

Local Development Plan, draft Plan Strategy (DPS) Reconsultation - Reconsultation Survey

Instructions

- Write as **clearly** as you can— these forms might be scanned
- Write your answers in the same language as this form

Formal Consultation period

The Statutory Consultation period opens on 16 January 2026 and closes at 4.30pm on 16th March 2026

Responses to be returned to the LDP team at

2 Church Street , Newtownards BT23 4AP

or by email to planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

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.

Soundness

A key feature of the local development plan system is 'soundness' which requires the development plan document to be tested in terms of content, conformity and the process by which it is produced, at independent examination (IE).

The tests of soundness are based upon three categories which relate to how the development plan document (DPD) has been produced, the alignment of the DPD with central government regional plans, policy and guidance, and the coherence, consistency and effectiveness of the content of the DPD.

More information on Soundness is available :[Development Plan Practice Note 6 Soundness](#) .

Tests of Soundness

The tests of 'Soundness' for Development Plan documents are as follows:

Procedural tests

P1 - Has the DPD been prepared in accordance with the Council's timetable and the Statement of Community Involvement?

P2 - Has the Council prepared its Preferred Options Paper and taken into account any representations made?

P3 - Has the DPD been subject to sustainability appraisal including Strategic Environmental Assessment?

P4 - Did the Council comply with the regulations on the form and content of its DPD and procedure for preparing the DPD?

Consistency tests

C1 - Did the Council take account of the Regional Development Strategy?

C2 - Did the Council take account of its Community Plan?

C3 - Did the Council take account of policy and guidance issued by the Department?

C4 - Has the Plan had regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the Council's district or to any adjoining council's district?

Coherence and effectiveness tests

CE1 - The DPD sets out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations logically flow and where cross boundary issues are relevant it is not in conflict with the DPDs of neighbouring councils.

CE2 - The Strategy, policies and allocations are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base.

CE3 - There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.

CE4 - It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.

1. **Name:**

2. **Address**

3. **Post Code** (optional)

4. **Email** (optional)

5. **Phone Number** (optional)

6. **Are you responding as an individual?** (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

7. **Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?** (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

8. **Organisation and Job Title (if applicable):** (optional)

9. Are you an Agent responding on behalf of a client? (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

10. Client Name , address (if applicable): (optional)

11. Do you wish to upload a document to add to your survey response? (optional)

Please note the maximum size of files that can uploaded is 50MB

This field cannot be completed on paper. Please use the online version of this form instead.

12. Please indicate how you would like your representation to be dealt with at Independent Examination (please select one item only): Please note that the Independent Examiner will be expected to give the same careful consideration to written representations as to those dealt with by oral hearing.

Further information on the IE procedures can be found at <https://www.pacni.gov.uk/node/443>

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Written (Choose this procedure to have your representation considered in written form only)

Oral Hearing (Choose this procedure to present your representation orally at the public hearing) Unless you specially request a hearing, the Independent Examiner will proceed on the basis that you are content to have your representation considered in written form only.

13. Soundness of the Plan (optional)

Do you believe the draft Plan Strategy is sound?

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

14. If you believe the strategy is unsound, please indicate which tests of soundness it fails and provide your reasoning below. (optional)

15. Procedural Tests - (optional)

P1 Has the DPD been prepared in accordance with the Council's timetable and the Statement of Community Involvement?

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

16. Test P1 Comments (optional)

17. P2 Has the Council prepared its Preferred Options Paper and taken into account any representations made? (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

18. Test P2 Comments (optional)

19. P3 Has the DPD been subject to Sustainability Appraisal including Strategic Environmental Appraisal? (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

20. Test P3 Comments (optional)

21. P4 Did the Council comply with the regulations on the form and content of its DPD and procedure for preparing the DPD (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

22. Test P4 Comments (optional)

23. Consistency Tests (optional)

C1 Did the Council take account of the Regional Development Strategy?

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

24. Test C1 Comments (optional)

25. C2 Did the Council take account of its Community Plan? (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

26. Test C2 Comments (optional)

27. C3 Did the Council take account of policy and guidance issued by the Department?
(optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

28. Test C3 Comments (optional)

29. C4 Has the Plan had regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the Council's district or any adjoining council's district? (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

30. Test C4 Comments (optional)

31. Coherence and Effectiveness Tests (optional)

CE 1 The DPD sets out coherent strategy, from which its policies and allocations logically flow and where cross boundary issues are relevant it is not in conflict with the DPDs of neighbouring councils?

**Choose exactly 1 option*

- Yes
- No

32. Test CE 1 Comments (optional)

33. CE 2 The Strategy, policies and allocations are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base?
(optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

- Yes
- No

34. Test CE 2 Comments (optional)

35. CE 3 There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring? (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

36. Test CE 3 Comments (optional)

37. CE 4 It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances? (optional)

**Choose exactly 1 option*

Yes

No

38. Test CE 4 Comments (optional)

39. If you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be unsound please provide details of changes you suggest to make the draft Plan Strategy sound. (optional)

40. Do you have any comments on the Implementation and Monitoring of the draft Plan Strategy? (optional)

41. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
(optional)

Do you have any comments?

42. draft Habitats Regulations Assessment(HRA) (optional)

Do you have any comments on the draft HRA?

43. Equality Impact Screening Report (optional)

Do you have any comments on the EQ screening?

44. Rural Needs Impact Assessment (optional)

Do you have any comments on the RNIA?

45. Please add any additional comments (optional)

What Happens Next?

Thank you for your representation to the Local Development Plan draft Plan Strategy (dPS).

You will receive a formal acknowledgement letter from the Council's Planning Department . We will issue this within 5 working days of your response.

This is in addition to the acknowledgement auto-generated by the Go Vocal system.

Representations received during the public consultation stages of the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan, must be made available for public inspection, both in hard copy, and on the Council's website, as required by Legislation.

Representations will also be shared with an Independent Examiner such as the Planning Appeals Commission and the Department for Infrastructure as part of the Local Development Plan Examination Process.

Representation: Soundness of Ards and North Down draft Plan Strategy

This representation relates to the Draft Plan Strategy housing framework, in particular draft Policy HE 14 – Enabling Development for the Conservation of Significant Places, but also the Strategic Housing Allocation of 15,608 dwellings, SGS1; SGS4; SGS5; SGS6, and the associated operational housing policies set out in Policies HOU 1–17.

Introduction

Given that Enabling Development policy has been in existence for a substantial period of time, surely there is a case for an Exemplar Project for our heritage in the Borough.

ANDBC is a conservation and tourism-led council. The avoidance of employing established Enabling Development policy will see the devastation of the Borough’s heritage.

The alternative to employing a viable Enabling Development policy would be to create an abundance of ‘romantic ruins’ reducing our present heritage assets and landscapes to rubble. This would result in eradicating skillsets as opposed to creating opportunities for re-invigorated heritage that can have an influence on our unique and precious heritage environments, engaging the next generation to learn and lead on restorative, regenerative and sustaining practices.

We would question how the approach being proposed aligns with the internationally recognised standard for the protection of our heritage environments. The ICOMOS principles are designed to ensure the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage sites. The principles value authenticity and the importance of heritage value, following structured processes in diagnosis and restoration to ensure the integrity of the cultural heritage as a whole.

It is important that all new public policy should adhere to providing for an inclusive society – this relates to of gender, race, class, sexuality, dis/ability, etc. Our heritage provides a vital aspect of civic life, acting for our wellbeing, providing spaces to breathe in an increasingly digital age and providing an oasis for our mental health. Our heritage environment appeals to young and old, as an educator, as a resources, as a reminder, and as a place of reminiscence.

This resource is irreplaceable.

Climate adaptation is no longer a distant prospect. It is a present and accelerating challenge. Heatwaves, rising energy costs and extreme weather are already testing the resilience of our buildings and communities.

The planning and heritage frameworks that govern adaptation remain complex, inconsistent and risk-averse, limiting progress at the scale now required.

Retrofit or Ruin

Grosvenor February 2026

Climate change exposes these buildings to extremes of weather not envisaged and will only undermine the built fabrics, removing dew points or quicker erosion via vulnerabilities. Alongside this, we are experiencing dramatic rises in maintenance out of sequence now with established timescales from quintennial, to annual, to bi-annual, to seasonal and monthly.

Our heritage is biodiverse by its very existence. It has enjoyed, in some cases for many years, as a symbiotic relationship with nature, co-existing through seasonal and environmental changes, something that newer environments and buildings have yet to prove and live through. We should be encouraging

this protectionism, bringing light to its existence and using it as an exemplar for future generations to learn from.

Creating environmental resilience as opposed to encouraging environmental damage is something to be strived for, as we witness the extinction of our native flora and fauna, from birds, insects, wildlife and aquatic life forms. It is always important to establish resilient solutions to our historic environment to counter the environmental effects we are now experiencing due to climate change; our aim on all projects should be to re-establish harmony with the natural environment in all interventions that we make in the built environment.

When our aim is to protect heritage, then there must be a way of funding this, and Enabling Development is the policy that has been established to do this. It would appear shortsighted to overlook how successful tourism relies on people of Northern Ireland and the stories they have to tell.

Custodians and people, living and working in our heritage, are the business plan and to exclude the human element with a passion for heritage we will ultimately lose heritage.

We need to encourage and pass on heritage-focused skills, as embedded in our culture, and education so that heritage is preserved for future generations and those generations understand how to be custodians for the heritage entrusted to them.

The importance of cultivating a compassionate approach in all that we execute as practitioners and policy makers is vital to the success.

We need to strive for authenticity and seek the 'glimmers of hope' amongst the rich and vibrant backdrop to life in the Borough. Building in measures that whole-heartedly embrace our mental health, which are climate change resilient and encourage and nurture our biodiverse environments. Fundamentally, these aspirations need to be understood by all and be logical, complete, straightforward documentation with guidance provided to this end.

Hence the variance in guidance across the SPPS, BPG and SGS with the proposed dLDPS, do not lend themselves to being understood to all.

Summary Position

It is our submission that the Draft Plan Strategy cannot be considered to be sound, particularly in regard to the HE 14, which is irrational which, as a result fails the test of Consistency.

Enabling policy permissions develop land for purposes that would otherwise not be permitted, including developing housing in the countryside. The Draft Plan Strategy does not take account of this and consequently fails the tests of Coherence and Effectiveness.

Additionally, the proposed rural housing policies HOU 1- 17, in particular HOU 10, 11, 15 & 17, ensure that the assumed rural housing allocation will not be met, and fails the tests of Coherence and Effectiveness as a result.

If it detaches itself from the guidance it references, then chaos ensues. Either it has new guidance but it cannot cherry-pick earlier guidance and leave conflict unresolved. The application of enablement development requires clear guidance to be successful. The stories are already complex. The policy needs adaptability given the potential breadth of potential projects and the importance of our historical and cultural landscape.

Policy Review

1. Policy HE14

The following inconsistencies are noted under draft policy HE 14 and the SPPS:-

A) Enabling development is not defined in the policy headnote

The SPPS defines enabling development in Paragraph 6.25 as:

*“Enabling development is a development proposal that is contrary to established planning policy and in its own right would not be permitted. Such a proposal may however be allowed where it will secure the long term future of a significant place and will not materially harm its heritage value or setting. Enabling development typically seeks to subsidise the cost of maintenance, major repair, conversion to the optimum viable use of a significant place **where this is greater than its value to its owner or market value.**” (emphasis added)*

By contrast, HE 14 does not have a definition in its headnote and later definition of enabling development in the justification states:

*“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.**” (emphasis added)*

The SPPS sets out the enabling development process and this augments the Best Practice Guidance to PPS 23, the conservation of the significant place is achieved through the revenue generated by the enabling development not its profit, crucially within that context profit is permitted providing the incentive to restore.

Further, the enabling development only able to fund the difference between the value of the completed restoration and the cost of doing so, which means that the owner must also make a significant contribution to the restoration. The owner therefore has a financial interest in ensuring its success.

By contrast, the Draft Plan Strategy definition replaces the use of value to determine the enabling with the use of profit; under HE 14 the profit not the revenue generated provides the funds for restoration removing the incentive for owners to restore.

This is a radical departure from the SPPS definition and the method deployed in the Best Practice Guidance, which the justification section notes is retained by the plan. It also challenges the standard revenue generating model adopted throughout the UK. Instead this Council area will uniquely require that private custodians will receive reduced benefit through enabling development with corresponding negative outcomes for important historic buildings. These historic buildings cannot choose their location and therefore they must avail of exceptions available across the UK and cannot be expected to follow all general policies.

The dLDPS is therefore inconsistent and fails soundness test C3.

B) Policy requires enabling development to comply with all provisions of the dLDPS

As defined in the SPPS and dLDPS, the purpose of enabling development is to permit development that is contrary to established planning policy where it will fund the restoration of historic buildings and places which is in the public interest; with the critical element of the policy definition being that it overrides other policies in the LDP.

The final paragraph of the HE 14 policy headnote states:

“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.”

This paragraph is impossible to achieve; consequently, as currently drafted HE 14 is neither coherent nor effective.

C) The policy does not align in regard to public benefit

Paragraph 15.94 of the dLDPS states:-

“The policy will not be implemented if the Council is uncertain that public benefit will be gained.”

And paragraph 6.26 of the SPPS states

“The justification for allowing the enabling development lies in the over-riding public benefit to the conservation of the significant place and its sustainable future use which would be derived from the implementation of the principal proposal which otherwise would have little prospect of being carried out.”

The SPPS therefore defines that the public benefit that arises comes from the conservation of the significant place itself. There is no clarity as to whether the dLDPS will introduce a new policy test of public benefit not contained in the policy headnote or whether the Council is contemplating not implementing the policy as a whole. Confirmation and accompanying details are sought and there is risk that policy HE14 will be inconsistent with the SPPS as a result of that confirmation.

2. Countryside Policies

Enablement heritage cannot choose their locations and not all heritage assets fall into an urban or suburban environments. Historic estates were once the generators of employment and housing often in rural areas. We are now in a position whereby they need populated and brought back into use again in order to realise viable and sustainable future environments in which to retain and protect our heritage assets.

The Countryside policies do not take Enabling Development into Account. Enabling development as defined in the SPPS offers a potential rural housing windfall that needs to be factored into the allocation figures.

The allocation for rural housing is premised on the assumption that past trends will continue.

The draft operational policy as noted in the dLDPS decreases the numbers of rural dwellings approved by introducing a stricter policy framework as noted individually below:-

- HOU 10 Introduces a stricter test for non-listed vernacular dwellings;. The already restrictive policies of the past are contrary to preserving the authenticity and we are already seeing more buildings lost than retained. The Council should adopt a picturesque planning policy. Founded in the 18th century, a design philosophy emphasising irregularity, asymmetry, would harmonise architecture with the natural landscape.
- HOU 11 Introduces additional requirements to demonstrate the importance and suitability of the building and fails to permit conversion to more than one dwelling where the building is of sufficient size (as required under the bullet point on page 50 of the SPPS). This precludes large buildings which are an important part of our heritage landscape and in a housing crisis would offer viable homes.
- HOU 15 Changes the policy test in two ways: firstly, to a gap sufficient to accommodate only one dwelling, as opposed to two dwellings in PPS 21 and the SPPS; and secondly, the definition of an otherwise substantial and closely built up frontage is changed to five buildings from three. How can this be processed by the lay-person or the neurodiverse community when the guidance reference presents that the opposite is possible.
- HOU 17 Strengthens the six-year test to six continuous years.

The justification clearly sets out that the imposition of additional restrictions as fully considered during the plan-making process. Therefore, the premise that past trends will not continue and the assumption underlying the allocation is wrong, a new trend will produce a lower number of dwellings post plan adoption.

In turn this means that the rural housing allocation is ineffective as the proposed policy framework ensures it will not be met.

As proposed:-

- the rural housing allocation and rural housing policies are inconsistent with each other and the policies do not logically flow from the allocation and is therefore incoherent;
- the rural settlements need people in order to create micro-circular economies;
- and
- the operational policies actively prevent the allocation from being delivered and is therefore not effective in delivery.

Soundness

The Draft Plan Strategy is not sound in relation to HE 14 for the following reasons:

Consistency failure: HE 14 is inconsistent with the SPPS, in particular paragraphs 6.25 and 6.26 by not including the correct definition of enabling development within the headnote; amending the definition to change the core policy test and by suggesting that the policy may not be implemented at all.

Coherence failure: Enabling policy involves accepting that the development proposal does not conform to LDP policies, to include a requirement for that development to conform to all the LDP's policies is incoherent

Irrationality: as drafted HE 14 creates an irreconcilable irrational situation in which development proposals must satisfy policies that enabling development requires be set aside in the public interest.

Effectiveness failure: As drafted HE 14 will not deliver enabling development, placing the future of existing historic environment at risk.

Consistency failure: Operational policies HOU 9 to HOU 17 are inconsistent with the rural housing allocation.

Coherence failure: Operational policies HOU 9 to HOU 17 do not logically flow from the housing allocation.

Effectiveness failure: Operational policies HOU 9 to HOU 17 have been expressly drafted to reduce the number of rural dwellings, conflicting with the basis of the allocation on past trends and less stringent policy.

There is so much left to interpretation within the dLDPS that it is not evident on which basis, rules or guidance are to be followed, and worse, judgement may be made on an individual project by project basis. This appears wholly inappropriate to the policy when the thrust of the new policy is based on soundness. There has been a huge global shift in the standard of professionalism being judged on competency, which is not a good fit with interpretation. The approach of the dLDPS would appear to be weak on this respect and not following the current practice.

Until these matters are addressed, the Draft Plan Strategy cannot be considered a clear, workable plan capable of delivering its objectives and is therefore not sound.

Yours Faithfully,

Stephen Villiers