential use in accordance with Policy HE 7 Change of Use or Extension/Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building.

There are a range of other types of non-residential development that may be acceptable in principle in the countryside, e.g. certain utilities, telecommunications, or infrastructure development.

All proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP with particular attention to the rural design policies CS 5 Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside, CS 6 Rural Character and CS 7 The Setting of Settlements.

Operational Planning Policies

Policy CS 2
Rural Landscape Wedges

Within designated Rural Landscape Wedges, planning permission will only be granted for development proposals where all of the following criteria are met:

(a) It is demonstrated that the proposal will maintain and, where possible, enhance the open character of the Rural Landscape Wedge;

(b) Proposals are sensitively located and integrated into the landscape; and

(c) Visual separation between settlements is maintained.

All proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP including rural design policies.

Justification and Amplification

3.12 The RDS highlights the use of landscape wedges in SFG 5 which aims to "protect and enhance the network of open spaces in the BMUA[2]", where the network "consists of country parks, landscape wedges, parks and community greenways".

3.13 The strategic functions of Rural Landscape Wedges are to distinguish and maintain separation between settlements. They protect the settings of settlements, preventing coalescence and maintaining the rural character of the countryside.

3.14 Consistent with the strategic aim to conserve the rural landscape and the setting of the BMA[3], it is essential that rural landscape wedges are protected from inappropriate development. Proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will maintain the open nature of the wedge to ensure visual separation and protect the identities of the component areas. It will therefore be important to consider the impact of any proposed development on the integrity of the wedge and on the need to retain separation between settlements.

3.15 Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP) 2015 designated Rural Landscape Wedges between Belfast and Holywood, between Holywood and Seahill, between Bangor and Helen's Bay/ Crawfordsburn, between Bangor and Groomsport, and between

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[2] *Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area*

[3] *Belfast Metropolitan Area*

Bangor and Newtownards (within the former North Down council area up to the boundary with the former Ards council area). These designations will continue to be applied until such time as a review of all existing designations and consideration of the need for new designations is undertaken at Local Policies Plan (LPP) stage.

Policy CS 3
Local Landscape Policy Areas

In designated Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs), planning permission will only be granted for development proposals where it is demonstrated that they will not have a significant adverse impact upon the features or combination of features that contribute to the intrinsic landscape, environmental value, or character of such areas.

All proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

3.16 Consistent with the SPPS, LLPAs are designated to protect those areas in, or adjoining settlements considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and therefore, worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development.

3.17 Development proposals within an LLPA should not overly dominate or detract from the locally distinctive landscape and townscape/ village character of settlements and their setting. The policy also seeks to protect those features and qualities that are of intrinsic environmental value or local significance in regard to amenity or the historic environment. These features may include:

- Archaeological sites and monuments and their surroundings;
- Listed and other locally important buildings and their settings;
- Riverbanks and shorelines and associated public access;
- Attractive vistas, localised hills, and other areas of local amenity importance; and
- Areas of local nature conservation importance, including areas of woodland and important tree groups.

3.18 The LLPAs will help to ensure that new development does not dominate their distinctive landscape and townscape characteristics. They may also act as buffer zones between different uses and help to reduce the likelihood of overdevelopment.

3.19 LLPAs may contain Historic Parks Gardens and Demesnes, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs), Areas of Village Character (AVCs), and archaeological monuments. This list is not exhaustive and in designating LLPAs through the LPP, the Council will consider any feature within or adjoining a settlement which is of intrinsic landscape, heritage, environmental or amenity value.

3.20 Development likely to have a significant adverse effect on designated LLPAs will not be approved. The onus shall be with the applicant to demonstrate the acceptability of any proposal.

3.21 Where riverbanks are included within LLPAs the Council will normally require, as part of any development proposal, that access be provided to the river corridor. A landscape buffer may also be required between any development and the river corridor to maintain its intrinsic environmental value.

3.22 A total of 101 LLPAs were designated in Draft BMAP 2015 and the Ards and Down Area Plan (ADAP 2015). These designations will continue to be applied until such time as a review of all existing designations and consideration of the need for new designations is undertaken at LPP stage.

Policy CS 4
Areas of High Scenic Value

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals that would have a significant adverse effect on the quality, character, and features of interest in Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV). Proposals for minerals development and waste disposal and management will not be acceptable.

A landscape analysis must accompany development proposals that fall within these areas to indicate the likely effects of the proposal on the landscape.

All proposals must also comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

3.23 Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) are designated to protect the setting of urban areas and other areas of particular landscape merit.

3.24 Within an AoHSV, all proposals will be assessed against the relevant LDP policies. Particular regard will be given to the siting, massing,

scale, design, materials, finishes and landscaping of proposals in order to ensure that development will integrate well into the topography and landscape.

3.25 High design standards will be applied to all developments within an AoHSV and re-use of traditional buildings and vernacular features will be favoured over new buildings. Materials used should be reflective of those traditionally used in the area.

3.26 A landscape analysis should include the likely effects of the proposed development on the landscape including a consideration of:

- location of the site within the landscape and positioning of the proposal within the landscape;
- undue prominence, particularly in more open and exposed landscapes; and
- integration of development into the landscape including degree of natural enclosure and relationship with surrounding buildings.

Planting of indigenous tree species should generally form an integral part of these proposals along with details of any mitigation measures that are required.

3.27 Draft BMAP 2015 and ADAP 2015 both designated an AoHSV to the south of Holywood, known as Craigantlet Escarpment. This designation will continue to be applied until such time as a review of all existing designations and consideration of the need for new designations is undertaken at LPP stage.

Rural Design Policy

3.28 The following operational policies are intended to apply to all forms of development in the countryside to ensure that they integrate into their setting and that there is no adverse impact on the rural character of the area.

3.29 This approach is in line with the SPPS which states that “In all circumstances proposals for development in the countryside must be sited and designed to integrate sympathetically with their surroundings, must not have an adverse impact on the rural character of the area, and meet other planning and environmental considerations” (para. 6.77).

Policy CS 5
Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside

Planning permission will be granted for a building in the countryside where it can be visually integrated into the surrounding landscape and it is of an appropriate design, informed by a Design Concept Statement.

A new building will be unacceptable where:

(a) it is a prominent feature in the landscape; or

(b) the site lacks, or does not retain and augment, established natural boundaries and trees or is unable to provide a suitable degree of enclosure for the building to integrate into the landscape; or

(c) it relies primarily on the use of new landscaping for integration; or

(d) ancillary works do not integrate with their surroundings; or

(e) the design of the building is inappropriate for the site and its locality; or

(f) it fails to blend with the landform, existing trees, buildings, slopes and other natural features which provide a backdrop; or

(g) in the case of a proposed dwelling on a farm (see Policy HOU 17), it is not visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on a farm.

Justification and Amplification

3.30 Traditional buildings in the countryside evolved in response to their setting and function on the land. They blend sympathetically with their surroundings and do not appear incongruous in the landscape. It is essential that similar care is exercised in the siting and design of new buildings to ensure they too can integrate harmoniously with their surroundings and thereby protect the amenity and character of our countryside.

3.31 Landscapes vary, and this needs to be taken into account. The determination of whether a new building integrates into the landscape is not a test of invisibility; rather it requires an assessment of the extent to which the development of the proposed site, including necessary site works, will blend in unobtrusively with its immediate and wider surroundings.

3.32 The degree of visual impact will be considered against the following:

- the location of the site within the landscape, the position of the building within the site and its relationship with surrounding buildings. This will help determine whether the development will be a prominent feature in the landscape;
- the attributes of the site and its landscape surroundings and whether these provide sufficient enclosure for the new building. This includes the existence or otherwise of natural boundaries and/or a visual backdrop, and whether there is any intervening vegetation or natural features between the site and critical views; and
- the suitability of the design of the building for the site and its locality, including its form, scale and massing.

3.33 The assessment of integration will be judged from critical views along stretches of the public road network; shared private lane-ways serving existing or approved dwellings; public rights of way and other areas of general public access and assembly, e.g. a car park. There may also be occasions where combined views from individual private laneways, located in close proximity to each other, will be relevant in assessing integration. Where a site cannot be readily identified from critical viewpoints, it does not obviate the need for careful site selection to ensure the proposed building blends into its surroundings and is of a high standard of design.

3.34 New buildings that would read as skyline development or occupy a top of slope/ridge location or otherwise be a prominent feature in the landscape will be unacceptable.

3.35 New buildings should be sited to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by existing mature planting, hills, slopes or other natural features to provide suitable enclosure. Natural features can provide a visual backdrop to development and, where located in the foreground between the site and critical views, can assist integration by filtering views of the new building. A group of existing buildings, such as a farm complex may also provide an opportunity to sensitively integrate a new building provided this does not adversely impact on rural character (see Policy CS 6).

3.36 As Figure 5 illustrates, where trees provide enclosure or a backdrop to a site they should be retained and where necessary augmented by new planting with native species or other species characteristic of the area. This will assist the integration of the new building and help promote biodiversity. Care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate distance is maintained between tree root systems and building foundations, so neither is compromised. Both the retention of existing vegetation and trees and new landscaping will be secured by conditions.

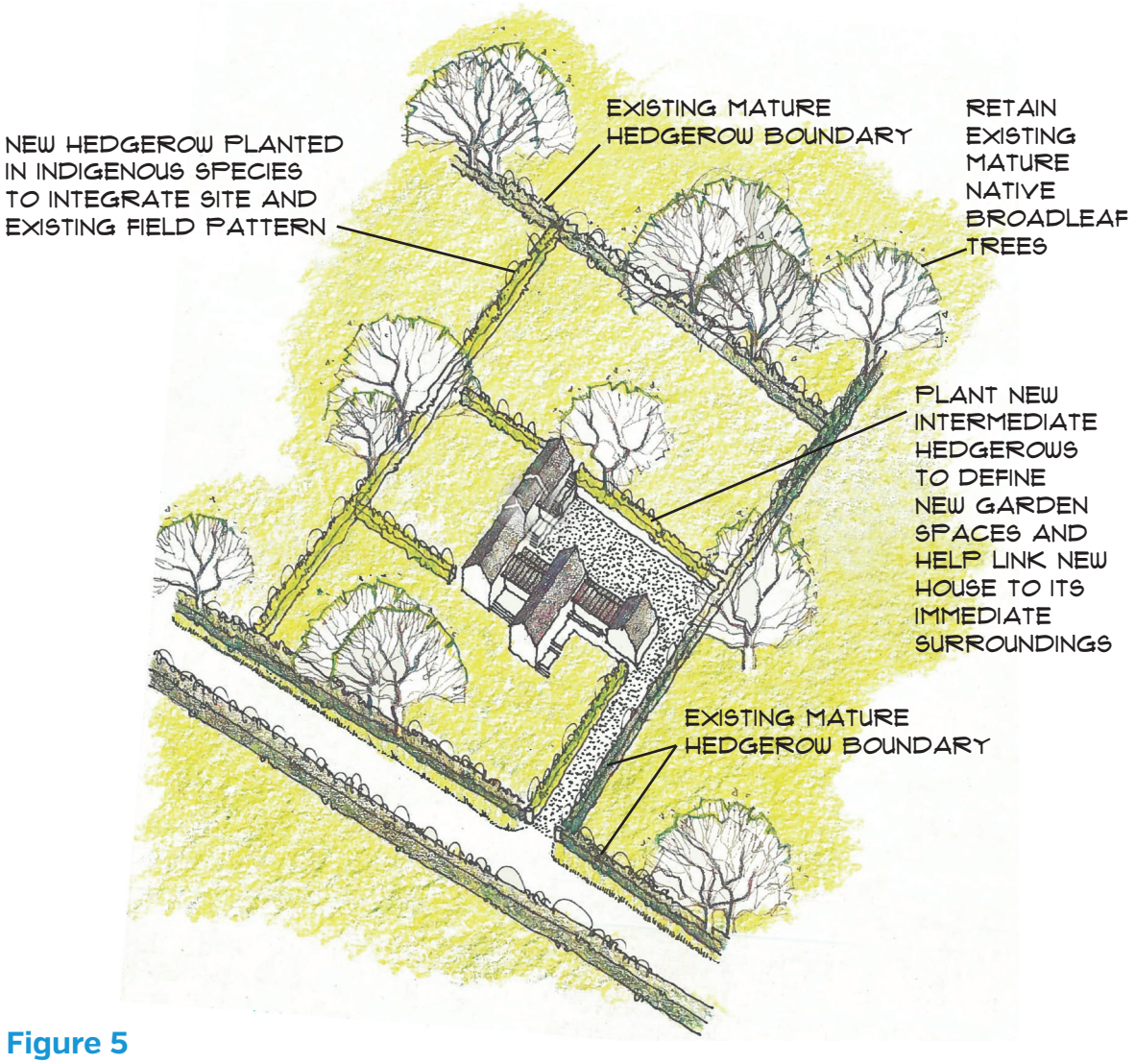


Figure 5

Sketch of site with well-established boundaries augmented by additional planting. (Source: 'Building on Tradition - A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside[4]', Department of the Environment (DoE) 2012).

3.37 While new tree planting for integration purposes will be considered together with existing landscape features, new planting alone will not be sufficient. As a general rule of thumb, sites that require the provision of more than one new boundary should be avoided where possible. A building on an unacceptable site cannot be successfully integrated into the countryside by the use of landscaping. New planting will inevitably take a considerable length of time to mature and in the interim will not mitigate the impact of new development. Similarly, a new building that relies on significant earth works, such as mounding or cut and fill for integration will be unacceptable.

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4 *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*

3.38 Due to the widespread views generally available in flat landscapes, exposed hill areas and the Undeveloped Coastal Zone (UCZ) (see designation UCZ and accompanying Policy CO 1), it is all the more important to ensure that new buildings integrate well with their surroundings. In such areas, poor siting and design carries with it a greater potential for adverse impact on visual amenity and rural character. Particular care is therefore required in site selection so that new buildings will integrate into these landscapes.

3.39 New buildings will only be permitted exceptionally within the UCZ and dwellings are not permitted with the exception of replacement dwellings that are compliant with the policy provisions of HOU 10 'Replacement Dwellings'. HOU 10 requires that a proposed new dwelling should not have a visual impact significantly greater than the dwelling it is to replace, to ensure that it integrates into the surrounding landscape. This is of particular importance in the UCZ given the high visual amenity and significant sensitivity to development of the coastal landscape. The design of all buildings must be of a high quality, appropriate to the rural and coastal location, with particular attention paid to retaining key views towards the coastline from public aspects.

3.40 The supplementary planning guidance contained within the rural design guide 'Building on Tradition' (DoE 2012) sets out visual examples of best practice and basic rules to assist with site selection, design, scale, size, and form.

Design

3.41 The form and proportions of a new building are key elements in the design and strongly influence its visual impact on the landscape. As Figure 6 illustrates, if form and proportion are wrong, then little can be done with any other features to mitigate the impact of a poor design. Inappropriate big bulky houses should be avoided. Wide gables are problematic as they generate overly high ridges. The design should also avoid overly complex roof shapes; roof dormers that are overly large or located halfway up the roof slope; excessively fussy appendages such as bay windows, porches and chimneys projecting from gables rather than internally from the roof ridge. Where the scale, form or massing of a building would make it dominant or incongruous in the local landscape planning permission will be refused.

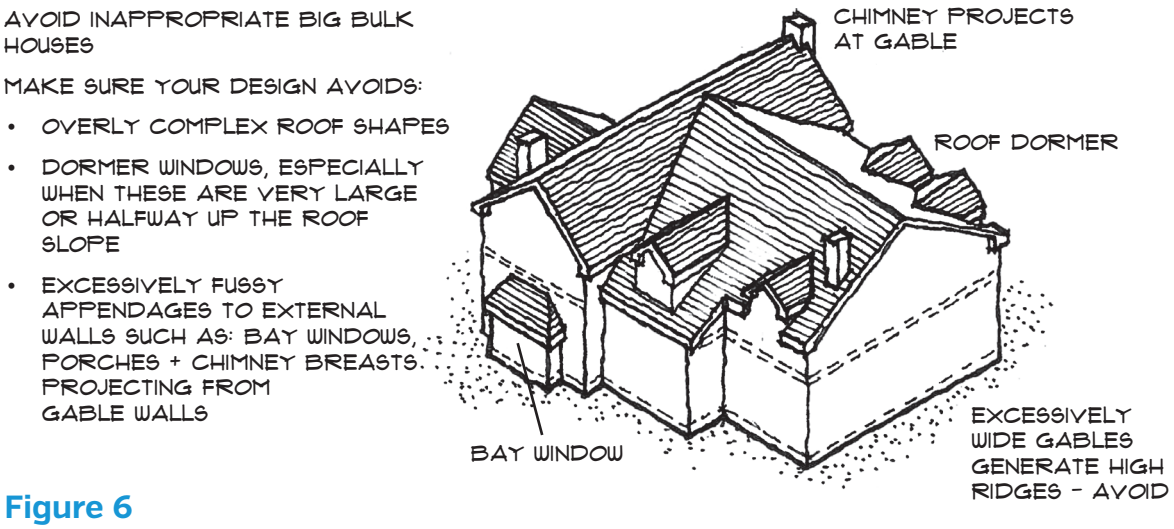


Figure 6
Sketch showing unacceptable rural design (Source: Building on Tradition (DoE 2012).

3.42 The most successful rural designs are those which are based upon simple shapes and forms of traditional buildings. It is however acknowledged that there will also be opportunities for contemporary or innovative design which results in the provision of high quality and more environmentally friendly buildings, provided the overall design and orientation are acceptable.

3.43 Irrespective of whichever design approach is followed relative simplicity of design and discretion in the use of materials, texture and colour will greatly enhance the appearance of a new building. The use of non-traditional materials such as brick, concrete and artificial stone-cladding tends to introduce too much diversity of colour and texture. Combinations of materials on walls, the use of feature panels and excessive ornamentation should be avoided.

3.44 Where appropriate, applications for buildings in the countryside should include details of proposals for site works, retention or reinstatement of boundaries, hedges and walls and details of new landscaping.

3.45 Applicants are required to support their proposal with a design concept statement setting out the analysis involved in the design process, including the site selection, site appraisal, and building design. This should be undertaken in accordance with extant published guidance. Specific guidance for development in the Strangford and Lecale AONB is contained in Policy NE 6 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

3.46 The LDP supports proposals that consider and incorporate features intended to maximise sustainability and energy efficiency, including the use of renewable energy sources where appropriate, in accordance with LDP Policies RE 1 Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development and RE 2 Reduced Energy Consumption and Use of Low/Zero-Carbon Energy.

Access and other ancillary works

3.47 New accesses are often a visible feature of new buildings in the countryside and on occasion can be more obtrusive than the building itself, particularly if they include ornate walls, gates and fencing. Accordingly, it will often be necessary to attach a condition removing permitted development rights for such boundary features in the interests of preserving the amenity and rural character of an area.

3.48 Wherever possible access to a new building should be taken from an existing laneway. Where a new access drive and services, such as electricity and telephone lines, are required, they should, as far as practicable, be run unobtrusively alongside existing hedgerows or wall lines and be accompanied by landscaping measures. Access driveways should respect site contours and cross them gently, thus integrating the building with its entrance and site. Sweeping driveways which create a suburban emphasis and access arrangements, will not be acceptable.

3.49 While adequate visibility at the road access is necessary in the interests of road safety, access driveways surfaced in tarmacadam and with concrete kerbing can look out of place in the countryside and less formal solutions should be sought. The traditional field pattern should be preserved, and roadside and field boundary hedges and stone walls retained or reinstated following any access works. Retention or reinstatement of boundaries, native species hedging and walls is an important element in mitigating the impact of new development and where necessary will be controlled by condition.

3.50 Large garden areas between a new dwelling and the public road can also be a prominent and unnatural feature in the countryside and will be unacceptable (see Figure 7). It may on occasion be necessary to control the size and extent of the curtilage of a new dwelling by applying a planning condition.

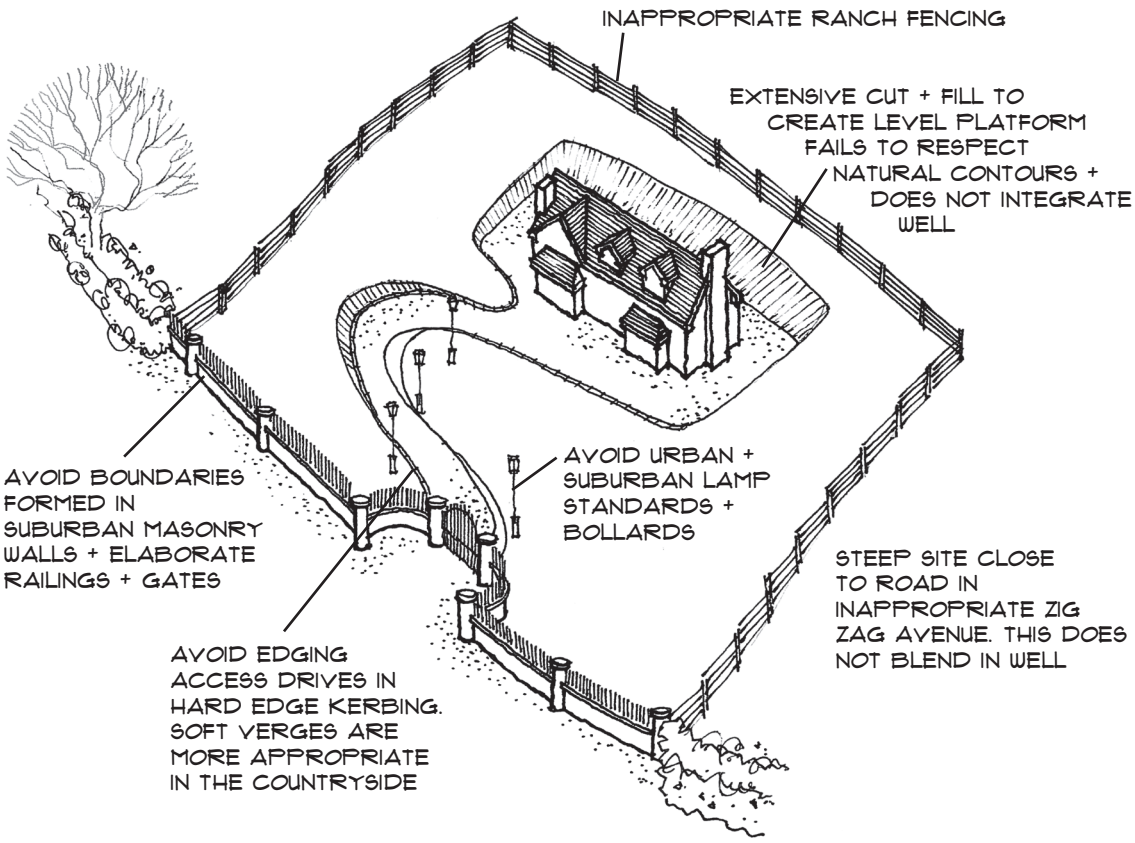


Figure 7
Sketch demonstrating poor site selection and design. (Source: Building on Tradition, DoE 2012).

3.51 Figure 7 shows how poor site selection and design may impede integration of new development and harm rural character. Selection of a steep site and use of extensive cut and fill fails to respect natural contours of the site and prevents integration. The 'zig-zag' access through the site with hard edged kerbing is not appropriate for the rural area. The suburban appearance is reinforced by the use of land standards and bollards. Boundaries formed in suburban masonry walls and elaborate railings and gates or ranch fencing should be avoided.

Policy CS 6
Rural Character

Planning permission will be granted for a building in the countryside where it does not cause a detrimental change to, or further erode the rural character of an area. A new building will be unacceptable where:

(a) it is unduly prominent in the landscape; or

(b) it results in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing and approved buildings; or

(c) it does not respect the traditional pattern of settlement exhibited in that area; or

(d) it creates or adds to a ribbon of development (see Policy HOU 15 - Ribbon Development); or

(e) the impact of ancillary works (with the exception of necessary visibility splays) would damage rural character.

Justification and Amplification

3.52 The Ards and North Down countryside is valued for its intrinsic landscape character, nature conservation interest and historic environment, as well as being a resource for tourism and recreation. While the countryside is constantly changing in response to human activity, the pace of change is now more rapid than ever. This has resulted in the erosion of the rural character of parts of the Borough, due to the cumulative effect of ongoing development. It is crucial therefore to ensure that new buildings and any associated ancillary works do not result in a detrimental change to, or further erode the rural character of an area, rather they should seek to maintain and protect the special qualities and unique character of our countryside.

3.53 The coastal landscape is particularly vulnerable to intrusive development. Therefore, the Undeveloped Coastal Zone designation and accompanying policy CO 1 aims to provide additional protection for the unique landscape value, visual amenity and nature conservation interest of the Borough's coastline. Exceptionally, where development is permitted as per policy CO 1, proposals must incorporate measures to minimise adverse impacts upon the fragile environment including sensitive design, siting and landscaping with particular attention paid to retaining key views towards the coastline from public aspects. Where appropriate, these measures will be secured by means of planning conditions.

3.54 There are a number of different ways in which new development in the countryside can impact detrimentally on rural character. One building by itself could have a significant effect on an area if it is poorly sited

or designed and would be unduly prominent, particularly in more open and exposed landscapes such as the undeveloped coast.

3.55 On other occasions a new building may have little impact by itself. However, when taken cumulatively with other existing and approved buildings and their ancillary features in the vicinity, it could result in a build-up of development detrimental to the rural character of that area.

3.56 In assessing the cumulative impact of a building on rural character the matters taken into consideration include the following:

- the intervisibility of the proposed building with existing and approved development[5];
- the vulnerability of the landscape and its capacity to absorb further development; and
- the siting, scale and design of the proposed development.

3.57 In order to maintain and protect the rural character of an area the new building should respect the traditional pattern of settlement; that is, the disposition and visual appearance of land and buildings in the locality of the proposed development.

3.58 Accordingly, to be considered acceptable, a new building in the countryside should:

- adopt the spacing of the traditional buildings found in the locality; or
- integrate sensitively along with a group of existing buildings, such as a farm complex.

3.59 It is considered that ribbon development is always detrimental to the rural character of an area as it contributes to a localised sense of build-up and fails to respect the traditional settlement pattern of the countryside.

3.60 The assessment of the impact of a new building on rural character will be judged from critical views along stretches of the public road network; shared private lane-ways serving existing or approved dwellings; public rights of way and other areas of general public access and assembly. There may also be occasions where combined views from individual private laneways, located in close proximity to each other, will be relevant in assessing the impact of a proposal on rural character.

3.61 The impact of ancillary works associated with a new building on rural character will also be assessed. In particular the access arrangements can often raise awareness of and draw attention to new development and when read in conjunction with other existing or approved accesses can have a combined impact damaging to the rural character of an area.

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[5] *Approved development relates to unimplemented extant planning permissions for new buildings.*

Policy CS 7
The Setting of Settlements

Planning permission will be refused for development that mars the distinction between a settlement and the surrounding countryside or that otherwise results in urban sprawl.

Justification and Amplification

3.62 A settlement's identity can be as much as a result of its setting within the surrounding countryside, as the quality of its buildings. Landscapes around settlements have a special role to play in maintaining the distinction between urban and rural, in preventing coalescence between adjacent built-up areas and in providing a rural setting to the built-up area.

3.63 The principle of drawing a settlement limit is partly to promote and partly to contain new development within that limit and so maintain a clear distinction between the built-up area and surrounding countryside.

3.64 Proposals that would mar this distinction or create urban sprawl will therefore be unacceptable. Where social and affordable housing under Policy HOU 12 Affordable Housing in the Countryside may in principle be acceptable, it will be important to consider what siting options are available and to mitigate any adverse impact on the setting of the settlement.



4 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy

4.1 The evidence is clear that human-led activity is causing climate change. The vast majority of actively publishing scientists agree that humans are causing global warming and climate change, resulting in erratic unsettled weather patterns, wetter winters, drier summers, higher annual temperatures, increased extreme weather events and rising sea levels. The implications of this for Northern Ireland are wide ranging and include flooding, coastal erosion, destruction of natural habitats, loss of property and assets and an impact upon health and wellbeing.

4.2 The enactment of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is a key driver of strategies and action plans to tackle the issue of climate change at a regional level. It sets an ambitious target of at least 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This Act is supported by a number of strategies such as the Energy Strategy, the Green Growth Strategy and the Environment Strategy.

4.3 At a local level the Council has recognised that, in the context of a global climate emergency, we must fundamentally change the way we plan, manage and operate so that both the Council and the Borough as a whole can become more sustainable. A key facet of this is the Sustainability and Climate Change Policy, which gives a commitment that the Council will endeavour to reduce its impact on the local and global environment whilst providing high quality services, preventing pollution, reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions and saving energy and water. Similarly, the "Roadmap to Sustainability" aspires to place sustainability at the centre of all policy, strategy and investment decisions for the Council.

4.4 Climate change adaptation and mitigation are central concepts in building community resilience and protecting biodiversity and the historic environment in the face of the Climate Emergency. The Council's Climate Adaptation Plan[1] sets out the Council's Corporate recognition of the risks from climate change and the steps taken to prepare. Adaptation measures seek to lower the risks posed by environmental change by ensuring new development is resilient in facing climate challenges. Mitigation seeks to address the root causes of climate change by lowering greenhouse gas emissions. Both approaches are necessary because even if emissions are dramatically reduced, adaptation will still be needed to address the changes that have already been set in motion.

Strategic Policy CC 1: Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

To support sustainable development that seeks to mitigate and adapt to climate change and increase local environmental resilience.

4.5 This will be achieved by:

- Supporting renewable energy generation and storage in suitable locations where they are not considered likely to cause unacceptable adverse impacts in line with Policy RE 1 Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development;
- Encouraging the provision of decentralised renewable and low-carbon energy generation and supply in line with Policy RE 2 Reduced Energy Consumption and Use of Low/Zero-Carbon Energy;
- Requiring new development to be designed to reduce likely energy consumption and increase resilience to future climate change through using landform, layout, building orientation, tree planting, landscaping, building design and permeable surfaces in line with Policy RE 2 Reduced Energy Consumption and Use of Low/Zero-Carbon Energy / Policy GP 1 General Principles;
- Incorporating sustainable design features and construction techniques in new development in line with Policy GP 1 General Principles;
- Supporting sustainable patterns of development by implementing the Spatial Growth Strategy and improving integration of housing, employment, services, infrastructure and transportation;
- Protecting and enhancing existing open space in line with Policy OS 1 Protection of Open Space;
- Facilitating and enhancing green and blue infrastructure through the provision of new open space, and promoting linkages between existing and planned open spaces in line with Open Space Policies OS 2 Public Open Space in New Residential Development, OS 3 New Open Space Provision in Settlements, OS 4 Greenways, Blueways and Community Greenways and TRAN 5 Disused Transport Routes;
- Promoting active travel and sustainable transport in new development proposals in line with Policies AT 1 Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport and GP 1 General Principles Policy;
- Maximising carbon storage through protection of the natural environment including trees, woodland and 'blue carbon habitats' such as saltmarsh, seagrass and oyster beds, through Natural Environment Policies NE 1 - NE 6;

- Supporting the provision or restoration of biodiversity and habitats that provide a carbon storage function in line with Policies WM 3 Waste Disposal, MIN 1 Environmental Impact, MIN 7 Restoration, and RE 1 Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development;
- Promoting the retention of embodied carbon through the protection of historic buildings in line with Policies HE 7 Change of Use or Extension/Alteration or Conversion of Listed Building, HE 9 The Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building and HE 12 Areas of Townscape/Village Character, and Policies for the conversion and re-use of other buildings - Areas of Townscape/ Village Character such as HOU 11, ED 5 and TOU 3;
- Supporting waste reduction and the hierarchy of waste management through Policies WM 1 Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility and WM 2 Waste Collection and Treatment Facilities;
- Supporting sustainable waste management by requiring sufficient space in residential development for recycling and composting;
- Managing flood risk through Policies FLD 1 Development in Fluvial (River) and Coastal Flood Plains and FLD 3 Development and Surface Water Flood Risk outside of Flood Plains;
- Encouraging sustainable drainage systems and features in all developments in line with Policy GP 1 General Principles and in larger developments in line with Policy FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage;
- Restricting development in sensitive and low-lying coastal areas through the designation of an Undeveloped Coastal Zone and accompanying Policy CO 1 The Undeveloped Coast;
- Restricting development in known areas of coastal erosion and land instability through Policy CO 3 Coastal Change.

4.6 The above actions align directly with the principles of sustainable development, which are at the heart of the planning system and are reflected in Criterion (a) of the LDP General Principles.

Why we have taken this approach

4.7 The RDS 2035 recognises the importance of Northern Ireland playing its part in reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change, including effects on species and habitats and on health as a result of warmer temperatures, storms, floods and coastal erosion. Regional guidance RG9: 'Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality' specifically lists mitigation and adaptation measures which will be supported by the policy approach highlighted above.

4.8 The SPPS sets out that the planning system should help to mitigate and adapt to climate change by:

- shaping new and existing developments in ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and positively build community resilience to problems such as extreme heat or flood risk;
- promoting sustainable patterns of development, including the sustainable re-use of historic buildings where appropriate, which reduces the need for motorised transport, encourages active travel, and facilitates travel by public transport in preference to the private car;
- requiring the siting, design and layout of all new development to limit likely greenhouse gas emissions and minimise resource and energy requirements;
- avoiding development in areas with increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change, particularly areas at significant risk from flooding, landslip and coastal erosion and highly exposed sites at significant risk from impacts of storms;
- considering the energy and heat requirements of new developments when designating land for new residential, commercial and industrial development and making use of opportunities for energy and power sharing, or for decentralised or low carbon sources of heat and power wherever possible;
- promoting the use of energy efficient, micro-generating and decentralised renewable energy systems; and
- working with natural environmental processes, for example through promoting the development of green infrastructure and also the use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs) to reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

4.9 The strategic policy approach of this Plan document supports these measures and paves the way for further implementation at LPP stage.

4.10 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of the Council's Community Plan, 'The Big Plan' that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2); and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

4.11 The approach also supports one of the key corporate priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028 to 'reduce carbon emissions as we transition to net zero,' and complements the following Council strategies and policies:

- The Roadmap to Sustainability 2021-2028 which formalises our various sustainability commitments, shaped around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; and

- The Sustainability and Climate Change Policy (2022) which gives a commitment that the Council will carry out its activities and functions a manner which minimises any potentially negative climate change impacts and states that the principles of sustainable development will be integrated throughout all Ards and North Down Borough Council activities.

4.12 The LDP has the capacity to affect change as it guides the location and the design of new development and therefore influences how people travel, whether new buildings are energy efficient and where space can be found for renewable energy solutions. Planning has a key role in minimising vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and is therefore essential that the principles of adaption and mitigation are embedded in the policies of the LDP.

4.13 Forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) will provide further clarity to maximise the opportunities for implementing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. This will be taken into account as a material consideration when determining planning applications.



Part C
General Policies Applying to All Development

5 General Principles

6 Planning Agreements

5 General Principles Policy for all Development

5.1 This section sets out the General Principles of Development that will be applied consistently to all development proposals across the Borough, including development provided for by way of exceptional circumstances, irrespective of whether this is explicitly stated in the relevant subject policy. The General Principles are grouped together here in order to avoid repetition throughout the subject policies of the Plan Strategy.

5.2 The policy will ensure that key planning principles embodied in overarching government strategies such as the RDS the SPPS and the Marine Plan are applied to planning applications via the operation of the Development Management process in the context of the Plan-led system. Policy GP 1 also provides operational policy for specific forms of development that are not covered by the subject policies such as schools, hospitals and churches.

5.3 In addition to this, Policy CS 6 Rural Character in the Strategic Policy for the Countryside section sets out additional general criteria for all development proposals outside of settlement development limits. The relevant topic-based Development Management Policies in Chapters 7-25 also contain specific criteria for a range of development types.

5.4 It should be noted that whilst every application should be assessed against this policy, not every bullet point within each criterion will be relevant to every proposal. The relevance depends upon the nature, scale and location of the development and it is a matter of professional planning judgement as to which aspects of the policy criteria should be applied to a specific application.

Policy GP 1
General Principles

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that further the sustainable development of the Borough, accord with the provisions of the LDP and other material considerations and cause no demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

In assessing all proposals, the Council will be guided by the precautionary approach that, where there is a significant risk of damage to the environment, its protection will generally be paramount unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

All development proposals will be assessed against and must demonstrate, if appropriate, compliance with the criteria set out at a) to e) below:

a) Furthering Sustainable Development

- it generally aligns with the LDP Spatial Growth Strategy;
- essential infrastructure to facilitate the development must be available or, if lacking, there must be a firm commitment with respect to its timely provision;
- it utilises sustainable urban drainage systems as the preferred drainage solution where feasible and practicable, to ensure that surface water runoff is managed in a sustainable way;
- it conserves and, where possible, enhances the quality and integrity of the natural and historic environment, including the marine environment, and local biodiversity, resulting in the delivery of ecosystem services;
- it protects and provides sufficient high quality and useable open space, and links to and integrates with green and blue infrastructure, where practicable;
- it makes efficient use of energy, water and other resources and incorporates sustainable features and construction practices where practicable and appropriate, including the integration of electricity micro-generation and passive solar design;
- the proposal will not cause the unacceptable loss of, or damage to existing vegetation, including trees or other landscape features which contribute positively to local environmental quality and includes a landscaping scheme that includes maximum retention of existing vegetation, trees and other landscape features; and
- it includes adequate provision for the storage and management of waste.

b) Design Quality and Respecting Local Character and Distinctiveness

- It respects and is appropriate to the site and surrounding context and contributes positively to the character of the area, creating or reinforcing a sense of local identity and distinctiveness;
- it does not create conflict with surrounding land uses, including existing and zoned sites;
- it is of good design quality and complements or enhances local built form[1], drawing upon the best local traditions;
- Appropriate landscaping and means of enclosure are provided in the form of new landscaping or the retention of existing historic boundaries (or a combination of the two) so as to facilitate satisfactory integration into the local townscape, landscape or seascape; and
- it conserves and, where possible, enhances features and assets of the natural and historic environment, including the marine environment, and their settings, and seeks to identify, and, where appropriate, protect and integrate such features in a suitable manner into the overall design and layout.

c) Safeguarding Residential Amenity

- There should be no unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenity of existing residents living within, adjacent to or in reasonable proximity to the development site by reason of:
  1) overlooking and/or loss of privacy;
  2) dominance, overshadowing, or loss of light;
  3) air, light or water pollution;
  4) odour, dust, noise, lighting, vibration or other forms of disturbance; or
  5) general disturbance, including that arising from the operational use or traffic generated by the development.

The above will also be assessed in terms of the impact on future residents of adjacent schemes that benefit from an extant planning permission.

It should also be noted that the amenity impacts of some proposals may extend further than others due to their unique characteristics, for example wind turbines. In such cases the relevant subject policies and associated Supplementary Planning Guidance should be referred to in order to ensure that a complete assessment of amenity impacts takes place.

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[1] *In the context of this and other general or subject related policy criteria, built form refers to the siting, layout, density, scale, height, massing, form, levels, materials and detailing of buildings within the development site.*

d) Access, Movement and Parking

- access arrangements and parking provision that are in accordance with the guidance published by the Department for Infrastructure and the Council, and with operational Policies TRAN 2 Access to Public Roads, TRAN 3 Access to Protected Routes, TRAN 7 Parking and Servicing Arrangements and TRAN 8 Design of Parking;
- provides ease of access to reserved car parking, public transport facilities and taxi ranks;
- a movement pattern is provided that, insofar as is practicable, maximises active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) and sustainable transport modes, respects pedestrian priority, and is in accordance with operational Policy AT 1 Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport;
- provides for the needs of people with disabilities or whose mobility is impaired, retains any permissive paths[2], an unhindered approach to buildings, rights of way and other important access routes, and provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and local community facilities, in accordance with operational Policy TRAN 1 Creating an Accessible Environment;
- the existing road network has sufficient capacity or can be adequately upgraded to satisfactorily accommodate and safely manage the vehicular traffic generated by the proposal[3]; and
- it minimises any visual impact arising from parking provision, in accordance with Policy TRAN 8 Design of Parking.

e) Safety and the Safeguarding of Human Health and Wellbeing

- the development is sited and designed so as to not prejudice safety nor cause an unacceptable adverse impact to public safety, human health and wellbeing;
- where appropriate, the development should be designed so as to facilitate opportunities for active and passive recreation for everyone, both within and, where practicable, beyond the site;

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[2] *A permissive path is a path that a private landowner has voluntarily opened up to the public, to enable them to cross his or her land. A permissive path is not a public right of way and can have terms and conditions, limitations and duration of access. The landowner can withdraw the access to the permissive path at any time.*

[3] *A Transport Assessment is the main mechanism by which assessments of road capacity and are made – these are covered in policy TRAN 6.*

- the development is designed to reduce social exclusion, the risk of crime and fear of crime and to promote personal safety;
- any emission or discharge of effluent (including sewage) arising from the development is in accordance with legislative requirements pertaining to air and water quality;
- the development site is not at risk from flooding and the development will not cause or exacerbate flooding elsewhere, taking account of present-day flood risk and potential future risk associated with the impacts of climate change; and
- the development site is not located in an area known to be at risk from coastal erosion or land instability or will not exacerbate such risks elsewhere.

All development proposals in the countryside must demonstrate how account has been taken of the guidance contained in 'Building on Tradition: A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside[4].'

Justification and Amplification

5.5 The Council wishes to secure good quality sustainable development in the Borough. This is considered as important as the suitability of the site in deciding whether to grant planning permission. The Council, in its assessment of each development proposal, will determine which policies and criteria apply to that proposal, and the Plan should be read in the round.

Furthering Sustainable Development

5.6 Sustainable development is central to the planning system and the LDP. In order to further the sustainable development of the Borough, new development proposals must deliver for society and the economy. However, this must not be at the expense of the environment. The relevance of, and weight to be given to social, economic and environmental considerations is a matter of planning judgement in any given case. The LDP, in line with the SPPS, will not seek to promote any one of them over another.

5.7 The LDP Spatial Growth Strategy seeks to secure sustainable patterns in the location of new development over the Plan period, in line with the RDS. Policy GP 1 therefore requires that new development, particularly major proposals, aligns with the Spatial Growth Strategy.

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[4] *See Historic Environment Division (HED) Guidance document 'Thermal Upgrade of Traditional Buildings,' (September 2024) available to view on Department for Communities website.*

5.8 All proposals should avoid harming the quality and integrity of the environment and ensure that all essential infrastructure to support the proposed development is either available or firmly committed to by a public body or through a planning agreement in line with policy PA 1 in chapter 6 of the draft Plan Strategy and paragraph 5.69 of the SPPS. The urgency to reverse biodiversity loss is as much an environmental emergency as cutting greenhouse gas emissions. As such, new development should enhance the natural environment and ecosystem services should be protected. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) identifies actions for key habitats and species in Ards and North Down.

5.9 A further aspect of sustainable development relates to the conservation of resources such as energy and water. Conserving the use of energy has a positive impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions that accelerate climate change. In promoting good design, the Council considers that all proposals should adopt features intended to maximise sustainability and energy efficiency including sustainable building practices and the integration of sustainable renewable energy technology such as micro-generation and passive solar design. For listed and historic buildings, thermal upgrade and retrofitting works need to be balanced against the heritage impact.

5.10 The layout and design of new development can also assist in the conservation of water resources. Further details on this are contained in 'Sustainable Water – a Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2040'.

5.11 SuDS represent a simple and often cost-effective measure which can have a significant benefit in mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to high intensity rainfall events.

5.12 SuDS shall be the preferred drainage solution for all development proposals. It will assist in reducing the incidence of flooding, improving water quality and may have a positive impact on local biodiversity including nature recovery. The application of SuDS shall be appropriate to the scale of the development, and it should be carefully designed so it is integrated into the overall scheme. The design and maintenance of any proposed SuDS scheme should be considered and addressed early on in the planning process.

5.13 More information on the general application of SuDS is included in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (to be prepared at a later date).

Design Quality and Respecting Local Character and Distinctiveness

5.14 In line with its LDP Vision, the Council will seek good design standards for all development proposals in the Borough.

Quality design makes the most of a site's characteristics and achieves a balanced response to all the factors influencing a scheme including its landscape/seascape or townscape setting and local/historic context. The quality is reflected in the totality of what is created – its overall character rather than constituent parts. It is important therefore that new development is based on a clear design concept[5] informed by its context. The context of sites will differ; however, as a general principle, the context is considered as the overall environment in which a site is located and includes both the immediate and wider setting in which the development will sit and be engaged with.

5.15 Quality design also entails variety and contrast within developments, in layout, in boundaries and planting, and in adapting the buildings and spaces around them, to enhance local distinctiveness.

5.16 The Borough has a range of historic environment and natural heritage designations, such as Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape/Village Character, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, listed buildings, Local Landscape Policy Areas and a proposed Area of Significant Archaeological Interest. In assessing schemes in these identified areas, the Council will have particular regard to relevant published Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG.) Quality design within such areas requires attention to detail and consideration of matters which contribute to an existing sense of place, such as the existing quality of the built and natural heritage of the area, recognised in appropriate designations, non-designated heritage assets and historic buildings, and the creation of landmarks and the use of public art. This includes the marine natural heritage and marine built heritage assets where relevant.

5.17 Quality design addresses peoples' needs, in particular those of children and the elderly as well as those with disabilities and reduced mobility. It encourages pedestrian and cycle movements, makes provision for increased use of public transport, promotes biodiversity and encourages wildlife and nature recovery, integrates open space and, where necessary, accommodates local neighbourhood facilities.

5.18 It also creates a network of spaces rather than a hierarchy of roads. This helps ensure the creation of surroundings with an attractive human scale and a distinctive overall sense of place. Therefore, the

[5] *A design concept sets out the processes involved in site selection and analysis and building design.*

Council will place more emphasis on the layout of a building/s and spaces than on the road layout in order to achieve an improved design quality and promote a sense of place, while continuing to ensure that standards of road safety are not compromised. All buildings should be located and orientated to front onto existing and proposed roads to create an attractive outlook.

5.19 Proposals should be informed by the topography, existing buildings, routeways, features of the archaeological or built heritage and landscape features such as rivers, streams, trees and hedgerows, which make an important contribution to the biodiversity and ecology of an area, and seascape, marine natural heritage and marine built heritage where relevant. Proposals should identify, conserve, protect and, where possible enhance heritage and landscape features, which should be integrated into the overall design in a suitable manner.

5.20 The design of buildings, the relationship between them, their relationship to streets, roads and the spaces created around them will all strongly influence the character of the overall site and its surroundings and has the potential to contribute significantly to the quality and identity of the new environment. Proposals should seek to reinforce and evolve local characteristics that are considered positive and attractive. This does not preclude high quality contemporary design.

5.21 The Council will also expect to see variety introduced into development proposals so that the spaces between buildings can, where appropriate, include tree-lined avenues, crescents, mews, courtyards, lanes and greens. Particular care will be required in the treatment of corner sites within layouts, and these should contain specifically designed buildings.

5.22 The Council attaches particular importance to the incorporation of existing landscaping features and the introduction of new elements to raise the quality of development proposals and to assist in the promotion of biodiversity including nature recovery. Existing landscape features such as streams, hedgerows or trees, and townland or parish boundaries should be identified and retained and suitably integrated into developments, together with the provision of adequate open space in their vicinity to ensure they and their visual setting are protected, and the sites biodiversity is sustained and promoted.

5.23 In all circumstances, the Council will resist proposals that would result in the loss of significant local landscape features, which contribute to areas designated for their townscape, local landscape or heritage importance. Applicants/landowners should be mindful that it is a criminal offence to cut down, uproot, wilfully destroy or damage trees which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order and that the Councils consent is required to carry out any works to a protected tree. In the

case of trees that fall within the boundary of a Conservation Area, the applicant/landowner must notify the Council six weeks in advance of any proposed tree works. Failure to do this is also a criminal offence.

5.24 Where it is deemed necessary to remove existing trees and hedging, or in cases where there has been extensive vegetation removal prior to development, the Council will expect the layout to include proposals for compensatory tree and hedge planting. Only native, species-rich planting should be used[6].

5.25 The integration of development proposals at settlement edges is also important. Therefore, buffer planting, native and species rich (8-10 metres in depth), will be required to be provided and retained at a specified height to help assimilate and soften the proposal's impact on the countryside. In addition, all hard landscape design, including paving areas, means of enclosure and street furniture should be carefully considered and the use of high-quality materials will be required, including the incorporation of SuDS where practicable.

5.26 In other cases, where proposals impact on local landscape features, the Council will normally seek the provision of compensatory planting to mitigate against the loss of local environmental quality and assist in the promotion of biodiversity including nature recovery and climate resilience.

5.27 Developers will be required to carry out all landscape works associated with their schemes and must provide establishment maintenance and ongoing long-term management, unless this responsibility is transferred to another appropriate body in a manner formally agreed with the Council through a planning agreement.

5.28 Development proposals should demonstrate how they have taken account of the principles of good design and place-making which are set out in 'Living Places – an Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland' (DOE, 2013) or 'Building on Tradition – A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside (DOE, 2012), where relevant to the proposal. Other design guidance may be applicable, depending on the nature and location of the proposal such as Design Guides for Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape/Village Character.

5.29 The preparation of a Design and Access Statement may also be required for certain categories of development proposal, and these are set out in DFI's Development Management Practice Note 12.

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[6] *Native species hedging and trees should be sourced and grown locally. The species that would be acceptable include scots pine, oak, ash, cherry, alder, rowan, hazel and birch. Native species hedging would include hawthorn, holly, blackthorn and hazel.*

Safeguarding Residential Amenity

5.30 The safeguarding of residential amenity is about ensuring that a new development does not give rise, either directly or indirectly, to an unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenity of those living in a neighbouring or nearby dwelling. Relevant considerations include those points 1-5 bulleted at Policy criterion (c). However, this is not an exhaustive list. In assessing planning applications, the Council will request the developer to look at how likely adverse impacts might be effectively mitigated, prior to a final assessment of the planning application.

Access, Movement and Parking

5.31 The needs of disabled people are explicitly recognised in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), and it is therefore important that all new development, in terms of its design, siting and layout, is accessible to all members of the population, and in particular, people with disabilities/impaired mobility. The integration of good accessibility in all aspects of design should be considered at a very early stage in the design process.

5.32 Attention should also be paid to areas outside buildings and pedestrian movement should be given priority over vehicles. The siting of buildings and the layout of associated car parking, vehicular access and circulation roads should be designed to facilitate ease of access for all pedestrians and wheelchair users, not only to the building entrance but also from the pedestrian environment, streets and spaces around buildings.

5.33 It is recognised that many existing buildings were not originally designed to accommodate disabled/mobility-impaired users and that it may not always be possible for development involving an existing building, which is open to the public, to provide level access. In the case of historic or listed building, there will be a presumption that suitable access for all will be balanced against the heritage impact and incorporated as far as reasonably possible. A flexible and pragmatic approach plus a level of imagination and design creativity will be required to ensure suitable access is provided for all without compromising the special interest or character of the building

5.34 The Council wishes to promote features within the public realm that encourage the use and enjoyment of public spaces for all, including older people and those with disabilities. This includes wider footpaths, and the provision of seats and benches, accessible toilet facilities, signage and street design that helps orientation and navigation, and seats and shelters at public transport stops. The Council is involved in some of this provision in its public realm schemes and will continue its partnership working with other public bodies in the delivery of quality spaces.

Access

5.35 The Council will require access arrangements to be in accordance with the latest departmental published guidance.

Movement

5.36 A sustainable movement pattern should be provided that, insofar as is practicable, seeks to reduce reliance on the private car, fosters and supports active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling), meets the needs of people with disabilities or whose mobility is impaired, retains any permissive paths, rights of way and other important access routes including green and blue infrastructure, and provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and existing and any proposed local community facilities.

5.37 Roads are public spaces and are therefore an important element in the design of a development proposal. All roads and footpaths should be planned and designed to contribute to the overall quality of the development, and this can be facilitated by a permeable layout with a network of interconnected carriageways and, where appropriate, a number of access points to the development.

5.38 Road layouts which meet departmental technical requirements, but which do not pay due regard to the quality of the residential development and the need to foster sustainable movement patterns, will be unacceptable.

5.39 Residential developments will be required to incorporate traffic calming measures to keep traffic speeds low, improve safety and help create a better environment. The Council will also assess the need for the design of layouts to safeguard access to adjoining lands, where relevant, to ensure that the comprehensive development of a site or future development potential is not prejudiced.

Parking

5.40 The Council will require all proposals, where appropriate, to provide well designed, convenient, adequate and appropriate provision for parking, including electric vehicle charging points, disabled parking spaces, and bicycle parking. Ideally, parking layouts should also incorporate soft landscaping and permeable surfaces and not dominate the environment to be created. The loss of boundary screening and front garden areas to create large parking areas can have a detrimental impact upon the street scene and will be resisted.

5.41 The amount of car parking required in any development shall be in accordance with published standards but may vary depending upon the specific particulars of the development proposal.

Safety and the Safeguarding of Human Health and Wellbeing

5.42 The Council will ensure that all new development is safe for those who will be living in, working in or visiting the building(s) and/or site or the immediate locality. In this regard, the Council will mainly exercise control through its role in administering the Building Regulations. However, the Council will also use its planning powers to ensure that new development is not located in areas of risk such as flood plains, or areas liable to land instability and subsidence.

5.43 The Council will consult with relevant statutory consultees, as and when required, on development proposals within the consultation distance of COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) establishments and Major Accident Hazard pipelines.

5.44 With the emergence of new technology for energy production and storage the Council will also consider any potentially significant impacts for the public due to fire or loss of containment.

5.45 The design of new developments should incorporate 'secured by design' principles, seeking to provide a sense of security and take proper account of deterring crime in all parts of the layout. Narrow, potentially unfrequented or unsupervised routes for pedestrians and cyclists will not be acceptable. All public areas should be well lit and overlooked by the front of buildings to provide maximum surveillance. The rear gardens of residential dwellings should be enclosed and back onto each other.

5.46 Given that car parks involve extensive areas of hard surfacing and therefore an associated increase in surface water runoff, consideration should be given to the incorporation of SuDs early in the design process, for example through the incorporation of permeable paving, underground water storage and bioretention tree pits, etc.

5.47 The Council will base its decisions on material planning grounds alone. Accordingly, it will not use its planning powers to secure objectives achievable under other legislation for the regulation of air and water quality. However, new development will be expected to be in compliance with the relevant legislation, so as to have proper regard for the safety and wellbeing of occupiers.



6 Planning Agreements

Policy PA 1
Planning Agreements

In appropriate cases, the Council will seek contributions from developers where these are necessary for infrastructure delivery or to manage impact on the Borough's environment and services.

Where the necessary infrastructure works and/or contributions can be secured by means of planning conditions, this will form part of the decision and planning permission.

If this cannot be achieved, the Council will seek to secure the required works and/or contributions by means of a Section 76 Planning Agreement (or other such legal agreement as necessary), before planning permission is granted.

Contributions may be required towards such matters including necessary infrastructure to support the development or a means of further investigation and/or mitigation e.g. archaeological investigation and mitigation and SuDS.

Why we have taken this approach

6.1 Planning Agreements are used to secure a planning obligation – such as developer contributions – where it is not possible or desirable to do so via planning condition. They are legally binding agreements between those with an 'estate in the land' and the planning authority (e.g. an applicant and the Council). A Planning Agreement must be completed before planning permission can be granted as per Section 76 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

6.2 Section 76(1) of the 2011 Act provides that any person with an estate in land may enter into an agreement with the relevant authority to:

- facilitate or restrict the development or use of the land in any specified way;
- require specified operations or activities to be carried out in, on, under or over land;
- To ensure the orderly delivery of large zoned areas (particularly where multiple landowners are involved);
- require the land to be used in any specified way; or

- require a sum or sums to be paid to the relevant authority or to a Northern Ireland government department on specified date / dates or periodically.

6.3 The SPPS sets out that the Council may consider the use of a planning agreement where what is required cannot be adequately addressed by the imposition of planning conditions and:

a) is needed to enable the development to go ahead;

b) will contribute to meeting the costs of providing necessary facilities in the near future;

c) is otherwise so directly related to the proposed development and to the use of the land after its completion, that the development ought not to be permitted without it;

d) is designed to secure an acceptable balance of users;

e) is designed to secure the implementation of development plan policies in respect of a particular area or type of development; or

f) is intended to offset the loss of, or impact on, any amenity or resource present on the site prior to development.

6.4 Examples include securing the following:

- required proportion of affordable housing in a new development;
- provision and future management and maintenance of open space and SuDS;
- improvements to the transportation network including active travel networks and public transport;
- Enabling development proposals where phasing of development and conservation works require appropriate controls to safeguard the conservation of the heritage asset;
- necessary educational or community facilities and/or their improvement;
- utilities infrastructure;
- decommissioning and future restoration and aftercare of sites developed for renewable energy or minerals development;
- completion of specified works (such as the conservation of a listed building);
- mitigation or compensatory measures;
- necessary ongoing monitoring of works; and
- provision of financial guarantees.

6.5 This list is non-exhaustive and it may not be possible to identify all circumstances in which an application may require a planning agreement to be in place prior to granting permission. Negotiations

will therefore occur on a case-by-case basis having regard to the scale and impact of the development. However, the LDP will highlight those instances where it is likely that securing developer contributions through means of a planning agreement will be required.

6.6 It is intended that further guidance will be published in respect of planning agreements and developer contributions in due course.

Voluntary Contributions

6.7 In some circumstances community benefits may be offered on a voluntary basis by developers to communities likely to be affected by a development. Whilst the Council is committed to ensuring that local communities benefit from development schemes in their area, such community benefits cannot be considered material considerations in decision-taking and are distinct from developer contributions and planning conditions.





Part D
Strategic and Operational Topic Policies



Social

7 Housing

8 Open Space

9 Health, Education, Community and Culture

7 Housing

7.1 Good health and wellbeing is supported by well-designed, sustainable environments. Sustainable, quality residential development will be well-designed, incorporating sustainable design features and construction techniques to reduce likely energy consumption and increase resilience to future climate change; add to and be sustainably integrated with existing green and blue infrastructure, and active travel infrastructure; and comprise a mix of housing tenures, sizes and types to meet the needs of all.

7.2 The Local Development Plan (LDP) has a central role to play in creating high quality, sustainable residential environments to meet the housing needs of everyone. The Strategic Housing Allocation supports sustainable patterns of development by directing the majority of housing towards the urban footprints of the larger settlements within the Borough which benefit from the integration of housing, employment, services and transportation. Operational policy shall support higher density development in appropriate locations while avoiding town cramming.

7.3 Rural communities will be supported through facilitating sustainable opportunities for housing.

Housing Strategy

To create balanced communities with high quality, sustainable residential environments to meet the housing needs of everyone.

This will be achieved by:

- Facilitating new sustainable residential developments that are designed to a high standard;
- Ensuring that existing local character and environmental quality is respected, and that existing residential amenity is safeguarded;
- Promoting higher density housing developments in our town centres and in other suitable locations that benefit from high accessibility to public transport facilities;
- Facilitating a range of house types, sizes and tenures; and
- Supporting rural communities by facilitating sustainable well-designed residential development in the countryside.

Why we have taken this approach

7.4 Regional Guidance in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 seeks to build sustainable communities as places where people want to live, work and play, now and in the future. In relation to housing, Regional Guidance (RG) 6 aims to 'strengthen community cohesion' by encouraging mixed housing developments so neighbourhoods have a range of housing sizes and tenures to support balanced communities.

7.5 RG 7 aims to 'support urban and rural renaissance', through developing innovative ways to bring forward under-utilised land and buildings particularly for mixed use development; promote regeneration in areas of social need; ensure that environmental quality in urban areas is improved and maintained, particularly with adequate provision of green infrastructure; and reduce noise pollution.

7.6 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) restates these regional objectives and sets out that the policy approach must "facilitate an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone; promote more sustainable housing development within existing urban areas; and the provision of mixed housing development with homes in a range of sizes and tenures. This approach to housing will support the need to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services, and the creation of more balanced sustainable communities" (para 6.136).

7.7 The Housing Strategy integrates all the core planning principles as set out in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS):

- Improving Health and Well-being;
- Creating and Enhancing Shared Space;
- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth;
- Supporting Good Design and Positive Place Making; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

7.8 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2);
- communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure (Outcome 3); and
- an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

Operational Planning Policies

Policy HOU 1
Housing Development in Settlements

Planning permission will be granted for new residential development in settlements where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a high quality, safe and sustainable residential environment.

In line with Policy HOU 2, an overall Design Concept Statement must be provided (in which the level of detail should be commensurate with the complexity of the proposal) that aims to enhance local distinctiveness by drawing upon the positive aspects of the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

A Concept Master Plan will be required for planning applications involving:

(a) 200 dwellings or more; or

(b) the development, in part or full, of sites of 15 hectares or more zoned for housing in development plans[1]; or

(c) housing development on any other site of 15 hectares or more.

In the case of proposals for the partial development of a site zoned for housing, the Concept Master Plan will be expected to demonstrate how the comprehensive planning of the entire zoned area is to be undertaken.

Any proposal for residential development that would result in unsatisfactory piecemeal development, or which fails to produce an appropriate quality of design, will not be permitted, even on land identified for residential use in the Local Development Plan.

Proposals must also comply with Policy HOU 2, General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.9 In line with Policy HOU 2 Design of New Residential Development, the Council will champion a design-led approach in which the quality and sustainability of the development is as important as the nature of the site itself. Such an approach brings important benefits by establishing the parameters and requirements for the delivery of a quality residential environment early in the planning process.

[1] *The Council will review all existing housing zonings and identify new zonings at LPP stage. Until that stage, extant zonings will continue to apply.*

7.10 The submission of Design Concept Statements and, where appropriate, Concept Master Plans will therefore be required to support all planning applications for residential development. Such information is necessary to accompany outline, as well as full, planning applications, to show how the applicant will deliver a quality residential environment on a particular site. It will indicate how the design concept has evolved and provide a clear vision of what is intended for the site without the need for fully detailed plans. Without the submission of this information at outline planning application stage, the Council will be unable to fully assess the proposal.

7.11 Quality design proposals should emerge from a careful analysis of the site's location, surrounding context and the specific characteristics of the site itself. The Council will expect to see a clear demonstration of the design thinking behind the scheme and how this has developed from the analysis. Pre-application discussions (PADs) with the Council can be helpful when this analysis has been completed and design options are being evaluated. Front loading the planning application system by the use of PADs leads to benefits such as improved quality of applications, and agreement on the way forward to determination.

Design Concept Statements

7.12 A design concept statement is necessary to demonstrate how the proposed scheme has taken account of the main features of the site and its context, and how it will meet the criteria set out in Policies HOU 1 Housing Development in Settlements, HOU 2 Design of New Residential Development, and GP 1 General Principles Policy thereby contributing to the promotion of a quality residential environment.

7.13 At the early stages of a project, the developing concept statement should focus on the overall quality and character of the spaces being created to help provide a clear basis for constructive discussion.

7.14 The statement should outline in writing the overall design concept and objectives for the site and include an indicative concept plan, based on the appraisal of the site and its context. The amount of information and level of detail required will depend on the nature, scale and location of the proposed development.

7.15 Applicants are encouraged to incorporate sustainable design features and construction techniques to reduce likely energy consumption and increase resilience to future climate change to comply with Policies CC 1 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and RE 2 Energy Consumption and Use of Low/Zero-Carbon Energy.

7.16 Where necessary, the statement should also address any local design considerations identified in design guides, supplementary planning guidance, or key site requirements (KSRs) set out at LPP stage. The

statement should also provide information on any improvements to infrastructure required to facilitate the proposed development and how this will be provided by the developer.

Additional Design Considerations

7.17 Design and Access Statements (DAS) are a current legislative requirement that should accompany certain applications under Section 40(3) and Section 86(2) of the Planning Act. In relation to residential development this includes an application which is a major development (i.e. comprises 50 units or more; or the area of the site is or exceeds 2 hectares) or where one or more dwelling houses are located within a designated area – in our Borough this is the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Conservation Areas, or an Area of Townscape Character (ATC) or Village Character (AVC). In addition, all applications which necessitate Listed Building Consent must also be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement which must explain the potential impact on the heritage significance of the listed building in addition to explaining the approach to design and access. Applicants will note that in line with Policy HE 1, all development proposals impacting upon a heritage asset or its setting must include a 'Statement of Significance' demonstrating a full and proper understanding of the essential character and special historic interest of the building or site.

7.18 In instances where a DAS is required, applicants should ensure that the content complies with the requirements of Article 6(3) of The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (GDPO). Good practice guidance is contained in 'Design & Access Statements – a guide for Northern Ireland[2]' (Department for Infrastructure (DfI), 2015). The principles set out in this guidance document can be usefully applied to preparing Design Concept Statements for smaller housing developments and those located outside designated areas.

Concept Master Plan

7.19 Where a Concept Master Plan is required, this will need to indicate in graphic form a scheme for the comprehensive development of the whole area, and include a written statement, detailed appraisals, sketches, plans and other illustrative materials to address all of the relevant matters set out in this Policy and its associated supplementary planning guidance. The Concept Master Plan should also clearly demonstrate how it is intended to implement the scheme.

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

Additional Information

7.20 Advice and guidance on site appraisal and the type of information that will be required to accompany concept masterplans and design concept statements is contained in 'Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments'[3] (Department of the Environment (DoE, 2000), alongside the principles outlined in 'Living Places – Urban Stewardship and Design Guide'[4] (DoE, 2014, updated DfI 2019). These documents will be material considerations in assessing planning applications for residential development.

7.21 The submission of a design concept statement, design and access statement or a concept masterplan will not preclude the need for other detailed assessments or information in support of a planning application, for example a Transport Assessment, Drainage Assessment, or an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Planning Agreements

7.22 The Council may be unable to grant planning permission for major housing schemes, and some smaller developments, in the absence of a Planning Agreement made under Section 76 of the 2011 Planning Act. Such agreements may be required for several reasons, for instance to secure any local facilities and infrastructure needed as a result of the development or the provision of open space and its long-term maintenance, or to secure the delivery of the agreed proportion of affordable housing. These agreements will need to be executed prior to permissions being issued to ensure that necessary facilities and works are provided and to help guarantee the quality of development required. Applicants should therefore consider this matter early in the design process.

7.23 Applicants should also be aware that they will be liable for payment of the Council's legal fees associated with the drafting of such planning agreements, and potentially for any monitoring of such agreements.

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[3] *https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/creating-places-achieving-quality-residential-environments*

[4] *https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/living-places-urban-stewardship-and-design-guide-northern-ireland*

Policy HOU 2
Design of New Residential Development

Planning permission will be granted for new residential development in settlements where it conforms to all of the following criteria:

(a) the development respects the surrounding context and is appropriate to the character and topography of the site in terms of layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance of buildings and structures and the spacing between them, and landscaped and hard surfaced areas;

(b) features of the archaeological and built heritage (including non-designated heritage assets), and natural environment are identified and, where appropriate, protected and integrated in a suitable manner into the overall design and layout of the development;

(c) adequate provision is made for public and private open space and landscaped areas as an integral part of the development. Where appropriate, planted areas or discrete groups of trees will be required along site boundaries in order to soften the visual impact of the development and assist in its integration with the surrounding area;

(d) adequate provision is made for necessary local neighbourhood facilities, where appropriate, to be provided by the applicant as an integral part of the development;

(e) it has been demonstrated how the promotion of active travel and sustainable transport has been maximised in accordance with Policy AT 1 Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport;

(f) it has been demonstrated that the proposal has considered and incorporated measures to reduce likely energy consumption, and the use of decentralised, renewable and low-carbon energy supply systems in accordance with Policy RE 2 Reduced Energy Consumption and Use of Low/Zero-Carbon Energy;

(g) adequate and appropriate provision is made for parking;

(h) the design of the development draws upon the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing;

(i) the design and layout will not create conflict with adjacent land uses and there is no unacceptable adverse effect on existing or proposed properties in terms of overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, noise or other disturbance; and

(j) the development is designed to deter crime and promote personal safety.

Any proposal for residential development which fails to produce a high quality of design will not be permitted, even on land identified for residential use in the Local Development Plan. All residential proposals shall be accompanied either by a Design Statement or Concept Master Plan where required by Policy HOU 1 Housing Development in Settlements.

Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape / Village Character

In the primarily residential parts of these designated areas, proposals involving intensification of site usage or site coverage will not normally be acceptable and will only be permitted in the following exceptional circumstances:

- a residential extension in keeping with the scale and character of the dwelling and its surroundings; or
- the sympathetic conversion of a large dwelling in appropriate locations to smaller units; or
- the development of a significant gap site within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage provided this would be of a density and character prevailing in the area.

Established Residential Areas

In established residential areas planning permission will only be granted for the redevelopment of existing buildings, or the infilling of vacant sites (including extended garden areas) to accommodate new housing, where all the criteria set out in (a) to (j) above, and all the additional criteria set out below are met:

(k) the proposed density[5] is not significantly higher than that found in the area;

(l) the pattern of development is in keeping with the overall character and environmental quality of the area; and

(m) all dwelling units and apartments are built to a size not less than those set out in Annex A.

[5] *Density is generally considered to be a calculation of dwellings per hectare.*

Conversion and Reuse of Buildings

All proposals for the conversion or change of use of existing buildings to flats or apartments (including those for multiple occupancy[6]) must comply with criteria (a) to (j) above and all the additional criteria set out below:

(n) there is no adverse effect on the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of the surrounding area;

(o) the proposal maintains or enhances the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building;

(p) the original property is greater than 150 square metres gross internal floorspace;

(q) all flats or apartments are self-contained (i.e. having separate bathroom, w.c. and kitchen available for use only by the occupiers); and

(r) the development does not contain any flat or apartment which is wholly in the rear of the property and without access to the public street.

All proposals for residential development must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.24 The task of designing new places with a sense of quality and sustainability, and with local distinctiveness, requires considerable skill. There is no single or universal version of quality design. What is right in one place might be quite unsuitable in another.

7.25 Quality design comes from achieving a balanced response to all the factors influencing a scheme. It will require housing layouts with individuality, and which respond to a local context by making the most of a site's characteristics and its landscape or townscape setting. Quality design also entails variety and contrast within developments, in layout, in boundaries and planting, and in adapting the buildings and spaces around them, to enhance local distinctiveness. It requires a greater attention to detail and

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[6] *A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is defined by the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, PART 1 (1) as follows:*

A building or part of a building is a "house in multiple occupation" if–

(a) it is living accommodation,

(b) it is occupied by 3 or more persons as their only or main residence,

(c) those persons form more than two households, and

(d) rents are payable or other consideration is to be provided in respect of the occupation by at least one of those persons of the living accommodation.

consideration of other matters which contribute to a sense of place, such as the creation of landmarks and the use of public art. Quality design addresses the needs of residents, in particular those of children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. It encourages pedestrian, cyclist and other wheeled user movements, makes provision for increased use of public transport, promotes biodiversity and encourages wildlife, integrates open space and, where necessary, accommodates local neighbourhood facilities.

7.26 Quality design will assist residents to develop a sense of ownership for new housing areas. In larger developments this can be a particular problem, and these should be divided into smaller neighbourhoods, each with its own character and easy access to necessary amenities and other uses.

7.27 The quality of a development depends not only on the design of its parts, but also the totality of what is created – its overall character. It is important therefore that new residential development is based on a clear design concept. Ideally this should be based on a network of spaces rather than a hierarchy of roads. This will help ensure the creation of surroundings with an attractive human scale and a distinctive overall sense of place.

Site Context

7.28 Proposals for new residential development must take account of the specific circumstances of each site. Those preparing layouts will be expected to have greater regard to the site context, in particular the characteristics of landform and the townscape or landscape setting, and the need for these elements to be integrated into the overall design concept.

7.29 In recent years, many applicants have ignored the local context and have failed to produce designs and layouts that draw inspiration from the special characteristics of an area. The design for a housing development should seek to reinforce and evolve local characteristics that are considered positive and attractive, while those urban design features that undermine the overall character of an area should not be replicated nor used as a precedent.

Established residential areas[7]

7.30 In established residential areas - with the exception of designated town centres and areas in the principal settlements that are either located adjacent to main public transport nodes or within key and link transport corridors – planning permission will only be granted for the redevelopment of existing buildings, or the infilling of vacant sites

[7] *Annex B contains a definition of an established residential area and any exceptions.*

(including extended garden areas) to accommodate new housing where the proposed density is not significantly higher than, and the pattern of development is in keeping with, the overall character and environmental quality of the area.

7.31 All dwelling units and apartments in established residential areas should be built to a size not less than those set out in the space standards in Annex A and should not result in unacceptable damage to the residential amenity of these areas.

7.32 Analysis of context is particularly important for infill housing, backland development or redevelopment schemes in established residential areas. While such development can usefully contribute to housing supply, great care will be needed to ensure that the individual or cumulative effects of such development proposals do not significantly erode the character and amenity of existing areas, for example through inappropriate design or overdevelopment.

7.33 Infill housing in established residential areas will not always be appropriate, particularly in many older residential areas with distinctive townscapes, often dating from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Intensifying the scale and massing of buildings in such areas can adversely affect local character and lead to a loss of valued open garden spaces, mature trees and shrubs. When combined with the impact of ancillary activities such as car parking and refuse storage, such development, if unchecked, can undermine the qualities that people value, and damage our built heritage. Redevelopment is generally considered to be the least sustainable option for residential intensification. Accordingly, proposals for the sympathetic re-use of existing buildings, as opposed to proposals involving demolition and redevelopment, will continue to be looked at more favourably.

7.34 Successful backland development requires the development plot to be of sufficient depth to accommodate new housing in a way which provides a quality residential environment for new and existing residents. Backland development on plot depths of less than 80m is unlikely to be acceptable, except where the existing urban grain is very urban in character, and where careful design can overcome concerns of overlooking and loss of day lighting.

7.35 Although the majority of residential areas do not have the distinctive character of Conservation Areas, ATCs or AVCs, this does not mean that their quality of residential environment is unimportant. It will often be of great and legitimate concern to local residents. In assessing housing proposals in established residential areas the Council will therefore need to be satisfied that unacceptable harm will not be caused to the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of the area. Particular account will be taken of

the spacing between buildings, the safeguarding of privacy, the scale and massing of buildings, the use of materials, impact on existing vegetation and landscape design.

Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape Character and Areas of Village Character

7.36 In line with the relevant LDP policies for Conservation Areas, ATCs and AVCs, the preservation and enhancement of the existing character, and distinctive qualities of the area will be paramount. Notwithstanding the regional strategic policy[8] to promote more housing within urban areas, proposals in the primarily residential parts of these designated areas which involve intensification of site usage or site coverage will not normally be acceptable. Such proposals usually involve demolition, plot sub-division or plot amalgamation which can be particularly detrimental to their character and appearance. Therefore, proposals involving intensification in these areas will only be permitted in the exceptional circumstances set out in the policy.

7.37 In all cases, proposals for residential development in these areas must comply with the LDP policy provisions for the Historic Environment – particularly Policies HE 7: Change of Use or Extension/ Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building; HE 9 The Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building; HE 10 Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building; HE 11: Conservation Areas; and HE 12: Areas of Townscape/Village Character. Applicants must also have regard to any relevant design guidance for the Conservation Area, ATC, or AVC in question.

Site Characteristics

7.38 Proposals must respect the individual characteristics and features of the site itself. These include topography, existing buildings, features of the archaeological or built heritage and landscape features such as rivers, streams, trees and hedgerows, which make an important contribution to the biodiversity and ecology of an area. Proposals should identify and, where appropriate, protect and integrate heritage and landscape features into layouts in line with LDP policies on the natural environment and historic environment.

7.39 Particular care will be necessary in preparing layout proposals on sloping sites in order to minimise the impact of differences in level between adjoining properties, existing or proposed. The use of prominent retaining walls within and at the margins of sloping sites will be unacceptable. In such cases the Council is only likely to accept low density development which would entail minimal works of excavation.

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[8] *RDS, RG8, page 42-43*

7.40 Applicants may also wish to consider the use of specific house designs which respect topography; these must also comply with Policy HOU 4 on Accessible and Adaptable Homes. Where changes in ground level between buildings are unavoidable the Council will expect these to be accommodated by the use of planted banks. In all cases applicants will need to demonstrate that their proposals will avoid overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy.

Layout Considerations

7.41 The Council supports positive place-making and directs applicants to address the connections between people and place from the outset. The design of house types and other buildings, the relationship between them, their relationship to streets and the spaces created around them will all strongly influence the character of the overall site and its surroundings and contribute significantly to the quality and identity of the new residential environment.

7.42 The emphasis shall be on the creation of successful places versus road layout in order to achieve an improved design quality and promote a sense of community, while continuing to ensure that standards of road safety are not compromised.

7.43 All buildings should be located and orientated to front onto existing and proposed roads to present an attractive outlook. The Council will also expect to see greater variety introduced into schemes so that the spaces between houses include tree-lined avenues, crescents, mews, courtyards, lanes and greens. Particular care will be required in the treatment of corner sites within layouts and these should contain specifically designed buildings. Such corner sites and other accessible nodes can often provide ideal opportunities for the use of landmark buildings.

Form, Materials and Detailing

7.44 The overall design concept for a new residential environment should seek to provide contrast and interest, balanced by unifying elements to provide coherence and identity. As well as greater variety in the spatial form of development this will entail a greater diversity of dwelling size, form and type to help produce a lively street scene and promote choice for prospective residents. For example, terraced buildings may be used to enclose a space, while elsewhere a taller building may be used to create a landmark feature. Coherence can be created in the detailed design of the different dwelling types by following the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing.

7.45 Applicants will be required to provide details of the boundary treatment of buildings as this can significantly affect the overall quality and character of new housing areas. The Council will expect

use of appropriate hedge planting and well-designed walls or railings as opposed to the wholesale use of close board fencing – particularly where these elements are open to public view.

7.46 Many villages and smaller settlements in the Borough display an essentially rural character, and proposals for housing development in these locations should reflect this in their design, layout and detailing. The overall scale and density of development proposed should also respect the form and character of the settlement.

7.47 While it is important to ensure that all new development fits in well with its surroundings this will not preclude quality contemporary design using modern materials and innovative design and layouts. The creation of a strong narrative through the design concept will be particularly important when introducing contemporary interpretations. Innovative design should not be limited to visual appearance but should include considering and addressing how the design of a development can minimise energy, water usage and CO^2 emissions along with the incorporation of sustainable urban drainage solutions (SuDS).

Density

7.48 The Local Policies Plan (LPP) may indicate a density requirement or a specific number of dwellings for particular housing zonings/ designations. Where this is not the case, applicants shall have regard to the location of the proposal in relation to its context and the overall quality of the residential environment to be created.

7.49 In town centres or on sites which benefit from high accessibility to public transport facilities, where a high quality and frequent service is available, higher density development, such as apartments or town houses, will normally be acceptable. In established residential areas, however, great care must be taken that development or redevelopment schemes do not unacceptably harm the local character, environmental quality or amenity of such areas. On greenfield sites, the site characteristics, the need to preserve existing site features and vegetation, and the space requirements for the provision of communal open areas will all influence development densities. On large sites a range of densities, building forms and a mix of house types will be required to help enhance quality and sustainability and provide choice. In all cases however the over-development of sites will not be acceptable.

Natural Heritage and Landscape Design

7.50 The Council attaches particular importance to using 'greening' to raise the quality of residential development and assist in the promotion of biodiversity. Good quality open space improves health

and wellbeing and can also help to improve resilience to climate change through providing SuDS[9], reducing the effects of flooding and urban heat islands.

7.51 Existing landscape features such as streams, hedgerows or trees should be identified and, where possible, retained and suitably integrated into developments, together with the provision of adequate open space in their vicinity to ensure they and their visual setting are protected. Where existing trees are removed the layout must include proposals for compensatory tree planting. The loss of existing trees that make a contribution to the visual amenity and biodiversity of the area will be resisted in line with Policy NE 5 - Habitats, Species or Features of Natural Heritage Importance. Existing trees may be protected by a Tree Preservation Order[10] (TPO) and will require written consent before any works are carried out on those protected trees. The trees within a Conservation Area are similarly protected as if a TPO were in place[11].

7.52 The Council will expect to see greater use of vegetation within developments including a hierarchy of different types of planting such as street trees, garden trees and hedge planting, specimen trees and amenity planting in open spaces. The integration of development at the edges of settlements is important and buffer planting, generally of native species (around 8-10 metres in depth), will be required to help assimilate and soften its impact on the countryside. In addition, all hard landscape design, including paving areas, means of enclosure and street furniture should be carefully considered and the use of high-quality materials will be required. Permeable paving materials are encouraged for private driveways, patios, paths, and shared hard landscaped surfaces to increase water infiltration, or its collection for re-use, thereby mitigating against future flood risk. In all proposals, the permeable paving should be:

- suitable to its location;
- high quality; and
- visually attractive and appropriate to the overall scheme design.

7.53 Applicants will be required to carry out all landscape works associated with their schemes and must provide establishment maintenance and ongoing long-term management, unless this responsibility is transferred to another appropriate body in a manner formally agreed with the Council.

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[9] *LDP Policy FLD 6 - Sustainable Drainage*

[10] *A TPO is a statutory protection afforded to trees under the Planning Act (NI) 2011.*

[11] *Further information is available on the Council's website: https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/article/1382/Trees*

Public Open Space

7.54 Integrating pleasant, attractive and landscaped areas of public open space, including children's playspaces where appropriate, is an intrinsic element of any new residential development and shall be provided as per the provisions of Policy OS 2 Public Open Space in New Residential Development.

7.55 Open space has recreational and social value and impacts positively on health and wellbeing. It is also considered vital to the overall design quality of the development. It can help promote biodiversity and contributes to the creation of an attractive, sustainable and varied residential environment, helping to 'green' an area, soften environmental impact, mitigate flood risk and foster a sense of community. All open space areas should be suitably located, proportioned and planted. Narrow or peripheral tracts which are difficult to manage will not be acceptable. In addition, applicants should consider the potential to incorporate sustainable methods of drainage in line with Policies GP 1 General Principles, and FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage, and the enhancement of green and blue infrastructure in the Borough in line with Policy OS 4 Greenways, Blueways and Community Greenways.

Private Open Space

7.56 Well-designed space around buildings can add greatly to the attractiveness of a development, especially where the principles of defensible space are applied. A variety of garden sizes and usable open spaces will promote diversity and give greater choice for potential residents. Sufficient space should be included for sustainable waste management including a variety of recycling bins and composting, and, where appropriate, for other sustainable uses of space such as greywater recycling and clothes drying. Applicants should therefore make adequate provision for private open space in the form of gardens, patios, balconies or terraces, depending on the characteristics of the development proposed and the surrounding context. All houses will need to provide some in-curtilage open space. The provision of adequate private garden space is particularly important for new family dwellings – generally dwellings with three or more bedrooms. For apartment developments private open space may be provided in the form of communal gardens where appropriate management/maintenance arrangements are agreed. Further guidance is contained within 'Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments' [DoE, 2000].

Privacy

7.57 The protection of the privacy of the occupants of residential properties is an important element of the quality of a residential environment. It is a particularly important consideration where new development is proposed adjacent to existing properties. Proposals should, therefore, seek to provide reasonable space between buildings in order to minimise overlooking. This will also assist in providing acceptable levels of daylight to properties. Further guidance on appropriate separation distances between dwellings is contained within 'Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments' (DoE, 2000).

Security from Crime

7.58 The design of new developments should seek to provide a feeling of security and a sense of vitality in all parts of the layout. To enhance security from crime, the back gardens of dwellings should be enclosed and back onto each other. Public areas such as open spaces, pedestrian routes and cycle linkages should be overlooked by the fronts of dwellings and other buildings to provide maximum surveillance. Narrow, potentially unfrequented or unsupervised routes for pedestrians, cyclists and other wheeled users will not be acceptable.

7.59 'Secured by Design[12]' is a UK project for promoting the principles of designing out crime from the built environment and should be taken account of by applicants in preparing schemes.

Travel

7.60 All residential developments will be expected to demonstrate how sustainable modes of travel have been maximised in line with Policy AT 1 Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport. They should seek to reduce reliance on the private car, foster active travel by pedestrians, cyclists and other wheeled users, respect existing public rights of way and provide convenient access to public transport and existing or proposed facilities in the vicinity. Such matters must be built into the design concept from the outset as the adaptation of the layout, for example to fit in routes for pedestrians, cyclists and other wheeled users will be difficult, if not impossible, at a later date. Opportunities to provide linkages to active travel networks and designated greenways and community greenways should be identified and integrated into the proposal.

7.61 Roads are public space and are therefore an important element in the design of a development. All roads should be planned and designed

[12] *https://www.securedbydesign.com/*

to contribute to the overall quality of the development. This can be facilitated by a permeable layout with a network of interconnected carriageways and, where appropriate, a number of access points to the development. Residential developments may be required to incorporate traffic calming measures to keep traffic speeds low, improve safety and help create a better environment.

7.62 Road layouts which meet the relevant highway design standards but which do not pay due regard to the quality of the residential development and the need to foster sustainable movement patterns will be unacceptable.

7.63 The Council will also assess the need for the design of layouts to safeguard access to adjoining lands to ensure that the comprehensive development of a site or future development potential is not prejudiced.

Parking

7.64 The amount of parking required in any development will vary according to the specific characteristics of the development, its location and having regard to published standards[13]. All parking should be well designed, convenient, accessible and located to allow for informal surveillance. It should not, however, dominate the residential environment to be created. Applicants should also give consideration to the provision of electric vehicle charging. In instances where parking is proposed within the built fabric of a building, such as an apartment development, this will only be acceptable where it will not result in a negative impact on the street scene at ground level by the creation of a "dead" frontage.

7.65 Applicants will also need to indicate what arrangements have been made within the development for secure bicycle parking. For apartment developments communal bicycle stands will often be required. Further policy considerations around parking and its design are contained within Policies TRAN 7 and TRAN 8.

Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings

7.66 The conversion and reuse of existing buildings for flats or apartments is consistent with achieving more sustainable patterns of residential development and can contribute to meeting sustainability targets. It can make an important contribution to meeting the varied housing needs of the whole community, assists with the creation of balanced communities, and can also support urban regeneration by reusing buildings.

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[13] *https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/DCAN%2015%20-%20Vehicular%20Access%20Standards_0.pdf*

7.67 The residential intensification of existing dwellings or the conversion of other buildings to residential use can however sometimes have negative impacts on the local character of an area, the amount of amenity space, and on the privacy of adjoining residents, for example, as a result of increased density, overlooking, increased traffic congestion, and the loss of family sized housing can occur.

7.68 Sympathetic conversion of existing buildings can harmonise with adjacent properties and maintain or enhance the overall character and environmental quality of existing residential areas. Poorly designed conversion schemes can adversely impact the character of residential areas, through inappropriate alterations, materials and detailing, alongside the impact of providing additional car parking. In determining applications, full account will be taken of the potentially damaging effect of cumulative changes in a neighbourhood by which proposals, although not detrimental in isolation, could be judged to be detrimental when considered alongside other recently approved developments. Policy also seeks to protect the amenity and privacy of existing residents.

7.69 Therefore, in considering applications for conversion and extension of large houses the Council will need to be satisfied that any extension will:

- harmonise with the existing dwelling in scale, style and the use of materials;
- not be detrimental to the amenities of adjoining properties, particularly in terms of privacy and availability of light;
- not overdevelop the site in terms of mass or density, as this can contribute to the loss of character of existing residences; and
- retain an acceptable proportion of amenity space to the built form.

7.70 To ensure that individual dwellings are appropriate for conversion, the policy sets a minimum size limit of 150 square metres gross internal floorspace on dwellings which will be permitted for conversion to flats or apartments. A more flexible approach to this floorspace requirement may be appropriate at some locations within designated town centres, along key and link transport corridors, and sites adjacent to main public transportation nodes. In all instances, proposals should provide a good quality of accommodation with all main living rooms and bedrooms enjoying natural light and a pleasant outlook.

7.71 Amenity space is an essential part of the character and quality of the environment of residential properties. It is important therefore to ensure, when bringing forward a proposal for conversion and/or extension of a larger dwelling to multiple smaller dwellings, that adequate amenity space remains. The level of private open space for

new residential property is detailed in 'Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments' (DoE, 2000).

7.72 Provision for waste and recycling storage should be appropriately screened from public view. Furthermore, proposals involving the replacement of front gardens with hard surface car parking areas will be resisted.

7.73 Any proposals involving extensions are required to be consistent with Policy HOU 6 Residential Extensions and Alterations for achieving quality in relation to proposals for residential extensions and alterations.

Policy HOU 3
Affordable Housing

Planning permission will be granted for residential development of 5 housing units or more, or on a site of 0.1 hectares or more, where at least 20% of the units are affordable housing[14].

Where there is an acute localised need as demonstrated by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), the proportion required may be uplifted on an individual site.
Provision for affordable housing will also be made on sites zoned for housing in the Local Policies Plan, and key site requirements (KSRs) may be applied to supplement the delivery of affordable housing where necessary to meet local need.

Affordable housing shall consist of social rented housing and/or intermediate housing. In determining the appropriate mix of affordable housing in terms of size, type and tenure, a statement of housing need provided by NIHE will be taken into account. If need in the local area has been met or has decreased, the requirement for affordable housing may be adjusted accordingly.

Development proposals which contain less than 5 housing units where lands have been artificially divided for the purposes of circumventing the policy requirements will not be permitted.
Where there is a phased approach to the development of a site, this should be discussed with the Council at the outset and a Concept Master Plan provided to ensure that the affordable housing requirement can be developed in a comprehensive way over the whole scheme.

The design, external finishes and appearance of affordable housing in the development shall reflect the character of the remainder of the housing on the site. The affordable housing units shall be interspersed throughout the site so that they are not readily distinguishable. Planning permission will be refused where schemes do not provide effective integration of affordable housing elements in new developments.

The delivery of affordable housing will be secured by planning condition or a Section 76 planning agreement which should be in place in advance of planning permission being granted.

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[14] *"Affordable housing is:*

a) Social rented housing; or

b) Intermediate housing for sale; or

c) Intermediate housing for rent that is provided outside of the general market, for those whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing which is funded by Government must remain affordable or alternatively there must be provision for the public subsidy to be repaid or recycled in the provision of new affordable housing" [Department for Communities, 2021].

Where it can be demonstrated that it is not viable or practicable for a proposed development to meet the above policy requirements in full, the Council will consider acceptable alternatives on a case-by-case basis.

All proposals for residential development must comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.74 Affordable housing policies, while enabling the delivery of new homes to meet need, also contribute positively to the creation of mixed, diverse, inclusive and sustainable communities. A range of housing in terms of dwelling size, type, tenure, and affordability is central to achieving mixed, balanced communities, and ensuring areas are attractive to people of different ages, lifestyles, and incomes.

7.75 Due to a high level of committed sites, a policy-based approach is considered to be the most appropriate means of securing the delivery of affordable housing within the Borough. Benefits of this approach include: access to sites in areas where housing associations have traditionally struggled to acquire land for development (e.g. rural settlements); consistency and proportionality to sites in terms of the size of sites and number of units to be delivered; and faster delivery compared to reliance on KSRs on zoned sites alone.

7.76 The threshold has been set according to local need, the level of uncommitted housing sites and estimated windfall provision. This is intended to ensure delivery of affordable housing in the borough due to the high proportion of committed sites to which KSRs cannot be retrospectively applied.

7.77 However, this will not preclude the Local Policies Plan (LPP) from applying a KSR to zoned housing sites to supplement the delivery of affordable housing where this approach is considered necessary to meet local need.

7.78 The Council will consult with NIHE to establish the local need for affordable housing for planning applications being determined under the policy. If need in the local area has been met or has decreased, the requirement for affordable housing may be adjusted accordingly. NIHE will also advise on the mix, size and type of affordable housing required.

7.79 The social housing units shall meet the design standards as set out in the latest published standards[15]. In addition, the design, external finishes and appearance of the affordable housing element shall reflect the character of the remainder of the scheme. To support mixed tenure development, the affordable housing units shall be interspersed within the market housing. Planning permission will be refused where schemes do not provide effective integration of the affordable housing in new developments.

7.80 Applicants are advised to seek advice with a registered Housing Association prior to the submission of a planning application to discuss layout and design of affordable housing, the financial and technical regime within which Housing Associations work and the transfer of the completed dwellings. This will enable applicants to better accommodate the percentage and mix of affordable housing required and to make proper financial provision for its delivery, before entering into financial or legal commitments for the site.

7.81 Large sites should not be artificially sub-divided to circumvent affordable housing policies but can be phased to assist meeting affordable housing requirements. Where a phased approach is proposed, this should be discussed with the Council at the outset to ensure that the affordable housing requirement can be developed in a comprehensive way over the whole scheme, within an appropriate time period.

7.82 A 'review point' may be established in a Section 76 agreement [S76], so the Council, applicant, housing association and NIHE can reconsider the way affordable housing is to be delivered in later stages of the scheme.

7.83 The Council recognises that there may be occasions where sites are unable to meet the policy requirements in full, such that some flexibility in the policy is required. Where it would not be viable for a proposed development to meet the policy requirements in full, applicants must provide a viability assessment - to the Council's satisfaction - to justify the proposed departure.

7.84 The Council will seek the maximum reasonable level of provision of affordable housing, having regard to the circumstances of each case, including: development viability; encouragement for the delivery of residential development on the site, applying other policies in the plan; the need to promote mixed and balanced communities; the size and type of affordable housing needed in particular locations; other resources available to fund affordable housing; and the specific circumstances of individual sites, including any constraints on developing the site for a mix of housing including market and affordable housing.

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[15] *Latest standards are currently found in the DfC Housing Association Guide, found at the following link: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/collections/housing-association-guide*

7.85 Acceptable on-site alternatives to full provision as per the policy may include (in order of preference): adjusting the timing of the delivery of affordable housing requirements; changing the mix of tenure, size or type of affordable housing; and lastly, a reduction in the affordable housing requirement proportion.

7.86 In circumstances where it is demonstrated that the alternative on-site provision as set out above is not viable or practicable, the Council may consider off-site provision on an alternative site within the same housing need area, or payment of a commuted sum. Any provision off-site or by way of contribution will be expected to reflect the provision of an equivalent amount of affordable housing as would have been required on site.

7.87 The priority of the Council shall be to achieve the objective of providing housing for all and meeting affordable housing need, therefore the preference for any alternatives is to maximise the number of affordable units on site and access to land (on-site or off-site) over financial contributions.

7.88 An affordable housing proposal form (see Annex C) should be completed by the applicant and accompany a planning application to demonstrate compliance with the affordable housing requirement. This will also act as a checklist of requirements.

Policy HOU 4
Accessible and Adaptable Homes

To assist with the delivery of accessible and adaptable homes for the lifetime of the property, planning permission will be granted for residential development where all of the following criteria are met:

(a) a living room, kitchen and sanitary convenience[16] shall be provided at entrance level;

(b) an accessible bathroom shall be provided on the same floor as the main bedroom;

(c) in dwellings of two or more storeys, the stair design shall incorporate straight flight, dog-leg or 'L' shaped stairs with adequate space top and bottom for chair parking provision for a future stair lift; and

(d) in apartment blocks of two or more storeys, a passenger lift shall be provided to provide wheelchair access to upper storeys.

In addition, at least 10% of new dwellings on developments of 20 dwellings or more will be required to be built to wheelchair accessible standards. Wheelchair standard dwellings must comply with the latest published standards[17].

All proposals for residential development must comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.89 This policy shall apply to all proposals for new residential development including those located in the countryside.

7.90 Demographic evidence shows that more of us are living longer. Even with good levels of health, this means many people are living with impairments and life-limiting conditions. Families with young children, with wider family visiting regularly, those with disabled or older relatives who want to visit or reside for a while will all benefit from housing that is built to inclusive principles, therefore adding to the social cohesion of a community.

7.91 Current Building Regulations focus on ensuring that dwellings are accessible for visitors[18]. This includes some Lifetime Homes standards and some wheelchair accessible standards, but for a home to be fully

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[16] *A 'sanitary convenience' is defined as 'a water closet and washbasin'.*

[17] *Latest design standards in relation to Wheelchair Housing are published by Department for Communities: https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/wheelchair-housing*

[18] *https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/Technical-booklet-R-Access-to-and-use-of-buildings-October-2012.pdf*

adaptable to meet potentially changing needs of occupants, further measures would be required.

7.92 Lifetime Homes (LTH) is a set of well-established and recognised design standards that incorporate 16 design criteria that can be applied to new homes to support the changing needs of individuals and families at different stages of life - from raising small children to coping with disability or illness or dealing with reduced mobility in later life. They do not provide full wheelchair accessibility standards.

7.93 The policy aims to increase accessible housing stock across all tenures by requiring additional space and design measures in all developments, with an additional requirement to provide a percentage of dwellings within larger developments as wheelchair accessible units. The requirements uplift those set out in current Building Regulations but do not adopt full Lifetime Homes design standards. This is a pragmatic approach as many of the Lifetime Homes standards are either included within current Building Regulations or fall outside the remit of planning to assess and manage (for example the positioning of interior switches and control panels).

7.94 The policy approach will provide choice within new housing stock to meet a range of needs, allowing people to stay in their own homes for longer, preventing costly adaptations at a later stage or residents having to leave their homes due to lack of suitability.

7.95 There is widespread consensus on the cost savings to the wider economy from accessible homes. Therefore, accessible homes should not be considered as specialist housing but mainstream housing, as they are sustainable, well designed, and inclusive. As the population ages, there is an increasing market for more adaptable and accessible homes.

7.96 Without increasing accessible housing, the majority of new build homes will be unsuitable for the needs of the population and may not be fit for purpose in the long term. These homes will demand future additional costs in adaptation, in addition to increased health and social care spending and environmental costs.

7.97 It is recognised that there may be some exceptional circumstances where not all of these policy criteria can be accommodated whilst still meeting other planning policy requirements. For example, a case may be made for such buildings to be exempt from the requirements of the policy where it is necessary in order to protect the historic environment. This must be supported by evidence such as advice from the Historic Environment Division (HED), or advice from a qualified heritage specialist. Such cases will be considered on their merits whilst carefully balancing all policy and other material considerations.

Policy HOU 5
Traveller Accommodation

Planning permission will be granted for Traveller accommodation where all of the following criteria are met:

(a) there is a demonstrable need for Traveller accommodation as identified in a Housing Needs Assessment;

(b) the proposal is compatible with the context of the site and area in terms of environmental and residential amenity, including the provision of workspace, play space and parking where appropriate;

(c) there is suitable provision of utilities including running water, toilet facilities and waste disposal;

(d) the proposal will provide convenient access to local services, including health services, education facilities, public transport, employment opportunities and open space; and

(e) adequate landscaping is provided for visual integration;

Where a suitable site within a settlement is not available, exceptionally a site adjoining or in close proximity to a settlement will be considered where it meets the policy requirements of Policy HOU 12 Affordable Housing in the Countryside.

Exceptionally, and without a requirement to demonstrate need, a single-family Traveller transit site or serviced site may be permitted in the countryside. Such proposals will be assessed on their merits having regard to the above requirements and Policy HOU 12 Affordable Housing in the Countryside.

All proposals must comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.98 When assessing applications for Travellers' accommodation the Council will consider the existing level of local provision and need for sites, as well as the availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation that meets the distinctive needs of Travellers.

7.99 Where a specific locational need is identified, this will be indicated in the Local Policies Plan (LPP). In all other cases, proposals will be considered under this policy.

7.100 Where a suitable site within a settlement is not available, exceptionally, a site adjoining or in close proximity to a settlement will be considered where it meets the policy requirements of Policy HOU 12 "Affordable Housing in the Countryside".

7.101 Any proposal for an individual single-family site may have fewer requirements than those listed in the main policy text (e.g. play space) and this should be taken into account when determining such proposals.

Policy HOU 6
Residential Extensions and Alterations

Planning permission will be granted for a proposal to extend or alter a residential property where all of the following criteria are met:

(a) the scale, massing, design and external materials of the proposal are sympathetic with the built form and appearance of the existing property and will not detract from the appearance and character of the surrounding area;

(b) the proposal does not unduly affect the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents;

(c) the proposal will not cause the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, trees or other landscape features which contribute significantly to local environmental quality; and

(d) sufficient space remains within the curtilage of the property for recreational and domestic purposes including the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles.

The guidance set out in Annex D will be taken into account when assessing all proposals against the above criteria.

All proposals for residential development must comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.102 The Council wishes to encourage the highest standard of design for all development, including proposals for residential extensions and alterations. Good design will help promote sustainable development and improve the quality of the existing environment. It should also afford appropriate protection of residential amenity.

7.103 A proposal to extend or alter a residential property can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the local environment. The main causes of harm arise where an extension is poorly designed, over-sized or badly sited or where inappropriate alterations are proposed. Even small-scale changes can, by virtue of their cumulative impact over a period of time, significantly erode the character of a street, village or rural setting. An extension or

alteration can also affect the privacy and amenities enjoyed by neighbouring households, with issues such as dominance, privacy and loss of light often arising.

7.104 Applications for house extensions and alterations therefore raise detailed, site-specific issues and each case will be assessed on its individual merits. The acceptability of proposals will depend on the particular circumstances on the site and its surroundings, and decisions will be informed by the guidance provided in Annex D.

7.105 The overall aim is to encourage high quality design solutions. The design approach, which is most commonly followed, is for extensions and alterations to tie in with the style, design and materials of the existing property. However, an innovative, contemporary design solution will be acceptable where the proposal has a clear design concept and complements the host property and respects its wider surroundings.

Sustainable Design

7.106 In promoting good design for residential alterations and extensions, the Council encourages applicants to incorporate features intended to maximise sustainability and energy efficiency, including the use of renewable energy sources, where appropriate. Further advice to assist property owners and their professional advisors in preparing proposals to sustainably extend or alter a residential property may be found via the Energy Saving Trust, the Building Research Establishment (BRE), and NIHE amongst others.

People with Disabilities

7.107 The Council will give sympathetic consideration to proposals where an extension or alteration is required for a person with a disability or whose mobility is otherwise impaired. If imaginative and innovative design approaches are fully explored, it is generally possible to provide a satisfactory solution in line with the policy. The specific needs of a person with a disability are, however, an important material consideration and exceptionally the policy criteria may be relaxed to meet these needs. In these instances, the Council may request the submission of supporting evidence from a medical or health professional.

Ancillary Accommodation

7.108 There may be occasions when people wish to provide ancillary accommodation to provide additional living space for elderly relatives or to meet a variety of other personal and domestic circumstances.

7.109 To be ancillary, accommodation must be subordinate to the main dwelling and its function supplementary to the use of the existing

residence. Such additional accommodation should normally be attached to the existing property and be internally accessible from it, although a separate doorway access will also be acceptable.

7.110 Where an extension to the existing house is not practicable and it is proposed to convert and extend an existing outbuilding, planning permission will normally depend on the development providing a modest scale of accommodation. The purpose of this is to ensure the use of the building as part of the main dwelling. The construction of a separate building, as self-contained accommodation, within the curtilage of an existing dwelling house will not be acceptable, unless a separate dwelling would be granted permission in its own right. Other proposals for ancillary residential use which are clearly incidental to the enjoyment of the property, such as a garden room or a gazebo, will be treated on their merits within the terms of the policy.

7.111 In all cases the Council will need to be satisfied that the proposed accommodation will remain ancillary to the main residential property and careful consideration will be given to the impact of proposals on neighbouring dwellings. Where permission is granted, it will be subject to a condition that the extension will only be used for ancillary residential purposes in connection with the main dwelling, and not as a separate unit of accommodation.

Rural Design

7.112 This policy applies to all proposals to extend or alter a residential property, including those in the countryside. Care will be needed to ensure that a proposal to extend or alter a dwelling in the countryside is sensitive to its setting within the rural landscape. This is particularly important where it is proposed to upgrade a small un-improved dwelling to modern amenity standards and for proposals involving ancillary buildings. Such cases also provide the opportunity for additional planting which can assist integration into the landscape and help promote biodiversity.

Historic Environment and Natural Environment

7.113 In assessing planning applications for residential extensions and/or alterations in Conservation Areas, ATCs and AVCs, and those affecting Listed Buildings, the Council would direct applicants towards LDP policies HE 7: Change of Use or Extension/Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building; HE 10 Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building; HE 11: Conservation Areas, and HE 12: Areas of Townscape/ Village Character. Likewise, for proposals within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, cognisance must be had of LDP Policy NE 6 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Applicants must also have regard to any relevant design guidance for the Conservation Area, ATC or AVC in question.

Policy HOU 7
Protected Housing Areas in Town Centres

Within designated Protected Town Centre Housing Areas, planning permission will not be granted for any development that results in a change of use from housing.

Justification and Amplification

7.114 Established housing areas within our town centres provide valuable housing stock and are homes for established communities which contribute to the variety and vitality of life in these centres.

7.115 Protected housing areas will be designated in the Local Policies Plan (LPP). Until this time, extant designations will continue to apply.

Policy HOU 8
Houses of Multiple Occupation[19] (HMO)

Planning permission will only be granted for HMO development where, as a result, the number of HMOs does not exceed 10% of dwelling units on that road or street.

Where such a street or road is in excess of 600 metres in length, planning permission will only be granted for further HMO development where, as a result, the number of HMOs does not exceed 10% of dwelling units within 300 metres either side of the proposal on that road or street.

The conversion of buildings for multiple occupation will only be considered acceptable in principle where all of the following criteria are met:

(a) the minimum space standards set out in Annex A are met;

(b) there is no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties and the character of the surrounding area;

(c) the external spaces are of a safe and secure design, providing easy and convenient access to yards, gardens, bin storage and parking;

(d) parking and service requirements will not result in adverse traffic impact or detract from the amenity of local residents;

(e) landscaping reflects the character of the property and neighbourhood, avoiding the excessive use of hard landscaping, and where relevant, making provision for future maintenance; and

(f) with respect to the conversion of shops, all materials used in ground floor windows and door openings should reflect the design dimensions and character of the upper storeys.

All proposals for HMO development must also comply with Policy HOU 2 Design of New Residential Development, the General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[19] *A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is defined by the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, PART 1 (1) as follows:*

A building or part of a building is a "house in multiple occupation" if–

a) it is living accommodation,

b) it is occupied by 3 or more persons as their only or main residence,

c) those persons form more than two households, and

d) rents are payable or other consideration is to be provided in respect of the occupation by at least one of those persons of the living accommodation.

Justification and Amplification

7.116 HMOs may play an important role in providing low-cost suitable accommodation for students, young professionals and seasonal workers, however controls are necessary to ensure that the accommodation is of a sufficient standard and that the impact on neighbouring properties is not detrimental to their residential amenity, or to the environmental quality or character of the area e.g. in terms of parking, noise and disturbance, or waste collection.

7.117 The Council will monitor HMO development on an ongoing basis. For the purposes of this policy, the number of HMOs will be calculated as a total of the number of HMOs recorded under the HMO Licensing scheme and the number of planning approvals for HMOs not yet licensed.

7.118 The Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015 includes Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) as a sui generis use. This means that a change of use to an HMO requires planning permission in all instances.

7.119 This policy does not apply to any use set out in Class C1[20] of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015.

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[20] *Class C1: Dwellinghouses*

Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as sole or main residence)–

a) by a single person or by people living together as a family; or

b) by not more than 6 residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents.

Policy HOU 9
New Dwellings in Existing Clusters

Planning permission will be granted for a dwelling at an existing cluster of development provided all the following criteria are met:

(a) the cluster of development lies outside of a farm and consists of four or more buildings outside the settlement development limit of which at least three are dwellings (excluding ancillary buildings such as garages, outbuildings and open sided structures);

(b) the cluster appears as a visual entity in the local landscape;

(c) there is a focal point within the cluster (such as a social/community building/facility), or the cluster is located at a cross-roads;

(d) the identified site provides a suitable degree of enclosure and is bounded on at least two sides with other development in the cluster;

(e) development of the site can be absorbed into the existing cluster through rounding off and consolidation and will not significantly alter its existing character, or visually intrude into the open countryside; and

(f) the development would not adversely impact on residential amenity.

All proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.120 A cluster is a close grouping of buildings, and whether it constitutes a visual entity will be determined by both visual linkages from public vantage points and physical proximity. The buildings in question must either benefit from planning permission, a CLEUD[21] or be permitted development as per the legislation - currently The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. Unauthorised buildings may not be relied upon to satisfy the policy.

7.121 For the purposes of this policy examples of what constitutes a focal point includes a social/community building/ facility, or cross-roads. A social/community building/facility is an identifiable entity used by the community for gatherings or activities with social interactions including a church, community hall or school building.

7.122 As this policy solely relates to proposals within the countryside, buildings and/or focal points within settlements cannot be relied upon.

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[21] *Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development*

7.123 The sketches below are taken from the supplementary planning guidance 'Building on Tradition' [Department of the Environment 2012[22]] and illustrate this siting principle applied to a range of small groups.

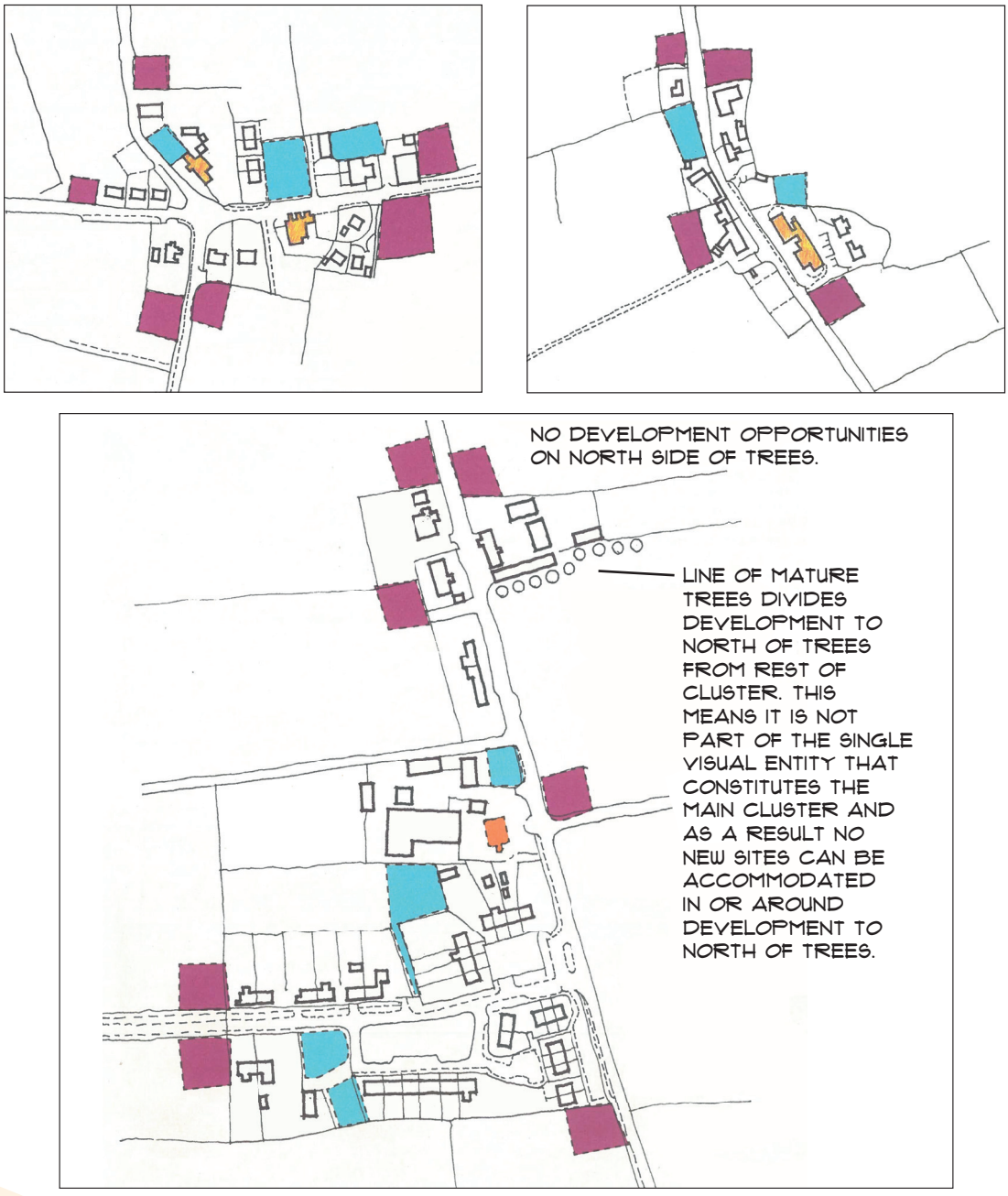


Figure 8:
Sketches to illustrate the siting principles of Policy HOU 9 (Source: Building on Tradition, DOE 2012)

[22] *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*

Policy HOU 10
Replacement Dwellings

Planning permission will be granted for a replacement dwelling where the building to be replaced exhibits the essential characteristics of a dwelling and as a minimum all external structural walls are substantially intact. For the purposes of this policy all references to 'dwellings' will include buildings previously used as dwellings.

Buildings designed and used for agricultural purposes, such as sheds or stores, and buildings of a temporary construction will not be eligible for replacement under this policy.

Favourable consideration will however be given to the replacement of a redundant non-residential building with a single dwelling, where the redevelopment proposed would bring significant environmental benefits and provided the building is not listed or otherwise makes an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality.

In cases where a dwelling has recently been destroyed, for example, through an accident, including fire, planning permission may be granted for a replacement dwelling. Evidence about the status and previous condition of the building and the cause and extent of the damage must be provided.

Non-listed Vernacular Dwellings

The retention and sympathetic refurbishment, with adaptation, if necessary, of non-listed vernacular dwellings in the countryside will be positively supported in preference to their replacement in line with the policy provisions of Policy HOU 11: Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings, and Policy HE 13: Non-Designated Heritage Assets.

Proposals involving the replacement of such dwellings will be assessed as follows:

- if the dwelling makes an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality, planning permission will only be granted where the applicant submits robust evidence from a suitably qualified heritage specialist to demonstrate that it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved.
- if the dwelling does not make an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality, planning permission will be granted for a new dwelling. In such cases the retention of the existing structure will be supported where it is sympathetically incorporated into the layout of the overall

development scheme, for example as ancillary accommodation or a store, to form an integrated building group.

In cases where the original building is retained, it will not be eligible for replacement again. Equally, this policy will not apply to buildings where planning permission has previously been granted for a replacement dwelling and a condition has been imposed restricting the future use of the original building, or where the building is immune from enforcement action as a result of non-compliance with a condition to demolish.

All Replacement Cases

In addition to the above, proposals for a replacement dwelling will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:

(a) the proposed replacement dwelling must be sited within the established curtilage of the existing building, unless either:

  (i) the curtilage is so restricted that it could not reasonably accommodate a modest sized dwelling. In this instance, an extension to the curtilage must first be considered before an off-site location, or

  (ii) it can be shown that an alternative position nearby would result in demonstrable landscape, heritage, access or amenity benefits.

(b) the overall size of the new dwelling must allow it to integrate into the surrounding landscape and not have a visual impact significantly greater than the existing building;

(c) the design of the replacement dwelling must be of a high quality appropriate to its rural setting and have regard to local distinctiveness;

(d) all necessary services are available or can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment or character of the locality; and

(e) access to the public road will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

For the purposes of this policy 'curtilage' will mean the immediate, usually defined and enclosed area surrounding an existing or former dwelling house.

Listed Dwellings

All proposals for the replacement of a listed dwelling must comply with the Historic Environment policy provisions, particularly HE 7 and HE 9.

Proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.124 The replacement of existing dwellings is important to the renewal and upgrading of the rural housing stock. All permissions for a replacement dwelling granted under this policy will be subject to a condition requiring demolition of the existing dwelling or restricting its future use if it is to be retained as part of the overall development scheme.

7.125 However, this policy does not permit the replacement of buildings that do not exhibit the essential characteristics of a dwelling or former dwellings, or where the building is only partially intact. The essential characteristics of a dwelling may vary but will typically include domestic windows, domestic doors, chimneys, chimney breast, hearth, internal subdivision etc. Due to the varying and site-specific nature of this assessment, each case will be considered on its own merits. In all cases, the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate that the building to be replaced meets the criteria.

7.126 Proposals which display rebuilding and repairs to contrive the appearance of a substantially intact building, or the essential characteristics of a dwelling, will be resisted in principle where they do not benefit from a CLEUD[23].

7.127 Proposals to replace existing semi-detached or terraced dwellings will generally only be acceptable if replaced in situ with the proposed new dwelling remaining attached to the other elements of the existing development unless there are practical mitigating circumstances to be considered.

Non-Listed Vernacular Dwellings

7.128 There is growing concern that the tendency to replace, rather than upgrade, older dwellings is depleting our vernacular rural dwellings, which is increasingly viewed as an important element of our built heritage. Accordingly, this policy seeks to help retain vernacular houses and promote their sympathetic renovation and continued use rather than replacement.

7.129 Where the replacement of a vernacular dwelling is considered acceptable in principle, the encouragement provided in this policy to retain and incorporate the existing structure into the overall layout of the development scheme is intended to promote imaginative design solutions that will help retain a visual link with the past.

7.130 The advice set out in Annex E will be employed to help determine what constitutes a vernacular dwelling or building for the purposes of this policy.

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[23] *Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use or Development*

7.131 Policy HOU 11 Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings highlights that the reuse and sympathetic conversion of locally important non-residential buildings can represent a sustainable approach to development in the countryside. It is however acknowledged that there may be rare occasions where the replacement of such buildings can result in significant environmental benefits. The demonstration of significant environmental benefits is intended to be a high policy test and the betterment of visual amenity alone will not normally suffice to satisfy this policy requirement.

All Replacement Cases

7.132 The supplementary planning guidance contained within 'Building on Tradition' (DoE 2012) sets out visual examples of best practice and basic rules to assist with siting, scale, size, and form of successful replacement dwellings. Particular attention is drawn to the common mistake of a poor understanding of scale or size of a replacement project, in the introduction of a new house that is too big for the site and/or bears no relationship to the scale of the original buildings. The policy test is clear that the proposed dwelling must not have a visual impact significantly greater than the existing building.

7.133 Valid replacement opportunities are sustainable in that they will often be sites with an existing access, well-established boundaries and mature trees to assist integration. Services such as water and power connections may also be available. To realise these benefits, the new dwelling must be sited as close as possible to that of the building it is to replace.

7.134 In instances where an off-site replacement is proposed, there must be a clear demonstration of betterment in terms of landscape and visual integration, the safeguarding of a built or natural heritage asset, or other exceptional access or amenity benefits that offer clear planning merit. Applicants must demonstrate the design and siting options considered and the rationale behind the selected approach. Detailed supporting information in the form of sketches, photomontages and other reports will assist in the decision-making process.

7.135 Applicants should ensure that proposals have satisfied all the relevant policies and requirements of the LDP – including the need to comply with the LDP policy provisions for Natural Heritage and protected species legislation. In practice, this will necessitate the completion of a Biodiversity Checklist - a 'step by step' tool used by applicants and their agents to help identify if a development proposal is likely to adversely affect any biodiversity and natural heritage interests and whether further ecological assessments/surveys may be required.

Policy HOU 11
Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings

Planning permission will be granted for proposals for the sympathetic conversion, with adaptation, if necessary, of a locally important building (such as former schoolhouses, churches, and older traditional barns and outbuildings) to an alternative appropriate use, where this would secure its upkeep and retention.

To satisfy this policy, the applicant will be expected to submit robust evidence to demonstrate:

(a) how the subject building has local importance, for example by virtue of its visual or historical, architectural/cultural importance; and

(b) that the subject building is capable of conversion through a structural survey conducted by a suitably qualified professional.

Such proposals will be required to be of a high design quality and to meet all of the following criteria:

(i) the building is of permanent construction and has undergone minimal intervention to date;

(ii) the reuse or conversion shall involve maximum retention of the historic fabric and would maintain or enhance the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building and not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality;

(iii) any new extensions are sympathetic to the scale, massing and architectural style, materials and detailing of the existing building;

(iv) the reuse or conversion would not unduly affect the amenities of nearby residents or adversely affect the continued agricultural use of adjoining land or buildings;

(v) the nature and scale of any proposed non-residential use is appropriate to a countryside location; and

(vi) the proposal complies with General Principles Policy GP 1, the countryside policies, and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Buildings of a temporary construction such as those designed and used for agricultural purposes, including sheds or stores will not be eligible for conversion or re-use under this policy.

Former dwellings previously replaced and retained as ancillary buildings to a new replacement dwelling will not be eligible for conversion back into residential use under this policy.

Listed Buildings

All proposals for the conversion or refurbishment of a building listed as being of special architectural or historic interest for residential purposes will be assessed against the Historic Environment policy provisions, in particular Policy HE 7.

Justification and Amplification

7.136 Due to changing patterns of rural life, there are a range of older buildings in the countryside, including some that have been listed, that are no longer needed for their original purpose. These can include former schoolhouses, churches and older traditional barns and outbuildings. The reuse and sympathetic conversion of these types of buildings can represent a sustainable approach to development in the countryside and for certain buildings may be the key to their preservation. The onus shall be on the applicant to demonstrate how the subject building has local importance, for example by virtue of its visual, historical, architectural, cultural or other importance.

7.137 The Council does not currently hold a list of non-designated heritage assets that have already been identified, nor has it any immediate plan to start a 'Local List' (a formal means of recording any buildings or features identified). However, should a 'Local List' be brought forward in the future, it will assist applicants and decision- makers in the consideration of whether a subject building has local importance.

7.138 To avoid the inadvertent loss of or irreparable damage to the original building, the applicant will also be required to demonstrate that the subject building is capable of conversion through a structural survey conducted by a suitably qualified professional. This evidence will be subject to detailed consideration by the Council and, where considered necessary, further verification of the condition of the building from a second suitably qualified professional will be requested from the applicant.

7.139 There is the potential for the reuse of an existing non-residential building as a dwelling and exceptionally, planning permission may be granted to conversion of a traditional building to more than one dwelling. There is also scope for the reuse and adaptation of existing buildings in the countryside for a variety of non-residential uses, including appropriate economic, tourism and recreational uses or as local community facilities. In all instances, the relevant LDP policies for that use must be complied with. Retailing, unless small scale and ancillary to the main use, will not be considered acceptable in the countryside.

7.140 The Council would stress the importance of good design in all cases and in particular, care needs to be taken for proposals involving the conversion of traditional buildings to ensure that their character is not lost to the overall scheme of redevelopment.

7.141 In addition, it should be noted that this policy relates only to schemes of sympathetic conversion. The Council would therefore stress that a grant of planning permission for conversion of a non-residential building to residential use will not in itself be considered sufficient grounds to subsequently permit the replacement of the building with a new dwelling, unless the proposal meets the requirements of Policy HOU 10 Replacement Dwellings.

Policy HOU 12
Affordable Housing in the Countryside

Planning permission may be granted for a group of no more than 14 dwellings adjacent to or near a small settlement to provide affordable housing to meet the needs of the rural community.

Planning permission will only be granted where the application is made by a registered Housing Association and where a demonstrable need has been identified by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) which cannot readily be met within an existing settlement in the locality.

In assessing the acceptability of sites outside a small settlement, the following sequential test in terms of location will be applied:

(a) land adjacent to the existing settlement limit, subject to amenity and environmental considerations;

(b) a site close to the settlement limits which currently contains buildings or where the site is already in a degraded or derelict state and there is an opportunity to improve the environment;

(c) an undeveloped site in close proximity to the settlement where the development could be visually integrated into the landscape.

All proposals must be sited and designed to integrate sympathetically with their surroundings and comply with General Principles Policy GP 1, the countryside policies, and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Generally, only one group will be permitted in close proximity to any particular rural settlement.

Justification and Amplification

7.142 The majority of affordable housing in the Borough will be provided in settlements in accordance with the thresholds set out in Policy HOU 3: Affordable Housing or set out in Key Site Requirements (KSRs) for specific zonings designated through the Local Policies Plan.

7.143 This policy is therefore anticipated to be invoked exceptionally to address instances of rising and unforeseen affordable housing need which cannot be met within the settlement limit in a rural area. Groups of dwellings in the countryside are not considered to be sustainable or desirable and will be resisted in all other instances.

7.144 The specific local need for affordable housing must be established by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the resulting planning application made only by a registered Housing Association in line with the established Protocol.

7.145 For the avoidance of doubt, a small settlement shall be taken to be all those identified as such in the LDP's Settlement Hierarchy.

Policy HOU 13
Personal and Domestic Circumstances

Planning permission will be granted for a dwelling in the countryside for the long term needs of a person, where there are compelling, and site-specific reasons for this related to the person's personal or domestic circumstances and provided the following criteria are met:

(a) the applicant can provide satisfactory evidence that a new dwelling is a necessary response to the particular circumstances of the case and that genuine hardship would be caused if planning permission were refused; and

(b) there are no alternative solutions to meet the particular circumstances of the case, such as: an extension or annex attached to the existing dwelling; the conversion or reuse of another building within the curtilage of the property; or the use of a temporary mobile home for a limited period to deal with immediate short-term circumstances.

All permissions granted under this policy will be subject to a condition restricting the occupation of the dwelling to a named individual and their dependants.

All proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1, the countryside policies, and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.146 There may be cases where special personal or domestic circumstances require a new house in the countryside. Such cases will include instances where a young adult who requires a continuing and high level of care, but who could also benefit from a greater degree of independent living.

7.147 Applicants will be expected to provide sufficient information to allow a proper assessment of each specific case. Such information should include:

- a statement detailing the special personal or domestic circumstances supported if appropriate by medical evidence from a medical or health professional;
- details of the level of care required in relation to any medical condition again supported by the appropriate health professional, the identity of the main carer, their current address and occupation;
- an explanation of why care can only be provided at the specific location and how genuine hardship would be caused if planning permission were refused;
- details of what alternatives to a new dwelling have been considered e.g. extension / annex to an existing dwelling and why such alternatives are not considered practical to meet the site-specific need; and
- any other information considered relevant to the particular case.

Policy HOU 14
Dwellings for Non-Agricultural Business Enterprises

Planning permission will be granted for a dwelling house in connection with an established non-agricultural business enterprise where a site-specific need can be clearly demonstrated that makes it essential for one of the firm's employees to live at the site of their work.

Where such a need is accepted the dwelling house will need to be located beside, or within, the boundaries of the business enterprise and integrate with the buildings on the site.

All proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1, the countryside policies, and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.148 Established non-agricultural business enterprises, located in the countryside, may require residential accommodation. The presence of such a business is not, of itself, sufficient justification to grant permission for someone to live on the site. The majority of the Borough is easily accessible from its settlements and applicants must provide sufficient information to show that there is a site-specific need which makes it essential for one of the firm's employees to live at the site of their work, as against a general desire for a dwelling in association with the business.

7.149 A business which has been operating satisfactorily without residential accommodation will be expected to demonstrate why accommodation is now considered necessary in order to enable the enterprise to function properly. Furthermore, it should be noted that the need to provide improved security from theft and/or vandalism by having someone living on the site is unlikely on its own to warrant the grant of planning permission.



Policy HOU 15
Ribbon Development

Planning permission will be refused for a building which creates or adds to a ribbon of development.

An exception will be permitted for the development of a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate one dwelling within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage, provided this respects the existing development pattern along the frontage in terms of size, scale, siting and plot size.

For the purpose of this policy the definition of a substantial and built-up frontage includes a line of five or more buildings located outside settlement development limits, (excluding smaller and ancillary buildings such as garages, sheds, outbuildings and open sided structures) with a common frontage to a road, footpath or private lane, which are visually linked as a line of development when viewed from said frontage.

In certain circumstances it may also be acceptable to consider the infilling of such a small gap site with an appropriate economic development proposal including light industry where this meets the General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other provisions of the LDP.

All proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1, the Rural Design Policies, and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.150 The strategic policy approach to rural development attempts to strike a balance between sustainable development and the protection of the countryside. Ribbon development is detrimental to the character, appearance and amenity of the countryside. It creates and reinforces a built-up appearance to roads, footpaths and private laneways and can sterilise back-land, often hampering the planned expansion of settlements. It can also make access to farmland difficult and cause road safety problems. Ribbon development has consistently been opposed and will continue to be unacceptable.

7.151 This policy permits an exception for a small gap site for a single dwelling in instances where it is considered that little or nothing is lost in terms of rural character because of the existing substantial and continuously built-up frontage.



Proposed site not likely to comply with HOU 15
Proposed site likely to comply with HOU 15

Figure 9:
Sketch to illustrate application of Policy HOU 15 (Building on Tradition, DoE 2012).

7.152 The policy therefore defines a substantially built-up frontage as one comprising five or more buildings excluding smaller and ancillary buildings (such as garages, sheds, outbuildings and open sided structures). Unauthorised buildings will not satisfy the policy and should either benefit from planning permission, a CLEUD or be permitted development as per the legislation - currently The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015[24].

7.153 For the purposes of this policy a road frontage includes a footpath or private lane. A 'ribbon' does not necessarily have to be served by individual accesses nor have a continuous or uniform building line. Buildings sited back, staggered or at angles and with gaps between them can still represent ribbon development, if they have a common frontage and are visually linked.

7.154 Many frontages in the countryside have gaps between houses or other buildings that provide relief and visual breaks in the developed appearance of the locality and that help maintain rural character. The infilling of these gaps will therefore not be permitted except where it comprises the development of a small gap sufficient to accommodate a single dwelling within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage. The matter of what constitutes a 'small gap' will be a matter of planning judgement and will vary from site to site, having regard to the size of the plots of the buildings which form part of the frontage. In considering in what circumstances a dwelling might be approved in such cases, it will not be sufficient to simply show how a house could be accommodated. Applicants must take full account of the existing pattern of development in the frontage and produce a design solution to integrate the new building in line with the policy provisions of the LDP on rural design.

7.155 Sites which exceed the local average plot width of the frontage are unlikely to satisfy the policy in this regard as they are more likely to constitute an important visual break. Supplementary planning guidance contained within Building on Tradition (DoE 2012) sets out other examples of an important visual break including: gaps which frame a viewpoint or provide an important setting for the amenity and character of the established dwellings, or a wooded area that contributes to rural character.

[24] *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/70/contents/made*

Policy HOU 16
Residential Caravans and Mobile Homes

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

These exceptional circumstances include:

(a) the provision of temporary residential accommodation pending the development of a permanent dwelling; or

(b) where there are compelling and site-specific reasons related to personal or domestic circumstances (see Policy HOU 13).

All permissions will normally be subject to a three-year time limit. However, this may be extended having regard to the particular circumstances of the case.

The siting of a residential caravan or mobile home will be subject to the same planning and environmental considerations as a permanent dwelling. Permission will depend on the ability to integrate the unit within an existing building group and screen the unit from public view. Residential caravans or mobile homes on farms will be required to be visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm.

All proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1, the countryside policies, and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.156 The design and finishes of a residential caravan or mobile home limits its potential for integration into the landscape. For this reason, planning permission will not be granted for a permanently sited residential caravan or mobile home in the countryside.

7.157 It is accepted however, that in exceptional circumstances, a caravan or mobile home can be a sensible temporary solution, to meeting the need for residential accommodation in the countryside.

Policy HOU 17
Dwellings on Farms

Planning permission will be granted for a dwelling house on a farm where all of the following criteria can be met:

(a) the farm business is currently active and has been established for at least six years;

(b) no dwellings or development opportunities out-with settlement limits have been sold off or transferred from the farm holding within 10 years of the date of the application; and

(c) the new building is visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm and where practicable, access to the dwelling should be obtained from an existing lane. The retention of buildings relied upon for visual linkage or clustering will be secured by means of a planning condition.

Exceptionally, consideration may be given to an alternative site elsewhere on the farm, provided there are no other sites available at another group of buildings on the farm or out-farm, and where there are either:

- demonstrable health and safety reasons; or
- verifiable plans to expand the farm business at the existing building group(s).

Those farm businesses which do not have an established group of farm buildings associated with them will not satisfy this policy. It will not be possible to site a proposed dwelling to visually link with a dwelling and ancillary domestic buildings, or with neighbouring farm buildings.

The applicant must demonstrate that the farm business is currently active and has been established for at least six continuous years through the submission of robust evidence, clearly linked to the farm business, showing the applicant is an active farmer, personally and substantially involved in the farm business.

Planning permission granted will only be forthcoming once every 10 years for a farm business.

A proposal for a dwelling by those involved in the keeping and breeding of horses for commercial purposes will also be assessed under the criteria set out in this policy.

All proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1, the countryside policies, and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

7.158 In recognition of changing farming practices and to help support rural communities, it is considered that there is a continuing need for new dwellings on farms to accommodate both those engaged in the farm business and other rural dwellers.

7.159 New houses on farms will not be acceptable unless the existing farming business is both established and active for a continuous period of six years. The applicant will therefore be required to provide robust evidence to prove active farming over the required period. Examples include provision of an active Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Business ID number and receipts of farming related grants or subsidies, accounts prepared by a qualified accountant, receipts relating to outputs and inputs, and bank statements showing income/expenditure relating to receipts. In all cases the evidence must relate to the farm business in question and cover a minimum six-year period. Hobby farming is not considered to constitute a farm business for the purposes of this policy.

7.160 An active farmer is defined as having the decision-making power, benefits and financial risks in relation to the agricultural activity on the land. Agricultural activity is defined as: (i) production, rearing or growing of agricultural products, including harvesting, milking, breeding animals, and keeping animals for farming purposes, (ii) maintaining an agricultural area in a state which makes it suitable for grazing or cultivation without preparatory action going beyond usual agricultural methods and machineries (e.g., good agricultural and environmental condition). This is in line with DAERA advice and guidance[25].

7.161 In instances where land is let out in conacre, it is generally the conacre tenant who will carry out the main agricultural activity on the conacre land and enjoy the decision-making power, benefits and financial risks in relation to the agricultural activity. Neither the maintenance of land which is let out in conacre nor the act of letting land out itself will be deemed as agricultural activity for the purposes of this policy as the primary farming activity will generally be carried out by the tenant farmer.

7.162 Planning permission will not be granted for a dwelling under this policy where a rural business is artificially divided solely for the purpose of obtaining planning permission or has recently sold-off or transferred a development opportunity from the farm such as a replacement dwelling or other building capable of conversion. For the purposes of this policy, 'sold-off or transferred' will mean any development opportunity disposed of from the farm holding to any other person including a member of the family.

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[25] *Definition of "agricultural activity" was previously stated in the EU direct payments regulation (Regulation No. 1307/2013). This regulation was disapplied following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union and reapplied with some amendments to language through the Direct Payments to Farmers (Legislative Continuity) Act.*

7.163 To help minimise impact on the character and appearance of the landscape, dwellings shall be positioned sensitively with an established group of buildings on the farm, either to form an integral part of that particular building group, or, when viewed from surrounding vantage points, it reads as being visually interlinked with those buildings with little appreciation of any physical separation that may exist between them. If, however, the existing building group is well landscaped, or where a site adjacent to the building group is well landscaped, planning permission can be granted for a new dwelling even though the degree of visual linkage between the two is either very limited, or virtually non-existent due to the amount of screening vegetation. It will not be acceptable to position a new dwelling with buildings which are on a neighbouring farm holding[26].

7.164 For the purposes of this policy, an established group of buildings on the farm holding would not include a dwelling and ancillary domestic building only (e.g. garage, shed, outbuilding, domestic stable etc.). This is to ensure that the general policy approach of the SPPS to cluster, consolidate, and group new development with established groups of buildings is maintained and that new residential development would not result in a suburban style build up and a negative impact on rural character should a new farm dwelling be sited in proximity to an existing dwelling and ancillary building without the integration afforded by a group of established farm buildings. The buildings in question must either benefit from planning permission, a CLEUD or be permitted development as per the legislation - currently The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. Unauthorised buildings may not be relied upon to satisfy the policy. Furthermore, the retention of buildings relied upon for visual linkage or clustering will be secured by means of a planning condition to ensure that the integration benefits of clustering development are not lost.

7.165 Where an alternative site is proposed under criterion (c) which is removed from existing buildings on the farm, the applicant will be required to submit appropriate and demonstrable evidence from a competent and independent authority such as the Health and Safety Executive or the Environmental Health Department of the Council to justify the siting. Evidence relating to the future expansion of the farm business may include valid planning permissions, building control approvals or contractual obligations to supply farm produce.

7.166 Under this policy an equine business is to be afforded the same benefits as an established and active farm. Such businesses will include horse breeding and training and the operating of livery yards, trekking centres and riding schools. Applicants will have to provide sufficient information to demonstrate a level of involvement

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[26] *'holding' is defined as all units being used for agricultural activities and managed by a farmer*

commensurate with commercial activity over the requisite period of 6 continuous years prior to the submission of the application. Such information should include:

- a statement of commercial rateable history for the business;
- copies of appropriate Insurances;
- copies of 'Horse Passports' (if applicable); and
- any other information considered relevant to the particular case.

7.167 Those keeping horses and/or ponies for hobby purposes will not satisfy the requirements of this policy.

7.168 DAERA will confirm the Farm Business ID number and other relevant authorities will be further consulted as necessary on applications for dwellings on farms, including those for equine businesses.

8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

8.1 The Council owns and maintains a wide variety of open spaces, sports facilities and outdoor recreation areas throughout the Borough comprising parks, amenity open spaces, play areas, sports and leisure complexes, sports pitches and beaches. This includes six parks and one cemetery which have been awarded Green Flag status – Castle Park, Linear Park and Clandeboye Cemetery in Bangor, Kiltonga Nature Reserve and Londonderry Park in Newtownards, Ballymenoch Park in Holywood, and Cairn Wood.

8.2 A variety of publicly accessible recreational facilities and open spaces are managed by organisations such as the National Trust, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) amongst others. There are also privately owned areas of open space including playing fields in sports clubs and the education sector, glens, parks, walkways and amenity green space in housing areas. Furthermore, the countryside and shorelines of Belfast Lough, Strangford Lough and the Irish Sea coast are among the natural resources of the Borough which provide abundant opportunities for outdoor recreational activities of all kinds.

8.3 Open space plays an important role in improving the health and wellbeing for all the residents of the Borough. It offers places to participate in sport and provides areas to socialise, relax, exercise and play. Networks of open space support active travel by providing a safe, attractive prospect for walking and cycling such as the North Down Coastal Path, the Comber Greenway, and the new greenway routes which are being progressed by Council.

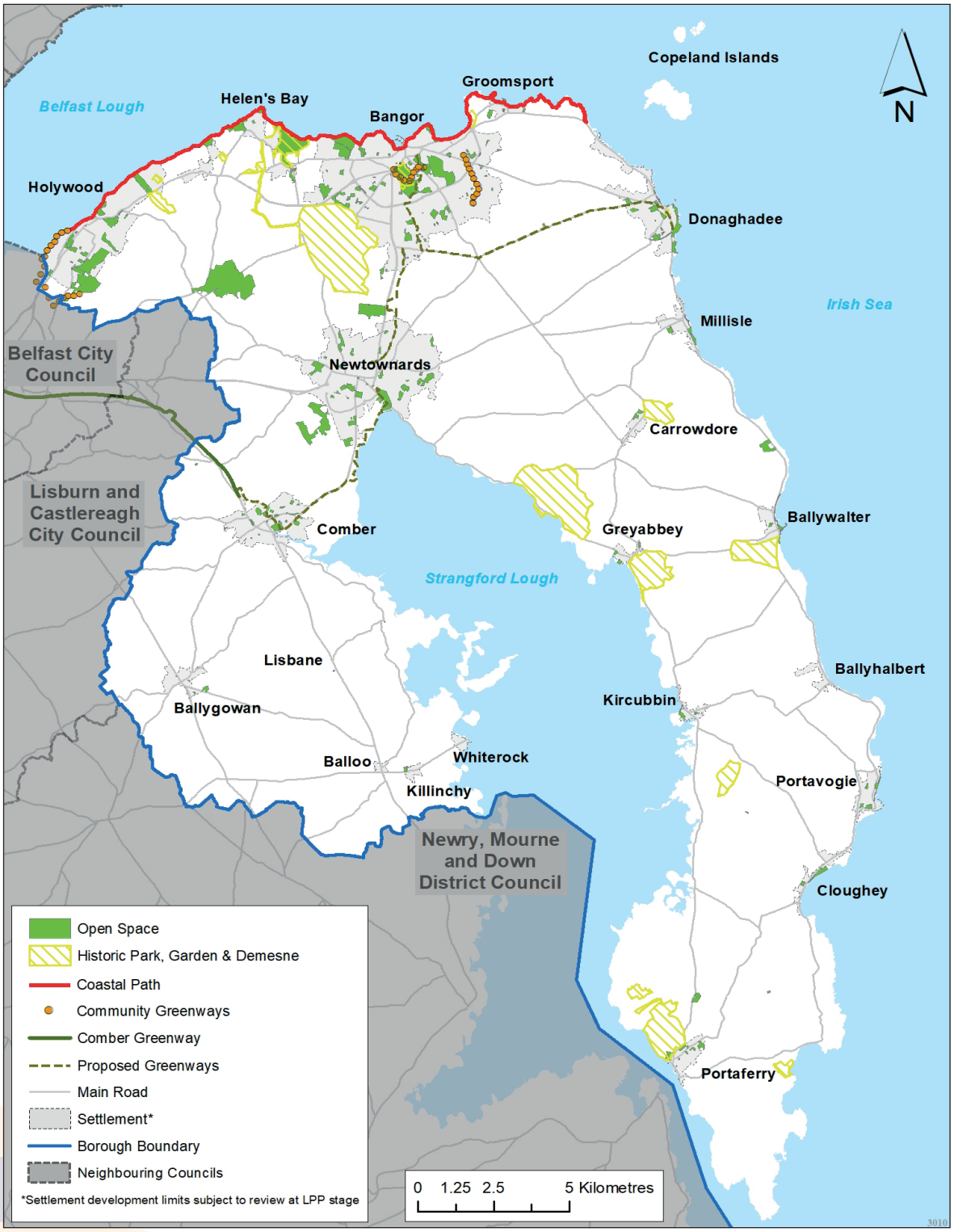
8.4 Open space enriches the character of urban areas, civic buildings and civic spaces, thereby promoting renaissance and regeneration in urban areas and assisting in attracting business and tourism to the Borough. It enhances civic pride and community cohesion.

8.5 Irrespective of its physical condition, appearance or accessibility, open space may function as an important linkage or stepping stone for wildlife; sustaining biodiversity and offering opportunities for its enhancement. It also reduces flood risk, acts as a buffer between competing land uses and assists in improving air quality. Its importance in mitigating and adapting to climate change and increasing local environmental resilience is identified in strategic policy CC 1 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

8.6 This multi-functional quality was particularly evident across the Borough during the Covid-19 pandemic when open spaces including our parks, forests, greenways, water bodies and other outdoor spaces such as beaches, performed a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing health and well-being of residents.



Map 4: Strategic Open Space



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Open Space Strategy

- **Protect and enhance existing and proposed open space**

  Existing open space is a valuable resource and once developed is lost to the community forever. Existing open space and proposed open space identified in the Local Policies Plan shall be protected through LDP Policy OS 1 Protection of Open Space.

- **Support the provision of new high quality open spaces close to where people live, that meet the needs of people of all ages, ability and background**

  New high quality open spaces shall be supported through the Policies OS 2 Public Open Space in New Residential Development and OS 3 New Open Space Provision in Settlements, including stand-alone parks and play areas where a need is identified, and ancillary open space in support of a quality residential development

- **Facilitate and enhance green and blue infrastructure through new provision and the promotion of linkages between existing and planned open spaces, including strategic and local community greenways and blueways**

  Green infrastructure includes parks, wooded areas and glens, amenity green spaces, landscaping and gardens, street trees, cycleways and footways, and even green roofs. Blue infrastructure includes water bodies such as loughs, lakes, rivers, canals, streams and ponds. Green and blue infrastructure is multi-functional – supporting health and wellbeing, enhancing and sustaining biodiversity, and aiding resilience to and mitigation of climate change impacts. The provision of green and blue infrastructure and promotion of new linkages in operational policy will help deliver these benefits. There are a number of strategic greenway routes proposed within the Plan area and the LDP will support their appropriate development and future protection whilst promoting community greenways, nature recovery, and other initiatives to improve connections between our network of open spaces, the countryside and the coast.

- **Support the provision of formal sports and outdoor recreation facilities in appropriate locations ensuring that they:**
  - o are sustainable in their location, siting and design;
  - o are accessible;
  - o protect natural and historic environments; and
  - o protect residential and visual amenity.

Why we have taken this approach

8.7 This strategic approach has been informed by regional policy such as the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), and at a local level by the Council's Corporate Plan and 'The Big Plan' (Community Plan). Local policy documents such as the Play Strategy, Pitch Strategy and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan have also been considered. The evidence base includes an audit of existing open space carried out on behalf of the Council.

8.8 In regional guidance supporting urban and rural renaissance (RG 7), the RDS places importance in promoting recreational space within cities, towns and neighbourhoods. It states that new developments or plans should make provision for adequate green and blue infrastructure. RG 11 highlights the importance of protecting and encouraging green and blue infrastructure to moderate against the absorption and storage of heat energy within urban areas and reflects on the value of linking these with ecological networks.

8.9 This approach also supports the Spatial Framework Guidance of the RDS (SFG 5) to protect and enhance the network of open spaces in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) of country parks, landscape wedges, parks and forests and community greenways - recognising their importance as recreational facilities, active travel networks and ecological corridors.

8.10 The SPPS acknowledges the links between improved health and wellbeing by safeguarding and facilitating quality open space, sport and outdoor recreation, and the protection and provision of green and blue infrastructure.

8.11 The importance of open space, sport and outdoor recreation and its cultural, social, economic, health and environmental benefits are recognised and the SPPS sets out regional strategic objectives to:

- safeguard existing open space and sites identified for future such provision;
- ensure that areas of open space are provided as an integral part of new residential development and that appropriate arrangements are made for their management and maintenance in perpetuity;
- facilitate appropriate outdoor recreational activities in the countryside that do not negatively impact on the amenity of existing residents;
- ensure that new open space areas and sporting facilities are convenient and accessible for all sections of society, particularly children, older people and those with disabilities;
- achieve high standards of siting, design and landscaping for all new open space areas and sporting facilities; and

- ensure that the provision of new open space areas and sporting facilities is in keeping with the principles of environmental conservation and helps sustain and enhance biodiversity.

8.12 It requires Councils to bring forward an Open Space Strategy (OSS) that must reflect the aim, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS. The LDP should be informed by a survey/assessment of existing open space provision and future needs. This should include both public and private open space and identify the different needs they serve (para 6.204 SPPS). Council commissioned an audit of all open space within the Borough on the basis of its quantity, quality and accessibility. The outworking of this has informed the Council's strategic approach and will be an important baseline to consider future provision and need at Local Policies Plan stage.

8.13 The Open Space Strategy integrates the following core planning principles as set out in the SPPS:

- Improving Health and Well-being;
- Creating and Enhancing Shared Space;
- Supporting Good Design and Positive Place Making; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

8.14 The Council has also had regard to regional documents such as 'Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways' (DfI 2016), and 'Northern Ireland Changing Gear: A Bicycle Strategy' and 'Sport Matters – The NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019'.

8.15 At a local level, the strategic approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2);
- communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure (Outcome 3); and
- an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

8.16 The strategic approach set out above also supports the following outcomes of The Community Plan: The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032, that all people in Ards and North Down will:

- Enjoy good health and wellbeing;
- Live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure; and
- Feel pride as they have access to a well-managed, sustainable environment.

8.17 The Open Space Strategy has also had regard to ANDBC Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2022-2032 (LBAP), the Sports Facility Strategy 2016-2026 and the Council's Play Strategy 2021-2032.

Operational Planning Policies

Policy OS 1
Protection of Open Space

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would result in the loss of existing open space or land zoned for the provision of open space. The presumption against the loss of existing open space will apply irrespective of its physical condition and appearance.

An exception may be permitted where it is clearly shown that redevelopment will bring substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh the loss of the open space.

An exception may also be permitted where it is demonstrated that the loss of open space will have no significant detrimental impact on the amenity, character or biodiversity of an area and where either of the following circumstances occur:

(a) in the case of an area of open space of 2 hectares or less, alternative provision is made by the applicant which is at least as accessible to current users and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness, safety and quality; or

(b) in the case of playing fields and sports pitches within settlement limits, it is demonstrated by the applicant that the retention and enhancement of the facility can only be achieved by the development of a small part of the existing space - limited to a maximum of 10% of the overall area - and this will have no adverse effect on the sporting potential of the facility. This exception will be exercised only once.

Justification and Amplification

8.18 Open space is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, loughs, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

8.19 There is a broad range of open spaces that are of public value, including:

i. parks and gardens – including urban parks, country parks, forest parks and formal gardens;

ii. outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned) – including tennis courts, bowling greens, sport pitches, golf courses, athletic tracks, school and other institutional playing fields, and other outdoor sports areas;

iii. amenity green space (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) – including informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, and village greens;

iv. provision for children and teenagers – including play areas, kickabout areas, skateboard parks and outdoor basketball hoops;

v. green corridors – including river and canal banks, amenity footpaths and cycleways;

vi. natural and semi-natural urban green spaces – including woodlands, urban forestry, grasslands (e.g. meadows), wetlands, open and running water, and rock areas (e.g. cliffs);

vii. allotments and community gardens;

viii. cemeteries and churchyards; and

ix. civic spaces, including civic and market squares and other hard surface areas designed for pedestrians.

8.20 Most areas of open space are multi-functional in terms of:

- strategic functions - defining and separating urban areas; providing community greenways, 'green lungs' or landscape buffers within urban areas; better linking of town and country; serving recreational needs over a wide area; and mitigating against absorption and storage of heat energy in urban areas.
- urban quality - helping to support regeneration and improving quality of life for communities by providing visually attractive green spaces close to where people live.
- promoting health and well-being - providing opportunities to people of all ages for informal recreation, or to walk, cycle or ride within parks and open space or along paths, bridleways and canal banks. Allotments may provide physical exercise and other health benefits.
- havens and habitats for flora and fauna – sites may also have potential to be corridors or stepping stones from one habitat to another and may contribute towards achieving objectives set out in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy.
- heritage value - open space can be of heritage value and a source of local identity, articulating evolution of place, providing important settings, or holding reservoirs of archaeological potential.
- community resource – a place for congregating and for holding community events.

- visual amenity – even without public access, people enjoy having open space near to them to provide an outlook, variety in the urban scene, or as a positive element in the landscape.

8.21 This multi-functional quality was evident across the Borough during the Covid-19 pandemic when open spaces including our parks, forests, greenways, water bodies and other outdoor spaces such as beaches, performed a crucial role in maintaining and enhancing health and wellbeing of residents – both physical and mental – while providing a much-needed social space for safe interaction with each other. Even beautifully planted borders played an important role in raising spirits and civic pride through improving visual amenity.

8.22 Open space is a valuable asset for our communities for both amenity and recreation purposes and contributes positively to the character, attractiveness and vitality of our towns and villages. It provides areas for play - an essential element in the development of all children – and enhances the quality of the residential environment. It can also provide valuable areas for nature conservation and biodiversity, act as a buffer between conflicting land uses, help mitigate against the absorption and storage of heat in urban areas. reduce flood risk, promote pedestrian linkages and provide 'green lungs' that can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality. Ultimately open space and the use of such space contributes to improved health and wellbeing for all.

8.23 The use of land as open space is no less important than other uses. It is a valuable resource and great importance is attached to its retention, for once built on it is almost certainly lost to the community forever. Accordingly, there will be a general presumption against the loss of open space to competing land uses.

8.24 The protection of open space is particularly important in urban areas where competing development pressures are greatest. Indeed, its retention and enhancement is now all the more important in support of the drive for urban renaissance. The aim of urban renaissance is to create a more sustainable form of development by encouraging compact urban forms and promoting more housing within existing urban areas without town cramming. This, however, should not lead to a loss of amenity and indeed places greater emphasis on the need to maintain a well-distributed, well-connected and accessible supply of open space. For this reason, open space of public value does not fall within the definition of 'brownfield/previously-developed sites'.

8.25 The protection and enhancement of sporting and outdoor recreational facilities in urban areas may also reduce the demand for such activities in the countryside. This can sometimes help provide relief for more fragile environments in the rural area.

8.26 An exception to the presumption against loss of open space may be permitted where development would produce such community benefit that would decisively outweigh its loss. One example may be the development of social housing in accordance with an agreed protocol with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to bring about benefits in respect of estate restructuring, reductions in anti-social behaviour and meeting high levels of housing need. In such cases, applicants will generally be expected to demonstrate that their proposals are supported by the local community.

8.27 It is also recognised that development can on occasion provide an opportunity to recreate open space or outdoor recreational facilities in an alternative location to substitute for the loss of an existing open space or facility. This approach will only be considered for areas of two hectares or less and a key factor in assessing proposals will be the accessibility of the proposed new space to all the users of the existing space. It should not be assumed, however, that permission will automatically be granted when alternative provision is proposed. Existing open space is often of considerable value to the amenity, character and biodiversity of a local area and therefore worthy of protection in its own right.

8.28 Where an exchange is acceptable in principle, it will be secured through the use of planning conditions or, where appropriate, a Planning Agreement under Section 76 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. This will tie redevelopment to the provision of the new facility and ensure that this is capable of being maintained adequately through appropriate management agreements.

8.29 In relation to playing fields and sports pitches in urban areas, there may be exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated that the retention and enhancement of the facility can only be achieved by the redevelopment of a part of the area. This can, however, be detrimental to the quality and value of such facilities and call into question their overall viability. Consideration will therefore only be given to redevelopment proposals that are judged to have no adverse effect on the sporting potential or overall amenity value of the open space and which are restricted to an area no greater than 10% of the total site.

8.30 The above exception will be applied only once to guard against the piecemeal erosion of playing fields and sports pitches by a succession of small developments, possibly over a long period of time. In addition, the grant of planning permission will normally be reliant on the applicant entering into a Planning Agreement tying the financial gain arising from redevelopment to the retention and enhancement of the open space facility.

8.31 All proposals for the alternative use of open space will be assessed with regard to their effect on the amenity, character and biodiversity of the area and the wider locality and taking into account the needs of future generations. Any deterioration in the appearance or condition of open space due to inadequate management or maintenance, however, will not be sufficient justification in itself for the loss of the open space to alternative uses.

Policy OS 2
Public Open Space in New Residential Development

Planning permission will only be granted for new residential development of 25 or more units, or on sites of one hectare or more, where public open space is provided as an integral part of the development. In smaller residential schemes the need to provide public open space will be considered on its individual merits.

Where the provision of public open space is required under this policy, the precise amount, location, type and design of such provision will be negotiated with applicants taking account of the specific characteristics of the development, the site and its context subject to the following:

(a) Open space provision must be at least 10% of the total site area.

(b) For residential development of 300 units or more, or for development sites of 15 hectares or more, open space provision must be at least 15% of the total site area.

Exceptionally, provision at a rate less than 10% of the total site area may be acceptable where the residential development:

i. is located within a town or city centre; or

ii. is close to and would benefit from ease of access to areas of existing public open space; or

iii. is an apartment development or specialised housing where a reasonable level of private communal open space is being provided.

For residential development of 100 units or more, or for development sites of 5 hectares or more, an equipped children's play area will be required as an integral part of the development. The Council will consider an exception to this requirement where an equipped children's play area exists within reasonable walking distance (generally around 400 metres) of the majority of the units within the development scheme. The applicant will be required to make contributions towards the maintenance and improvement of Council-managed play areas where these are relied upon as above.

Any proposal for residential development which seeks to artificially divide a site in order to avoid provision of appropriate open space will not be permitted.

Public open space required by this policy will be expected to conform to all the following criteria:

- it is designed in a comprehensive and linked way as an integral part of the development;
- it is of demonstrable recreational or amenity value;
- it is designed, wherever possible, to be multi-functional;
- it provides easy and safe access for the residents of the dwellings that it is designed to serve;
- its design, location and appearance take into account the amenity of nearby residents and the needs of people with disabilities;
- it retains important landscape and heritage features[27] and incorporates and protects these in an appropriate fashion;
- an appropriate landscaping scheme is included to support biodiversity including native species hedging and/or pollinating shrubs;
- it creates and provides linkages to green and blue infrastructure including existing and planned open space, greenways and community greenways where possible; and
- consideration has been given to the incorporation of sustainable drainage solutions in line with policies GP 1 General Principles and FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage.

Planning permission will not be granted until the applicant has satisfied the Council that suitable arrangements will be put in place for the future management and maintenance, in perpetuity of areas of public open space required under this policy. In all cases applicants will be responsible for the laying out and landscaping of public open space required under this policy.

Justification and Amplification

8.32 Providing public open space as an integral part of a housing scheme contributes to the creation of a sustainable and quality residential environment. It has both recreational and social value and helps to establish a sense of identity. The 'greening' of an area can also contribute to people's health, well-being and quality of life, particularly that of children, and can help promote biodiversity. It can also support climate change mitigation and adaptation in line with strategic policy CC 1 'Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation' by providing

[27] *Including unrecorded archaeological remains identified during pre-development evaluation*

a carbon storage function, by facilitating and enhancing green and blue infrastructure, and by presenting opportunity to incorporate sustainable drainage solutions as 'soft' SuDS in line with policy FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage and the General Principles policy GP 1.

8.33 The Council is committed to securing a high quality of design, layout and landscaping in new housing developments. It is considered essential, therefore, that areas of pleasant, attractive and landscaped public open space, including children's play spaces, are provided as an integral element of new residential development.

8.34 Public open space can be provided in a variety of forms ranging from village greens, kickabout areas and small parks through to equipped play areas and sport pitches. In addition, the creation or retention of woodland areas or other natural or semi-natural areas of open space can provide valuable habitats for wildlife and promote biodiversity.

8.35 The Council recommends the consideration of the quality standards as set out in Annex F in the design of new areas of public open space. Through careful design, multi-functional areas combining activities and uses can often be successfully created. To provide for maximum surveillance, areas of open space are best located where they are overlooked by the fronts of nearby dwellings.

8.36 A particularly important consideration in determining the layout of new housing developments is the provision of safe opportunities for children's play. The main place where young children play is adjacent or near to their homes as generally, they are constrained in terms of the distance they are allowed to venture from their house for supervision and safety reasons. It is important, therefore, that children's play areas and facilities are located within a reasonable walking distance of where they live and well surveilled by neighbouring dwellings and transport links. However, such facilities should be sited appropriately to avoid noise or nuisance problems to residential properties.

8.37 In some instances, there may already be a Council play area in proximity to a new residential development and it would not be sustainable to provide another. In these circumstances, applicants will be expected to contribute towards the possible expansion and maintenance of the Council facility instead of making separate provision. In all cases, early engagement with the Council's Parks and Cemeteries team is advised to ensure that the planned play area meets Council standards in terms of the equipment, surfacing and layouts. This may assist in future adoption of the area. Applicants should not assume that Council will adopt the management of play areas as such requests will be considered on a site-by-site basis in conjunction with the criteria outlined in the Council's Play Strategy.

8.38 In large developments, there may be a need to provide more formal outdoor recreation facilities, such as playing pitches, to meet the needs generated by the development. This shall be addressed in conjunction with the Council's Leisure department.

8.39 In calculating the precise amount of public open space provision needed in an individual development proposal, only space of demonstrable recreational or amenity value i.e. 'useable' open space, will generally be counted. Accordingly, verges and visibility splays, which form part of the adopted highway, will not normally count towards the open space provision.

8.40 Apartment developments and specialised housing will also require adequate provision of open space to meet the needs of future residents and to help integrate the development and promote a more attractive environment. In cases where private communal gardens are proposed as an integral part of the development, separate provision of public open space will not normally be required.

Management and Maintenance in Perpetuity

8.41 The provisions made for the management and maintenance of public open space required under this policy are a key material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Council will not commit to the adoption of such open space areas. The onus, therefore, will rest on applicants to ensure that such land will be made available and subsequently retained, managed and maintained in perpetuity as public open space.

8.42 There are three main approaches that may provide reasonable assurance that such open space can be managed and maintained in perpetuity. These are:

1. A legal agreement transferring ownership and responsibility for the open space to the Council. Applicants are therefore advised to consult the Council about their adoption policies at an early stage in the design process.
2. A legal agreement transferring ownership and responsibility for the open space to a charitable trust registered by the Charity Commission, such as The Woodland Trust, or a management company supported by such a trust; or
3. A legal agreement transferring ownership and responsibility for the open space to a properly constituted residents' association with associated management arrangements. In this case, the ownership of the open space is divided equally among incoming residents who then employ a management company on their behalf to maintain the open space. The applicant will be responsible for setting up a resident's association, putting in

place the initial management regime and ensuring this matter is clearly set out in the sale agreement. Any applicant intending to follow this approach will also be required to demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction what alternative measures will take effect in the event that the residents' management arrangements were to break down.

8.43 If an applicant wishes to follow an alternative approach to those outlined above, it will have to be demonstrated how such an approach can meet the policy requirement for the open space to be managed and maintained in perpetuity.

8.44 To ensure that planning applications are dealt with expediently and therefore avoid delays, the Council will expect full information on the applicant's preferred approach to be provided as part of their application. This matter will need to be agreed in writing with the Council before full planning permission (or approval of reserved matters) is granted and any necessary legal agreements between the applicant and third parties put in place before the development commences. A condition will be attached to planning permission tying the management and maintenance of the open space to the approach agreed with the Council.

8.45 The Council will also attach appropriate planning conditions to address: the laying out and landscaping of the open space; the timing of its implementation; and the permanent retention of the open space.

8.46 It should be noted that there may be occasions where the provision of open space in association with residential development can only be facilitated by the applicant entering into a Planning Agreement under Section 76 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011. Where this is the case, the Planning Agreement will need to be completed before planning permission is granted.

Policy OS 3
New Open Space Provision in Settlements

Planning permission will be granted for new open space provision in settlements, including community growing spaces and allotments, where it complies with all of the following criteria:

(a) it is located in an accessible location with good connectivity to active travel infrastructure and public transport where possible;

(b) it is designed, where possible, to be multi-functional;

(c) its design, location and appearance take into account the amenity of any nearby residents and the needs of all potential users – particularly those with disabilities and older people;

(d) it retains important landscape and heritage features and incorporates and protects these in an appropriate fashion;

(e) an appropriate landscaping scheme is included to support biodiversity including native species hedging and/or pollinating shrubs;

(f) it creates and provides linkages to green and blue infrastructure including existing and planned open space, greenways and community greenways where possible;

(g) any ancillary buildings must be designed to a high standard, be of a scale appropriate to the character of the local area, and be sympathetic to the surrounding environment in terms of siting, layout and landscaping; and

(h) the Council is satisfied that suitable arrangements will be put in place for the future management and maintenance of any new open space in perpetuity.

All proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

8.47 Everyone living in the Borough should have access to good quality, attractive open spaces, providing opportunities for a wide range of users close to where they live. Well designed, useable, clean, safe and accessible spaces are vital to encouraging healthier lifestyles, supporting wellbeing and tackling inequalities. Good quality open spaces lead to higher satisfaction levels, greater feelings of safety and higher levels of activity in the outdoors.

8.48 In 2021 the Council agreed a sustainable community food growing strategy, 'Let's Grow Together', that recognises the wide-ranging benefits of, and seeks to inspire, promote, and support, community growing across the Borough. These benefits include: the opportunity to produce a wide range of relatively inexpensive healthy vegetables, physical exercise in the outdoors, improved social interactions, fostering of community pride and cohesion, opportunities to develop skills, and improve education and awareness around healthy food.

8.49 OS 3 supports the food growing strategy by facilitating allotments and community growing spaces where they are accessibly located and well designed to maximise their benefits whilst avoiding any unacceptable impacts.

8.50 The provision of green and blue infrastructure and promotion of new linkages in this policy will help support good health and wellbeing, enhance and sustain biodiversity, and aid local environmental resilience to, and mitigation of, climate change impacts in line with strategic policy CC 1 'Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation'.

8.51 The Local Policies Plan (LPP) will identify proposed areas of open space informed by the audit, which was undertaken in 2021, and future identified need from the Council's Parks and Cemeteries Service. However, should other opportunities present themselves, this policy will be applied to all new proposals for open space of all typologies.

8.52 The Council recommends the consideration of the quality standards as set out in Annex F in the design of new areas of public open space.

8.53 Operational policy for cemetery provision is contained within Policy CEM 1 'Cemeteries and Burial Space'.

Policy OS 4
Greenways, Blueways[28] and Community Greenways

Planning permission will only be granted for new development within or adjacent to an existing or planned greenway, blueway or community greenway where it will not prejudice its retention, enhancement, or further development as a green corridor and active travel route.

Where appropriate, development proposals must include access and open space linkages to designated greenways, blueways and community greenways.

Justification and Amplification

8.54 Greenways, blueways and community greenways are a vital part of the creation of a network of green and blue infrastructure as they seek to re-establish corridor links between the countryside and coastline and urban areas of open space such as parks, playing fields and natural areas. They facilitate recreation, opportunities for active travel and the enhancement of biodiversity through wildlife habitats and corridors. They also enhance the visual amenity of an area and may attract tourists and businesses. As part of the network of green infrastructure, they help mitigate the effects of climate change and support climate change adaptation and local environmental resilience in line with strategic policy CC 1 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

8.55 The Comber Greenway extends from the town of Comber to Belfast and has proved hugely successful. The Council is committed to bringing forward proposals to develop Greenways within the Borough including the following routes: extending the existing Comber Greenway to Newtownards and from the centre of Newtownards to Green Road, Bangor. The North Down Coastal Path is also an important part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure and active travel network in the Borough and the Council will seek to maintain and enhance it appropriately.

8.56 Community greenways are identified in the Strategic Plan for Greenways as a third level network of community paths to provide doorstep opportunities to connect local communities to their local

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[28] *Blueways are defined as "A network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on, and closely linked with the water, together with providers facilitating access to activities and experiences." [Sport Ireland: Blueway Management and Development Guide] https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2019-10/blueway-management-development-guide.pdf*

green space and neighbouring communities. Community greenways may include publicly owned and private open space such as parks, woodlands, playing fields, school grounds and private lands, golf courses and farmland. Watercourses and river corridors also offer potential for the development of community greenways, as do urban landscape wedges.

8.57 Details of designated greenways, blueways and community greenways will be set out in the LPP.

Policy OS 5
Outdoor Recreation in the Countryside

Planning permission will be granted for proposals for outdoor recreational uses in the countryside where they meet all of the following criteria:

(a) the development is compatible with other countryside uses in terms of the nature, scale, extent and frequency or timing of the recreational activities proposed;

(b) there is no unacceptable impact on nearby agricultural activities;

(c) existing buildings are utilised where possible. Where there are no suitable existing buildings, new ancillary buildings and/or structures must be demonstrated to be:

  i. necessary for the use proposed;

  ii. designed to a high standard;

  iii. of a scale appropriate to the local area; and

  iv. sympathetic to the surrounding environment in terms of their siting, layout and landscape treatment.

All proposals must also comply with the General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP including those for the coast, the protection and enhancement of natural and historic environments, active and sustainable travel, transportation, and countryside policies.

Justification and Amplification

8.58 The countryside of Ards and North Down is a rich resource in terms of facilitating outdoor recreation. There has been a significant growth in outdoor recreation activities in rural settings, particularly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. People are getting active by walking, rambling, running, cycling and in general there is more interest in being outdoors. The Borough enjoys a long coastline affording many recreational opportunities from open water swimming and angling,

to sailing, kayaking and paddle-boarding. Some of the benefits of outdoor recreation include improved physical and mental health and wellbeing, reduced social isolation, increased community cohesion and increased connection with the natural and historic environment. Moreover, activities such as walking and open water swimming are low-cost activities and therefore socially inclusive. Outdoor recreation in the countryside is also important not only to the local community but also benefits the rural economy and the promotion of tourism. The future provision of appropriate infrastructure, including car parks, inclusive toilet/changing facilities and pathways that provide access for all abilities and ages is key to realising the benefits of our spectacular outdoor spaces.

8.59 The key purpose of the LDP in relation to outdoor recreation in the countryside is to ensure that it operates as sustainably as possible. There is a balance to be struck between maximising the opportunities presented to realise the health, social and economic benefits and mitigating against the potential impacts on local rural communities and the environment in terms of noise, visual amenity, light pollution, impact on the road network and the natural, marine and historic environments.

8.60 In locations designated for their landscape, nature conservation or heritage importance, special care is needed in assessing proposals. It may be possible to meet the demand for outdoor recreation use so far as this is consistent with the conservation or enhancement of the interest for which the site or area is designated. Any proposal considered acceptable in principle under this policy must also comply with LDP policies on General Principles, Countryside, Coast, Natural Environment and Historic Environment, amongst others.

8.61 Proposals will be considered on a case-by-case basis as the nature of the sporting or outdoor recreational activity and the ability of the land, or the landscape, to sustain the development in the long term will vary. The natural qualities inherent in certain areas, notably their silence, solitude or remoteness, also need to be considered. One location may be suitable for some pursuits but not others, while others may be suitable for a cluster of activities.

8.62 The impact of development associated with certain outdoor recreational uses can be reduced by careful attention to scale, siting, layout, design and landscaping details. Any proposed activity or development should not, however, become a dominant feature in the landscape. In some cases, therefore, the provision of ancillary facilities may need to be severely limited or even prohibited.

Golf Courses

8.63 The development of golf courses can facilitate agricultural diversification and encourage tourism but can also have a detrimental impact on the environment, particularly because of the scale of such development. Golf courses and ancillary development associated with them can have a significant visual impact on the countryside. Poor siting, design and management can lead to loss of valuable landscapes, historic landscape character or habitats. Golf courses should be integrated with the local landscape and designed to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment. Existing tree cover should be integrated into schemes and where additional planting is proposed preference will be given to native species. In addition, attention should be given to habitat creation and the management and protection of wildlife networks.

8.64 The Council will carefully consider the impact of proposals for the development of golf courses on the landscape and wider environmental qualities of the countryside. Each proposal should contain full details of the site and its immediate environs, including the effect on any public rights of way together with information on potential adverse impacts or environmental benefits associated with the development. These details should include information on landscaping and land levels, both existing and proposed, access arrangements, car parking and ancillary facilities such as a clubhouse. The use of photomontages from critical viewpoints will assist decision making.

Golf Driving Ranges

8.65 Golf driving ranges are generally more intensive land uses than golf courses with different visitor patterns and potentially higher levels of traffic generation. The buildings or the galleries, especially if they are two-tier, can be particularly intrusive unless sensitively sited and designed. Driving ranges often need high safety fencing and generally seek floodlighting to permit evening use. These features mean that driving ranges will generally only be acceptable where they will not be detrimental to the natural environment, the local landscape setting and the general character of the locality. Policy OS 9 Floodlighting of Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities sets out the policy on the floodlighting of recreational facilities.

Equestrian Uses

8.66 The keeping and riding of horses for recreational purposes is increasingly popular in many parts of the countryside. Outdoor participatory recreational uses such as riding schools, will normally be considered acceptable in principle, provided the scale of ancillary buildings is appropriate to its location and can be integrated into their

landscape surroundings. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to the reuse of existing traditional or redundant farm buildings in association with such proposals.

Noise Generating Sports

8.67 Some outdoor recreational activities have the potential to generate high levels of noise and it is therefore necessary to pay special regard to the siting and location of such activities. Policy OS 7 Noise Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Activities sets out policy relevant to this issue.

Temporary Recreational Uses

8.68 Part 5 of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (NI) 2015 provides rights for the temporary use of land for a specified number of days each year. These rights are often used to facilitate certain sporting and outdoor recreational activities, such as clay pigeon shooting and certain equestrian activities. On occasion proposals are submitted to develop permanent buildings or structures in support of such temporary uses. Generally, these will only be acceptable where the Council considers use of the site on a permanent basis would of itself be acceptable.

Additional Development based on Recreational Use

8.69 Certain sports or outdoor recreation activities may on occasion create a demand for additional development, such as holiday chalets or a hotel. While it is acknowledged that such facilities can improve the attractiveness of an area to tourists and in turn bring employment benefits, they must be considered on their own planning merits. The existence of an outdoor recreational use, such as a golf course, will not therefore in itself provide the justification for approving an associated development if this would not be acceptable in its own right.

Policy OS 6
Intensive Sports Facilities

Planning permission will be granted for the development of intensive sports facilities at accessible locations within settlements where there is good connectivity with public transport and active travel infrastructure.

Exceptionally, a site outside a settlement may be permitted in the case of the development of a sports stadium where all the following criteria are met:

(a) there is no alternative site within the settlement which can accommodate the development;

(b) the proposed development site is located close to the edge of the settlement and can be clearly identified as being visually associated with the settlement;

(c) there is no adverse impact on the setting of the settlement; and

(d) the scale of the development is in keeping with the size of the settlement.

In all instances, proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP including those for the protection and enhancement of natural and historic environments.

Justification and Amplification

8.70 An 'intensive sport facility', is defined in the SPPS as a purpose built indoor or outdoor resource which facilitates one or more activity fundamental to maintaining individual health and fitness. This may include stadia, sports halls, leisure centres, swimming pools and other indoor (and outdoor) sports facilities. Such facilities often serve as a focus for the community and are therefore best located in settlements where they can be accessed most easily by a significant local catchment population.

8.71 It is acknowledged that specific difficulties may arise in seeking to locate a sports stadium within a settlement, particularly larger scale proposals. Exceptionally, the Council may be prepared to accept such development at the edge of a settlement. In such cases applicants will need to provide, as part of the application, specific justification for the choice of site together with details of what alternative sites were considered and the reasons these could not accommodate the development. As above, ease of access will be a key issue in assessing such proposals, in particular, the availability of public transport.

8.72 The precise location of intensive sports facilities can be contentious. They can attract large numbers of people, particularly in the evenings and at weekends. They can also generate increased noise levels, operate long hours, attract a large number of vehicle movements and can require large car parking areas and floodlighting. The siting, scale, extent, frequency and timing of the activities proposed will be key in determining whether there is likely to be an unacceptable adverse impact.

8.73 Factors which are important in assessing development proposals include the need for the facility, the size and make-up of the proposed catchment population, accessibility to this population in terms of walking and cycling distances, proximity to public transport, the impact on the local historic and natural environment, neighbouring residential amenity, traffic generation, parking provision, drainage and waste disposal, and, where appropriate, the proximity to existing facilities of a similar size and nature. Detailed information on these matters should accompany proposals for intensive sports facilities.

8.74 All the provisions of the General Principles policy GP 1 must be complied with alongside any other relevant policies contained within the LDP such as those on transportation, access and parking; historic environment; natural environment; flooding and drainage.

Policy OS 7
Noise Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Activities

Planning permission will be granted for the development of sport or outdoor recreational activities that generate high levels of noise, where all the following criteria are met:

(a) there is no unacceptable level of disturbance to people living nearby, or conflict with other noise sensitive uses;

(b) there is no unacceptable level of disturbance to farm livestock and wildlife; and

(c) there is no conflict with the enjoyment of environmentally sensitive features and locations, or areas valued for their silence and solitude.

All proposals must comply with the General Principles policy GP 1 and all other policy provisions of the LDP including those for the protection and enhancement of natural and historic environments.

Justification and Amplification

8.75 The Council recognises that some sports and recreational activities may generate high levels of noise and seeks to manage their development in such a way so as to mitigate against any unacceptable disturbance and impact to people and animals. Particular attention is given to the impact on the enjoyment of environmentally sensitive locations and areas valued for their silence and solitude.

8.76 The impact of noise is an important issue in assessing proposals for activities such as motorsports, shooting, water-skiing and paintball adventure games. The noise associated with such activities can cause disturbance to local residents and conflict with nearby noise sensitive uses such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes and places of worship. These sports or activities can also be disruptive to livestock and wildlife and have a detrimental effect on the natural environment. All proposals for noise generating sports and activities will be expected to be accompanied by a noise report for consideration by the Council's Environmental Health department.

8.77 The use of conditions specifying the times such noise generating activities are permitted to operate will be employed where appropriate.

8.78 Appropriate sites for regular use by noise generating sports are not easy to identify. Much will depend on the type of activity, the tone, level, frequency and duration of any noise generated, the design of facilities, the nature of the local topography and the amount of existing and proposed screening. While measures can sometimes be taken to reduce noise at source, only those locations where the impact of noise can be effectively contained and minimized by the use of features such as landform or woodland should generally be considered.

8.79 Suitable sites for noisy sports may include former mineral workings or locations where the ambient noise level is already high, and the tone of noise produced by the proposed sporting or recreation activity will not appear dominant. There may be occasions where the Council may only consider it appropriate to grant planning permission for a limited period to allow the impact of noise levels and any potential disturbance or nuisance to be assessed.

8.80 The development of noisy sports or outdoor recreation activities will generally be inappropriate in or near environmentally sensitive features or locations, such as sites of nature conservation importance or historic parks, gardens and demesnes or areas of significant archaeological interest. Such activities can significantly, and sometimes irreversibly, harm these valued environments. Particular

care will also be necessary in assessing proposals in areas of high landscape quality such as the Strangford and Lecale AONB and there will be a presumption against noisy sports in areas valued for their silence such as any 'Quiet Areas'[29] designated by DAERA, and Nendrum Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI).

8.81 Where appropriate the Council will liaise with Sport NI or the governing body of a particular noise generating sport to ascertain if the activity is subject to a code of practice or other means of control such as licensing conditions.

8.82 It should be noted that a number of noise-generating sports, such as clay pigeon shooting and motor racing, which may only function infrequently, may operate within the confines of the temporary use rights currently provided by Part 5 of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (NI) 2015.

[29] *Stricklands Glen is a designated 'Quiet Area' with more locations in the Borough under consideration for designation by DAERA.*

Policy OS 8
Development of Facilities Ancillary to Water Sports

Planning permission will be granted for the development of facilities ancillary to water sports adjacent to the coast, inland loughs, lakes, reservoirs and waterways where the following criteria are met:

(a) it is compatible with any existing use of the water, including non-recreational uses;

(b) it will not result in water pollution or an unacceptable level of noise or disturbance; and

(c) there is no conflict with the provisions of any local management plan.

All proposals must comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other policy provisions of the LDP in particular those for the coast, and for the protection and enhancement of the natural, marine and historic environments.

Justification and Amplification

8.83 Water based sports are an increasingly popular activity and our coastline, loughs, rivers, reservoirs, lakes and canals are an important recreational resource. Water sports may range from tranquil uses such as angling, sailing, canoeing, rowing and sailboarding, to powered activities such as water-skiing, jet-skiing and other power boat uses. Management plans drawn up for particular water areas seek to address the compatibility of such varying demands.

8.84 The development of ancillary facilities to support water sport uses, such as slipways, jetties, boat houses, toilet and changing facilities, parking areas and access, generally requires planning permission. In considering such development proposals, the Council will assess the impact on the visual amenity and character of the area.

8.85 Particular attention will be paid to the potential for development to result in over-intensive use of a site especially in or adjacent to designated sites of nature conservation importance, or areas designated for their landscape quality. The Borough has a particularly rich maritime, intertidal heritage and archaeology. In line with policies for the protection of the historic environment, no adverse impact will be permitted to features of importance to archaeology or built heritage. It is the general intention of the Council to conserve the environmental quality and character of water bodies and to protect them and their surroundings from harmful development.

8.86 The need for and impact of access across land to water bodies will be addressed when considering proposals for water sports. Ancillary space requirements for launching, mooring and car parking can vary from modest dimensions to large compounds.

8.87 Proposals must demonstrate that they will not adversely impact features of importance to the wider natural, marine or historic environment and comply with the relevant policy provisions elsewhere in the LDP. Noise and disturbance (including that underwater), erosion of shorelines or riverbanks and the potential loss of amenity for other users will be considered. The Council will require good design in terms of layout, buildings and other structures and high-quality treatment for boundaries either adjacent to the road or the actual waterway. Proposals should include details of all landscaping and surface treatments.

Policy OS 9
Floodlighting of Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities

Planning permission will be granted for the development of floodlighting associated with sports and outdoor recreational facilities where the proposal demonstrates that it meets all of the following criteria:

(a) there is no adverse impact on:

  i. visual amenity and/or the character of the area; and

  ii. biodiversity, natural, marine, or historic environment interests

(b) there is no unacceptable impact on residential amenity; and

(c) public safety is not prejudiced.

Proposals must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP in particular those relating to the protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environments.

Justification and Amplification

8.88 The provision of floodlighting at sports and outdoor recreational facilities can extend the hours of operation, thereby creating greater flexibility and potential for enhanced use by more people, both as participants and spectators. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that such development will not cause unacceptable harm to amenity or prejudice public safety.

8.89 Where floodlighting is proposed as part of a new sports or recreational development or in association with an existing facility, a number of issues need to be considered. These include the potential for increased use of the facility, light pollution and increased traffic and noise generation. Such issues are particularly relevant where the proposed floodlighting is close to residential properties. The impact of the design and size of the floodlighting structures on visual amenity and their use on the character of the wider area are also important considerations. Particular care needs to be exercised in the countryside and those areas identified for their landscape, townscape or heritage value.

8.90 Floodlighting may also impact upon biodiversity and nature conservation interests, including certain protected species, and the completion of the biodiversity checklist will be essential to screen for this possibility.

8.91 In assessing the impact of floodlighting on public safety, the Council will have regard to its effect upon the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transport on land, on or over water or in the air. For example, glare from excessively bright or poorly aimed floodlighting can cause dazzle with implications for transport users, pedestrians, cyclists and other wheeled users - particularly the elderly and other vulnerable groups. The alignment and brightness of the lights are important considerations, therefore, in determining proposals for floodlighting.

8.92 In certain cases, it may be possible to permit proposals subject to the imposition of conditions limiting the hours during which the floodlights may be operated and/or the frequency of their use, restricting the luminance or brightness of the lights or requiring the installation of appropriate shielding.



9 Health, Education, Community and Culture

9.1 The Local Development Plan (LDP) has an important role to play in respect of promoting positive behaviours to support health and wellbeing through the formulation of planning policy and the allocation of land. From improved integration of land use and transport to the protection of our natural and historic environment and open spaces; and from the planning for quality housing to meet the needs of all, to supporting the provision of jobs, services, and economic growth. In recognition of its importance, the Plan Strategy (PS) therefore seeks to improve health and wellbeing throughout.

9.2 The provision of appropriate health, education, community and cultural facilities is a key component of successful places and balanced communities, and helps inform the settlement hierarchy in the Spatial Growth Strategy. This shows the relationship between settlements and the facilities and services which support them.

9.3 Furthermore, the loss of land safeguarded for such uses shall be resisted. Development proposals which would prejudice either their future use or extension will be resisted.

Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities Strategy

Facilitate the provision of health, education, community and cultural uses to meet the needs of the community.

This will be achieved by:

- Identifying land in the Local Policies Plan (LPP) through zonings or key site requirements, in conjunction with service providers; and
- Facilitating proposals, where a need cannot be met on an existing or zoned site, where the location is suitably accessible to all.

Why we have taken this approach

9.4 One of the aims of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 is to 'promote development which improves the health and well-being of communities'. It refers not only to the provision of necessary services and facilities, but also to that of a healthy community being one which is able to take advantage of all the opportunities which are open to it – economic, social and environmental.


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9.5 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) does not contain specific regional strategic policy requirements, but rather recognises the improvement of health and wellbeing as a core planning principle and directs planning authorities to contribute positively to health and well-being through:

- safeguarding and facilitating quality open space, sport and outdoor recreation;
- providing for safe and secure age-friendly environments;
- encouraging and supporting quality, environmentally sustainable design;
- better connected communities with safe pedestrian environments;
- better integration between land-use planning and transport;
- facilitating the protection and provision of green and blue infrastructure;
- supporting the provision of jobs, services, and economic growth;
- supporting delivery of homes to meet the full range of housing needs;
- contributing to balanced communities; and
- supporting broader government policy aimed at addressing for example obesity, and health and well-being impacts arising through pollution.

9.6 The SPPS directs Councils to allocate sufficient land to meet the anticipated needs of the community, in terms of health, education and other public services.

9.7 At a local level, the approach supports the outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), particularly that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2).

Operational Planning Policies

Policy HECC 1
Protection of Land for Health, Education, Community and Cultural Uses

Planning permission will be granted for health, education, community and cultural uses on land identified within the LPP for such use.

Exceptionally, consideration may be given to alternative proposals if it can be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that the original intended use is no longer necessary and that the site is not viable for an alternative community use.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

9.8 Lands required for education, health, community or cultural uses by the relevant service providers will be identified in the LPP. These uses are vital to the functioning of our settlements, therefore the zoned lands will be protected accordingly and the loss of such facilities will be resisted.

9.9 However, unforeseen circumstances do arise and exceptionally, where lands identified for community uses become surplus to requirements over the Plan period, alternative uses may be deemed acceptable. In this instance, it will be necessary to demonstrate that the site is no longer required by the service provider.

9.10 It is desirable that where existing sites are no longer required by a service provider, they are retained to serve the community in an alternative use as they are likely to benefit from a location accessible via active travel and public transport.

Policy HECC 2
Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities[30]

Planning permission will be granted for the development of new health, education, community or cultural facilities where it is demonstrated that:

(a) there is a need for the proposal which cannot be satisfied on an existing site; and

(b) the location is accessible via active travel networks and public transport.

All proposals for the development of new facilities or the extension of existing facilities, must comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

9.11 The Council will work with statutory stakeholders and service providers to ensure that sufficient land is allocated, in the right locations, to meet their needs over the Plan period as per Policy HECC 1. Existing sites should be fully utilised to ensure sustainable patterns of development wherever possible. However, unforeseen opportunities may arise over the Plan period and the LDP must be flexible enough to accommodate these where there is a need for a proposal that cannot be accommodated on an existing site; and where the location is suitably accessible to all via active travel or public transport and complies with all other relevant policy provisions.

9.12 For reasons of sustainability, settlements will be the preferred location for such facilities. A new community use or facility may be deemed necessary to meet a particular local need in a rural community. In these exceptional circumstances, applicants will be expected to demonstrate this need, proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. In such cases, new proposals shall be directed to edge of settlement locations in the first instance and should seek to re-use existing buildings where possible. The relevant countryside policies will apply including policies for integration and design of buildings, rural character, and the setting of settlements.

[30] *Includes Residential Nursing Homes and Care Homes*

9.13 Applicants must comply with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP and the policy requirements of GP 1 in respect of:

- furthering sustainable development;
- design quality and respecting local character and distinctiveness;
- safeguarding residential amenity;
- access, movement and parking; and
- safety and safeguarding human health and wellbeing.







Economic Chapter

10 Economic Development
11 Town Centres and Retailing
12 Tourism
13 Minerals

10 Economic Development

10.1 The LDP has a key role to play in achieving a vibrant economy and facilitating employment through the zoning of land and the development of appropriate planning policy to support business development and job growth within the Borough. Both the Ards and North Down Corporate Plan 2024-2028 and the Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy (ITRDS) 2018-2030 set ambitious targets to grow the number of jobs and business activity within the Borough and the LDP can assist in the achievement of these aims.

10.2 The NI Business Register and Employment Survey, (BRES) published September 2023) estimates that as of September 2022, the total number of employee jobs in Ards and North Down was 41,806, an increase of 1594 from the previous year. In June 2023, the number of VAT and or PAYE registered businesses in the Borough was 4815, representing 6% of the Northern Ireland total. The dominant industries in the Borough were construction, agriculture, professional/scientific and technical and retail (Source – NISRA Interdepartmental Business Register.) Some of the top performing businesses in AND include LE Pritchitt, Munster Simms Engineering, Denroy Plastics, Magellan Aerospace, Mash Direct and TG Eakin Ltd. Tourism is also an important element of the local service economy and has been identified as a growth area in the Council's Corporate Plan and ITRDS referred to previously. Traditionally, fishing has also been a major industry in the area with Portavogie the second largest fishing port in Northern Ireland after Kilkeel and which remains at the centre of the trade today.

10.3 In addition to the more traditional industries and businesses, Holywood has recently become established as the base for a cluster of creative innovators specialising in production and postproduction for television, film, animation, design and games development. Locally grown businesses such as Waddell Media, Paper Owl Films, Flickerpix, Yellowmoon and NI Silver have played a vital role in the growth of Northern Irelands screen sector, working with clients including HBO, the Discovery Channel, Netflix, BBC and RTE. The combination of; proximity to nearby developments such as Belfast Harbour Studios, Titanic Studios and the new Studio Ulster virtual production studio and also, established Council partnership links with South Eastern Regional College (SERC), NI Screen and the local community means that Holywood is perfectly placed to harness the future growth of business and talent in this rapidly expanding sector.

10.4 A recent report into office space and the available facilities highlighted that within Holywood, there was a significant demand for a quality workspace to meet the requirements of these high-growth firms. Under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) 'Building our Digital Innovation' funding pillar, the Council has secured funding to develop a centre of excellence for the creative and technology sectors in Holywood, specialising in film, TV and screen industries. Whilst at an embryonic pre-planning stage, it is envisaged that the building will offer high quality and digitally advanced co-working space and will provide a platform for collaboration and networking within these sectors.

10.5 BRCD funding has also been secured for the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Scheme and two key strands of this are of relevance to the economic development of the Borough. Pickie Park is already a popular tourist attraction which generates significant revenue for the Borough and the redevelopment scheme aims to enhance this through the creation of new attractions for both children and young adults, incorporated within feature landscaping. Bangor Marina is ranked as the largest 5 gold anchor accredited marina development in Northern Ireland, and its planned redesign will allow an increase in the number of seafaring visitors to Bangor. Dropped boardwalks, seating and viewing areas, and food and beverage offerings will open up the space and make it easier for people to enjoy the sea views.

10.6 A final economic development project of note is the Artemis zero emissions ferry, designed by maritime engineering firm Artemis Technologies and being developed in Belfast. The pilot scheme is scheduled to run from Bangor to Belfast in late 2025.

Economic Development Strategy

To ensure there is a generous supply of suitable land to meet the economic development needs of the Borough over the Plan period, to allocate appropriate economic development land in the key settlements of Bangor and Newtownards and to provide a spatial framework for the application of economic development policies intended to deliver sustainable and environmentally sensitive economic growth across the Borough, including rural areas.

10.7 This will be achieved by:

- The designation of Strategic Employment Locations (SELs) to protect sites that are of most economic significance to the Borough from encroachment of other uses that would undermine their strategic function;
- A presumption in favour of employment-related development, provided it meets the requirements of the operational economic development policies and other relevant policies in the LDP;
- The identification and safeguarding of a range of sites for industrial and business activity in the Local Policies Plan, focusing upon the strategic employment locations of Bangor and Newtownards;
- The identification of previously developed land for potential economic development use, thereby reducing the need for greenfield development;
- Supporting sustainable economic growth in the countryside where this accords with the relevant operational policy;
- The identification of opportunities for mixed use development that includes economic development uses in locations which are accessible to all members of the community, and which connect to the public transport system;
- The use of Key Site Requirements (KSRs) for zoned sites to ensure that all of the necessary infrastructure is provided including drainage, road access, pedestrian access, connectivity to cycling and public transport, landscaping, digital connectivity and water supply.

Why we have taken this approach

10.8 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS 2035) sets a policy direction to 'Ensure adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth'. Advocating that the land should be accessible and located to make best use of available services, the RDS sets out that the focus will be on larger urban centres and regional gateways taking advantage of their locations on the regional transport network.

10.9 The RDS Spatial Framework Guidance SFG11 points to the promotion of economic development opportunities at Hubs and Clusters. Newtownards is recognised as having the potential to cluster with the Belfast Metropolitan Area, being 10 miles from Belfast City and 5 miles from Bangor. Bangor is also recognised as an important retail and commercial centre. It is therefore entirely consistent with regional policy direction that the focus of zoned employment lands should be in Newtownards and Bangor.

10.10 The SPPS sets out a hierarchy for economic development in that provision for economic development in cities and towns should be largely made through the LDP process. Within villages and small settlements, the LDP should not zone land for economic purposes as this would inhibit flexibility.

10.11 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from;

- A prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4.)

10.12 The creation of jobs and thriving businesses is supported by the economic policy which zones new employment land and protects existing employment land from loss to other uses or encroachment by incompatible uses. Furthermore, the farm diversification policy is aimed at supporting those in the agriculture sector to pursue alternative countryside activities that are complementary to farming.

10.13 The Economic Development Strategy and the associated operational planning policies are also compliant with the core planning principle 'to support sustainable economic growth.'

10.14 It is clear that any strategic and operational policies relating to economic development must recognise the key role that the LDP plays in achieving a vibrant economy. At the heart of this is the facilitation of economic growth of the borough in ways consistent with the protection of the environment and with the principles of sustainable development.



Operational Policies for Economic Development

Economic Development Use Classes

Note that for the purposes of Policies ED1 - ED10, 'economic development' comprises the following uses as currently defined in Part B 'Industrial and Business Uses' of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015:

Class B1: Business

Use:

- as an office other than a use within Class A2 (Financial, professional and other services);
- as a call centre; or
- for research and development which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

Class B2: Light Industrial

Use for any industrial process which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

Class B3: General Industrial

Use for the carrying on of any industrial process other than one falling within Class B2.

Class B4: Storage or distribution

Use for storage or as a distribution centre.

Economic Development in Principal Settlements

Policy ED 1
Principal Settlements – Sites Zoned as Strategic Employment Locations (SELs)

Planning permission will be granted for large scale industrial development, business uses, research and development and storage and distribution in Strategic Employment Locations (SELs), subject to all relevant policies of the LDP.

In order to safeguard these strategic sites from encroachment by alternative uses, development proposals that fall outside Use Classes B1(b), B1(c), B2, B3 and B4 of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 will not normally be acceptable except in the following circumstances:

(i) For a small-scale ancillary use that is compatible with the existing business use such as a trade counter;

(ii) Where an essential need has been demonstrated, for a small scale complementary/ancillary use that meets the day-to day needs of local employees; or

(iii) For an appropriate sui generis use[1].

In all cases, the onus is upon the applicant to demonstrate that the proposed development is of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the surrounding area and that approval of a non-business use in the SEL will not result in a significant diminution of the industrial/employment resource in the vicinity and the plan area as a whole.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.15 The LDP seeks to focus employment and services within the principal settlements of the Borough as these are highlighted by the SPPS and RDS as the most sustainable locations. The objective is to capitalise upon development opportunities provided by the concentration of people and goods, combined with the clustering of a range of professional and technical services that are essential to economic development.

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[1] *"sui generis"- a latin term meaning "of its own kind", is used in planning to describe properties or land uses that do not fit into any specific category in the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015. Examples include scrapyards, waste management facilities and premises for the sale of motor vehicles.*

10.16 The Council has identified existing strategically located employment sites at Jubilee Road, Newtownards, and Balloo Road, Bangor. These sites are both in excess of 10 ha in size, are highly accessible by car but also by public transport, walking and cycling and are of particular significance to the Borough in terms of their existing employment function.

10.17 As these are considered the primary economic development sites within our Borough, the Council will safeguard these areas to principally meet the requirements of key economic sectors. Large scale industrial development, business uses, call centres, research and development and storage and distribution proposals (Uses Classes B1(b) and (c), B2, B3 and B4) will be directed towards SELs and the Council will resist proposals for alternative uses.

10.18 It is acknowledged that non-Class B uses have become established in some parts of Jubilee and Balloo SELs. Class A1 retail uses such as comparison, convenience and retail services, and also commercial leisure development, would not be deemed acceptable going forward, except where it is ancillary in nature, such as a 'trade counter' hire shop or a small-scale use that meets the essential needs of local employees, for example a café. The policy also permits exceptions for appropriate sui-generis uses such as builders' merchants, breakers yard or waste management facilities. It should be noted that not all types of sui generis use may be suitable for such locations, and this will be dependent upon the nature of the proposal and the character of surrounding development. The applicant will be expected to provide evidence that approval for these alternative uses will not adversely impact upon the integrity of the SEL in terms of its business and employment function.

10.19 There may be some scope for the expansion of SELs where it is demonstrated that further capacity is needed to support the specific role and function of that employment area, for example when there is a particular existing business that is in need of additional space. in such cases, proposals will be expected to be justified by clear evidence that there is insufficient capacity within the existing settlement in terms of land or vacant areas that could be redeveloped to accommodate the needs of said business and that the site is well-related to the existing SEL, forming a logical extension.

Policy ED 2
Principal Settlements – Other Zoned Sites

Planning permission will be granted for proposals for the new development, expansion or re-use of vacant sites for Use Class B business use (with the exception of B1a) and appropriate sui generis uses within sites zoned for economic development, where these accord with all other relevant policies of the LDP.

Proposals for mixed use regeneration schemes, that would result in the loss of zoned economic development land, will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) the site/building is no longer economically viable in its present economic development use;

(b) The non-economic development use would be compatible with the operations of existing economic development uses nearby; and

(c) The proposal will bring substantial community, environmental or economic benefits that outweigh the loss of the land for economic development use.

In all cases, proposals must be compatible with adjoining land uses and of a scale, nature and design appropriate to the location.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.20 Town and city centres will continue to be focus for new and expanding Class B1a business uses as they act as hubs enabling good accessibility by various modes of transport, including public transport, walking and cycling. Business uses can also benefit the town centre through increased footfall and customer spending. The reuse of vacant town and city centre properties has wider benefits in terms of conserving and protecting the historic environment, addressing dereliction and supporting placemaking ambitions for the Borough.

10.21 Proposals for the development, expansion and/or redevelopment in Use Classes B2, B3 and B4 shall be directed towards sites zoned for economic development use. The reuse of land and buildings within zoned sites for appropriate economic development uses will be given favourable consideration. The LDP will ensure that an ample supply of land is available for economic development purposes within the

main towns. A range of suitable sites will be provided in terms of size and location in order to promote flexibility and provide for the future demands of businesses within the Borough.

10.22 It is also recognised that market conditions alter over time and that certain economic development sites may fall out of economic development use. There is no justification for safeguarding sites in their entirety for economic purposes in the long-term where there is no prospect of future economic development use. Therefore, proposals for comprehensive mixed use regeneration scheme alternative uses will only be considered acceptable where they satisfy the listed criteria. The applicant will be required to submit evidence that the site/building is no longer economically viable in its present industrial use:

- Demonstrating that there is no demand for the re-use of the building/site for economic development purposes, following a minimum period of 3 years marketing for the existing use with a recognised commercial agent, at a reasonable price reflecting typical local land values. (Acceptable evidence for this could include marketing details such as property brochures from a property agent, links to an existing agent's website and/or record of interests and viewings by potential occupiers) and/or;
- Demonstrating that the physical adaptation or re-use of the building is uneconomic in commercial terms.

10.23 The onus will be upon the applicant to demonstrate that the proposal will deliver significant community, employment and environmental gains that outweigh the retention of the land solely for economic development use.

10.24 If appropriate, the Council will apply Key Site Requirements to zoned sites in order to stipulate the proportion of economic development uses that will be required in any mixed-use development scheme for the site.

Policy ED 3
Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development Uses

Zoned Land in all Locations

Development that would result in the loss of land or buildings zoned for economic development use in a development plan (either existing areas or new allocations) to other uses will not be permitted. An exception will be permitted for the development of a sui generis employment use within an existing or proposed industrial/employment area where it can be demonstrated that:

(a) the proposal is compatible with the predominant industrial use; and

(b) it is of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the location; and

(c) approval will not lead to a significant diminution of the industrial/employment land resource in the locality and the plan area generally.

Retailing or commercial leisure development will not be permitted except where justified as acceptable ancillary development.

Unzoned Land in Settlements

On unzoned land a development proposal that would result in the loss of an existing Class B2, B3 or B4 use, or land last used for these purposes, will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that:

(a) redevelopment for a Class B1 business use or other suitable employment use would make a significant contribution to the local economy; or

(b) the proposal is a specific mixed-use regeneration initiative which contains a significant element of economic development use and may also include residential or community use, and which will bring substantial community benefits that outweigh the loss of land for economic development use; or

(c) the proposal is for the development of a compatible sui generis employment use of a scale, nature and form appropriate to the location; or

(d) the present use has a significant adverse impact on the character or amenities of the surrounding area; or

(e) the site is unsuitable for modern industrial, storage or distribution purposes; or

(f) an alternative use would secure the long-term future of a building or buildings of architectural or historical interest or importance, whether statutorily listed or not; or

(g) there is a firm proposal to replicate existing economic benefits on an alternative site in the vicinity.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.25 It is important that economic development land and buildings which are well-located and suited to such purposes are retained and only exceptionally will the Council consider the loss of such land and buildings to other uses. The Council is keen to support the diversity of the local economy and the retention of existing sites for economic development is often necessary to achieve this aim.

10.26 The retention of economic development land in urban locations and elsewhere can not only make a substantial contribution to the renewal and revitalisation of towns but can also provide employment opportunities accessible to large sections of the urban population and the rural hinterland. The existence of redundant business premises and derelict industrial land can be an important resource for the creation of new job opportunities in areas of high unemployment, particularly small businesses, and can help reduce the demand for greenfield sites.

10.27 Planning permission will not be granted for proposals involving the loss of land zoned for economic development use, either existing or proposed, in a development plan to other uses. Any decision to reallocate such zoned land to other uses where necessary will be carried out as part of the development plan process.

10.28 An exception may be made for a proposal for a sui generis employment use compatible with the existing or proposed economic development use e.g. a builders' supplies merchant or a waste management facility provided a sufficient supply of land for economic development use remains in the locality and the plan area generally.

10.29 Planning permission will not normally be granted for the change of use, or the redevelopment for other uses, of unzoned sites or premises in settlements used or last used for industrial and storage or distribution purposes, except in the circumstances outlined in the policy above. For instance, the redevelopment of an existing

industrial or storage and distribution site with a mixed-use scheme, as a specific regeneration initiative to meet the needs of a particular locality and providing a significant element of employment or community uses are integrated into the overall development scheme. Such sites should be accessible by means other than the private car such as public transport, walking and cycling.

10.30 The LDP will not zone land for economic purposes within villages and other rural settlements as this would inhibit flexibility. Favourable consideration will be given to applications for industry, business and storage and distribution on unzoned land, provided the proposals is of a scale, nature and design appropriate to the character of the settlement concerned and it complies with all the relevant policy provisions of the LDP including General Principles policy GP 1.

Economic Development in the Countryside

Policy ED 4
Major Economic Development in the Countryside

Planning permission will be granted for a major or regionally significant economic development proposal (Use Class B2 or B3) where it is demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) The proposal will make a significant contribution to the regional economy;

(b) The proposal requires a countryside location due to its size or site-specific requirements;

(c) No alternative sites within a settlement are available; and

(d) The proposal will not result in any unacceptable environmental or transport impacts.

Exceptionally, where an industrial development proposal is judged acceptable in principle in the countryside under the above criteria, an edge of town location will be favoured over a location elsewhere in the rural area.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.31 Whilst economic development is generally best located within settlements, the Council recognises that certain proposals, because of their size or specific site requirements, may require to be located in the countryside. Thresholds for what is categorised as 'major' economic development, including those of regional significance are set out in the Schedule to the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015.

10.32 In all cases, the economic development proposal must be accompanied with sufficient information to demonstrate that the proposal is regionally significant and that alternative urban and edge of urban sites have been fully considered and found to be unsuitable. The Council will consider not only the economic needs and benefits but also the wider and long-term environmental and transport impacts.

10.33 Where such a proposal is justified in principle, the Council will expect the design of any buildings to be of the highest standard. It should be accompanied by measures to assist integration of the proposal into the landscape and help promote biodiversity. The Council will not normally grant permission for existing urban based enterprises seeking relocation to the countryside.



Policy ED 5
Expansion of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside

The expansion of an established economic development use in the countryside will be permitted where the scale and nature of the proposal does not harm the rural character or appearance of the local area and there is no major increase in the site area of the enterprise.

Proposals for expansion will normally be expected to be accommodated through the reuse or extension of existing buildings on site. Where it is demonstrated that this is not possible, new buildings may be approved provided they are in proportion to the existing building(s) and will integrate as part of the overall development.

Any extension or new building should respect the scale, design and materials of the original building(s) on the site and any historic or architectural interest the original property may have.

A proposal for the major expansion of an existing industrial enterprise that would not meet the above policy provisions will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated that:

(a) relocation of the enterprise is not possible due to particular operational or site-specific requirements;

(b) the proposal would make a significant contribution to the regional economy; and

(c) the development would not undermine rural character, particularly in terms of environmental and transport impacts.

In all cases, measures to aid integration into the landscape will be required for both the extension and the existing site.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.34 There are already many industrial and business enterprises located in rural areas. Some are long established, others normally small-scale, have been granted planning permission to operate in disused rural buildings. Many of these enterprises will over time need to expand and/or diversify. While such expansion is desirable for job creation, it can radically change the nature of the enterprise and its impact on the local environment. It is therefore important to weigh carefully the advantages to the rural economy of job creation or an improved industrial/business facility against the potential for an adverse impact on the rural environment.

10.35 Where proposals for expansion of an industrial or business enterprise in the countryside are considered inappropriate, planning permission will generally be refused. In those circumstances, the Council would normally recommend relocation of the enterprise to a nearby settlement. Exceptionally, where it is accepted that relocation of an existing industrial enterprise is not possible for particular operational or employment reasons, such expansion may be permitted.

10.36 In all cases where permission for major expansion is granted, the Council will require measures to be taken to ameliorate the impact, not only of the extension but also of the existing enterprise, on the local environment. Such measures will normally be considered essential to the grant of planning permission. Where necessary, planning agreements may be used to secure environmental improvements. Conditions will also be imposed to ensure there is adequate landscaping, parking and servicing provision.

Policy ED 6
Redevelopment of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside

A proposal for the redevelopment of an established economic development use in the countryside for industrial or business purposes (or a sui generis employment use) will be permitted where it is demonstrated that all the following criteria can be met:

(a) the scale and nature of the proposal does not harm the rural character or appearance of the local area and there is only a proportionate increase in the site area;

(b) there would be environmental benefits as a result of the redevelopment;

(c) the redevelopment scheme deals comprehensively with the full extent of the existing site or in the case of partial redevelopment addresses the implications for the remainder of the site; and

(d) the overall visual impact of replacement buildings is not significantly greater than that of the buildings to be replaced.

The redevelopment of an established storage or distribution site for continuing storage or distribution use will also be permitted subject to the above criteria. However, the redevelopment of an established industrial or business site for storage or distribution purposes will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

On occasion, proposals may come forward for the alternative use of economic development sites in the countryside. Proposals for the redevelopment of sites for tourism, outdoor sport and recreation or local community facilities will be viewed sympathetically where all the above criteria can be met and where the proposal does not involve land forming all or part of an existing industrial estate.

Redevelopment proposals involving retailing will, however, not be permitted.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.37 The Boroughs countryside contains some developed sites presently or formerly in industrial or business use. Whether they are redundant or in continuing use, the complete or partial redevelopment of these sites may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement and the promotion of job creation without adding to their impact on the amenity of the countryside.

10.38 The design and layout of new development will need to be considered as well as its footprint. The location of the new buildings should be decided having regard to the character of the area, the main features of the landscape and the need to integrate the new development with its surroundings.

10.39 Where proposals involve partial redevelopment, applicants will be required to address the potential impact on the remainder of the site.

10.40 The Council will not normally grant planning permission for the redevelopment of existing industrial or business uses in the countryside for storage/distribution use, partly because of the generally greater impact on rural amenity which would result and partly because the employment normally generated by storage/distribution use of a site is relatively less significant than its use for industrial or business purposes. An exception will however be permitted for small-scale proposals for storage and distribution use on part of an existing site used for industrial or business use or for redevelopment schemes involving an ancillary element of storage or distribution use provided in both cases the general policy criteria can be met. Redevelopment proposals for small-scale storage and distribution using existing buildings on farms will be assessed under the provisions of policy ED 9 Farm and Forestry Diversification.

10.41 The redevelopment of existing economic development sites in the countryside for other uses considered appropriate in a rural area, such as a tourism or recreation facility, will be permitted where the proposal meets the above criteria and approval would not mean the loss of land currently in use as an industrial estate. This flexibility for redevelopment proposals other than for economic development will only apply to a limited range of uses.

Policy ED 7
Small Rural Projects

Planning permission will be granted for a firm proposal to develop a small community enterprise centre or a small rural start-up industrial enterprise on land outside a village or smaller rural settlement where it is demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:

(a) there is no suitable site within the settlement;

(b) the proposal would benefit the local economy or contribute to community regeneration; and

(c) the development is clearly associated with the settlement, but will not dominate it, adversely affect landscape setting or otherwise contribute to urban sprawl.

In assessing the acceptability of sites, preference will be given to sites in the following order:

1. land adjacent to the existing settlement limit, subject to amenity and environmental considerations;
2. a site close to the settlement limit which currently contains buildings or where the site is already in a degraded or derelict state and there is an opportunity to improve the environment; and
3. an undeveloped site in close proximity to the settlement where the development could be visually integrated into the landscape.

Where an economic development proposal is permitted under this policy, any subsequent proposal should preferably be sited to cluster or visually link to this, subject to amenity and environmental considerations.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.42 This policy allows a flexible approach, ensuring adequate provision is made for firm proposals for small rural enterprises that are associated with a village or rural settlement but cannot be accommodated within the settlement itself. This may be due to a lack of suitable land within the settlement or because the nature of the small industry requires it is separated from the built-up area due to potential nuisance e.g. noise or smell.

10.43 In all cases, the applicant will have to provide sufficient information to demonstrate that the proposal is viable and what sources of finance are available to sustain the project. The supporting information submitted should also include an assessment of the contribution that the enterprise will make to the local community and the level of community support for it. In terms of site selection, the applicant should submit detailed information to illustrate that there is no suitable site within the settlement limits and justification of the site chosen.



Policy ED 8
Agricultural and Forestry Development

Planning permission will be granted for development on an active and established agricultural or forestry holding where it is demonstrated that:

(a) The farm or forestry business is currently active and has been established for the last six years;

(b) It is necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding or forestry enterprise;

(c) There is no unacceptable adverse impact upon the historic, natural or coastal environment as a result of the development; and

(d) There is no unacceptable impact upon air, soil and water quality as a result of the development.

In cases where the proposed development includes a new building, applicants will also have to provide sufficient information in addition to the above criteria (a) to (d), to confirm both of the following:

(e) There are no suitable existing buildings on the holding or enterprise that can be used; and

(f) The proposal is sited beside existing farm or forestry buildings.

Exceptionally, consideration may be given to:

(i) an alternative site away from the existing farm or forestry buildings, or

(ii) a new building which is the first building on the holding;

provided there are no other sites available at another group of buildings on the holding, and where the following criteria are met in addition to criteria (a) to (d):

(iii) It is essential for the efficient functioning of the business; or

(iv) There are demonstrable health and safety reasons to justify the chosen location

In all cases, the applicant must demonstrate that the farm business is currently active and has been established for at least six years through the submission of robust evidence, clearly linked to the farm business, showing the applicant is an active farmer, personally and substantially involved in the farm business.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.44 Our Borough has a well-established agricultural community and business sector which contributes significantly to the local economy and is vital in maintaining a vibrant rural community. As agricultural business needs change and in in order to ensure the longevity of a farm enterprise and maintain employment in the agricultural sector, new or extended buildings may be required, and this policy is intended to support such developments. The policy relating to dwellings on farms is contained within Policy HOU 17 Dwellings on a farm.

10.45 New buildings associated with existing agricultural or forestry holdings will not be acceptable unless the existing farming business is both established and active. The applicant will therefore be required to provide robust evidence to prove active farming over the required period. Examples include provision of an active DAERA Business ID number and receipts of entitlements, accounts prepared by a qualified accountant, receipts relating to outputs and inputs, and bank statements showing income/expenditure relating to receipts. In all cases the evidence must relate to the farm business in question and cover a minimum six-year period.

10.46 An active farmer is defined as having the decision-making power, benefits and financial risks in relation to the agricultural activity on the land. For example, in instances where land is let out in conacre, it is generally the conacre tenant who will carry out the main agricultural activity on the conacre land and enjoy the decision-making power, benefits and financial risks in relation to the agricultural activity. Neither the maintenance of land which is let out in conacre nor the act of letting land out itself will be deemed as agricultural activity for the purposes of this policy as the primary farming activity will generally be carried out by the tenant farmer.

10.47 The applicant will be required to demonstrate that the proposal is necessary for the efficient use of the farm or forestry business.

10.48 Agricultural and forestry developments that involve intensive cultivation practices or animal husbandry can have significant effects upon the environment in terms of ammonia air pollution. Ammonia emissions from livestock and the application of manure to land as fertiliser can adversely impact upon air quality. Ammonia is also deposited on soils and water bodies where it can acidify and enrich soils and fresh waters to such an extent that it damages sensitive habitats. The Council will carry out consultations with the relevant statutory authorities with respect to this issue for any applications that involve intensive agricultural practises. An Air Quality Assessment may have to be submitted for consideration for some proposals and appropriate conditions relating to ammonia emissions may be added to the decision notice.

Policy ED 9
Farm and Forestry Diversification

Planning permission will be granted for a farm or forestry diversification proposal where it has been demonstrated that it is to be run in conjunction with and clearly linked to the agricultural operations on the farm. The following criteria will apply:

(a) The farm or forestry business is currently active has been active and established for the last six years;

(b) In terms of character and scale, it is appropriate to its location;

(c) It will not have an adverse impact upon natural or historic environment; and

(d) It will not result in an unacceptable detrimental impact upon the amenity of nearby residential properties, including problems resulting from noise, smell, pollution and traffic impacts.

Proposals will normally only be acceptable where they involve the re-use or adaptation of existing farm or forestry buildings.

Exceptionally, a new building will be permitted where there is no existing building available to accommodate the proposed use, either because they are essential for the maintenance of the existing farm enterprise, are clearly unsuitable for adaptation/re-use or cannot be adapted sufficiently to meet the requirements of statutory agencies.

Where a new building is justified, it should be satisfactorily integrated within an existing building group, unless this would be prejudicial to the operation of the farm or there are sound environmental or amenity reasons to justify a suitable alternative site.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.49 This policy recognises that farming practices are changing in response to a number of economic and environmental factors. Farm diversification can help existing farm businesses be more robust, financially viable and able to weather unforeseen changes. Such schemes, not only supplement farm incomes, but also bring added value to the wider rural economy, for example through local employment generation and bringing redundant buildings back into beneficial use.

10.50 Farm diversification may involve various types of enterprise including the introduction of various methods of agricultural production, the use of new crops, adding value to farm products, tourism, recreation and farm shops. The aim is that the diversification scheme should support rather than replace existing farming activities elsewhere on the farm. The same level of evidence that is described in the Justification and Amplification for ED 8 Agricultural and Forestry Development will also be required to satisfy criteria (a) of ED 9 Farm and Forestry Diversification.

10.51 The scale of any proposal should not undermine the rural character of the farm or the surrounding area. Appropriate uses will tend to be small in nature, providing job opportunities for local people, supporting local suppliers and services and attracting a small but steady number of customers.

10.52 Diversification schemes need to be absorbed into the landscape without causing undue harm and ideally should incorporate ways of improving their surroundings. Existing trees and hedges on site should be retained and protected from damage during the construction phase. In order to limit the visual impact, the re-use of existing buildings will be encouraged where possible. In exceptional cases, where re-use is not possible, new buildings must be carefully designed and sited to cluster with existing buildings on the farm and skyline positions should be avoided.

10.53 Given that farms are usually located in sensitive rural locations, care should be taken to ensure that diversification proposals do not harm the natural and historic environment. Rural diversification can provide the opportunity to manage, improve and create wildlife features as an integral part of the proposal. Existing buildings to be converted may provide a habitat for protected species such as bats and owls. Furthermore, if the buildings to be converted are of historic significance, the conversion should be carried out sympathetically with the maximum retention of historic fabric and any extensions or alterations should be sympathetic to the original structure in terms of scale, height, massing, detailed design and materials. The Council will carry out consultations with the relevant statutory agencies for any applications for farm diversification that will potentially impact upon the historic and/or natural environment.

10.54 The relatively peripheral and peaceful locations of farms means that any increase in the intensity of operations can have an impact upon the amenity of surrounding properties. Neighbour concerns are likely to include noise, dust, odour, extended hours of operation and traffic movements/road safety. The Council will have regard to these potential impacts when considering any farm diversification application. Information regarding existing and proposed operations on site will likely be requested during the processing of the application. The same considerations with respect to ammonia

pollution (outlined in the J and A of policy ED9) would also apply to farm diversification applications, where more intensive agricultural operations form part of the proposal.

10.55 Applicants may wish to include a Farm Plan with their planning application, and one may be requested where a large-scale farm diversification proposal is being put forward. The Farm Plan should include the following:

(i) Farm profile, detailing existing activities, assets such as buildings, how the farm operates and any other specific characteristics;

(ii) Details of why there is a need for diversification, including what present problems are being encountered on the farm;

(iii) Proposal details which may include additional reports such as landscaping plans, traffic data, structural surveys, ecological reports and parking information. This should also include measures for any potential adverse impacts; and

(iv) Clarification regards the way the proposals relate to the wider farm business and the implications for the rural economy.

10.56 The Council may seek to place planning restrictions on approved proposals, to ensure that the intensity of use is acceptable for the rural location, for example by limiting open hours or requiring the provision of landscaping.

Policy ED 10
Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses

Planning permission will not be granted for a proposal for development in the vicinity of an existing or approved economic development use that would be incompatible with this use or that would prejudice its future operation.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

10.57 Some proposed developments may be incompatible with nearby economic development enterprises, either already operating or approved. For example, industrial operations giving rise to dust, dirt or fumes may be incompatible with enterprises requiring a

particularly clean and contaminant-free environment such as pharmaceuticals and medical products, food processing and Research and Development. These types of industry are well represented in our Borough and are therefore significant to the local economy. In other cases, incompatibility could arise as a result of new residential development in close proximity to an existing economic development use that would be likely to cause nuisance through noise, pollution or traffic disturbance.

10.58 Where it is clearly demonstrated that a proposal for a new or expanded use would prejudice the operation of an established or approved economic development use, it will normally be appropriate to refuse the application. All reasonable means of mitigation should be explored by the developer and the established enterprise prior to the submission of the planning application.

11 Town Centres and Retailing[2]

11.1 Our town centres operate not only as a commercial heart, but also as the focus for service, entertainment, leisure, cultural and civic activities. These other main town centre uses are playing an increasingly important complementary role to traditional retail uses as they enable activity levels to be sustained at different times of the day and throughout the week. The most successful urban centres are vibrant, diverse and alive with activity. The Local Development Plan (LDP) has a key role to play in supporting these centres by promoting a town centre first approach for retail and enhancing diversity of use to ensure town centres are attractive, viable and sustainable.

11.2 Bangor is identified in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 as having an important complementary role within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) and it specifically advocates for its regeneration through widening its economic and retail base to serve its catchment and reduce its role as a dormitory town. The town centre is spread across a relatively extensive area and is the third most popular destination for comparison shopping in the Borough[3] (after Newtownards and Bloomfield Shopping Centre). The evidence base suggests that given its size and status, Bangor Town Centre is underperforming in its role particularly in relation to its comparison retail offer.

11.3 The RDS identifies Newtownards as a "main hub" with the potential to cluster with the BMUA. It has a long-established reputation as a prime retail destination, with a vibrant mix of high street and independent shops. Newtownards Town Centre is the most popular location in the Borough for comparison shopping[4] however the convenience retail offer could be improved.

11.4 In the smaller town centres, there is a focus on convenience retail with less comparison offer. However, each town has its own unique selling points. Holywood enjoys a rich historic environment and is characterised by upmarket independent boutiques and shops, alongside its food and eating out offer. Comber has a strong reputation for local high-quality foods, its café-culture, being cycle-

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[2] *Includes both city and town centres.*

[3] *Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (Nexus 2022).*

[4] *Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (Nexus 2022).*

friendly, and independent unique retail shops. Donaghadee enjoys quality food and beverage establishments alongside its pleasant seaside location and high-quality built environment.

11.5 In recent years our town centres have faced the ongoing challenges of increasing online competition, reduced consumer spending and competition from district centres, out-of-town shopping centres and retail parks which have influenced vacancy rates within town centres. In order to remain vibrant and economically competitive, it is essential that town centres are supported to offer a diversity of uses to enhance visitor experience beyond that of a standard shopping trip whilst curtailing the influence of other retailing locations.

Retail Strategy

To promote and support the Borough's town centres as the preferred locations for the development of retail, leisure (including evening economy uses), offices, visitor accommodation, and appropriate housing and community facilities.

11.6 This will be achieved by:

- Defining a network and hierarchy for our Borough's retail centres;
- Promoting established town centres as the appropriate first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions;
- Ensuring all development proposals for retail and other main town centre uses are of a scale and type that are commensurate with the centre's role and function within the retail hierarchy set out in Strategic Policy SP RET 1;
- Controlling retail development that is not located within an existing town centre;
- Protecting and encouraging town centre living; and
- Seeking the highest standards of design and positive place-making to ensure our centres are sustainable, accessible and attractive to shoppers, visitors, tourists and businesses.

11.7 The Council will identify the spatial extent of the Borough's retail centres and all other relevant town centre designations in the Local Policies Plan (LPP). Until that stage, extant designations will apply.

11.8 The Council will work with statutory partners and other stakeholders to bring forward measures that will regenerate and support our Borough's centres, enhance the quality of retail floor space and

reduce overall vacancy levels. This will include public realm schemes, meanwhile uses, enhanced landscaping, opportunities for improved accessibility by all transport modes, including walking and cycling, improved parking, an enhanced tourism offer and profile-raising events as well as promoting high quality design in new developments in accordance with the General Principles Policy GP 1.

Why we have taken this approach

11.9 The Retail Strategy is broadly aligned with the settlement hierarchy and has been developed through a consideration of the evidence base including the Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (produced on behalf of the Council by Nexus in March 2022).

11.10 The RDS Spatial Framework has been considered in relation to promoting the regeneration of Bangor and widening its employment and retail base. It is also consistent with its recognition of the long-established reputation of Newtownards as a prime retail destination, with a vibrant mix of high street and independent shops.

11.11 The aim of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is to support and sustain vibrant town centres across Northern Ireland through the promotion of established town centres as the appropriate first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions consistent with the RDS. The Regional Strategic Objectives at Paragraph 6.271 of the SPPS are as follows:

- secure a town centres first approach for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses;
- adopt a sequential approach to the identification of retail and main town centre uses in Local Development Plans (LDPs) and when decision-taking;
- ensure LDPs and decisions are informed by robust and up to date evidence in relation to need and capacity;
- protect and enhance diversity in the range of town centre uses appropriate to their role and function, such as leisure, cultural and community facilities, housing and business;
- promote high quality design to ensure that town centres provide sustainable, attractive, accessible and safe environments; and
- maintain and improve accessibility to and within the town centre.

11.12 The approach to town centres and retailing set out is in accordance with the Regional Strategic Policy set out in the SPPS. It has been informed by an assessment of need across the Borough and health checks of all centres[5]. It includes a town centre first approach and

[5] *Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (Nexus 2022).*

appropriate policies and proposals including to retain and consolidate existing District and Local Centres, definitions of the Retail Hierarchy and the boundaries of existing centres, and allocations for suitable retail and other town centre use sites where appropriate (para 6.272-6.276).

11.13 The Retail Strategy integrates the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS, particularly:

- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth; and
- Supporting Good Design and Positive Place Making.

11.14 Locally, the approach either directly or indirectly supports the following outcomes of the Council's Community Plan 'The Big Plan' – that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- A prosperous economy (outcome 4);
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (outcome 5); and
- Being equipped to enjoy good health and well-being (outcome 2).



Strategic Policy
RH 1 - Retail Centre Hierarchy

Table 8:
Proposed Retail Hierarchy and Classification

Tier	Role	Centre
Large Town Centres	Provides (or has the potential to provide) a range of shops, services, businesses, cultural, leisure and community facilities to a significant hinterland which includes smaller neighbouring towns or a number of suburbs	Bangor Newtownards
Town Centres	Provides (or has the potential to provide) a range of shops, services, businesses, leisure and community facilities to a hinterland which includes neighbouring villages or a few surrounding suburbs	Holywood Comber Donaghadee Portaferry
District Centres	Provides (or has the potential to provide) a range of shops, services, and businesses to a surrounding suburban community. Usually underpinned by a large foodstore	Bloomfield Springhill Ards (Shopping Centre)
Local Centres	Provides (or has the potential to provide) a range of accessible small scale convenience shops, retail services and community facilities with a focus on local, everyday need such as a general grocery store, sub-post office, small pharmacy etc.	Stratheden Heights Ashbury Avenue

11.15 The hierarchy of retail centres is informed by the LDP Spatial Growth Strategy and aligns closely to the Settlement Hierarchy. It provides a spatial framework against which to apply the operational policies for Retailing and Town Centres.

11.16 The extant plans designated a three-tier retail hierarchy of town centres (Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Donaghadee, and

Comber), district centres (Bloomfield and Springhill, Bangor), and local centres[6] (Ashbury Avenue, and Stratheden Heights).

11.17 The Retail and Commercial Leisure Study[7] recommended a four-tier hierarchy, retaining and reclassifying the original set out in the POP with the addition of 'Large Town Centres' to distinguish Bangor and Newtownards. This is in recognition of their having the greatest number of retail units (300+) and catchment population as well as a range of community facilities. Both centres were noted to offer a range of retail, leisure, business, community and cultural uses.

11.18 Despite city status being conferred on Bangor in 2022, the evidence supports its retention as a proposed 'large town centre'. This approach is consistent with the approach taken in the Settlement Hierarchy wherein, despite its city status, Bangor is designated as a principal settlement based on the settlement appraisal (see Technical Supplement 6).

11.19 Portaferry has been newly designated as a town within the Settlement Hierarchy based upon its level of services and infrastructure. The Council's Retail and Commercial Leisure study[8] concluded that in terms of current retail, retail services and leisure provision, Portaferry caters primarily for the very immediate local population's essential needs, and for seasonal tourists. Designation of a town centre boundary for Portaferry at LPP stage will support aspirations to regenerate and promote its commercial core over the Plan period.

11.20 The LDP also acknowledges the role of village and rural centres which sit outside the Retail Hierarchy but nonetheless help sustain rural communities by meeting the daily shopping and service needs of local residents and adding to the vitality of rural settlements.

11.21 The Council will produce Supplementary Planning Guidance specific to retail and other main town centre uses.

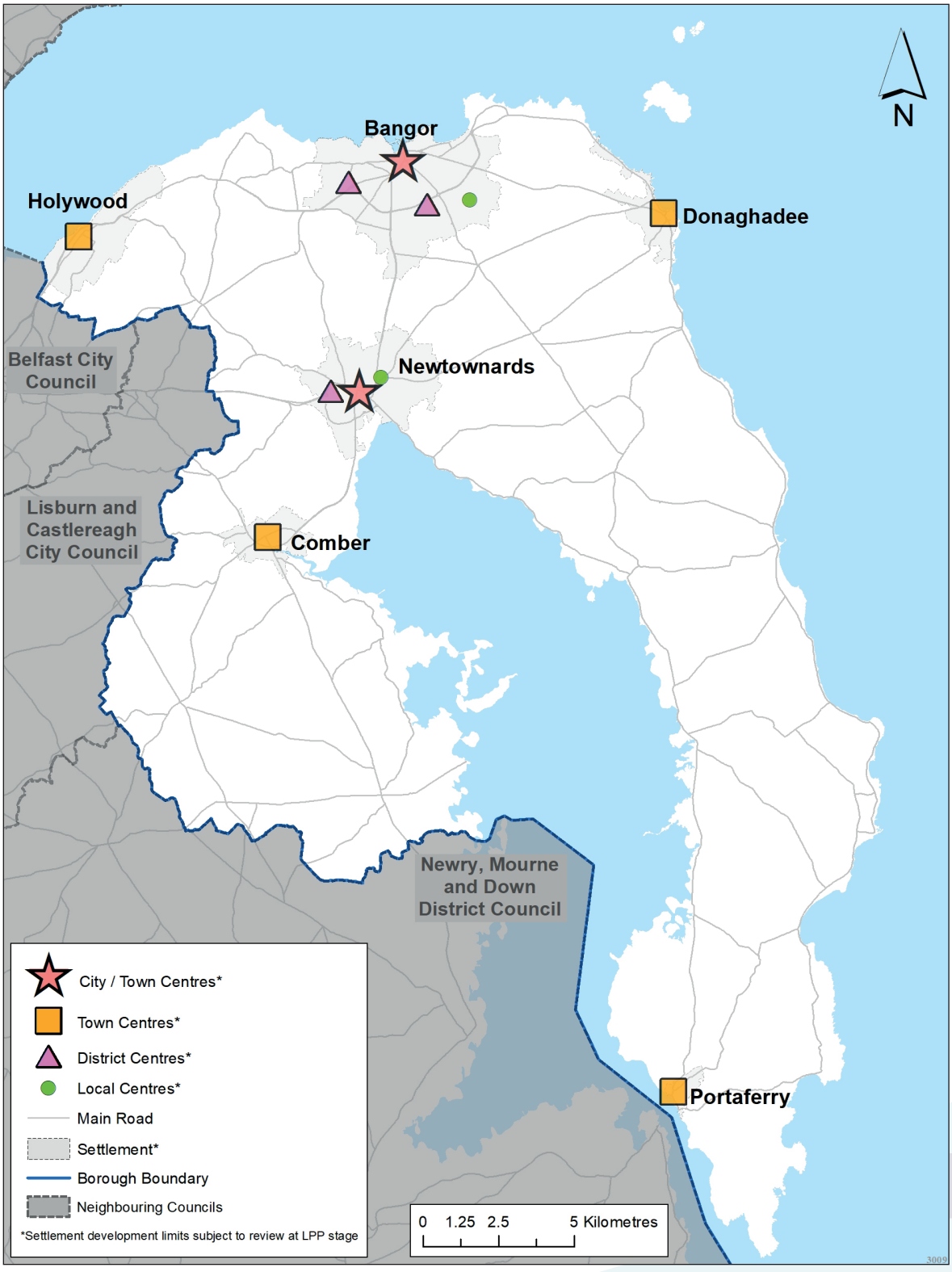
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[6] *Ashbury Avenue - at the public inquiry into draft BMAP, the Department agreed that the site met the requirements for designation as a Local Centre and requested that the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) recommend its designation in the Plan. The PAC considered the site contained sufficient retail floorspace and other complementary uses to warrant its designation as a Local Centre in accordance with prevailing planning policy at the time. This recommendation was accepted by the Department and carried forward in the designation of BR 13 Ashbury Local Centre in the unlawfully adopted BMAP. As the most up to date position relating to the Local Centre, the Council has been using this designation for decision making and will continue to do so until review at LPP stage.*

[7] *Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (Nexus 2022).*

[8] *Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (Nexus 2022).*

Map 5: Retail Hierarchy



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Operational Planning Policies

Policy RET 1
Retailing and main town centre uses[9]

The Council will consider applications for main town centre uses in the following order:

1. Primary retail core[10];
2. Town centres;
3. Edge of centre (i.e. adjoining town centres or within 300m from the centre boundary, where it is well connected with functional linkages and compliant with Policy RET 6 Out of Centre Development); and
4. All other locations[11] (only where sites are accessible by a choice of good public transport modes and compliant with Policy RET 6 Out of Centre Development).

A sequential test will be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre as above. An application which proposes development on a less sequentially preferable site shall be refused, unless it is demonstrated that an alternative sequentially preferable site or sites do not exist or are not suitable, available, or viable within a proposal's catchment, and that there will be no significant adverse impact on the town centre(s) within the catchment area.

Favourable consideration will be given to edge of centre sites before out of centre locations, provided it has been demonstrated that there is a need for the proposal. The assessment of need should incorporate a quantitative and qualitative assessment taking account of the needs of the local town, committed development proposals, and allocated sites.

Proposals for retail and other main town centre uses must also comply with all of the following criteria:

(a) the design of the proposal (including any proposed signage) makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the town centre;

(b) the proposal contributes to the vitality and viability of the town centre; and

(c) proposals retain and/or provide for access to upper floors so as not to prejudice their future use.

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9 *E.g. cultural and community facilities, retail, leisure, entertainment and business.*

10 *Where designated.*

11 *Includes all locations outside designated town centres that are not considered to be 'edge-of-centre'.*

Local Shops

Exceptionally, permission may be granted for a small-scale convenience shop or retail service which does not exceed 100sqm gross external area, where it can be demonstrated that:

- it meets a defined local need which cannot be met within an existing centre[12]; and
- it will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of existing centres within its catchment.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

11.22 Regional planning policy through the RDS and SPPS recognise the importance of vibrant town centres which provide for a diversity of uses. To thrive and compete, town centres are evolving from traditional shopping high streets to multi-functional destinations – both during the day and evening - which often define the very character of our towns. This vibrancy and diversity of use is supported through the town-centre first approach of the policy and counters historical development in unsustainable out of centre locations which rely heavily on vehicular transport.

11.23 To support this approach, a sequential test will be applied to all applications for retail and other main town centre uses. Applicants shall be required to justify their chosen location by first considering all Primary Retail Core sites, then town centre sites before accessible 'edge-of-centre' sites – demonstrating in turn that these sequentially preferable sites are neither suitable, available nor viable before, finally, considering any other locations. The scale and complexity of this assessment will be proportionate to the proposal in question. An application which proposes development on a less sequentially preferable site without satisfying the policy will be refused.

11.24 A further consideration is the application of the policy between centres. Applicants of a scheme, for example, within the Donaghadee Town Centre boundary would not have to consider the availability of suitable sites within the Bangor Town Centre boundary, even though Bangor sits above Donaghadee in the proposed retail hierarchy. However, an applicant for an out-of-centre retail proposal in Donaghadee should first consider whether it could instead be located

[12] *Includes town centres, district centres and local centres.*

within the Primary Retail Core or town centre boundary of Bangor or any other higher order centre within its catchment.

11.25 All proposals for retail development outside of town centres, including edge-of-centre sites, must also satisfy the requirements of Policy RET 6 - Out of Centre Development.

Local Shops

11.26 The policy makes provision for small scale local shops that do not sit within a designated local or district centre in our towns provided that they meet a demonstrable local need and will not adversely affect any existing centres within its catchment.

Policy RET 2
District Centres

Within District Centres, planning permission will not be granted for the following retail development:

- Proposals for additional comparison goods floor space (including the provision of mezzanine floors within an existing retail unit);
- Proposals that seek to vary or remove planning restrictions for bulky goods retail or outlet use to provide unencumbered retail use;
- Proposals for the subdivision of commercial units into smaller units; and
- Proposals for retail and other main town centre uses which are considered likely to impact adversely on the vitality and viability of town centres within the catchment.

Planning permission for small-scale complementary uses may be considered acceptable within a district centre where it is demonstrated that the proposal is not likely to impact adversely on the vitality and viability of town centres within the catchment.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

11.27 Consistent with the aims of the Retail Strategy, the hierarchy and the SPPS, the policy approach is one of retention and consolidation of existing district centres' provision rather than competition with the town centre. To this end, the policy approach allows for limited convenience retail, retail services, and other complementary uses where these are not considered likely to impact adversely on the vitality and viability of the town centre.

11.28 Proposals for additional comparison retail floorspace, the subdivision of retail units to provide comparison retail and the removal of planning restrictions to provide unencumbered retail uses will be refused as these are likely to impact adversely on the vitality and viability of the town centre contrary to regional planning policy and the LDP Retail Strategy.

11.29 District centres occupy an important position in the Retail Hierarchy, providing a range of shops and services to a surrounding suburban community. However, in some instances they are overtrading and out-competing nearby town centres[13]. As is typical elsewhere, district centres in the Borough tend to be accessed primarily by the private car - reinforcing the need for consolidation rather than growth in these locations.

11.30 RH 1: Retail Hierarchy identifies District Centres as follows:

- Bloomfield (Bangor)
- Springhill (Bangor)
- Ards (Newtownards)

11.31 The Council will review and identify the spatial extent of District Centres at LPP stage – this will include the delineation of a boundary for Ards District Centre. Until that stage, extant designations will continue to apply for Bloomfield and Springhill District Centres.

[13] *Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (Nexus 2022).*

Policy RET 3
Local Centres

Within designated Local Centres, planning permission will be granted for convenience retail and retail services where all of the following criteria are met:

(a) any individual unit created as a result does not exceed 500m^2 gross floorspace for convenience shopping and 100m^2 gross floorspace for retail services;

(b) the proposal meets a local need;

(c) the proposal would not alter the role and function of the centre; and

(d) that the design of the proposal makes a positive contribution appropriate to the appearance of the area.

Proposals for comparison retail will not be permitted.

Planning permission for other small-scale complementary uses may also be considered acceptable within a local centre where they comply with criteria (b), (c) and (d) above.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

11.32 Local centres shall be maintained in accordance with the Retail Strategy and their role within the retail hierarchy, as centres of retail and services to cater to local needs and sustain communities. The COVID 19 pandemic and the climate change emergency has placed an increased focus on local provision and the importance of accessible retail and services so people can avail of facilities close to where they live. Such facilities are often easily accessible on foot, bicycle or public transport from nearby residential areas. They may also act as catalysts for local regeneration. However, this should not be at the expense of the town centre and district centres. Therefore, to maintain their role as local centres, the policy seeks to limit the scale of retail proposals in these areas to ensure that their role, function and scale is retained at an appropriate level.

11.33 Provision is also made for small-scale complementary uses that meet a local need, such as food outlets, where they would not alter the role and function of the local centre and the design makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the area.

11.34 RH 1: Retail Hierarchy identifies Local Centres as follows:

- Ashbury Avenue[14] (Bangor)
- Stratheden Heights[15] (Newtownards)

11.35 The Council will review and identify the spatial extent of Local Centres at LPP stage. Until that stage, extant designations will continue to apply for Ashbury Avenue and Stratheden Heights Local Centres.

Policy RET 4
Villages and Small Settlements

Planning permission will be granted for retail and other complementary uses within villages and small settlements where all of the following criteria are met:

(a) it meets a local (i.e. day-to-day) need;

(b) it is appropriate, in terms of scale and nature, with the character and function of the village or small settlement;

(c) the design of the proposal makes a positive contribution appropriate to the appearance of the village or small settlement; and

(d) in the case of new (or extended) retail development, it is centrally located in the settlement and accessible by public transport (if available) and active travel means.

Justification and Amplification

11.36 The Borough has a vibrant rural population which relies upon local shops in villages and small settlements to meet day to day needs and provide vital services in the community – particularly for those with limited or no access to a means of transport.

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[14] *At the public inquiry into draft BMAP, the Department agreed that Ashbury Avenue met the requirements for designation as a Local Centre and requested that the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) recommend its designation in the Plan. The PAC considered the site contained sufficient retail floorspace and other complementary uses to warrant its designation as a Local Centre in accordance with prevailing planning policy at the time. This recommendation was accepted by the Department and carried forward in the designation of BR 13 Ashbury Local Centre in the unlawfully adopted BMAP. Draft BMAP remains an emerging plan and, along with representations received to the draft plan and PAC Inquiry Reports, remains as a material consideration to be weighed by the decision-maker. This will continue to be the case until review at LPP stage.*

[15] *ADAP 2015 designated the spatial extent of Stratheden Heights.*

11.37 As identified in the Retail Strategy, future retail and other complementary uses must be appropriate in scale and nature to the character and function of the settlement and demonstrate that they will not adversely affect any other centre in the catchment area. To be sustainable and satisfy the placemaking approach, design must be of a high quality and appropriate to its location and be as accessible as possible to pedestrians, cyclists, wheeled users and users of public transport.

Policy RET 5
Retailing in the Countryside

Retailing will be directed to the centres within the retail hierarchy, and there is a general presumption against the development of inappropriate retail facilities in the countryside.

However, as a general exception to the overall policy approach, some retail proposals may be considered appropriate outside of settlement limits provided:

- they are of an appropriate scale and type (e.g. farm shops tied to an existing farm business, craft shops attached to existing craft workshops, and shops serving tourist or recreational facilities – in all instances these should be ancillary to the main use);
- they are located within existing buildings where possible; and
- that the proposal would not adversely affect any other centre within the catchment area.

Exceptionally, where no existing buildings are available, an extension or a new building may be acceptable provided that they are small in scale and satisfactorily integrated with existing buildings on the site.

Refuelling[16] Stations in the Countryside

Proposals for refuelling stations outside of settlement development limits will only be allowed where there is a clear indication of need.

Proposals for new facilities within 12 miles of existing services will not be acceptable.

New retail floorspace shall be limited to retail convenience of 100m^2 gross floorspace and shall remain ancillary to fuel sales.

Proposals must also comply with policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[16] *Includes all 'refuelling' stations.*

Justification and Amplification

Retailing in the Countryside

11.38 This approach is consistent with the SPPS which recognises that notwithstanding the directing of retail towards town centres, exceptionally, some retail facilities may be considered acceptable in the countryside. To satisfy the Retail Strategy and Countryside Strategy, these must be of appropriate scale and typically connected with an existing countryside use such as farm shops, craft shops, tourism or recreational facilities. They must be ancillary to the main use and located within existing buildings as far as possible and in other instances shall be satisfactorily integrated with any proposals must also demonstrate that they will not adversely affect any other centre within the catchment area.

Refuelling Stations in the Countryside

11.39 The approach allows for the development of refuelling stations in the countryside where there is an identified need. Accompanying proposals for retail convenience development must remain ancillary to the main use on the site and limited in size in keeping with the countryside location.

Policy RET 6
Out of Centre Development

Proposals for main town centre uses (including extensions to, or sub-division of, existing uses) that are not located within an existing town centre will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that a sequentially preferable site is not available in accordance with Policy RET 1.

Proposals that have a retail floor-space of 1,000sqm gross and above[17] and which are not proposed in a town centre must also be accompanied by a retail impact assessment and an assessment of need.

The Council may request a retail impact assessment and an assessment of need for development below the 1,000sqm threshold, taking into account local circumstances such as the size, role and function of nearby centres.

Factors to be addressed in a retail impact and assessment of need include:

- the impact of the proposal on trade and turnover for both convenience and comparison goods traders, and the impact on town centre turnover overall for all centres within the catchment of the proposal;
- the impact of the proposal on existing committed and planned public and private sector investment and investor confidence in the town centre/s;
- the impact of the proposals on the delivery of the planned/ allocated sites and the LDP strategy;
- the impact on the vitality and viability of existing centres including consideration of the local context. This should take into account existing retail mix and the diversity of other facilities and activities;
- cumulative impact taking account of committed and planned development, including planned commitments within the town centre and wider area; and,
- a review of local economic impacts.

Where an impact on one or more of these criteria is considered significantly adverse or where in balancing the overall impacts of each of the criteria the proposed development is judged to be harmful, then it will be refused.

All proposals should also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[17] *this shall apply to extensions to existing retail where the cumulative total exceeds 1000sqm gross and above.*

Justification and Amplification

11.40 For the avoidance of doubt, 'out of centre' refers to all sites located outside of a designated town centre and therefore includes those classified as 'edge-of-centre' in Policy RET 1 Retailing and main town centre uses.

11.41 Out of centre retailing is detrimental in terms of the negative impact on the vitality and viability of town centres and maintaining an over reliance on private vehicles. This is contrary to regional planning policy in the RDS and SPPS and to the Council's Retail Strategy and is to be resisted.

11.42 In certain circumstances where there is an identified need and there is no sequentially preferable site as per Policy RET 1, a proposal for a main town centre use may be considered acceptable. In all instances it will be essential to demonstrate that there will be no significant adverse impact on the town centre(s) within the catchment area.

11.43 A Retail Impact Assessment will be required to be submitted for all proposals over 1000 sqm[18] to further assess the likely impact of any proposed development outside town centres. If any likely impact is considered to be significantly adverse, the proposal will be deemed unacceptable.

[18] *this will include extensions to existing retail proposals resulting in a cumulative total of over 1000 sqm.*

12 Sustainable Tourism

12.1 Tourism makes a vital contribution to the Northern Ireland economy in terms of the revenue it generates, the employment opportunities it provides, and the potential it creates for economic growth. Tourism spending helps to support a wide range of economic activities. As well as direct spending on holiday accommodation and use of tourist amenities, tourism plays an important role in helping to support the viability of many local suppliers, services, and facilities. It improves assets and provides infrastructure for local people and tourists, supports the vibrancy of Northern Ireland's culture and heritage, and sustains communities. The Council seeks to manage, promote and enhance the Borough to make it a sustainable visitor destination of choice.

12.2 Sustainable tourism is, "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities[19].

12.3 The Local Development Plan (LDP) has a key role to play in the facilitating the growth of sustainable tourism through planning policies which are tailored to the needs and assets of the Ards and North Down Borough Council area.

Local Context

12.4 Situated only a 20-minute drive from Belfast and in very close proximity to Belfast City Airport, the Borough is ideally placed to benefit from both domestic tourism and visitors from further afield. With over 100 miles of coastline, much of the Borough's tourism assets revolve around the unique and varied landscapes and seascapes. The coastline also provides opportunities for a wide range of outdoor activities such as water sports, sailing, walking, cycling, and fishing. The Borough's tourism assets regularly feature in the top visitor attractions of Northern Ireland.

12.5 The natural environment of the whole Borough is a significant asset. Strangford Lough's coastline and surrounding hinterlands offers ideal vantage points to admire an abundance of flora and fauna including exotic water and migrant birds. Numerous country parks and walking trails are also dotted throughout the Borough. Strangford Lough by virtue of its many National and International nature conservation designations, is one of the highest ranking marine environmental

[19] *UN World Tourism Organisation definition of Sustainable Tourism.*

sites in Europe, with almost three quarters of all Northern Ireland's marine species recorded there. The historic environment of the Borough includes listed buildings, Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesness and State Care Monuments and many other attractions for visitors to enjoy.

12.6 Family entertainment is also catered for within the Borough; outdoor attractions such as Castle Espie, Pickie Fun Park and the Ark Open Farm; and indoor activities such as soft play areas, go-karting, museums, Exploris Aquarium in Portaferry and the only camera obscura on the island of Ireland at Donaghadee Motte.



Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The Local Development Plan's Tourism Strategy promotes sustainable tourism across Ards and North Down, allowing areas within the Borough to respond to tourist demand whilst safeguarding the integrity of the assets upon which the tourism draw depends.

12.7 The LDP:

- Encourages environmentally sensitive tourism development that is appropriate to the location through a defined Tourism Hierarchy to ensure that the natural and historic assets are protected and enhanced;
- Promotes a balanced approach that provides tourism infrastructure, while benefiting society and the economy;
- Offers sufficient choice of the right type of visitor accommodation in the right areas and provides a range of things to do; and
- Safeguards tourism assets from inappropriate development and encourages future tourism demand to areas where it is best accommodated.

Tourism Hierarchy

12.8 Opportunities for tourism development exist principally within urban areas where infrastructure is already in place and where there are opportunities to capitalise upon existing tourism facilities. Tourism development is not considered appropriate where it would have a negative impact on the character of a townscape or the natural or historic environment. Bangor's history as a traditional holiday resort will be boosted by significant future development such as that at the Bangor Waterfront. The Borough's wealth of natural and historic environment assets is anticipated to continue to attract visitors.

12.9 Future development must balance visitor demands with the protection of the natural and historic environment. A key element of this is to focus new development in sustainable locations. In Ards and North Down these areas are defined as priority, sensitive and protected. Table 9 explains the features in each.

Priority Areas which are urban areas where the majority of development for tourism uses will be expected to locate.

Sensitive Areas which are areas where tourism should be controlled to respect the local environment and particular characteristics of the area.

Protected Areas which are areas where tourism development will not be approved through the majority of their extent, except in exceptional circumstances.

12.10 This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging tourism development to be located within city, town, village centres or settlement limits;
- Adopting a precautionary approach when considering the impacts of a proposed evelopment on a designated heritage asset or a protected or sensitive landscape; and
- Applying operational planning policies for sustainable tourism development.



Table 9:
Tourism Hierarchy Areas

Priority Area	Sensitive Area	Protected Area
Principal Settlements	Countryside[20]	Ards and North Down Undeveloped Coastal Zone[21]
Within Settlements	Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Nendrum Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI)
Urban Waterfronts	Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs)	Natural Environment designated sites
Town Centres	Conservation Areas	Craigantlet Area of High Scenic Value (AoHSV)
	Areas of Townscape Character (ATC) Areas of Village Character (AVC)	
	Quiet Area[22] Stricklands Glen[23]	
	Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes	

Why we have taken this approach

12.11 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) promotes a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure that safeguards tourism infrastructure while benefiting society and the economy through encouraging environmentally sustainable tourism development.

12.12 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) directs LDPs to bring forward a tourism strategy, together with appropriate policies and proposals that must reflect the aim objectives and policy approach of the SPPS tailored to the specific circumstances of the plan.

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[20] *Edge of settlement locations are in preference to open countryside.*

[21] *'Undeveloped Coast,' defined in the SPPS as "the coastal area outside of settlement limits, major developments such as ports, isolated industrial units and power stations".*

[22] *Quiet Areas are designated under the Environmental Noise Regulations (NI) 2006, these are designated by DAERA.*

[23] *It should be noted that more locations in the Borough are under consideration for designation as Quiet Areas by DAERA.*

12.13 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from;

- Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (outcome 2).
- A prosperous and inclusive economy (outcome 4.) and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (outcome 5);

Operational Planning Policies

Policy TSM 1
Tourism Development in Settlements

Planning permission will be granted for a proposal for tourism development (including a tourist amenity[24] or tourist accommodation) within a settlement, which are defined as Priority Areas within the Tourism Hierarchy, providing it:

(a) Is of a nature appropriate to the settlement; and

(b) Respects the site context in terms of scale, size, and design.

Proposals should also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

12.14 Tourism can be beneficial for urban areas and help to deliver sustainable development. It can support existing services and facilities such as retail, catering, entertainment, leisure, and transport as well as promoting a sense of urban vitality. In specific locations tourism can provide a focus for regeneration schemes or may be a key component of mixed-use development. Conversely, towns and cities often provide opportunities for tourism to flourish. Tourism benefits from the constructive interaction arising through the concentration of hotels, museums, art galleries, conference facilities, restaurants, bars, cinemas, and theatres, often within town centres. Larger settlements, as transport hubs, are also readily accessible by tourists.

12.15 In assessment of tourism development within settlements, account will be taken of the nature, size, scale and design of the development and its impact on the appearance and character of the surrounding area and neighbouring residential amenity. A town centres first

[24] *A tourist amenity is defined by the Tourism (NI) Order 1992 as "an amenity, facility or service provided primarily for tourists but does not include tourist accommodation".*

approach for the location of tourism development, as a main town centre use, within settlements is expected, as outlined in the retail chapter of this document.

Policy TSM 2
Tourist Amenities in the Countryside

New Proposals

Planning permission will be granted for a tourist amenity[25] in the countryside where it is demonstrated that:

(a) It is in association with and requires a site at or close to a particular tourism attraction located in the countryside; or

(b) The type of tourist activity in itself requires a countryside location.

All proposals that include buildings must utilise existing or replacement buildings, unless it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable buildings available.

Where a proposed tourist amenity is of regional importance or is otherwise significant, in terms of the extent of new build or the scale of engineering operations, it must demonstrate substantial benefit to regional tourism as well as sustainable benefits to the locality. Such applications must be supported by evidence which articulates these benefits.

Extension of an Existing Tourist Amenity

Planning permission will be granted for the extension of an existing tourist amenity where the scale and nature of the proposal does not harm the rural character, landscape quality or environmental integrity of the local area.

Such proposals will be expected to be accommodated through the conversion, reuse, or extension of existing buildings on site, unless it can be demonstrated that this is not a feasible option.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP, including policies on rural design.

[25] *A tourist amenity is defined by the Tourism (NI) Order 1992 as "an amenity, facility or service provided primarily for tourists but does not include tourist accommodation".*

Justification and Amplification

12.16 Tourist amenities are diverse in terms of their nature, scale, and function and not all proposals will be suited to an urban location. For example, there may be a functional need for facilities associated with a mountain bike trail to be located in the countryside. A visitor centre may have a specific functional need to be located in close proximity to the particular countryside attraction it is intended to serve.

12.17 The policy therefore provides for tourist amenities in the countryside where the tourism activity and associated facilities require a rural location in terms of their functional or site / area specific requirements.

12.18 New buildings must satisfy the design requirements as contained within Design Guidance for development in the countryside.

12.19 The impact of proposals on rural character, landscape, seascape and natural and historic environment is an important consideration in their assessment, particularly within areas designated for their landscape, natural or cultural heritage qualities. 'Building on Tradition-A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside' produced by the Department of the Environment (DOE) is relevant.

12.20 Tourism development within Sensitive areas as defined in the Tourism Strategy Hierarchy will only be approved in exceptional circumstances and must demonstrate compliance with requirements[26] for their protection. Applicants are directed to the Natural Environment chapter of this document.

12.21 To facilitate assessment of regionally significant or large-scale proposals, applications must be accompanied by a tourism benefit statement[27] to demonstrate the value of the proposal in terms of tourism revenue and employment opportunity and how it will further the aims of the Tourism Northern Ireland (NI) priorities. The Council will consult Tourism NI for comment regarding tourism benefit.

12.22 Regionally significant or large-scale proposals are also required to deliver sustainable benefit to the rural locality and Policy TSM 4 Major Tourism Development in the Countryside - Exceptional Circumstances applies.

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[26] *Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as HRA.*

[27] *Guidance on information to be included within a tourism benefit statement is contained within Annex -H- Tourism Information.*



Policy TSM 3
Hotels, Guest Houses and Tourist Hostels in the Countryside

Planning permission will be granted for a new hotel / guest house / tourist hostel in the countryside in the following circumstances and will be assessed under the specified criteria:

Circumstances:

(a) The conversion of a listed building, where this is necessary to secure its future and where the building cannot reasonably be expected to serve its original purpose, in compliance with policies HE 7 Change of Use or Extension/Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building and HE 10 Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building;

(b) The conversion of a vernacular or locally important building;

(c) The replacement of an existing rural building, or

(d) A new build proposal on the periphery of a settlement.

Conversion of Listed, Vernacular and Locally Important Buildings

Listed Buildings

The Council will permit the sympathetic conversion of a listed building into a hotel, guesthouse or hostel provided the essential character and special architectural and historic interest is conserved and where possible enhanced, in line with the policy provisions of HE 7 and also, HE 10 if applicable.

Vernacular Building

The Council will permit the sympathetic conversion of non-listed vernacular buildings to a Hotel, Guesthouse or hostel where this would secure their upkeep and retention.

Proposals for conversion will be required to meet all the following criteria:

(e) The building is structurally sound and capable of conversion;

(f) Conversion will not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality and safeguards the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building;

(g) The new use would not cause unacceptable adverse effects on the amenities of nearby residents or other land uses;

Locally Important Buildings

(h) A proposal for the conversion of a Locally Important building will be assessed under Countryside Policy HOU 11 Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings:

The requirements of Policy HOU 11 must also be met.

Replacement of an Existing Rural Building

Planning permission will be granted for the replacement of an existing building in the countryside with a hotel, guest house or tourist hostel subject to all the following criteria being met:

(i) The building is of permanent construction;

(j) The existing building and its replacement are both of sufficient size to facilitate the proposed use in accordance with the accommodation requirements set out in Tourism (NI) Order 1992;

(k) The existing building is not a listed building; and

(l) Where the existing building is a locally important building of special character or interest, and is considered to make an important contribution to local heritage or character, replacement will only be

approved where it is demonstrated that the building is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved.

The condition of the building and the economic feasibility of repairing and maintaining it will also be taken into account in assessing such proposals.

New Build Hotel, Guest House, or Tourist Hostel – On the Periphery of a Settlement

A proposal to develop a hotel, guest house or tourist hostel on land at the edge of a settlement will be permitted subject to the demonstration of compliance with the following specific criteria:

(m) There is no suitable site within the settlement;

(n) There are no suitable opportunities in the locality to provide a hotel, guest house or tourist hostel either through:

  (i) The conversion and re-use of a suitable building(s); or

  (ii) The replacement of a suitable building(s); and

(o) The development is close to the settlement, but will not dominate it, adversely affect landscape or seascape setting, or otherwise contribute to urban sprawl.

Where the principle of a new building on the periphery of a settlement is established through meeting the above criteria, the Council will apply a sequential locational test, with preference being attributed to sites in the following order:

(p) A site adjacent to the existing settlement limit, subject to amenity and environmental considerations;

(q) A site on the periphery of the settlement limit which currently contains buildings or where the site is already in a degraded or derelict state and there is an opportunity to improve the environment; and

(r) An undeveloped site close to the settlement where the development could be visually integrated into the landscape;

Any proposed change of use or replacement of a hotel, guest house or tourist hostel approved under this policy to a non-tourism use will be resisted, unless it is demonstrated that:

(s) The facility is not viable in the long term; and

(t) There is sufficient alternative provision in the locality to offset the loss of tourism benefit.

Expansion of Existing Hotels, Guest Houses and Tourist Hostels

A proposal for the expansion of an existing hotel, guest house or tourist hostel will be permitted subject to all the following specific criteria being met:

(u) New or replacement building(s) are subsidiary in terms of scale to the existing building(s) and will integrate as part of the overall development;

(v) Any extension or new building should respect the scale, design, and materials of the original building(s) on the site and any historic or architectural interest the original property may have;

(w) The overall size and scale of the new development, including car parking and ancillary facilities, will allow it to integrate into the surrounding landscape and seascape and will not have a visual impact significantly greater than the existing building; and

(x) Access, car parking and other necessary services are available or can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment, the appearance and character of the locality and road safety.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

12.23 Where there are listed, vernacular or locally important buildings in the Countryside, which are no longer viable for their original purpose, the Council will support proposals where their re-use and sympathetic conversion to a Hotel, Guest house or Hostel would maintain the building in active use.

12.24 The potential for the conversion of a listed building will be assessed under HE 7 Change of Use or Extension of Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building) and HE 10 Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building.) All works and alterations required to convert the listed building into a hotel, guest house or hostel must ensure that the essential character and special architectural and historic interest of the building in question is preserved, protected and, where possible enhanced. The new use must be fully compatible with the fabric, setting and character of the listed building.

12.25 The applicant will be expected to demonstrate how the proposed use will secure the future of the building and explain the reasons why the building can no longer fulfil its original purpose. This justification could be usefully included in the Statement of Significance document which is required for all Listed Building consent applications (see policy HE 1.)

12.26 "Vernacular buildings reflect the local 'folk tradition' and are typical of a common type of building in a particular locality, generally pre-1925. For more detail refer to 'A Sense of Loss – The Survival of Rural Traditional Buildings in Northern Ireland', published by DOE, March 1998." (SPPS)

12.27 The potential for the conversion and re-use of Locally Important Buildings, will be assessed under Countryside Policy HOU 11 Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings.

12.28 The condition of the building and the economic feasibility of repairing and maintaining it will also be considered in assessing such proposals. Reuse of existing buildings that meet the requirements of this policy contributes positively to reducing carbon emissions, embodied carbon in the existing building would otherwise be lost through demolition.

12.29 Where development is being sought due to association with a heritage asset, the proposal must adopt a heritage-led design approach and be in line with the appropriate historic environment policy as set out in the LDP. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate the acceptability of the proposal.

New Building

12.30 Where the case for a location outside a settlement is clearly demonstrated; the selected site should be as close to the settlement as possible, subject to amenity and environmental considerations, as this is usually more sustainable than a more remote site.

12.31 A proposal must also respect the character of the settlement and its setting in the surrounding landscape. This in turn will require careful site selection, layout, design, and landscaping.

12.32 To allow informed consideration all applications made under this policy will be expected to be accompanied with the following information:

- Sufficient evidence to indicate how realistic the particular proposal is and what sources of finance are available (including any grant aid) to sustain the project;
- Detailed information of an exhaustive search to illustrate that there is no reasonable prospect of securing a suitable site within the limits of the particular settlement or other nearby settlement; and
- Justification for the particular site chosen and illustrative details of the proposed design and site layout.

12.33 The grant of planning permission will not in itself allow for inappropriate alternative uses if an approved scheme for some reason does not go ahead. While the Council cannot require business enterprises which become uneconomic to continue, alternative land uses will only be approved if there is sufficient alternative accommodation in the locality to provide for tourism needs. The Council will consult with Tourism NI in making this assessment.

Policy TSM 4
Major Tourism Development in the Countryside – Exceptional Circumstances

Planning permission will be granted for a major tourism development in the countryside if it meets all the following exceptional circumstances:

(a) Demonstration of exceptional benefit to the tourism industry;

(b) Demonstration that the proposal requires a countryside location by reason of its size or site specific or functional requirements;

(c) Demonstration of sustainable benefit to the locality; and

(d) The location is accessible via active travel networks and public transport.

All proposals brought forward under exceptional circumstances must be accompanied by a statement demonstrating how the proposal meets all the above criteria.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

12.34 This policy makes provision for major tourism development projects in the countryside, as defined in planning legislation [9], in exceptional circumstances for proposals that offer exceptional benefit to the tourism industry in the Borough. The ability of the proposed development in itself to attract tourists will be significant in assessing whether it will offer exceptional benefit to the tourism industry.

12.35 This policy will not facilitate approval of minor proposals for tourism development, for example a single guest house or small-scale self-catering development, as such proposals are unlikely in themselves to offer exceptional benefit to the tourism industry or be of a scale that requires a countryside location. However, a proposal that offers a tourist amenity likely to attract significant numbers of visitors along with a commensurate level and quality of visitor accommodation will fall to be considered under this policy.

12.36 It is important that all proposals for tourism accommodation in the countryside are of a high quality and that they meet an identified tourism need or market. Any new-build or substantial expansion proposals must therefore demonstrate how they make a positive and sustainable contribution to the tourism offer and visitor experience.

12.37 To allow informed consideration all applications made under this policy will be expected to be accompanied with the following information:

- A tourism benefit statement that will demonstrate the value of the proposal in terms of tourism revenue, increased visitor numbers to the Borough and the locality, and also how it demonstrates exceptional benefit to the tourism industry, and benefit to the locality;
- Sufficient evidence to demonstrate how realistic the particular proposal is and what sources of finance are available (including any grant aid) to sustain the project; and
- Justification for the site chosen and illustrative details of the proposed design and site layout.

12.38 All such proposals in the countryside to be considered under exceptional circumstances will be subject to consultation with Tourism NI.

12.39 The impact of proposals on rural character, landscape and natural/ historic environment is an important consideration in their assessment, particularly within areas designated for their landscape, natural or cultural heritage qualities.

Policy TSM 5
Self-Catering Accommodation in the Countryside

Planning permission may be granted for self-catering units of tourist accommodation in any of the following circumstances:

(a) One or more new units all located within the grounds of an existing or approved hotel, self-catering complex, guest house or holiday park;

(b) A cluster of 3 or more new units are to be provided at or close to an existing or approved tourist amenity that is and / or will be a significant visitor attraction in its own right; or

(c) The restoration of an existing clachan or close, through conversion and / or replacement of existing buildings, subject to the retention of the original scale and proportions of the buildings and sympathetic treatment of boundaries.

In either circumstance (a) or (b) above, self-catering development is required to be subsidiary in scale and ancillary to the primary tourism use of the site. Where practicable original materials and finishes should be included.

All permissions for self-catering accommodation will include the use of a Section 76 agreement requiring the units to be used for holiday letting accommodation only and not for permanent residential accommodation.

Where a cluster of self-catering units is proposed in conjunction with a proposed or approved hotel, self-catering complex, guest house or holiday park and/or tourist amenity, a condition will be attached to the permission preventing occupation of the units before the primary tourism use is provided and fully operational.

The overall design of the self-catering scheme, including layout, the provision of amenity open space and the size and detailed design of individual units, must deter permanent residential use. To this end, permitted development rights in respect of plot boundaries will also be removed.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

12.40 This policy provides sustainable opportunities for self-catering tourist accommodation in the countryside particularly in areas where tourist amenities and accommodation have become established or likely to be provided as a result of tourism initiatives.

12.41 The policy will provide for sustainable economic benefits because new self-catering accommodation linked with an existing tourism enterprise can create synergy by enhancing its usage, economic viability, and attractiveness to tourists. In turn this will support wider tourism initiatives.

12.42 The policy will also provide sustainable environmental benefit through focusing self-catering development in existing nodes of tourism activity, thereby avoiding random development throughout the countryside, and safeguarding the value of tourism assets.

12.43 Proximity is a matter of planning judgement as each proposal is considered based on the information provided, location and wider landscape considerations. Whilst large geographical areas such as the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or the coastline of the Borough are attractive to visitors, they do not satisfy the policy requirement of this policy. Proximity to an existing or planned tourist amenity is a physical test rather than a perceived need or benefit.

12.44 Where units are proposed in association with a tourist amenity, the policy requires that the tourist amenity must be a significant visitor attraction in its own right. In assessing this, the Council will consider the nature and scale of the tourist amenity. Relevant considerations in this regard are likely to include visitor numbers, and the provision of facilities linked to and enabling usage of the amenity, for example berths for boats, buildings for use as changing areas or the storage of recreational equipment, and car parking. To assist in this assessment, the Council may consult with Tourism NI.

12.45 Where self-catering units are permitted on the basis of an associated tourist accommodation or a tourist amenity, it is imperative that the primary tourism use, which provides the justification. is in place and functioning before the units become operational. This policy requires a condition to be attached to approvals to this effect.

12.46 Exceptionally, such a condition may not be attached by the Council in circumstances where self-catering units are to be provided in association with a tourist amenity, such as a golf course, which has a long lead in time prior to it becoming operational. However, this exception will only be applied where there is no hotel or other element of the overall development proposal that could provide a revenue source during the lead-in time required for the tourist amenity.

12.47 The requirement for approved self-catering units to be retained in tourism use and not used for permanent residential accommodation will seek to ensure that tourist accommodation is available to benefit local communities in rural areas and that the unauthorised use of approved tourist accommodation as a private dwelling(s) does not occur.

12.48 Permanent residential use of self-catering units will also be deterred through design. Such units will be required to demonstrate an informal site layout with communal open space only. Informal road layout without designated car parking will also be required. Informal car parking provision should not, where possible, be directly associated with the units.

12.49 Individual units must be of appropriate design for holiday use, with possible restrictions on floorspace and building height. Plot divisions between units by means of fences or walls will be prevented through the removal of permitted development rights.

12.50 Countryside policies relating to the conversion and reuse of rural buildings, farm or forestry diversification and development in dispersed rural communities may provide other opportunities for small scale, including single unit, self-catering accommodation in the countryside where proposals will be assessed against Policy HOU 11 Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings.



Policy TSM 6
New and Extended Holiday Parks and Glamping Accommodation

Planning permission will only be granted for a new holiday park[27] or an extension to an existing facility in locations within Sensitive Areas, as defined in the Tourism Hierarchy, where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a high quality and sustainable form of tourism development.

The location, siting, size, design, layout, and landscaping of the holiday park proposal must be based on an overall design concept that respects the surrounding landscape, rural character, and site context.

Proposals for holiday park development must be accompanied by a layout and landscaping plan, and will be subject to the following specific criteria:

(a) The site is located in an area that has the capacity to absorb the holiday park development, without adverse impact on visual amenity and rural character;

(b) Effective integration into the landscape must be secured primarily through the utilisation of existing natural or built features. Where appropriate, planted areas or discrete groups of trees will be required along site boundaries in order to soften the visual impact of the development and assist its integration with the surrounding area;

(c) Adequate provision (normally around 15% of the site area) is made for communal open space (including play and recreation areas and landscaped areas), as an integral part of the development;

(d) The layout of caravan pitches / motor homes is informal and characterised by discrete groupings or clusters of units separated through the use of appropriate soft landscaping;

(e) The design of the development, including the design and scale of ancillary buildings and the design of other elements including internal roads, paths, car parking areas, walls, and fences, is appropriate for the site and the locality, respecting the best local traditions of form, materials, and detailing;

(f) Environmental assets including features of the archaeological and built heritage, natural habitats, trees, and landscape features are identified and, where appropriate, retained and integrated in a suitable manner into the overall design and layout; and

[27] *Holiday Park: a holiday park is defined as a caravan site licensed under the Caravans Act (NI) 1963 now the Caravans Act 2011, which in addition to static caravans, may also contain or cabins, pitches for touring caravans, motor homes and tenting.*

(g) Mains water supply and sewerage services must be utilised where available and practicable.

(h) Information on the construction of each form of accommodation should accompany each proposal.

Glamping Accommodation

Glamping accommodation units fall outside the definition of a caravan by virtue of the interpretation in the Caravan Sites Act (NI) 2011[28].

The following policy applies for Glamping accommodation

Planning permission will be granted for three or more glamping accommodation units within the Priority and Sensitive Areas, as defined in the Tourism Hierarchy, where one or all of the following criteria are met:

(i) The glamping units are all located within the grounds of an existing or approved hotel, self-catering complex, guest house, holiday park; or

(j) The glamping units are accepted as a form of farm diversification and they are grouped with existing buildings;

(k) Where there is a locational need for glamping accommodation and the proposed development is integrated into the landscape.

Supporting evidence for any proposal should be proportionate to the size of the scheme.

All proposals for glamping accommodation must also comply with criteria (b) and (d) to (h) inclusive above.

Supporting evidence for any proposal should be proportionate to the size of the scheme.

Where an applicant is claiming a proposal is needed to support farm diversification, they need to clearly demonstrate why it is needed at that location and how it will help sustain the farm business and fully comply with Policy ED 8 Farm Diversification.

Where a proposal for glamping accommodation includes additional amenities such as shower blocks or cooking facilities they should be situated in existing buildings on the site where possible. Policy NMW 1 Non-Mains Wastewater is relevant where mains wastewater infrastructure is not available.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[28] *Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (legislation.gov.uk).*

Justification and Amplification

Holiday Parks

12.51 Holiday parks are important for the domestic tourism market in terms of the volume of rural tourism bed spaces they provide and the economic benefits that flow from this scale of tourism activity.

12.52 The Borough benefits from several long-established holiday parks providing accommodation for this tourist accommodation sector. Such parks offer a range of accommodation, including static caravan holiday homes and pitches for touring caravans, motorhomes, and camping, as well as a diverse range of infrastructure and amenity provision.

12.53 The scope for integrating a new holiday park, particularly a static park, or a large-scale extension to an existing facility is often limited by the extent and layout of such development and by specific locational preferences such as proximity to the coastline outside of settlements. Appropriate site selection is therefore crucial to ensure visual integration into the landscape and to avoid detrimental impact upon environmentally sensitive sites.

12.54 The policy provisions also reflect the importance of design, layout, and landscaping to achieve high quality development that integrates into the landscape and respects the surrounding rural context as well as providing a pleasant environment for users of the holiday park.

12.55 It is acknowledged that new holiday parks typically require somewhat larger sites than traditional high-density parks, high-quality proposal in terms of layout and landscaping will still be refused planning permission if the site is fundamentally unsuitable. Design considerations are contained within Annex G.

Glamping Accommodation

12.56 Glamping accommodation has become increasingly popular in recent years and offers visitors a level of luxury and comfort above what can be offered in the traditional camping experience, whilst enabling enjoyment of the natural environment. Glamping accommodation includes yurts, tepees, bell tents, wooden pods, and shepherd's huts.

12.57 Proposals for glamping accommodation must be submitted with supporting information which shows that the proposal complies with this policy. Photomontage imagery may be necessary to demonstrate that the proposal will integrate within the landscape and character of the area.

Policy TSM 7
Safeguarding of Tourism Assets

A tourism asset is defined as any feature with the built or natural environment which is of intrinsic interest to tourists[30].

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would, in itself or in combination with existing or approved development on the locality, have an adverse impact on a tourism asset such as to significantly compromise its tourism value.

This policy provides for the safeguarding of all tourism assets, including those which are subject to protection for other reasons under various legislative or policy instruments and those which are not subject to such protection.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

12.58 A tourism asset may already be subject to protection from inappropriate or excessive development through statutory designation.

12.59 This policy is intended to complement such measures in the specific interests of tourism while affording protection to other undesignated environmental assets on the basis of their tourism value alone.

12.60 The safeguarding of tourism assets from unnecessary, inappropriate, or excessive development is a vital element in securing a viable and sustainable tourism industry. To allow such development could damage the intrinsic character and quality of the asset and diminish its effectiveness in attracting tourists.

12.61 The policy is applicable to all forms of development which may impact adversely upon a tourism asset. Adverse impact may include visual impact, for example within an area of high landscape quality such as an Area of High Scenic Value (AoHSV), in a Conservation Area (CA), or within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), any of these could be important for attracting tourists. Adverse impact upon a tourism asset could also arise through other sources, for example odour, noise, dust or pollution of air or watercourses. What

[30] *A tourism asset can be regarded as any feature associated with the built or natural environment which is of intrinsic interest to tourists (SPPS).*

constitutes ‘adverse impact’ and the determination of the extent of its influence are matters of planning judgement and each case will be assessed on its merits.

12.62 Where the tourism asset is large scale, for example Strangford and Lecale AONB, key locations of tourism value at a local level should also be safeguarded. Development of a tourist amenity intended to provide sustainable access to, or interpretation of a tourism asset will be required to be sensitive to its inherent qualities and setting that underpin its tourism value.

12.63 Proposals within Sensitive, Protected areas are required to demonstrate that the proposal will not have an adverse on the protected site and supporting habitats or an indirect effect through increasing recreational pressure.

12.64 Any tourism development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as “Habitats Regulations Assessment” (HRA).

13 Mineral Development

13.1 Minerals are an important natural resource and economic asset within the Borough. They are essential for many forms of development and provide fuel for domestic and industrial purposes. The minerals industry, through extraction and processing, makes a significant contribution to the local and wider economy and is a valued provider of employment, particularly in rural areas.

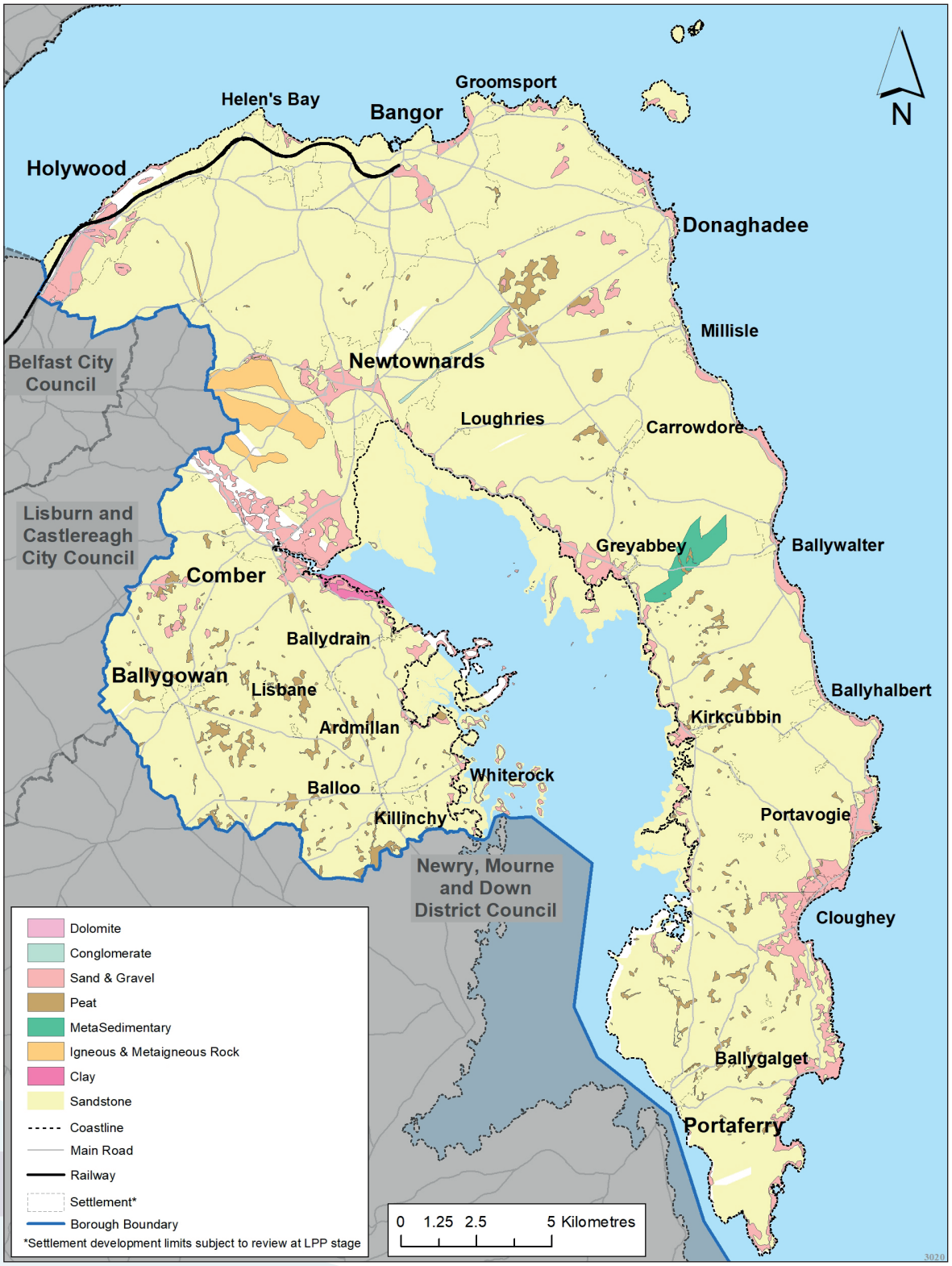
13.2 Minerals development, by its nature and location, can present significant challenges relating to environmental impact and the amenity of those living near the mineral extraction and processing operations. The scale of extraction can also result in significant visual intrusion and potential degradation of the landscape.

13.3 The Local Development Plan (LDP) therefore has a significant role in the balancing of the need for mineral resources and the need to protect and conserve the environment.

13.4 The Borough has an extensive history of minerals extraction, with slate, limestone, lead, shale, clay, sandstone, sand, and gravel all being extracted in the past. Map 5 shows the geodiversity across Ards and North Down. No sand or gravel extraction takes place within the Borough.

13.5 Sandstone is the only rock currently extracted in the Borough, with Ards and North Down providing a third of the sandstone extracted in Northern Ireland and it has been extracted in Ards and North Down since Medieval times. The Borough contains quarries that extract rock with a High Polished Stone value (PSV) which is highly valued for road building and exported to Great Britain through the port of Belfast.

Map 6: Ards and North Down Geodiversity



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Mineral Development Strategy

The strategy for mineral development is to balance the need for exploiting reserves where they exist, with the need to protect and conserve the environment from the potential adverse impacts that may arise as a consequence. This is through identifying areas which should be protected from minerals development, safeguarding mineral resources which are of economic or conservation value, and providing for the full assessment of mineral proposals including the sustainable and safe restoration and reuse of mineral sites.

13.6 This will be achieved by:

- The application of operational planning policies protecting the Borough's natural, marine and historic environment and its landscape and seascape;
- The application of operational planning policies for mineral development requiring the submission of information to demonstrate the need for mineral development;
- Identifying Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development (ACMD) at LPP stage; and
- Identifying Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSA) at LPP stage to prevent the sterilisation of mineral resources by surface development.

Why we have taken this approach

13.7 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Our society and economies are completely dependent on the environment which encompasses them and are therefore bound to its limits and capabilities.

13.8 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) directs LDPs to:

- Ensure that sufficient local supplies of construction aggregates can be made available for use within the local, and where appropriate, the regional market area and beyond, to meet likely future development needs over the Plan period;
- Safeguard mineral resources which are of economic or conservation value and seek to ensure that workable mineral resources are not sterilised by other surface development which would prejudice future exploitation; and
- identify areas which should be protected from minerals development because of their intrinsic landscape, amenity, scientific or heritage value (including natural, built, and archaeological heritage and councils may also identify areas most suitable for minerals development within the plan area.

13.9 From time-to-time minerals may be discovered which are particularly valuable to the economy. The SPPS states that there will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area, however in considering a proposal where the site is within a statutory policy area, due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning. The SPPS also states in relation to unconventional hydrocarbon extraction there should be a presumption against its exploitation until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.

13.10 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from;

- A prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4.)
- An environment that is valued, well managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

13.11 Successful management of mineral development protects the most sensitive areas and provides for managed extraction, restoration and aftercare for quarries. It is important that the LDP acknowledges the balance between the need for mineral development and the need to protect the environment.

13.12 The Mineral Development Strategy supports the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS particularly:

- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.



Operational Planning Policies

Policy MIN 1
Environmental Impact

Planning permission will be granted for mineral exploration and working only where:

(a) The need for such development is demonstrated;

(b) Such exploration and working delivers a high standard of environmental protection and enhancement to ensure that there are no unacceptable impacts on the natural and historic environment;

(c) Proposals for mineral extraction include an appropriate scheme for restoration, after care and long-term after-use to enable long-term enhancement of the environment;

(d) Proposals include details of the management of waste from extraction.

(e) It can be demonstrated that there are no unacceptable cumulative impacts on the environment;

(f) The proposal does not have an unacceptable visual impact on the landscape or seascape;

(g) Landscape, planting and restoration proposals take account of the landscape characteristics of the proposed location; and

(h) Particular regard is paid to the preservation of skyline and to the proposed location of plant, stockpiles and overburden/waste within the working area and there are no unacceptable impacts on marine and coastal water quality.

Extensions to existing minerals workings which minimise environmental disturbance in the countryside will be preferred to new workings on green field sites.

Minerals development within or in close proximity to an area that has been designated (or is proposed for designation) to protect its landscape, scientific or natural heritage significance will not normally be granted permission where this would prejudice the essential character of the area and the rationale for its designation.

Permission for the extraction of peat for sale will only be granted in exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated that peat is already degraded and not reasonably capable of restoration and where peat extraction is linked to a management plan which will deliver improved peatlands over a longer term.

Planning permission will not be granted for unconventional hydrocarbon extraction in the absence of sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

13.13 Minerals can only be extracted from sites where they occur and economically viable and environmentally acceptable extraction of minerals may be limited.

13.14 The consideration of environmental impacts will include, but is not limited to, effects on nature conservation (designated and non-designated sites and species), the marine environment, sites of geological interest, heritage assets (designated and non-designated) and their setting and other cultural assets, landscape, seascape and townscape character, soil quality, air quality, water quality and supply, flood risk, highways, infrastructure and community amenity.

13.15 The factors to be considered will depend on the scale of the proposed mineral development and its local context. In all circumstances proposals will be assessed in accordance with normal planning criteria, including such considerations as soil quality (where this is particularly suitable for agriculture), water quality (of rivers, lakes, reservoirs and groundwater), coastal and marine impact, tree and vegetation cover, wildlife habitats, natural features of interest in the landscape and sites of archaeological and historic interest.

13.16 The information required to make such assessments will be proportionate to the nature, size and scale of the proposal. Applications are expected to be accompanied by all required environmental information necessary to enable the Council to determine the potential impact of the proposal.

13.17 Where the proposal falls under the scope of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017, Environmental Assessment will be required.

13.18 Any minerals development that could impact directly or indirectly on a European Designated Site must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).

13.19 There is a presumption against the exploitation of hydrocarbon across Northern Ireland as stated in the SPPS. The geology of the area makes it unlikely that the Borough is prospective for oil or gas. The Department of the Economy, Geological Survey Northern Ireland (GSNI) advised there has been no petroleum encountered and there has been no hydrocarbon exploration within the Borough.

13.20 This policy requires evidence which demonstrates the need for the proposed development at this specific site. Information may take the form of geological data, or such information which details the need for the mineral development. The consideration of alternative sites should be demonstrated detailing potential environmental impact considerations. Supply and demand information available is expected to be provided to support the need for the development. Mineral extraction proposals should also demonstrate how they meet the requirements of The Planning (Management of Waste from Extractive Industries) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Visual Impact

13.21 It is a fact of geology that some of the more beautiful parts of the countryside such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV) contain easily workable reserves of rock, sand, and gravel. It would be unrealistic to dispense with essential sources of supply. To minimise the visual impact in the landscape, workings should, where possible, be located to take advantage of existing landforms and features.

13.22 Proposals should be submitted with evidence documenting the potential visual impact on the landscape and, where appropriate, seascape including the use of photomontages with a range of critical viewpoints identified, long range views and at close proximity to enable the visual impact to be fully assessed.

13.23 Guidance on Landscape Character is available on the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) website and across the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Review undertaken as part of the LDP evidence base. The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NILCA) 2000 and the Regional Landscape Character Assessment map viewer are additional sources of information for use and consideration by applicants.

13.24 Seascape information is available within the Northern Ireland Regional Seascape Character Assessment. It is recommended that references to landscape features also include coastal features such as shorelines and not just rivers, streams and hedges.

13.25 Where mineral development is situated along the coast, the potential impact to coastal processes should be considered. Applicants are advised that for any proposed marine aggregate extraction permission must first be sought from DAERA Marine and Fisheries Division (MFD), Marine Licensing Team.

13.26 Where permission is granted, landscape quality will be protected by attaching conditions designed to avoid or mitigate visual disturbance.

Peat

13.27 Peat is a type of soil that contains a high amount of dead organic matter, mainly plants that have accumulated over thousands of years. The conservation of peatlands is important for several reasons including biodiversity, archaeology, carbon and water storage and because of their landscape value. Peatlands are sensitive habitats that are easily affected by both natural and human factors, even degraded peat can be an important carbon store, and extraction may lead to carbon release. In addition, poorer quality peat can afford protection to better quality or active peat.



Policy MIN 2
Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments (ACMD)

Planning permission will not be granted for mineral extraction and/or processing of minerals within an area designated as an (ACMD).

Exceptions to this policy may be made where the proposed operations are:

- Short term; and
- The environmental and/or amenity impacts are not significant.

In such cases on-site processing of the excavated material is unlikely to be permitted.

Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments (ACMDs) will, where appropriate, be designated in the Local Policies Plan (LPP) using evidence to determine and support the extent of the areas.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 01 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP including NE 1 International Designations.

Justification and Amplification

13.28 The Borough is protected by a hierarchy of protective designations. Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments (ACMDs) add to the protection of areas from minerals development due to their intrinsic landscape, amenity, scientific or heritage value (including natural, built, and archaeological heritage).

13.29 There is a general presumption against mineral developments within ACMDs. Exceptionally mineral development within an ACMD will be permitted where it is demonstrated that the development would not unduly compromise the integrity of the ACMD or threaten to undermine the rationale for the designation.

13.30 Additional supportive evidence will be required to justify the need for mineral development within ACMDs such as the information required to satisfy MIN 3 Valuable Minerals

13.31 'Short term' for the purposes of this policy is a matter of professional planning judgement. The limitation on the length of time is to ensure that worked land is reclaimed at the earliest opportunity, and that high quality restoration and aftercare of mineral sites takes place as soon as possible.

Policy MIN 3
Valuable Minerals[31]

Planning permission will be granted in particular circumstances for applications to exploit minerals limited in occurrence and with some uncommon or valuable property.

In considering a proposal within a statutory designation or policy area, due weight will be given to the reason for the designation and all applications for valuable minerals will have to comply with MIN 1 Environmental Impact.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policies within the LDP including NE 1 International Designations.

Justification and Amplification

13.32 The Borough has a history of extraction of valuable metalliferous minerals in areas such as Whitespots at Newtownards. The LDP does not presume against such extraction in any area, however, where the proposed site is located with a designated area, due weight will be given to the reasoning for the designation, and what it seeks to protect.

13.33 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) states that from time-to-time minerals may be discovered which are particularly valuable to the economy. Their exploitation may create environmental effects which are particular to the methods of extraction or treatment of that mineral. There will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area, however in considering a proposal where the site is within a statutory policy area, due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning.

13.34 Extraction of valuable minerals within the Borough under this policy will require detailed justification on the value of the resource which may include data from the Tellus survey[32] Survey Northern Ireland (GSNI) and the Minerals Resource Map for Ards and North Down.

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[31] *Valuable Minerals are defined as metalliferous or non-metalliferous minerals licensed by the Department for the Economy (DfE) or Crown Estate which are particularly valuable to the economy.*

[32] *http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/id/eprint/18981/1/Down_Belfast_Mineral_Final.pdf*

Policy MIN 4
Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs)

Planning permission will not be granted where surface development would prejudice the future exploitation of valuable mineral reserves.

Where there are minerals of economic or conservation value and those reserves have been proven to acceptable standards, surface development which would prejudice their future exploitation will not be permitted.

Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA)'s will, where appropriate, be designated in the LPP using evidence to determine and support their extent.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policies within the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

13.35 As minerals can only be extracted from where they naturally occur, location options for the economically viable and environmentally acceptable extraction of minerals may be limited. This means that it is necessary to consider protecting land from non-minerals development in defined MSAs which would prejudice the working of these valuable minerals.

13.36 Specifically, surface development which could impact the ability of a mineral working to:

- extract to the full extent of their permitted reserves; or
- plan for and implement future extraction.

13.37 It is also important that consideration is given to permitted mineral development and distances to neighbouring development so that new neighbours are not adversely impacted by a mineral extraction site operating within the conditions of its extant planning permission.

13.38 Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) will, where appropriate, be designated in the LPP using evidence to determine and support the safeguarding area.

13.39 The following types of development will be exempt from this policy:

- Applications for householder development;
- Applications for alterations and extensions to existing non-residential buildings and for change of use of existing development, unless intensifying activity on the site;

- Applications for advertisement consent;
- Applications for reserved matters, including subsequent applications after outline consent has been granted;
- Certificates of Lawful Use or Development (CLUD);
- Applications for works to trees protected under a Tree Preservation Order (TPO); and
- Applications for temporary planning permission.

Policy MIN 5
Safety and Amenity

Planning permission will be granted for mineral development where it can be demonstrated that it will not:

(a) Compromise safety or significantly impair the amenity of people living or working in close proximity to the site; or

(b) Cause adverse impact due to noise, dust and vibration arising from extraction, processing or transportation of materials/minerals.

Where such impacts are judged to be incompatible with standards of amenity acceptable to the Council, planning permission shall be refused, unless the applicant can demonstrate adequate and acceptable means of mitigation.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policies within the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

13.40 When assessing proposals, it is also important to have regard to the safety and amenity of residents in close proximity to mineral workings. Proposals impacting upon the residential amenity of occupiers of nearby development may be satisfactorily mitigated by requiring sufficient separation between mineral operations and residential development, particularly where such operations involve blasting.

13.41 The distance required will vary according to several factors including but not limited to the nature of operations and topography and advice will be sought from consultees including the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) and the Council's Environmental Health Department (EHD) as necessary.

Policy MIN 6
Traffic

Planning permission will be granted for mineral developments where traffic generated from such proposals will not prejudice the safety and convenience of road users.

In cases where it is shown that an associated access would prejudice the safety and convenience of road users, planning permission will only be granted where access can be satisfactorily improved.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policies within the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

13.42 Mineral resources can often occur where the public road is unsuitable for the volume of heavy traffic which such mineral developments can generate.

13.43 When considering applications for new mineral developments with access onto the main traffic route network, particular attention will be paid to;

- The importance of the mineral to the economy of the area;
- Alternative sources of the mineral;
- The availability of an alternative access; and
- The suitability of the access having regard to the standards of sightlines, radii, gradients, as well as access to the strategic transport network.

13.44 Vehicles transporting materials from a mineral site may be directed to use particular routes to minimise the effect of disturbance from traffic on neighbours, where possible. Development Control Advice Note (DCAN) 15 "Vehicular Access Standards"[33] contains guidance for applicants. Climate Change Strategic policy and the need to reduce carbon emissions is a consideration for mineral development, as is the potential impact of transportation of extracted material.

[33] *Development Control Advice Note 15 - Vehicular Access Standards (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)*

Policy MIN 7
Restoration

Planning permission will only be granted for proposals for the extraction of minerals which include satisfactory restoration proposals. Such proposals must provide for progressive restoration of sites. As a minimum a Restoration Plan must include:

(a) An overall concept plan with sufficient detail to demonstrate that the scheme is feasible in both technical and economic terms;

(b) Details of contouring, landscaping, phasing and any other information as appropriate; and

(c) A statement demonstrating benefit to the locality, such as for biodiversity, tourism

Mineral extraction which relies on the importation of material for restoration must include satisfactory evidence that the material will be available in the type and quantities required, Applicants must:

(d) Demonstrate that importation provides the optimum restoration solution; and

(e) Provide evidence that it is not practical to reuse or recycle the waste if that is the material proposed;

Restoration plans should be considered at the design of the mineral extraction proposal. Section 76 Agreements may be required to ensure satisfactory restoration.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 01 and all other relevant policies within the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

13.45 Restoration is required to make areas of mineral working, fit for beneficial use and environmentally acceptable following the completion of extraction. The preferred types of reclamation and after-use will depend on the characteristics of the deposits, nature of excavation, availability of fill materials, the surrounding landscape, the needs of the local community and the potential for nature conservation on the site.

13.46 Restoration after the cessation of mineral development has the potential to enhance geodiversity where geological features can be studied, where appropriate and biodiversity enhanced through the choice of after use.

13.47 Safety is a feature of quarry management, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Quarry Safety Campaign contains useful guidance for applicants. Secure fencing should be an integral part of restoration.

Policy MIN 8
Water Resources and Flood Risk

Planning permission will be granted for mineral development where it can be demonstrated that there are no unacceptable impacts on surface water quality and flows, there are no unacceptable impacts on marine and coastal water quality or groundwater quality and level, at or in the vicinity of the site.

A sustainable drainage solution for the management of surface water run-off will be required for any development that triggers the requirement for a Drainage Assessment under Policy FLD 3 Development and Surface Water Risk.

Planning permission will only be granted where the Council is satisfied that suitable arrangements for management and maintenance of a sustainable drainage solution are in place in perpetuity. This may be achieved by a Section 76 legal agreement. An exception will only be permitted where it can be clearly evidenced that the site is fundamentally unsuitable for a Sustainable Drainage Scheme (SuDS) solution.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policies within the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

13.48 Where opportunities exist, measures should be included in mineral proposals to improve overall water quality. Water resources, where required, should be used as efficiently as possible.

13.49 Where the opportunity exists, restoration proposals should seek to incorporate flood risk reduction measures e.g., floodplain storage and reconnection, flood defence structures, and land management practices to benefit local communities.

13.50 To enable the Council to consider the potential impacts on the water network, marine area, its ecosystem services, and the users that rely on them, applicants must demonstrate how any potential

adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated. The evidence should be proportionate to the scale of the proposal and any potential impact on other marine uses and the marine area. The Strategic Climate Change policy outlines the importance of mitigation and adaptation to the effect of increased rainfall, storm events and flooding. Development such as mineral extraction should consider efficient water management within quarry design.

Policy MIN 9
Historic Building Stone

Short-term, minimal extraction of building and ornamental stone to repair listed buildings and important buildings or structures will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where all the following criteria are met:

(a) Need is clearly demonstrated and supported by statutory consultees including the Department for Communities (DFC) Historic Environment Division (HED) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DAERA); and

(b) Reclaimed stone is not available; and

(c) No alternative approved sites are available.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and other relevant policy provision within the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

13.51 The geology of the Borough provided building stone for some of Northern Ireland's most important buildings. Exceptional, small-scale extraction of short duration may be necessary for discrete restoration or repair of significant buildings.

13.52 Support of relevant statutory consultees must accompany any application which wishes to engage this building stone policy.





Environmental Chapter

14 Natural Environment
15 Historic Environment
16 Coastal Management
17 Flooding and Drainage
18 Advertisements
19 Hazardous Substances
20 Contaminated and Unstable Land

14 Natural Environment

14.1 Ards and North Down is rich in varied landscapes, wildlife habitats and heritage features, which together make a positive contribution to its special character and identity. The district is dominated by Strangford Lough, an enclosed tranquil stretch of marine water with an indented coastline of islands, half drowned drumlins and a smoother eastern coast, backed by wooded estates.

14.2 The Borough is characterised by a number of landscape types. The rocky coastline along the southern edge of Belfast Lough; an inland belt of gently rolling farmland. The wooded slopes of the Holywood Hills in the northern portion of the Borough and the Craigantlet Escarpment, and a steep escarpment to the south of Holywood, which forms a backdrop to east Belfast. The Borough also includes undulating farmland to the east, which continues southwards to the Ards Peninsula and the Outer Ards coast characterised by colourful rural coastal settlements and rocky coastal features.

14.3 Other highlights include Crawfordsburn Country Park, the Copeland Islands, and the North Down Coastal Path. The value and importance of many of these areas are recognised and afforded protection through international, national, and local environmental designations. The Outer Ards and Belfast Lough coastlines to the east and north of the Borough are designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites. In addition, 16 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) are designated throughout the Borough in recognition of their flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features.

14.4 The Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 43% of the Borough Council area, centred upon Strangford Lough. Strangford Lough as a marine habitat is recognised and the conservation of its natural environment, secured by a variety of statutory designations made under European Directives and regional legislation.

14.5 The Borough is also home to many rivers and extensive coastline including priority habitats where rivers maintain populations of salmon, migratory and resident trout, eels and potentially lamprey. These priority species hold considerable nature conservation and biodiversity value.

Table 10:
Natural Environment Designations in the Borough

International/European	
3 Ramsar Sites	Outer Ards Strangford Lough Belfast Lough
5 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) 2 Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 1 Proposed SPA	Belfast Lough SPA Copeland Islands SPA Outer Ards SPA Strangford Lough SPA Belfast Lough Outer SPA North Channel SAC Strangford Lough SAC Proposed SPA East Coast Marine pSPA
National	
4 National Nature Reserves (NNR)	Ballyquintin Nature Reserve North Strangford Lough Granagh Bay Nature Reserve Dorn Nature Reserve
16 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)	Ballymacormick ASSI Ballyquintin Point ASSI Blaeberry Island Bog ASSI Copeland Islands ASSI Lough Cowey ASSI Outer Ards ASSI Quoile ASSI Scrabo ASSI Strangford Lough ASSI 1, 2 ,3 Tieveshilly ASSI Whitespots ASSI Outer Belfast Lough ASSI Inner Belfast Lough ASSI Heron and Carrigullian Loughs ASSI
2 Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)	Outer Belfast Lough Strangford Lough
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Strangford and Lecale AONB

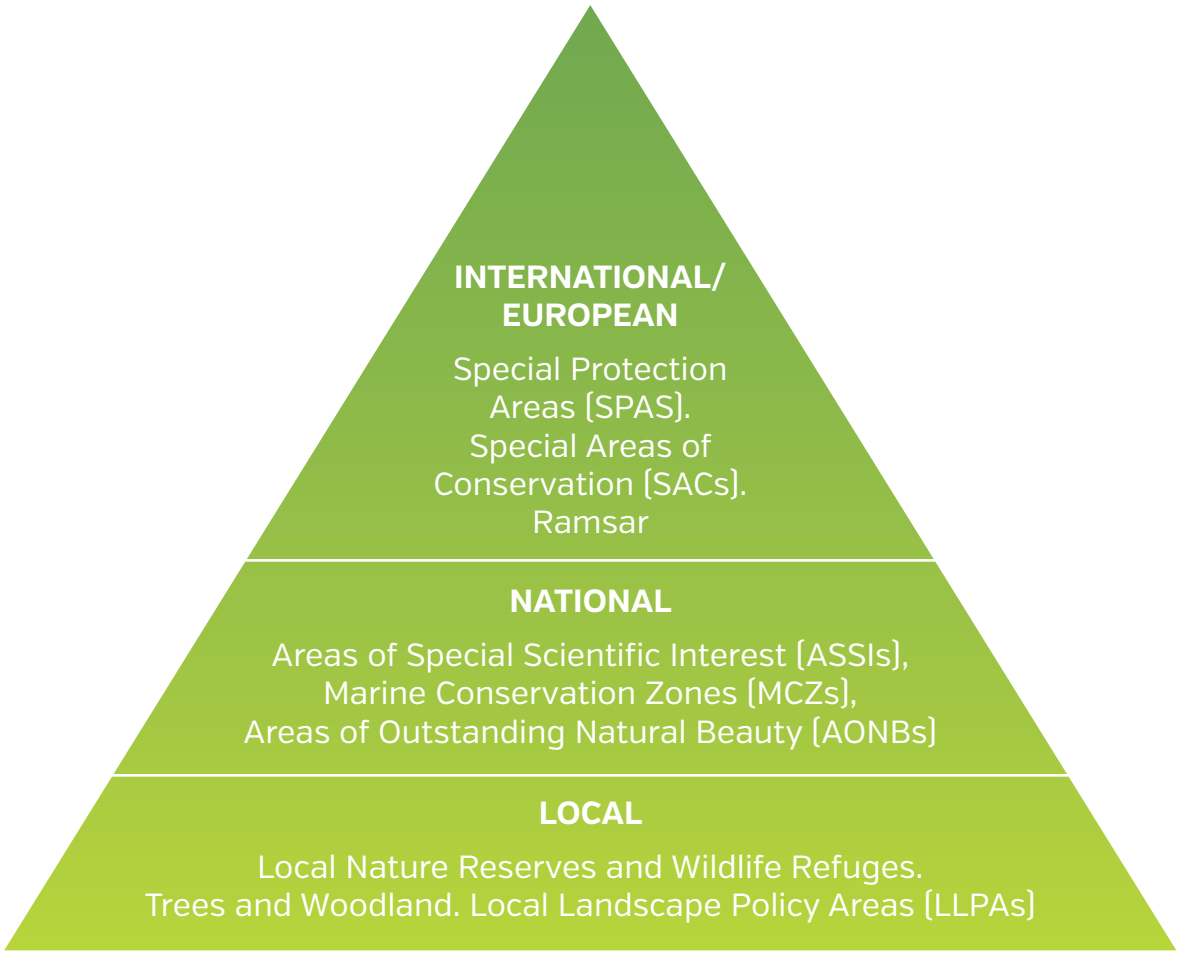


Figure 10:
Hierarchy of Nature Conservation Designations

Natural Environment Strategy

To conserve, protect and where possible enhance the natural environment, landscape, and biodiversity of Ards and North Down. The Local Development Plan (LDP) recognises the protection afforded to the Borough's natural environment, species, landscape, and seascape and endorses this protection.

14.6 This will be achieved by:

- The adoption of a precautionary approach when considering the impacts of a proposed development on national or international significant landscape or natural heritage resources, and protected species;
- A review of the existing Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPA) will be undertaken and brought forward within the Local Policies Plan (LPP); and

- The application of operational planning policies for Natural Environment and other relevant policies of the LDP including the Strategic Climate Change Policy.

Why we have taken this approach

14.7 Regional Guidance set out in the RDS, under RG 11, directs councils to 'Conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment'. This is supported by the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), which states that Natural Heritage features and designated sites should be identified as part of the plan-making process. The SPPS sets out strong regional policies for developments in relation to the protection of the natural environment.

14.8 The strategic policy for the natural environment has direct links with the Big Plan for Ards and North Down.

14.9 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- Opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential (Outcome 1);
- Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2);
- A Prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4); and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

14.10 Various studies show the positive effect that spending time in nature has on people's physical and mental health. Policies that protect and enhance the natural environment contribute to the achievement of several community planning outcomes.

14.11 Policy which protects the natural environment has an additional economic impact on the tourism value of the natural environment.

14.12 As referred to in the introduction, the natural environment creates a unique sense of place and contributes positively to the character of places in the Borough.

14.13 The Natural Environment Strategy supports the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS particularly:

- Improving Health and Well-Being;
- Creating and Enhancing Shared Space;
- Supporting Good Design and Positive Place-Making;
- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

Operational Planning Policies

Policy NE 1
International and European Designations

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that, either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, is not likely to have an adverse effect on:

- A European Site Special Protection Area (SPA), proposed Special Protection Area (pSPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC) and Sites of Community Importance) (SCI); or
- A listed or proposed Ramsar site.

Where a development proposal is likely to have a significant effect (either alone or in combination) or reasonable scientific doubt remains, the Council shall make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. A development proposal which could adversely affect the integrity of a European or Ramsar site may only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where all the following criteria are met:

(a) There are no alternative solutions; and

(b) The proposed development is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and

(c) Compensatory measures are agreed and fully secured through conditions or planning agreement.

In exceptional circumstances[1], a development proposal will only be permitted when the applicant has demonstrated that: -

- It is necessary for reasons of human health or public safety or there is a beneficial consequence of primary importance to the environment; or
- It has been agreed in advance with the relevant appropriate authority.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[1] *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1995/380/contents/made*

Justification and Amplification

14.14 Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA's) Standing Advice[2] which explains what applicants must do to meet legislative and policy requirements and enables them to prepare good quality planning applications.

14.15 Applicants should demonstrate how consideration of the proposals impact on the wider marine environment has been given, including terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, wider environment and the ecological networks that connect them.

Policy NE 2
Species Protected by Law

European Protected Species

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to harm a European Protected Species (EPS).

In exceptional circumstances a development proposal that is likely to harm these species may only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:

(a) There are no alternative solutions;

(b) It is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest;

(c) There is no detriment to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status; and

(d) Compensatory measures are agreed and fully secured.

National Protected Species

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to harm any other statutorily protected species, and which can be adequately mitigated or compensated against.

Development proposals are required to be sensitive to all protected species, and to be sited and designed to protect them and their habitats and are required to prevent deterioration and destruction of their breeding sites or resting places. Seasonal factors will also be taken into account.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[2] *https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/standing-advice-development-land-may-affect-natural-heritage-interests*

Justification and Amplification

14.16 Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is the Regulatory Authority in Northern Ireland with regard to European Protected Species (EPS). The Habitats Directive (transposed by the Habitat Regulations) includes a strict system of protection for EPS.

14.17 The Council aims to protect and enhance our natural environment and biodiversity, this includes policy to protect sites of national and local importance and the wider environment including, terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine habitats and the ecological networks that connect them. The precautionary principle is applied when considering the impacts of a proposed development.

14.18 It is a criminal offence to harm a statutorily protected species. The presence of species protected by legislation is a material consideration when considering a development proposal that if, carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitats.

14.19 European Protected Species (EPS) are listed under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (transposed under Schedule 2 of the Habitats Regulations) and must be subject to a system of strict protection. Other national protected species are listed under the Wildlife Order under Schedules (1), (5) and (8). The priority species list updated in 2023 is available on the NIEA website[3].

14.20 The presence or potential presence of a legally protected species is an important consideration in decision-making. Steps must be taken to establish whether it is present, and the requirements of the species must be factored into the planning and design of the development. Any likely impact on the species must be fully considered prior to any determination[4].

14.21 Applicants should demonstrate how consideration has been given to the proposal's impact on the wider marine environment. Evidence to show the consideration of the potential impacts on the marine area, its ecosystem services and the users that rely on them, should show how any potential adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated. The evidence should be proportionate to the scale of the proposal and any potential impact on other marine uses and the marine area.

14.22 Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal if it demonstrates that it is not likely to harm any European Protected Species (EPS). Seasonal factors, such as, nesting season and the timing of required surveys, will be important considerations and should also be considered in assessing the likely impacts of development. The impact of noise or floodlighting must also be considered.

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[3] *https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/list-northern-ireland-priority-species-2023*

[4] *Biodiversity Checklist NI - https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/NI%20Biodiversity%20Checklist%20-%20Version%202%20-%20April%202017.pdf*

14.23 Information to demonstrate the impact of a proposal on light sensitive receptors should include; which species are present, how they are using the habitat, the existing light levels and show how any potential adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated.

14.24 Applicants are advised to familiarise themselves with NIEA's Standing Advice[5] which explains what applicants must do to meet legislative and policy requirements and enables them to prepare good quality planning applications.

Policy NE 3
Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - National Designations

Planning permission will only be granted for a development that is not likely to have an adverse impact on the integrity, including the value of the site to the habitat network, or special interest of:

- An Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI); or
- A National Nature Reserve (NNR); or
- Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).

A development proposal which could adversely affect a site of national importance may only be permitted where the benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh the value of the site. In such cases appropriate mitigation and or compensatory measures will be required.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

14.25 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) provide statutory protection for the best examples of Northern Ireland's flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features. National Nature Reserves are areas of particular importance for flora, fauna, geological or other special features for conservation purposes and are managed to provide opportunities for research and further study.

14.26 Strangford Lough was Northern Ireland's only Marine Nature Reserve (MNR), it was redesignated as Northern Ireland's first Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) on the introduction of the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.

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[5] *Standing Advice | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)*

14.27 Proposals which may impact the wider marine environment should include the consideration of the potential impacts on the marine area, its ecosystem services and should show how any potential adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated.

Policy NE 4
Sites of Nature Conservation Importance - Local Designations

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to have a significant adverse impact on:

- A local Nature Reserve; or
- A Wildlife Refuge.

A development proposal which could have a significant impact on a site of local importance may only be permitted where the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the value of the site.
In such cases, appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures will be required.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

14.28 Local Nature Reserves (LNR) can be designated by Councils for nature conservation under powers conferred to them under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended). They are particularly appropriate for educational, recreational, or public information services. Local nature reserves (LNR) in the Borough include Balloo Wetland Nature Reserve and Balloo Woodland Nature Reserve, Kiltonga.

14.29 Applicants will be required to demonstrate that the proposal will not cause significant adverse impact.

Policy NE 5
Habitats, Species or Features of Natural Heritage Importance

Planning permission will be granted for a development proposal which is not likely to result in the unacceptable adverse impact on, or damage to known:

- Priority habitats;
- Priority species;
- Active peatland;
- Ancient and long-established woodland;
- Features of earth science conservation importance;
- Features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna including ecological corridors;
- Rare or threatened native species;
- Wetlands (includes river corridors);
- Other natural heritage features worthy of protection;
- Trees and woodland that are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO); or
- Other trees and woodland that are not protected but still make a contribution to the Borough in terms of visual amenity and biodiversity.

A development proposal which is likely to result in an unacceptable adverse impact on, or damage to, habitats, species or features listed above may only be permitted where the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the value of the habitat, species or feature. In such cases, appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures will be required.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

14.30 Many species and habitats protected by law under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) occur outside core designated sites and are liable to harm by proposed development if policy is not in place to protect them.

14.31 This includes both European (as identified under Annex I and II of the Habitats Directive and Annex I of the Birds Directive) and Northern Ireland priority habitats and species identified through the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy (NIBS) (to achieve the statutory duties under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (NI) Act 2011).

14.32 Northern Ireland priority species are those species which require conservation action because of their decline, rarity, and/or importance. Not all nature conservation interests are restricted to core statutory and non-statutory designated sites. It is important to recognise there are habitats and species located in the wider landscape not identified as conservation priorities but that are still considered locally important for biodiversity.

14.33 Other natural heritage features worthy of importance include trees and woodland, which do not fall under the priority habitat or long-established woodland categories, but are in themselves important for local biodiversity. Other natural environment features that provide a significant contribution to biodiversity may include buffer areas around core designated sites, stepping stones, ecological corridors, and links, which are all vital components of a resilient Ecological Network. Irrespective of any designations or specific protection, it is important that all development proposals consider how they can conserve and enhance nature conservation, biodiversity interests and ecological connectivity.

14.34 The Council's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) contains information on habitats and species of local importance. Healthy biodiversity makes essential contributions to climate change mitigation and adaptation the importance of which is also reflected within the Boroughs Climate Change Policy CC 1 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

14.35 Applicants should enable the Council to be able to determine the impact of the proposal's impact, through the submission of necessary information.

- Seasonal factors should be considered that could impact upon protected species for example, nesting seasons. This is also important in determining when surveys should be carried out to establish the presence of a species on site.
- The consideration of the potential impacts on the marine area, its ecosystem services and the users that rely on them, should show how any potential adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated.
- Information to demonstrate the impact of a proposal on light sensitive receptors should include which species are present, how are they using the habitat – roosting, commuting, foraging, the existing light levels and show how any potential adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated. "Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting[6]" Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals contains further guidance.

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[6] *https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Resources/ilp-guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting-compressed.pdf?v=1542109349*

14.36 It is recognised that hedgerows are important for a range of ecosystem services including biodiversity. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Standing advice contains further information on hedgerows[7]. Applicants should note that hedgerows may be a priority habitat due to their significant biodiversity value which relates not only to the specific plant species within the hedgerow but to their wider value for foraging, providing shelter, and corridors for movement of large numbers of species.

Policy NE 6
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Planning permission for new development within Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will only be granted where all the following criteria are met:

(a) The siting and scale of the proposal is sympathetic to the distinctive special character of the area and the quality of the landscape, heritage, and wildlife;

(b) It respects or conserves features (including buildings and other man-made features) of importance to the character, appearance, or heritage of the landscape, including the:

- (i) Local architectural style and pattern;
- (ii) Traditional boundary details, by retaining features such as hedges, walls, trees, and gates;
- (iii) Local materials, design, and colour; and
- (iv) Protection of the public view of key features, such as ridge lines and coastal headlines within the AONB.

Proposals located outside the AONB but which have a visual link, must have regard to the sensitivity of the setting and the visual relationship with Strangford and Lecale AONB.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 01 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[7] *https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/DAERA%20Standing%20Advice%20%20-%20NED%20-%20Hedgerows.pdf*

Justification and Amplification

14.37 The Council wishes to acknowledge and protect the distinctive qualities of Strangford and Lecale AONB. Much of Strangford Lough and the surrounding area has been designated as an AONB since the late 1960's with re-designation in 2010 to the "Strangford and Lecale" AONB.

14.38 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated for their high landscape quality, wildlife importance and rich cultural and architectural heritage. This policy seeks to protect the distinctive landscape character of the AONB.

14.39 Design and Access Statements are a requirement that should accompany applications within the AONB, under Section 40(3) and Section 86(2) of the NI Planning Act 2011.

14.40 The Statement should outline in writing the overall design concept and objectives for the site and include an indicative concept plan, based on the appraisal of the site and its context both terrestrial and offshore. Individual, and cumulative impacts should also be identified.

14.41 The amount of information and level of detail required will depend on the nature, scale, and location of the proposed development. Where necessary the Statement should also address any local design considerations, identified in design guides or supplementary planning guidance and provide information on any improvements to infrastructure required to facilitate the proposed development.

14.42 In assessing proposals, account will be taken of the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NILCA), and the Review of the Landscape Character Assessment which was undertaken to update the evidence base for the new Local Development Plan (LDP). The Landscape Character Area (LCA). Review identifies those Landscape Character Areas within the AONB and illustrates those viewed as more sensitive to a range of development types.

14.43 The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NILCA) presents the key characteristics, landscape description, landscape condition, sensitivity to change, principles for landscape management and development management. The LCA Review updates information and offers high level consideration of areas viewed as more sensitive to a range of development types.

14.44 Account should also be taken of the Northern Ireland Regional Seascape Character Assessment and any other relevant guidance including The Strangford and Lecale AONB Management Plan and any other published guidance.

15 Historic Environment

15.1 The historic environment of Ards and North Down comprises of built and archaeological assets from all periods of human settlement in Ireland from around 7,000BC to the 20th Century. The range of historic features is diverse, including vernacular buildings, planned parklands, tombs, medieval ruins, mounds, maritime heritage and industrial and defence heritage, all of which have influenced the evolution of our Borough. As such, the historic environment constitutes an important source of information about our past and provides iconic features that give our settlements their unique character and sense of place. The economic potential is also recognised, for example through the use of historic sites as tourist attractions and filming locations and the conservation-led reuse and regeneration of historic buildings for modern uses.

15.2 The Borough contains a variety of listed buildings, of which 16 are Grade A. Many of these are 'grand houses' set within extensive grounds, for which the area has become renowned, such as Mount Stewart, Bangor Castle, Ballywalter Park, and Rosemount in Greyabbey. Furthermore, there are 122 Scheduled monuments (15 of which are in State Care, including Scrabo Tower and Ballycopeland Windmill), 17 historic parks, gardens and demesnes (of which Mount Stewart is of international significance) and 12 Areas of Archaeological Potential, located within the Borough. Nendrum is identified for designation as an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest as it is considered to be a particularly distinctive area of historic landscape in Northern Ireland.[1]

15.3 There are three conservation areas designated within the Borough at Holywood, Donaghadee and Portaferry. Holywood Conservation Area was designated in May 2004 and contains a mix of Medieval, Victorian and Edwardian architecture, a well-preserved historic street pattern and a unique wooded landscape setting, all contributing to its unique character. Portaferry and Donaghadee Conservation Areas are primarily commercial in nature, the evolution of both having been heavily influenced by their coastal locations. The character of the 200-year-old harbour and lighthouse in Donaghadee are iconic features of the Borough as a whole. There are also 18 Areas of Townscape Character and Village Character within the Borough, designated through the LDP process on the basis of their distinctive character and unique identity. These include Crawfordsburn, which developed along an important routeway between Belfast and Bangor. It has retained elements of its 17th Century history, including the old coaching inn.

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[1] *The number of historic assets were correct at the time of publication but please note that they are subject to change over time as new assets are discovered , designated or in some cases, removed from the Historic Environment Record.*

15.4 Further details of the historic environment of the Borough, including the spatial extent of designations, can be found on the Historic Environment Division (HED) Historic Environment MapViewer and within the LDP Position Paper – Historic Environment, on the Planning pages of the Council's website.

Historic Environment Strategy

To protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment of our Borough and to support proposals that deliver economic and community benefits through the sustainable reuse of heritage assets, whilst safeguarding their historic significance.

15.5 This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring appropriate protection is afforded to features of the historic environment;
- Requiring an applicant to submit a Statement of Significance to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by development proposals;
- The application of Development Management policies and other relevant policies of the LDP to protect specific heritage assets and their settings from the adverse impacts of development;
- Promoting the highest quality of design for any proposed change or new development that affects the historic environment;
- Identifying areas of distinctive character that are worthy of protection as Areas of Townscape/Village Character;
- The promotion of the historic environment as a tourist asset and catalyst to regeneration; and
- The promotion of a sustainable approach by encouraging the reuse and repurposing of heritage assets.

Why we have taken this approach

15.6 The RDS sets out regional guidance to protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the historic environment of our Borough. This is supported by the SPPS, which directs Local Development Plans to identify the main built and archaeological heritage features where they exist within the Plan area and to bring forward appropriate policies or proposals for their protection, conservation and enhancement.

15.7 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2);
- Various studies[2] by heritage authorities have shown a positive correlation between positive wellbeing indicators for people who had visited or volunteered at heritage sites. Therefore, it can be concluded that policies that protect and enhance the historic environment contribute towards and achievement of this community planning outcome;
- A prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4);

  A policy that protects our heritage assets aligns with this outcome primarily due to the tourism value that they have as visitor attractions;
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

15.8 Furthermore, the historic environment strategy and operational policies will also deliver on all five of the core planning principles:

- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Creating and Enhancing Shared Space
- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth
- Supporting Good Design and Positive Placemaking; and
- Preserving and Improving the built and natural environment.

15.9 As referred to in the introduction, heritage assets create a unique sense of place and contribute positively to the character of places in the Borough. Conservation-led management of development of these assets and the spaces adjacent to them will ensure that their placemaking value is maintained and, where possible, enhanced.

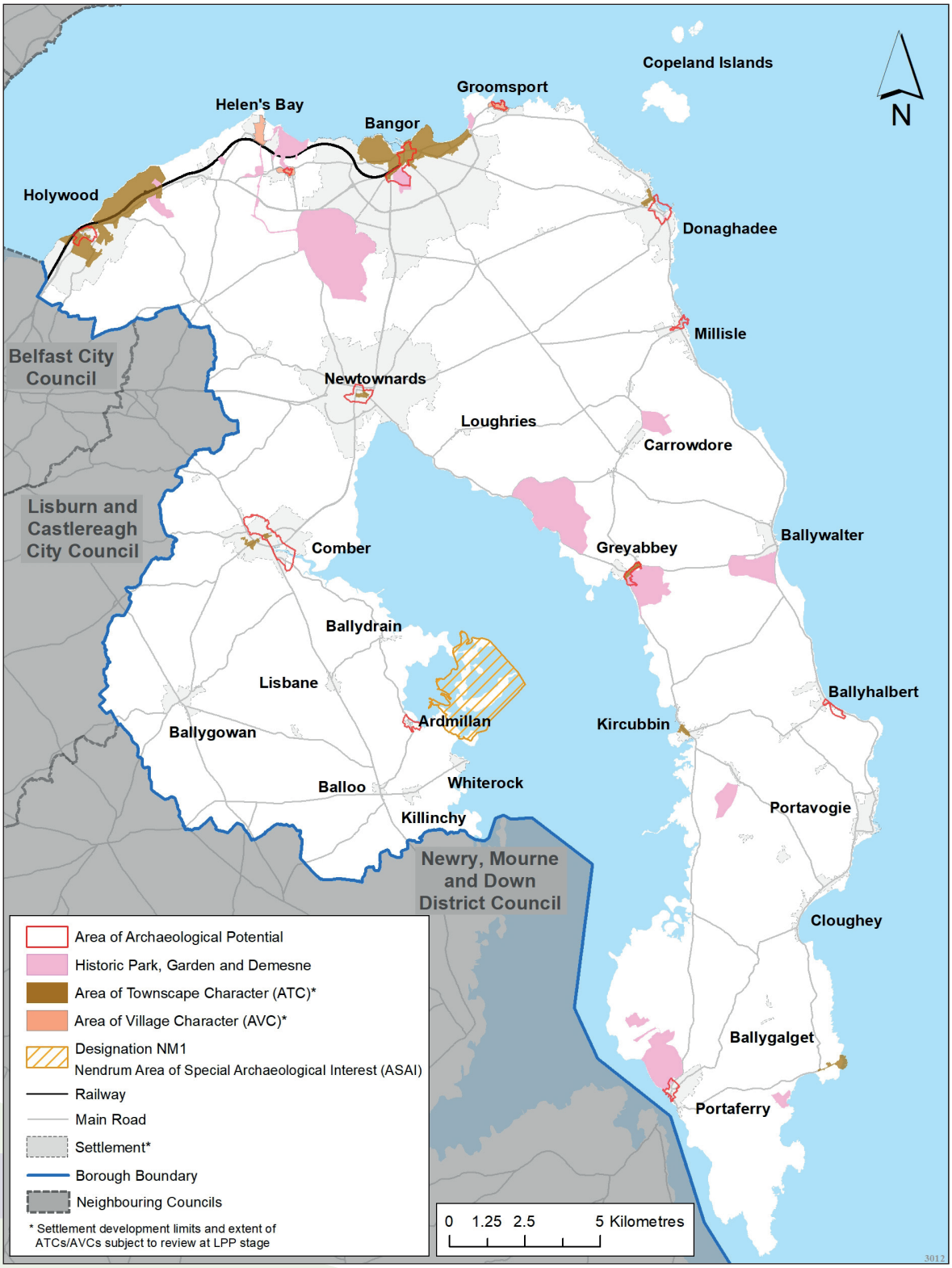
15.10 Our historic environment is particularly vulnerable to change and for this reason, a cautious approach to its management and protection is required. It is important that the LDP recognises and protects those special features of our Borough to maintain local distinctiveness and manage change in a way that also maximises the potential to deliver positive economic and tourism benefits. Historic Environment Division (HED) has a role in both designating heritage assets[3], maintaining the record of said assets and as a statutory consultee on certain planning applications.

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[2] *Sources -Ni Heritage Statistics and www.heritagedelivers.org*

[3] *A Heritage asset includes any part of the historic environment that has heritage value including scheduled monuments,archaeological remains, historic buildings (both statutorily listed and of more local significance) together with any historically related contents, industrial, marine and defence heritage, CAs, ATCs or a Historic Park, Garden or Demesne.*

Map 7: Strategic Historic Environment Map



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Designation NM1

Nendrum Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI)

15.11 Nendrum, on the western shores of Strangford Lough (see Designation Map 8), is proposed for designation as an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI). Nendrum was an important maritime monastic settlement, located on the highest point of Mahee Island. The ASAI includes several heritage features including the monastery itself which is the best example of an early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure in Northern Ireland. The monastery includes an ancient tide mill of international importance and is a State Care monument, managed by the Department for Communities, along with nearby castle sites at Sketrick (Sketrick Castle) and Mahee (Nendrum Castle). Other small-scale features within the designated site include stone quays, intertidal walls, slipways, causeways and fish traps.

15.12 The unique island and coastal landscapes make a valuable contribution to the setting, understanding and appreciation of the monastic site, whose influence extended to the mainland in historic times and to the understanding and enjoyment of other heritage assets and their settings, that lie within it. The views from the monastery and toward it, including the views from and to the mainland, are critically important and convey a distinct and tranquil sense of place. The contribution of the rural and coastal approach roads and causeways to the site are a key characteristic of the ASAI, offering unique views of land and sea and reflecting the interwoven nature of the islands and coastline. The place names of the area have been influenced by both its natural landscape characteristics and the historic environment.

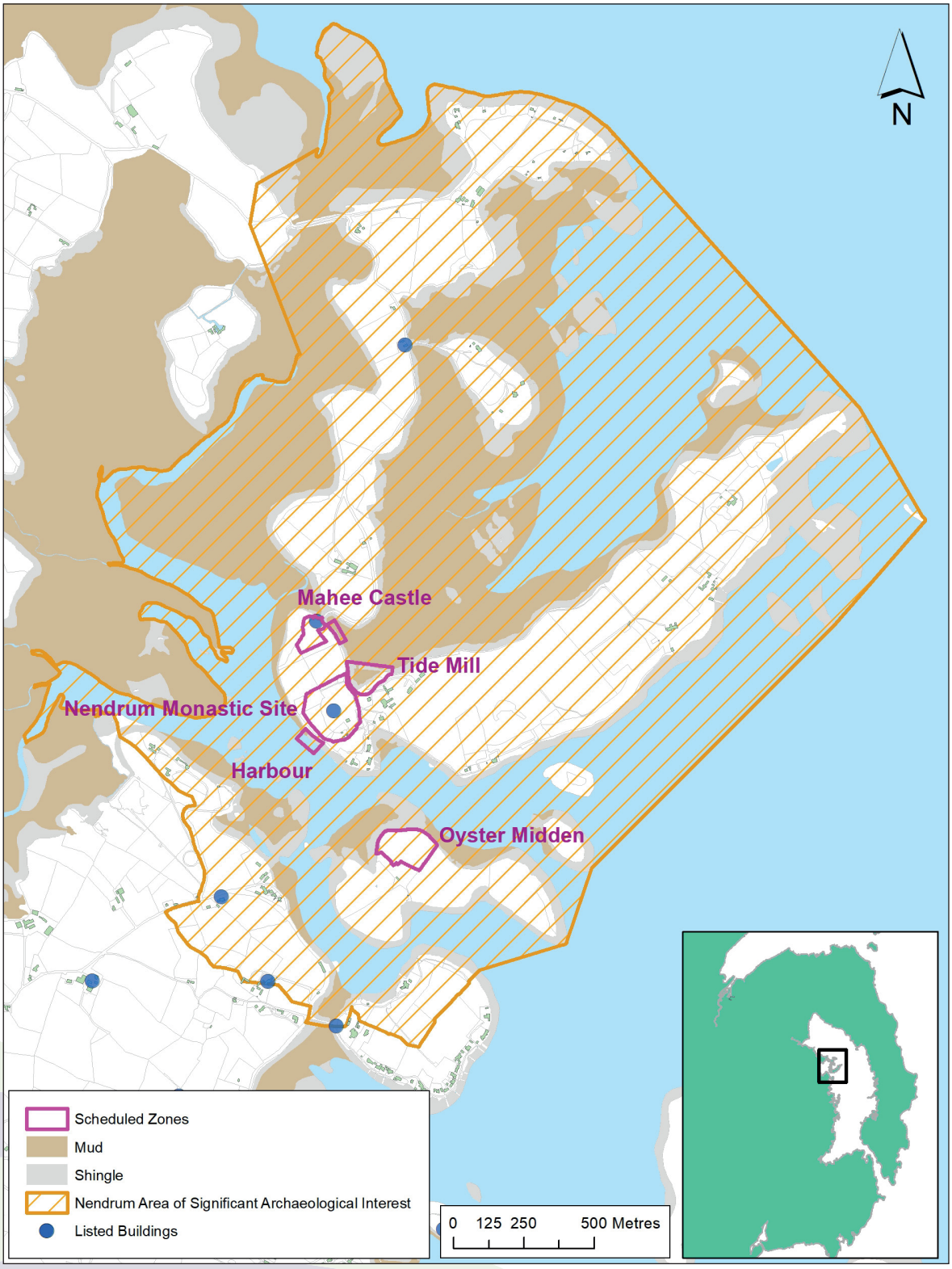
15.13 Development, such as high wind turbines (on land or sea), large scale development, cumulative one-off housing, large forms of aquacultural development[4] or types of development that would result in the introduction of loud noise output into the landscape, has the potential to adversely impact the distinctive qualities of this close-set island landscape and the contribution it makes to the setting and enjoyment of the monument.

15.14 Accordingly, this regionally significant archaeological site is proposed for ASAI designation and applications that fall within the designated boundary will be subject to the provisions of Policies HE 1 and HE 2.

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[4] *Acquaculture development refers to the rearing of aquatic animals or the cultivation of aquatic plants for food.*

Map 8: Designation Map of Nendrum Area of Significant Archaeological Interest



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Note: Scheduled Zones provide a spatial definition to the scheduled monuments designation as implemented by Article 3 of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1993. Works within such areas require scheduled monument consent from the Department for Communities in advance of works commencing. They are defined on a site-specific basis, following field and desk-based survey, taking cognisance of the attributes of individual assets and, in some cases, taking in surrounding land to protect attributes that may include, but which are not confined to, buried features or hydrology, or structural integrity.



Operational Policies for the Historic Environment

Policy HE 1
Statements of Significance (SoS)

All development proposals impacting upon a heritage asset must include a Statement of Significance, demonstrating a full and proper understanding of the essential character and special architectural and/or historic interest of the building/site and its setting.

This policy applies to the following heritage assets:

- Listed buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes;
- Scheduled Monuments; and
- Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest.

Justification and Amplification

15.15 All planning applications for development proposals which impact upon the heritage assets listed above should include a Statement of Significance (SoS), informed by an appropriate level of professional expertise, demonstrating a heritage-led approach to the development and a clear understanding of its significance.

15.16 Significance is defined as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic and it may derive not only from the asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'

15.17 This policy is intended to improve the quality of applications that impact upon the historic environment. It is based upon the principle that development proposals that affect the historic environment are much more likely to gain the necessary permissions and create successful places if they are designed with a knowledge and understanding of the significance of the heritage asset that they affect.

15.18 The requirement for a SoS represents a staged approach to decision making whereby the significance of the asset is fully understood before a scheme is designed. This is a better approach than developing a proposal before significance is assessed – which can result in abortive work, time delays and additional costs for applicants.

15.19 The SoS should identify the significant characteristics of the site, detail how the proposal would affect them and justify why this is necessary or desirable. The SoS would likely include a desktop and onsite analysis, historical information, photographs and may require expert assessments. Sources of information could include local Conservation or Historical Groups/Societies, books, maps and records obtained from DfC Historic Environment Division (HED). Additional information such as photomontages, and drawings may also be submitted in support of an application.

15.20 The level of detail included within the SoS should be proportionate to the nature of the development and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of the asset. If the significance of the asset and the impact upon it is low, then only a few paragraphs may be needed. However, if the impact is high and the significance of the asset is also high, then a higher level of detail will be required.

15.21 An example of a sample structure for a SoS can be found in Annex I. In cases where a Design and Access Statement (DAS) is also required, the SoS may be usefully incorporated into the DAS, to avoid unnecessary duplication of information. It should be made clear in the title that the two documents have been combined.

Archaeology

Policy HE 2
The Preservation of Archaeological Remains of Regional Importance and their Settings

The Council will operate a presumption in favour of the physical preservation in situ of archaeological remains of Regional Importance and their settings. These comprise Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI), monuments in State Care, Scheduled monuments and other important sites and monuments that would merit scheduling.

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals which would adversely affect such sites of regional importance, or the integrity of their settings, in exceptional circumstances and where it is demonstrated that the development is of overriding regional significance and there are no alternatives.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. A Statement of Significance will also be required to accompany the proposal (see Policy HE 1 Statements of Significance (SoS)).

Justification and Amplification

15.22 Ards and North Down has a rich archaeological heritage, consisting of both above and below ground remains. These are finite resources which help us understand our past, but they are often fragile and vulnerable to damage or destruction through insensitive development. It is therefore particularly important that they are preserved in situ and within an appropriate setting.

15.23 State Care and Scheduled monuments, alongside Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest, represent the highest tier of archaeological remains in terms of their importance to Northern Ireland. Development that would adversely impact upon archaeological remains of regional importance will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, where there is no practicable alternative site and where it is demonstrated that there is a regionally significant overriding need for development.

15.24 Monuments in State Care are protected by legislation and managed as a public asset. In assessing proposals for developments in the vicinity of these monuments, particular attention will be given to:

- The critical views or, and from the site or monument, including protection of its setting;
- The access and public approaches to the site or monument; and
- The understanding and enjoyment of the site or monument by visitors.

15.25 Where a planning application is proposed to be submitted which involves affecting a scheduled monument, the applicant is advised to submit an application for Scheduled Monument Consent to the Department for Communities (DfC) - Historic Environment Division (HED) in advance, in order that all the issues can be considered concurrently.

Policy HE 3
The Preservation of Archaeological Remains of Local Importance and their Settings

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals which would adversely affect archaeological sites or monuments of local importance, or their settings, where it is demonstrated that the importance of the proposed development or other material considerations outweigh the value of the remains and their settings.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. Planning applications affecting Scheduled monuments also require the submission of a Statement of Significance – see Policy HE 1 Statements of Significance (SoS).

Justification and Amplification

15.26 The vast majority of archaeological sites and monuments are not scheduled but they still provide an important record of our past. Many are recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record, the Industrial Heritage Record and the Defence Heritage Record, all maintained and compiled by Historic Environment Division (HED). They are locally important and of value to the community and therefore merit protection through the planning process.

15.27 In assessing the local significance and intrinsic value of local archaeological sites and remains, the following factors will be

considered, as part of a wider judgement based upon the individual circumstances of the case in consultation with DfC:

- Appearance: distinctive features in the landscape/townscape or local landmarks;
- Quality: well-preserved or extensive buried remains;
- Folklore/historical interest: association with a person or event in local tradition or legend;
- Group Value: one of a number of locally important sites; and
- Rarity: a locally rare example.

15.28 In cases where development proposals affect archaeological sites and monuments that are not of regional or local importance, the Council will still have regard to desirability of preserving them and their settings.

15.29 If it is decided that development may proceed, this will be conditional upon appropriate archaeological mitigation measures (see Policy HE 4).

Policy HE 4
Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation

Where the impact of a development proposal upon important archaeological remains is unclear, or the relative importance of such remains is uncertain, applicants will be required to provide further information in the form of an archaeological assessment or evaluation. Should an applicant fail to provide a suitable assessment or evaluation when requested, the Council shall adopt a precautionary approach and refuse planning permission.

Justification and Amplification

15.30 Prospective developers should take archaeological considerations into account from the outset in order to avoid, or at least reduce, potential conflict between archaeology and development. It is therefore in applicants' own interests to establish whether a site contains archaeological remains as part of the assessment of its development potential and to engage in early discussions with both the Council and DfC Historic Environment Division to establish the archaeological sensitivity of the site prior to the detailed design stage.

15.31 Areas of Archaeological Potential (AAPs) are those areas within settlements where, based on current knowledge, there is a likelihood that archaeological remains will be encountered during development.

This means that further assessment, evaluation, and possibly mitigation measures, will be likely at these locations. There are currently 12 identified AAPs in the Borough and further AAPs will be identified at Local Policies Plan stage.

15.32 In some cases, the Council will use its powers under the Planning (NI) Act 2011 to request further information in the form of an Archaeological Assessment or Evaluation to accompany a planning application. The purpose of an archaeological evaluation or assessment is to help define the importance, character and extent of the remains that may exist on a development site, to establish the weight that should be attached to their preservation and to identify potential options for minimising or avoiding damage. Such information will enable the Council to make an informed and reasonable decision on the application, following further consultation with Historic Environment Division (HED).

15.33 An archaeological assessment is carried out by a qualified archaeologist and normally consists of a desk-based study of existing information relating to the site including historic maps, records of previous discoveries or geophysical surveys.

15.34 An archaeological evaluation usually involves a targeted archaeological excavation, of limited scope, carried out by a licensed archaeologist. It is quite distinct from a full archaeological excavation and aims to clarify the nature and extent of below-ground archaeological remains, within a proposed development site.

15.35 Further information on the completion of archaeological assessments and evaluations can be found in the Historic Environment Division (HED) Guidance document 'Guidance on Archaeological Works in the Planning Process' (April 2019) which is available on the DfC website.

Policy HE 5
Archaeological Mitigation

In cases where planning permission is granted for development proposals which will affect sites known, or likely, to contain archaeological remains, the Council will attach appropriate conditions to ensure that measures are in place for the identification and mitigation of the archaeological impacts of the development.

This may include, where appropriate, preserving the remains in situ, the completion of a licensed excavation, recording, examination and archiving of remains before development commences.

Justification and Amplification

15.36 In some circumstances, it will be possible to permit development proposals that affect archaeological remains, providing that appropriate archaeological mitigation measures are in place to ensure that the remains are preserved in situ in the final development, (which is always the preferred option) or that the remains are excavated, examined and recorded before development commences.

15.37 Potential mitigation measures may include specific design alterations or the careful siting of landscape features and open space areas to avoid disturbing underground remains.

15.38 The discovery of previously unknown archaeological remains can also result in a material change which could affect the nature of the development permitted. Occasionally, archaeological remains are only discovered once development commences. In such circumstances, it is a statutory requirement that these are reported to HED.[5]

15.39 On rare occasions, the importance of such remains may merit scheduling, in which case the developer will need to seek separate Scheduled Monument Consent before they continue work. In most cases, it should prove possible for differences to be resolved through voluntary discussion towards the agreement of a mitigation strategy. Applicants should consider the potential need for a contingency plan to deal with unexpected archaeological discoveries.

15.40 There may be occasions where archaeological remains are of lesser importance and where the value of the remains is not sufficient when weighed against all other material considerations (including the importance of the development) to merit protection in situ. In these cases, developers will be required to prepare and carry out a programme of archaeological works, in consultation with Historic Environment Division (HED).

[5] *Article 42 of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects Order 1995 applies.*

Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes

Policy HE 6
Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals within historic parks, gardens or demesnes, or which may impact upon their settings ,where it can be demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) The development will not lead to the loss of, or cause harm to, the overall character, layout, setting or principal components of the park, garden or demesne, including flora and fauna, landscape features and buildings;

(b) The development would not adversely impact upon the overall quality, understanding, experience and enjoyment of the historic park, garden and demesne; and

(c) The development would not impair the archaeological, historical or horticultural, nature conservation or scientific interest of the site.

If permission is granted for a development proposal which would result in the loss of any distinctive features, a planning condition will be imposed which will require developers to record these features prior to the commencement of development, in consultation with (HED).

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. The proposal will also require to be accompanied by a Statement of Significance (see Policy HE 1 Statements of Significance (SoS).

Justification and Amplification

15.41 The Register of Parks, Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest in Northern Ireland was first published in 1999 by Historic Environment Division (HED) to identify those parks, gardens and designed landscapes that are of exceptional importance to Northern Ireland. They represent striking and important feature of our historic environment and are enjoyed as unique places for study, reflection, recreation and conservation. Furthermore, they embody a living record of social, economic and cultural change and values through their landscaping, design, features and collections of trees, shrubs and flowers.

15.42 The original Register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes (which contained 13 'registered' and four 'supplementary' sites in our Borough) was comprehensively reviewed and revised by Historic

Environment Division in 2021 and the updated Register was published on 30 September 2022. The updated Register includes 16 properties within Ards and North Down and introduces a grading system (A*, A and B) to reflect the level of significance. Three sites in the Borough are categorised as A* - Mount Stewart, Rosemount and Clandeboye.

15.43 Policy HE 6 Historic Parks Gardens and Demesnes seeks to secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, enhancement of the heritage features associated with these historic parks, gardens and demesnes. In assessing the impact of proposals for development in or adjacent to a historic park, garden or demesne, particular attention will be paid to the impact of the proposal upon:

- The archaeological, historical, horticultural, nature conservation or scientific interest of the site;
- The original design concept of the site, overall quality and setting;
- Trees and woodland and their contribution to landscape character;
- Any buildings or landscape features of character within the site including boundary walls, pathways, garden terraces, statues, ponds, bridges and water features; and
- Planned historic views of or from the site.

15.44 Where the decision is taken to permit development which would result in the loss of any distinctive features of parks, gardens and demesnes, the Council will require developers to carry out recording so that the knowledge of this part of our landscape is not lost.



Policy HE 7
Change of Use or Extension/Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building

All works to a listed building must ensure that the essential character and special architectural and historic interest is conserved, protected and, where possible, enhanced.

Change of Use

Planning permission will normally only be granted for a change of use of a listed building where it secures its upkeep and survival. The new use must be compatible with the fabric, setting and character of the listed building.

Extension/Alteration or Conversion of a Listed Building

Planning permission will be normally only be granted for development proposals for extension/alteration or conversion of a listed building where it is demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) The essential character and special architectural and/or historic interest of the building and its setting remains intact and unimpaired, and includes maximum retention of historic fabric and architectural features;

(b) The works proposed make use of traditional or sympathetic building materials, techniques and details which match or are in keeping with those found on the existing buildings;

(c) In the case of extensions, they shall be sympathetic to the existing building in terms of height, scale, form, massing, proportions and alignment; and

(d) Architectural detailing e.g. doors, guttering, windows match or are in keeping with the existing building.

Where partial demolition is proposed as part of the extension/alteration or conversion proposal, it will be expected to comply with Policy HE 9 The Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. The proposal will also be required to be accompanied by a Statement of Significance (see Policy HE 1 Statements of Significance (SoS)).

Justification and Amplification

15.45 Listed Buildings are designated as being of 'special architectural or historic interest' under Section 80 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011. The list, which is maintained by Historic Environment Division (HED), contains all types of structures from grand houses to cathedrals to warehouses and private dwellings. There are almost 700 listed buildings in this Borough. The policy allows for the sympathetic change of use or alteration of such buildings with the aim of securing their upkeep and retention.

15.46 Every proposal for works to a listed building should aim to conserve the maximum level of original fabric, whether or not it will be seen. This is because the loss of even a small portion of historic fabric can diminish the authenticity of the building and consequently harm its heritage value.

15.47 Suitable alternative uses will be considered for listed buildings where this is necessary to secure their future and where the building cannot reasonably be expected to serve its original purpose. All proposals must be based upon a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and should support the best viable use that is compatible with the fabric, setting and essential character of the building.

15.48 The listed building in its original form should remain the dominant feature in relation to any additions or extensions proposed to it. The proposed extensions should be sympathetic to the listed building and respect its unique characteristics in terms of scale, height, massing, proportions and alignment and must use high quality materials.

15.49 Successive applications for alteration or extension or minor works of differing quality should be carefully considered as such works can cumulatively reduce the special interest of a listed building.

15.50 When assessing any application for works of alteration/extension and/or conversion of a listed building, the Council will carry out detailed consultations with the relevant statutory authority, in accordance with legislative requirements, and it is likely that an accompanying Listed Building Consent application will require to be submitted for consideration. The proposal will also require to be accompanied by a Statement of Significance (see Policy HE 1 Statements of Significance (SoS)).

15.51 Please note that since 2015, all Listed Building Consent applications (LBCs) also require the submission of an accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS).

Policy HE 8
The Control of Advertisements on a Listed Building

Advertisement consent for the display of signage that is attached to, or within the curtilage of a listed building will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) It is carefully designed in terms of size, position on buildings and materials.

(b) It is located to respect the architectural form and detailing of the building,

(c) It respects the amenity of the surrounding area and

(d) It is not detrimental to public safety.

The erection of electronic forms of signage such as scrolling, static and intermittent LED signage on, or within the setting of a listed building will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

15.52 Proposals for the display of signage on a listed building must use high quality materials and be of a scale and form designed to complement the special character of the building. The signage should be carefully located so as not to obscure any architectural detailing of the building. The use of standard corporate signage will rarely be acceptable. Signage on the upper floors of buildings and internal illumination of signs will also normally be unacceptable. Where illumination is justified, it should be achieved unobtrusively. Light fittings mounted above and projecting forward of the sign will not normally be acceptable. Signage should be applied sparingly as a proliferation of many different types and styles of sign will detract from the historic integrity of the host building.

15.53 Projecting signage can often adversely affect the character of a listed building and will, therefore, require very careful consideration. Where they are considered acceptable, particular attention will be paid to the size, design and materials. The display of digital signage including scrolling, intermittent and static LED advertisements is rarely likely to be acceptable on or near to a listed building.

15.54 Many heritage assets are in commercial use and already display signs or advertisements that may in themselves be of historic interest or some artistic quality. Where this is the case, the Council will not normally permit their removal or significant alteration.

15.55 Applicants should be aware that consent to display advertisement proposals on a listed building will also require the submission of an accompanying Listed Building Consent application and will be subject to the policy provisions of policy AD 1 Outdoor Advertisements. The proposal will also require to be accompanied by a Statement of Significance (see Policy HE 1).

Policy HE 9
The Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings. Listed Building Consent will only be granted for the total or partial demolitionii of a listed building where it is demonstrated that there are exceptional reasons why the building cannot be retained in its original or reasonably modified form and where comprehensive evidence is provided to demonstrate that every effort has been made to retain it.

Where, exceptionally, listed building consent is granted for the total or partial demolition, this will be conditional on prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site and appropriate arrangements for recording the building before its demolition.

Justification and Amplification

15.56 The demolition of any listed building, whether total or in part, should be wholly exceptional and will require the strongest justification. Evidence will be required to illustrate the condition of the building and demonstrate that it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved. Consent will not be granted for the total or partial demolition of a listed building without clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses or find viable new uses and these efforts have failed, or that redevelopment would produce substantial regional benefits that would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

15.57 Whilst the policy is primarily intended to prevent the loss of irreplaceable historic fabric, it is worth highlighting that the presumption against demolition of listing buildings and instead, the prioritisation of their reuse as an alternative to new build, can help mitigate the effects of climate change. By having a robust policy in respect of demolition, the emissions generated by all the processes associated with the creation of a new building, including mining and processing of natural resources, manufacturing of products and the transport and delivery of materials, will be substantially reduced. Furthermore, the embodied carbon in the existing buildings will not be lost through demolition. One of the principles of the LDP Strategic Climate Change and Adaptation Policy is to promote the protection and reuse of buildings. Many historic buildings have experienced and survived hundreds of years of climatic change, have therefore demonstrated good resilience to it. Such buildings are therefore excellent candidates for retention.

15.58 The onus will be upon the applicant to demonstrate and justify the need for demolition. Evidence will be required to indicate that alternative options for stabilisation of the building structure have been considered in efforts to retain it. The Council will attach determining weight to reports completed by a suitably qualified structural engineer, architect or building surveyor with specialisms in conservation engineering (for example a professional who is on the CARE register[6]). Structural issues will not be accorded substantial weight when making a case for demolition where these have arisen due to neglect of the building through failure to properly maintain or secure it.

15.59 Consent will not be given simply because it is economically more attractive to redevelop a site rather than repair or re-use a listed building.

15.60 Where an applicant seeks the total or partial demolition of a listed building, details of the following must be submitted:

- The condition of the building, the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and to the value derived from its continued use. Where it is clear that a building has been deliberately neglected in the hope of obtaining consent for demolition, less weight will be afforded to the costs of repair;
- Actions taken to retain the building in use. The Council will require to be satisfied that genuine efforts have been made without success to continue the present use of the building or to find alternative viable uses;
- The merits of the alternative proposals for the site.

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[6] *CARE Register-Conservation Accreditation Register for Engineers, which lists engineers with a proven track record of working on/with historic buildings.*

15.61 The Council will request applicants to submit detailed drawings illustrating the proposed redevelopment of the site to accompany the Listed Building Consent application for demolition. It will not be acceptable to leave a vacant plot and, as such, the following conditions will be imposed:

- Prohibiting demolition until planning permission has been granted and contracts have been signed for the redevelopment of the site; and
- Requiring, where appropriate, the recording of the building prior to its demolition.

15.62 The proposal will also require to be accompanied by a Statement of Significance (see Policy HE 1).

Policy HE 10
Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building

Planning permission will not normally be granted for development proposals which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building. Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that affect the setting of a listed building where it is demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) The proposed development respects the essential character of the listed building and its setting in regard to height, scale, form, massing, alignment, materials, techniques and finishes;

(b) The proposed development does not result in the significant loss of key public views to and from the listed building; and

(c) The nature of the proposed use respects the character and setting of the listed building.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. The proposal will also require to be accompanied by a Statement of Significance (see Policy HE 1 Statements of Significance (SoS)).

Justification and Amplification

15.63 The term 'setting' refers to the physical space that is part of, and contributes to, the significance and distinctive character of the heritage asset, and through which the asset may be seen, experienced, understood and enjoyed within its context. The setting

of a listed building is often integral to its unique character and therefore the design and siting of new buildings and how they relate to the listed building are very important considerations.

15.64 The extent to which proposals are expected to comply with the policy criteria will be influenced by the following factors, which all relate to how the heritage asset is seen, experienced, enjoyed and understood:

- The character of the listed building;
- The proximity of the proposal to it;
- The character and quality of the setting; and
- The extent to which the proposed development and the listed building will be experienced in juxtaposition.

15.65 Although the setting of a listed building is not solely defined by its views, it remains important that new development should not interrupt any key views to, or from a listed building. Development proposals some distance from the site of a listed building can sometimes have an adverse impact upon the setting e.g. through the disruption of views of a historic skyline. Applications that may affect the setting of a listed building will therefore normally require the submission of detailed contextual drawings and visuals which illustrate the relationship between the proposal and the listed building and demonstrate how they will be seen in juxtaposition.

15.66 Applicants should take account of the DfC publication 'Guidance on the Setting and the Historic Environment,' when preparing any applications that impact upon listed buildings. The Council will have regard to this as part of the determination of any application.

Policy HE 11
Conservation Areas (CAs)

Conservation Areas (CAs) are designated areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Development proposals in a Conservation Area will be assessed with the guiding principles of:

- Preserving the character or appearance of that area in cases where an opportunity for enhancing its character or appearance does not arise; and
- Enhancing the character or appearance of that area in cases where an opportunity to do so does arise.

New Build or Replacement Buildings

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals involving new build or replacement buildings in a Conservation Area where it is demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:

(a) The overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area is enhanced or preserved in line with guiding principles above;

(b) The height, scale, massing, form, alignment, materials and detailing respect the characteristics of the adjoining buildings, the distinct character and setting of the Conservation Area and its wider surroundings;

(c) The plot layout and site density reflect and respond positively to the existing buildings and the distinct characteristics of the Conservation Area;

(d) Key public views within, into and out of the Conservation Area are protected;

(e) It does not result in environmental problems such as noise, nuisance and disturbance;

(f) Trees and other landscape features contributing to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area are protected and/or integrated into the design and layout of the development; and

(g) The development is consistent with the published Conservation Area Design Guide.

Alteration, Conversion, Extension or Change of Use

Planning permission will only be granted for alterations, conversion, extensions or change of use applications within a Conservation Area where the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area is enhanced and only where the opportunity to enhance does not exist, should the lesser test of preserving be applied.

In addition to the above, the proposal must also comply with the following criteria:

(h) Extensions shall be sympathetic to the existing building and its setting in terms of height, scale, form, massing, alignment, materials and finishes; and

(i) The design should incorporate visual characteristics or features reflective of the surrounding area where possible.

Demolition within a Conservation Area

There will be a presumption in favour of the retention of unlisted buildings within a Conservation Area. Planning permission for a development proposal that involves the demolition of an unlisted building will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, where it is

demonstrated that the building makes no material contribution to the character and appearance of the area and that the new building will enhance the character or appearance of the area.

Where it is determined that the unlisted building does make a material contribution to the character and appearance of the area, Policy HE 9 The Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building shall apply.

Where Conservation Area Consent for demolition is granted, this will be conditional upon prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site and appropriate arrangements for the recording of the building before demolition.

Control of Advertisements in a Conservation Area

Advertisement consent for the display of signage in Conservation Areas will be permitted where it is demonstrated that they enhance the character and appearance of the area or at least maintain the character where the opportunity to enhance does not arise. They shall also comply with Policy AD 1 on Control of Advertisements.

The erection of electronic forms of signage such as scrolling, static and intermittent LED displays in Conservation Areas will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. A Statement of Significance will also be required to accompany such proposals [see Policy HE 1 Statements of Significance [SoS]].

Justification and Amplification

15.67 There are three Conservation Areas in the Borough at Donaghadee, Portaferry and Holywood. Conservation Areas are designated under Section 104 of the Planning Act [NI] 2011 as areas of 'special architectural or historic interest,' and in managing these areas, the guiding principle is to afford special regard to the desirability of enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area where an opportunity to do so exists, or to preserve the character and appearance where an opportunity to enhance does not arise.

15.68 Designation as a Conservation Area puts the onus upon prospective developers to produce a high standard of design which respects the particular qualities of the conservation area. Proposals will also be expected to adhere to guidance set out in the relevant Conservation Area Design Guide.

New Buildings

15.69 The development of new buildings in a Conservation Area should be a stimulus to imaginative, high-quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area. Key design considerations for new development in a Conservation Area include the appropriateness of the overall massing of the development, the scale (the expression of size indicated by windows, doors, floor heights and other identifiable units), the proportions and the relationship to its context. Development should be in harmony with, or complimentary to, its neighbours, having regard to the adjoining architectural styles. It should also, where possible, fit into the 'grain' of the Conservation Area, e.g. by respecting historic layout, street patterns and existing landforms. Where appropriate, good quality contemporary design will be acceptable, provided it draws upon the heritage values associated with the particular area.

15.70 The use of materials that generally match those that are historically dominant in the area is important, and the development should not have a visually disruptive impact upon the existing townscape.

Alterations, Extensions and Change of Use

15.71 Proposals for the alteration, extension and change of use of a building in a Conservation Area will be supported where they are sensitive to the existing building and to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area within which they are located. Extensions should be sympathetic to the existing building, use appropriate materials and detailing and not result in the detrimental loss of visual gaps between buildings.

15.72 In assessing applications for the change of use of a property within a Conservation Area, consideration will be given to both the impact of the proposed use on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and any other applicable LDP policies. New uses will normally only be acceptable where any associated external alterations, for example new shopfronts, are sympathetic to their setting and relate in scale, proportions and materials to the remainder of the building and the local street scene.

Demolition

15.73 The demolition of even a single building in a Conservation Area could severely prejudice its character and appearance. This is because it is not one individual building but rather a combination of all the buildings that combine to form a streetscape worthy of protection from demolition. In such circumstances, the whole purpose of designating the Conservation Area in first place could be undermined if a building is lost. There are also climate change implications of demolition versus rebuild which have been highlighted in the Justification and Amplification of Policy HE 9 The Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building.

15.74 In order to protect the unique character and appearance of conservation areas, the Council will operate a presumption in favour of retaining any building that makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. Where demolition is proposed, the onus rests upon the applicant to provide evidence that the building makes no material contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

15.75 In determining proposals for demolition of unlisted buildings, the Council will consider their contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the area and also wider impacts upon the Conservation Area as a whole. In cases there the Council determines that the building does make a positive contribution to the area, the Council will have regard to the same broad criteria used when considering applications for demolition of listed buildings (Policy HE 9 The Demolition or Partial Demolition of a Listed Building).

15.76 The preservation of public elevations alone of an unlisted building in a Conservation Area which makes a material contribution to its appearance or character will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances, provided the scale of the overall development proposal will not be detrimental to the character of the area and the scheme can be implemented without serious risk to the retained structure. In such cases, the Council will require the submission of a structural engineer's report indicating what measures are to be taken to protect those parts of the building to be retained during the construction work.

15.77 In cases where demolition consent is granted, conditions will be imposed requiring the redevelopment of the site to be based upon previously agreed detailed proposals and prohibiting demolition of the building until planning permission has been granted and contracts have been signed for the redevelopment of the site. It may also be appropriate to require recording of the building before demolition.

Trees

15.78 Trees often make an important contribution to the appearance and character of Conservation Areas. They also sequester carbon which is particularly important in an urban setting where there may not be much planting. In assessing development proposals affecting a Conservation Area, the Council will take into account their potential impact on existing trees. Where such trees make an important visual, historic or amenity contribution to the area and should be retained, the Council will seek appropriate protection measures through the imposition of planning conditions or may consider making a Tree Preservation Order. In some instances, development may be acceptable subject to conditions requiring new tree planting or replanting.

The Setting of Conservation Areas

15.79 Special care is also needed in the location and design of development proposals close to a Conservation Area. Inappropriate development outside a Conservation Area can have a detrimental effect on the character and setting of the area. In such cases, any new development will be expected to respect the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Area, while the Council will also seek to retain important views in and out of the area.

Advertisements

15.80 Proposals for the display of signage in Conservation Areas must use high quality materials and be of a scale and form designed to complement the historical style and detailing of the host building and surrounding area. The use of standard corporate signage will rarely be acceptable. Signage on the upper floors of buildings and internal illumination of signs will also normally be unacceptable. Signage should be applied sparingly as a proliferation of many different types and styles of signage will detract from the historic integrity of the Conservation Area.

15.81 Projecting signage can often adversely affect the character of a Conservation Area and will, therefore, require very careful consideration. Where they are considered acceptable, particular attention will be paid to the size, design and materials. The display of electronic signage including scrolling, intermittent and static LED advertisements must also be carefully considered within Conservation Areas and will rarely be acceptable. Further guidance on this can be found in the Design Guides for each of the Borough's three Conservation Areas.



Policy HE 12
Areas of Townscape/Village Character

New or Replacement Buildings

Planning permission will be granted for new or replacement buildings within an Area of Townscape/Village Character (ATC/AVC) where it is demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) The overall distinct character of the ATC/AVC is maintained or if possible enhanced;

(b) The existing built form in the ATC/AVC is respected by way of height, scale, form, massing alignment, materials and finishes;

(c) The plot layout and site density reflect and respond positively to existing development patterns and the distinct characteristics of the ATC/AVC;

(d) There is no significant loss of views in to and out of the ATC/AVC; and

(e) Trees and landscape features which contribute to the character of the ATC/AVC are integrated into the design and layout of the development.

Alterations, Conversions, Extensions or Change of Use

Planning permission will be granted for alterations and extensions within an ATC/AVC where the above criteria are met, and regard is given to the following additional criteria:

(f) Extensions shall be sympathetic to the existing and adjacent buildings with regard to height, scale, massing form and alignment; and

(g) The alterations and extensions utilise materials and finishes that are characteristic of the ATC/AVC.

Demolition

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining any unlisted building that makes a positive contribution to the distinct character of an ATC/AVC.

Planning permission for total or substantial demolition of an unlisted building within an ATC/AVC will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that it makes no material contribution to the character of the ATC and where the quality of design of the replacement building is determined to enhance the overall character of the ATC/AVC.

Where permission for demolition is granted, this will be conditional on prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site.

Display of Advertisements

Advertisement consent for the display of signage in ATCs/AVCs will be permitted where it is demonstrated that they maintain the overall character and appearance of the area. They shall also comply with Policy AD 1 Control of Advertisements.

The erection of electronic forms of signage such as scrolling, static and intermittent LED signage in ATCs/AVCs will only be acceptable where they do not detract from the character of the area.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

15.82 Many areas within our towns and villages exhibit a distinct character based upon their historic built form and layout. Whilst they may not merit Conservation Area designation, the overall character is sufficiently distinctive to merit protection from inappropriate change via the Area of Townscape Character and Area of Village Character designations. There are currently 18 ATCs/AVCs within the Borough.

New or replacement buildings

15.83 New or replacement buildings should seek to reinforce local identity and promote high quality development and protect key views and assets. Proposals for new or replacement buildings will only be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that the development will maintain or enhance the overall area by meeting the policy criteria.

Alterations and Extensions

15.84 Proposals for the alteration and extension of a building within an ATC/AVC will only be considered acceptable where it is determined that they are sensitive to the existing building and are in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. They should normally be located at the rear of the host property, be subordinate to it and of an appropriate scale. The palette of materials and finishes used should complement the existing building. Careful consideration should be given to alterations involving the roof of the property as these may be particularly detrimental to the character of the area.

Demolition

15.85 The demolition of a building or buildings within an ATC/AVC can significantly impact upon the overall character and appearance of

the area and upon the integrity of the designation as a whole. The Council will therefore operate a presumption in favour of retaining any building that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, with the onus resting upon the applicant to provide evidence that the building makes no material contribution. The Council must be satisfied that the quality and design of the replacement building will enhance the overall character of the ATC/AVC. Where permission is granted, conditions will normally be imposed:

- Requiring the redevelopment of the site to be based upon previously agreed detailed proposals; and
- Prohibiting the demolition of the building until contracts have been signed for the approved redevelopment of the site.

Advertisements

15.86 Proposals for the display of signage in ATCs and AVCs must use high quality materials and be of a scale and form designed to complement the historical style and detailing of the host building and surrounding area. The use of standard corporate signage will only be acceptable when appropriate to the building and its surroundings. Signage on the upper floors of buildings and internal illumination of signs will require careful consideration. Signage should be applied sparingly as a proliferation of many different types and styles of sign will detract from the historic integrity of the ATC/AVC.

15.87 Projecting signage can often adversely affect the character of an ATC/AVC and will, therefore require very careful consideration. Where they are considered acceptable, particular attention will be paid to the size, design and materials. The display of electronic signage including scrolling, intermittent and static LED advertisements must also be carefully considered within ATCs and AVCs.

15.88 As part of the LDP process, the Council will prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for each of the Borough's ATCs and AVCs. This will contain detailed character appraisals and design guidance to assist residents, business owners and any other interested parties wishing to submit or comment on planning applications within designated ATCs/AVCs.

Policy HE 13
Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Proposals that would materially remove, harm or undermine the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, or its contribution to the character of a place, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the public benefits of the development outweigh the harm.

Where development of a non-designated heritage asset relates to the sympathetic conversion of a locally important vernacular building in the countryside, the additional provisions of Policy HOU 11 Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings will apply.

Justification and Amplification

15.89 All new developments should enhance or reinforce those characteristics, qualities and features that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the Borough's rural and urban areas. Many of these features are formally recognised through statutory designations such as listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments or identified through the LDP process, such as, Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, and ATCs and AVCs. However, there are also many buildings, structures or historic features that do not meet the criteria for designation but which have a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Examples include vernacular buildings, telephone boxes, street signs, bridges, lampposts, stiles, walls and gates. These are named non-designated heritage assets.

15.90 Para. 6.24 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI (SPPS) defines non-designated heritage assets as 'a building, structure or feature, whilst not statutorily listed, has been identified by the Council as an important part of its heritage, due to its local architectural or historic significance.'

15.91 The Council does not currently hold a list of non-designated heritage assets that have already been identified, nor have any immediate plans to start a "Local List" (a formal means of recording any buildings or features identified). However, should a need be identified to afford additional protection to these assets, appropriate protection measures such as the creation of a 'Local List' and accompanying policy may be reviewed at LPP stage. This means that non-designated heritage assets are currently identified through the process of assessing a planning application.

15.92 The effect of a proposal upon the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the

application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

Policy HE 14
Enabling Development for the Conservation of Significant Places

Planning permission will only be granted for enabling development relating to the conservation, refurbishment and re-use of a significant place, where it will not materially harm its heritage value or setting. It must be demonstrated through a 'Statement of Justification' that all of the following criteria are met:

(a) The heritage asset to be subsidised by the proposed enabling development will bring significant long-term benefits according to its site and location;

(b) The conservation of the heritage asset would otherwise be financially and operationally unviable;

(c) The impact of the enabling development is precisely defined at the outset;

(d) The scale of the proposed enabling development does not exceed what is necessary to support the conservation of the heritage asset;

(e) Sufficient subsidy is not available from any other source;

(f) The public benefit decisively outweighs the disbenefits of departing from other planning policies;

(g) It will not materially harm the heritage values of the heritage asset or its setting;

(h) It avoids detrimental fragmentation of the management of the asset;

(i) It will secure the long-term future of the heritage asset and, where applicable, its long-term use for a sympathetic purpose; and

(j) It is necessary to resolve problems arising from the inherent needs of the heritage asset, rather than the circumstances of the present owner, or the purchase price paid.

The benefits to be derived from the conservation of the significant place will be secured either by conditional grant of planning permission or conditional grant of planning permission, accompanied by a planning agreement.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

15.93 Enabling Development is defined as development that conflicts with other policies in the LDP and would normally be considered unacceptable in its own right, but which may be supported if the Council is satisfied that the proposal will facilitate and secure the long-term future of a significant place by using the profit generated from the new development. For the purposes of this policy, a 'significant place' means any part of the historic environment that has heritage value, including Scheduled Monuments, archaeological remains and historic buildings (together with any historic contents), industrial heritage, Conservation Areas and Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes.

15.94 It is intended that this policy will only be used as a last resort, where the long-term public benefit of securing an important heritage asset decisively outweighs the disadvantages of departing from other LDP provisions. The policy will not be implemented if the Council is uncertain that public benefit will be gained. Enabling development decisions will be taken in the context of a robust evidence base that may require scrutiny from outside experts to the Council and, in the interests of transparency will need to be available in a public forum.

15.95 To permit the Council to make an informed and timely decision on an application involving Enabling Development, a Statement of Justification will be required, undertaken by a suitably qualified professional. This must include sufficient financial information to allow the Council to make an informed decision upon the application. This should also be accompanied by a conservation statement/plan that demonstrates a detailed understanding of the importance of the heritage asset and the forward plan for it. The onus will be upon the developer to demonstrate that all other sources of sufficient finance are not available to allow for the viable use of the heritage asset, rather than an inability of the developer to fund a viable project.

15.96 The information supplied by the developer should cover all the financial aspects of the proposed enabling development, in a sufficient degree of detail to enable scrutiny and validation by the planning authority in consultation with its economists. This applies both to the assessment of need and the assessment of the scale of the enabling development necessary to meet that need. The onus is on the developer to demonstrate that sufficient funds are not available from any other source, such as grant aid.

15.97 The scale and extent of Enabling Development must be proportionate to the funds needed for the refurbishment/conservation works. It should be the minimum necessary to generate the income for the restoration and re-use of the heritage asset. As the profit generated will be used for the conservation works, the cost of both elements must be clearly set out in a business plan and financial projection

accompanying the application, in order that the viability of the scheme can be fully assessed.

15.98 Applicants should expect to have restrictive planning conditions and/or a planning agreement attached to any permission and should therefore have access to their own legal services to facilitate this.

15.99 'Assessing Enabling Development' [published by Central Government DoE April 2014] is the relevant Best Practice Guide for Enabling Development and will be applied by Council when determining enabling development applications, relating to significant places. Pre-application discussions are also encouraged.Applicants should also note that a Statement of Significance may also be required for these types of applications. Please refer to Policy HE 1 for further clarification.



16 Coastal Management

16.1 At a length of 115 miles, the coastline of Ards and North Down Borough is one of the longest in Northern Ireland, consisting of Belfast Lough to the north, the Irish Sea to the east, and Strangford Lough with its associated islands forming the internal coastline of the Ards Peninsula. These areas provide nationally and internationally significant habitats for birds and wildlife such as mudflats, coastal saltmarsh, sandy beaches, boulder and rocky shore and are protected by numerous nature conservation designations on a local, regional and international scale. Strangford Lough is of particular significance, designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar Site, and Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) and there is no comparable area in Northern Ireland that supports such a diverse range of habitats and species. Elsewhere within the Borough, Belfast Lough and Outer Ards coastlines are also designated SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites and there are six coastal Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) within the Borough.

16.2 In addition to its unique nature conservation and visual qualities, the coastline performs other important roles for the residents of Ards and North Down. A large proportion of the Borough population resides in the fifteen coastal settlements of Bangor, Holywood, Seahill, Helen's Bay, Groomsport, Orlock, Donaghadee, Millisle, Ballywalter, Ballyhalbert, Portavogie, Cloughey, Portaferry, Kircubbin and Whiterock. These settlements provide opportunities for coastal recreation for residents and tourists alike. Examples include Pickie Fun Park in Bangor, the coastal path along the northern coastline, numerous sailing and yacht clubs, and features of the historic environment, including listed buildings and archaeological sites. Bangor Marina is of particular note as Northern Ireland's largest leisure marina – it offers 560 sheltered and secure pontoon berths, 24-hour staffing and facilities such as fuelling, water and electricity. In recent years, the coastal settlements of the Borough have also provided the backdrop to maritime-themed tourist events including Sea Bangor, Portavogie Seafood Festival and the Strangford Lough Viking Festival in Portaferry.

16.3 In terms of coastal infrastructure, several of the main arterial road routes of the Borough run along the coastline and key operations that provide a service for our coastline, such as the HM Coastguard Headquarters and RNLI station in Bangor and the lifeboat and lighthouse in Donaghadee, are located in our coastal settlements. The Portaferry to Strangford Ferry service conveys about 500,000 passengers per annum between the two destinations, shortening the alternative road journey from 47 miles to 0.69 miles. Another

key element of the coastal infrastructure and economy is Portavogie harbour, which is the second largest commercial fishing port in Northern Ireland. The fishing fleet catches mainly prawns and herring which are prepared for onward transfer to locations within and beyond the Borough in nearby processing plants. All of these examples illustrate the social, economic and environmental significance of the coastline of the Borough.

16.4 The impacts of climate change are often felt more profoundly at the coast. Coastal change in the form of erosion, storms and sea level rise have had serious implications for our Borough and will continue to do so in the future. This is exacerbated by the concentration of people and property in coastal locations. Incidences of flooding and storm damage including the complete collapse of sections of the peninsula coast roads have become more frequent in recent years and saltwater encroachment is damaging to fragile habitats and wildlife. It is not just coastal development that can impact upon the marine area, as proposals some distance inland also have the potential to impact upon the marine area and its environment.

16.5 The Council's Roadmap to Sustainability recognises that climate change is one of the major challenges of our time. The impacts of global warming and poor air quality are extensive, from threatening coastal communities with increased erosion and flooding, to damaging the cardiovascular and respiratory health of entire populations. The policies in the LDP that relate to the coast must demonstrate adaptability to and mitigation of climate change impacts that are specific to the coast by limiting all but essential development in sensitive coastal locations, particularly those that are susceptible to coastal flooding, erosion and land instability. Where possible, nature-based solutions[1] should be utilised to mitigate these impacts.

16.6 Baseline evidence for coastal erosion and land instability along the NI coastline[1] is extremely limited, however the Council shall continue to work collaboratively with DFI and DAERA as part of the Coastal Forum[2] to ensure that key coastal issues within our borough are fully evidenced and soundly addressed in the LDP. DAERA recently commissioned the Northern Ireland Historical Shoreline Analysis Survey which is available to view on the DAERA website.

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[1] *Nature based solutions leverage nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, optimise infrastructure and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future.*

[2] *Forum established by Department of Infrastructure in 2015*

Coastal Management Strategy

To protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate, excessive or obtrusive development that would cause harm to its visual amenity and natural and historic assets, whilst accommodating appropriate sustainable development in the developed coast at locations that are not at risk from coastal change (erosion, landslip and inundation).

16.7 This will be achieved by:

- The designation of an Undeveloped Coastal Zone to afford protection to the areas of high amenity, landscape and seascape value, conservation interest or heritage value where development should be restricted;
- The designation of urban waterfronts within which sensitive proposals for regeneration of the shoreline and appropriate recreation and tourism will be supported;
- Making appropriate provision for developments that require a coastal location operationally e.g. ports and marinas;
- Avoiding development in areas that are vulnerable to coastal change or any development that adds to the impact of physical changes to the coast (subject to the data at the appropriate scale and level of detail on the current and predicted impacts of physical changes to the coast becoming available);
- Having regard to the provisions of the UK Marine Planning Policy Statement and the draft Marine Plan for NI.

Why we have taken this approach

16.8 The RDS emphasises that our environment is one of Northern Ireland's most important assets. It specifically references the need to protect, enhance and manage the coast. Coastal areas need to be protected from coastal squeeze and the loss of distinctive habitats which can be utilised to aid our adaptation to climate change.

16.9 The policy within the SPPS is consistent with the RDS in that its aim is to support the sensitive enhancement and regeneration of the developed coast largely within coastal settlements. At the same time, the natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast should be protected from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development.

16.10 The SPPS further emphasises how the LDP, the UK Marine Policy Statement and the Marine Plan for NI need to be compatible with each other. The terrestrial planning system and the marine licensing

system are legally and functionally separate but overlap in a spatial sense. Section 8 of the Marine Act (NI) 2013 states that any planning decision that affects or may affect the UK Marine area must be taken in accordance with the draft Marine Plan for NI and the UK Marine Policy Statement.

16.11 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from;

- Communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure (Outcome 3);

  The coastal management policies aim to ensure that people and property are kept safe from the risks posed by flood inundation, coastal erosion and land instability.

- An environment that is valued, well managed and accessible (Outcome 5.)

  The strategic aims of the coastal management policies are to manage development in sensitive coastal areas and to encourage sustainable recreation and tourism proposals that promote access to the coast in appropriate locations. This aim is entirely consistent with Outcome 5 of the Big Plan.

16.12 It is clear that the LDP has a key role in the identification of opportunities for appropriate development along the coastline whilst also protecting those areas of the coast from inappropriate development. The LDP policies should therefore acknowledge and respond to the pressures that face our coastline including recreation, shoreline change, residential development, tourism and coastal industry.

16.13 The DFI and DAERA Coastal Forum, set up in 2019, agreed that the Forum would be the mechanism through which coastal management issues would be progressed collaboratively by central and local government and the National Trust. Any new or emerging strategies will be incorporated into the LDP. The Forum will also progress the development of best practice guidance to assist local councils in helping to inform local development plans.

Designation UCZ 1

Ards and North Down Undeveloped Coastal Zone (AND UCZ)

16.14 The Ards and North Down Undeveloped Coastal Zone (AND UCZ) is designated along the shores of Belfast Lough, Outer Ards and Strangford Lough and includes all coastal areas outside of settlement limits.

16.15 The extent of the AND UCZ is indicated on Map 1d: Ards and North Down Undeveloped Coastal Zone, and the methodology that informed its designation is outlined in the Coastal Management Technical Supplement. Note that the outer (seaward) edge of the UCZ corresponds with the Low Water Mark (LWM), meaning that it extends beyond the 'developable' coast of the Borough and includes some intertidal areas such as mudflats, beaches and other coastal features.

16.16 The designation is intended to provide additional protection for the unique landscape value, visual amenity and nature conservation interest of the Borough's coastline. Planning applications on sites that fall wholly or partly within the boundary of the AND UCZ will be assessed under the policy provisions of Policy CO 1.



Operational Policies for Coastal Management

Policy CO 1
The Undeveloped Coast

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals which fall wholly or partly within the Ards and North Down Undeveloped Coastal Zone (AND UCZ) where it is demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:

a) the proposal is of national or regional importance;

b) there is a clear site-specific need for the proposed development;

c) there is no feasible alternative site available inside development limits of settlements; and

d) it will not have an unacceptable impact either directly, indirectly or cumulatively upon the coastal environment or its setting, including any asset associated with the natural[3], coastal or historic environment.

The following exceptions will not be required to demonstrate compliance with criteria (a), (b) and (c) but will still be expected to comply with criterion (d):

- The creation or enhancement of public access to the coast e.g. coastal paths and greenways, where a clear community benefit is demonstrated;
- Water based recreation which contributes positively to public enjoyment of the coast (such proposals must also comply with policy OS8);
- The delivery of small-scale environmental benefit projects e.g. creation of wildlife habitats
- Householder development e.g. residential extensions, alterations, sheds and garages, within the curtilage of the existing dwelling; and
- The erection of a replacement dwelling in line with the policy provisions of HOU 10 Replacement Dwellings.

Where permission is granted, and where appropriate, adequate mitigation and compensatory measures must be agreed and if necessary, secured via planning conditions. Acceptable proposals may be subject to the requirement of a legal agreement to ensure adequate mitigation and compensatory measures.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. The UK Marine Policy Statement and Draft Marine Plan for NI are material considerations for all planning decisions that affect or might affect the marine area.

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[3] *The natural environment consists of land-based aquatic and coastal ecosystems that support human and environmental well-being.*

Justification and Amplification

16.17 In order to ensure the character of the coast is maintained, the AND Undeveloped Coastal Zone designation and accompanying policy aims to provide additional protection for the unique landscape value and visual amenity of the coastal area. This includes areas of high amenity, landscape value, conservation interest or heritage value where development should be restricted. Implementation of this policy should mitigate the effects of 'coastal squeeze,' whereby the loss of natural habitats or a deterioration in their quality is caused by man-made structures or human activity.' It is also a responsible approach in the face of the climate change emergency to proactively limit development in coastal areas where the impact of climate change is most intensely felt, thereby making our coastlines more adaptable to extreme weather events in the future. The policy is not however intended to sit at odds with proposals that have been sensitively designed to further tourism or recreation opportunities that would improve public access to the coast.

16.18 It should also be noted that Policy CO 1 is not intended to restrict appropriate development within existing domestic curtilages, provided that no harm would result in respect of the coastal landscape and its nature conservation and historic environment interests. Some minor domestic extensions and alterations would fall within the criteria of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 and would therefore not require the submission of a planning application; however, these forms of ancillary development would not be expected to have a significant adverse impact upon the coast due to their modest scale.

16.19 New dwellings are not permitted within the AND UCZ with the exception of replacement dwellings, in compliance with policy HOU 10. As stipulated in the policy criteria, the visual impact of the proposed new dwelling should not have a visual impact significantly greater than the dwelling it is to replace so that it integrates into the surrounding landscape. This is of particular importance in the UCZ given its high visual amenity and significant sensitivity to development. The design of the replacement building should be of a high quality, appropriate to the rural and coastal location, with particular attention paid to retaining key views towards the coastline from public aspects.

16.20 In considering development proposals on or adjacent to the undeveloped coast, regard will be paid to the retention of existing public accesses and coastal walkways. Development that would result in the closure of existing access points will normally only be acceptable where a feasible alternative is provided.

16.21 Where development is approved within the undeveloped coast, conditions will be imposed to minimise adverse impacts upon this fragile environment. Such conditions will be used to minimise the visual impact of the development by sensitive design, siting and landscaping, ensuring the design of the proposal is of a high standard, and using appropriate materials.

Policy CO 2
Urban Waterfronts in the Developed Coast

Within designated Urban Waterfronts, planning permission will be granted where it is demonstrated that the development proposal incorporates all the following criteria:

(a) Promotion of the waterfront area as a driver for economic development in the Borough through regeneration and enhancement of buildings and mixed-use development

(b) Enhancement of the environmental quality and maritime identity of the waterfront by incorporation of key elements such as promenades, public spaces and maritime infrastructure and ensuring that the water is central to all design proposals;

(c) Retention and, where possible, further development of public access to the coast, including prioritisation of pedestrian access to the waterfront edge and enhanced connectivity between the waterfront area and other areas of the town/town centre;

(d) Protection of existing coastal open space and defining of the scale, form and function of the public realm to encourage public and visitor use of the waterfront;

(e) Enhance tourism potential and recreational facilities, particularly water-based attractions; and

(f) Protection, conservation and, where possible, enhancement of important elements of the historic, coastal and natural environment and safeguarding key views of these.

In addition to the above, favourable consideration will be given to development proposals requiring a coastal location for operational reasons, such as HM Coastguard and RNLI facilities.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. They must also have regard to the Marine Policy Statement and Draft Marine Plan for NI.

Justification and Amplification

16.22 As referred to in the introductory section, there are 15 settlements within the Borough which occupy a coastal location. The characteristics and functions of the shoreline in these urban areas vary widely, including the historic harbour and lighthouse in Donaghadee, commercial marina and maritime emergency services headquarters in Bangor, fishing port in Portavogie and ferry terminal in Portaferry.

16.23 Our urban waterfront areas are a vital part of the Borough's heritage. The waterfront was at the roots of the historical development of most of our settlements and remains a focus for tourism, recreation and economic development today. Given that they often include derelict or underutilised brownfield land, urban waterfronts can offer some of the best opportunities for urban regeneration.

16.24 The Council has identified Bangor Waterfront as a strategic regeneration project. The rapid expansion of the town in the 19th Century was very much based upon the 2 mile stretch of coast between Skippingstone Beach in Bangor West and Ballyholme Bay in the east. The town thrived as a tourist resort and hub for the trade of coal and other commodities. With the advent of cheap package holidays and decline of traditional industries since the end of World War Two, the significance of the waterfront area declined. The Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment Scheme aims to re-establish Bangor as a thriving city and visitor attraction in Northern Ireland, using the waterfront area as a catalyst for development. The project is one of over 20 ambitious schemes in Northern Ireland that have received financial support as part of the Belfast Region City Deal. The vision is to seamlessly connect the waterfront to the rest of the city and, in so doing, create a unique range of opportunities for public spaces, creative events, activities, attractions and experiences that should enrich the lives and businesses of residents and visitors alike. There are five main strands to the redevelopment scheme – public realm improvements, expansion of Pickie Fun Park, improve access to and public enjoyment of the Marina area, the expansion of the Court House as a multipurpose venue and the development of Ballyholme Yacht Club as a premier location within Northern Ireland to further develop sea sailing and watersports.

16.25 In addition to Bangor, other Urban Waterfronts (UWs) will be designated within other coastal settlements at LPP stage, based upon the significance and future potential of their waterfront areas. The thriving and historic waterfront area of Donaghadee, with its picturesque, listed lighthouse and harbour and range of cafes and restaurants, is one such potential UW which was frequently suggested by respondents to the Preferred Options Paper. Another is Portaferry which hosts Northern Ireland's only aquarium and

provides a ferry link to Newry, Mourne and Down District across the ecologically diverse Strangford Lough.

16.26 Within the designated urban waterfronts (which will be designated at LPP stage), the aim will be to encourage uses that will help promote vibrant and attractive waterfronts that capitalise on the assets of the coastal location. The design of any proposals must be appropriate to the locality and be of high visual quality when viewed from adjacent public areas and the shoreline itself.

16.27 Whilst the policy aims to enhance tourism and recreation in the urban waterfronts, it is not intended to prejudice the practical operation and necessary expansion of existing coastal services and functions, such as marine rescue services, that may also be located within the boundaries of the urban waterfront.

Policy CO 3
Coastal Change

There is a presumption against development in known areas of land instability and erosion in coastal locations.

In areas of known land instability and coastal erosion, new development or the intensification of existing development or land uses will not be permitted.

An exception may be permitted for householder development (the alteration extension or improvement of a dwelling house or minor development within its curtilage such as garages, walls and other outbuildings) where the proposed development does not extend closer to the coastline than the existing dwelling house.

In cases where statutory consultees advise that erosion and land instability is likely but the extent of the impact is not yet fully known, then a precautionary approach will be adopted and planning permission will be refused.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP. The UK Marine Policy Statement and the draft Marine Plan for NI are material considerations for all planning decisions that affect or may affect the marine area.

Justification and Amplification

16.28 In line with the precautionary and risk-based approach advocated by the SPPS with respect to coastal management, the policy sets out a presumption against development in areas of known risk from land instability and/or coastal erosion as a result of coastal processes. This approach is reflected in the draft Marine Plan for NI, Section 119 – Coastal Processes. The implementation of this policy also aligns with the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy by increasing local resilience to its impacts.

16.29 The policy will also apply to areas of risk which are identified as further information emerges. The DFI publication 'Coastal Erosion Risk Management Report 2019[4]' is a useful starting point in the identification of areas of high erosion risk. This can be viewed on the DFI website.

16.30 It should be noted that the granting of planning permission does not infer that that land in question is free from land instability. The responsibility for safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner.



[4] *https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/baseline-study-and-gap-analysis-coastal-erosion-risk-management-ni*

17 Flooding and Drainage

17.1 Flooding is a natural phenomenon which cannot be entirely prevented. It can happen at any time and there is consequent risk to people, property, infrastructure and the natural and historic environment. Flooding originates from a number of sources. Fluvial flooding (from rivers) takes place when the river channel capacity is exceeded, and water is conveyed to the natural floodplain of the river. Pluvial flooding (surface runoff) occurs as the result of rainfall which overwhelms natural or man-made drainage systems and results in water flowing overland. Coastal flooding occurs when inundation of land takes place due to a combination of high tides, wave action and storm surge. Finally, flooding from reservoirs can occur in the event of an uncontrolled release of water if a reservoir fails structurally or by an unusually high flow of water via spillways. Although the likelihood of this type of flooding is low, the impact on communities is high due to the sudden release and rapid inundation of flood water.

17.2 It is generally accepted that we are more likely to experience more regular flooding in the future. In urban areas we have already seen increases in surface water flooding due to the development of green spaces and the paving of gardens and driveways. Deforestation, agricultural drainage and changing land use practices lead to increased flows in watercourses and increased potential for fluvial flooding. Climate change predictions also suggest a rise in sea level, increase in winter precipitation, an increase in the intensity of extreme rainfall events and increased storm intensity and frequency. The development of appropriate flooding and drainage policies represents an opportunity to demonstrate resilience to climate change by ensuring that development is not approved in vulnerable flood-prone locations.

17.3 As required by the Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (NI) 2009, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has identified 12 Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APSFR) in Northern Ireland. Within Ards and North Down Bangor has been identified as an APSFR. The legislation requires that flood hazard maps and flood risk maps are created for all designated APSFRs, plus Flood Risk Management Plans that focus on prevention, protection and preparedness. Newtownards is designated as a Transitional APSFR which means that although it may no longer be designated as a significant area of flood risk, there may still be outstanding commitments from the previous Flood Risk Management Plans 2015-2021 to be implemented.

17.4 Historical records indicate that very few properties in Bangor have been inundated with flood water in recent years. This may be

attributed to the fact that major improvements were made to urban watercourses in the 1990s. That said, there are six watercourses within the urban footprint that have the potential to adversely affect the urbanised area of Bangor. Although a coastal town, Bangor is not considered to be at risk from coastal flooding. The coastal fringe is elevated above sea level meaning that significant tidal inundation is unlikely. The NI Flood Risk Management Plan (May 2022, DfI) suggests that surface water flooding poses the greatest risk owing to the urbanised nature of the city and the large areas of impermeable road surfaces.

17.5 Government policy with respect to securing a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland is currently being implemented through 'Sustainable Water – A Long Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2040' and the Living with Water in Belfast Plan 2021, both published by DfI. Both strategies set out a range of initiatives to deliver long term goals of a sustainable water sector, protection from flooding and a cleaner and greener environment.

17.6 Rivers Directorate is the statutory drainage and flood defence authority for Northern Ireland and acts as a key planning consultee where development proposals are likely to impact upon watercourses and floodplains. Full account must be taken of all the information held by Rivers Directorate with respect to strategic flood mapping and modelling. This provides present day predictive flood risk information but also has wider implications for future flood risk predictions due to climate change.

Flooding and Drainage Strategy

To manage development that may be at risk of flooding or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, to protect flood defences and drainage infrastructure and to promote sustainable drainage solutions to improve water quality.

17.7 This will be achieved by:

- The adoption of a precautionary approach to the identification of land for development and determination of planning applications on sites that are susceptible to flooding;
- Ensuring that the most up to date information on flood risk is considered when determining planning applications – for example, using Flood Maps NI;
- Avoiding new development where possible within flood risk areas;
- Protecting development that is permitted within flood risk areas by ensuring that adequate and appropriate measures are

taken to mitigate and manage flood risks (with a preference for soft defences, incorporating nature-based solutions) without increasing flood risk elsewhere; and

- The promotion of sustainable drainage for new developments and redevelopment schemes.

Why we have taken this approach

17.8 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) recognises the need to avoid, where possible the selection of flood prone land for employment and housing growth. It urges the planning authority to adopt a precautionary approach to development in areas of flood risk and to use the latest flood information in order to properly manage development.

17.9 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) further confirms that development can exacerbate flooding and stresses the important role that the planning system has in managing development in a way that reduces the risks and impacts of flooding.

17.10 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from;

- Communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure (Outcome 3);

  The flooding and drainage policies aim to ensure that people and property are kept safe from the risks posed by flood inundation.

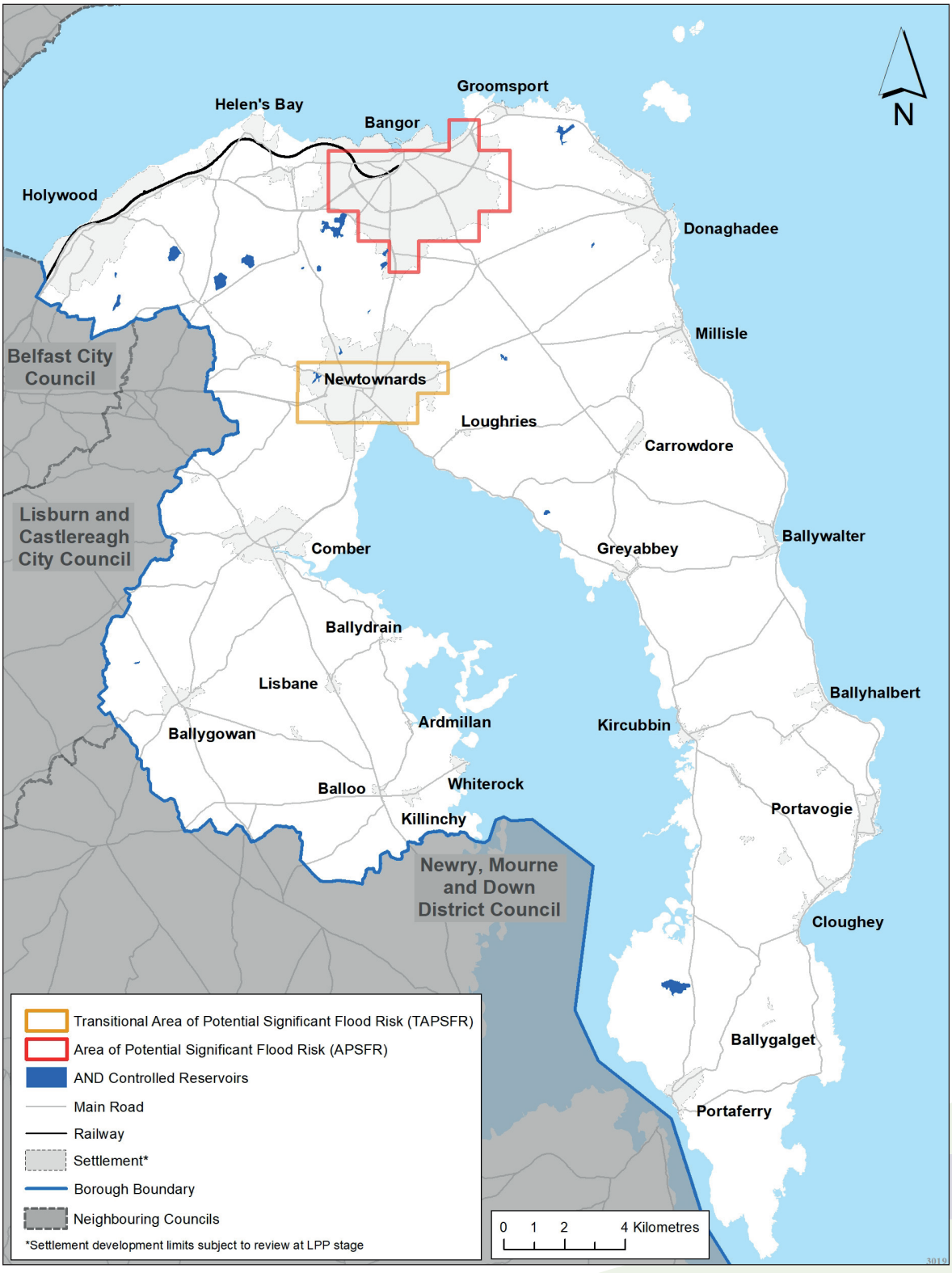
- An environment that it valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5.)

  The strategic aims of the flooding and drainage policies are to manage development in areas susceptible to flooding. This aim is entirely consistent with Outcome 5 of the Big Plan.

17.11 In addition, these aims are also consistent with core planning principle 3 - 'Supporting sustainable economic growth.'

17.12 It is clear that the Borough faces complex challenges and opportunities in addressing flood risk. The strategic approach to flood risk should ensure that new developments are not unnecessarily exposed to flooding, whilst having regard to the cumulative effects of existing developments within the settlement limits. It also aligns with the LDP Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy by encouraging the use of Sustainable Drainage solutions to manage surface water risk.

Map 9: Strategic Flooding and Drainage Map



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Policy FLD 1
Development in Fluvial (River) and Coastal Flood Plains

Planning permission will not be granted for development within the 1 in 100 year fluvial flood plain (AEP[2] of 1%) plus the latest mapped climate change allowance or the 1 in 200 year coastal flood plain (AEP of 0.5%) plus the latest mapped climate change allowance unless the applicant can demonstrate that the proposal constitutes an exception to the policy.

Where the principle of development is accepted by the Council through meeting the 'Exceptions Test,' as set out below, the applicant is required to submit a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for all proposals. Planning permission will only be granted if the FRA demonstrates that:

(a) All sources of flood risk to and from the proposed development have been identified; and

(b) There are adequate measures in place to manage and mitigate any increase in flood risk arising from the development.

Exceptions

Defended Areas

(a) A proposal on previously developed land that is protected by flood defences (confirmed by Rivers Directorate as the competent authority) as being structurally adequate in a 1 in 100 year plus climate change allowance fluvial event or 1 in 200 year plus climate change allowance coastal flood event.

- Due to the residual flood risk, there will be a presumption against development where proposals include essential infrastructure, storage of hazardous substances, bespoke accommodation for vulnerable groups or development located close to flood defences.
- Proposals involving significant intensification of use will be considered on their individual merits and will be informed by the FRA.

[2] *AEP-"Annual Exceedance Probability" -the probability of a flood event of a certain magnitude,or greater, occurring in each and any one year,expressed as a percentage*

Undefended Areas

(b) New development within settlements in the coastal floodplain where the land is raised to an acceptable level above the flood plain (through infilling) and subject to meeting all of the following criteria:

- The proposal is not dependent upon the provision of new coastal flood defences or likely to require such protection as a result of anticipated climate change;
- The site is not in an area likely to be at risk from coastal erosion or land instability and the proposed development will not significantly increase such risks in the locality; and
- The elevation of development above the flood plain will not unduly disrupt the provision and ongoing delivery of essential services including access, power, water and sewerage.

(c) Replacement of an existing building.

- Proposals that include essential infrastructure or bespoke accommodation for vulnerable groups (e.g. schools, residential/nursing homes and sheltered housing) or that involve significant intensification of use will not be acceptable;

(d) Development for agricultural use, transport and utilities infrastructure, which for operational reasons has to be located within the flood plain.

(e) Water compatible development such as for boat mooring, navigation and water based recreational use, which for operations reasons has to be located within the flood plain.

(f) The use of land for sport and outdoor recreation, amenity open space or for nature conservation purposes, including ancillary buildings. This does not include playgrounds for children.

(g) The extraction of mineral deposits and necessary ancillary development.

Development Proposals of Regional or Sub-Regional Significance

A development proposal within the flood plain that does not constitute an exception to the policy may be permitted where it is deemed to be of overriding regional or sub-regional importance and meets both of the following criteria:

- Demonstration of exceptional benefit to the regional or sub-regional economy; and
- Demonstration that the proposal requires a location within the flood plain and justification as to why possible alternative sites outside the flood plain are unsuitable.

Where the principle of development is established through meeting the above criteria, the Council will steer developments towards sites at lowest flood risk. The applicant is required to submit an FRA for all proposals.

Minor Development[3]

Minor development will be acceptable in defended and undefended flood plains subject to the submission of a satisfactory FRA. The need for an FRA for residential extensions and alterations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Flood Protection/Management Measures

The following flood protection and management measures, proposed as part of a planning application, in order to facilitate development within flood plains, will not be acceptable:

- New hard engineered or earthen bank flood defences;
- Flood compensation storage works; or
- Land raising (infilling) to elevate a site above the flood level within the undefended flood plain, except undefined areas where it complies with the criteria listed under bullet point (b).

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

17.13 Floodplains are the areas adjacent to a watercourse or the sea where water is conveyed and stored in periods of flood, and as such are of critical importance to the wider flood management system. Any built development within a floodplain will cause a reduction in valuable flood storage area, putting the development itself at risk but also adding to the cumulative risk of flooding elsewhere. In order to preserve the natural function of the flood plain, preserve its ecological integrity and minimise the flooding risk to people and property, it is necessary to avoid development within flood plains where possible.

17.14 The changing climate is increasing the extent of flood plans and putting more people and property at risk from flooding. Ensuring that development is diverted away from these sensitive locations is one means of adapting to and mitigating climate change.

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[3] *For the purposes of this policy, "minor development" refers to extension, alterations and ancillary buildings within the curtilage of an existing dwelling and non-residential extensions with a floor area less than 150m2 (measured externally).*

17.15 This policy seeks to ensure that development within the flood plains of rivers and the sea is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. The Council will adopt a precautionary approach in assessing proposals in areas that may be subject to flood risk presently and in the future, as a result of climate change predictions.

17.16 Rivers Directorate advises Council on the extent of river and coastal flood plains in Ards and North Down. Current information on flooded areas, including the defined present-day river and coastal flood plains and those which take account of climate change predictions is available on Flood Maps NI, available to view on the DfI website.

17.17 These maps are regularly updated as more detailed information becomes available, meaning that the extent of the flood plains will change over time.

Defended Areas

17.18 A 'defended area' is that part of the flood plain where flooding would normally occur but for the presence of flood defences. The location of such defences and the areas benefitting from their protection are shown on Flood Maps NI. Previously developed land protected by existing defences (such as earthen banks or hard engineered walls) and confirmed by Rivers Directorate as being structurally adequate in a 1 in 100 year fluvial plus climate change allowance or 1 in 200 year plus climate change allowance coastal flood event, will generally be considered acceptable for development. However, as part of the Council's precautionary approach to flood risk, any new defence works proposed by a developer will not be acceptable as justification to allow new development in a flood plain to proceed.

17.19 It should be noted that the flood risk in defended areas cannot be completely eliminated. The possibility of a flood event exceeding the design limit of the defence and overtopping it (the residual flood risk) will remain as will the possibility of structural collapse and breeching of defences, resulting in the sudden and rapid inundation of flood water. There is also potential for back drainage systems to become overwhelmed as they are unable to discharge effectively when water levels remain high during flood conditions. In all such circumstances, flood water within defended areas is likely to become trapped by the defences, resulting in longer term impacts and may require evacuation and pumping or other engineering solutions to remove. As a result of these flood risks, Policy FLD 1 places restrictions on the location and type of development that will be permissible in such areas.

17.20 In terms of location, development close to flood defences will be resisted as such land will often be low lying and therefore susceptible to flooding. Also, it may need to be retained for temporary water storage in a flood event. Before submitting planning applications on sites near flood defences, developers are advised to seek guidance from Rivers Directorate on acceptable separation distances.

17.21 In terms of types of development, the policy operates a presumption against development associated with vulnerable groups, such as, the young, old or those who are disabled. Flood warning and evacuation measures would be difficult to implement for these groups, placing them at greater risk of fatality or injury than the general population in the event of a flooding episode. There is therefore a presumption against locating facilities such as, children's nurseries, schools, residential care/nursing homes, sheltered housing and hospitals in these risk areas.

17.22 Development proposals for essential infrastructure such as, for emergency services, power supply and telecommunications will also be resisted in areas of residual flood risk because access and uninterrupted operation cannot be guaranteed in these locations.

17.23 Development associated with the storage of hazardous substances, fuel storage depots, sewage treatment works or other development likely to give rise to environmental damage and pollution in the event of flooding will only be granted planning permission where it is demonstrated that an alternative lower risk location is not available, and that adequate provision has been made for pollution containment.

17.24 Proposals involving significant intensification of use such as conversion of a single dwelling into apartments effectively expose more people to residual flood risk in defended areas and are therefore undesirable in the context of flood risk alone. However, this issue must be balanced against all other material planning considerations such as the existing housing density in the area in question. The Council will determine each application on its own merits, considering any scope for flood risk mitigation.

17.25 There will be a presumption against the development of green field sites in defended areas. In addition to exposing more people and property to residual flood risk, this form of development also removes valuable flood storage areas in the event of overtopping or a breach of the defences.

Undefended Areas

17.26 An 'undefended area' is an area within the flood plain that is not protected by flood defences. This applies to the majority of fluvial and coastal flood plains. Any built development, including infilling, will cause piecemeal reduction of the flood plain and potentially remove valuable flood storage area, which may cause or exacerbate flooding elsewhere. Development also has the potential to impair the conveyance function of the flood plain and its ecological integrity. For these reasons, and also the need to limit exposure of people and property to flood risk, built development and infrastructure works, particularly on greenfield sites, will normally not be permitted. However, it is recognised that in certain cases, particular developments or infrastructure must be in these locations,

as alternative lower risk flood sites may be neither feasible nor available. Exceptions to the policy are therefore set out for a range of development types.

17.27 The policy provides opportunity for new development in the undefended coastal flood plain on the basis that infilling and land raising to an appropriate level above the flood plain will have a negligible effect upon its extent and will not incur any additional flood risk elsewhere. Any infilling operations should minimise and mitigate any geomorphological changes in order to ensure they have a minimal impact upon coastal processes, including sediment movement. Such developments should not generate a present or future need for additional flood defences.

17.28 The replacement of an existing building may be considered on the basis that this should not normally result in any material increase in the flood risk to the development or elsewhere. The adoption of suitable flood proofing measures through resistance and resilience construction (Annex K) will normally be expected. If the replacement building is to provide accommodation for vulnerable groups, this will be unacceptable. Similarly, the replacement of a building to accommodate essential infrastructure will be unacceptable as access for essential activities may not be possible in the event of a flood. Finally, a replacement proposal that leads to a significant intensification of use will be resisted as this would introduce more people and property to a high-risk area.

17.29 The policy allows for the provision of areas of amenity open space, sports, outdoor recreation and nature conservation purposes on the basis that these areas are not permanently occupied and are unlikely to suffer major damage if flood inundation was to occur. Children's playgrounds are not included in this exception as such proposals would have the effect of exposing a vulnerable group to flood risk.

17.30 Ancillary development such as changing facilities, clubhouses and pitches may be acceptable where justified by an FRA. Although intermittently occupied, it will be necessary to demonstrate mitigation of flood impacts for these types of developments and also adequate flood warning and evacuation procedures. Synthetic sports surfaces have the potential to increase flood risk to the site or elsewhere. It should also be noted that such synthetic surfaces are prone to damage by flooding and repair can be expensive.

Development Proposals of Overriding Regional or Sub-Regional Economic Significance

17.31 Ideally, economic development should not be located within a flood plain, however it is accepted that some proposals may require a site that happens to fall within a flood plain due to their nature, size or site-specific requirements. In such circumstances, the applicant will

be expected to demonstrate that the proposal will make a significant contribution to the regional or sub-regional economy for example, in providing employment for a substantial number of people living in Ards and North Down Council area.

17.32 Developers must justify the need for a location in the flood plain. This should include evidence that a thorough search of alternative sites outside the flood plain was conducted and why they were found to be unsuitable. Should the Council accept the principle of development, a suitable site in the least vulnerable area of the flood plain should be selected.

Flood Risk Assessments and Mitigation Measures

17.33 Where the Council determines that development is acceptable in principle in the flood plain, the applicant must submit a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). This must demonstrate measures to be taken to identify, manage and mitigate risks to the proposed development and elsewhere. These measures should be proportionate to the flood risk and will be more rigorous in undefended areas than in defended areas. Guidance for the submission of FRAs can be found in Annex J. Information on flood proofing, resistance and resilience techniques is contained in Annex K.

17.34 Infilling or land raising within the undefended fluvial flood plain is not considered acceptable because the loss of flood storage area may well cause or exacerbate flooding elsewhere. However, in exceptional circumstances, infilling may be permitted to facilitate the provision of key infrastructure, such as a road embankment. Flood compensatory storage may be acceptable as a flood mitigation measure. Flood compensation storage involves the replacement of flood plain land lost through infilling for development, with compensatory land at the same level in a close location. This compensatory land is provided through excavation. Due to the cumulative effect and unknown implications associated with infilling and excavation, flood compensatory storage in itself is not considered as justification for development in a flood plain.

Development and Flood Defences

Policy FLD 2
Protection of Flood Defence and Drainage Infrastructure

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would impede the operational effectiveness of flood defence and drainage infrastructure (including above-ground soft SuDS) or hinder access to enable their maintenance.

Justification and Amplification

17.35 Flood defence and drainage infrastructure is critical in providing a level of flood protection to people and property and adequate land drainage. This policy seeks to ensure that such infrastructure is protected from development that would impact upon its operational integrity. This also includes a presumption against the erection of buildings or other structures over the line of a culverted watercourse in order to avoid damage and facilitate replacement, maintenance or other necessary operations.

17.36 Where a new development is located beside a flood defence, control structure or watercourse, it is essential that an adjacent working strip is retained in order to facilitate future maintenance. The exact width of this strip will be determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with Rivers Directorate.



Development outside of Fluvial (River) and Coastal Flood Plains and Surface Flood Risk

Policy FLD 3
Development and Surface Water Flood Risk outside of Flood Plains

A Drainage Assessment (DA) will be required for all development proposals that exceed any of the following thresholds:

- A residential development comprising of 10 or more dwelling units; or
- A development in excess of 1 hectare; or
- Development involving new buildings and/or hard surfacing exceeding 1000 m^2 in area.

A Drainage Assessment will also be required for any development proposal (except for minor development) where:

- The proposed development is located in an area where there is evidence of a history of surface water flooding;
- Surface water run-off from the development may adversely impact upon other development or features of importance to the natural or historic environment.

Planning permission will be granted where it is demonstrated through the DA that adequate measures will be put in place to effectively mitigate the flood risk to the proposed development and from the development elsewhere.

Where the proposed development is also located within a coastal or fluvial flood plain, Policy FLD 1 Development in Fluvial (River) and Coastal Flood Plains will take precedence.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 General Principles and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

17.37 Surface water or pluvial flooding is the result of high intensity rainfall which overwhelms natural or man-made drainage systems, resulting in water flowing overland and ponding in depressions in the ground. The incidence and severity of this type of flooding has increased in recent years due to the expansion of urban areas with associated non-permeable surfaces. Pluvial flooding can also impact upon the marine environment in terms of marine and coastal water quality.

17.38 This policy aims to ensure that development proposals likely to be at risk from surface water flooding are only permitted subject to the submission of a satisfactory Drainage Assessment (DA). This must demonstrate that the flood risk can be effectively controlled and mitigated and that the proposed development will not create greater potential for surface flooding elsewhere. The Strategic Flood Maps NI Surface Water Layer should assist applicants in identifying areas where surface water flooding could be a potential problem. In addition, Annex J of this document contains guidance on the completion of Drainage Assessments.

17.39 If a DA is not required, but there is potential for surface water flooding as shown on the Surface Water Layer of DfI Flood Maps NI (on the DfI website), it remains the responsibility of the developer to mitigate the effects of flooding and drainage as a result of the development.

17.40 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be the preferred drainage solution, as outlined in Policies FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage, GP 1 General Principles and CC 1 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

17.41 For the purposes of this policy, 'minor development' has the same definition as described in footnote 1 of policy FLD 1 Development in Fluvial (River) and Coastal Flood Plains.

Policy FLD 4
Artificial Modification of Watercourses

Planning permission will only be granted for the artificial modification of a watercourse, including culverting or canalisation operations, in either of the following exceptional circumstances:

- Where the culverting of a short length of a watercourse is necessary to provide access to a development site or part thereof; or
- Where it is demonstrated that a specific length of watercourse needs to be culverted for engineering reasons and that there were no reasonable alternative courses of action.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

17.42 Culverting and /or canalisation of watercourses, whether undertaken as an operation in its own right, or as works associated with the development of land usually requires planning permission. Some culverting operations many constitute permitted development as set out under the provisions of the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (NI) 2015 and subsequent amendments. In some cases, it may be necessary to remove permitted development rights where culverting is likely to increase flood risk elsewhere.

17.43 Any artificial modification of a watercourse as part of a flood alleviation or drainage infrastructure scheme carried out by a public body in pursuance of its statutory responsibilities will normally be exempt from planning permission. However, approvals may still be required from the relevant authority.

17.44 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement recognises that artificial modification of watercourses, including culverting or canalisation, is environmentally unsustainable with the potential to increase flood risk. Such operations can adversely impact upon visual amenity, and can damage or impair the landscape quality, ecological integrity and biodiversity of watercourses. Culverting creates barriers to the passage of fish, while the higher flow velocities cause the unnatural movement of sediment and increased erosion downstream. Whilst culverting may alleviate local flood risk in some instances, it can increase the risk downstream through the accumulation of higher flows. It can also impact upon the integrity of certain types of heritage asset such as millraces and canals, or the hydrological conditions of water dependant archaeological remains.

17.45 Good layout and design should promote the retention of open watercourses as a central amenity feature. Incorporating watercourses into the open space requirements for a new residential development will be preferential to locating them to the rear of properties, where they are difficult to maintain. Where possible, the removal of culverts and the reintroduction of the natural watercourse should be encouraged.

17.46 The policy does acknowledge that, in exceptional circumstances, culverting of a section of watercourse will be unavoidable and the onus is upon the applicant to demonstrate this to the satisfaction of the Council, in consultation with Rivers Directorate and DAERA Inland Fisheries. When culverting a short section of watercourse for access reasons, the length and number of culverts should be kept to a minimum. if part of the watercourse is already culverted prior to the commencement of any development, this does not necessarily mean that approval will be forthcoming to lengthen or upgrade it simply to meet the increased site discharge requirements.

17.47 The use of sustainable drainage solutions for the disposal of stormwater is a much more sustainable alternative than culverting or other options involving the artificial modification of watercourses. The use of SuDS solutions, particularly 'soft' elements such as ponds and swales and their integration into new development schemes as amenity features will be encouraged. Applicants are therefore required to demonstrate that SuDS have been considered as a feasible alternative to culverting and canalisation of watercourses (See Policy FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage).

Development and Controlled Reservoirs

Policy FLD 5
Development in Proximity to Reservoirs

Planning permission will only be granted for development within the potential flood inundation area of a 'controlled reservoir' as shown on Flood Maps NI if it can be demonstrated that the condition, management and maintenance regime of the reservoir is appropriate to provide sufficient assurance regarding reservoir safety, to enable the development to proceed; or

In cases where sufficient assurance on the condition, management and maintenance regime of the relevant reservoir(s) cannot be demonstrated, the development will only be permitted in the following circumstances:

(a) Proposals for replacement or change of use of an existing building(s), provided it is demonstrated that there is no material increase in reservoir flood risk to the development or elsewhere; or

(b) Where the application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) or other analysis, which assesses the downstream flood risk to people in the event of an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure as being acceptable to enable the development to proceed.

Where a reservoir FRA is deemed necessary, this will need to set out suitable measures to manage and mitigate the identified flood risks, including details of emergency evacuation procedures.

There will be a presumption against development within the potential flood inundation area for proposals that include:

- Essential infrastructure;
- Storage of hazardous substances;
- Bespoke accommodation for vulnerable groups.

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

17.48 A 'controlled reservoir' is defined by Sections 1 to 5 of the Reservoirs (NI) Act 2015 as 'a structure or area that is capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres of water above the natural level of any part of the surrounding land.' There are currently 19 reservoirs of this size in

Ards and North Down, examples of which include Ballysallagh in Craigantlet, Portavoe in Donaghadee and Lough Cowey in Portaferry. Reservoir Flood Maps have been prepared by Rivers Directorate and are available to view on the DfI website. These provide the location of each reservoir and the flood extent in the event of an uncontrolled release of water.

17.49 Water impounding structures, such as, reservoirs constitute a potential source of flood risk which could have serious consequences for human life and property. Flooding of downstream areas (known as the 'area of inundation') may ensue in the unlikely event of an uncontrolled release of water, for example if the structure fails or is overtopped. In the event of a controlled release of water during periods of high flows, there may also be potential for unexpected flooding within the inundation area. In such cases, inundation is likely to be rapid and the response time short and the Council will therefore operate a presumption against all new developments in flood inundation areas that are associated with essential infrastructure, the storage of hazardous substances and accommodation for vulnerable groups.

17.50 New development within the inundation area of a controlled reservoir can be justified where the condition, management and maintenance regime of the reservoir are appropriate to provide assurance regarding reservoir safety. Confirmation of this for planning purposes only, may be dependent upon a written agreement between the Responsible Reservoir Manager and Rivers Directorate. If there is a voluntary formal agreement and evidence of voluntary compliance with the relevant sections of the Act, the reservoir will be regarded as being Responsibly Managed. In the case of reservoirs where a Responsible Reservoir Manager has not been conferred, a current inspection report, 'signed off' by an All Reservoirs Panel Engineer may be appropriate. In both cases, the Council will carry out detailed consultation with Rivers Directorate. If the submitted information is sufficient to provide condition, management and maintenance assurance for planning purposes, an additional Flood Risk Assessment will not have to be submitted.

17.51 In cases where neither of the above documents are available, development in the flood inundation area will be restricted to replacement buildings as these should not affect the potential future flood risk area. Other developments may also be permitted where an FRA, or other analysis confirms that the level of downstream flood risk following an uncontrolled release of water is acceptable.

17.52 Further information on 'Development in Proximity to Reservoirs' can be found in the DfI Technical Guidance Note TGN 254 (June 2020) on the DFI website.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Policy FLD 6
Sustainable Drainage

A sustainable drainage solution for the management of surface water run-off will be required for any development that triggers the requirement for a Drainage Assessment under Policy FLD 3 – Development and Surface Water Risk. An exception will be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that the site is fundamentally unsuitable for a SuDS solution.

Planning permission will not be granted until the Council is satisfied that suitable arrangements will be put in place for the future management and maintenance, in perpetuity of SuDS required under this policy. (A Section 76 planning agreement may be required.)

All development proposals will also be required to comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and accord with all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

17.53 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are defined as management practices and control systems designed to drain surface water in a more sustainable way than conventional piped systems. The SPPS states that the Council should encourage developers to use sustainable drainage systems as the preferred drainage solution, firstly as they have been proven to be more effective than traditional piped drainage in reducing surface water flooding but also as they provide other environmental, economic and social benefits. In terms of climate mitigation and adaption, SuDS has a key role to play for the following reasons:

- SuDS can replace some of the evaporative cooling lost through urbanisation and can therefore mitigate against Urban Heat Island (UHI) effects;
- Unlike traditional piped drainage, SuDS contribute to green infrastructure through the establishment of vegetation and trees. These sequester carbon and therefore mitigate against greenhouse gas emissions;
- SuDS can reduce the need for water pumping and treatment, which saves energy; and
- SuDS offer more effective resilience to high intensity rainfall events which are more problematic in urban areas due to high levels of hard surfacing.

17.54 The Council will expect SuDS to be an integral feature of all larger developments that meet the threshold for submission of a Drainage Assessment. However, the Council will also actively encourage the implementation of sustainable drainage elements for smaller developments. Even small-scale SuDS measures can assist in building cumulative resilience to climate change impacts. These can include green roofs, permeable paving, rainwater harvesting, rills, micro-wetlands and tree pits, which can all be implemented on smaller sites.

17.55 The Council will also promote the use of SuDS within public realm schemes and streetscape improvements, in order to improve the resilience of existing drainage systems, thereby mitigating the effect of stormwater on drainage network capacity.

17.56 Developers should consider the incorporation of SuDS as early as possible in the design process and the appropriateness of a particular SuDS solution will depend upon a variety of factors, including the topography, hydrogeology and geology of the site as well as the availability of discharge points (rivers, drains or sewers).

17.57 SuDS can vary in size and composition and the integration of a variety of techniques may well present the best solution. 'Hard' SuDS can include permeable paving and oversized surface water sewers with flow control and attenuation tanks. NI Water will adopt such a sewer or drain, which is intended to communicate with the public sewer under an Article 161 Agreement, if all required conditions are met. (See the NI Water website, 'Services for Developers' section for further information) 'Soft' SuDS are usually in the form of swales (narrow drainage channels), ponds, wetlands and groundwater infiltration beds which are carved into the landscape to collect water and let it soak naturally into ground. These solutions offer further benefits in that they enhance nature conservation value and biodiversity.

17.58 Planning applications will be expected to include the appropriate level of detail in respect of SuDS and where acceptable, the Council will need to be satisfied that the proposals for SuDS are capable of practical implementation and that suitable arrangements are in place regarding the long-term management and maintenance of the infrastructure upon which the SuDS depend. DFI's 'Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage' consultation of March 2022 includes a consideration of future powers to specify design and maintenance requirements for SuDS and whether this guidance should be in the form of regulatory legislation or non-statutory guidance.

17.59 It is accepted that there may be occasions when a site is fundamentally unsuitable for SuDS. For example, sites with a

high-water table which could be subjected to pollutants and contamination, a flat site where there is a lack of gradient to convey water, an excessively steep site where increased erosion and scouring of SuDS components could be an issue or sites where ground conditions are suboptimal. In these cases, the reasons for SuDS unsuitability must be set out in the Drainage Assessment and supported by a suitably qualified engineer. It should also be noted that whilst some sites may not be suitable for a large-scale SuDs installation, it is nearly always possible to incorporate some SuDs features into a scheme design.

18 Outdoor Advertisements

18.1 Advertising is a familiar feature in the environment that can contribute to a vibrant and competitive economy. Advertisements affect the character and appearance of the building or place where they are displayed. Given the potential impact of outdoor advertising on amenity, there is a need to balance their positive function with the protection and, where possible enhancement of the character and appearance of our cities, towns, villages, small settlements and the countryside. There is a corresponding need to ensure that advertisements will not prejudice public safety.

18.2 Section 130 of The Planning Act (NI) 2011 enables the Council to restrict or regulate the display of advertisements in the interests of "amenity" and "public safety" including road safety. Furthermore, roads legislation[1] provides additional controls on advertisements in, or on a public road.

18.3 Advertisements must not detract from the unique qualities and amenity of our countryside nor diminish our archaeology and built heritage.

18.4 It is important to prevent clutter, adequately control signs involving illumination and to protect features such as listed buildings and conservation areas from the potential adverse effects of advertising. The increase in availability of digital and illuminated signage has the potential to have a negative impact.

Outdoor Advertisements Strategy

To ensure that advertisements do not detract from the character and amenity of where it is to be displayed, to prevent clutter, to ensure that advertisements do not prejudice public safety, including road safety and to adequately control illuminated signage and digital advertising screens.

18.5 This will be achieved by;

- Protecting our natural and historic environment and heritage assets from the potential adverse effects of advertising and
- The application of operational planning polices to prevent clutter, and adequately control signs involving illumination and digital advertising screens; and
- Consulting with Statutory consultees through the processing of planning applications with regards to public safety.

[1] *Article 87 The Roads (Northern Ireland)Order 1993*

Why we have taken this approach

18.6 The regional strategic approach for the Control of Advertisements within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is that outdoor advertisements should respect amenity and do not prejudice public safety, including road safety. Advertising should be well designed, which respects the building or location where it is displayed, and which contributes to a quality environment.

18.7 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of the Council's Community Plan, 'The Big Plan' that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- A Prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4); and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

18.8 The Outdoor Advertisement Strategy supports the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS particularly:

- Supporting Good Design and Positive Place-Making;
- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

Operational Planning Policy

Policy AD 1
Outdoor Advertisements

Advertising consent will be granted for the display of an advertisement where:

(a) It respects amenity, when assessed in the context of the general characteristics of the locality; and

(b) It does not prejudice public safety;

(c) The cumulative effect does not result in clutter;

(d) The effect of illumination used in the advertisement is not detrimental to amenity;

(e) The advertisement does not detract from the place where it is to be displayed or its surroundings; and

(f) The effect of illumination on advertisements and light pollution is not detrimental to biodiversity including ecological sensitive receptors.

For the purposes of this policy advertisements are defined as any word, letter, model, sign, placard, board, notice, awning, blind, device or representation, whether illuminated or not, and employed wholly or partly for the purpose of advertisement, announcement, or direction.[2]

The guidance set out in Annex L - Guidance for Outdoor Advertisements will be taken into account in assessing proposals.

The proposal must also meet GP 1 and accord with all other provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

18.9 Advertisement consent is required for the display of outdoor advertisements. However, some adverts benefit from 'Deemed advertisement consent.' These requirements are contained within the Regulations[3].

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[2] *Section 130 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011*

[3] *The Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015*

Amenity

18.10 In relation to advertisements the term amenity is usually understood to mean its effect upon the appearance of the building or structure or the immediate neighbourhood where it is displayed, or its impact over long distance views.

18.11 A proliferation of advertisements on a building or along a road can create clutter and be disruptive to the appearance and character of an area. When preparing designs for new signage or advertisements, the opportunity should be taken to rationalise the number of signs on a building or in an area and remove those which are redundant or excessive.

18.12 In assessing the impact of an advertisement or sign on amenity the Council will take into account all of the following matters:

(a) The effect the advertisement will have on the general characteristics of the area, including the presence of any features of historic, archaeological, architectural, landscape, cultural or other special interest;

(b) The position of the advertisement on the host building and its scale and size in relation to that building;

(c) The cumulative effect of the proposal when read with other advertisements on the building or in the surrounding area and whether the proposal will result in clutter;

(d) The size, scale, dominance, and siting of the advertisement in relation to the scale and characteristics of the surrounding area;

(e) The design and materials of the advertisement, or the structure containing the advertisement, and its impact on the appearance of the building on which it is to be attached;

(f) In the case of a freestanding sign, the design and materials of the structure and its impact on the appearance and character of the area where it is to be located; and

(g) The impact of the advertisement, including its size, scale and levels of illumination, the impact of scrolling illumination on the amenities of people living nearby and the potential for light pollution.

18.13 In order to protect the unique qualities of the countryside from the negative effects of advertising, the only advertisements likely to be acceptable in the countryside are those proposed on site, and which relate to existing or approved commercial enterprises. These should be small in scale and not detract from the quality and character of the local landscape.

Public Safety

18.14 In assessing the impact of an advertisement on public safety the Council will have regard to its effect upon the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transport on land (including the safety of pedestrians), on or over water or in the air.

18.15 The main types of advertisements which are likely to pose a threat to public safety are:

(a) Those which obstruct or impair sight lines at corners, bends or at a junction or at any point of access to a road;

(b) Those which, by virtue of their size or siting, would obstruct or confuse a road user's view or reduce the clarity or effectiveness of a traffic sign or traffic signal, or those which would be likely to distract road users because of their unusual design;

(c) Signs which leave insufficient clearance on or above any part of the road or footpath, or insufficient lateral clearance for vehicles on the carriageway;

(d) Those which are located so as to impair the safety of any person looking at them because there is no protection from moving vehicles or where the footpath is narrow at the point where the public stop to look at them.;

(e) Illuminated signs:

- where the means of illumination is directly visible from any part of the road;
- which, because of their colour, could be mistaken for, or confused with, traffic lights or any other authorised signal; and
- which, because of their size or brightness, could result in glare or dazzle, or otherwise distract road users especially in wet or misty weather.

(f) Signs which incorporate moving or apparently moving elements in their display, especially where the whole message is not displayed at one time therefore increasing the time taken to read the whole message;

(g) Those which resemble traffic signs because of their colour or content or those which embody directional or other traffic elements, which could therefore cause confusion with traffic signs;

(h) Signs sited or designed primarily to be visible from any type of special road; and

(i) Those which cause possible interference with a navigational light or an aerial beacon.

18.16 In assessing the impact on public safety, the vital consideration for the Council will be whether the advertisement itself, or the exact location proposed for its display, is likely to be so distracting or confusing that it creates a hazard to, or endangers, people in the vicinity, be they drivers, cyclists, wheeled users or pedestrians.

18.17 The illumination of advertisements may cause disturbance to wildlife and protected species including bats and may impact the marine environment. Sufficient documentation is expected to be submitted to enable the Council to determine the potential impact of the proposal on biodiversity including the potential impact on light sensitive species.

18.18 Evidence to show the consideration of the potential impacts on the marine area, its ecosystem services and the users that rely on them should show how any potential adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated.

18.19 Information to demonstrate the impact of a proposal on light sensitive receptors should include which species are present, how are they using the habitat (eg roosting, commuting, foraging), the existing light levels and show how any potential adverse impact is, in order of preference, avoided, minimised and/or mitigated.

18.20 The Council will be mindful that, on occasion, some advertisements can positively contribute to public safety, for example, by directing drivers and others to their destination.

18.21 Public safety issues are less likely to occur where an advertisement is proposed within an existing industrial or commercial centre, and when the level of illumination proposed is appropriate to the location.

18.22 In assessing the brightness of signs, these will be expected to accord with the guidance contained in the Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance PLG05, The brightness of illuminated Advertisements (2023).[4]

18.23 Where appropriate, the Council will consult other relevant public bodies who have an interest in the safe display of advertisements. In particular, the Council will take into account the advice of DfI Roads on matters of road safety.

Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character

18.24 Specific policies for the control of advertisements affecting Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas (CA)s and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs) are set out in Historic Environment Polices HE8, HE12 and HE13.

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[4] *https://docs.planning.org.uk/20210606/98/QPOWTCLYH8100/uq2tfwk2unkapc3d.pdf*

19 Hazardous Substances, Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH)

19.1 This specialist area of planning control is informed by legislation including "The Planning (Hazardous Substances) (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015"[1] and the "Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (COMAH)[2].

19.2 The hazardous substances regime sets limits on the amount of dangerous substances that can be stored and/or used in an establishment before that establishment must apply for consent from the Council. The Council must consider any major accident hazard issues before planning permission can be granted in relation to establishments, to certain types of development near such establishments, and hazardous substances consent.

19.3 The detail of what is a hazardous substance, and the thresholds are contained within legislation which allows the Council to consider whether the proposed storage or use of a significant quantity of a hazardous substance is appropriate to a particular location, having regard to the risks arising to persons in the surrounding area and the wider implications for the community.

19.4 The Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations requires that development plans consider the location of hazardous installations. There are two types (tiers) of establishment which are subject to COMAH, known as 'Upper Tier' and 'Lower Tier', depending on the quantity of dangerous substances they hold. Upper Tier establishments will hold greater quantities of dangerous substances, meaning that additional requirements are placed on them by the Regulations. There is one COMAH site within the Borough, which is an upper tier site. Information on COMAH sites is available on the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) website[3].

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1 *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2015/325/contents/made*

2 *Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 (legislation.gov.uk).*

3 *https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/comah-public-information-northern-ireland*

Why we have taken this approach

19.5 The Council is required to protect the environment and residents from hazardous substances, comply with relevant legislation and ensure that the location of any COMAH site is taken into account in the Local Development Plan (LDP).

19.6 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).



Policy CMA 1
Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH)

The Council may restrict development adjacent to or near an identified COMAH site following consultation with the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI).

Justification and Amplification

19.7 There is a need to maintain an appropriate distance between establishments where hazardous substances are present and residential areas, areas of public use or areas of nature conservation interest. Applicants are advised to contact the HSENI for further information including on the PADHI guidelines (Planning Advice for Developments near Hazardous Installations).

19.8 Hazardous substance consent is required for development falling within the thresholds determined by the Regulations. Further advice on Hazardous Substance Consent is available within Development Control Advice Note 12 - Planning Controls for Hazardous Substances.

19.9 In addition to planning permission, some industrial developments may also require consent under Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

19.10 Applications for Hazardous Substance Consent (HSC) and those applications that involve the storage of hazardous substances within or adjacent to a COMAH site will be assessed against the advice received from consultation with HSENI and NIEA and all other relevant material considerations. Appropriate conditions relating to mitigation measures will be attached to any approval which may be granted.

20 Contaminated and Unstable Land

20.1 Northern Ireland's historic and present-day activities may have impact land and can cause wider environmental damage. It is crucial that all unacceptable risks are identified, and that remediation of such land enables it to be suitable for use.

20.2 Northern Ireland does not, as yet, have the contaminated land regime that is in place in the rest of the United Kingdom. The Contaminated Land Regime, which is set out in Part III of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 has been enacted but is not yet in force. There is therefore not a list of sites subject to contamination within the Borough in advance of the regime being enacted.

20.3 This regime supports the 'polluter pays' principle and provides a legal framework for dealing with historic contamination. It aims to provide a system for the identification and remediation of land where contamination is causing unacceptable risks to human health, the natural environment and/or property. Local Councils will be the primary regulators for this regime with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) having defined regulatory roles and responsibilities.

20.4 Industry Profiles published in 1995 by the Department of Environment provides information on the processes, materials and waste associated with a range of individual industries regarding land contamination, showing the range of industries that may cause land contamination, including a range of manufacturing works, petrol filling stations and recycling plants.

Unstable Land

20.5 Natural conditions such as landslides (due to geology or angle of land), soluble rocks or mining activities such as mining or subsidence can cause land instability.

20.6 Northern Ireland's abandoned mines are vested in the Department for the Economy (DfE) under the Mineral Development Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. The GSNI Abandoned Mines Database contains information on the location of over 2000 abandoned shafts and adits and in some cases plans of the underground workings.

20.7 Whitespots is an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) for its geological interest and earth science value. It appears on the abandoned mine database and is an example within the Borough where extensive working of lead ore took place in the early nineteenth century, it declined after 1854, and the mines had closed by 1900.

Why we have taken this approach

20.8 The Council is required to protect the environment and residents from potential contamination whilst enabling sites that require remediation to be brought safely back into use. Land that is subject to instability must be appropriately assessed and remediated.

20.9 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2); and
- an environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

Policy CU 1
Contaminated or Unstable Land

Contaminated Land

The Council will only support development proposals on potentially contaminated land where it can be demonstrated:

(a) Through a site investigation and a Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) report, that the site is in a condition suitable for the proposed development and is not causing significant pollution of the environment, including an assessment to determine the potential for pollution in groundwater, watercourses, marine and coastal waters; and

(b) Where necessary effective remediation measures are agreed to ensure the site is made suitable for the new use and that disposal and or treatment of any hazardous material takes place.

The Council will attach conditions to the grant of any planning approval to ensure that remediation measures are carried out prior to or as part of the development.

Unstable Land

Where a proposal may be affected by instability, at the planning application stage, developers will be required to provide a Mine Risk Assessment (MRA) report which investigates the stability issues and the possible affect it may have on the development and its future users and the natural and built environment. This report should be written in line with guidance from the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI)[4].

The Council will attach conditions to the grant of any planning approval to ensure that remediation measures are carried out prior to, or as part of the development.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

20.10 Where a site is known or suspected to be contaminated developers will be expected to undertake a detailed site investigation to establish the extent of any contamination and to determine the potential for pollution to water, land and harm to human health. This should

[4] *AbandonedMinesGuidance.pdf (bgs.ac.uk).*

be carried out by a suitably qualified professional. A Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) should be produced in accordance with the UK Technical Framework as described in the Land Contamination: Risk Management (LCRM) Guidance produced by the Environment Agency[5].

20.11 Where contamination is determined to be present, suitable remediation, mitigation measures must be identified to prevent potential adverse impacts of the development on local amenity, human health, or the environment.

20.12 Applicants are advised to liaise with Environmental Health within the Council at the earliest stage in developing the proposal. When considering contaminated land developers should also have regard to guidance advised by DAERA[6] and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)[7].

Land Instability

20.13 A Mine Risk Assessment (MRA) report must be prepared by a competent person with a recognised relevant qualification, experience in dealing with ground stability and mining legacy issues and ideally holding a professional accreditation from a relevant organisation.

20.14 The Council will seek the advice of the appropriate regulatory and statutory organisations including the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI), the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), and the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI).

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[5] *Land contamination risk management (LCRM) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).*

[6] *Practice Guide - Redeveloping Land Affected by Contamination April 2019.pdf (daera-ni.gov.uk).*

[7] *Contaminated land | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk).*

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Infrastructure

21 Renewable Energy

22 Transportation

23 Public Utilities, Infrastructure and Connectivity

24 Waste Management

25 Non-Mains Wastewater Infrastructure

21 Renewable Energy

21.1 Ards and North Down Borough Council passed Northern Ireland's first Climate Emergency motion[1] in February 2019. The Council has a responsibility to support efforts to meet the ambitious targets set out in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022[2]. These include:

- Net zero emissions by 2050;
- At least 48% reduction in net emissions by 2030; and
- At least 80% of electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2030.

21.2 Sustainable development lies at the heart of the planning system – a key challenge of which is mitigating and adapting to climate change. This includes facilitating the generation of renewable energy in support of targets above. The main sources of renewable energy are: wind, sun/solar, moving water/hydro, heat extracted from the air, ground and water, and biomass. Diversifying and decentralising supply through greater use of renewables also brings benefits in terms of greater energy security, improving air quality, improving affordability of energy for household and businesses, and supporting economic growth in the green energy sector.

21.3 The Local Development Plan (LDP) can also contribute to reducing emissions through encouraging sustainable patterns of development and through the integration of land use with active travel links and sustainable transportation. Encouraging greater energy efficiency in new and existing buildings will also make a contribution.

Renewable Energy Profile

21.4 There are no wind farms in the Borough, with single turbines dominating the renewable energy provision to date. Potential wind speeds within the Ards Peninsula indicate some suitability for harnessing wind energy, however, this potential must be balanced against the potential for adverse impacts and, in particular, the desirability of preserving the quality and character of the natural and historic environment – particularly given the designation of much of the western portion of the Peninsula as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

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[1] *"That this Council notes the recent IPCC report on the impacts of climate breakdown; agrees that drastic and far-reaching measures must be taken across society to try and mitigate the risks and declares a 'Climate Emergency'. It requests an urgent report to assess the impact of the activities of Ards and North Down Borough Council on greenhouse gas emissions, exploring what mitigation measures can be put in place and establishes a working group to bring the issues of climate breakdown to the fore in the council structures and actions, local communities and businesses, as well as formulating a climate adaptation plan."*

[2] *The Path to Net Zero Energy. Safe. Affordable. Clean. (economy-ni.gov.uk)*
Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)

21.5 There is one solar farm in the Borough, located in the Ards Peninsula near Carrowdore.

21.6 There is good geothermal energy potential within the Borough, with the Sherwood Sandstone aquifer as shown in Figure 11. Geothermal energy can significantly contribute to providing a renewable heat source for domestic and industrial sectors including heating housing, as well as applications in agriculture, industry and district heating.

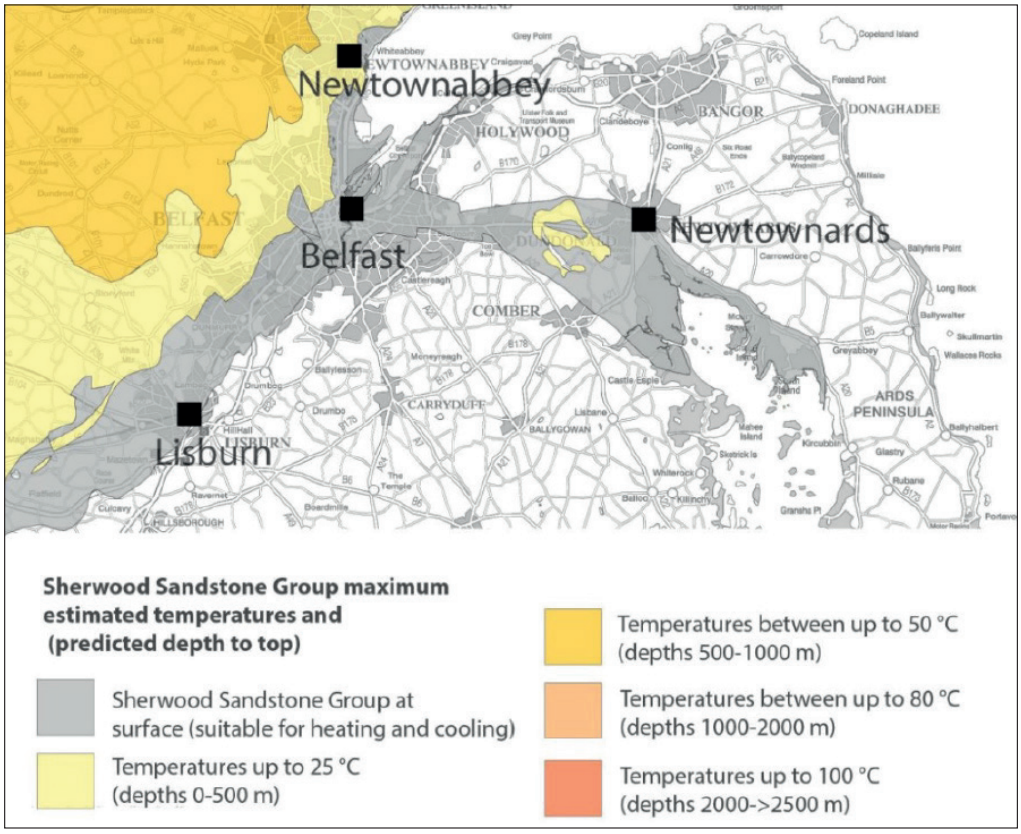


Figure 11
Map of Sherwood Sandstone Aquifer and estimated maximum temperatures (Source: Geo Energy NI[3])

[3] *https://geoenergyni.org/what-is-geothermal-energy/#northern-irelands-geothermal-potential*

Renewable Energy Strategy

To positively facilitate the Borough's full potential for renewable and low carbon energy development.

This will be achieved by:

- Supporting renewable energy generation and storage in suitable locations where they are not considered likely to cause unacceptable adverse impacts; and
- Promoting low/zero carbon principles at the heart of all new developments in the Borough.

Why we have taken this approach

21.7 The policy approach directly supports regional energy policy and targets set out in the Energy Strategy[4] and the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022[5].

21.8 Regional guidance in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) supports this approach. RG 5 'Deliver a sustainable and secure energy supply', recognises the importance of increasing the contribution that renewable energy makes to the overall energy mix. Whilst RG 9: 'Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality' specifically lists mitigation measures such as: increasing the use of renewable energies; utilising local production of heat and/or electricity from low or zero carbon energy sources; and improving the energy efficiency and adaptability of buildings.

21.9 The aim of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) in relation to renewable energy is to facilitate appropriately sited renewable energy generating facilities in order to achieve renewable energy targets and to realise the benefits of renewable energy without compromising other environmental assets of acknowledged importance (para 6.218).

21.10 The SPPS sets out regional strategic objectives for renewable energy and states that councils should set out policies and proposals in their LDPs that support a diverse range of renewable energy development, including the integration of micro-generation and passive solar design.

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4 *https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-energy-strategy-path-net-zero-energy*

5 *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2022/31/enacted*

21.11 The Renewable Energy Strategy supports the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS particularly:

- Improving Health and Well-being; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

21.12 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of the Council's Community Plan, 'The Big Plan', that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2); and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

21.13 The approach also supports the Council's Corporate Plan and complements the following Council strategies and policies:

- The Roadmap to Sustainability 2021-2028 which formalises our various sustainability commitments, shaped around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;
- The Sustainability and Climate Change Policy (2022) gives a commitment that the Council will carry out its activities and functions in a manner which minimises any potentially negative climate change impacts and states that the principles of sustainable development will be integrated throughout all Ards and North Down Borough Council activities.

21.14 The policy approach complements and should be read alongside, the strategic LDP Policy CC 1 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation to mitigate and adapt to climate change and increase local environmental resilience.

21.15 The Council will produce Supplementary Planning Guidance specific to renewable and low/zero carbon development, and reduced energy consumption, to support the operational policies to follow.

Operational Planning Policies

Policy RE 1
Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development

Planning permission will be granted for proposals for renewable and zero or low carbon energy generation and storage provided the proposal, and any associated buildings and infrastructure (including transmission lines), would not result in an unacceptable adverse impact, either alone or in combination with other developments, on:

(a) Public safety, human health, or residential amenity;

(b) Visual amenity, landscape and seascape character;

(c) Biodiversity, natural environment, or historic environment interests;

(d) Local natural resources, such as air quality, water quality or quantity; and

(e) Tourism, recreation and public access to the countryside.

Wind Energy

Applications specifically for wind energy development must have a separation distance of 10 times rotor diameter to occupied property, with a minimum distance not less than 500m for windfarm[6] proposals. Those proposals for wind energy development that are acceptable in principle under Policy RE 1 will also be required to demonstrate all of the following:

I. That the development will not have an unacceptable impact on visual amenity or landscape or seascape character through the number, scale, size and siting of turbines or the need for new transmission lines for connection to the electricity supply grid;

II. That the development has taken into consideration the cumulative impact of neighbouring wind turbines or wind farm development, existing or approved;

III. That the development will not create a significant risk of landslide or bog burst;

IV. That the development will not significantly affect the groundwater environment nor nearby receptors;

V. That no part of the development will give rise to unacceptable electromagnetic interference to communications installations; radar or air traffic control systems; emergency services communication; or other telecommunication systems;

[6] *Defined as two or more wind turbines.*

VI. That no part of the development will have an unacceptable impact on roads, rail or aviation safety; and

VII. That the development will not cause significant harm to the safety or amenity of any sensitive receptors[7] (including future occupants of committed developments) arising from noise, shadow flicker, ice throw, and reflected light.

A cautious approach will be adopted within those areas considered to be most sensitive to proposals for renewable energy generation and storage.

Renewable energy development should be sited outside areas of peatland to avoid impacting on peatland carbon stores and on the hydrology of the peatland. Development on active peatland[8] will not be permitted unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest as defined under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, as amended.

Proposals will be expected to be located at, or as close as possible to, the resources needed for that particular technology, unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the need for transportation of raw materials.

Proposals must demonstrate how above-ground redundant plant (including turbines), buildings and associated infrastructure shall be removed and the site restored to an agreed standard appropriate to its location.

Permission will only be granted if any unavoidable damage that would be caused during installation, operation or decommissioning, is minimised and mitigated, and where necessary, compensated for.

The wider environmental, economic and social benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects are material considerations that will be given appropriate weight in determining whether planning permission should be granted.

The latest published guidance will be taken into account in assessing proposals under this policy[9].

Proposals must also comply with the General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

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7 *Defined as habitable residential accommodation (although not necessarily occupied), hospitals, schools and churches.*

8 *Comprising blanket and raised bog, i.e. peatland on which peat is currently forming and accumulating. It is identified as a priority habitat for Europe in Annex 1 of the EC Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (the 'Habitats Directive').*

9 *The latest guidance includes: Planning Policy Statement 18 'Renewable Energy' Best Practice Guidance (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk); Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland Landscapes | Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk); and Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance to PPS18 - Anaerobic Digestion (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)*

Justification and Amplification

21.16 For the purposes of this policy, renewable and low carbon energies incorporate wind, solar, water (hydropower), heat extracted from the air, ground and water (including geothermal energy), tidal, biomass, and emerging technologies, such as green hydrogen. This policy shall also apply to proposals for energy storage and the re-powering of existing sites used for renewable energy generation.

21.17 The Council is supportive of renewable and low carbon energy proposals unless they would have unacceptable adverse effects which are not outweighed by the local and wider environmental, economic and social benefits of the development. This includes wider benefits arising from a clean, secure energy supply, reductions in greenhouse gases and other polluting emissions, reduced fuel poverty, and contributions towards meeting Northern Ireland's target for use of renewable energy sources on the road to net zero.

21.18 There are also economic benefits ranging from the wider geopolitical context of security of energy supply, to the localised, with potential links to job creation as some companies increasingly seek to locate near a secure supply of clean renewable energy.

21.19 Applicants may wish to note that some forms of renewable energy generation fall within permitted development rights as per The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. This includes some forms of domestic micro-generation and some anaerobic digestion on agricultural land. Applicants are advised to refer to the relevant legislation[10] for clarity in all cases.

Public Safety, Human Health, and Residential Amenity

21.20 The policy sets out minimum separation distances from turbines to nearby occupied residential properties in order to safeguard public safety, health and residential amenity.

21.21 Applicants should ensure that a noise report accompanies all applications for wind turbines (and other proposals such as heat pumps and solar farms, where appropriate) to assist the Council's Environmental Health department in assessing the likely impact on residential properties and other noise sensitive receptors. Noise reports must have regard to the latest available guidance and best practice in respect of assessing potential noise from wind turbines[11]. Where applicable, shadow flicker reports may also be required.

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[10] *The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (legislation.gov.uk)*

[11] *The most recent guidance and best practice is contained within 'The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms' (ETSU-R-97).*

21.22 Glint and glare from solar farms has potential to impact upon road or aviation safety and residential amenity. Applicants must therefore demonstrate that there will not be an unacceptable adverse impact on public safety, human health or residential amenity in this regard.

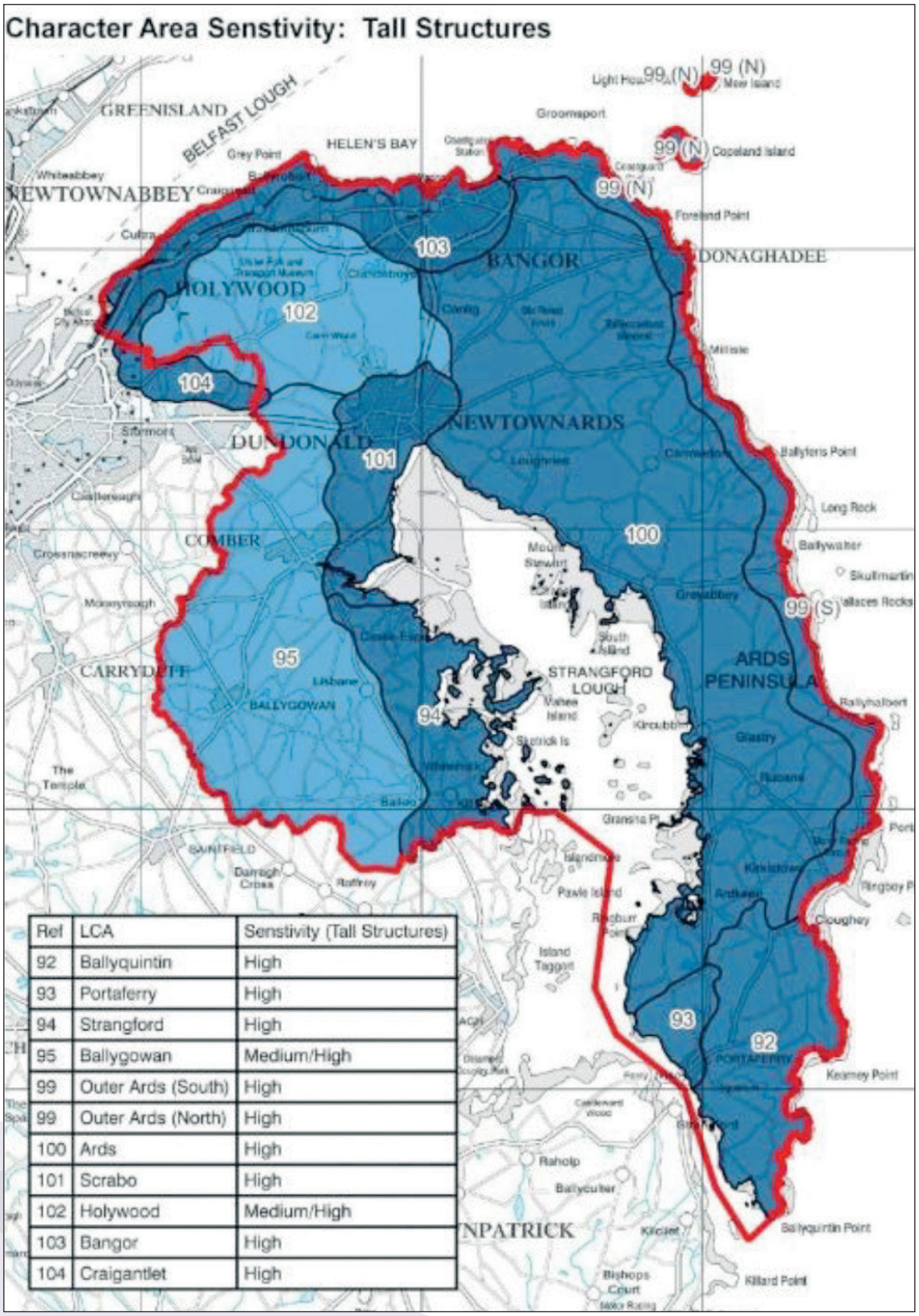
Visual Amenity, Landscape and Seascape Character

21.23 The landscape and visual effects of particular renewable energy developments will vary on a case-by-case basis according to the type of development, its location and the landscape setting of the proposed development. Some of these effects may be minimised through appropriate siting, design and landscaping schemes, depending on the size and type of development proposed.

21.24 The Council may also request photomontages from key viewpoints to assess the visual impact on the landscape or seascape, and any heritage assets and their settings such as listed buildings and historic monuments.

21.25 Strategic planning policy currently provides for a cautious approach in designated landscapes that are of significant value, for example Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Nendrum Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI) and Areas of High Scenic Value (AoHSV). Proposals for renewable energy development within these special landscapes will be carefully considered against Policy RE 1 Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development along with their specific policy provisions within the LDP.

21.26 The Council's updated 'Landscape Character Area Review' identified much of the Borough as having high sensitivity to tall structures including wind turbines (see Figure 12). When read alongside best practice guidance such as 'Wind Energy in Northern Ireland's Landscapes', it will assist in identifying those landscapes in the Borough which are most sensitive to wind energy development. There is currently no evidence to support the designation of areas within the Borough as being 'acceptable in principle' for wind or large-scale solar energy development.



Ref	LCA	Senstivity (Tall Structures)
92	Ballyquintin	High
93	Portaferry	High
94	Strangford	High
95	Ballygowan	Medium/High
99	Outer Ards (South)	High
99	Outer Ards (North)	High
100	Ards	High
101	Scrabo	High
102	Holywood	Medium/High
103	Bangor	High
104	Craigantlet	High

Figure 12
Landscape character area sensitivity to tall structures (including wind turbines) (Source: Landscape Character Analysis, Ironside Farrar for ANDBC, 2022).

Biodiversity, Natural Environment and Historic Environment Interests

21.27 It is important to note that proposals outside the most sensitive landscapes still have the potential to cause unacceptable adverse impacts. Their location will not negate the need for detailed consideration of the landscape and visual impacts of individual applications on a case-by-case basis, as well as, for consideration of other issues referred to in the policy and other relevant provisions of the LDP. This includes policies for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environments, and protection of public health and residential amenity amongst others.

21.28 The potential impact on protected species and priority habitats will depend on the nature of the renewable energy proposed, as well as its scale and location. The onus shall be on the applicant to satisfy the requirements of the policy and provide additional information from the outset of the planning process. Initial screening via a Biodiversity Checklist may necessitate further environmental studies and reports along with consultation with Natural Environment Division (NIEA). Applicants are encouraged to 'front load' the application process and particular consideration should be given to seasonal timings for any necessary environmental studies in protected species and habitats.

21.29 Active peatland is of particular importance for its biodiversity, water and carbon storage qualities. Much of the active peatland to the east of Northern Ireland, including this Borough, has been lost through agricultural activities and cutting. Therefore, renewable energy development on active peatland will not be permitted unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest as defined under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, as amended.

21.30 Hydro-electric developments have the potential to negatively impact on fisheries interests in rivers. Applications for hydro-electric development should include fisheries assessments and reports in relation to impacts on priority species and priority habitats and any proposed mitigation.

Local Natural Resources

21.31 Increased provision for and use of renewables is generally linked to improvements in air quality, however, the use of biomass combustion or hydrogen combustion may lead to air pollutant emissions and mitigation may be required to protect air quality.

21.32 Wind turbines constructed using foundations could potentially impact on groundwater flow paths, groundwater receptors (aquifers) or

secondary receptors (including wells/boreholes, springs, wetlands and their groundwater dependent ecology). It is recommended that applicants consider the risks to potential receptors initially through a desktop study of water features. Further online advice is available from DAERA.

21.33 Geothermal power has the potential to affect the local water resources (especially groundwater) as a result of abstraction of water in open-loop proposals and changes of temperature in the groundwater environment. Depending on the volumes extracted (during aquifer testing & operations), this may require licensing under the Water Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006.

21.34 Drilling boreholes and using a groundwater supply for hydrogen production has the potential to impact on local water resources (especially groundwater). This activity may require licensing under the Water Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006. It is recommended that applicants engage with DAERA Water Regulation Unit to discuss regulatory requirements at their earliest convenience and that all proposals are conducted to current best practice and pollution prevention guidelines.

21.35 In relation to hydroelectric power generation schemes, applicants should avoid siting within catchments with a flow gauging station, as this can alter the flow regime of a river, resulting in the loss of important national river flow archive data used to estimate flood risk. This has the potential to lead to less accurate flood estimations and subsequently an increase in flood risk.

Tourism, Recreation and Public Access

21.36 Renewable energy proposals may co-exist with, and complement existing tourism and recreation facilities and activities. Applicants should consider any existing activities and public access both within, and adjacent to the development site.

Battery Energy Storage Systems

21.37 Battery storage is technology that facilitates the storage of electrical energy from renewable sources so that it may be exported to the grid or used at a time convenient to the end user.

21.38 The Council supports the use of this emerging technology as it has potential to maximise the energy generated from renewable sources and contribute to wider environmental, economic and social benefits in the same way. However, it is important that proposals do not have an unacceptably adverse impact as per Policy RE 1 Renewable and Low/ Zero Carbon Energy Development and paragraph 6.224 of the SPPS.

21.39 Any proposals that incorporate energy storage should include it in the description of development, clearly indicating the power capacity of the storage in MW to assist the classification of the application and the consideration of environmental impact assessment requirements. Further detail to assist decision-making should be provided including:

- Type of battery;
- Location of the battery storage development and any proposed connection to the grid network;
- Proposed battery housing and layout;
- Any proposed civil engineering works such as changing the ground levels and importing or exporting materials;
- Noise report to assist the Council's Environmental Health department in assessing the likely impact on residential properties and other noise sensitive receptors;
- Drainage proposals;
- Any necessary environmental reports;
- Risk of accidents – to include all potential risks, what receptors may be affected and how those effects would be mitigated. The Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland and/or Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service may be consulted; and
- Decommissioning and future restoration of the land.

21.40 This list is not exhaustive and the information required to assist decision-making will vary on a case-by-case basis depending on the location and particulars of each proposal. In all instances, a Pre-Application Discussion (PAD) is recommended.

21.41 Applicants may find it useful to refer to the Battery Storage Guidance Notes series produced by the Energy Institute.

Emerging Technologies

21.42 Renewable and low carbon technologies are rapidly evolving in light of the political position and drive towards net zero for much of the developed world. It is important that the LDP facilitate proposals for emerging technologies whilst ensuring that they are properly assessed against potential impacts on health and safety, residential amenity, visual amenity, and the protection and enhancement of our natural and historic environments. Therefore, proposals which utilise emerging renewable and low carbon technologies not explicitly mentioned above will also be assessed under this policy.

21.43 In relation to renewable energy developments which become redundant, applicants will be required to provide details on future decommissioning. This should include proposals for site restoration,

generally to a condition which is as close as possible to its original state as appropriate to its location. The use of conditions (or a Section 76 Planning Agreement where appropriate) will ensure the works necessary to restore the site to an agreed standard are undertaken. For wind farm development, it is likely that the duration of the planning permission will be linked to the expected operational life of the turbines. However, during this period, proposals may be forthcoming to extend the life of the project by re-equipping or replacing the original turbines with new ones. While there are obvious advantages in utilising established sites, such cases will have to be determined on their individual merits.

Additional Information Requirements

21.44 Some proposals for renewable energy and/or storage may require additional environmental information if deemed necessary under The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017[12]. The purpose of Environmental Impact Assessment is to protect the environment by ensuring that a planning authority when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project, which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, does so in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects, and takes this into account in the decision-making process.

21.45 The failure to provide any of the information deemed necessary for the thorough consideration of a proposal may result in the application being refused due to a lack of information.

21.46 Best practice guidance in relation to Renewable Energy has been retained by the Department for Infrastructure and will remain a material consideration in the assessment of proposals for renewable and zero or low carbon energy generation and storage alongside any forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

[12] *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/571/contents*

Policy RE 2
Reduced Energy Consumption and Use of Low/Zero-Carbon Energy

Planning permission will be granted for development where it is demonstrated that the proposal has considered and incorporated the following measures:

(a) It is designed to reduce likely energy consumption;

(b) The use of decentralised, renewable and zero or low-carbon energy supply systems (in accordance with Policy RE 1 Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development); and

(c) The promotion of active travel and sustainable transport in accordance with Policy AT 1 Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport.

Exceptionally, there may be instances where it is not possible to comply fully with the energy efficiency requirements of the policy without impacting upon the character, appearance or setting of heritage assets.

In these instances, Council shall give special consideration to its duty to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, whilst considering the evidence submitted in relation to the suggested measures above.

All proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

21.47 Increased energy efficiency, using less energy, and decentralised, renewable and zero or low carbon energy systems, benefit the environment and support objectives set out in the Energy Strategy and the Climate Change Act in relation to the reduction in carbon emissions and move towards net zero to combat climate change.

21.48 It also helps to combat fuel poverty and provides good-quality, sustainable housing, which is particularly relevant against today's cost of living crisis and in consideration of an aging population in the future.

21.49 This policy seeks to complement the nearly zero-energy requirements for new dwellings introduced in building regulations[13] by requiring applicants to consider and incorporate design-led energy efficiency measures and the use of decentralised, renewable and low-carbon energy supply systems from the earliest stages of the design process. Proportionate to the scale and nature of the development, this may include a fabric first approach, sustainable use of construction materials and techniques, optimising passive solar gain or passive ventilation and cooling via the layout, design and orientation of buildings and associated landscaping, through to more ambitious measures, including, decentralised energy supply systems based on energy from renewable sources, cogeneration/combined heat and power (CHP) and district or block heating or cooling. Considering these measures from the outset is encouraged and can avoid the need to later retrofit, which can often be more expensive and complex.

21.50 Early engagement with NIE Networks is encouraged in relation to proposals for on-site renewable generation. All proposals involving renewable energy generation and/or storage must also comply with the policy provisions of Policy RE 1 Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development.

21.51 It is recognised that the reuse and conversion of buildings is, of itself, a sustainable practice which retains embodied carbon whilst, simultaneously reducing the need for additional resources and associated carbon emissions. It is also acknowledged that the conversion and reuse of historic buildings, or those located in a conservation area, may present specific challenges. Opportunities to improve energy efficiency for heritage assets will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Any proposed upgrades or alterations will need to be based on an informed understanding of the historic fabric and essential character of the building, including impacts of change on features of special interest. Exceptionally, a case may be made for such buildings to be exempt from the requirements of the policy where it is necessary in order to protect the historic environment. This must be supported by evidence, such as, advice from Department for Communities (DFC) Historical Environment Division or advice from a qualified conservation specialist.

21.52 A reduction in transport emissions is a key aim of regional policy which is reflected in this Plan Strategy. Therefore, applicants must demonstrate that their development maximises the promotion of active travel and sustainable transport in accordance with Policy AT 1 Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport.

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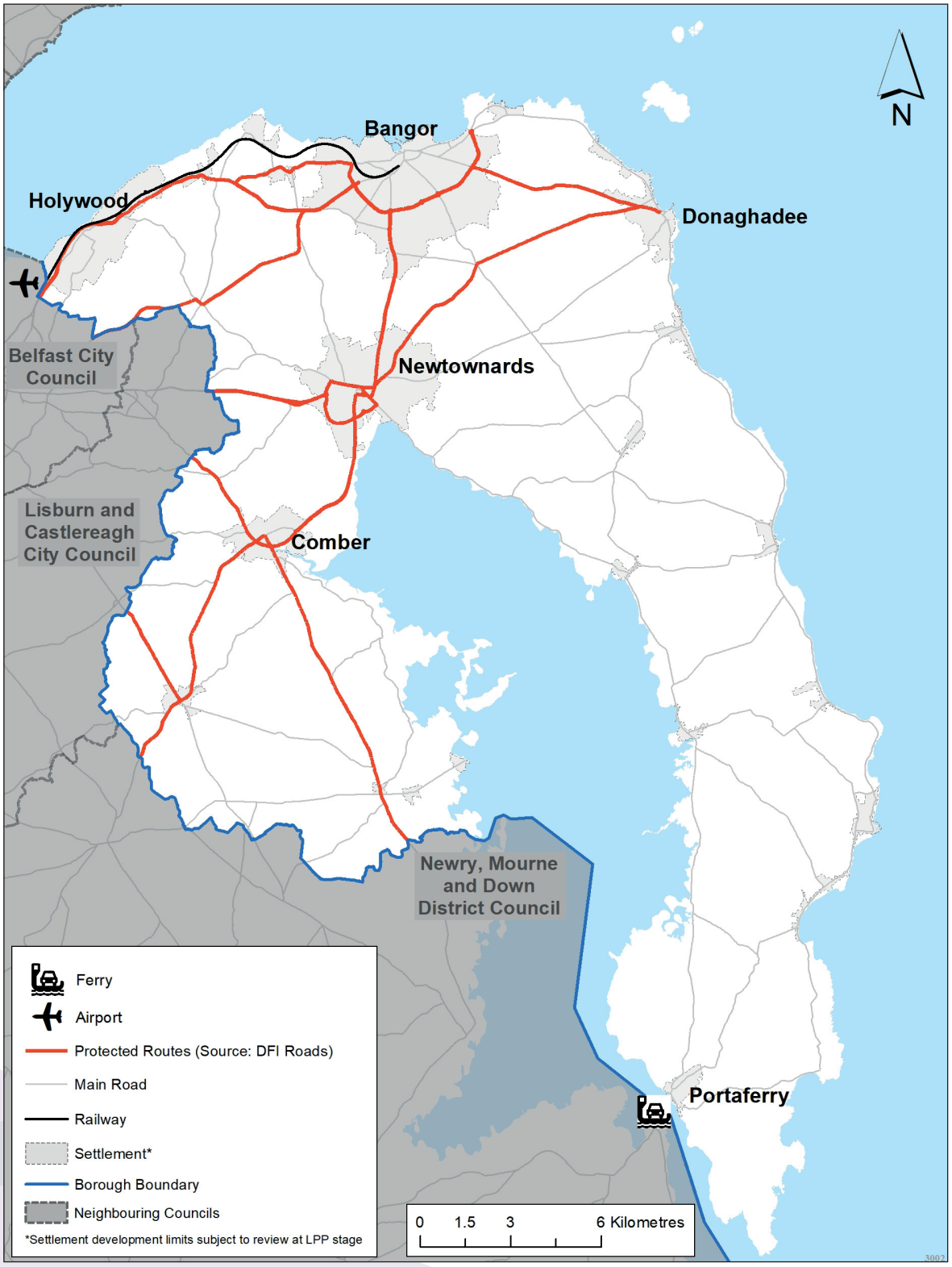
[13] *'Nearly zero-energy requirements for new buildings' were introduced in Building Regulation 43B from 1st January 2019 in respect of new buildings occupied and owned by public authorities, and for all new buildings from the 31 December 2020. An uplift in the energy efficiency and carbon performance requirements was applied from 30 June 2022 with further uplifts to follow in subsequent years.*

22 Transportation

22.1 A functional and adequately resourced transportation system supports the efficient movement of people and goods, attracting investment and economic development, and enables the delivery of essential services. Transportation choices and behaviours in terms of sustainable transport and active travel can contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions and mitigate some contributory aspects of climate change whilst improving air quality and reducing the burden of environmental noise – thereby improving health outcomes and quality of life.



Map 10: Strategic Transportation Infrastructure in Ards and North Down



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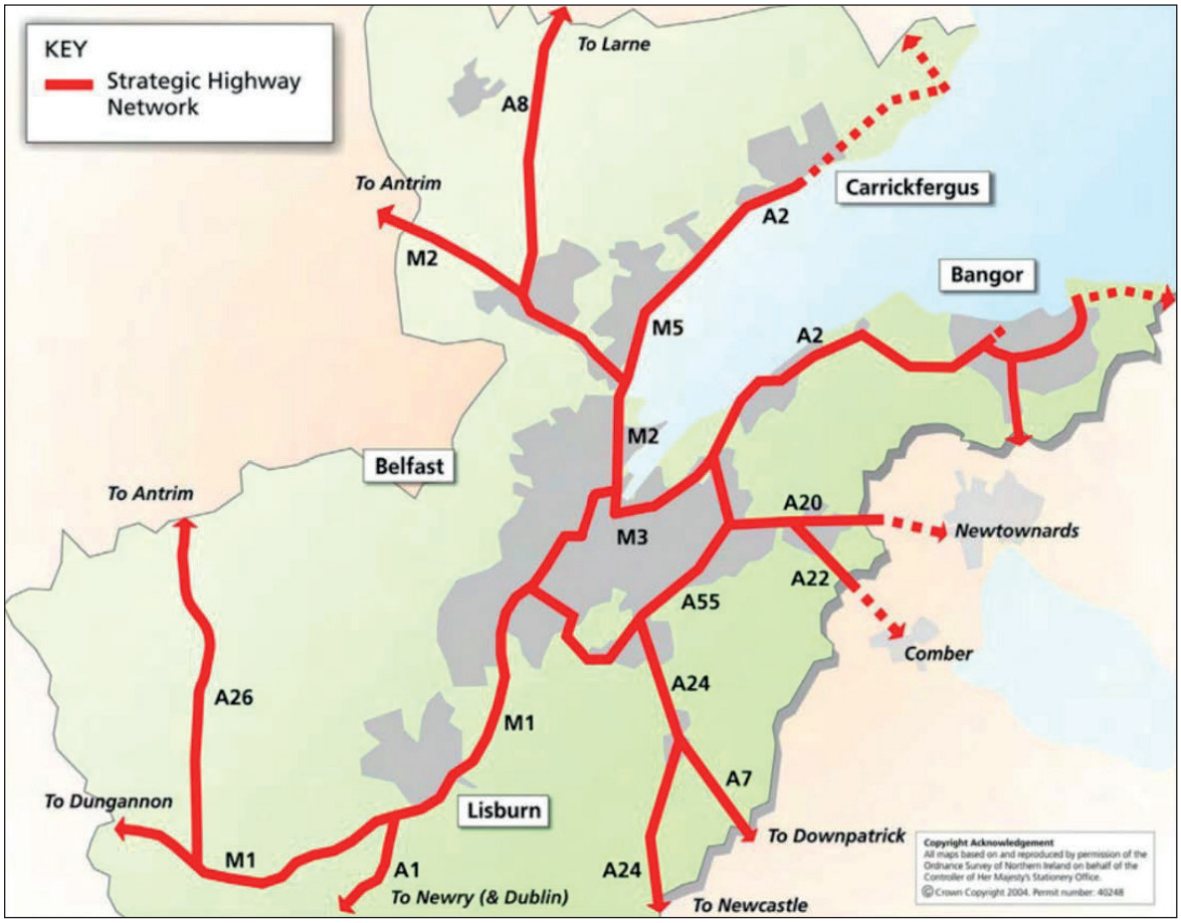


Figure 13
Strategic Highway Network (Source: BMTP 2015)

22.2 Ards and North Down Borough has a number of key transport routes that are part of the Regional Strategic Road Network. These are the A2 between Bangor and Belfast, the A20 from Newtownards to Belfast, the A21 from Bangor to Newtownards though to Comber and the A22 from Comber to Belfast. The A2 is also a Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridor. There are a number of 'Protected Routes' within the Borough, further information on which may be obtained from DfI.

22.3 The north of the Borough is served by the Northern Ireland Railways (NIR) network with a train station in Bangor which links directly to Belfast, Portadown and Newry via stops in Bangor West and Carnalea (Bangor) Helen's Bay, Seahill, Cultra, Marino, and Holywood. There are further connections available to the Dublin rail line and all other NIR lines.

22.4 The entirety of the Borough lies within the Belfast Travel to Work Area (TTW). The main commuter routes include the A2 Belfast to Bangor Road which carries significant volumes of traffic, the A20 Belfast to Newtownards Road and the Belfast to Bangor train line.

22.5 The well-established Strangford Lough Ferry at Portaferry provides a link to Strangford in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. A pilot scheme for a zero-emission commuter ferry service between Bangor and Belfast is anticipated to commence in late 2025.

22.6 There is a private airport in Newtownards and the Borough is directly linked to Belfast City Airport via the A2 Bangor to Belfast Road.

22.7 Bus services cover most of the towns, villages and small settlements within the Borough, and connect to the bus stations in Bangor, Newtownards and Comber. Whilst the Council area benefits from many public transport services to and from Belfast, these primarily serve commuters and other linkages between settlements across the Borough are less well developed. Rural areas, particularly the Ards Peninsula, experience accessibility issues and are less likely to enjoy regular public transport services.

22.8 There are significant gaps in active travel and sustainable transport infrastructure, both in terms of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the Borough's principal settlements and towns.

Transportation Strategy

- To implement the Spatial Growth Strategy to concentrate growth in Bangor and Newtownards which also benefit most from high connectivity and good accessibility;
- Identify and allocate development sites for housing, employment and mixed uses at Local Policies Plan stage where integration with public transport, cycling, walking and the responsible use of the private car can best be achieved;
- Encourage better integration of sustainable transport and land-use through the application of Policy AT 1 Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport;
- Bridge the gaps in active travel and sustainable transport infrastructure through working with statutory partners and other stakeholders in the delivery of a range of infrastructure improvements to support sustainable transport and active travel networks – including Greenways, urban cycle routes and Park and Ride opportunities; and
- Implement the recommendations in our Car Parking Strategy to promote parking policies and pricing structures to assist in reducing reliance on private cars, tackling congestion and increasing turnover of spaces, particularly in our centres.

Why we have taken this approach

22.9 The **Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035** aims to deliver a balanced approach to transport infrastructure by improving connectivity, maximising the potential of the Regional Strategic Transport Network, using road space and railways more efficiently, improving social inclusion, managing the movement of freight, improving access to cities and towns and improving road safety.

22.10 **Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF)** – A New Approach to Regional Transportation complements the RDS and contains high level aims and strategic objectives to support the growth of the economy, enhance the quality of life for all and reduce the environmental impact of transport. The document sets out the approach to regional transportation and is used to guide strategic investment decisions beyond 2015.

22.11 **Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change** focuses on the delivery of the sustainable transport goals within regional transportation strategies and policies and prioritises change across the following actions: carbon reduction; proactive planning and design; and integrated land use and transport planning. As Figure 14 shows, it advocates for a modal shift for the movement of people and goods and for a modal hierarchy for settlements that prioritises sustainable transport by:

- Firstly, providing for walking and wheeling;
- Then providing for cycling;
- Then providing for public transport;
- Then providing for taxis and shared transport and goods vehicles; and
- Finally, providing for private cars and motorcycles.

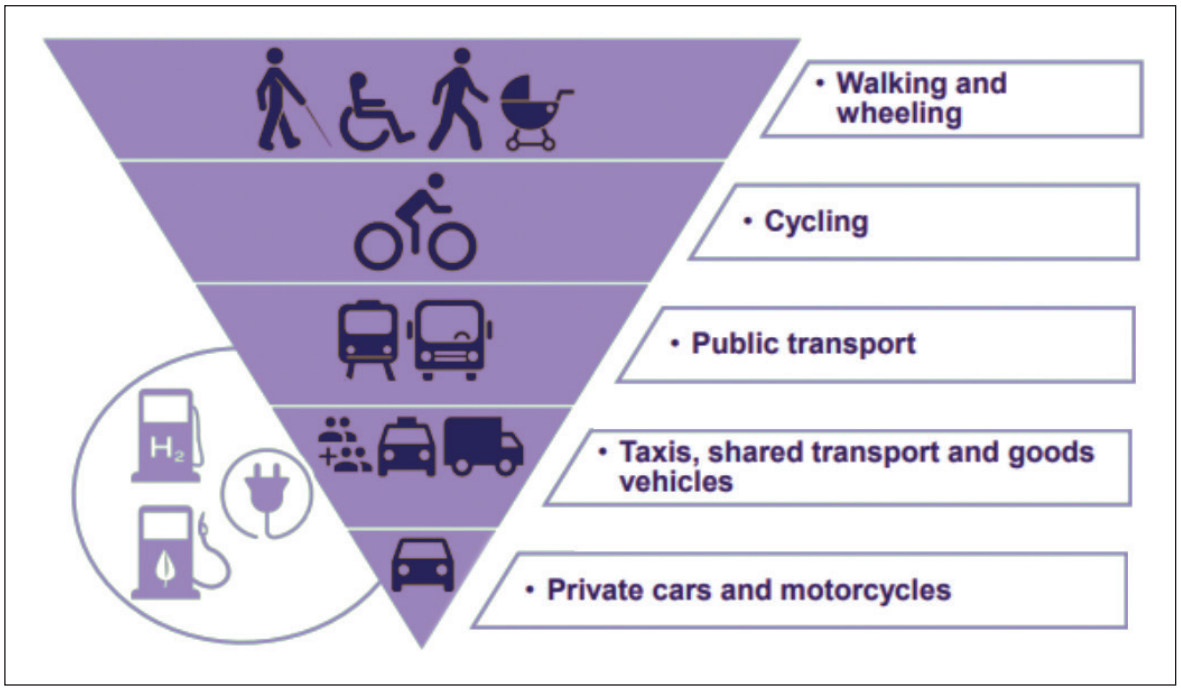


Figure 14
Sustainable Transport Hierarchy (Source: Planning for the future of Transport – A Time for Change, DfI 2021)

22.12 The Transportation Strategy supports the following core planning principles as set out in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS):

- Improving health and well-being;
- Creating and enhancing shared space;
- Supporting sustainable economic growth; and
- Supporting good design and positive place making.

22.13 The SPPS aims to secure improved integration with land-use planning, consistent with the RDS and the ESTF and to facilitate safe and efficient access, movement and parking. The SPPS sets out regional strategic objectives and regional strategy policy, which must be taken into account, namely, to:

- Promote sustainable patterns of development, which reduce the need for motorised transport, encourages active travel, and facilitate travel by public transport in preference to the private car;
- Ensure accessibility for all, with the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired, given particular consideration;
- Promote the provision of adequate facilities for cyclists in new developments;
- Promote parking policies that will assist in reducing reliance on the private car and help tackle growing congestion;

- Protect routes required for new transport schemes, including disused transport routes with potential for future reuse;
- Restrict the number of new accesses and control the level of use of existing accesses onto Protected Routes; and
- Promote road safety, in particular for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

Living Places - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland

22.14 This design guide aims to clearly establish the key principles behind good place making. It seeks to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing and making urban places. It identifies the impact of car-oriented development as one of the key challenges facing urban places. This includes the environmental impact both globally and locally, the spatial impact of congestion and infrastructure forming barriers for communities, and the social impact of low-density development and the reduced ability to support community facilities and services.

Northern Ireland Changing Gear – A Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland

22.15 The strategy outlines the ambition to transform cycling in Northern Ireland over a 25-year period. Its vision for cycling in Northern Ireland is stated as, "A community where people have the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle for everyday journeys".

22.16 The strategy outlines how a comprehensive network of bicycle facilities should be developed, including a focus on urban networks, where detailed proposals for infrastructure should be outlined and delivered alongside specific behaviour change initiatives and campaigns. In the urban areas, radial routes (primary routes), quiet routes and greenways should be developed to form a comprehensive hierarchical network.

22.17 'Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways' sets out the plans for a network of greenways, connecting towns and cities to the villages and countryside from east to west and north to south across all eleven councils. The document identifies three classifications of greenway routes that should be explored;

- Primary Greenway Network – to provide long distance connectivity;
- Secondary Greenway Network – to provide wider access to greenways; and
- Community Paths – to provide doorstep opportunities to connect local communities to their local green space and neighbouring communities.

Local Transport Study

22.18 A Local Transport Study (LTS) was prepared to provide strategic direction and an objective evidence-based assessment of current and future transport issues in the context of the Councils' growth ambitions. It was prepared for the Plan Strategy by DfI Transport Planning Modelling Unit (see Technical Supplement 15 Transportation).

Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) 2035

22.19 The forthcoming ETP, previously known as the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP), encompasses Ards and North Down Borough Council, along with:

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC);
- Belfast City Council (BCC);
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC); and
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC)

22.20 A draft vision and objectives for the ETP have now been consulted upon, agreed and published by DfI.

ETP 2035 Vision:

22.21 "Deliver an integrated and re-balanced transport network in favour of sustainable, efficient modes, which connects communities creating an accessible, inclusive, safe and prosperous economic region by delivering carbon reduction, improving air quality, enhancing the built and natural environment and facilitating healthy and sustainable travel choices over unnecessary private car travel."

ETP 2035 Objectives:

- Reduce travel distances by promoting safe, inclusive and connected neighbourhoods, supported by integrated planning.
- Deliver a reduction in carbon emissions by increasing accessibility for all to jobs, services and recreation by sustainable travel modes.
- Promote healthy and inclusive communities by developing safe sustainable travel modes that respect the local built and natural environment.
- Reduce unnecessary use of the private car by implementing effective demand management measures.
- Improve air quality and the environment by encouraging the use of sustainable travel modes and vehicles which utilise sustainable fuels.

- Enhance the resilience and safety of the transport network to support the economy and meet the challenges of climate change.
- Support the efficient, sustainable movement of goods and people and enhance connectivity to regional networks including access to airports and ports.

22.22 ETP 2035 is to be phased with individual councils' Local Policies Plan (LPP) in respect of transport schemes. The guiding principles in this will be understanding how locations function both in terms of 'place' and 'movement'.

22.23 At a local level, the approach supports all the outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- Opportunities to fulfil their lifelong potential (Outcome 1);
- Being equipped to enjoy good health and wellbeing (Outcome 2);
- Communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure (Outcome 3);
- A prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4); and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

Operational Planning Policies

Policy AT 1
Supporting Active Travel and Sustainable Transport

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals where applicants demonstrate how the promotion of active travel and sustainable transport has been maximised in all new development proposals.

Measures will be proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposed development but may include:

- Layout design giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists, and other wheeled users;
- Increased permeability and connections to existing cycling and walking links;
- Providing facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and other wheeled users;
- Connectivity with public transport; and
- Other complementary measures that support reduction in private car usage.

Where appropriate, specific measures will be detailed for zoned sites in the key site requirements.

Justification and Amplification

22.24 Too often, the design and layout of new developments has often been dominated by road layouts and facilitating private vehicles. This policy encourages people-centred design with pedestrians, cyclists and other wheeled users as the focus rather than cars. This will apply not only to the internal layout and urban design of a development but also its connectivity with the wider area and existing footpaths, cycleways and public transport connections. Guidance for pedestrian and cycle paths within housing developments is contained within 'Creating Places - Achieving Quality in Residential Environments' (DfI, 2000).

22.25 This may be easier in practice for larger sites, but all development can benefit from having active travel as its focus and a proportionate approach will be adopted during the assessment. For example a single dwelling or commercial unit may consider incorporating internal or external storage for bikes. Larger businesses will be expected to incorporate showers and changing areas for staff, covered secure bike storage and well-lit pathways to their front

entrance. Housing developments and larger commercial or mixed-use sites will consider layouts which give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and wheeled users, increased permeability to surrounding areas, and connections to existing active travel networks, alongside complementary measures to encourage the use of sustainable transport.

22.26 Good quality, secure cycle parking should be provided as an integral part of development providing jobs, shopping, leisure and services and should also be available in town and district centres, at educational institutions and public transport interchanges, including Park and Ride and Park and Share sites. Standards for the provision of cycle parking are set out in Development Control Advice Notice (DCAN) 'Parking Standards'[14] (DfI, 1999).

Policy TRAN 1
Creating an Accessible Environment

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals where applicants take account of the specific needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired in the design to create a more accessible environment for everyone.

Where appropriate, the external layout of development will be required to incorporate all or some of the following:

(a) Facilities to aid accessibility, e.g. provision of dropped kerbs and tactile paving etc. together with the removal of any unnecessary obstructions;

(b) Convenient movement along pathways and an unhindered approach to buildings; and

(c) Ease of access to reserved car parking, public transport facilities, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and taxi ranks.

The development of a new building open to the public, or to be used for employment or education purposes, will only be permitted where it is designed to provide suitable access for all, whether as customers, visitors or employees.

In such cases the Council will operate a presumption in favour of a level approach from the boundary of the site to the building entrance. The use of steps, ramps or mechanical aids will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that these are unavoidable and can be facilitated from the public footway without overly impairing available width.

[14] *https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/DCAN%2015%20-%20Vehicular%20Access%20Standards_0.pdf*

Development should be designed to facilitate ease of access for all pedestrians, including wheelchair and other wheeled users, not only to the building entrance but also to and from the pedestrian environment around the building.

The Council will seek to ensure that access to existing buildings and their surroundings is improved as opportunities arise through alterations, extensions and changes of use.

The Council will require the submission of a Design and Access Statement to accompany development proposals in accordance with the relevant legislation[15].

Justification and Amplification

22.27 The SPPS identifies the need to "ensure accessibility for all, with the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired given particular consideration" (para 6.297). The Council is committed to improving opportunities for the mobility of those who are in greatest need. The changing state of our built environment - whether by new development, redevelopment or the upgrading and refurbishment of existing buildings -, provides an opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone. In assessing development proposals, the Council will therefore seek to facilitate improved accessibility for all people, and in particular will require that the specific needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired, be addressed.

22.28 The integration of good accessibility in all aspects of design will benefit everyone in society through a better thought out, easier and more accessible environment[16]. The matter should be considered at an early stage in the design process. The quality of such access is just as important as its availability, for example, suitable access should be provided for all through the main entrance of a building to ensure that everyone's dignity is respected.

22.29 There is also a need to ensure that special attention is paid to areas outside buildings. The siting of buildings and the layout of associated car parking, vehicular access and circulation roads can often act as a barrier to convenient movement.

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[15] *Section 6 of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (NI) 2015*

[16] *See the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) at www.cae.org.uk for design advice and information on how the built environment can best be made or modified to achieve inclusion by design.*

22.30 Development should therefore be designed to facilitate ease of access for all pedestrians, wheelchair and other wheeled users, not only to the building entrance but also from the pedestrian environment, streets and spaces around buildings and where necessary should provide for priority for such movement over vehicles.

22.31 The designer of a new building should seek to meet the Council's presumption of providing a level approach from site boundary to the building entrance. The detailed design features for access into the building, such as a level threshold, are set out under Building Regulations. Provision within the curtilage of a premise is always the preferred option. If applicants wish to request alterations to the footway, they are strongly encouraged to consult with DfI Roads at the outset of the process.

22.32 It is recognised that many existing buildings were not designed with disabled people in mind. Designing suitable access in these circumstances may call for imagination and creativity. In the case of historic or listed buildings, if a flexible and pragmatic approach is taken, it may be possible to plan suitable access for all without compromising the building's special interest or character. Access proposals affecting a listed building must be accompanied by a Design & Access Statement, which should outline how the proposals have been sympathetically designed to conserve the buildings essential character and special interest.

22.33 Additional information is available in Development Management Practice Note 12 – Design and Access Statements[17], produced by DfI.

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

Policy TRAN 2
Access to Public Roads

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification[18] of the use of an existing access, onto a public road where:

(a) Such access will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic; and

(b) The proposal does not conflict with Policy TRAN 3 - Access to Protected Routes.

The acceptability of access arrangements, including the number of access points onto the public road, will be assessed against current published guidance[19] in addition to:

I. The nature and scale of the development;

II. The character of existing development;

III. The contribution of the proposal to the creation of a quality environment, including the potential for urban/village regeneration and environmental improvement;

IV. The location and number of existing accesses; and

V. The standard of the existing road network together with the speed and volume of traffic using the adjacent public road and any expected increase.

Justification and Amplification

22.34 The land-use planning system has an important role to play in promoting road safety, as identified in the SPPS (para 6.297). New development will generally require vehicular access to a public road, either in the form of a new access or by the use of an existing one. It is important to fully consider the effect proposed new development will potentially have on the public road network and the Council shall seek to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts.

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[18] *Intensification is 5% or greater increase in traffic flow.*

[19] *Currently contained within DCAN 15 Vehicular Access standards 1999 (https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/DCAN%2015%20-%20Vehicular%20Access%20Standards_0.pdf) and Creating Places: Achieving Quality in Residential Environments 2000 (https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/creating-places-achieving-quality-residential-environments).*

22.35 A well-designed access is important for the safety and convenience of all road users. The standards used to determine the suitability of a new, or the intensification of use of an existing access, are set out in DFI's guidance Development Control Advice Note (DCAN 15) and include current standards for sightlines, radii and gradient etc. that will be applied to both a new access and the intensified use of an existing vehicular access onto existing public roads.

22.36 The proximity of the proposed access to junctions, other existing accesses and the total number of accesses onto a given stretch of road, are relevant matters in the assessment of traffic hazards. The combining of individual access points along a road will be encouraged as this can help to improve road safety.

22.37 Applicants will be expected to have control over the land required to provide the requisite visibility splays and ensure that they are retained free of any obstruction. A negative condition will normally be imposed requiring that no development shall take place until the works required to provide access, including visibility splays, have been carried out.

22.38 Exceptionally, a relaxation in standards may be acceptable in order to secure other important planning objectives. Visibility standards, however, will not be reduced to such a level that will create a hazard.

22.39 In circumstances where an existing access is available to facilitate development proposals, the Council will expect this to be used, unless there is an opportunity to provide a more acceptable access arrangement, having regard to both road safety and local amenity considerations. Where an existing access is to be used, but is sub-standard, a condition requiring its improvement prior to the commencement of the development will normally be imposed on any planning permission granted. In cases where a new access is considered acceptable in preference to the intensified use of an existing access a condition requiring the existing access to be closed may be imposed.

22.40 In relation to development proposals for a replacement dwelling in the countryside, where an existing access is available but does not meet current standards, applicants are encouraged to consider incorporating improvements to the access in the interests of road safety.

22.41 In the past, the design of many housing developments has tended to be dominated by roads considerations. Dwellings may have backed onto nearby roads or other public areas and created unsightly views. This has, in part, resulted from the practice of minimising the number of access points onto the public road. Current standards for access within new residential developments are set out in the residential

design guide 'Creating Places' which advocates for the creation of permeable layouts with an interconnected network of carriageways and a number of access points. This will not only help improve quality, but it can also enhance safety by ensuring that vehicle flows are well distributed and low in most places by creating the shortest practicable routes to destinations. It will also provide alternative means of access for the emergency services.

Policy TRAN 3
Access to Protected Routes

The Council will restrict the number of new accesses and control the level of use of existing accesses onto Protected Routes as follows:

Motorways and High Standard Dual Carriageways – All locations

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals involving direct access to motorways and high standard dual carriageways. An exception may be considered in the case of service areas where there is demonstrable need.

Other Dual Carriageways, Ring Roads, Through-Passes and By Passes – All locations

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal involving direct access or the intensification[20] of the use of an existing access in exceptional circumstances or where the proposal is of regional significance.

Other Protected Routes – Outside Settlement Limits

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification of the use of an existing access in the following cases:

(a) Replacement Dwelling – where a building to be replaced complies with all relevant policy provisions of the LDP and there is an existing vehicular access onto the Protected Route.

(b) A Farm Dwelling – where a farm dwelling complies with all relevant policy provisions of the LDP and access cannot reasonably be obtained from an adjacent minor road. Where this cannot be achieved proposals will be required to make use of an existing vehicular access onto the Protected Route.

[20] *Intensification is considered to occur when a proposed development would increase the traffic flow using an access by 5% or more.*

(c) A dwelling for non-agricultural business enterprise – where a dwelling complies with all relevant provisions of the LDP and access cannot reasonably be obtained from an adjacent minor road. Where this cannot be achieved proposals will be required to make use of an existing vehicular access onto the Protected Route.

(d) Other Categories of Development – approval may be justified in particular cases for other developments which would meet the criteria for development in the countryside and where access cannot reasonably be obtained from an adjacent minor road. Where this cannot be achieved proposals will be required to make use of an existing vehicular access onto the Protected Route.

(e) Major economic zonings/development – where lands are identified in the LDP and access cannot reasonably be obtained from an adjacent minor road.

(f) The proposal is for a facility that would promote alternative forms of travel (e.g. Park & Ride or Park & Share sites).

Other Protected Routes – Within Settlement Limits

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification of the use of an existing access:

(a) Where access cannot reasonably be taken from an adjacent minor road; or

(b) In the case of proposals involving residential development, it is demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that the nature and level of access onto the Protected Route that are to be will significantly assist in the creation of a quality environment without compromising road safety standards or resulting in an unacceptable proliferation of access points.

In all cases, where access to a Protected Route is acceptable in principle, it will also be required to be safe in accordance with Policy TRAN 2.

Lack of ownership will not be considered sufficient grounds to argue that access cannot be reasonably taken from an alternative minor road.

Where appropriate, the Local Policies Plan will identify and prepare local policies for those stretches of a Protected Route to be subjected to further access restrictions due to local circumstances such as a history of traffic collisions, high volumes of traffic or speed of vehicles.

Justification and Amplification

22.42 This policy is intended to protect roads which contribute significantly to economic prosperity by providing efficient links between the towns within the Borough, the BMA and its regional gateways including airports and ports.

22.43 It is important that a new access or intensified use of an existing access onto a protected route does not compromise their function of facilitating the free and safe movement of traffic and does not significantly add to congestion. Additionally, on stretches of Protected Routes designed specifically to facilitate the efficient and safe movement of traffic, it is essential that access which would compromise road safety or prejudice their design standards, is severely restricted.



Policy TRAN 4
Protection for New Transport Schemes[21]

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the implementation of a transport scheme identified in the LDP or Transport Plan.

The following matters must be taken into account in assessing whether the implementation of a particular scheme would be prejudiced by a development proposal:

(a) The nature of the proposal;

(b) The programming of the transport scheme; and

(c) The extent to which implementation of the scheme would be compromised by the carrying out of the proposed development.

Justification and Amplification

22.44 The intent of this policy is to afford adequate protection for new transport schemes or planned improvements to the transport network currently identified or designated for protection in the LPP or forthcoming Local Transport Plan, from development likely to jeopardise its implementation.

22.45 It is recognised that blight resulting from the need to protect land required for a future transport scheme may have a damaging impact on an area. However, in some instances the identified schemes represent the best opportunity to promote sustainable travel and improve the performance and safety of the transport system.

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[21] *Includes but not limited to road and rail schemes, public transport schemes, park and ride or park and share schemes, and improvements to active travel networks.*

Policy TRAN 5
Disused Transport Routes

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the re-use of a disused transport route identified in the LDP or Local Transport Plan for transport or recreational, nature conservation or tourism related purposes.

Justification and Amplification

22.46 This policy complements Open Space Policy OS4 Greenways, Blueways and Community Greenways which seeks to protect designated Greenway or Community Greenway routes from inappropriate development that would prejudice their retention, enhancement or further development as green corridors and active travel routes.

22.47 This policy seeks to safeguard against the loss of a disused transport route which has potential for future use for transport, active travel, recreation, nature conservation or tourism related purposes.

22.48 Applications for the future development of disused transport routes will be considered under the relevant LDP policy depending on the intended use, the General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP including those for the historic and natural environment.

Policy TRAN 6
Transport Assessment

Development proposals which are likely to generate significant travel movements will be required to submit a Transport Assessment to review the transport impacts and mitigate against any adverse consequences. In applications for significant travel generating uses, a Transport Assessment may need to be accompanied by a Travel Plan to mitigate against any adverse impacts through, complementary measures. Actions and measures identified through a Transport Assessment and/or Travel Plan will be secured through the use of conditions or planning agreements, including monitoring arrangements to ensure agreed objectives are met.

Justification and Amplification

22.49 A Transport Assessment Form (Annex M) must be submitted with each planning application. Its purpose is to screen out those applications where no further information on the transport impacts is needed and help identify applications where applicants will be asked to prepare a detailed Transport Assessment. For example, due to the size of the proposal, its location, or level of likely activity at peak times. The Council may also request a Transport Assessment for other considerations such as where a development is likely to:

- Generate significant traffic at peak times in a congested area, a sensitive location or an important traffic route or road junction;
- Generate significant freight movements;
- Generate traffic late at night in a residential area, particularly lorries; or
- Raise significant concerns over road safety.

22.50 The coverage and detail of a Transport Assessment should reflect the scale of development and the extent of the transport implications of the proposal. The costs of necessary transport infrastructure improvements, or monitoring measures shall be undertaken by the applicant.

22.51 Travel plans co-ordinate transport related measures to promote and encourage sustainable travel. They should set clear targets alongside future monitoring arrangements to be agreed and secured by condition or planning agreement in advance of a decision.

22.52 Detailed information is contained in the document 'Transport Assessment – Guidelines for Development Proposals in Northern Ireland' (DfI, November 2006).

Policy TRAN 7
Parking[22] and Servicing Arrangements

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that provide adequate provision for parking and appropriate servicing arrangements.

The precise amount of parking will be determined according to the specific characteristics of the development and its location, having regard to published standards[23] or any reduction provided for in an area of parking restraint designated in an LDP.

Proposals must not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

Beyond areas of parking restraint identified in the LDP, a reduced level of car parking provision may be acceptable in the following circumstances:

(a) Where, through a Transport Assessment or Travel Plan, it forms part of a package of measures to promote alternative transport modes; or

(b) Where the development is in a highly accessible location well served by public transport; or

(c) Where the development would benefit from spare capacity available in nearby public car parks or adjacent on street car parking; or

(d) Where shared car parking is a viable option; or

(e) Where the exercise of flexibility would assist in the conservation of the historic, natural and marine environment, would aid rural regeneration, facilitate a better quality of development or the beneficial re-use of an existing building.

Proposals involving car parking in excess of published standards[24] or, which exceed a reduction provided for in the LDP will rarely be acceptable.

In assessing car parking provision, a proportion of the spaces to be provided must be reserved for people with disabilities, in accordance with best practice. Where a reduced level of car parking provision is applied or accepted, this will not normally apply to the number of reserved spaces to be provided.

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[22] *Includes car, coach and cycle parking*

[23] *Currently 'Parking Standards' (DfI, 2005)*

[24] *Parking Standards (published by DOE, 2005)*

Justification and Amplification

22.53 The provision of parking for cars, coaches and bicycles in association with development, needs to be considered within the context of regional strategies and policy aimed at achieving more sustainable travel patterns, through a modal shift to reduce car dependency.

22.54 The LDP may designate an area of parking restraint, within which a reduction in the published car parking standards will be applied. Beyond these areas of parking restraint, there may also be situations where a reduction in car parking provision in association with new development will be acceptable, for example, where it forms part of a package of measures to promote sustainable modes of transport, particularly where this has been demonstrated and accepted through a Transport Assessment and/or Travel Plan.

22.55 Reduced parking provision may also be acceptable in locations which are highly accessible and well served by public transport. This includes many town centres and locations close to public transport interchanges.

22.56 On occasion reduced parking provision may be appropriate where new development is proposed close to existing public car parking, and it is demonstrated there is available spare capacity. This will include a consideration of approved development which also relies on the capacity. Reduced parking provision may also be acceptable where schemes propose shared parking arrangements, particularly in town centres or as part of major proposals. For example, office and leisure uses (such as cinemas) where shared car parking is a viable option because the peak levels of use do not coincide.

22.57 It may also be acceptable for small-scale developments, which do not generate significant parking demand, to rely on using on-street parking for a proportion of their parking provision. To aid the assessment of these options, applicants will be required to demonstrate the capacity and availability of such alternative parking provision.

22.58 In assessing developments affecting Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape or Village Character or the setting of listed buildings, it may not always be possible, or desirable to provide the full standard of parking provision in order to protect the character and appearance of features of the built heritage or assist with the retention of trees. There may also be occasions where flexibility in the level of car parking provision will help facilitate a better-quality development or facilitate the beneficial re-use of an existing building.

22.59 Where car parking reduction is considered acceptable in principle the precise level of reduction will be negotiated with applicants. Account will

be taken of the specific characteristics of the development, its location and its accessibility to sustainable modes of transport, including any measures proposed to promote these alternatives to the private car.

22.60 Parking provision in excess of the published standards is unlikely to be permitted.

22.61 Given that the car is often the only form of transport available to many people with disabilities, applicants will be required to reserve an appropriate proportion of parking spaces to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Such designated parking should be conveniently located to facilitate ease of access to the buildings they serve in order to take account of the limited mobility range of many disabled people. Best practice on the number, size and layout of reserved parking spaces is set out in the published standards.

22.62 An appropriate proportion of spaces should be considered for EV charging points which should also be accessible.

22.63 Consideration should also be given to the provision of public transport facilities for able-bodied people and people with disabilities who do not have access to a car. In larger schemes provision should be made for appropriately located bus stops, including set-down and pick-up bays for vehicles such as public and private hire taxis which are wheelchair compatible.

22.64 For retail, leisure and community uses consideration should be given by applicants to the provision of 'parent and child' parking spaces. As with spaces reserved for people with disabilities, these should be located in a manner which facilitates ease of access to the buildings they serve.

22.65 Retained guidance for parking associated with residential development is set out in the design guide 'Creating Places[25]'. Some urban contexts may indicate levels of provision lower than those set out in guidance. For example, where there is good pedestrian access to local facilities and public transport, or where townscape character would be undermined.

22.66 Servicing arrangements are also important and can exert a major influence on the quality of the urban environment and its attractiveness to shoppers and other visitors. In city and town centre locations, applicants will normally be expected to include proposals for the provision of rear servicing facilities, where practicable. It is recognised, however, that historic settlement patterns may be a constraint upon the provision of rear servicing.

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[25] *Creating Places: Achieving Quality in Residential Environments 2000 https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/creating-places-achieving-quality-residential-environments*

Policy TRAN 8
Design of Parking

Planning permission will only be granted for a proposal for parking where all the following criteria are met:

(a) It provides a high standard of design, layout and landscaping, incorporating sustainable features where appropriate;

(b) It respects the character of the local townscape/landscape;

(c) It will not adversely affect visual amenity;

(d) It will not adversely affect residential amenity;

(e) Provision has been made for security, and the direct and safe access and movement of pedestrians, cyclists and wheeled users within the site; and

(f) It complies with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

22.67 The amount and arrangement of parking can have a significant impact on the quality of both the built and natural environment. All proposals for parking facilities should therefore be well designed, respect local character and their wider setting. They should also provide for safe and convenient access/egress and direct and safe internal movement for cyclists and pedestrians, including all wheeled users, people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired.

22.68 Security is of particular importance in the design of parking facilities. The Council will therefore expect applicants to address this matter, particularly in relation to multi-storey and basement parking, and would encourage applicants to seek advice from the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Surface Level Car Parks

22.69 Surface level parking should generally be broken up to avoid the creation of a vast expanse of "dead space". This can be achieved by way of a well-designed landscape scheme, which includes appropriate boundary and surface treatments. In urban situations, the re-arrangement of buildings and space within the layout may in some instances be a more appropriate solution. Landscaping will also assist in the drainage of a site and applicants should consider the use of permeable surfaces and SuDS, as set out in the General Principles Policy GP 1 and Policy FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage.

Temporary Car Parks

22.70 In assessing proposals for temporary car parks on sites awaiting redevelopment the Council will normally still require a landscaping scheme incorporating details of boundary and surface treatments.

Multi-storey Parking

22.71 Well-designed multi-storey facilities may impact less on places than large surface parking facilities. The design of multi-storey parking should reflect the character and appearance of the surrounding townscape in terms of form, scale, massing and use of materials. Building lines should adhere to those already established, while public facades in particular should be designed to create visual interest. Blank screen walls will not be acceptable as these can have a negative impact on the street scene.

Parking within Buildings

22.72 The design of basement or semi-basement parking facilities requires careful attention to ensure that they are safe to use and do not have a negative impact at street level by the creation of dead frontage.

22.73 Surface parking underneath a raised ground floor can create the same effect to an even greater extent, particularly where ground floor elevations are entirely made up of metal grids or finished in an unimaginative way. This can effectively remove life from the street and contribute to the creation of a threatening and unpleasant environment. Such an approach to the provision of parking will be unacceptable.

Rural Parking Facilities

22.74 The amount and arrangement of parking in rural locations can have a significant impact on the natural environment, particularly in sensitive locations. The development of larger schemes in the countryside, such as those to serve tourist facilities or rural golf courses, need particular care in respect of their scale and design and the potential impact on surface flooding and drainage. Overflow parking to cater for increased demand for special events should not generally be a hardened surface and use should be made of concrete grass pavers with pockets of soil which encourage the growth of grass, general vegetation or shrubs to hide the concrete.

22.75 The design, layout and landscaping of rural parking facilities should seek to retain the open nature and visual amenity of the countryside. In addition, matters such as floodlighting, will require careful design in order to minimise their impact on local wildlife, visual amenity of the surrounding area and residential amenity.

Policy TRAN 9
Provision of Public, Private and Temporary Car Parks

Planning permission will only be granted for the development or extension of public or private car parks, including park and ride / park and share and temporary car parks, where it is demonstrated that:

(a) they do not significantly contribute to an increase in congestion;

(b) they are not detrimental to local environmental quality;

(c) they meet a need identified in a Transport Plan or as demonstrated though robust analysis provided by the applicant;

(d) within defined areas of parking restraint, they are only used for short-stay parking and are appropriately managed to deter long-stay commuter parking;

(e) they are compatible with adjoining land uses; and

(f) they comply with General Principles policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions for the LDP.

In addition, proposals for temporary car parks will only be deemed acceptable in principle when accompanied by programmed proposals to develop/redevelop the site in question. Where granted, permission shall only be granted for a period of one year.

Justification and Amplification

22.76 It is recognised that the provision of adequate public parking facilities can act as a stimulant to economic development whilst having environmental and safety benefits in locations such as town and city centres which generate a considerable demand. Public car parking facilities normally comprise:

- Public car parks operated by the Council and/or DfI;
- On-street car parking controlled by DfI;
- Public car parks operated by the private sector including temporary car parks on sites awaiting redevelopment (these include long and short-stay parking and the leasing of contract spaces).

22.77 Of critical importance to the supply of public car parking facilities is the type of parking to be provided. Within town centres in particular it is essential that sufficient short-stay public parking facilities are

available to maintain economic vitality and viability and to allow them to compete with new out-of-centre developments. An ever-increasing supply of car parking spaces solely serving long-stay commuter demand in such locations on the other hand can act as an impediment to economic growth by contributing to increased congestion and the erosion of environmental quality. However, the overall transportation objective will nevertheless be to restrain the use of the car and encourage shoppers and commuters to use public transport and Park and Ride initiatives.

22.78 The development and operation of public car parks by the private sector, including multi-storey provision and temporary car parks, should seek to complement existing parking provision and the Council's approach to meeting short stay needs. In locations where a proposal is considered acceptable, the Council will require applicants to enter into a Planning Agreement under Section 76 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 to control the use of parking spaces in order to deter long-stay commuter parking. This will normally include restrictions on the leasing of contract spaces.

Park and Ride / Park and Share

22.79 The Council will promote the development of Park and Ride and Park and Share facilities in appropriate locations where these will reduce the number of cars entering central urban areas and promote the use of public transport.

22.80 The establishment of Park and Ride sites and associated services will also be an important contribution to integrated transport. Such schemes seek to persuade car users to change to public transport (bus or train) for the final part of their journey to major urban centres, thereby reducing the level of congestion and pollution in the centre. They should also contribute to the economic viability of the centre by avoiding the use of land at the centre for car parking which, for economic and environmental reasons, would be better put to other purposes.

22.81 Regional Strategic Transportation Policy places greater emphasis on a modal shift to alternatives to the private car and on more effective use of motorised transport. Promotion of park and share to increase the occupancy of cars entering urban areas can contribute to a reduction in traffic. Where clear benefits can be identified the Council will promote the creation of park and share sites.

22.82 Park and Share should normally be sited at key junctions on the trunk road network. Park and Ride sites should preferably be located within settlements. Ideal locations are public transport interchanges. It is recognised however that there may be occasions where a

countryside location may be needed for such development, and this may be appropriate provided that all the following are met:

(a) A comprehensive assessment of potential sites, to meet the identified need, has been carried out. This should include both urban and countryside locations;

(b) The assessment establishes that the proposed site is a sustainable option taking account of all relevant factors including travel impacts;

(c) The scheme will not seriously compromise the purposes of including land in the countryside;

(d) The proposal is contained within the local transport plan or based on a thorough assessment of travel impacts; and

(e) Any buildings forming part of the development proposal are essential to the operation of the park and ride/share scheme.

22.83 The layout, design and landscaping of Park and Ride and Park and Share sites is particularly important in rural locations (see also Policy TRAN 8 - Design of Car Parks). Provision of facilities, such as floodlighting, which are generally considered essential to the safe operation of such sites, will need careful design to ensure that they are not visually intrusive.

22.84 Applicants often seek approval for temporary car parking on sites which have been acquired for development. This must be seen as a short-term expediency and the long-term existence of such car parks is contrary to both transportation and broader environmental objectives.

22.85 While planning applications for temporary car parks, including public car parking, will be assessed in the light of all relevant factors, there will be a presumption against such development where it is considered unnecessary and is not linked to firm proposals for the development of the site. Applicants should note that a time limited planning permission for temporary use of land for car parking will not normally be renewed.

23 Public Utilities Infrastructure and Connectivity

23.1 This chapter includes telecommunications, electricity, water and cemeteries. Public utilities and their associated infrastructure are an essential element of everyday life for people of the modern world and are inextricably linked with social and economic wellbeing.

23.2 Whilst the provision of public utilities in the Borough is principally the responsibility of Government Departments and Statutory bodies such as Northern Ireland Water (NIW) and Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE), the private sector is playing an increasingly important role concerning public utility provision, regulated by bodies such as the Office of Communications, (OFCOM), and the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem).

Electricity

23.3 One aspect of modern life is the presence of pylons and poles carrying overhead wires for telephone or electricity supply. This "wirescape" can be visually obtrusive, particularly where the wires and poles impact above the skyline or where they dominate the streetscape in a built-up area.

23.4 The siting of electricity power lines and other overhead cables will be controlled, in terms of the visual impact on the environment, with reference being given to designated areas of landscape or townscape value.

23.5 The Council recognises the important role of connectivity and infrastructure, such as, electricity power lines and overhead cables in the economic and social development of the Borough.

Broadband and Digital Infrastructure

23.6 Digital connectivity is already central to economic competitiveness and social sustainability. To achieve the necessary productivity improvements demanded by the economic strategy and to meet the challenges imposed by demographic change will demand ever greater reliance on digital connectivity and transformation. Effective infrastructure is essential to support this increasing dependence on digital connectivity.

23.7 Data services are key to many businesses operating efficiently and effectively and the range of services available is expected to grow in the future. People working from home have an increased demand for data service to conduct business, and prospective buyers are now taking this into account when buying a new home.

23.8 Digital ducting is the physical infrastructure underground carrying cables associated with digital technologies and this can sit alongside traditional infrastructures, such as, telephone and electricity. Given the increase in demand for broadband and associated data services the Council considers it as important as other utilities. Even wireless technology requires some ducting to support cabling.

23.9 Although the capabilities of full fibre[26] can be matched by other ultrafast technologies, full fibre offers greater reliability and far greater flexibility of geographic reach.

23.10 The Office of Communications (OFCOM) publishes regular infrastructure reports for mobile coverage and Ards and North Down performs very well in terms of the availability of full fibre connectivity.

Public Utilities, Infrastructure and Connectivity Strategy

The Telecommunication and Utilities Strategy facilitates the development of telecommunications, digital services and utilities infrastructure, including a sustainable approach to support sustainable economic growth. Whilst minimising the visual and environmental impact of telecommunications and utilities infrastructure particularly within high sensitivity areas within the Borough.

23.11 This will be achieved through;

- The use of up to date information on the availability of utilities infrastructure within the Local Development Plan (LDP) when allocating new development;
- The application of appropriate key site requirements for digital and utilities infrastructure as required, within the Local Policies Plan (LPP); and
- The application of operational planning policy.

[26] *Full-fibre broadband: a form of broadband that uses fibre cables all the way from the exchange to people's homes or property. (OFCOM)*

Why we have taken this approach

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

Telecommunications Infrastructure

23.12 Guidance in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 seeks to implement a balanced approach to telecommunications infrastructure that will give a competitive advantage.

Regional Energy Infrastructure

23.13 Regional Guidance (RG 5) of the RDS aims to deliver a sustainable and secure energy supply that will increase the contribution that renewable energy can make to the overall energy mix.

23.14 RG 5 also supports new gas infrastructure, including provision of natural gas to new areas of Northern Ireland stating that it would enhance diversity of energy supply. Whilst not all the Borough is connected to mains gas yet, most of the population can access gas heating.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

Telecommunication

23.15 The SPPS states that councils should bring forward policies and proposals to set out the detailed criteria for consideration of new telecommunications development in their local area which should address important planning considerations, such as, siting, design, and impact upon visual amenity. It should take account of the potential effects of new telecommunications development, and any necessary enabling works on visual amenity and environmentally sensitive features and locations.

23.16 The Local Development Plan (LDP) supports the aims and objectives of the RDS and the SPPS by providing a strategic policy framework that facilitates the development of such infrastructure in an efficient and effective manner, whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum.

Digitally Connected (2019-2022)

23.17 The Ards and North Down Borough Council's digital strategy, 'Digitally Connected (2019-2022)' outlines the importance of digital connectivity and the current pattern of digital access across the Borough.

23.18 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- A prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4); and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

23.19 The Telecommunications and Utilities Infrastructure Strategy supports the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS particularly:

- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

Operational Planning Policies

Policy EI 1
Electricity and Energy Infrastructure

Planning permission will be granted for electricity infrastructure, gas network infrastructure together with any enabling works where they:

(a) Avoid sites of landscape sensitivity;

(b) Avoid areas of nature conservation, historic or archaeological interest;

(c) Minimise their visual intrusion;

(d) Follow the natural features of the environment; and

(e) In the case of overhead cables, the undergrounding of services is preferred. If this is not possible, applicants are required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council, why this cannot be achieved.

Where proposals relate to electricity network structures and overhead lines, a statement will need to be submitted in compliance with ICNIRP guidelines for public exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the Local Development Plan (LDP) including NE 1 International Designations.

Justification and Amplification

23.20 Electricity infrastructure incorporates connections to the Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) network through overhead lines, underground cables, substations towers and associated equipment. Proposals for electricity, gas and other utility infrastructure, together with any enabling works is expected to include:

- Information about the purpose and need for the development, including a description of how it fits into the applicant's wider network; and
- Details of the consideration given to measures to mitigate the visual and environmental impact of the proposal.

23.21 Electricity infrastructure for EV charging stations and renewable energy production is required to enable and facilitate growth in demand for renewable generation and storage. Policies RE 1 – Renewable and Low/Zero Carbon Energy Development, RE 2 – Reduced Energy Consumption and Use of Low/Zero-Carbon Energy and RET 5 – Refuelling stations in the Countryside, may also apply.

23.22 Proposals for the development of electricity and gas infrastructure, such as, new power lines or alterations, extensions to existing pipelines may also be required to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES).To ensure that the visual and environmental impact of utility development is kept to a minimum.

Overhead Lines

23.23 Overhead power lines, particularly those which are mounted on pylons, can appear visually intrusive in the landscape. To reduce any subsequent detrimental impact on visual amenity, care should be taken regarding their siting and design.

23.24 In all cases 'wirescape' should be kept to a minimum. The Council will encourage telecoms and electricity providers to use underground cables were possible. Where this is not possible, the Council will seek proposals which are designed to follow the natural landscape features of the area, with particular attention paid to vegetation and tree cover. It is best practice to avoid prominent locations visible from visitor attractions, scenic viewpoints, or the main line of vision from a road. Overhead lines should be routed to minimise disturbance to current land use and farming practice, and to minimise the number of crossings of other power lines, railway lines and roads. Sharp changes in direction should also be avoided to curtail the number of towers and pylons in the landscape. The potential of overhead lines to disrupt the flight paths of birds will also be a consideration.

23.25 In designated areas of landscape or townscape value, for example Conservation Areas or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Council will seek to enhance the visual amenity of the area by encouraging the removal of all unnecessary overhead wires and wires on building elevations. When new paving and footpaths are being laid as part of an Environment Improvement Scheme (EIS), consideration will be given to putting services underground.

23.26 Without exception, all proposals for either new or alterations to existing power lines must be accompanied by a signed statement declaring that the proposal will comply with the 1998 International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). These guidelines apply to all sources of electromagnetic fields (EMFs), including those associated with the generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity. This encompasses power lines, substations, and other electrical installations.

23.27 Developers must demonstrate that proposals, having regard to technical and operational constraints, have been sited and designed to minimise visual and environmental impact. Detailed information on visual impact may be required to assess the application, such as, photomontages, or a landscape or visual impact assessment.

23.28 The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 outlines permitted development for developers and operators, subject to the satisfaction of conditions.

Policy TEL 1
Control of Telecommunications Development

Planning permission will be granted for telecommunications and infrastructure development where such proposals, together with any necessary enabling works, will not result in unacceptable damage to visual amenity or harm to environmentally sensitive features or locations.

Applicants must demonstrate that proposals for telecommunications development, having regard to technical and operational constraints, have been sited and designed to minimise visual and environmental impact.

Permission for the development of a new telecommunications mast will only be granted where the aforementioned requirements are met, and it is reasonably demonstrated that:

(a) The sharing of an existing mast or other structure has been investigated and is not feasible; or

(b) A new mast represents a better environmental solution than other options.

Applications for telecommunications development by Code System Operators or broadcasters will need to include:

(c) Information about the purpose and need for the development at that site, including a description of how it fits into the operator's or broadcaster's wider network; and

(d) Details of the consideration given to measures to mitigate the visual and environmental impact of the proposal.

Where proposals relate to the development of a mobile telecommunications base station, a statement will need to:

(e) Indicate its location, the height of the antenna, the frequency and modulation characteristics, details of power output; and

(f) Declare that the base station when operational will meet the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)[27] guidelines for public exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Proposals for telecommunication development of a domestic nature within residential areas should be sympathetic to the streetscape and character of the area and must not cause demonstrable harm to:

(g) Visual amenity;

(h) The character of the surrounding area; or

(i) Residential amenity of the surrounding area.

Where information on the above matters is not made available or is considered inadequate, the Council will refuse planning permission.

A condition will be attached to all approvals to ensure that when equipment becomes redundant it must be removed, and the site restored to its former condition at the operator's expense. The equipment includes all cable runs, fixings and ancillary items, and all fixing holes should be made good. Any access tracks should also be returned to an appropriate natural state.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

[27] *https://www.icnirp.org/cms/upload/publications/ICNIRPrfgdl2020.pdf*

Justification and Amplification

23.29 Telecommunication connectivity within the Borough not only aids businesses and the economic prosperity of the area but also contributes to the health and wellbeing of residents. Telecommunication and related infrastructure, although considered a necessity, can be associated with negative impacts. Telecommunication and infrastructure development shall be facilitated in an efficient and effective manner whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. The Council will encourage telecoms providers to use underground cables were possible. Where this has not been possible, the council will seek proposals which are designed to follow the natural landscape features of the area, with particular attention paid to vegetation and tree cover.

23.30 The Council recognises that telecommunications code system operators are obliged to provide their services to the public (at large) and must work within the constraints of the technology to meet their licence requirements. Telecommunications development may, therefore need particular locations to work effectively.

23.31 In assessing proposals, the Council will therefore, consider the special needs and technical constraints associated with the telecommunications proposal. Applicants will be required to submit sufficient information which demonstrates that such considerations have been thoroughly assessed and mitigated. New masts should only be considered where site sharing is not feasible or offers an improved environmental solution. Operators will be encouraged to site share wherever possible. Applicants will therefore be expected to provide information about the purpose and need for the apparatus or equipment.

23.32 Networks may need to support evolving technology i.e. the evolution of 2G networks supporting voice calls to 5G networks, which can support more users and more sophisticated services which may require additional infrastructure. Network coverage information is available from the Office of Communications website (Ofcom).

Environmentally Sensitive Features and Locations

23.33 There is a need for the Council to adequately control telecommunications development so that rural landscapes, urban skylines and townscape character are not unduly spoiled. Wherever possible telecommunications development should seek to avoid sensitive features and locations of archaeological, built or natural heritage value. This includes archaeological remains, listed buildings, conservation areas, areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of nature conservation importance, sites where there are protected species, local landscape policy areas and other environmental designations.

23.34 Applicants should submit suitable evidence to show that alternative locations in less sensitive areas have been investigated and cannot be used. Where such locations cannot be avoided extra care will be required to ensure that the visual and environmental impact of the telecommunications apparatus and any ancillary works, such as an access track or power line, is minimised to reduce any potential negative effects within sensitive areas, for example through sympathetic design and colour.

23.35 In built up areas, operators should, wherever possible seek to locate and disguise larger apparatus on existing buildings and structures so that it is not conspicuous. Design should be sympathetic to the architectural form of the building. Any additional equipment whether on an existing mast, building or other structure should be designed and positioned sensitively to complement the visual ensemble already in place.

23.36 Areas designated for their landscape quality and other sensitive landscapes, such as the undeveloped coast, will pose challenges in finding an acceptable solution. The approach to finding the optimum solution may include disguising the antennas, sharing a site or existing infrastructure, minimising the size of a new mast, using stealth designs, and landscaping and appropriate screen planting. Hill-top or skyline sites should only be used as a last resort.

23.37 In all circumstances, applicants should provide details of mitigation measures relating to the visual and environmental impact of proposals. In addition, where existing telecommunication infrastructure is being replaced, operators should consider the scope for improved designs that would be less visually intrusive.

23.38 Applications for the development of telecommunications equipment are required to be accompanied by a statement declaring that when operational the development will meet the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure to electromagnetic fields.

23.39 There is provision within the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 for applicants and operators under permitted development, subject to the satisfaction of conditions.

23.40 Guidance about how the industry can continue to expand its operations in a manner that minimises the visual and environmental impact of equipment is provided in Development Control Advice Note 14 (DCAN14) - Siting and Design of Radio Telecommunication Equipment[28].

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[28] *https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/DCAN%2014%20-%20Siting%20and%20Design%20of%20Radio%20Telecommunications%20Equipment_0.pdf*

23.41 The DCAN highlights examples of good practice from Northern Ireland and beyond and gives advice on the process of site selection and design and illustrates how equipment can be sensitively installed. It also explains why additional base stations are needed to serve the growth in customer demand and in response to changing technical requirements.

23.42 The DCAN is relevant to the full range of radio telecommunications equipment. This includes mobile, Fixed Radio Access (FRA), microwave link, television and radio broadcasting, paging, police, fire, ambulance, taxi, and private telecommunication systems.

23.43 The technological advancement and different uses and users, requires that networks need to facilitate the capacity to support more demanding and different uses. As the potential to support more sophisticated services increases telecommunication infrastructure needs to be updated to ensure that connectivity keeps pace with emerging technologies.

Cemetery and Burial Space Strategy

The Strategy for cemeteries and burial spaces is to safeguard existing cemeteries and facilitate new or extended cemeteries or burial spaces, to meet the needs of the Borough, over the Plan period.

This will be achieved by:

- Protecting all existing cemeteries and burial spaces from inappropriate development;
- Identifying new cemetery provision at dLPP stage as required; and
- The application of operational planning policy.

Why we have taken this approach

23.44 Provision and maintenance of cemeteries is a council statutory responsibility, it is anticipated that there will be a need for additional council burial space over the plan period, in the form of new cemeteries or extensions to existing cemeteries. Whilst there are also burial spaces within graveyards located within church grounds, there are areas of the Borough that will need additional burial space provision, over the plan period. This will be required primarily in the more populated north of the Borough.

23.45 Burial choice will have an impact on the amount of space required. The Cemeteries and Burial Space policy will be applicable to address proposals coming forward on sites which may not have been identified through the Local Development Plan (LDP) process.

23.46 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

23.47 The Strategy for Cemetries and Burial Space supports the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS particularly:

- Improving Health and Well-Being;
- Creating and Enhancing Shared Space; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

Operational Planning Policy

Policy CEM 1
Cemeteries and Burial Space

All existing cemeteries will be protected from inappropriate development.

Planning permission will be granted for the provision of new cemeteries or extensions to an existing cemetery/burial space where both the following criteria are met:

(a) It is demonstrated that the proposal will not have an adverse impact on the natural and historic environment and landscape (including the local water environment, in particular, the groundwater underlying the site) through the submission of a hydrogeological risk assessment; and

(b) The location is accessible via active travel networks and public transport.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

Justification and Amplification

23.48 This policy seeks to ensure that any new proposal for cemeteries burial space is in an appropriate location. This policy will apply to new cemeteries/burial space and extensions of existing cemeteries not covered by other open space policies in this document.

23.49 Proposals for cemetery development should be considered in liaison with Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Water Management Unit. (WMU)[29]. A Hydrological Risk Assessment which demonstrates the suitability of the proposal should take account of the following advice:

- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Good Practice Guide Cemeteries, Burials and the Water Environment[30]; and
- Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP)[31].

23.50 For site specific geological and hydrogeological information for cemetery applications applicants may wish to contact the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) an office of the Department for the Economy (DfE).

23.51 Applicants should also consider any potential impact on the historic environment, in the proposed re-use of, or extension to, historic church sites and graveyards.

23.52 This policy will also provide direction for the assessment of other cemetery proposals not identified in the Local Development Plan (LDP).

23.53 Environmentally sensitive locations will require the submission of documentation showing how the proposal satisfies the requirements of this policy and natural environment policies.

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[29] *DAERA Water Regulation Correspondence WaterRegulationCorrespondence@daera-ni.gov.uk*

[30] *AE1 19 573678 Practice Guide - Cemeteries, Burials and the Water Environment 2019(2).pdf (daera-ni.gov.uk)*

[31] *https://www.netregs.org.uk/environmental-topics/guidance-for-pollution-prevention-gpp-documents/*

24 Waste Management

24.1 Waste management and its associated infrastructure are an essential element of everyday life for people of the developed world and is inextricably linked with social and economic wellbeing. However, they may also be associated with their potential negative impact on visual amenity and environmentally sensitive features and locations.

24.2 Waste management facilities carry out an important function in the treatment and disposal of waste and will be approved in appropriate locations. Such facilities often undertake complex operations that can impact adversely on the environment with potential risks at individual sites, for example, in relation to odour, windblown litter or birds.

24.3 Current and future waste management activities are influenced by the legislative and policy framework in Northern Ireland. This includes European Union (EU) waste policy which aims to reduce the environmental and health impacts of waste and improve resource efficiency. Most waste policy and guidance are based on EU Directives which are then translated into National legislation. Policy Article 4 of the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) (WFD) sets out the Waste Hierarchy as a priority order for waste management, as set out in Figure 15.

24.4 The definition of waste management within the Waste Framework Directive is “the collection, transport, recovery (including sorting), and disposal of waste, including the supervision of such operations and the aftercare of disposal sites, and including actions taken as a dealer or broker.”

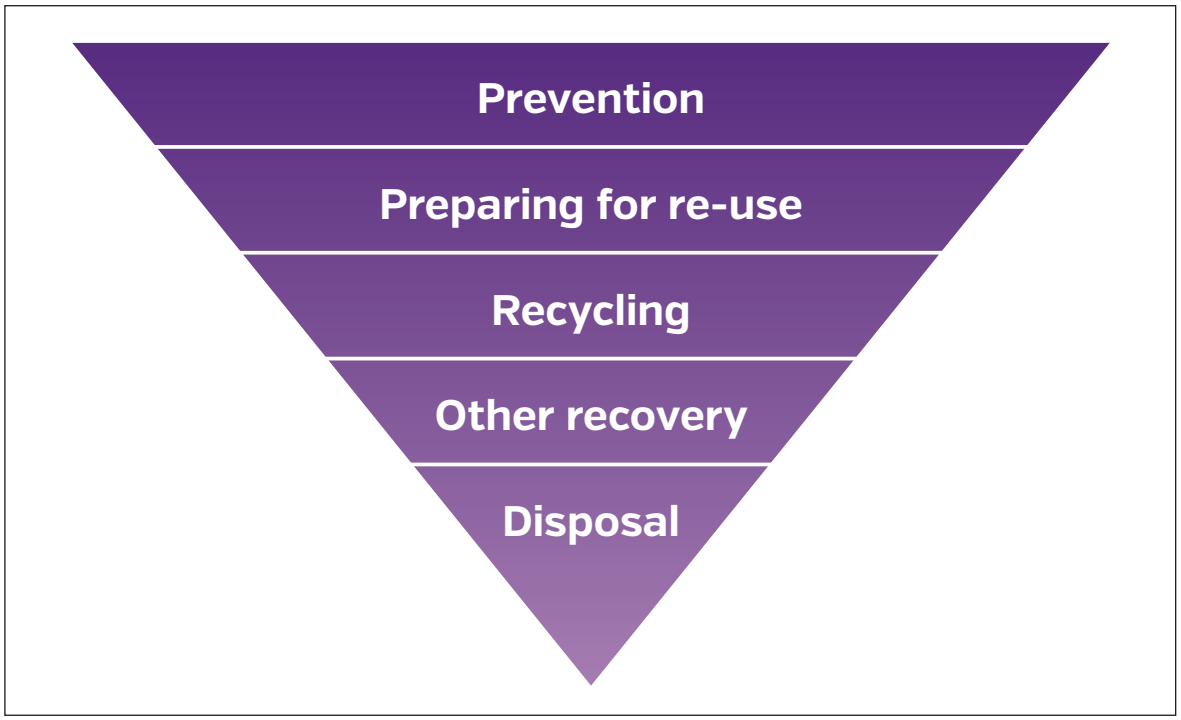


Figure 15 – Waste Management Hierarchy (Source: RDS 2035)

Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy 'Delivering Resources Efficiently' (2013)

24.5 The Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy sets the policy framework for the management of waste in Northern Ireland and contains actions and targets to meet EU Directive requirements and the Departments Programme for Government (PfG) commitments.

24.6 The key aim of the Waste Management Strategy is to achieve fully sustainable waste management. Modern waste management facilities, encouraging more sustainable waste practices can help bring environmental benefits.

24.7 By reason of their size, scale and location waste management facilities have the potential to cause significant damage to the surrounding environment in terms of visual amenity, natural heritage, biodiversity, and pollution.

24.8 The targets contained within the Waste Management Strategy require a significant shift away from landfill. Waste treatment facilities reuse, recycle, and recover waste materials and can significantly reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. They can also have benefits in relation to the co-location or provision of integrated facilities close to waste arisings, close to where waste is reused or close to other waste treatment facilities.

24.9 Ahead of the development of a new Waste Management Strategy, The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has published a Waste Policy Tracker on their website, for stakeholders and members of the public to stay informed of the Department's ongoing waste policy developments.

Waste Management Plan: Arc21

24.10 Ards and North Down Borough Council is one of six councils represented by Arc21, an umbrella waste management group, the other councils represented by Arc21 are Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Arc21 works on behalf of its partner councils to guide, support, and help them deliver their statutory waste management obligations and drive forward innovative waste management programmes, including developing infrastructure.

24.11 The waste management plan for Ards and North Down is the "Arc21 Management Plan (2015)", which takes account of the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy. It provides a framework for waste management provision and a regional network of facilities for all controlled wastes within the Arc21 Region. It establishes the overall need for waste management capacity and details the proposed arrangements to deal with the waste produced in a sustainable manner.

24.12 Councils have a statutory requirement under The Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (Article 23) to have in place a Waste Management Plan. An Addendum to the 2015 Waste Management Plan was published in 2024 to update the Waste Management Plan[32].

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

24.13 Water supply within the Plan area is drawn from Silent Valley and delivered through various local service reservoirs and a number located outside the Borough. The provision of water supply and wastewater treatment within the Borough is the responsibility of NI Water (NIW).

24.14 NI Water's sewerage network capacity mapping tool and sewer network modelling activities have identified capacity limitations across the Borough and across Northern Ireland.. Upgrades of the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) and the network will be required over the Local Development Plan (LDP) period to accommodate existing and future development whilst achieving the necessary water quality and environmental standards.

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[32] *https://www.arc21.org.uk/download/files/IBR1437%20Draft%20Addendum%20to%20the%20Waste%20Management%20Plan%20arc21%20for%20Consultation.pdf*

Waste Management Strategy

To promote waste reduction within the Borough, promoting the development of waste management facilities in appropriate locations, that meet identified need in the Waste Management Plan (WMP) and to also ensure that potential detrimental effects associated with waste management facilities are avoided or minimised and that sites are restored to a satisfactory after use at the end of their life.

This will be achieved by:

- Identifying land for waste management infrastructure as part of the Local Policies Plan where waste management provision is necessary;
- Supporting the LDPs Climate Change Policy (CC 1) Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, to maximise recycling and waste reduction contributing to the requirement for Northern Ireland to reduce waste by 70% as contained within the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022; and
- The application of the operational policy for waste management.

Why we have taken this approach

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

24.15 The RDS states that managing waste is a significant part of how we treat our environment. If waste is not managed safely then it can become a serious threat to public health, and cause damage to the environment as well as being a local nuisance.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

24.16 The aim of the SPPS in relation to waste management is to support wider government policy focused on the sustainable management of waste, and a move towards resource efficiency. The SPPS promotes development of waste management and recycling facilities in appropriate locations and ensures that detrimental effects on people, the environment and local amenity associated with waste management facilities (e.g. pollution) are avoided or minimised.

24.17 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' (the Council's Community Plan), that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- A prosperous and inclusive economy (Outcome 4); and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible (Outcome 5).

24.18 This outcome includes actions around the quality of the physical environment and infrastructure such as waste and water.

24.19 The Waste Management Strategy supports the core planning principles as set out in the SPPS, particularly:

- Improving Health and Well-Being;
- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

Operational Planning Policy

Policy WM 1
Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility

Proposals for the development of a waste management facility will be subject to thorough examination of potential environmental effects and planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that all the following criteria are met:

(a) The proposal will not cause demonstrable harm to human health or result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment;

(b) The proposal is designed to be compatible with the character of the surrounding area and adjacent land uses;

(c) The visual impact of the waste management facility, including the final landform of landfilling or land raising operations, is acceptable in the landscape and the development will not have an unacceptable visual impact on any area designated for its landscape/seascape quality;

(d) The proposal will not cause unacceptable impacts on marine and coastal water quality;

(e) Adequate arrangements shall be provided within the site for the access to the site, parking, servicing, and circulation of vehicles;

(f) The types of waste to be deposited or treated and the proposed method of disposal or treatment, will not pose a serious environmental risk to air, water or soil resources that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures;

(g) In the case of waste disposal operations, the proposal includes suitable, detailed and practical restoration and aftercare proposals for the site which offer significant biodiversity benefit;

(h) The proposed site is not at risk from flooding and the proposal will not cause or exacerbate flooding elsewhere; and

(i) In the case of landfilling the proposal includes suitable, detailed, and practical restoration and aftercare proposals for the site.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

Justification and Amplification

24.20 In assessing all proposals for waste management facilities, the Council will be guided by the proximity principal which emphasises the need to treat and/or dispose of wastes in reasonable proximity to their point of generation.

24.21 The Council will be guided by the precautionary principle that where there are significant risks of damage to the environment, its protection will generally be paramount, unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

24.22 The Council will assess the potential environmental impact of a waste management proposal considering the nature, size, scale and location of the proposal. Sufficient information should be submitted with waste applications to enable the Council and external consultees to make an informed assessment on the potential impacts.

24.23 Where appropriate, the Council will use it powers contained in the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (NI) 2015 Section 3 (6) to request applicants to supply such additional information as considered necessary to allow proper determination of planning applications.

24.24 As appropriate, the Council will carefully condition, monitor and enforce the quantity and categories of permissible waste at any proposed facility.

24.25 Certain waste management applications/projects will fall under the scope of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Waste disposal installations for the incineration, chemical treatment, or landfill of hazardous waste require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in every case. Certain other waste management projects, which fall within the scope of the EIA Regulations, may require an assessment where the Council considers that the development will have significant environmental effects.

24.26 Waste management facilities vary greatly in scale and their potential for impact. The Council's consideration will include, but is not limited to, the following matters during assessment of proposals for new, or extensions to existing, waste management facilities:

- Health considerations;
- Compatibility with adjacent development;
- Visual Intrusion and Impact on the Landscape and seascape;
- Transport, traffic, and access;
- Nature conservation and historic environment;

- Environmental pollution (including noise, dust and airborne pollution, litter, vermin and birds, land stability, hours of operation and duration of operations);
- Protection of surface and groundwater;
- Flooding from rivers;
- Agricultural land quality;
- Reinstatement of the site; and
- The potential impacts on the marine and coastal water environment.

24.27 Applicants will be required to demonstrate that they have taken account of the above issues and bring forward proposals to mitigate potential adverse impacts which may necessitate the use of a Section 76 Planning Agreement.

24.28 Restoration after a development such as waste disposal, offers an opportunity to maximise biodiversity. Restoration which enhances biodiversity, aligns with the strategic approach to climate mitigation and adaptation. Thriving ecosystems have the capacity to help reduce the impacts of climate change. Restoration after development such as those providing waste disposal, offers an opportunity to maximise biodiversity.

Policy WM 2
Waste Collection and Treatment Facilities

Planning Permission will be granted for the development of a waste collection or treatment facility where the proposal complies with Policy WM 1 – Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility and:

1. There is a need for the facility as established through the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy and the relevant Waste Management Plan; and the following criteria:
2. The proposed facility complies with one or more of the following locational criteria:
   (a) It is located within an industrial or port area of a character appropriate to the development; or
   (b) It is suitably located within an active or worked out hard rock quarry or on a site of an existing or former waste management facility including a landfill site; or
   (c) It brings previously developed, derelict or contaminated land back into productive use or makes use of existing or redundant buildings; or

(d) In the case of a civic amenity and similar neighbourhood facilities the site is conveniently located in terms of access to service a neighbourhood or settlement whilst avoiding unacceptable adverse impact on the character, environmental quality, and amenities of the local area; or

(e) Where the proposal is in the countryside, it involves the reuse of existing buildings or is on land within or adjacent to existing building groups.

3. The following operational criteria must also be met:

I. In the case of a regional scale waste collection or treatment facility, its location relates closely to and benefits from easy access to key transport corridors and, where practicable makes use of the alternative transport modes of rail and water;

II. Proposals involving the sorting and processing of waste, are carried out within a purpose built or appropriately modified existing building, unless it can be demonstrated that part or all of the proposed operation can only be carried out in the open;

III. The built development associated with the proposed methods of handling, storage, treatment, and processing of waste is appropriate to the nature and hazards of the waste(s) concerned;

IV. Proposals for the incineration of waste and other thermal processes, shall incorporate measures to maximise energy recovery both in the form of heat and electricity, taking account of prevailing technology, economics and characteristics of the waste stream involved; and

V. It will not result in an unacceptable adverse environmental impact that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures including their impact on marine and coastal water quality as well as the marine environment.

Waste Water[33] Treatment Facilities

Development proposals for new or the upgrading and/or extension of existing Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) will be permitted where it has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Council, that there is a need for the extension/ facility, and it meets the criteria in Policy WM 1 Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

[33] *This term is used instead of the term "sewage", to include effluent from toilets, showers, washing machines, dishwashers, etc, as well as some commercial and business discharges.*

Justification and Amplification

24.29 Waste treatment facilities reuse, recycle and recover waste materials and can significantly reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. To realise the recycling potential within the Borough and contribute positively to the meeting of the recycling target within the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, the Council may seek to facilitate the increase in the number, type, and range in size of waste treatment facilities in line with the requirements of the Waste Management Strategy (WMS) and relevant Waste Management Plan (WMP).

24.30 Applicants must demonstrate that the proposal is consistent with the WMS and the WMP. They will also have to obtain a relevant waste management authorisation from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) i.e., a waste management licence, waste exemption, discharge consent, waste permit etc.

24.31 For the purpose of this policy, waste treatment projects include but are not limited to, waste separation, recycling, transfer, storage and processing.

24.32 Consequently, this policy provides criteria for the determination of planning applications for civic amenity sites, waste transfer stations, the various types of recycling facility, scrapyards, multi-stream separation and material recovery facilities, composting facilities, wastewater treatment works, incineration and other thermal treatment/energy recovery facilities and the recycling of construction and demolition waste.

24.33 Waste management infrastructure should not be located in areas which are prone to flooding, or in areas benefiting from a designated flood defence where environmental pollution is likely to occur and where a residual flood risk remains.

Waste Water Treatment Facilities

24.34 Wastewater is not controlled waste and therefore the WMS and WMP do not apply to proposals for wastewater treatment works (WWTWs) and related facilities. In such cases the applicant must demonstrate that there is a need for the facility.

24.35 Due to their nature and scale many WWTWs have the potential to have a significant impact on the environment and on the amenity of local communities. As a result, they are often located in the countryside away from residential development. By their nature wastewater treatment works tend to be located adjacent to a watercourse and often within a flood plain. Where this is the case, proposals should comply with Policy FLD 1 – Development in Fluvial (River) and Coastal Flood Plains, and applicants must provide relevant flood assessment details.

Water Infrastructure

24.36 Northern Ireland Water (NIW) have advised the Council that the wastewater system including the network is under financial and physical strain. In this circumstance and when it is confirmed that connection cannot be made to the existing NIW system, private wastewater infrastructure can be considered. It must be noted that private wastewater infrastructure will only be considered a viable option if the environment is available to receive the discharge and where agreement is reached with NIW and Policy NMW 1 Non-Mains Wastewater Infrastructure will apply.

24.37 Applicants should engage with Northern Ireland Water for all new proposed connections, to assess the site-specific needs of the proposal, the wastewater infrastructure capacity and possible solutions for connection. Applicants are advised that Policy NMW 1 – Non-Mains Wastewater, applies to proposals relying on non-mains water infrastructure.

Hazardous Waste

24.38 Hazardous Waste is defined within the Hazardous Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The nature of hazardous waste and the need to protect the public from any harmful effects associated with noise, smell, fumes, and dust, emphasise the importance that needs to be placed on the safe treatment of such waste and to reducing the amount that requires disposal.

24.39 All planning applications for waste collection and treatment facilities will also be assessed against policy WM1 Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility and the principles of sustainable waste management.

Policy WM 3
Waste Disposal

Planning permission for the development of landfill or land raising facilities for the disposal of waste will be permitted where they comply with Policy WM 1 Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility, and it is demonstrated that:

1. There is a need for the facility as established through the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy (WMS) and the relevant Waste Management Plan (WMP); and
2. The proposed facility complies with all of the following criteria:
   (a) It will not result in an unacceptable adverse environmental impact that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures;
   (b) Significant mineral reserves are not sterilised (see Policy MIN 4 Mineral Safeguarding Areas);
   (c) It is suitably located within an active or worked out hard rock quarry or it brings land that is despoiled, derelict or contaminated back into productive use;
   (d) In the case of a regional scale landfill or land raising site, its location closely relates to and allows for easy access to key transport corridors and, where practicable make use of the alternative transport modes of rail and water; and
   (e) Detailed measures are included for the appropriate restoration and aftercare of sites that will maximise biodiversity.

In line with the Waste Management Strategy, prior to the establishment of an integrated network of waste management facilities, the development of interim landfill or land raising facilities for the disposal of waste will be permitted where the criteria above are met and the proposed facility:

(f) Provides essential interim capacity; and

(g) Is likely to form part of a coordinated regional or sub-regional network; and

(h) As far as possible does not lead to an increase in the number of active landfill sites.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

24.40 Landfilling is the disposal of waste into void spaces in the land, often left as a result of mineral extraction. Land raising is the disposal of waste by depositing on land thereby raising its level. This policy applies to all proposals for the disposal of household, industrial and commercial waste with the exception of the deposition of inert waste which is suitable for the purposes of land improvement (See Policy WM 5 Land Improvement).

24.41 Landfilling and land raising of municipal waste are at the bottom of the waste management hierarchy as they are usually the least sustainable waste management option. To comply with the Landfill Directive, the absolute quantities of waste going to landfill must reduce.

24.42 Waste disposal proposals must be accompanied by a statement which identifies the waste implications of the development, such as potential landfill gas, methane gas released into the air or surrounding ground, leachate into the soil measures taken to minimise and manage the waste generated, a critical analysis of the alternative methods of treatment for the particular waste material and its potential for recycling, composting or energy recovery.

24.43 Compliance with the siting, engineering and operational requirements of the Landfill Directive is an essential pre-requisite and strict controls will be applied under waste management licensing and Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) permitting.

24.44 Proposals for the disposal of waste materials will not be permitted where the development would lead to an unacceptable impact on the environment or unacceptable pollution problems (See Policy WM 1 – Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility). The Landfill Directive bans the co-disposal of inert, hazardous, and non-hazardous waste and all waste going to landfill must be pre-treated. In addition, certain wastes are banned from land filling as a disposal method altogether.

24.45 Due to the nature of landfill and land raising operations, waste disposal sites may be suitably located within a hard rock quarry or where the impact of the operations will not have a detrimental effect on residential amenity or the environment. It is important that Waste Disposal Projects do not sterilise mineral reserves considered to be of particular value to the economy.

24.46 Land-raising, in that it creates a new landform, has the potential to significantly impact on the landscape. As a result, careful consideration will be given to the proposed landform and scale of land raising activities to ensure that these can satisfactorily be assimilated into the existing landscape (See Policy WM 1 Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility). Planning permission will not be granted for the disposal of waste in sites designated for landscape

or natural environment value, including International, European, and National sites designated outside the LDP.

24.47 Restoration and aftercare are essential to prepare landfill or land raising sites for a use which is compatible with the surrounding area. Proposals should be detailed, comprehensive, practical, and achievable and they should help promote or enhance biodiversity on the finished landform and the surrounding area.

24.48 All applications for landfill and land raising operations should be accompanied by drawings illustrating cross-sections through the site and indicating depth of fill, capping details, final restoration contours, planting, and other relevant details.

Policy WM 4
Development in the vicinity of Waste Management Facilities

Planning permission for the development of land in the vicinity of existing or approved waste management facilities and wastewater treatment works (WWTWs), will be granted where the following criteria are met:

(a) It will not prejudice or unduly restrict activities permitted to be carried out within the waste management facility; and

(b) It will not give rise to unacceptable adverse impacts in terms of people, transportation systems or the environment.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

24.49 Waste management facilities provide a necessary function, in the treatment and disposal of waste. This activity can however result in some undesirable impacts on nearby residents and the wider environment.

24.50 This policy seeks to ensure that potential adverse impacts of existing or approved facilities will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development of adjacent land.

24.51 The Council must consider the sensitivity of development in the vicinity of waste management facilities and WWTWs, particularly sensitive uses such as residential development or areas of open space and recreation. Development in the vicinity of waste

management facilities should only be permitted where it will not prejudice the operation of such facilities and will not give rise to unacceptable impact on people, transport, or the environment.

24.52 This is particularly important in relation to landfill sites as the EU Landfill Directive, when implemented, will require landfill sites or areas within landfill sites to be dedicated specifically to the deposit of special or hazardous waste. The Hazardous Waste Directive will extend the list of hazardous substances that should not be landfilled. As a result, new waste treatment facilities will be needed to treat hazardous waste.

24.53 In relation to development proposed in the vicinity of WWTW's the potential adverse impact of existing or approved infrastructure upon neighbouring land uses will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development of that land. Planning applications involving land within the vicinity of WWTWs will not be approved where there would be a loss of amenity from odour nuisance. Information on Northern Ireland Water's Development Encroachment procedures and Odour assessment is available on their website.

24.54 Applications will be assessed by taking account of the circumstances prevailing at particular locations. Relevant considerations will include the nature and capacity of the treatment works, local topography, odour assessment, screening and disposition of existing development, the nature of the proposed development, the precise position of actual odour sources within the boundaries of the works and advice on relevant environmental health matters. In all cases, specific advice will be sought from the Environmental Health Department of the Council.

Policy WM 5
Land Improvement

Planning permission will be granted for the disposal of inert waste by its deposition on land where it is demonstrated that it will result in land improvement and all the following criteria are met:

(a) It will not result in an unacceptable adverse environmental impact that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures;

(b) The need for the land improvement is demonstrated;

(c) Only the minimum quantity of fill necessary to achieve the proposed improvement shall be deposited;

(d) It will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape, seascape that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures; and

(e) Detailed measures are included for the appropriate restoration and aftercare of sites that will help to enhance biodiversity.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and Amplification

24.55 The main purpose of the proposal should be to improve land quality rather than the disposal of waste. In this regard, the quantity of waste to be deposited should be the minimum required to achieve the proposed improvement. Documentation should be submitted by the applicant to support the application demonstrating the need for and quantities required. Where this is not the case, the Council will consider the proposal under Policy WM 3 – Waste Disposal.

24.56 The deposition of inert waste on agricultural or other land can result in an improvement in land quality, for example, where steep gradients are reduced and the land re-graded with an adequate surface layer of topsoil.

24.57 On occasion, deposition of inert waste can facilitate land reclamation for necessary development. The Council recognises, however, that care needs to be taken to ensure that such schemes do not adversely affect nature conservation and heritage interests nor have an unacceptable impact on the landscape (See Policy WM 1 Environmental Impact of a Waste Management Facility). Vacant land or land of low agricultural value, often provides important habitats for flora and fauna.

25 Non-Mains Wastewater Infrastructure

25.1 Northern Ireland Water, (NIW) is a Government Owned Company (GoCo), set up in April 2007, to provide the water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland. NIW delivers clean, safe drinking water to approximately 840,000 households and businesses. NIW collects approximately 330 million litres of wastewater per day from around 669,000 households and organisations connected to the sewerage system and transfers it to a works facility where it is treated and disposed of safely.

25.2 To deliver this service, a system of pipes, pumping stations, water and wastewater treatment works and reservoirs is required. There are 26,700 kilometres of watermains and 15,600 kilometres of sewers in Northern Ireland.

25.3 NI Water's sewerage network capacity mapping tool and sewer network modelling activities have identified capacity limitations across Northern Ireland and across the Borough. Upgrades of the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) and the network will be required over the Local Development Plan (LDP) period to accommodate existing and future development whilst achieving the necessary water quality and environmental standards.

25.4 At the time of writing Cloughey and Killinchy wastewater treatment works within the council area do not have any available capacity.

25.5 NI Water's sewerage network capacity mapping tool and sewer network modelling activities have also identified capacity issues in parts of the Ballyhalbert Victoria, Ballyrickard, Ballywalter, Cloughey, Greyabbey, Killinchy, Kinnegar, Kircubbin, North Down, Portaferry and Seahill wastewater networks.

25.6 The capacity of WWTWs has a direct impact on new connections and new dwellings must provide an on-site solution such as septic tanks[34] or treatment package plants such as a privately-owned system for treating wastewater for one or more dwellings or other types of development.

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[34] *A septic tank is a two or three chamber structure, which retains sewage from a property for enough time to allow solids to form into sludge at the base of the tank, where it is partly broken down by bacteria. The remaining liquid drains from the tank by an outlet pipe and soakaway*

Non-Mains Wastewater Strategy

To promote development in appropriate locations and to also ensure that potential detrimental effects, of development that relies on non mains wastewater infrastructure are avoided or minimised.

This will be achieved by:

- Supporting development where mains wastewater infrastructure is present; and
- the application of operational planning policy.

Why we have taken this approach

25.7 The RDS promotes a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and wastewater services. It promotes a "more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management" [RG12]. The planning for the provision of water and wastewater infrastructure and treatment facilities is both a practical and environmental necessity for regional development.

25.8 At a local level, the approach supports the following outcomes of 'The Big Plan' [the Council's Community Plan], that all people in Ards and North Down benefit from:

- A prosperous and inclusive economy [Outcome 4]; and
- An environment that is valued, well-managed and accessible [Outcome 5].

Operational Planning Policy

Policy NMW 1
Non-Mains Wastewater[35] Infrastructure

Planning permission will only be granted for development relying on non-mains wastewater management, where the applicant can demonstrate that this will not create or add to a pollution problem.

Applicants will be required to submit sufficient information on the means of wastewater management treatment and disposal to allow a proper assessment of such proposals to be made.

In those areas identified as having a pollution risk, development, relying on non-mains wastewater infrastructure will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, where appropriate mitigation measures have been identified.

Proposals must also comply with General Principles Policy GP 1 and all other relevant policy provisions of the LDP including NE 1 International/ European Designations.

Justification and Amplification

25.9 The aim of this policy is to protect the Borough's water resources from the actual or potential polluting effects of on-site treatment plants, particularly in areas identified for the abstraction of water for human consumption and to ensure compliance with water quality regulations. There is also a potential risk of impacts on European and International Designated Sites within the Borough.

25.10 It is desirable for new development to connect to mains services wherever possible. However, it is acknowledged that it will not be feasible for many buildings in the countryside to connect to a public water borne wastewater system and they will rely instead on some means of 'on-site sewage treatment', such as a septic tank or package treatment plant. Effluent from such installations is usually dispersed through a system of channels or field drains before percolating to the nearest watercourse.

[35] *This term is used instead of the term "sewage", to include effluent from toilets, showers, washing machines, dishwashers, etc, as well as some commercial and business discharges.*

25.11 Applicants are advised to engage with NI Water to assess the site-specific needs of the proposal, the wastewater infrastructure capacity and possible solutions for connection. Pollution can arise from point sources, such as, industrial or sewage effluent discharges or can be diffuse, such as, road or agricultural run-off. It is important that our water bodies - rivers, lakes, estuaries, marine and coastal waters, groundwaters and reservoirs - are protected from pollution and managed as a sustainable resource for all the activities that depend on them.

25.12 New development relying on non-mains wastewater infrastructure may, either individually or cumulatively, increase the risk of groundwater pollution. As such, it has the potential to adversely affect the ecology and chemical quality of the water environment.

25.13 The number and type of on-site sewage treatment plants that will be acceptable in a particular area will be determined by the sub-soil conditions, the sensitivity and capacity of the receiving watercourse and the vulnerability/sensitivity of water catchment areas. In addition, such installations should be located at least 15 metres away from any dwelling and soakaways should not drain across the curtilage of any neighbouring property. Under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, the consent of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is required to discharge any trade or sewage effluent or any other potentially polluting matter from commercial, industrial, or domestic premises to waterways or underground strata.

25.14 Sewage discharges containing high levels of ammonia can reach toxic concentrations and the following reductions in dissolved oxygen levels can also result in fish kills. Fish populations are sensitive to reductions in water quality and salmonid habitat is particularly susceptible to siltation.

25.15 Planning permission will be refused for development relying on non-mains wastewater where the physical arrangements proposed for on-site sewage treatment are unsatisfactory or in cases where 'Consent to Discharge' under the Water Order is unlikely to be forthcoming due to pollution risks.

25.16 If Consent for Discharge has been granted under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 for the proposed development site, a copy of this should be submitted to accompany the planning application. In cases where no Consent to Discharge has been supplied by the applicant any assessments carried out must consider the cumulative impact of discharges to the watercourse. The method of discharge and attenuation should be clearly indicated by the applicant and included within the red line boundary of the application.

25.17 Where the proposal involves an on-site sewage treatment plant, such as a septic tank or a package treatment plant, the application will also need to be accompanied by drawings that accurately show the proposed location of the installation and soakaways, and of drainage ditches and watercourses in the immediate vicinity. The site for the proposed apparatus should be located on land within the application site or otherwise within the applicant's control and therefore subject to any planning conditions relating to the development of the site.

25.18 Applicants are advised to contact Northern Ireland Water (NIW[36]) and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in the preparation of proposals.[37]



[36] *Services for Developers - Northern Ireland Water (niwater.com)*

[37] *DAERA Standing Advice - WTR - Single Dwellings - Final 2022.pdf (daera-ni.gov.uk)*





Part E
Monitoring and Review

26 Monitoring and Review

26 Monitoring and Review

Legislative and Policy Context

26.1 Monitoring and review of the Local Development Plan (LDP) is an integral part of the plan making process. It aims to provide more flexibility and enable councils to adapt to changing circumstances, thereby ensuring that a rolling programme of up-to-date LDPs are in place.

26.2 Section 21 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 places a statutory duty upon councils to produce an annual monitoring report. This document sets out the extent to which the LDP objectives are being fulfilled through the policies and proposals contained within the LDP. The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) echoes this requirement at paragraph 5.36 - councils must keep under review the implementation of their plans and report annually to the Department on whether the objectives in the Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan are being achieved.' It also makes it clear that a Council may revise its Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan at any time subsequent to adoption or as directed by the Department, if a review identifies that changes are required.

The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

26.3 The main mechanism for reporting on the performance of the LDP will be the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), which will provide a summary of information collated each financial year (1 April – 31 March). Regulation 25 of the LDP Regulations states that the AMR must specify the following:

a) Housing land supply:

b) Number of net additional housing units built;

c) Supply of land for economic development purposes; and

d) Such other issues as appear to the Council to be relevant to the implementation of the LDP.

26.4 This information will be assessed against a number of indicators, to ensure that policies are achieving their objectives without unintended consequences, the objectives behind policies are still relevant and any associated targets are being achieved. Where a policy is not being implemented, the AMR should state the reasons for this, the steps the Council intend to take to secure the implementation of it and whether the intention is to revise or replace the policy in question.

26.5 To assist the Council in monitoring the objectives and policies in the Plan Strategy, a Monitoring Framework has been developed which measures the relevant objectives and policies against a range of indicators and targets. Details of these are provided in the following section.

26.6 The framework contains the key elements which inform the annual report under each of the Plan Objectives, listing the indicators and targets. These include:

- The remaining housing land supply and number of housing units completed;
- The percentage of affordable housing units approved;
- Permissions on zoned employment land and the amount of land remaining;
- Level of demolition in Conservation Areas and ATCs/AVCs;
- Permissions within fluvial or pluvial floodplains which are not considered exceptional cases/of regional significance;
- Net loss of open space.

26.7 This list is not exhaustive and will be subject to review at Local Plan Policies stage. The Council recognises that data cannot be collected for every policy in the Plan. It is therefore intended that key policy areas linked to the delivery of the Plan's strategic objectives will be monitored, to allow trends to be analysed.

26.8 It should also be noted that not all policies in the Plan require clear targets or do not easily translate into measurable indicators. This can apply where the necessary monitoring information is currently lacking – for example in respect of areas at risk from coastal erosion and land instability. Also, whilst the indicators may provide a direct reflection of the performance of specific policies, in some cases, other non-planning factors can contribute. The extent to which these external factors impact upon the achievement of LDP objectives will be a matter of judgement and may not necessitate corrective actions.

Review

26.9 As noted in the previous section, there is a statutory duty for the Council to monitor the LDP on an annual basis. However, should no changes be necessary as a result of annual monitoring, a five yearly review will be carried out to ensure the LDP is kept up-to-date and is fully reflective of the Monitoring Framework.

26.10 Where evidence suggests that a policy is not working effectively or satisfactorily achieving the desired outcome, steps will be taken to ensure this is rectified. The course of action could include the following:

- Undertake enhanced monitoring;
- Discussion of issues with statutory consultees;
- Ensuring consistency in application of policies; or
- Strengthening policy wording or production of accompanying supplementary planning guidance.

Monitoring Framework

1 Spatial and Cross-cutting Objectives

To promote sustainable growth in the right places and at the appropriate level, to meet the needs of all those who live, work, visit and invest in the Borough.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
a) Balanced growth in line with Settlement Hierarchy Policy: SGS 5	Alignment of spatial distribution of growth with Settlement Hierarchy	Numbers of new dwellings approved exceeds 5% of the allocation to: (i) Villages; and (ii) Small settlements	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov Housing Monitor

To create sustainable places throughout the Borough through design, layout and mix of uses that enhance the character and identity of settlements and landscape; create attractive, safe and accessible places to live, work and visit; and promote prosperity, and well-being of citizens.

To support sustainably located and designed development that supports mitigation and adaptation to climate change and increases local environmental resilience. This includes carbon reduction through the use of renewable energy development and incorporation of sustainable design principles and features.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
b] Sustainable patterns of development Policy: SGS 4, SGS 5	60% of all new housing on brownfield land	Delivery falls below 60%	Housing Monitor / GIS MasterGov
c] Total number of planning approvals including measures to: - reduce likely energy consumption; - use decentralised, renewable or zero/low-carbon energy supply Policy: RE 2	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions, MasterGov

2 Social Objectives

To provide a sufficient supply of land for new housing to support the Council's growth ambition and facilitate delivery to meet diverse housing needs up to 2032.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
a) Total number of housing units completed across Borough (statutory requirement) Policy: SGS 4	Number of housing units completed aligned with per annum projections	Total housing completions is 10% above / below allocation	Housing Monitor
b) Total housing land remaining (statutory requirement) Policy: SGS 5	Maintain a sufficient supply of housing land.	Total remaining housing land falls below 5-year supply in any settlement with individual housing allocation	Housing Monitor
c) Percentage of affordable homes approved Policy: HOU 3	20% of all housing developments of 5 units or more or on sites of 0.1ha or more to be affordable	Affordable housing provision is 10% below target.	Housing Monitor / MasterGov/ NIHE

To create sustainable residential environments which are designed to a high standard, well connected and inclusive of the needs of all potential inhabitants.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
d) Percentage of wheelchair units built in developments of 20 units or more Policy: HOU 4	10% of wheelchair units in development of 20 or more dwellings	Provision below target of 10%	Housing Monitor MasterGov NIHE
e) Loss of protected town centre housing Policy: HOU 7	No net loss	Net loss of protected town centre housing to other uses	MasterGov
f) HMO development not exceeding 10% on any street (or where street is in excess of 600m within 300m) Policy: HOU 8	HMO development not exceeding 10% on any street (or where street is in excess of 600m within 300m)	HMO development exceeding policy criteria of 10% on any street (or where street is in excess of 600m within 300m)	Housing Monitor / GIS

To support rural communities by providing appropriate and sustainable opportunities for development in the countryside

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
g] Total number of houses completed in the countryside Policy: SGS 5	Strategic allocation to the countryside	Number of rural dwelling completions exceeds 10% above the strategic allocation	Housing Monitor
h] Total number of houses approved under ribbon development / infill policy Policy: HOU 15	None – monitor trends	None – monitor trends	Housing Monitor

To build sustainable resilient communities where people have good access to housing, employment, shops, public transport, active travel, healthcare, community and cultural facilities.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
i] Total number of HECC uses / facilities approved Policy: HECC 1, HECC 2	None – monitor trend	None	MasterGov Planning and PAC decisions
j] Total number of HECC facilities lost to other uses Policy: HECC 1	No net loss contrary to policy	More than one loss contrary to policy	MasterGov Planning and PAC decisions

To improve health and wellbeing - by facilitating health, education, community and cultural facilities in accessible locations and creating places that encourage a healthy lifestyle through the provision of high-quality open space and sporting facilities, informal leisure spaces and increase opportunities to walk, wheel or cycle.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
k] Net loss of open space Policy: OS 1	No loss of open space contrary to policy	Net loss of open space contrary to policy	MasterGov GIS OS
l] Public open space provision in new residential development provided as follows: - minimum 10% of site area for housing development of 25 or more units, or on sites of one hectare or more; or - minimum 15% of site area for housing development of 300 units or more, or sites of 15ha or more. Policy: OS 2	10-15% public open space provided in residential development (dependent on proposal size) with linkages to existing and proposed open space	Number of new residential developments with open space provision below standard with no extenuating circumstances as per policy	MasterGov GIS OS

3 Economic Objectives

To support a thriving, well-connected, diverse economy to enable and encourage business growth and attract inward investment and businesses in appropriate growth sectors.

To support the Council's ambition of employment growth through the provision of accessible land for employment, including for start-ups and grow-on spaces in a choice of sites at a range of locations.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
a] Quantity of zoned economic development land Policy: ED 1, ED 2, GP 1, Economic Development Strategy, Growth Strategy	An ample supply of economic development land in terms of category and location	Provision falls below 5 year supply as detailed in Employment Land Review	Planning and PAC decisions, Employment Land Review updates, Employment Monitor
b] Retention of Zoned land in Strategic Employment Locations [SELs] for economic development uses Policy: ED 1, Economic Development Strategy, Growth Strategy	To ensure that no zoned employment land lost to alternative uses [except appropriate sui generis]	One or more approvals of non Class B uses [with the exception of appropriate sui generis development] on zoned employment land in 5 year period	Planning and PAC decisions, Employment Land Review updates, Employment Monitor
c] Retention of other Zoned Land [outside of SELs] for economic development uses Policy: ED 3, Economic Development Strategy, Growth Strategy	To ensure that there is no unacceptable loss of zoned employment land to other uses	Greater than 5% of employment land within any individual zoning lost to approvals for non-Class B uses within a 5 year period	Planning and PAC decisions, Employment Land Review updates, Employment Monitor

To sustain and enhance vibrant and attractive town centres, serving the needs of residents, visitors, tourists and businesses.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
d] Number of planning approvals for main town centre uses Policy: RH 1, RET 1	i] All approvals for main town centre uses made in accordance with sequential test; ii] No approvals for Local Shops in excess of 100sqm for convenience shopping or retail services	i] One or more approvals made contrary to sequential test ii] One or more approvals for Local Shops in excess of 100sqm	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov
e] Number of approvals in District Centres Policy: RET 2	No approvals in District Centres contrary to policy	One or more approvals contrary to policy	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov
f] Number of retail approvals in Local Centres Policy: RET 3	i] No approvals over 500 sqm gross floorspace for convenience shopping; ii] No approvals over 100 sqm for retail services.	i] One or more approvals over 500 sqm gross floorspace for convenience shopping; i] One or more approvals over 100 sqm for retail services.	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov

To support sustainable tourism development in the Borough by creating and identifying opportunities for sustainable tourism development and by safeguarding key tourism assets from inappropriate development.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
g) Number of planning approvals for tourism development (including accommodation and amenities) Policy: TOU 1-TOU 6	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions, Tourism NI Statistics

To facilitate sustainable minerals development through balancing specific need along with the duty to protect and conserve the environment.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
h) Number of planning approvals for mineral development in compliance with Minerals policies Policy: MIN 1-9	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions, DFE Annual Monitoring Report on operational quarries in the Council Area

4 Environmental Objectives

To protect, enhance and manage the natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems and the connectivity between them, while at the same time generating benefits for the economy, tourism, health and well-being. This includes the Borough's designated sites, protected habitats, species and other biodiversity, and its high quality and distinctive landscapes and seascapes.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
a] New development within designated sites of nature conservation importance (International / European, National and Local]; or harming protected species Policy: NE 1-4	No permissions granted for inappropriate developments: i] within sites of nature conservation importance; or ii] harming protected species.	One or more permission in any year for inappropriate developments: i] within sites of nature conservation importance; or ii] harming protected species.	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov
b] New development impacting upon habitats, species or features of natural heritage importance Policy: NE 5	No permissions granted for development likely to result in unacceptable adverse impact on or damage to known habitats, species or features of natural heritage importance	One or more permission in any year for development likely to result in unacceptable adverse impact on or damage to known habitats, species or features of natural heritage importance without appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov
c] Monitor impact of planning approvals for operational development in: Rural Landscape Wedges; LLPAs; AoHSVs, AONB Policy: CS 2, CS 3, CS 4, NE 6	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov GIS

To conserve, enhance and protect the historic environment and cultural heritage of Ards and North Down for the future while realising benefits for the economy, tourism and social well-being.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
d] Demolition in Conservation Areas Policy: HE 11, Historic Environment Strategy, GP 1	To ensure there are no inappropriate demolitions in conservation areas, contrary to policy provisions	1 or more permission for demolition in any of the conservation areas, contrary to policy provisions	Planning and PAC decisions
e] Demolition in Areas of Townscape Character Policy; HE 12, Historic Environment Strategy, GP 1	To ensure there are no inappropriate demolitions in areas of townscape or village character, contrary to policy provisions	1 or more permission for demolition in any of the Areas of Townscape and Village Character, contrary to policy provisions	Planning and PAC decisions
f] Nendrum Area of Significant Archaeological Interest Policy HE2, Historic Environment Strategy, GP 1	To ensure there are no inappropriate developments approved in Nendrum ASAI	1 or more permission for development that runs contrary to Historic Environment Division advice and policy provisions	Planning and PAC decisions

To protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate, excessive or obtrusive development that would cause harm to its visual amenity and natural and historic assets, whilst accommodating appropriate sustainable development to sensitively enhance the developed coast.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
g] Protecting the undeveloped coast from inappropriate development Policy CO 1, Designation UCZ 1	No development permitted contrary to policy provisions and/or Marine Division advice	More than one application approved in any one year in the Undeveloped Coastal Zone, contrary to policy provisions and Marine Division advice	Planning and appeal decisions and GIS mapping of approvals
h] New development at risk from coastal erosion and land instability Policy: CO 3, Climate Change Strategy, GP 1	No target – monitor trend*	No trigger*	Planning and PAC decisions within AND Undeveloped Coastal Zone

* No target or trigger due to the lack of data relating to this indicator

To ensure that new development in the Borough takes account of the risk of flooding, both existing and in the future, including the need to avoid inappropriate development in areas that are at risk from flooding, or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, and the need to design development, including the use of natural flood management measures and sustainable drainage, to appropriately manage flood risk and surface water run-off.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
i] New Development in fluvial or pluvial floodplains Policy: FLD 1 and FLD 3, Flooding and Drainage Strategy, GP 1	No development contrary to policy provisions and/or DfI Rivers advice	More than one application approved in any one year contrary to DfI advice unless justified as being of regional significance	Planning and PAC decisions, DfI Flood Maps, DfI Rivers Agency consultation responses
j] Major new developments incorporating SuDS measures: Policy: FLD 6, Flooding and Drainage Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, GP 1	More than 75% of qualifying applications incorporating sustainable drainage systems approved over a 5 year period	Less than 50% of qualifying applications providing SuDS measures approved over a 5 year period	Planning and PAC decisions

To identify and develop a network of green and blue infrastructure to encourage nature recovery and biodiversity whilst supporting resilient ecosystems and good health and wellbeing.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
k] New open space creates and provides linkages to green and blue infrastructure Policy: OS 2, OS 3, OS 4	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	MasterGov GIS OS

5 Infrastructure Objectives

To support more sustainable movement patterns by promoting a mix of land use allocations in accessible locations alongside improved digital connectivity, whilst providing opportunities for active travel and integrated sustainable transport above use of the private car.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
a] Total number of planning approvals demonstrating how promotion of active travel and sustainable transport has been maximised Policy: AT 1	Increase in approvals for development proposals including measures to maximise opportunities for active travel	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov

To facilitate development of renewable energy infrastructure whilst minimising impact on visual amenity and the environment

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
b] Total number of planning approvals for renewable energy infrastructure Policy: RE 1	Increase in approvals for renewable energy proposals	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov
c] Total number of planning approvals including measures to: - reduce likely energy consumption; - use decentralised, renewable or zero/low-carbon energy supply	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions, MasterGov

To promote and facilitate investment in physical and digital infrastructure and facilities for power, water, waste water and waste management.

Indicator	Target	Trigger	Source of information
d] Total number of planning approvals for infrastructure and facilities for: - Power - Water - Waste water - Waste management Policy: WM 1-5, EI 1	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov
e] Number of planning approvals for telecommunications and digital infrastructure Policy: Tel 1	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov OFCOM statistics and reports
f] Number of planning approvals reliant on non-mains waste-water infrastructure Policy: NMW 1	None – monitor trend	None – monitor trend	Planning and PAC decisions MasterGov



Part F
Glossary

27 Glossary

A

Active travel	An approach to travel and transport by physically active, human powered modes, as opposed to motorised ones.
Affordable Housing	Relates to social rented housing and intermediate housing. These are defined as follows: Social Rented Housing, i.e. housing provided at an affordable rent by a Registered Housing Association; and Intermediate Housing, i.e. shared ownership housing provided through a Registered Housing Association (e.g. the Co Ownership Housing Association) and helps households who can afford a small mortgage, but that are not able to afford to buy a property outright.
Area of Archaeological Potential (AAP)	Areas, where, based on current knowledge, it is likely that archaeological remains will be encountered in the course of continuing development and change.
Archaeological Assessment	An assessment usually carried out by a qualified archaeologist, consisting of a desk-based study of existing information relating to a site. This may include historical maps, records of previous discoveries or geophysical surveys.
Archaeological Evaluation	An archaeological evaluation usually involves a targeted archaeological excavation, of limited scope, carried out by a licensed archaeologist. It is quite distinct from a full archaeological excavation and aims to clarify the nature and extent of below-ground archaeological remains within a proposed development site.
Ards and North Down Undeveloped Coastal Zone (AND UCZ)	A designation which extends along the shores of Belfast Lough, Outer Ards and Strangford Lough and includes all coastal areas outside of settlement limits. The designation is intended to provide additional protection for the unique landscape value, visual amenity and nature conservation interest of the Borough's coastline.
Area of Constraint on Minerals Development (ACMD)	A designation which aims to protect the most valuable and vulnerable features of the natural environment and man–made heritage including areas of high scenic value from the adverse effects caused by the development of mineral resources.
Area of High Scenic Value (AoHSV)	Areas of High Scenic Value are designated in recognition of their special landscape quality.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	A designation in recognition of areas of national importance as their landscapes possess a distinctive character and landscape features of high scenic value.
Area of Parking Restraint (APR)	Areas of Parking Restraint allow for a reduction from the Department's published car parking standards being applied within designated areas outside of the town centre, such as around train and bus stations. Currently new development within town centres can avail of a reduction from the Department's published car parking standards that apply elsewhere in the urban area.
Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk	Areas identified by the Northern Ireland Flood Risk Assessment 2018 to be at the greatest flood risk. They may be designated because of the current or future flood risk to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity.
Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI)	A non-statutory designation that recognises areas of regional importance to Northern Ireland by reason of their distinctive historic character and heritage value. They are likely to include a number of individual and related sites and monuments and may also be distinguished by landscape character and topography.
Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)	Protected sites that are of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features designated under the Environmental (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (as amended). Sites are protected to conserve biodiversity and geodiversity.
Area of Townscape/ Village Character (ATC) (AVC)	An Area of Townscape Character / Area of Village Character is a designated area within a town /village which exhibits distinctive character or intrinsic qualities, often based on its historic built form or layout.

B

Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA)	The draft BMAP identifies the BMUA as the continuous built up area centred on Belfast with an arc from Jordanstown to Knocknagoney and includes the cities of Lisburn and Bangor and towns of Carrickfergus and Holywood.
Brownfield Sites	Sites within settlement limits that have been previously developed. May include vacant or derelict land, land occupied by redundant or underused buildings and developed land.
Built Heritage	This relates to manmade features of the historic environment and can include archaeological sites and monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks, gardens and demesnes and sites of industrial heritage.
Bulky Goods	This is a subset of comparison goods retailing. It describes those comparison goods which are difficult to accommodate in town centres because of their space requirements for large showrooms, parking and servicing. They typically include large items such as furniture, carpets, electrical/white goods and DIY goods, and are typically sold from retail warehouses.

C

Caravan	"Caravan" has the meaning given by section 15 of the Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011;
Class B1: Business Use	Use – (a) As an office other than a use within Class A2 (Financial, Professional and other services); (b) As a call centre; or (c) For research and development which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.
Clusters	Defined in the RDS as Cities and towns which can work together to create a critical mass to attract economic development and deliver services.

Coastal Erosion	Coastal erosion is the wearing away of materials from the coast by wave action, tidal currents, and/or the activities of humans, typically resulting in a landward retreat of the coastline.
Coastal Squeeze	The process whereby a loss of natural habitats or a deterioration in their quality is caused by man-made structures or human activity.
Coastal Flooding	This occurs when inundation of land takes place due to a combination of high tides, wave action and storm surges.
Committed Sites	A site on which planning permission has been granted.
Community Cohesion	Community cohesion refers to the sense of togetherness and bonding exhibited by a community, which helps to hold that community together. It may include feelings of belonging together, shared purpose or identity, or a sense of place.
Community Greenways	Greenways are an active network of traffic free routes which are aimed at connecting people to facilities and services, as well as offering a sustainable transport alternative.
Community Infrastructure	The community, health, leisure, educational facilities and other services that serve and help to sustain a community.
Comparison Goods/ Shopping	Goods for sale in retail outlets not classified as convenience goods. Comparison shopping refers to shops selling comparison goods, but excludes retail warehouses.
Compatible Economic Uses	Businesses falling outside Use Class Part B 'Industrial and Business Uses' which would not usually impact adversely on industrial enterprise. Such uses could include the sale or display of motor vehicles; scrapyards; or a yard for the storage or distribution of minerals; or the breaking of motor vehicles.
Conservation Area	Conservation Areas are designated areas of special architectural or historic interest. The SPPS notes that in managing development within a CA the guiding principle is to afford special regard to the desirability of enhancing its character or appearance where an opportunity to do so exists, or to preserve its character or appearance where an opportunity to enhance does not arise.

Controlled Reservoir	A structure or area capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres of water above the natural level of the surrounding land.
Convenience Goods	Broadly defined as everyday items such as food, drinks, tobacco, newspapers, magazines, cleaning materials, toiletries.

D

Density (residential)	Measure of the number of dwellings per hectare.
Developer Contribution (Section 76)	A contribution, either financial or in kind, which allows the provision of infrastructure that is necessary for a development to go ahead. Usually tied in with a planning agreement with the developer/landowner and the planning authority.
Development Management	The process of receiving, assessing and deciding planning applications and providing related information and advice to customers, the general public and other stakeholders.
District Centre	Groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants.

E

Employment Land Evaluation Framework (ELEF)	The Employment Land Evaluation Framework is a methodology set out in the RDS for identifying economic development sites to meet anticipated future requirements.
Enabling Development	Enabling Development is defined as development that conflicts with other policies in the LDP and would normally be considered unacceptable in its own right, but which may be supported if the Council is satisfied that the proposal will facilitate and secure the long-term future of a significant place by using the profit generated from the new development.

Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF)	Sets out the Department's 3 high level aims for transportation along with 12 supporting strategic objectives, covering the economy, society and the environment. It shows how strategic transportation intervention can be assessed against these to allow informed decisions to be made on future transportation investment.
Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)	An Equality Impact Assessment examines the likely effects of policies and proposals on the promotion of equality of opportunity between different groups in society and on promoting good relations.
Evidence Base	The information and data gathered by the Council to justify the soundness of the policy approach set out in the Local Development Plan. Documents, include the physical, economic and social characteristics of the plan area.

F

Farm Diversification	Process where a farming business develops new enterprises using the farm's assets, with a view to creating new income streams, usually in addition to the business's traditional farming activities (such as their existing livestock or arable production enterprises).
Fields in Trust (FiT) standard	Fields in Trust (FiT) standard recommends of a minimum of 2.4 hectares of outdoor playing space per 1000 population. This is commonly referred to as the 'Six Acre Standard', comprising of 4 acres (1.6 hectares per 1000 population) for outdoor sport provision and 2 acres (0.8 hectares per 1000 population) for children's play. The 4 acres for outdoor sport is further refined to 3 acres for pitch sports and 1 acre to be provided through other outdoor recreational facilities such as tennis courts, bowling greens, athletic tracks etc. Fields in Trust (FiT) developed the 'Six Acre Standard' in order to promote the protection and future development of 'green' and 'open' space throughout the United Kingdom. FiT have not attempted to put a value on synthetic pitches in comparison to natural turf pitches. Sport NI consider the value of a synthetic pitch to be 6 times that of a natural turf surface.
Fluvial Flooding	This takes place when the river channel capacity is exceeded, and water is conveyed to the natural floodplain of a river.

Flood Maps NI	An interactive map viewer which enables users to access the latest flood hazard information available from government.
Flood Risk Management Plan	A plan consisting of objectives and measures to manage and mitigate the impacts of flooding.
Footfall	Footfall is the number of people entering a shop or a shopping area at a given time.

G

Gateways	Defined in the RDS as strategically important transport interchange points which connect ports and airports to the internal transport network.
Green Corridor	A strip of land that provides sufficient habitat to support wildlife, often within an urban environment, thus allowing the movement of wildlife along it. A green corridor can act as a vital linkage for wildlife movement between urban areas and the countryside. Green corridors include railway embankments, river banks and roadside grass verges. Green corridors can also incorporate paths and cycle routes, which can link housing areas to the urban centres, places of employment and community facilities. They help to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas.
Green and blue infrastructure	Green and Blue Infrastructure is a phrase used to describe all green and blue spaces in and around our towns and cities. The term enables the consideration of the collective value of all of these spaces together. Constituent elements of green and blue infrastructure include parks, private gardens, agricultural fields, hedges, trees, woodland, green roofs, green walls, rivers and ponds. The term covers all land containing these features, regardless of its ownership, condition or size.
Greenfield	Undeveloped land or green space.

H

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations, implemented the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives. Regulation 43 of the Habitats Regulations requires an appropriate assessment to be undertaken of plans and projects which are likely to have a significant effect on a European site in Northern Ireland, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This is known as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and provides for assessment of the implications of a land use plan for European sites in view of their conservation objectives. In Northern Ireland under policy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations extent to Ramsar sites (inc. Proposed). Regulation 64B applies the assessment provisions to land use plans as defined in the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes	Parks, gardens and designed landscapes that are of exceptional the importance to Northern Ireland. These sites are of special Historic Interest identified within an HED in Register of Parks Gardens and Demesnes, based upon a clear set of published criteria and as such, are protected from inappropriate development.
Housing Association	A housing association is a society, body of trustees or company that provides rented accommodation and may specialise in accommodation for special needs groups. Housing Associations are the main developers of new social housing for rent in Northern Ireland.
Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)	The RDS identifies regional housing needs from 2012 to 2025 as Housing Growth Indicators across Northern Ireland. These are used as a guide for estimating future housing need in each of the Council areas.

[1] *Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*

[2] *Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (codified version)*

Housing Monitor	The main purpose of a housing monitor is primarily to inform local development plan preparation by assessing the extent of housing land available within settlements and the estimated number of units that this could accommodate. It will also help the Council to identify settlements where there is a potential shortfall in land supply and serve to inform house builders on the availability of land that may be suitable for housing.
Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)	Housing Needs Assessment is an assessment by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive of local housing needs primarily in relation to general needs social housing, supported housing, travellers accommodation and affordable housing.
Hubs	The Regional Development Strategy spatial framework guidance defines a number of large towns in Northern Ireland as either main hubs or local hubs.

I

Independent Examination (IE)	The Department will appoint the Planning Appeals Commission or other independent examiners to hold an Independent Examination. The IE will examine the Draft Plan Strategy and Draft Local Policies Plan against soundness tests which will relate to how the documents have been produced, and how they have taken account of central government's plans, policy and guidance, and also their coherence, consistency and effectiveness.
Infrastructure	The basic services and facilities needed for society to function. Sometimes grouped under 'hard' infrastructure (roads, energy supply, and water) and 'soft' infrastructure (schools, libraries and community centres etc.).
Integrated Tourism Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy	The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development presents a coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough of Ards and North Down. It responds to the vision and outcomes of the Community Plan for the area and is to be used as the common point of reference for all those contributing to the growth of the economy, the welcoming of visitors and the improvement of places. The strategy presents a confident and ambitious plan for the future.

Interim Report –Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	The Interim Report is part 2 of the first stage (Stage A) of the SA process. Stage A (2) requires the preparation of the environmental report which involves; • Identifying, describing and evaluating the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan; • Reasonable alternatives taking into account the geographic scope of the plan and reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and • Description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information.
International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)	The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection provides scientific advice and guidance on the health and environmental effects of non-ionizing radiation (NIR) to protect people and the environment from detrimental NIR exposure. NIR refers to electromagnetic radiation such as ultraviolet, light, infrared, and radio waves, and mechanical waves such as infra- and ultrasound.
Inward Investment	Investment in a country made by investors outside that country.

K

Key Site Requirements (KSRs)	Key Site Requirements are stipulated within the Development Plan and provide the detail of what would be required to be provided as part of the development of a zoned site.

L

Lifetime Homes	A set of 16 design criteria that provide a model for building accessible and adaptable homes to meet the needs of the occupier over their lifetime.
Listed Building	Listed Buildings are buildings of special architectural or historic interest that are afforded statutory protection. Listed Buildings are a key element of our built heritage and are often important for their intrinsic value and for their contribution to the character and quality of settlements and the countryside. Lists are subject to ongoing review.
Local Centre	Small grouping of shops, typically comprising a general grocery store, a sub-post office, occasionally a pharmacy and other small shops of a local nature.
Local Development Plan (LDP)	The Local Development Plan provides a broad land use policy framework for the physical development of the Borough. When adopted, the Ards and North Down Local Development Plan will become the statutory land use planning document for the area and will be the planning consideration in decision making on planning applications.
Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs)	Local Landscape Policy Areas consist of those features and areas within and adjoining settlements considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and therefore worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development.
Local Lists	Non-Designated heritage assets – buildings and monuments, identified by local planning authorities as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated.
Local Nature Reserves	Local Nature Reserves are areas of land, designated by a council under Article 22 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, to conserve its nature conservation, earth science and recreational value, with the primary land use being for conservation purposes.

Local Policies Plan (LPP)	The Local Policies Plan is prepared following adoption of the Plan Strategy. It will outline the detailed land use proposals, including zonings and key site requirements, for the local development plan. Together with the Plan Strategy, it will be the principle consideration when determining future planning applications for development within the Borough.
Local Transport Plan (LTP)	A plan containing the specific transport schemes and services to be provided consistent with the LTS and the proposals contained in the LDP Local Policies Plan.
Local Transport Strategy (LTS)	A statement of the transport aims and objectives for the Council area and the balance of transport measures to be provided.

M

Mineral Safeguarding Zones	Designated in some Development Plans to protect mineral deposits of economic or conservation value. They can also be used to ensure that workable mineral resources are not sterilised by surface development.
Mixed-Use Development	Mixed-use development contains several different land uses on a site. This could include residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or economic development or other uses.

N

Native species	Species of tree and hedge that are locally sourced and grown. Acceptable species include scots pine, oak, ash, cherry, alder, rowan, hazel, birch for trees. Hedging would include hawthorn, holly, blackthorn and hazel.
Natural Heritage	Incorporates biodiversity, including flora and fauna and ecosystem types, together with associated geological structures and formations (geodiversity).
Natura 2000	Natura 2000 is a network of nature protection areas within the EU. It is made up of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated respectively under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive. The network includes both terrestrial and marine sites.
Nature-Based Solutions	Actions which leverage nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, optimise infrastructure and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future.
Non-Designated Heritage Asset	A building, structure or feature which, whilst not statutorily listed, has been identified by the Council as an important part of its heritage, due to its local architectural; or historic significance.
Non-Strategic Road Scheme	Road schemes which are protected in Development Plans, but are not classified by DFI under their strategic programme of works.
Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)	The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, was established in 1971 as Northern Ireland's strategic housing authority. It offers a range of services to people living in socially rented, privately rented and owner occupied accommodation as well as supporting and working with a number of other public bodies, and with registered Housing Associations to facilitate the delivery of social housing in areas of identified need.
Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NILCA)	The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment subdivided the countryside into 130 Landscape Character Areas (LCA's), each based upon local patterns of geology, landform, land use, cultural and ecological features. For each LCA, the key characteristics were described and an analysis of landscape condition and its sensitivity to change was made.

Northern Ireland Flood Risk Assessment 2018	A high level analysis of the potential economic, social and environmental impacts that could result from flooding in Northern Ireland.
Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM)	The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 is the official measure of spatial deprivation in Northern Ireland.

O

Open Space	Open Space as defined in PPS 8 is taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also be important for visual amenity.

P

Passive Solar Design	Passive solar design in buildings is intended to collect, store, and distribute solar energy in the form of heat in the winter and reject solar heat in the summer. This means less reliance on fossil fuels and hence lower carbon emissions which can help to mitigate against climate change.
Placemaking	Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing.
Plan Strategy	The Plan Strategy outlines the strategic aims and objectives of the Local Development Plan. It is prepared following consultation on the Preferred Options Paper. Together with the Local Policies Plan, it will be the principal consideration when determining future planning applications for development in the Ards and North Down Council area.

Planning Appeals Commission (PAC)	The PAC is an independent body which deals with a wide range of land use planning issues and related matters. The PAC's functions generally fall into two broad categories, deciding on appeals arising from individual planning applications and hearing and reporting on Public Inquiries, Hearings and Examinations. The PAC may be appointed to conduct the Independent Examination of LDP's.
Planning Policy Statement (PPS)	PPS's set out the operational planning policies of central government on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.
Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)	The Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland sets out planning policy for Northern Ireland across a range of topics. Most of the topics within the Strategy have been superseded by the various PPS's or SPPS.
Pluvial Flooding	Pluvial (surface water) flooding occurs as the result of rainfall which overwhelms natural or man-made drainage systems and results in water flowing overland.
Position Paper	A series of topic papers produced to establish the main social, economic and environmental characteristics, key issues and needs of the plan area.
Preferred Option Paper (POP)	The Preferred Option Paper is a consultation document, intended to promote focused debate on strategic issues that will need to be addressed when preparing the draft Plan Strategy.
Primary Retail Core (PRC)	Designated areas within town centres where the aim is to protect existing retail use and to promote retail growth.
Programme for Government (PFG)	The NI Programme for Government is the highest level strategic document of the Executive – setting out the priorities that it will pursue in the current Assembly mandate, and the most significant actions it will take to address them.
Protected Route	A Protected Route is a DfI designation which gives additional control over the number of new accesses and the level of use of existing accesses onto the Protected Route.

R

Ramsar	A Ramsar site is an internationally designated site of wetland habitat (Ramsar Convention 1971), with particular value to wetland birds. The designation aims to halt the loss of wetlands by promoting conservation and 'wise use' of wetland habitats, with Habitats Regulations applying in respect of the sites.
Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS, 2035)	The Regional Development Strategy sets the context for the sustainable development of Northern Ireland to 2035. The RDS acts as the spatial strategy of the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government. The RDS was revised in 2010 to reflect the changing development of Northern Ireland and continues to set the overarching planning framework for the region.
Renewable Energy	Any naturally occurring source of energy such as solar, wind, tidal wave, biomass and hydroelectric power that is not derived from fossil or nuclear fuel.
Reservoir Manager	The person responsible for the safety of a reservoir. This is most likely the person who manages or operates the reservoir. Where no one manages or operates the reservoir, the owner is the reservoir manager.
Rural Landscape Wedges	Designations that consist of buffer landscapes and open areas that can fulfil a number of purposes, but are primarily intended to prevent neighbouring settlements from merging.
Rural Proofing	Rural proofing is the process where any major policy or strategy is assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas, and where appropriate, make adjustments within their plans to take account of particular rural circumstances.

S

Scheduled Monuments	Archaeological sites and monuments are scheduled for protection under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995
Scoping Report	The Scoping Report is part of the sustainability appraisal and sets out the methodology that will be used in the SA.
Section 75 Groups	Key groups listed in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 that traditionally have been under represented or disadvantaged. Section 75 requires all government departments, agencies and councils to consider these groups when creating policy.
Sequential Approach	An approach used to identify suitable sites for development. For example, in the instance of identifying sites for housing a sequential approach would require the focus to be on the re-use of previously developed land and buildings, underdeveloped and undeveloped land within the urban footprint, then extensions to cities and towns, next consideration would be given to a major expansion of a village or small rural settlement in exceptional circumstances before finally considering the development of a new settlement on greenfield land.
Settlement Hierarchy	A Settlement Hierarchy is a classification of settlements based upon different variables such as size, population and other criteria and is an important consideration in allocating housing growth and land for economic development through the LDP. The Settlement Hierarchy includes the following tiers: Large towns, small towns, villages and small settlements.
Settlement Limit	A continuous outer boundary designated for a settlement, demarcating its development limit.
Social Housing	Housing provided by registered social landlords for rent. Such housing is allocated by reference to an approved (Department of Social Development) Common Waiting List and allocation system.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	Special Areas of Conservation are those which have been given greater protection under the European legislation of The Habitat's Directive. They have been designated because of a possible threat to the special habitats or species which they contain and to provide increased protection to a variety of animals, plants and habitats of importance to biodiversity both on a national and international scale.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	Sites that are designated as an internationally important area for breeding, over-wintering and migrating birds.
State Care Monuments	Archaeological sites and monuments are taken into the care of the DfC under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995.
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	A Statement of Community Involvement sets out how a council proposes to engage the community and stakeholders in exercising its planning functions. The document informs everyone about how to fully participate in the planning process (including development planning, management and enforcement)
Statement of Significance (SoS)	A document that identifies the important characteristics and significance of a heritage asset, explains how a planning proposal would affect these and justifies why this is necessary or desirable.
Strategic Employment Locations (SELs)	These are defined as the most significant employment sites within the plan area – both in terms of their physical size and also the level of business and industry they support and are likely to support in the future.
Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)	The Department of the Environment's (now Department for Infrastructure) Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) published in 2015, sets out strategic planning policy for a wide range of planning matters. It also provides the core planning principles to underpin delivery of the two-tier planning system with the aim of furthering sustainable development. It sets the strategic direction for the new councils to bring forward detailed operational policies within future local development plans.
Strategic Road Improvement (SRI)	Strategic Road Improvement manage the major works road programme, funding for capital schemes/ programmes and monitor scheme reports and economic appraisals.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) supports and clarifies planning policy statements and plans. This can take the form of design guidance. It also includes a set of development control advice notes that explain the criteria and technical standards to be considered when dealing with specific categories or particular aspects of development. Where relevant to a particular development proposal supplementary guidance will be taken into account as a material consideration in making decisions.
Supported Housing	Supported Housing enables vulnerable people to live more independently both in their own home and in the community, through the provision of housing related support services.
Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report	Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report consists of a SA Scoping Report and an assessment of reasonable alternatives against an agreed SA framework.
Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of local development plans. It incorporates the more environmentally focused considerations of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
Sustainable Development	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Sustainable Development Strategy (2010)	The NI Executive launched its new Sustainable Development Strategy, 'Everyone's Involved' in May, 2010. The Strategy is intended to provide a framework that can support and inform the decisions and actions taken by individuals, groups and organisations in progressing the sustainability agenda.
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	SuDS are a sequence of water management practices that seek to alleviate the problems associated with hard and paved surfaces in urban environments, by storing or re-using surface water at source, thereby decreasing flow rates to watercourses and improving water quality.

T

Town Cramming	Can also be known as urban crowding and is linked to increased housing densities and the loss of open spaces within settlements. It can result in poor environments, noise, congestion and lack of recreational and open space.
Transport Assessment (TA)	A Transport Assessment is a comprehensive and systematic process that sets out and evaluates transport issues relating to a proposed development.

U

Urban Capacity Study (UCS)	An Urban Capacity Study assesses the supply of land and buildings that may be available to accommodate new housing development. They are a valuable tool in facilitating sustainable development by identifying land and buildings within an area that might be reused for housing purposes and to form the basis for choosing new housing sites and the management of their release through the local development plan.
Urban Footprint	The urban footprint of a settlement limit is the continuously built up area. The boundary will be represented by an uninterrupted line, often lying inside the planned settlement limit. The urban footprint contains land which has a formal urban use including land on the edge of the settlement where it forms part of the curtilage of a building. Undeveloped zoned land at the edge of the settlement is excluded.
Urban Regeneration	Urban Regeneration, also known as urban renewal or renaissance, is a programme directed to stimulate physical development and economic growth in urban areas that have fallen into decline. It includes a focus on significant physical, economic, community and social interventions within a designated area. The development of masterplans and other strategies within an urban area is an important part of the process in establishing a clear framework for the improvement and revitalisation of these areas.

Use Classes Order	The Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 itemises certain similar uses of land and buildings into categories known as 'Use Classes'. The main categories are Part A (Shopping and Professional Services), Part B (Industrial and Business uses), Part C (Residential issues) and Part D (Community, Recreation and Culture).

V

Vacancy Rates	Vacancy Rates are the percentage of all available units in an area, that are vacant or unoccupied at a particular time. It is the opposite of the occupancy rate, which is the percentage of units in an area that are occupied.
Valuable Minerals	Valuable Minerals are defined as metalliferous or non-metalliferous minerals licensed by the Department for the Economy (DfE) or Crown Estate which are particularly valuable to the economy.
Vernacular	Vernacular (rural) architecture is the construction of small plain buildings in the countryside (particularly before 1925) where the dominant influence in siting, materials, form and design is the local 'folk tradition.' Such buildings would have been common in any given locality and lack the 'educated' design features that characterised international fashions in formal architecture during the same period. In Northern Ireland, vernacular buildings can largely be identified by: • A simplicity of form; • Linear plan, usually one room deep between front and rear walls; • Linear extensions or extensions with an extra storey; • Hearths and chimneys expressed along the ridgeline; • The use of local materials; and • Siting either gable end or fronting the road
Viability	A measure of a centres capacity to attract ongoing investment for maintenance, importance and adaption to changing needs.
Vitality	A measure of how busy a centre is.

W

Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)	WWTWs remove waste from sewage that could harm the environment, so that the water can be returned to a river or the sea.
Wellbeing	A good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state influenced by health, happiness and prosperity. For a larger group of people, it could be described as the welfare of that group.
Windfall sites	Housing sites that are neither zoned nor anticipated during the formulation of the development plan but which become available during the lifetime of the plan. It can arise as a result, for example, of plot sub–division or property conversion and can normally make a significant contribution to the housing land supply over any Plan period.



Part F
Annexes

28 Annexes



Annexes

Annex A - Housing - Space Standards

Annex B - Housing - Definition of Established Residential Areas

Annex C - Housing - Affordable Housing Form

Annex D - Housing - Residential Extensions and Alterations

Annex E - Housing - Vernacular Buildings

Annex F - Open Space, Sport and Recreation - Open Space Quality Standards

Annex G - Tourism – Landscape Design Considerations for Holiday Parks

Annex H - Tourism - Information to be included in a Tourism Benefit Statement

Annex I – Historic Environment - Guidance on the structure and content of Statements of Significance (SoS)

Annex J – Flooding and Drainage – Guidance for the Submission of Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Assessment (DA)

Annex K – Flooding and Drainage – Flood Proofing: Resistance and Resilience Construction

Annex L – Outdoor Advertisements - Guidance for Outdoor Advertisements

Annex M – Transportation - Transport Assessment Form

Annex A

Minimum Space Standards[1]

Space Standards			
Type	**Single Storey / Flat (m2)**	**Two Storey (m2)**	**Three Storey (m2)**
1-Person / Bedsit	30/35	-	-
1-Person / 1-Bedroom	35/40	-	-
2-Person / 1-Bedroom	50/55	-	-
3-Person / 2-Bedroom	60/65	70/75	-
4-Person / 2-Bedroom	70/75	75/80	-
4-Person / 3-Bedroom	75/80	80/85	-
5-Person / 3-Bedroom	80/85	90/95	95/100
6-Person / 3-Bedroom	85/90	95/100	100/105
6-Person / 4-Bedroom	90/95	100/105	105/110
7-Person / 4-Bedroom	105/110	115/120	115/120

[1] *Department for Communities (DfC) Housing Association Guide 2009: Design Standards*

Annex B

Definition of an Established Residential Area

B.1 For the purposes of Policy HOU 2 and in order to clarify the existing application of the term, established residential areas are normally taken to mean residential neighbourhoods dominated by medium to low-density, single-family housing with associated private amenity space or gardens. These areas may include buildings in commercial, retail or leisure services use, usually clustered together and proportionate in scale to the size of the neighbourhood being served.

B.2 Within towns of over 5,000 in population, established residential areas often display a clear spatial structure. Building forms, plot sizes and shapes are sometimes similar, with a well-defined pattern of local development. Properties may exhibit comparable design styles including common architectural detailing and treatments. Areas of public amenity space together with the private gardens of properties, are frequently defined with mature trees, shrubs, and hedgerow planting. The overall spatial structure is often delineated by a clear network of streets and roads. However, it is recognised that there are also settled housing areas where there is a greater range and mix of dwelling styles and where the overall pattern of development is less uniform. These areas too have an established residential character worthy of protection against redevelopment or infill at a significantly higher density than that found in the locality.

B.3 In smaller towns, villages and other settlements, established residential areas generally display a more intimate character and spatial scale. There is often more local variety in architectural styles and treatments, with building lines, property sizes, plot ratios, and road layouts being much more changeable. Residential developments in these locations may have a close spatial relationship with land used for other purposes such as for employment, local schools, and other local services.

B.4 In recognition of the desirability of promoting increased density housing in appropriate locations, the following will not be considered to fall within the definition outlined above:

- Designated town centres[1];
- Key and link transport corridors within principal settlements; and
- Sites adjacent to main public transportation nodes within principal settlements.

Annex C

Affordable Housing Proposal Form and Checklist

Affordable Housing Proposal Form		
1	Site Location	
2	Proposal	
3	Site area	
4	Total number of dwellings proposed	
5	Zoning reference (if applicable)	
6	Affordable dwelling numbers required to meet policy / KSR, if applicable	
7	Total number of affordable dwellings proposed	
8	Number of social housing dwellings proposed	
9	Number of intermediate dwellings proposed	
10	Drawing numbers (showing location and design of all affordable housing)	

11	**Breakdown of Social Housing Types**		
	Size: Bedrooms/occupancy	**Houses**	**Apartments**
	1 bed/1 person		
	1 bed/2 persons		
	2 bed/2 persons		
	2 bed/3 persons		
	3 bed/3 persons		
	3 bed/4 persons		
	3 bed/ 5 persons		
	4 bed+		
	Wheelchair units		
12	**Breakdown of Intermediate Housing Types**		
	Size: Bedrooms/occupancy	**Houses**	**Apartments**
	1 bed/1 person		
	1 bed/2 persons		
	2 bed/2 persons		
	2 bed/3 persons		
	3 bed/3 persons		
	3 bed/4 persons		
	3 bed/ 5 persons		
	4 bed+		
	Wheelchair units		

13	**Discussion with Council (Please fill out this section if you have had initial discussion about affordable housing)**	
	Name of Planning Authority Officer	
	If discussion was through a PAD:	
	Date of meeting	
	Name all attendees	
	Outline of discussion:	

Annex D

Guidance for Residential Extensions and Alterations

D.1 The purpose of this Annex is to set out detailed guidance to provide a consistent basis against which to consider an extension and/or alteration to a dwelling house or flat, including those in multiple occupancy and any proposal for a domestic garage or an outbuilding.

D.2 The guidance is intended to advise home owners on how to extend or alter their property in a neighbourly manner that is sympathetic with the original property, respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area and contributes towards a quality environment. It should also be noted that a well-designed extension or alteration can enhance and add value to a property, while a poorly designed extension or alteration can make it difficult to sell.

D.3 Although the guidance may not cover all the site specific issues that can arise it covers the main considerations that will be taken into account when determining a planning application. If it is followed, an extension or alteration is more likely to be granted planning permission and unnecessary delays in processing applications avoided.

Context and Design

D.4 An extension or alteration to a residential property should be designed to become an integral part of the property both functionally and visually. Such works should not be designed in isolation solely to fit in a required amount of accommodation. Proposals that are badly sited or designed, or that are incompatible with their surroundings, can lead to an undesirable change in the character of the existing property and the area in which they are located. Success depends upon striking the right balance between adaptation and sensitivity to the original design.

D.5 The overall aim is to encourage high quality design solutions irrespective of whether the approach followed seeks to mirror the style of the existing property or adopts a contemporary modern design approach. To ensure good design, any extension or alteration will need to complement the host building and respect its location and wider setting.

D.6 An extension or alteration should not be so large or so prominent as to dominate the host property or its wider surroundings, rather development proposals should be in scale with existing and adjoining buildings. All such works should have proportion and balance, fitting

in with the shape of the existing property. The height, width and general size of an extension should generally be smaller than the existing house and subordinate or integrated so as not to dominate the character of the existing property, although it is accepted that on occasion a larger extension may be equired - for example to facilitate the renovation and upgrading of a small rural dwelling to meet modern amenity standards. It will not usually be appropriate to allow an extension to project above the ridge line of the existing dwelling and this will be especially important where uniform building height is part of the street scene.

D.7 Proposals in an urban context should not overdevelop the site in terms of massing, plot size and proximity to boundaries thereby, for example, creating a visual 'terrace' effect. This is one of a number of problems associated with side extensions, where they can alter the character of the area by filling the visual gaps between residential properties. The need for adequate space alongside boundaries is also important to provide ease of access to the rear of the property and to allow for maintenance. This will also serve to eliminate the possibility of any part of the extension, including rainwater goods, overhanging neighbouring property.

D8 A further concern may arise where a side extension to a semi-. detached dwelling is proposed at the same height and follows the same building line as the block comprising an original pair of dwellings. This will often compromise the appearance and architectural integrity of the block, and if repeated throughout a neighbourhood is likely to have an adverse impact upon the character of the wider area. To address this particular problem, proposals of this nature should be 'set back' from the building line or front of the house and also 'set down' from the ridge line.

D.9 Extensions or alterations to the front of a property require great care as the front elevation is often the most visible to public view. Poor design can upset the architectural integrity of the existing property and have an intrusive effect on the street scene. It is important, therefore, to ensure that extensions and alterations to the front of property do not detract from the street scene, especially where there is a clear and visually obvious 'building line' or architectural features. In such cases they should appear to be part of the existing property and not an obvious addition. This can be achieved by ensuring any such works are in proportion with the property, its fenestration and detailing, with matching materials, roof design and pitch.

D.10 Alterations or an extension to a dwelling should not infringe upon a neighbour's property. For example, it is an infringement of a neighbour's property rights should foundations or guttering encroach onto their land or if an extension overhangs or attaches to their

property. Where an extension abuts or runs close to a property boundary, permission to enter neighbouring land will also be required to enable approved works to be carried out or for future maintenance purposes. Consequently, it is advisable to discuss proposals with any neighbours before submitting a planning application. It should be noted that infringement of property rights is primarily a legal matter between the relevant parties.

Garages and other associated outbuildings

D.11 Buildings within the residential curtilage, such as, garages, sheds and greenhouses can often require as much care in siting and design as works to the existing residential property. They should be subordinate in scale and similar in style to the existing property, taking account of materials, the local character and the level of visibility of the building from surrounding views. The use of false pitches should be avoided as these often detract from the appearance of these buildings, particularly when viewed from the side.

D.12 Garages or outbuildings wholly located in front gardens or those that extend in front the established building line, can over-dominate the front of the property and detract from the street scene and will therefore generally be resisted.

D.13 In the countryside, ancillary buildings should be designed as part of the overall layout to result in an integrated rural group of buildings.

Roof Extensions

D.14 An extension or alteration which copies the roof type and angle of pitch of the original residential property will be more successful than those proposals that introduce a completely different type of roof. The roofing material of any pitched roof extension should seek to match that of the original. Flat or mansard roofed extensions to traditional buildings are seldom harmonious. However, they may be acceptable where they are not open to public views.

D.15 The use of loft space to provide bedrooms or other living space can often provide additional accommodation. However, alterations to the roof profile of any building can be particularly sensitive, as roofs play an important part in contributing to a building's appearance and the overall character of the area. An extension to the rear of a property should ensure that the roof of the extension does not project above the ridge of the existing dwelling, as this can give an unsightly view along the streetscape. Rooflights, which lie parallel with the plane of the roof, are a particularly sympathetic way of providing light to a room within a roofspace. They may often constitute permitted development but care should be taken to ensure compliance with Building Regulations where such windows are intended to provide a means of escape.

D.16 The regular repeated rhythm and uniformity of roof forms and chimneys may be a particular feature of a group of similar buildings or the wider townscape and should therefore be retained. If elements, which are not part of the original property are proposed, for example, a dormer roof extension, these should be designed in a manner that complements the period and style of the original property, or to reflect the best examples of such features on properties of a similar period in the area.

D.17 Where a dormer is open to public view, it can interfere with both the original design of the existing building and cause a visual intrusion into the street scene or rural setting. Dormer windows to the front or side of a property will be resisted in areas where they are uncharacteristic, particularly large box dormers that are over-dominant often extending the full width of the roof. The size and number of dormers should therefore be kept to a minimum to avoid dominating the appearance of the roof and should be located below the ridge line of the existing roof. Positioning dormer windows vertically in line with the windows below and ensuring that they are smaller in size will usually avoid a top-heavy or unbalanced appearance.

Detailing

D.18 Attention should be paid to design details such as the position, shape, proportion and style of windows, doors and other features to complement the existing property and respect the character and appearance of the area. To facilitate the integration of an extension or alteration with the existing property, new windows should be aligned to the existing fenestration and match the symmetry of the existing dwelling. The relationship between solids and voids is an essential component of any new proposal, but particularly when extending or altering an existing property where window size and height diminish on upper floors.

D19 Older residential properties in particular often have interesting .arches, brick detailing and other special features or ornamentation which add character. Continuing or reflecting such ornamentation around doors, windows and at the eaves in the design approach followed can be an effective way of integrating any extension or alteration work with the existing property.

External Finishes

D.20 The external finish of a proposal should aim to complement the type of materials, colour and finish of both the existing building and those of neighbouring properties, particularly where certain materials strongly predominate. Using similar or complementary materials to those of the existing property is more likely to produce a successful

extension or alteration. The re-use and recycling of building materials is encouraged and will be especially important when carrying out work to a listed building, or buildings within a Conservation Area or an Area of Townscape Character.

Sustainable Design

D.21 The Council wishes to promote and encourage a sustainable approach to development. The extension or alteration to a residential property can provide the opportunity to improve its sustainability in terms of incorporating energy efficiency measures, renewable energy technologies, the re-use of existing materials and measures to enhance biodiversity. For example, additional insulation and rainwater recycling using water butts.

D.22 Where existing walls are being demolished or roofs altered, existing materials can often be salvaged and re-used, which will benefit the visual appearance of the new work and its integration with the existing property. Solar thermal panels that produce hot water and photovoltaic (PV) panels that produce electricity, can be installed in roofs. PV tiles are now available that look like traditional tile and slate roofs, allowing the installation of these systems to be sensitive to the character, colour and style of the existing roof. Green or 'living' roofs can further benefit the environment by enhancing biodiversity and providing high standards of insulation. Extensions also provide the opportunity to consider the provision of additional landscaping to soften the impact of such works (see also paragraphs D39 – D40).

Walls and Fences

D.23 Walls and fences, particularly in front gardens, can also have a significant effect on the appearance of the property and streetscape. When erected beside driveways or on corner sites they can have an impact on sightlines and traffic safety. Both the visual and road safety aspects of a wall or fence will be assessed when proposals are being considered. Materials should always complement the character of the property and the neighbourhood. Expanses of close-board fencing bordering public areas are visually unacceptable. It should be noted that some walls or fences may be permitted development[2].

The Countryside

D.24 The impact of an extension or alteration on the visual amenity of the countryside and, in particular, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty needs to be considered. Proposals should be in keeping

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[2] *The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (S.R. 2015 No. 70) https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doe/corporate-legislation-planning-70-2015.pdf*

with the character of the existing property and its countryside setting. Through poor design the individual and cumulative effect of extensions and alterations which are disproportionate in size to the existing property, or which require the use of land outside the established curtilage of the property, will result in a detrimental change to rural character.

D.25 Many rural dwellings occupy larger plots than their urban counterparts. Whilst there may be sufficient room on the plot to accommodate an extension in physical terms, great sensitivity is required to ensure the proposal integrates with the existing dwelling and surrounding landscape. In assessing the potential impact of development in the countryside, particular regard will be paid to the quality and nature of the landscape in the locality and at the particular site.

D.26 The suburban boundary treatment of walls or fences and the introduction of ornate pillars are inappropriate in the rural landscape and will be resisted.

Residential Amenity

D.27 The Council considers it important that the amenity of all residents is protected from 'unneighbourly' extensions as these can cause problems through overshadowing/loss of light, dominance and loss of privacy. The extent to which potential problems may arise is usually dependent upon the separation distance, height, depth, mass and location of an extension and window positions. Single-storey extensions to the rear of a semidetached or terraced dwelling will generally be acceptable where the depth does not exceed 3.5 metres from the back wall of the original building, at the boundary with an adjoining dwelling. Larger extensions will be assessed in light of the following guidance, although it is acknowledged that flexibility may be needed in respect of older properties with small plot areas or where the proposal seeks to meet the specific needs of a person with a disability.

Privacy

D.28 Except in the most isolated rural location, few households can claim not to be overlooked to some degree. The protection of the privacy of the occupants of residential properties is an important element of the quality of a residential environment. It is a particularly important consideration where an extension or alteration is proposed adjacent to existing properties. Balconies, roof terraces, decking, dormer windows, windows in side elevations and conservatories all have the potential to cause overlooking problems, due to their position and orientation, particularly from upper windows. The use of obscure glass, roof light windows and high-level windows in appropriate

circumstances can often minimise this potential, for example, the use of obscure glass for bathroom and landing windows. However, this is not considered an acceptable solution for windows serving main rooms such as bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms or kitchens.

D.29 Proposals should seek to provide reasonable space between buildings in order to minimise overlooking. This will also assist in providing acceptable levels of daylight to properties. In the case of dormer windows, restricting the size of the window and setting it back from the eaves is usually an adequate solution that can protect neighbouring privacy.

D.30 Overlooking of gardens may be unacceptable where it would result in an intrusive, direct and uninterrupted view from a main room, to the most private area of the garden, which is often the main sitting out area adjacent to the property, of the neighbouring house. As a general rule of thumb this area is the first 3-4 metres of a rear garden, closest to the residential property.

Dominance

D.31 Dominance is the extent to which a new development adversely impinges on the immediate aspect or outlook from an adjoining property. Neighbouring occupiers should not be adversely affected by a sense of being 'hemmed in' by an extension. This can often result from the construction of a large blank wall. Dominance can be increased when the neighbouring property is at a lower ground level to the development site. Loss of light is usually a consequence of dominance. Two storey rear extensions to semi-detached and terraced dwellings are usually very prominent when viewed from adjoining dwellings and can dominate outward views from adjoining ground floor windows, appearing excessively large and overbearing. It is appropriate, however, to take account of the prevailing local environment.

Overshadowing/Loss of Light

D.32 Sunlight and daylight are valued elements in a good quality living environment. Effective daylighting can reduce the need for electric lighting, while sunlight can contribute towards meeting some of the heating requirements of our homes through passive solar heating. In designing a new extension or alteration to a residential property care should be taken to safeguard access to sunlight and daylight currently enjoyed by adjoining residential properties.

D.33 Where an extension is poorly sited or badly designed it can cast a shadow that may reduce a neighbour's daylight and adversely affect their amenity to an unacceptable level. It is important, therefore, that every effort should be made to avoid or minimise the potential

for overshadowing to a neighbour when drawing up plans for an extension. Overshadowing to a garden area on its own will rarely constitute sufficient grounds to justify a refusal of permission.

D.34 In terms of daylighting, the effect on all rooms, apart from halls, landings, bathrooms and utility rooms will be considered. Where an extension would be likely to reduce the amount of light entering the window of a room, other than those indicated above, to an unreasonable degree, planning permission is likely to be refused.

D.35 Significant problems of sunlight or daylight loss are most likely to occur in terraced or semi-detached housing situations and it is here that most care needs to be taken. An extension should be kept as far as possible from neighbouring windows and boundaries to minimise impact.

D.36 To help assess the loss of light as a result of a proposed development to the front or rear of a residential property, the 60 degree and 45 degree lines, as shown in Figure 1 for single storey and two storey extensions respectively, will be employed. These lines will be taken from the centre of the closest neighbouring window. It should be noted that where the closest window is located at first floor level it may be more appropriate to consider this against the 60 degree line. The elevations and outline plans of adjoining properties should be shown on drawings, accurately scaled (in metric measurement) to allow proper consideration of this matter.

D.37 The guidance in Figure 1 is not however a rigid standard which must be met in every case. Rather it is an assessment tool which will be used in conjunction with other relevant factors in order to gauge the acceptability of proposals in terms of the overshadowing / loss of light impact upon neighbouring properties. Other relevant factors which will be considered in this assessment are set out below:

1. The existing form and type of extension prevalent in the area. For example, where the majority of dwellings in a terrace have already been extended in a similar way to the application proposal this matter will be balanced against any adverse impact on neighbouring properties.
2. The proposed design of the extension or alteration. For example, where a proposed extension incorporates significant glazing in the design, the impact on neighbouring properties may be acceptable in circumstances where alternatives might result in unacceptable overshadowing

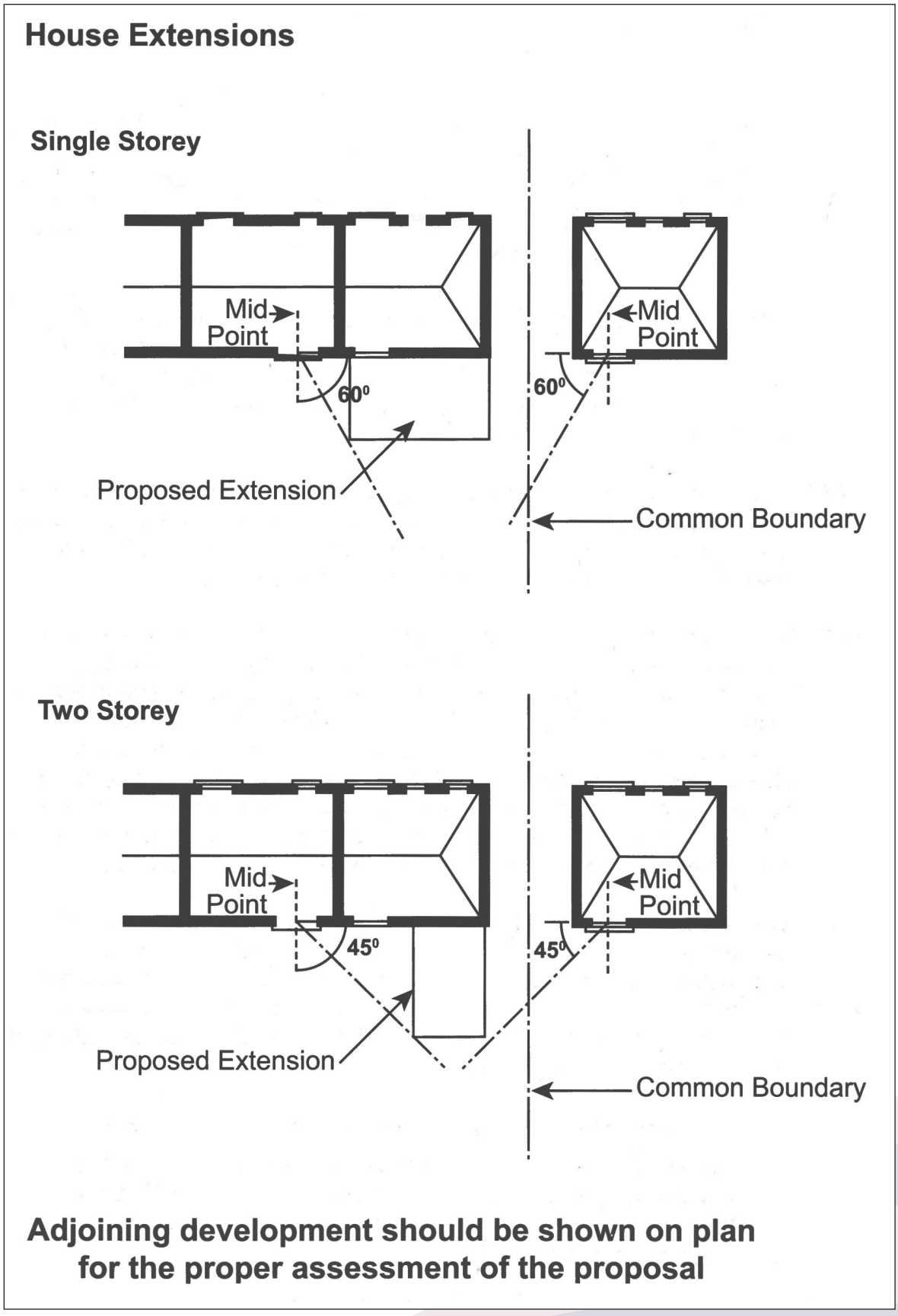


Figure 1
Example of how to apply 60 degree and 45 degree light tests.

Annex E

Vernacular Buildings

E.1 'A Sense of Loss – The Survival of Rural Traditional Buildings in Northern Ireland' (DOE, 1998) advises on the definition of rural vernacular:

"Rural vernacular or traditional architecture is the construction of small plain buildings in the countryside (particularly before 1925) where the dominant influence in siting, materials, form and design is the local 'folk tradition'. Such vernacular buildings will have been typical, i.e., of a common type in any given locality and will lack the individualistic and 'educated' design features that characterised international fashions in formal architecture during the same period."

E.2 It highlights that rural vernacular houses may be recognised as such by meeting most of the primary characteristics and some of the secondary characteristics listed below.

E.3 Primary characteristics include:

1. Built without the benefit of any formal plan, drawing or written specification.
2. Linear plan – elongated, rectangular.
3. Depth of houses (front to back) generally limited by roof construction to about 6 metres.
4. Walls of mass load-bearing materials.
5. Cooking (kitchen) hearth and other chimneys always expressed along the ridge line (i.e., the long axis of the linear plan).
6. Door (front) opens through the long wall into the space defined as the kitchen (i.e., room with the cooking hearth and solid floor).
7. Openings (windows and doors) predominantly on front and back long walls, and with a low proportion of ration of void to mass.
8. Houses extended linearly or with extra storey. Where 'returns' or extensions to linear plan are added (to give a T or L plan) these are always to the rear of the dwelling. The front of the dwelling therefore never has projections other than a front door wind-break or porch.

E.4 Secondary characteristics include:

1. Tendency for openings to lack symmetry and regularity, particularly at rear.
2. Relationship between roof pitch and height of building ('ladder rule' for thatched building). Traditional roof form may be hipped rather than gabled in some localities.
3. Internal transverse walls extend to the roof and are load-bearing.
4. Longitudinal internal walls never load-bearing for roof structure.

Annex F

Open Space Quality Criteria

Access & Community	Attractiveness / Place Appeal	Biodiversity	Functionality	Community Benefits
Well located & close to community	Attractive and offers a positive image	Contribute +ve biodiversity/ water/ air quality	Offers a range of functions/ flexibility of use	Safe and welcoming
Meets DDA requirements /Disabled Needs	Provides an attractive setting	Large enough to sustain wildlife populations	Diverse play/sport/ recreational opportunity	Good levels of natural surveillance
Provides quality paths fit-for-purpose	Quality materials/ equipment/ furniture	Offer diversity of habitats	Offers good places for social interaction	Low levels/ absence of anti-social behaviour
Connects to other transport nodes	Attractive planting/ landscape elements	Part of wider landscape structure	High quality facilities meeting user needs	Appropriate lighting levels
Allows movement in and between places	Welcoming boundaries/ entrances	Connects to wider green networks	Appropriate facilities for location/size/ use	Sense of local identity & place
Has accessible entrances in right places	Facilities in clean/safe/ useable condition	Balance habitat protection & access	Facilities well sited for all ages	Provide routes to wider community facilities
Offers connected path network and signage	Low levels of litter & adequate bins	Resource efficient (grass cutting/peat compost)	Adaptable to changing needs/use	Contains distinctive/ memorable places
	Well maintained			Community involvement in management

Source: AND Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy, Ironside Farrar 2021

Annex G

Landscape Design Considerations for Holiday Parks

G.1 Matters which need to be addressed in preparing a layout / landscaping plan include the following:

1. The creation of an appropriate link with the surrounding landscape (e.g., a dense tree belt may be appropriate in a heavily treed part of the countryside, but in an open landscape may draw attention to the development rather than allowing it to blend into the surrounding countryside).
2. Appropriate boundary treatment, taking account of point 1 above and reflecting needs for shelter, screening, and privacy. Buffer zones of at least 3 metres in width should be retained and kept free of development on the inside of all boundaries.
3. Informal layout of caravan units / motor homes / chalets characterised by the use small informal clusters separated by appropriate landscaping and the avoidance of 'regimented' rows of units that typically results in a detrimental visual impact (a 'sea' of caravans' effect).
4. The avoidance of long straight lines for roads and paths with due regard to the protection of key views from the holiday park. An exception to this may arise where an avenue is an appropriate design element.
5. Integration of ancillary buildings, hard landscaping, and facilities such as car parks and water points by reflecting local design characteristics, the use of local materials and appropriate planting. The use of muted colours (usually green tones) for caravan units / chalets may be appropriate particularly for those close to site boundaries.
6. The use of permeable surfaces for caravan pitches, hard landscaped areas, and car parking in order to safeguard against flood risk through surface water runoff.
7. Appropriate planning and selection of planting taking account of function, suitability for prevailing soil and climatic conditions (e.g., coastal environments), durability, seasonal changes, and ease of maintenance. Planting will be required for a variety of functions including:
   (a) linking the holiday park into its wider landscape setting,
   (b) enhancing the visual character of the development and promoting a distinctive sense of place,
   (c) boundary treatment and screening,

(d) creating visual diversity in the layout,

(e) integrating public and private open spaces into the design of the holiday park,

(f) softening the visual impact of accommodation units and ancillary buildings and facilities,

(g) adding definition and interest to accesses, particularly footpaths and cycle tracks.

8. Retention and enhancement of existing natural features such as ponds, copses of trees and hedgerows. This may also apply in some instances to archaeology and features of the built heritage.

9. The provision of communal open space should be considered as an integral part of the design in order to:

   (a) Meet formal and informal recreation and amenity open space needs,

   (b) Contribute to the attractiveness of the development,

   (c) Create a safe, convenient, and accessible space for all holiday park users, particularly children, the elderly, and people with disabilities,

   (d) Reduce the need for people to seek open space outside the park,

   (e) Enhance security through providing opportunity for on-site activity.

   Reliance on the use of residual areas of unused land for open space provision will not be acceptable.

Annex H

Tourism Information for a Tourism Benefit Statement

H.1 Economic Sustainability

(a) The proposed development will result in locally significant employment and / or training opportunities;

(b) A significant level of spend expected to flow into the local economy;

(c) The proposal will enhance the range and quality of tourism attractions and facilities in the local area;

(d) The proposed development will extend the tourist season in the local area;

(e) Significant utilisation of local goods and services, including trades and crafts;

(f) The proposal is an important element in farm or broader rural diversification.

H.2 Community / Social Sustainability

(g) The proposed development will, in addition to meeting tourist needs, provide facilities (recreational / cultural / social) that can be accessed by the local community;

(h) The proposal will contribute to a local community regeneration scheme.

H.3 Environmental Sustainability

(i) The proposed development will help to protect or improve an environmental asset associated with either the natural or built heritage;

(j) Development of 'green' transport initiatives, for example dedicated rail or bus links between the amenity and a nearby settlement or linking several tourist amenities in the locality;

(k) Use of a visitor management programme for larger scale proposals or to mitigate against damage to fragile sites;

H.4 Locational Sustainability

(l) The proposal is accessible by public transport, walking or cycling;

(m) Large scale proposals are conveniently accessible from the regional strategic transport network;

(n) The proposed development is conveniently located with respect to existing tourism development in the local area.

Annex I

Guidance on the structure and content of Statements of Significance

What is a Statement of Significance?

I.1 A Statement of Significance (SoS) is a statement outlining the significance of heritage assets and/or their settings affected by a development, and of the impacts of that development upon them.

I.2 A SoS is an important practical tool to guide an applicant in developing their proposals. A good understanding of the characteristics and constraints of the heritage asset should influence the evolution of a proposal from the outset and the SoS is a means to illustrate how an applicant or agent has arrived at a certain design or layout.

When is a SoS required?

I.3 Policy HE 1 of the draft Plan Strategy requires the submission of a SoS for all development proposals that impact upon the following heritage assets:

- Listed buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes;
- Scheduled Monuments; and
- Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest.

Proportionality

I.4 The suggested structure of an SoS will vary from one application to another. The level of detail provided in the SoS should be as full as necessary to understand significance but should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and the scale of the proposal that impacts upon it. Well-captioned photographs and other illustrations are very useful as a substitute for plain text and can help keep a statement concise and to the point.

I.5 Sections 40(3) and 86(2) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 detail the types of planning applications that require the submission of a Design and Access Statement. This includes all listed building consent applications and 'where any part of the development is in a designated area.' This means that there will be many types of application for which both a statement of Significance and a Design and Access Statement will both be required, for example

for new development in a conservation area. In such cases, the SoS may usefully be included/incorporated into the Design and Access Statement to avoid repetition and make for a more concise submission. It is for the applicant to decide whether it is appropriate to amalgamate the contents of the two documents or keep them separate. The content of any submitted documents should be made clear in the title.

Who can write a SoS?

I.6 A SoS needs to be relevant and appropriate, but its detail and complexity is dependent upon the scale and nature of the proposal and the heritage assets affected. Small works, of minor impact, require only simple SoSs that can easily be produced without the need for special expertise.

I.7 However, in some cases the scale of the proposed development or the nature or importance of the asset may require the SoS to be compiled by a suitably qualified consultant, with the necessary skills to assess the effects. This could include a conservation architect, architectural historian, archeologist, chartered surveyor or structural engineer. If the applicant is using an agent/architect to submit an application on their behalf, they may be capable of producing the statement or know someone who is.

I.8 Where an application site includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment or field evaluation may also be required in accordance with policy HE 4 Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation.

Suggested Structure of an SoS

I.9 The following template is given as a generic model to illustrate one way of setting out an SoS. The various sections of the suggested structure are described with recommendations as to content. The content of the assessment should increase with significance and complexity.

Introduction

- Purpose – what is the purpose of the SoS? A short note of the objective in preparing the statement (which is usually to support/ explain an application for planning permission/CA consent/LB consent)
- The Nature of the proposal – Brief description of the proposal, noting the scope of the works and what they are expected to achieve – repair/alteration/extension

The Nature Of The Heritage Asset(s)

- What is the asset, what does it look like, what is it used for and how has the site developed historically?
- What is the current state of repair of the asset?
- How does it relate to the surrounding context and are there any other heritage assets nearby?

Potential Information to include and sources;

- ✓ Designation records for the heritage asset e.g. Scheduled Monument Record or Listed building database entry with description of building, its architecture, historical development, reason for listing.
- ✓ Related designations e.g. Area of Archeological Potential, Register of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes.
- ✓ Planning History including drawings for previously approved applications.
- ✓ Historic Environment Map Viewer – historic ordnance survey maps.
- ✓ Conservation Area and ATC Design Guides.
- ✓ Historic Photographs (from PRONI or National Museums NI).
- ✓ Local Heritage Groups e.g. Ulster Architectural Heritage, Upper Ards Historical Society, Holywood Conservation Group.

The Significance[4] Of The Heritage Asset

- What makes the historic asset special?

Potential Information to include and sources;

Evidential value

The asset holds or potentially holds evidence of past human activity. This particularly but not exclusively applies to archaeological sites.

Aesthetic Value

The value derived from the building/structure/site and its setting. This could include architectural style, date(s) of construction, materials, key notable characteristics generally and specifically in the location of any proposals. If it is a conservation area, what is its particular townscape quality? Aesthetic value can be fortuitous or designed. Unusual or rare features will usually give the building, or area, a higher level of significance. A note could be made of any features which detract from its significance with an explanation as to why this is the case. The setting of a heritage asset can make an important contribution to its significance also. A description of the heritage asset's setting should include other buildings in the grounds, details of landscaping and views towards and away from the asset.

Historical Value

The development, form and appearance of a building or site can illustrate or tell the story of its history. Significance will often be derived from the age of the fabric of a building. For example, a late 20th Century extension to an 18th century house will not be as significant as the earlier original fabric. Historical associations with famous people, architects or events will usually increase the significance of the asset.

Communal Value

The importance of a place for society or a particular group in society such as a war memorial, church, school or public building.

[4] *Heritage significance is defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest derives not only from a heritage assets physical presence but also from its group value and setting.*

The Proposed Works And Impact Upon Significance

- Describe the nature of the works proposed
- How will the works impact upon the significance of the asset?
- How are harmful impacts being avoided or minimised?
- Justification of harmful impacts

Potential Information to include;

- ✓ Does the proposal affect the historic fabric?
- ✓ Loss or concealment of historic features, proposed demolitions and removals, the impact of alterations
- ✓ Does the proposal affect the setting and related views of the heritage asset?
- ✓ Will the development have above or below ground archaeological impacts?
- ✓ Will the proposal potentially preserve or enhance the asset e.g. by revealing or uncovering features that were previously hidden, enhancing public access to and enjoyment of a site, removing inappropriate extensions or alterations?
- ✓ Minimisation of impacts could include making any interventions reversible, use of appropriate materials, reuse of salvaged features or other works of mitigation
- ✓ The Historic Environment policies of the DPS stress that adverse/ harmful impacts upon heritage assets should be avoided. Therefore, justification for harmful impacts must be provided

Annex J

Guidance for the Submission of Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Assessment

When is a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) required?

J.1 Due to the nature of the Strategic Flood Map for Northern Ireland, the geographical extent of predicted flood areas cannot be precisely defined. In some cases, reservoir inundation maps may also be unavailable. A FRA will therefore be necessary:

- When the proposed development is located close to the edge of an area of flood risk in order to determine a more accurate extent of flooding. The requirement applies irrespective if the site lies just inside, just outside, wholly or partially the area identified in the Strategic Flood Map;
- When the proposed development is located within a flood plain but constitutes an exception listed under policy FLD1. In such cases, an FRA is required to be submitted as part of a planning application, in order to identify all sources of flooding, the resulting flood extents and the means by which flooding is to be controlled and mitigated. A FRA should not be undertaken when a proposal is clearly unacceptable in principle under the policy, as this will invariably result in nugatory work and expense on the part of the developer/applicant.

What information should a Flood Risk Assessment contain?

J.2 When a more accurate definition of the flood plain and extents is needed, the FRA will typically be required to contain the following information:

- A site location plan at a suitable scale, which clearly illustrates geographical features and identifies the catchment, watercourses in the vicinity and the built development;
- A site plan (and where appropriate, cross sections showing existing levels related to Ordnance Datum Belfast), existing structures, watercourses in or bounding the site, internal site drainage and drainage outfalls;
- Data on historical flooding events, including photographs and media reports, supported by information on rainfall, flood return periods and the probability of storm surges, where appropriate. Evidence on trends in flood occurrences and changes in the local environment since the last event is particularly valuable;
- A plan of the site showing the extent of the predicted flood plain and /or in the case of a reservoir, the extent of the predicted flood

inundation area. This may require a local hydraulic model based upon topographical information, historical flood events and an assessment of design flow discharges at the site using industry standard methodologies.

J.3 When the proposed development is within the fluvial or coastal flood plain, the following information will be required:

- A site location plan as detailed in para. J2
- A site plan;
- Details of any existing or proposed flood alleviation measures or flood defence structures that may influence the site, including information on their structural condition, level of protection and maintenance regime;
- The identification of all sources of flooding, pre and post development;
- An assessment of the hydraulic capacity and structural integrity of all drains and sewers within or bounding the site. The methodologies for assessment should be clearly identified;
- Data on historical flooding events, including photographs and media reports, supported by information on rainfall, flood return periods and the probability of storm surges, where appropriate. Evidence on trends in flood occurrences and changes in the local environment since the last event is particularly valuable;
- A plan of the site showing the extent of the predicted flood plain and /or in the case of a reservoir, the extent of the predicted flood inundation area. This will involve the production of hydraulic models requiring longitudinal/ cross sections of the watercourse and the site, assessment of flood discharge using industry standards and the inclusion of information such as finished floor levels, access road and car park levels, estimated flood water levels, depths and velocities and the associated probability of flooding;
- A plan of local features that may influence local hydraulics such as bridges, pipes or ducts crossing watercourses, culverts, embankments and walls;
- An assessment of the likely speed of potential flooding, the sequence in which various parts of the site may flood, the likely duration and consequences of a flood event and the depth and velocity of flood water;
- Where appropriate, the likely impact of any displaced water or increased runoff from the development site should be estimated and the consequences for neighbouring or other locations assessed.

J.4 Where the proposed development is located within the fluvial or coastal flood plain (or reservoir inundation area), the FRA will also be required to provide details of flood control and mitigation measures as well as safety procedures that will address the flood risks identified. The following considerations may be relevant:

Flood Control Measures

- Infrastructure and drainage design where it may be possible to limit the flow and duration of flood water to the proposed development by diversion of flow paths, culvert upgrading and introduction of control structures such as sluices, weirs and sealed manholes;
- Management of residual flood risk through keeping development a safe distance from flood defence structures and introducing sacrificial flood storage areas at the rear of defences;
- Suitable maintenance and management procedures: and
- Ground water control and pumping;

Flood Mitigation Measures

- Site design and layout, such as, siting built development so as to avoid areas of the site liable to flooding and flood flowpaths
- Raising finished floor levels of new buildings;
- Coastal infilling/ land raising
- Flood resistant and resilient construction (see Annex K).

Safety Procedures

- Flood and weather warning systems;
- Clear communication lines between those at flood risk and those with flood risk responsibilities. Emergency evacuation plans and procedures, including safe access and egress for emergency rescue services;
- Capacity and procedures for the rapid movement of furniture and goods to locations out-with of the flood risk area;
- Safe shutdown of electrical supply for domestic and industrial use
- Pollution control procedures.

Points to Note for Flood Risk Assessments

J.5 While it will be necessary to consider all the factors identified above, the detail necessary is likely to vary from case to case, depending upon local conditions and the scale and type of development proposed.

J.6 Due to the uncertainties inherent in flood estimation and expected climate change impacts, the application of the precautionary approach to hydrological analysis of flood flows and the determination of flood event return periods requires any assessment of flood risk to incorporate the necessary allowances for increased rainfall, storminess and sea level rise specified in current UK research and guidance.

J.7 All FRAs should acknowledge that there are no circumstances where the risk of flooding can be removed entirely. In defended areas, consideration should always be given to the potential impacts of extreme events on defences, the residual risks and the minimising of risks to life and property in such events.

When is a Drainage Assessment required?

J.8 Operational Planning Policy FLD 3 requires the submission of a Drainage Assessment (DA) to be submitted to the Council, along with a planning application, for development proposals that are located outside the fluvial and/or coastal flood plain, in any of the following circumstances:

- Where the proposed development exceeds the thresholds stipulated in the Policy e.g. 10 or more dwellings;
- Where run-ff from the development may adversely impact upon other development of features of importance to the natural or historic environment; and
- Where there is evidence of a history of surface water flooding.

J.9 The DA, as well as addressing surface water flooding, may also need to identify control measures for storm water discharge from the site. The use of sustainable drainage systems to limit and manage site discharges to pre-development runoff rates is required in accordance with Policy FLD 6 Sustainable Drainage.

What information should be in a Drainage Assessment?

J.10 A DA will typically be required to contain the following information relating to the assessment of surface water flood risk:

- A location plan as detailed in para. J2
- A site plan as detailed in para. J2;
- Confirmation as to whether the proposed development is to be located on previously developed land that may have minimal impact upon the drainage network;
- Indication as to whether the local area has past flooding problems which may limit site discharge into local drainage and watercourses to pre-development run-off rates;
- Identification of likely overland flow paths, including depth, velocities, timing and sequence of inundation;
- An assessment of hydraulic capacity and structural integrity of all drains and sewers within or bounding the site, which may result in out of sewer flooding. The methodologies for assessment must be clearly identified;
- Data on historical flood events as detailing in para J2;
- The likely impact of any displaced water or increased runoff from the development site should be estimated and the consequences for neighbouring or other locations assessed.

Annex K

Flood Proofing – Resistance and Resilience Construction

K.1 The primary aim of planning policy on flood risk is to avoid new development in areas known to be at risk of flooding. However, in certain cases, development within areas of flood risk may still proceed, for example where a proposal is deemed to be of overriding regional importance or is accepted as an exception to the policy for development in flood plains. Outside of flood plains, development within areas of surface water flood risk may be permitted subject to the submission of a satisfactory drainage assessment.

K.2 In all such cases, consideration should be given assessing and managing the flood risk through the adaptation of suitable flood proofing methods. For new development, permanent solutions which incorporate flood proofing methods into the structure of the building such as by raised floor levels and impermeable walls, will be preferred to other temporary methods. Below ground occupancy and basements should be avoided.

Flood Proofing

K.3 There are a number of routes by which floodwater can enter a property. The most common ways are through door openings, patios and windows. Water can also find its way through air bricks on exposed walls, under foundations and through gaps in floors. Less obvious ways are via drains and pipes as the pressure created by flooding can reverse the flow and cause water to back-up and enter the property through sinks, toilets and washing machines.

K.4 However, there are a number of measures available to prevent or limit the damage and disruption caused through flooding. Buildings can be flood proofed through the use of 'flood resistance' and/or 'flood resilient' measures.

K.5 Flood resistance is a term that refers to preventing or minimising floodwater from entering a building. The two methods that are available to achieve this are 'Passive Resistance' and 'Active Resistance.'

K.6 **Passive Resistance** is where flood mitigation is permanently in place. This is generally more feasible in new developments where the property is designed so that flood water is excluded from the building during flood events. Such mitigation methods are usually expensive as they will require structural modifications to the building. These include

Raised Floor Levels

- Finished floor levels of the building are designed to be above the design flood level. The levels will also include an additional height to accommodate a suitable freeboard. Driveways, paths and entrances to allow for access need to be designed accordingly.

Deeper Foundations

- This may be appropriate in permeable types of ground such as sand and gravels, where high ground water and floor water is able and under pressure, to infiltrate into the property below foundation level. Cut off trenches and toe walls to deeper impermeable clay/rock ground to block flow paths may be considered.

Tanking of Internal Floors and Basement Walls

- This measure may be used to prevent flood water or high groundwater entering the building. It involves the use of solid concrete walls and floors which are then sealed with waterproof membranes or sheets. Solid floors have the added advantage that with their extra weight, they are able to cope better with the uplift pressures from the floodwater.

Water Resistant Walls

- The building structure is designed using flood resistant materials that are able to reduce or stop the infiltration of water through the external walls. Solid walls can be constructed instead of cavity walls. Engineering bricks are preferred to concrete/aircrete bricks as they have lower water absorption rates. External joints and rendering can be applied to cavity walls and internal walls can use cement based renders with high lime content. Standard gypsum plasterboard which disintegrates when it first becomes wet, should be avoided.

Sealed Doors and Windows

- Entrances and openings can be designed and raised thresholds. Traditional wooden frames can become warped, whereas, water resistant PVC type material can provide better seals. Shatterproof/double glazed windows should be considered as these are more liable to remain intact when exposed to a depth of floodwater or floating debris.

Non-Return Valves and Covers

- Flaps can be fitted to the end and junctions of drainage and sewage pipes to stop any water flowing back into a building. Manhole covers can also be sealed by being bolted and air vents can be fitted with specialised water resistant covers.

K.7 **Active Resistance** involves the use of temporary flood mitigation measures and requires an effective flood warning system or a neighbourhood alert scheme to allow for a reasonable lead in time. Standalone temporary and demountable defences are not normally considered appropriate for new developments due to the likelihood of them not being in place on time, being damaged by flood debris or the potential for being breached or overtopped. The main advantage of these temporary arrangements is that they would normally be less expensive than the more permanent solutions and are more practical and suitable for buildings already within the flood plain. Recommended methods are:

Demountable Flood Guards

- These guards or gates are made of suitable flood resistant material and are fitted across boundary fences, doors and windows by bolting or dropping into pre-prepared slots or channels incorporated into the framework of the structure. They are then removed after the flood recedes.

Temporary Flood Defences

- This solution is sometimes adopted to provide protection for commercial properties such as shops and restaurants where a service or ongoing activity may still be required outside the building. They can also then be employed as a necessary short-term measure that may precede a more permanent flood defence structure.

Sand bags or Flood Sacks

- This is the cheapest form of measure and is more suitable in emergency response situations, such as surface water flooding where there is little or no warning, the water is at a shallow depth and the exact flood path cannot be predicted. The sandbags can be stored in a suitable nearby location or left along previous flood paths on a temporary basis. The flood sacks have the added advantage that they are light and can be easily stored and transported. They expand and fill voids once they come into contact with water.

K.8 **Flood Resilience** involves designed or adapting a property so that although flood water is able to enter the building, very little or no permanent damage is caused through the use of water resistant and replaceable sacrificial materials. Structural integrity is also maintained and normal service can resume fairly rapidly after the flood has receded and clean up has taken place. This method is not usually that suitable for new property. Recommended methods are:

Pipes and Services

- Electrical wiring can be dropped down from the first floor/roof level and by ensuring that all fuse boxes and electrical sockets are kept at least 1.5m above the floor level. This would also apply to gas, oil and water supplies so as to avoid pulled joints and leaks, which can lead to contamination and pollution.

Raising Fabrics and Appliances

- Televisions, fridges and cookers can be placed on plinths at raised levels. Machinery and office equipment should also be raised. Castor type sofas and the use of moveable rugs instead of fixed carpets are better options in regard to flood resilience.

Fixtures and Fittings

- Popular methods in kitchens and downstairs bathrooms are to use durable water resistant materials such as stainless steel units and plastic skirting boards. Vinyl and tiled floors are preferred to wooden or chipboard floors.

Valuables and Memorabilia

- Any valuables such as ornaments, pictures and photographs can be placed on high mounted shelves. Smaller furniture can be positioned in such a way that it can be easily transferred to upper levels.

Annex L

Guidance for Outdoor Advertisements

L.1 The main purpose of this annex is to set out the council's detailed guidance to provide a consistent basis against which to consider the display of different categories of advertisements.

L.2 The guidance is not intended to be overly prescriptive but is intended to advise applicants and commercial companies involved in promoting outdoor advertising how such advertising, if appropriately designed and sited, can contribute towards a quality environment.

Poster Panel Displays

L.3 Poster panel displays do not generally relate directly to the land or premises on which they are located. They comprise the more traditional paper posters on panels or hoardings, either freestanding or attached to buildings, modern displays, including moving prismatic panels, and internally illuminated PVC faced panels.

L.4 Poster panel displays are a common feature of urban advertising and rely on size and siting for their impact. As a result, they have the potential to be over dominant and obtrusive in the street scene. There is a need therefore to ensure that such displays respect the scale of their surroundings. Equally there is a need to prevent clutter and the undue dominance of such advertisements over other uses of land.

The Countryside

L.5 Poster panel displays are out of place in the countryside and will generally be unacceptable. An exception may be made where the display advertises a particular event, such as a local agricultural show or fair, and is restricted to a specified time period.

Villages and Small Settlements

L.6 Large scale poster panel displays are generally out of place in villages and small settlements because of their potential to detrimentally impact the visual amenity of these locations. Smaller poster panels may be acceptable depending on their size and on the scale and character of the village. The position and siting of such signage should respect the size, scale, and character of surrounding buildings and features.

Residential Areas

L.7 Poster panel displays are out of place in any predominantly residential locality. The priority in residential areas is to maintain local character and environmental quality and to protect the amenity of residents. The size, scale and intrusive nature of poster panel displays therefore make them generally unacceptable. An exception may be

made for the display of a poster panel on bus shelters in residential areas where there will be no significant impact on the amenity of adjacent residents.

Predominantly Commercial Areas

L.8 In commercial areas the scale of buildings may be sufficiently large to accommodate poster panel displays without adverse effect on visual amenity. The scale of commercial and industrial surroundings in our cities and towns can however vary greatly, often within short distances. It will be expected therefore that the scale of advertisement displays should respect the scale of adjacent buildings and the wider area.

L.9 Where an area is in mixed use, with shops and offices interspersed with residential properties, poster panel displays may on occasion be acceptable. They should be carefully related to the size and scale of surrounding buildings and designed in a manner that will not damage visual amenity or prejudice public safety.

Freestanding Advertisement Displays

L.10 Large freestanding panels (generally 48 sheet displays or greater) are commonly used to screen derelict and untidy land. These sites can be a potential eyesore and, in many cases, a carefully designed scheme for screening that integrates advertisement panels can often prevent fly tipping, vandalism and help ensure security. Such schemes need to be well maintained and will generally only be acceptable on a temporary basis. Freestanding displays are also often found at airports, ports and other gateway locations where they generally provide information on the locality, local events, and services.

L.11 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) The number, scale, proportions and design of freestanding advertisement panels should respect the site and its surrounding area. In particular, where these are situated at the back edge of the pavement, or in other prominent locations, care will be needed to ensure that their effect on pedestrians is not overwhelming.

(b) Panel displays should be integrated into a well-designed scheme of good quality screening which allows for visual breaks between each panel. Areas to the sides of and around the hoardings should be considered with as much care as the display itself.

(c) Wherever possible, good quality hard and soft landscaping should form part of the proposal and should be of sufficient scale to assist integration of the panel by reducing the visual impact of the overall display; and

(d) Where the rear of the advertising panel is visible from surrounding roads or properties, it should be appropriately treated.

Gable Mounted Advertisement Displays

L.12 Large scale poster panels (generally 48 sheet displays) located on gables are a common feature in the predominantly commercial parts of our towns and cities and may offer benefits, such as screening an untidy gable. Care, however, needs to be taken with such proposals to ensure they are not over dominant and relate well to the building on which they are proposed to be positioned.

L.13 **Design Guidelines**

(a) The form, design, size, proportions and siting of a wall mounted poster panel should be sympathetic to the building to which it is to be attached;

(b) The panel should generally be above ground floor level on the gable and be symmetrical with the wall on which it is to be positioned;

(c) Interesting features, for example architectural details, should not be obscured or destroyed;

(d) Windows should not be covered, and the normal functioning of the building should not be adversely affected.

(e) Tiers of advertisement poster panels affecting the gable or flank wall of a building should be avoided as they can have a significant detrimental impact over long distance views, whilst more local views can appear cluttered.

L.14 The guidance above also applies to large electronic screen displays and to freestanding panels in front of a gable or flank wall of a building.

Shroud Advertisement Displays

L.15 Shroud advertisement displays are a relatively new form of advertising. They are known by a variety of names such as meshes, wraparounds, or blow–up signs. They range in size but are generally large-scale and can cover the whole elevation of a building. They can even be used to present an image of what a building will look like when alterations, renovations or building works have been completed.

L.16 In view of their scale and size, shroud advertisements have the potential to seriously conflict with the visual amenity of the buildings upon which the display is situated and the area in which buildings are sited. Accordingly, proposals for this type of advertisement are only likely to be acceptable in commercial areas, where they are to be attached to scaffolding surrounding a building or development site and where a contract has been drawn up for the building or renovation works.

L.17 To prevent clutter, account will be taken of the number of similar proposals located within the vicinity of the site and others that have the benefit of advertisement consent.

Signs on Commercial Premises

L.18 Signs and advertisements on commercial premises are important in announcing the presence of a business in the street and in directing customers to that location and can assist the vibrancy of our city and town centres and other commercial areas. When sympathetically sited and designed, they can contribute positively to the distinctive visual amenity of an area by giving a sense of quality and permanence.

L.19 The most common signs on commercial premises are fascia signs and projecting signs, either box or hanging. Their design should always complement the design of the shopfront and building and respect the wider locality. An excessive number of signs or those which are too large can dramatically affect the premises on which they are sited and have an adverse impact on the general character of the area.

L.20 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) Fascia signs should be of an appropriate size, and sited and designed to harmonise with the shop front, the façade of the building and any detailing thereon;

(b) Where there is an original fascia, the sign should make use of this with generally no advertising at sub-fascia level or on pilasters or columns;

(c) Where a new commercial building is proposed, the location of fascia signage should be integrated into the overall design;

(d) On older and more traditionally styled buildings, painted signs or non- illuminated letters are preferable to panels or other types of display;

(e) Internal illumination should preferably be in the form of individually backlit letters; and

(f) Where external illumination is proposed, trough lighting is preferred. The trough should extend over the whole fascia and be painted to integrate it into the whole display.

L.21 **Projecting Signs Design Guidelines:**

(a) Projecting signs should be sympathetic to the design of the building where they are to be displayed and respect fascia signage;

(b) Box signs should be located at fascia level and are generally best situated at the end of the fascia;

(c) Hanging signs may be acceptable at first floor level and are generally best situated in a central position between windows;

(d) To reduce visual clutter a projecting sign will generally only be acceptable where there is no other projecting advertisement such as a canopy, awning, flag or horizontal banner;

(e) Internal illumination should preferably be in the form of individually backlit letters;

(f) Where external illumination is proposed trough lighting is preferred with the trough painted out;

(g) Projecting signs should generally project no more than 1 metre including fixings, with a maximum end width of no more than 0.1m in the case of a box sign;

(h) Projecting signs should be a minimum of 2.25m above ground level in the interests of public safety; and

(i) Illuminated projecting signs are generally unacceptable immediately adjacent to a neighbouring residential property.

Blinds and Awnings

L.22 Originally the function of blinds was to protect perishable goods from deterioration due to strong sunlight. Today, however, blinds, awnings, and canopies are increasingly used as a means to provide additional advertising.

L.23 Blinds that are well designed can improve the attractiveness of a building or street. Poorly designed or prominently located blinds or canopies displaying advertising can, however, detract from the appearance of buildings, the surrounding neighbourhood, and can result in clutter. They are particularly obtrusive when located above windows on upper floors and should be avoided.

L.24 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) Blinds and awnings should be retractable, made from non-reflective material and be designed to integrate with the appearance and construction of the shopfront as a whole; and

(b) Such blinds should be a minimum of 2.25m above ground level in the interests of public safety.

Advertisements on Upper Floors

L.25 Where commercial premises occupy the upper floors of buildings, the need to advertise their whereabouts can be important to their viability. Great care needs to be taken in considering how this can be achieved without the exterior of the building appearing cluttered.

L.26 Fascia signs, panel style signs, canopies, flags and banners are generally out of place on upper floors.

L.27 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) Advertising on upper floors should be printed or etched onto the glass or on internal window blinds. As an alternative, individual letters rather than an advertisement panel may be suspended behind the glass.

(b) These guidelines also apply to commercial premises on ground floors wishing to advertise on upper floors.

High Level Signs

L.28 High level signs generally relate to those vertical or horizontal signs on the walls of tall, single use buildings such as hotels. If not treated with great sensitivity, they have the potential to give the appearance of clutter within the local street scene and be obtrusive and dominant over long distances particularly when located on roofs.

L.29 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) High level signs will generally only be appropriate where they relate to the scale and primary use of the host building;

(b) They should be designed to be read as part of the building and should not detract from any architectural feature;

(c) They should not project above the eaves or parapet of the host building; and

(d) They should have only the lettering illuminated.

Offices in Former Residential Properties

L.30 In predominantly residential areas, where offices occupy part or all of a former residential property, it is essential that advertising remains unobtrusive in order that the residential amenity of the area is not prejudiced. Even in situations where offices occupy a row of former residential properties, it will generally still be important to retain the overall residential appearance of the area. A more flexible approach will, however, be considered in those areas where, through ongoing change, surroundings have become mainly commercial.

L.31 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) The advertisement of offices in former residential properties should be by means of nameplates made of metal or other suitable materials and should be fixed to the doorway pilaster, or if there is no pilaster, they may be fixed to the masonry beside the front door; and

(b) Painted or etched lettering on a front window will also generally be acceptable.

Signs at Retail and Business Parks

L.32 In retail parks and business parks the uncoordinated display of advance advertisements or ad hoc directional signs to individual businesses, which bears no direct relationship to the building, land or structure upon which it is displayed is often confusing, untidy and detrimental to the appearance of an area.

L.33 There is great potential for all advertising associated with retail or business parks to be undertaken in a planned and co-ordinated manner. Ideally the fascia signs for individual premises should form an integral part of the building, while a single carefully designed directory board located at the entrance to the park or in other acceptable locations can avoid a proliferation of advance signs.

L.34 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) All new buildings in a retail or business park should incorporate a signing zone as part of the design;

(b) Fascia and projecting signs should be in scale with the host building and surrounding buildings and be consistent across the whole unit; and

(c) Advance signage should be provided in the form of a combined directory board within a proposed or existing landscaped area designed and integrated as one scheme.

Signs at Filling Stations and on Forecourts

L.35 Signage at filling stations usually comprises a combination of a canopy, a pole/pylon, and shop fascia signage together with a number of smaller forecourt signs. In view of the range of signs involved, there is often potential for their cumulative effect to result in clutter.

L.36 To help prevent this, a co-ordinated approach should be taken when bringing forward proposals, particularly where existing signage is being replaced. Particular care is needed in assessing proposals for illuminated advertisements at filling stations located adjacent to or near residential properties.

L.37 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) All signs should be in scale with their surroundings and not detract from the amenity of the surrounding area;

(b) Illumination should generally be restricted to the sign lettering and logo; and

(c) Freestanding signs should be located so as not to interfere with or obstruct sightlines.

Pylon and Pole Mounted Signs

L.38 Pylon and pole mounted signs are a common feature at petrol filling stations. Increasingly they are found in association with drive-through restaurants, supermarkets, retail warehousing, retail parks and car showrooms.

L.39 The height, size and levels of illumination of these signs may result in visual intrusion within the locality where they are situated. They can be extremely dominant over long distances and detract not only from the character and appearance of the area in which they are sited but also that of the area from which they are viewed. In addition, where they are proposed close to residential properties, they can be detrimental to amenities enjoyed by local residents.

L.40 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) Pylon and pole mounted signs should be in scale with their surroundings, and they should not significantly exceed surrounding building heights;

(b) They should not detract from the visual amenity or character of the surrounding area;

(c) They should not be sited adjacent to, and wherever possible should not directly face residential properties; and

(d) Illumination should generally be restricted to the sign lettering and logo.

Digital Advertising Screens

L.41 This form of advertising has the potential to have a negative impact on our townscapes and the historic environment.

L.42 **Design Guidelines:**

(a) They should not detract from the visual amenity or character of the surrounding area;

(b) They should not be positioned above ground floor level;

(c) They should not be positioned in primarily residential areas;

(d) They should not be located within the open countryside or, within parks and public open spaces; and

(e) They should not contain moving images.

Annex M

Transport Assessment Form

PART A: GENERAL

Applicant details Name Address Telephone Email	
Agent details Name Address Telephone Email	
Development details Brief description of development proposal	

Is the development:	**Yes**	**No**
Residential comprising 10 or more units?		
Non-residential with a gross floor area of 500 square metres or more?		
Likely to generate 30 or more vehicle movements per hour?		
Likely to generate 5 or more freight movements per day?		

If the answer to any of the above questions is YES, applicants MUST complete Parts B, C and D of this form also.

PART B: TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS

1. How many journeys will be made to the site each day?

Please provide an estimate of the number of journeys to the site by each transport mode, walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport, car, taxi and freight vehicles.

Walking

Wheeling

Cycling

Public Transport
(please specify bus/train)

Car Driver

Car Passenger

Taxi

HGVs
(please indicate type/size of vehicles)

Comments

2. Will there be any peak times for traffic accessing the site?

Please provide details.

PART C: TRANSPORT IMPACTS

Describe below the transport impacts of the development.

For example, consideration should be given to the effect on transport infrastructure, possible increased risks of accidents, busier junctions, increased parking in the surrounding area, noise generation, air quality and the effect transport may have on the surrounding townscape, landscape and natural and historic environment etc.

PART D: MEASURES TO MITIGATE IMPACTS / INFLUENCE TRAVEL TO THE SITE

Describe below what measures will be taken to influence travel to and from the site and within it.

For example, maximising opportunities for active travel within the site and in the wider area (e.g. by prioritising walking and wheeling first in the layout and design of the proposal and then cycling, with consideration of cycle parking, routes and crossings and linkages with active travel infrastructure), encouraging the use of public transport (e.g. improved services, new stops, better information), minimising car-parking provision, ensuring good access through design, providing facilities for people with mobility impairments, supporting travel initiatives such as car-sharing, ensuring minimal and efficient freight movement etc.

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