

**MAIN QUESTION**

**Name:**

Michael Gordon

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Address**

3 Joy Street, Belfast

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Post Code**

BT2 8LE

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Email**

michael.gordon@turley.co.uk

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Phone Number**

07766770652

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Are you responding as an individual?**

No

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?**

Yes

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Organisation and Job Title (if applicable):**

Turley

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Are you an Agent responding on behalf of a client?**

Yes

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Client Name , address (if applicable):**

Chambers Homes Ltd

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

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.

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.

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

### Soundness of the Plan

No

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

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

See attached report.

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

### Test P1 Comments

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

### Test P2 Comments

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

### Test P3 Comments

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test P4 Comments**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test C1 Comments**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test C2 Comments**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

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

No

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test C3 Comments**

See attached report.

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test C4 Comments**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test CE 1 Comments**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

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

No

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test CE 2 Comments**

See attached report.

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test CE 3 Comments**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

CE 4 It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances?

No

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Test CE 4 Comments**

See attached report.

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

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

See attached report.

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

Do you have any comments on the Implementation and Monitoring of the draft Plan Strategy?

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**draft Habitats Regulations Assessment(HRA)**

No answer

+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

## Equality Impact Screening Report

No answer

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+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

## Rural Needs Impact Assessment

No answer

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+ ADD TO ANALYSIS

**Please add any additional comments**

No answer

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Example tag 1 +

Example tag 2 +

# Ards & North Down draft Plan Strategy

Representation on behalf of Chambers Homes Ltd

**Lisbane**

March 2026

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**Client**  
Chambers Homes Ltd

**Our reference**  
05204

16 March 2026

# Executive Summary

## *Representation on behalf of Chambers Homes Ltd – Ards & North Down draft Plan Strategy*

1. This submission, prepared by Turley on behalf of Chambers Homes Ltd is submitted in response to the Ards & North Down Borough Council's draft Plan Strategy (dPS). Chambers Homes Ltd is an established house builder with extensive experience of construction in the Borough. The representation acknowledges positive elements in the Council's approach, such as the shift to an employment-led housing strategy and the extension of the plan period to 2032, but also identifies concerns regarding the plan's soundness, particularly around its approach to continuity of housing land supply given the current plan horizon.

### **Key Strengths and Welcome Changes**

2. **Employment-led Housing Strategy:** The Council's decision to integrate housing and employment strategies, moving away from rigid Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs), is commended as a progressive, ambitious approach that better reflects the needs of the Borough's economy and population.
3. **Extension of Plan Period:** The plan period's extension from 2030 to 2032 is welcomed, albeit with the recommendation that a longer horizon (at least to 2035) would be more effective in securing continuity of land supply and maximising the benefits of the planning process.
4. **Recognition of Local Context:** The dPS's Borough profile accurately highlights key challenges, such as an ageing population, high quality of life, commuting patterns, and infrastructure issues. The alignment of the LDP Vision with the Community Plan is also supported.

### **Principal Concerns and Critique**

5. **Short Plan Horizon:** The plan's effective horizon is too short, with more than half the plan period elapsed before adoption is likely. This creates a backlog in housing delivery and risks the plan becoming outdated upon adoption, undermining its coherence and effectiveness.

### **Soundness Issues Identified**

6. The representation evaluates the dPS against statutory soundness tests, concluding that the plan is currently unsound for the following reasons:

#### ***Consistency Tests:***

7. C3: Failure to take account of policy and guidance issued by the Department insofar as the LDP has not been prepared quickly.

#### ***Coherence and Effectiveness Tests:***

8. CE2/CE4: Unrealistic plan period and inability to adapt to changing circumstances, especially given current adoption trajectories.

## **Detailed Policy Commentary**

9. The submission advocates for a longer plan period and consequential additional allocation to the villages to ensure they are sustained through continuity of housing land supply, supporting choice and maintaining their role as vibrant centre of community.
10. **General Policies:** Several operational policies are critiqued for lack of clarity, unnecessary duplication, or inflexibility (e.g., amenity impacts, parking requirements, planning agreements). Recommendations include streamlining policy wording and ensuring developer contributions are directly linked to development impacts.
11. **Design and Affordable Housing:** Concerns are raised about overly prescriptive design criteria that may stifle innovation, inflexible affordable housing definitions and requirements, and ambiguous terms that could hinder effective policy implementation.
12. **Monitoring and Review:** While ongoing monitoring is essential, it should not substitute for a robust, future-proofed LDP at adoption. The plan's short horizon and risk of immediate obsolescence are highlighted as critical weaknesses.

## **Recommendations for Improvement**

13. Extend the plan period to at least 2035 (preferably 2040) to ensure the LDP remains relevant, delivers on housing and employment targets, and provides a clear break from legacy planning frameworks.
14. Permit continued localised growth in villages such as Lisbane to provide choice for households and attract new families, supporting and sustaining local services and community development.
15. Clarify and, where appropriate, streamline general and topic-specific policies to provide certainty for applicants, decision-makers, and stakeholders.
16. Ensure monitoring and review mechanisms are robust but not a substitute for sound plan-making at the outset.

## **Conclusion**

17. This representation welcomes the Council's ambition and integrated approach but urges amendments to ensure the draft Plan Strategy is found sound. The principal recommendations focus on extending the plan period. By adopting these changes, the Council can better secure the Borough's sustainable growth objectives, support economic development, and provide for the housing needs of current and future residents.
18. We look forward to learning of the Council's consideration of this representation in its response, when published and, as necessary, participating in a future Independent Examination (IE).

# 1. Introduction & Background

- 1.1 Turley submits this representation on behalf of Chambers Homes Ltd and welcomes the opportunity to return comments on the Ards & North Down Borough Council draft Plan Strategy (dPS).
- 1.2 The company is familiar with the planning process, including the Local Development Plan (LDP) making process, having prior experience of both the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and Ards and Down Area Plan (ADAP) processes.
- 1.3 The company welcome this opportunity to respond to the Council's invitation to join the debate on the key issues of strategic significance which are likely to influence the direction of future development within the Borough.
- 1.4 The structure of the submission is as follows:
  - **Chapter 2:** provides an assessment of how the draft Plan Strategy addresses the legislative compliance tests;
  - **Chapter 3:** sets out our representations in response to the dPS Context and Vision (Part A);
  - **Chapter 4:** sets out our representations in response to the dPS Strategic Approach – Growth Strategy (Part B);
  - **Chapter 5:** sets out our representations in response to the dPS General Policies applying to all development (Part C);
  - **Chapter 6:** sets out our representations in response to the dPS Strategic and Operational Topic Policies (Part D);
  - **Chapter 7:** sets out our representations in response to the dPS proposals for Monitoring and Review (Part E);
  - **Chapter 8:** sets out our analysis of how growth can be accommodated in Lisbane.
- 1.5 By way of background, we would also like to draw your attention to the submission made in 2019 in response to the Preferred Options Paper (POP), at Appendix 1. Chambers Homes Ltd continues to have an interest in extending its Oakwood Park, Lisbane, development onto the lands identified in Chapter 8.

## 2. Legislative & Compliance Tests

- 2.1 In preparing their Draft Plan Strategy (dPS), the Council is required to adhere to the provisions of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('Act') and the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 ('Regulations').
- 2.2 We welcome the Council's decision to re-run the dPS consultation period due to the ambiguity around the final date for representations in December 2025, which arose as a result of the timing of the Belfast Gazette advertisement. Addressing this issue will help ensure that the LDP is capable of passing Procedural soundness test P4.
- 2.3 Whilst not particularly relevant to the focus of this representation, we note that an updated version of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) has been issued by the Department in the period since the dPS was prepared and look forward to understanding how this updated strategic policy context will be integrated into the plan-making process.
- 2.4 The keystone of the local development plan system is the principle of 'soundness'. Section 10(6) of the 2011 Act notes that the purpose of the Independent Examination (IE) is to determine, in respect of the development plan document:
  - 2.5 whether it satisfies the requirements of Sections 7 and 8 or, as the case may be, Sections 7 and 9, and any regulations under section 22 relating to the preparation of development plan documents; and
    - (i) whether it is sound.
    - (ii) The 2011 Act does not define the meaning of 'soundness'. However, Development Plan Practice Note 6 – Soundness (DPPN 6), dated May 2017, suggests that it may be considered in the context of its ordinary meaning of 'showing good judgement' and 'able to be trusted'.
- 2.6 Furthermore, DPPN 6 states that the tests of soundness are based upon three categories. These three categories relate to:
  - (i) how the development plan document (DPD) has been produced;
  - (ii) the alignment of the DPD with central government regional plans, policy and guidance; and
  - (iii) the coherence, consistency and effectiveness of the content of the DPD.
- 2.7 DPPN 6 advises that 'soundness' involves testing the principles, content and preparation process of the DPD against a list of key criteria. DPPN 6 then sets out a number of procedural (P1-P4), consistency (C1-C4) and coherence and effectiveness (CE1-CE4) tests which '...aim to provide a framework to assess the soundness of the DPD, whilst taking account of all relevant procedural, legislative and policy considerations'.

- 2.8 Specifically, Test CE1 requires the DPD to ‘set out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations logically flow’ and to ensure that it is consistent with the Plan Strategy.
- 2.9 Test CE2 also requires that ‘the strategy, policies and allocations are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base’.
- 2.10 For the reasons explained further below, whilst the dPS and, in particular, it’s integrated approach to the employment and housing strategies is welcomed, aspects of the plan render it unsound for Consistency and Coherence/Effectiveness reasons.
- 2.11 The key considerations which are implicit in judging the soundness of the LPP, include the extent to which:
- the LPP can achieve its own vision and strategic objectives without the allocation of an appropriate amount of ‘new’ land in places consistent with its Growth Strategy;
  - reliance upon existing housing commitments, particularly those which have yet to deliver homes, or are not delivering at pace, will affect achievement of the plan housing strategy, with knock on effects for employment and regeneration;
  - the plan should look beyond the end of its plan period to ensure continuity of housing land supply.

### 3. Part A – Context & Vision

#### **Borough Profile**

- 3.1 The following aspects of the profile of the Borough resonate with our analysis:
- the high quality of life available to residents of the Borough;
  - the ageing population and the implications of this for the future of the local economy and housing market;
  - the fact that many residents in the Borough travel outside for work, and the implications of this for transport infrastructure and for local employment opportunities, particularly for young people;
  - the distinctive role and function of each of the principal settlements in the Borough;
  - the issues, not unique to the Borough, around sewerage and water infrastructure.
- 3.2 Having built homes in Lisbane, Chambers Homes welcome the acknowledgement at para 1.94 of the Borough’s vibrant network of villages and small settlements, each with their individual physical and social attributes of their communities.
- 3.3 Equally, understanding the value of sustaining the thriving community facilities in Lisbane, Chambers Homes recognise the challenge identified in para 1.115 of maintaining existing sustainable, attractive and inclusive communities, to ensure that the Borough continues to benefit from low crime levels, good health and an attractive natural and historic environment – some of the key factors driving the high quality of life available in Ards and North Down.
- 3.4 Chambers Homes Ltd also welcome the acknowledgement at para 1.116 that some of these issues require collaborative approaches and commitments to address. The company welcome the opportunity to highlight, through this and previous submissions, that they stand ready to play their part in meeting housing needs in a sustainable and beneficial way to existing and future residents of the Borough.

#### **Vision & Objectives**

- 3.5 We note the alignment between the LDP Vision and that of the Community Plan, with the Council’s vision that by 2032:
- ‘Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to live.’*
- 3.6 In terms of prosperity and vibrancy, we would simply wish to emphasise the importance of supporting the delivery of the housing needed to achieve the economic

ambition of the Council and the vibrancy which additional population growth should bring to the Borough’s town and city centres.

- 3.7 With that in mind, we note the social, economic, environmental and infrastructure objectives of the LDP and concur with the Council that these are often cross cutting in nature. For example, achieving the stated social objectives, including providing sufficient land for housing, will support the economic objectives of encouraging growth and attracting inward investment.

**Plan Period**

- 3.8 We welcome the Council’s decision to extend the end date of the plan from 2030, as proposed at Preferred Options Paper (POP) stage, to 2032, however, we remain concerned that the plan horizon is still too short and it should be extended to at least 2035. The Council’s latest LDP timetable (May 2024) is as follows:



- 3.9 The Council is estimating that the Plan Strategy will be adopted, after Independent Examination, around two years (24 months) after its publication in draft. Even before the consultation reset, this is a very optimistic outlook based upon the equivalent programmes for the other NI Plan Strategies which have been adopted to date. As can be seen from the table below, the average time taken from publication of draft Plan Strategy to adoption is 55 months.

**Table 3.1: Time Taken to Adopt Plan Strategies Post Publication in Draft**

Council	Draft	Adoption	Time (Months)
FODC	October 2018	March 2023	53
Belfast	September 2018	May 2023	56
Antrim & Newtownabbey	July 2019	July 2025	72
Derry City & Strabane	September 2020*	July 2025	58
Lisburn & Castlereagh	November 2019	September 2023	46
Mid & East Antrim	October 2019	October 2023	48
AVERAGE			55

- 3.10 Even if it took the Council four years (48 months) to achieve adoption of the Plan Strategy – equalling the quickest of the other plans - this would see the Plan Strategy adopted in January 2030.
- 3.11 Notably none of the Councils that have adopted Plan Strategies have yet to publish Local Policies Plans (LPP) for consultation. The estimated best-case timescales for the earliest LPPs are set out below:

**Table 3.2: Anticipated Timescale for Draft LPPs**

Council	Draft Anticipated	Time from Plan Strategy (Months)
FODC	October 2026	43
Belfast	May 2026	36
Antrim & Newtownabbey	March 2027	20
Mid & East Antrim	March 2027	42
Derry City & Strabane	July 2027	24
Lisburn & Castlereagh	September 2027	48

- 3.12 Even if it takes the 15 months from adoption of the Plan Strategy, as presently forecast by the Council, this will see the draft LPP published in May 2031. The Council’s timetable suggests a three-year period from then to adoption of the LPP, which would be May 2034. This would be quicker than any other Council before it. Even with the potential for Independent Examination by either the Planning Appeals Commission or an alternative person appointed by the Department, it appears optimistic. 2035 is perhaps more realistic but time will tell.
- 3.13 The clear potential for the second part of the Plan to be adopted two or three years after its stated end date, must have consequences for its outlook and housing strategy. In order to deliver some benefit from the significant investment in plan-making and avoid the potential for the plan to be out of date before it is even adopted, it should look ahead to at least 2035, if not 2040.
- 3.14 As presently drafted the dPS fails several of the Consistency, Coherence and Effectiveness soundness tests:
- C3: The council took account of policy and guidance issued by the Department.***
- 3.15 Is not met because the Council has not taken account of paragraph 5.25 of the SPPS (or Diagram 2) which requires the Plan Strategy to be published quickly (anticipated within 2 years). This fundamentally affects the plan period and time horizon of the plan.
- 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***
- 3.16 Is not met because whilst the vision and core strategy of integrating housing and employment growth is sound, the time period within which this strategy is delivered is

inappropriate given the current trajectory of the plan making process. This affects the policies (such as the phasing policy SGS6) and housing allocation SGS5.

***CE2: The strategy, policies and allocations are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base***

- 3.17 Is not met because the plan period for the strategy and the associated policies and allocations are unrealistic and inappropriate considering the evidence of the current trajectory of the LDP towards adoption.

***CE4: It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances***

- 3.18 Is not met because for the reason stated above, it will not be able to deal with changing circumstances.

## 4. Part B – Strategic Approach – Growth Strategy

### SGS 1: Spatial Growth Strategy & SGS 2: Settlement Hierarchy

- 4.1 Flowing from the analysis of the Borough’s characteristics and challenges referenced above, the social objectives of the plan particularly resonate with Chambers Home, including:
- 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.
- 4.2 In this context the company welcomes the elevation of Lisbane in the settlement hierarchy, from a small settlement to a village. The community facilities and services provided in the village service a wider rural hinterland, as acknowledged at 2.5 bullet point 1. It is important continued localised growth is permitted to provide choice for households and attract new families, supporting and sustaining local services and community development.
- 4.3 Chambers Homes fully supports the Spatial Growth Strategy’s plan to sustain and maintain the diversity and quality of villages by encouraging local development which supports the population and services of local communities. This is particularly important where there is likely to be limited opportunities for houses in the countryside, meaning that villages are the principal locations for households choosing to live outside of the principal settlements and small towns.
- 4.4 Chambers Homes supports the plan (para 2.12) that 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.

### SGS 3: Strategic Allocation of Economic and Industrial Land

- 4.5 Given the important connection between the delivery of jobs and homes, we would support this policy.
- 4.6 The dPS proposes to allocate 15,608 new homes to meet housing need and support job creation over the plan period (2017 -2032, 15 years), under Policy SGS 4: ‘Strategic Housing Allocation’. The justifying text references the consideration of several housing growth scenarios within the underpinning evidence base, with these explained in *‘Technical Supplement 3 Housing’*. It confirms that the approach taken has been to *‘adopt an employment-led approach to setting the strategic housing requirement.’* It proceeds to acknowledge that: *‘There is a complex inter-reliance between employment growth – population growth – and housing growth.’*<sup>1</sup> Further consideration is given to

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<sup>1</sup> Ards and North Down Local Development Strategy (2025), paragraphs 2.45 and 2.46

the justification and underlying evidence supporting the approach taken in the dPS in this regard, within this note.

- 4.7 It is also observed that the dPS acknowledges the challenges relating to worsening affordability, observing: *'House prices in the Borough remain relatively high, and this can cause affordability issues, particularly for young people.'*<sup>2</sup> This challenge is equally evident in both urban and rural areas. The Borough's villages will play a complementary and proportionate role in the success scenario of the Borough's integrated employment/housing strategy.

### **Alignment between job growth and housing need**

#### ***Planning positively for economic growth***

- 4.8 The dPS Plan proposes, through Policy SGS 3 'Strategic Allocation of Economic and Industrial Development Land' to allocate a minimum 25 hectares of land for economic development purposes. In justifying this provision, the Plan references the commissioned *Employment Land Review (ELR, 2019)* and the *Employment Land Monitor (April 2022 and updated in 2023)*.
- 4.9 This evidence identified that out of the 203.23 hectares zoned through the Ards and Down Plan (2015) and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (2015), 63 hectares remains undeveloped.
- 4.10 The additional need reflects work undertaken to ensure alignment with the Council's *Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy (Integrated Strategy or ITRDS)*, which sets out the growth aspirations for the Borough up until 2026. The anticipated growth rates have been extrapolated to 2030 and then 2032 to align with the Plan period. In the case of the more ambitious 'strategy success' scenario this suggests job growth over the plan period of some 9,375 jobs, which is preferred and to which the Plan aligns. It is noted that the job growth figures to 2030, which are used in the ELR, suggest 4,500 jobs under the baseline and 7,500 jobs under the 'strategy success' scenario, translating into a need for between 12.6 and 20.5 ha of employment land. It is evident that in allocating an additional 25 ha, on top of the remaining land supply, that the Plan provides the potential to accommodate stronger job growth than either of these referenced scenarios if investment occurs and commercial floorspace is progressed across the whole potential supply.
- 4.11 The dPS cites the *'highly ambitious Belfast Region City Deal [BRCD]'* signed in December 2021, which it confirms represents a significant package of investment aimed at delivering: *'Inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs...'*. Referencing the intent for the *'substantial financial commitment'* to *'generate up to 20,000 jobs as it is delivered over the next 10-15 years'*<sup>3</sup>.
- 4.12 Looking at Ards and North Down the latest available data shows that there has been a steady and strong level of job generation over the plan period to date. Figure 4.2 shows

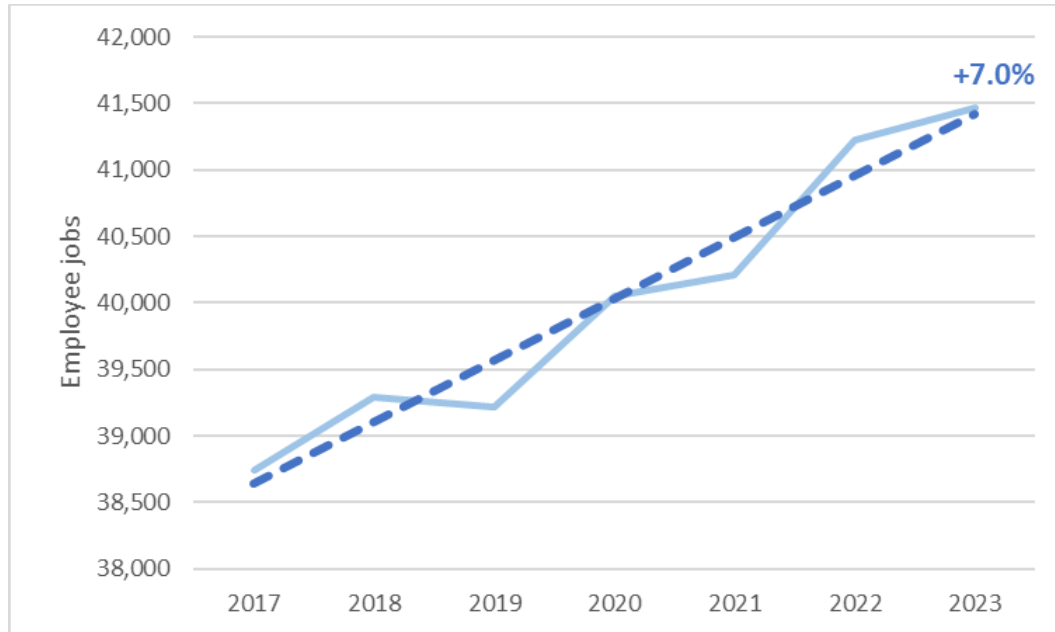
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<sup>2</sup> Ards and North Down Local Development Strategy (2025), paragraph 1.115

<sup>3</sup> Ards and North Down Local Development Strategy (2025), paragraphs 1.84 and 1.85

the annual change in employee jobs from the start of the plan period, confirming a 7% growth and an absolute increase of some 2,700 jobs over 6 years.

**Figure 4.1: Ards and North Down Employee Jobs 2017 – 2023**



Source: NI Business Register and Employment Survey

- 4.13 The Council recently commissioned a ‘*Supplementary Employment Land Review*’, which was published in 2025. This sought to validate the conclusions of the 2019 ELR and specifically consider the extent to which the forecast job growth (the 9,375 jobs over the plan period) was reasonable and its alignment with the amount of employment land proposed for allocation. The study did this by looking at existing pipeline projects and investments which would be expected to deliver job growth over the Plan period.
- 4.14 The study identified a sufficient pipeline of potential employment generating projects. Indeed, it identified, based on 20 ‘direct interventions’ along with calculated indirect growth arising from a number of these interventions, the potential to generate 10,395 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. A 10% displacement factor was applied to net this down to align with the total forecast of 9,375 to validate the assumed level of growth.

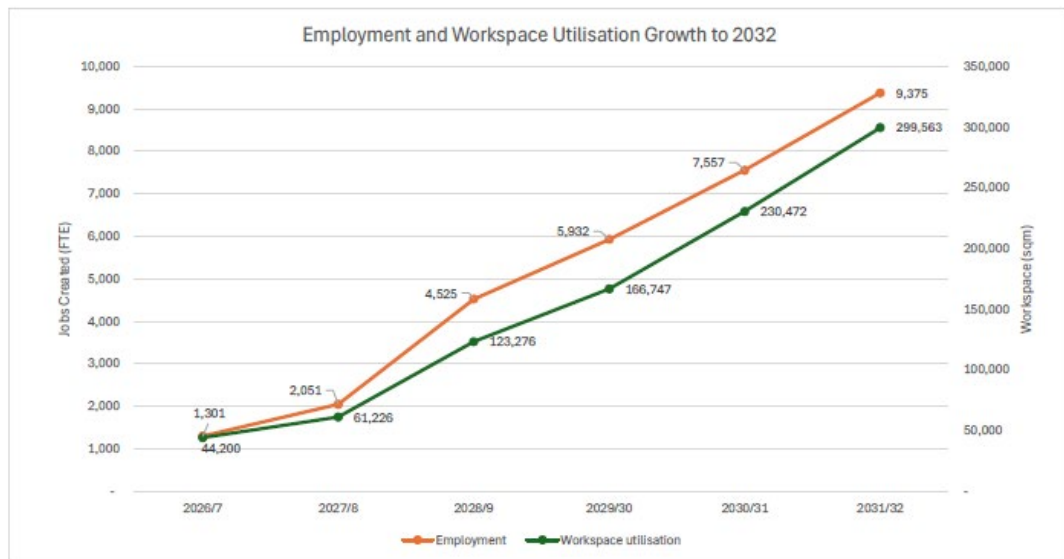
***The potential for higher than forecast employment growth***

- 4.15 It is observed that it is reasonable to interpret the findings of the 2025 *Supplementary ELR* as indicated that there is a good possibility that even stronger levels of employment generation could be expected, therefore exceeding the Draft Plan’s target.
- 4.16 The forecast potential to create over 10,000 jobs across 20 projects does not account for the potential for jobs to be created elsewhere across the borough. There is a recognition in the study that a growing population will itself be an economic driver. This is important as it is correct to expect that demands arising from additional people will generate jobs in sectors of the economy not picked up within the specific

interventions considered. This would include, for example, jobs associated with additional retail and leisure spend from a growing population as well as those within social infrastructure (schools, health facilities etc...).

- 4.17 The study suggests that the additional jobs forecast could be accommodated within 40.8 ha of employment land. Even against the 63 ha of extant employment land referenced above this suggests a reasonable level of headroom. If this additional land was built out and occupied this itself would contribute further additional jobs.
- 4.18 Finally, the forecasts developed in the study imply that a significant proportion (almost all) of the additional jobs generated would be created post 2026/27. This is shown in the following Figure which is replicated from the study. Where the housing requirement, and underlying demographics, assume growth over the whole plan period any additional job growth which has occurred prior to 2026/27 would already have been absorbed by population change over this period. The result would be a greater potential draw on labour over the remaining years of the plan period to align with this strong job growth.

**Figure 4.2: Employment and Workspace Utilisation Growth to 2032**



Source: Ards and North Down Supplementary Employment Land Review (2025), Jettora

***Understanding the implications for housing need***

- 4.19 In this context and in considering the relationship with housing the Council commissioned detailed demographic projection modelling work from Edge Analytics. The output of this analysis is presented in a separate technical report and then summarised in a ‘*Technical Supplement 3 Housing*’.
- 4.20 This work critically highlights and considers the implications of a projected ageing of the local population. The Local Plan summarises the conclusion of the technical evidence and identifies that to support the identified 9,375 forecast job growth there would need to be a population increase of 25,318, equating to an increase of 13,372 households. In turn this translates into a dwelling requirement of 14,189 homes over

the Plan period, or 946 dwellings per annum. To this need a flexibility allowance of 10% has been applied to justify the housing requirement of 15,608 dwellings.

- 4.21 Where the above evidence correctly identifies the important relationships between the changing age structure of the population and labour behaviours it is evident that to sustainably support a stronger economy there would be a direct need to see a parallel stronger growth in population and as a result housing need.

#### **The need for an extended Plan period**

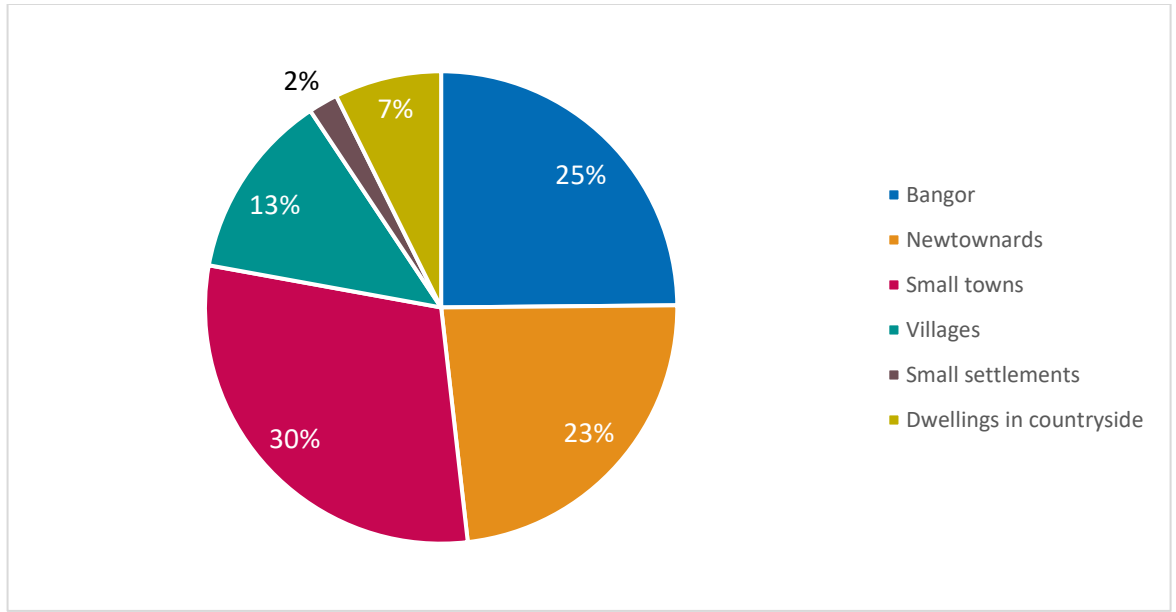
- 4.22 As noted above, the plan period as set out in the dPS is 2017 to 2032, with needs calculated and planned for over this period.
- 4.23 This results in a position where over 50% of the period has already occurred and the Plan is only looking forward approximately 6 years from the current point in time (early 2026). Recognising the time required to see the two stages of the Plan through to adoption, the reality is that there is a strong likelihood that the remaining time will be used and the LPP will be adopted after the stated end date of the plan.
- 4.24 Looking at housing, one consequence of this is an anticipated significant back-loading of provision and arising deliverability challenges. This recognises that the monitoring of completions reported in the Plan indicates that over the first 5 years of the plan period (2017/18 to 2021/22) only 2,959 homes have been delivered<sup>4</sup>. This represents an average annual delivery rate of 592 homes per annum, some way short of the average annual requirement of 946 homes per annum.
- 4.25 Further Housing Land Availability Reports have been published by the Council, with the latest monitoring completions in 2023/24. Adding the two additional years of data (completions of 557 and 407 dwellings per annum respectively) means a total of 3,923 homes have been delivered over the first 7 years of the plan period, an annual average of just 560 homes per annum.
- 4.26 This leaves a residual need for some 11,685 homes (against the plan period requirement of 15,608 dwellings). As a result, there is a requirement to deliver some 1,461 homes per annum over the last 8 years of the plan period. This evidently represents a significant 'step-up' from recent levels of delivery.
- 4.27 In the context of the above, there is a strong rationale for extending the plan period to allow for the backlog to be addressed over a longer period of time.
- 4.28 The Council's Housing Land Availability Reports provide what appears to be robust and consistent monitoring data back to 2019/20, a five year period with the latest year reported on being 2023/24. However, earlier reports note that there was a degree of inconsistency in how completions data was collected with the 2018/19 being the first to use a new methodology which was more comprehensive in its approach, but also observing that where it sought to retrospectively address earlier weaknesses that it cannot be used to present a reflection of the annual delivery that year. This is

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<sup>4</sup> The Draft Plan states '*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.*

unsatisfactory and means using this data source it is not possible to get a full picture of completions consistently over the plan period. However, the data does provide a spatial breakdown for this five year period, in which 2,579 completions were recorded in total. This is illustrated in Figure 4.3, which shows that the villages have played an important role in accommodating housing development in recent years.

**Figure 4.3: Spatial distribution of completions 2018/19 – 2023/24**



*Source: Turley analysis of Ards and North Down Housing Land Availability Reports*

- 4.29 Whilst for sustainability reasons it is agreed that the larger urban settlements, should accommodate the greatest share of the housing allocation, villages such as Lisbane should be permitted to grow modestly to provide choice and sustain communities and community facilities

**SGS 4: Strategic Housing Allocation (SHA)**

- 4.30 As noted above, the Council’s rejection of an HGI-led approach to establishing its Strategic Housing Allocation (SHA), in favour of an employment-led approach is broadly welcomed as positive and ambitious. The fundamentals of the approach are as per our approach to Belfast when commissioned by Belfast City Council. The need to encourage the in-migration of the working age cohort in acknowledgement of the Borough’s increasingly ageing population with a consequential reduction in working age population is noted.
- 4.31 Plainly it is important to maintain a continuous supply of quality homes in order to achieve the level of employment growth targeted by the Council. Given the likely timescales associated with the adoption of the LPP part of the LDP, as which point ‘new’ land will become available, it is equally important for there not to be a hiatus in the supply of land for new homes.

4.32 If, as is suggested above, the effective plan horizon (if not the stated end date) was extended to 2035, or 2040, the extrapolating (rolling forward) the SHA to generate a new total dwelling requirement would increase as per the table below:

**Table 4.1: Extrapolated Strategic Housing Allocation (SHA)**

	Council 2032	Turley 2035	Turley 2040
New dwelling requirement	14,189	17,027	21,757
10% Flexibility Allowance	1,419	1,703	2,176
Total Housing Requirement	15,608	18,730	23,933
Annual housing requirement	946		

4.33 Such an approach is also necessary because it will several years from the adoption of the plan for a fresh zoning to deliver new homes at any scale.

**SGS 5: Strategic Housing Allocation across settlements**

4.34 We welcome the Council’s approach to the allocation of the SHA across the settlement tiers with 10% allocated to villages.

4.35 Applying these proportions to the 2035 and 2040 Turley SHAs (Table 4.3), above, results in the following requirement.

**Table 4.2: Extended Strategic Housing Allocation (SHA)**

	Turley 2035	Turley 2040
Villages	1873	2393

4.36 Draft Plan Strategy Table 6: Strategic Housing Allocation Across Settlements sets out details of what the Council considers to be the Borough’s Potential Housing Supply, an extract of which is set out below:

**Table 4.3: Villages: Comparison of Housing Requirement to Supply (to 2032)**

	Housing Allocation 2017-2032	Existing Commitments	Urban Capacity Potential	Windfall Allowance	Total Potential Housing Supply
Villages	1265	1076	-	690	1766

4.37 This suggests that there is a sizeable surplus of available housing land supply in the villages, presuming all sources of identified supply are available and making a housing contribution.

4.38 With an extended plan period in mind, a comparison with the Turley 2035 SHA is set out below.

**Table 4.4: Villages: Comparison of Housing Requirement to Supply (to 2035)**

	Housing Allocation 2017-2035	Existing Commitments	Urban Capacity Potential	Windfall Allowance	Total Potential Housing Supply	Requirement
Villages	1873	1076	-	690	1766	107

4.39 This suggests that, again always presuming all sources of identified supply are available and making a housing contribution, housing land in the villages will run out soon after the end of the current plan period. There would be an additional requirement for land in the villages if, as recommended, the plan looked further ahead.

## 5. Part C – General Policies

- 5.1 Responses are provided to a number of the draft operational planning policies in turn below.

### **GP1 General Principles**

- 5.2 Whilst we are broadly supportive of the general principles for development, whilst generally align with the SPPS, the policy is long and contains a significant level of duplication with specific planning policies elsewhere in the Plan Strategy. We would suggest a more concise format as more suitable for the benefit of both applicants and decision makers.
- 5.3 Specifically, we have concerns with the following parts of the policy as drafted.
- 5.4 At part (c) 5), the policy seeks to avoid unacceptable amenity impact by reason of ‘*general disturbance*’. This term is not used within regional planning documents and is ambiguous. Normal sources of impact on residential amenity are covered sufficiently by the other reasons listed within the criteria, without the requirement for reason 5). This aspect of the policy fails soundness test CE2 in that it is not appropriate or founded on a robust evidence base.
- 5.5 At part (d), reference is made to the provision of ease of access to ‘*reserved car parking, public transport facilities and taxi ranks*’. The requirement for ease of access to taxi ranks should, if anywhere, be dealt with by transport policies within the Plan Strategy, yet it is not referenced elsewhere in any other policy. The requirement for proximity to a taxi rank in any case is overly onerous and will not be practicable or appropriate for all developments. In this regard, the policy fails soundness test CE4.
- 5.6 At part (e) the draft policy states:
- “any emission of discharge of effluent (including sewage) arising from the development is in accordance with legislative requirements pertaining to air and water quality.”*
- 5.7 Reiterating a requirement to comply with other non-planning legislation is deemed unnecessary for inclusion within the policy wording.

### **PA1 Planning Agreements**

- 5.8 Draft Policy PA1 states that:
- “In appropriate case, the Council will seek contribution from developers where these are necessary for infrastructure delivery or to manage impact on the Borough’s environment and services.”*
- 5.9 This wording could be unintentionally interpreted as a mechanism for contributions being sought for the above where any impact has not directly arisen as a result of the development proposal. The Department’s Development Management Practice Note 21 confirms that planning agreements should relate to the development being

proposed, such as where a proposed development would create a *direct need* (our emphasis) for particular facilities or place additional requirements on infrastructure. There should be a link between the development and any mitigation offered including any financial contribution. This is not made clear in the draft policy.

- 5.10 As worded, the policy fails soundness test C3 in that it does not take full account of the above guidance issued by the Department. We suggest the inclusion of wording to confirm that contributions may be sought to manage impact resulting directly from the development in question.

## 6. Part D – Strategic & Operational Topic Policies

### **HOU1 Housing Development in Settlements**

- 6.1 Draft Policy HOU1 outlines the criteria which will determine when a Concept Master Plan is required. Criteria (b) – all, or part of, zoned housing sites of 15 hectares or more, and (c) - housing development on any other site of 15 hectares or more, are not clearly worded and could be combined into a single criteria requiring a Concept Master Plan on any sites of 15 hectares or more. The next paragraph within the policy is sufficient to secure the requirement for a Concept Master Plan for any partial development of a zoned site.
- 6.2 Whilst this is not considered to be a matter of soundness, we suggest the above simplification of the policy.

### **HOU2 Design of New Residential Development**

- 6.3 HOU2 sets out in detail the design criteria for new residential development. There are several criteria which we have concerns with, in their current form.
- 6.4 Criterion (d) requires that:
- “adequate provision is made for necessary local neighbourhood facilities, where appropriate, to be provided by the applicant as an integral part of the development.”*
- 6.5 Firstly, the wording of the draft policy implies that the provision of neighbourhood facilities within residential development will be the normal expectation, insufficient clarity is provided in the amplification test as to any proportional application of the policy. Secondly, the policy requires such facilities to be an integral part of the development. Where this is often good planning, there may be circumstances where an off-site provision is preferable due to the specific needs of the community or due to development viability realities. This part of the policy is inflexible and fails the soundness test CE4.
- 6.6 Criterion (h) requires the design of development to *“draw upon the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing.”* Whilst in many circumstances, such an approach may be suitable and welcome, the inclusion of this criterion risks stifling innovative or contemporary design approaches which are sensitively designed to provide a high-quality development responding to its individual context. Whilst the SPPS (paragraph 4.29) does note that it is proper for policy and guidance to seek local distinctiveness, the same paragraph confirms that planning authorities should not attempt to impose a particular architectural taste or style arbitrarily.
- 6.7 The SPPS does not specify a requirement for traditional approaches to design. We suggest that this criterion should be removed and that design guidance specific to the Borough should direct design – carrying less weight than planning policy, and leaving space for non-traditional approaches. As drafted, the policy criterion (h) fails soundness test CE4.

- 6.8 Criterion (i) relates to the protection of amenity and includes the *term 'other disturbance'*. In similar vein to our comments at Paragraph 4.4 above, this is an ambiguous term which fails soundness test CE2.
- 6.9 Criterion (r) states that for the conversion and reuse of buildings, the development should not contain any flat or apartment which is *"wholly in the rear of the property and without access to the public street"*. Considerations of residential quality are sufficiently covered elsewhere in draft Policy HOU2 and criterion (r) as drafted is unduly onerous and restrictive. There may be bespoke design solutions or site layouts which enable the provision of a high-quality apartment to the rear of an existing property, and this should be a consideration for the decision maker on a case-by-case basis. As drafted, criterion (r) is not sufficiently flexible and fails soundness test CE4.

### **HOU3 Affordable Housing**

- 6.10 The Council's draft affordable housing draft policy fails soundness tests C3, C4 and CE2 for the following reasons.
- 6.11 Firstly, the second paragraph states that where NIHE have identified an acute localised need, the proportion of affordable housing required *"may be uplifted on an individual site"*. Whilst we support the general principle of the draft policy and the provision of affordable housing, the inclusion of this caveat within the policy creates uncertainty for landowners and developers when assessing land value and the viability of a proposed development. Certainty is required as to the maximum affordable housing proportion required on any particular site. This part of the draft policy should be removed.
- 6.12 It is notable that the policy as drafted does not follow the approach and established blueprint of affordable housing policy of the neighbouring local authority at Belfast City Council. That policy has been in successful operation for over two years and does not include such a caveat, ensuring that a degree of certainty is assured.
- 6.13 Secondly, paragraph four within the draft policy states *that "affordable housing shall consist of social rented housing and/or intermediate housing"*. This is an unreasonably inflexible definition which need not be included in the policy wording. Reference should be made to the definition of 'affordable housing' as set by the Department for Communities, noting that this definition has changed previously and may change again during the lifetime of the LDP.

### **HOU4 Accessible and Adaptable Homes**

- 6.14 Whilst we are supportive of the gist of draft policy HOU4, criterion (c) includes highly specific requirements for the layout and design of staircases within dwellings. As drafted the policy is not suitably flexible to account for other potential accessible design solutions and fails soundness test CE4. We suggest a simplification of the wording of the criterion to require the design of stairs to take account of the potential future need for a stair lift installation.

## 7. Part E – Monitoring & Review

- 7.1 We note the emphasis in paragraphs 26.1 and 26.2 on the importance of monitoring and review to ensure LDPs are up to date and achieving their objectives. Paragraph 26.2 underlines that a Council may revise its LDP at any time, if a review identifies that changes are required. Paragraphs 26.3 to 26.8 describe the content of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and subsequent pages contain details of the anticipated Monitoring Framework. Paragraph 26.9 explains the role of the five year review and paragraph 26.10 outlines several courses of action that might be taken should evidence suggest that a policy is not achieving the desired outcome.
- 7.2 It is agreed that monitoring and review is important to ensure LDPs are achieving their objectives but it is no substitute for ensuring that the LDP is fit for purpose at the point of adoption. As set out in this representation, we are concerned that the LPP will be adopted in and around the currently stated end date of the plan. Our clear recommendation is that a longer plan period is required to underpin the soundness of the plan.
- 7.3 A longer plan period, to at least 2035 would also make it more likely that the final plan could clearly and distinctively move the statutory plan for the Borough beyond the 'inherited' strategies, limits and zonings of the legacy plans - this would also be consistent with the Development Plan Practice Note 01 reference to a 15 year plan framework. Otherwise the risk is that when the LPP part of the plan is finally adopted, comparison with the previous plans could raise questions around what has actually changed.
- 7.4 Selection of a longer plan period would also reduce the risk of having to identify additional reserves of land to bridge a gap which might emerge in future. This has been the experience in other plan-making exercises such as the Lisburn Area Plan 2001 and BMAP.
- 7.5 Given the considerable investment by the Council (and others) in the plan-making process, the potential to review the plan immediately after it has been adopted in order to maintain continuity of land supply and achieve the Council's success scenario in relation to growth must not be used as a reason to avoid addressing the issues with the plan which are already apparent and eminently resolvable prior to adoption.

## 8. Accommodating Growth in Lisbane

- 8.1 Whilst the focus of this submission has been strategic and makes the case for ensuring continuity of a supply of homes in the villages commensurate with their scale, and we recognise that consideration of the locations of any future zonings or extensions to development limits is for the LPP, it is important to be able to demonstrate that the village is physically capable of accommodating a small scale extension, without harm to its setting or character.
- 8.2 Through the provision for modest growth of the settlement this will help contribute to the future sustainability of the local facilities and services in Lisbane. A proportionate level of growth required to sustain the settlement will not impact upon the plan's wider growth strategy which should focus the majority of the Borough's growth in larger settlements.
- 8.3 It is our consideration that whilst the Chambers Homes site has not previously been zoned for development, the recent development adjacent to it has proven the conditions of deliverability for housing on the site. It has also resulted in positive outcomes for local people by providing a source of housing close to services facilities they wish to access, so reducing the need to travel and meeting a need for houses which would otherwise have been likely to have been satisfied less sustainably in the open countryside.
- 8.4 The land is owned by Chambers Homes and is immediately available for development without any legal or land ownership / rights of way restrictions. Given the condition and topography of the site, it is our understanding that no significant site preparation work, such as cut and/or fill that would dramatically alter the character of the area would be required to facilitate development on the site.
- 8.5 The construction of the adjacent Oakwood Park residential development required the installation of utility infrastructure to serve the site. In order to facilitate the development, Chambers Homes Ltd constructed a new wastewater pumping station on the site to service the development. The Pumping Station was designed with additional capacity to that required to serve the existing development and the additional capacity is sufficient to also serve the quantum of development likely to be achieved on the Subject Site.
- 8.6 It would therefore be feasible that the site could be connected to this infrastructure subject to agreement from statutory providers. The capacity for the infrastructure to accommodate the additional load would be assessed through consultation during development management process on the basis of the quantum of development proposed.
- 8.7 A search conducted using the DfI Rivers online Flood Map does not identify the site as having any previous history of flooding, nor does it identify the site as lying within any fluvial or pluvial floodplain. Similarly, the DfI Rivers Reservoir Flood Mapping for Emergency Planning does not indicate that the site lies within an inundation area of a reservoir.

- 8.8 The current settlement limit boundary between the adjacent residential development and the site is only defined by a timber palisade fence at intermittent points along the boundary which otherwise is undefined. The site is defined to the east by mature hedgerow which would provide a natural and mature boundary to define the edge of the settlement.
- 8.9 On the basis of the site being able to accommodate the same density of development as the adjacent lands to the north, we consider it may have capacity for around 15 dwellings.

## **Appendix 1: POP Representation**

**Response to Ards and North Down Borough  
Council Preferred Options Paper  
The Straits, Lisbane**

August 2019

**Turley**

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Appendix 1: Site Location Plan

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**Client**

Chambers Homes Limited

**Our reference**

CHAB3002

August 2019

## Executive Summary

1. This representation is submitted on behalf of Chambers Homes Limited in respect of their landholdings to the south of The Straits and east of Oakwood Park, Lisbane.
2. Lisbane is one of the larger small settlements with a range of local facilities and services which provides a focus for appropriately scaled development. Chambers Homes own a small area of land outside the current development limit to the south of The Straits and east of Oakwood Park and wish to extend the development by providing a modest number of houses.
3. The focus of this representation is, therefore, principally upon the Preferred Options Paper (POP) insofar as it affects the potential of these lands in this small settlement.
4. In recognition of the early stage of the preparation of the LDP our comments seek to identify issues within the Council's preferred approach.
5. Below is a summary of our key comments we wish to make in relation to the POP.

Question	Comment	Cross Ref.
<b>Key issue 1: To facilitate development through developer contributions</b>		
Q.10	The aim of developer contributions is stated as facilitating development. Whilst we acknowledge that reasonable or proportionate costs may sometimes be required to support development, we are concerned that the POP's approach has the potential to discourage development by identifying requirements without a full understanding of the potential of a site and the other costs associated with its delivery.	Section 3, para 3.1 to 3.7
Q.11	Identifying sites where developer contributions would be required would not be sound because it would prejudice an assessment that would be best made during the development management process.  Furthermore, in determining the preferred options the Council has not undertaken any assessment of the impact that the preferred option would have on the deliverability of sites.  As such it fails against soundness tests CE2 & CE3.	Section 3, para 3.8 to 3.11
<b>Key Issue 2: Settlement Hierarchy</b>		
Q.12 to Q.15	No issue provided the reclassification of or introduction of new settlements does not impact the ability of villages and small settlements to provide for sustained growth to support existing	Section 4

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populations and local services.

**Key Issue 3: Housing Allocation**

Q.17      We fundamentally disagree with this preferred      Section 5  
option. It is unsound in both its approach to  
housing need and supply side assumptions.  
It fails against soundness tests CE1 & CE2.

**Key Issue 7: Urban and Rural Housing – Facilitating Affordable Housing**

Q24 & Q25      We partially support the Council’s preferred      Section 6  
option in that we agree that the Local  
Development Plan is the mechanism through  
which affordable housing should be delivered.  
However we consider that without further  
consideration the proposed policy approach could  
fail against soundness tests CE1, CE2 and CE4.

**Key Issue 8: Urban and Rural Housing - Facilitating the delivery of lifetime homes.**

Q26      This approach is not entirely consistent with the      Section 7  
approach endorsed in the SPPS and therefore  
would fail against soundness test C3.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Interim Report and Scoping (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment).**

Q91      The SA is fundamentally flawed and as such the      Section 8  
plan fails against soundness test P3.

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# 1. Introduction

1.1 This representation has been prepared on behalf of our client Chambers Homes Limited in response to consultation on the Ards and North Down Borough Council ('the Council') Local Development Plan (LDP). On the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019 the Council published their Preferred Options Paper ('POP') for consultation. These representations respond to the contents of the POP.

1.2 The following background documents, prepared by the Council have also been considered in prepared these representations:

- Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report, March 2019;
- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, March 2019;
- LDP Position Paper: Housing Allocation;
- LDP Position Paper: Settlement and Place-making; and
- LDP Position Paper: Population Growth and Housing.

## **Structure of the representations**

1.3 This report is structured to reflect the structure and questions set out the POP provided by the Council. In particular it responds to the following:

- Section 3 – Key Issue 1: To facilitate development through developer contributions;
- Section 4- Key Issue 2: Spatial Growth Strategy
- Section 5 – Key issue 3: Housing allocation;
- Section 6 – Key issue 7: Urban & Rural Housing – Facilitating Affordable Housing
- Section 7 – Key Issue 8: Urban & Rural Housing – Facilitating the delivery of Lifetime Homes; and
- Section 8 – Sustainability Appraisal – Interim Report and Scoping.

## 2. Subject Site

- 2.1 The site which is driving Chambers Homes' interest in the small settlement aspects of the LDP is located to the south of The Straits and east of Oakwood Park, Lisbane. A Site Location Plan is provided at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The lands are adjacent to but outside the settlement limit for Lisbane as identified within the Ards & Down Area Plan (ADAP) 2015 and as such lie in the open countryside for planning purposes.
- 2.3 Lisbane is a small settlement between Balloo and Comber to the west of Strangford Lough. The A22 road which connects Dundonald and Downpatrick runs through the settlement.
- 2.4 The Subject Site comprises greenfield land located adjacent to the eastern extent of the settlement. The site itself is undulating and extends to approximately 0.9 hectares in size. There is no evidence to suggest the site has previously been developed and there is no planning history relevant to the development of this site for any use.
- 2.5 Access to the site is taken from The Straits at the north-eastern corner of the site in the form of an agricultural gate. The land abuts the residential development of Oakwood Park to the west of the Subject Site. The lands to the remaining three sides are undeveloped and are in agricultural use.
- 2.6 The site is defined on the northern and eastern edges by mature hedgerows and trees. The boundaries to the west and south of Subject Site are undefined.
- 2.7 The settlement comprises a range of uses and facilities which support the local resident population of Lisbane and the surrounding areas. The built form is generally characterised by buildings of between one and two storeys in height with traditional pitched roofs.
- 2.8 The materials and finishes of the buildings in the surrounding area are rural character with the majority of buildings finished in self coloured render and dark grey/black slate roof tiles.
- 2.9 This representation is submitted at this strategic stage in support of the future allocation of these lands for residential development within the settlement limit of Lisbane at Local Policy stage.

### 3. Key Issue 1: To facilitate development through developer contributions

#### Q10. Do you agree with the aim of Developer Contributions?

The aim of developer contributions is stated as facilitating development. Whilst we acknowledge that reasonable or proportionate costs may sometimes be required to support development, we are concerned that the POP's approach has the potential to discourage development by identifying requirements without a full understanding of the potential of a site and the other costs associated with its delivery.

#### Full Response

- 3.1 The SPPS sets out that developer contribution can be sought in relation to the cost of work required to facilitate development. SPPS (paragraph 5.69) states that these could include:

*“Where a proposed development requires the provision or improvement of infrastructural works over and above those programmed in the LDP;*

*Where earlier than planned implementation of a programmed scheme is required;*

*Where a proposed development is dependent upon the carrying out of works outside of the site; and*

*Where archaeological investigation or mitigation is required.”*

- 3.2 Where contributions are required they should, where possible, be secured via a planning condition. This approach would be in accordance with the SPPS (paragraph 5.67) which states that:

*“A planning agreement may be considered appropriate where what is required cannot be adequately addressed by the imposition of conditions.”*

- 3.3 The SPPS goes on to set out that an agreement should be used where the contribution sought:

- Is needed to enable the development to go ahead;
- Will contribute to meeting the costs of providing necessary facilities in the near future;
- 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;
- Is designed to secure an acceptable balance of uses;
- Is designed to secure the implementation of development plan policies in response of a particular area of type of development; or

- Is intended to offset the loss of, or impact on, any amenity or resource present of the site prior to development.

3.4 Careful consideration should be given to requirement for specific sites to ensure that the tests above are met.

3.5 Developer contributions should only be sought in the circumstances set out in the SPPS and must satisfy the legal tests. The Plan must take care not to introduce a policy that would affect decisions by developers to invest. Development is a voluntary activity. A policy which would discourage development will undermine the ability of the plan to achieve its own objectives since, for a large part, these depend upon delivery by the private sector.

3.6 The POP suggests that:

*“Housing developments would mainly benefit from a developer contributions policy. Key site requirements for a housing zoning could specify the need for a financial contribution by the Developer towards the development or upgrade of nearby play park provision by the Council or other open space.”<sup>1</sup>*

3.7 It would be inappropriate to establish such a key site requirement as the need or otherwise, for such a requirement would depend upon whether such a development or upgrade was directly related to the new housing sought. This judgement would be informed by whether the proposed housing was of an appropriate scale and whether it was making its own provision integral to the new housing itself.

#### **Q.11 Do you agree with the approach to Developer Contributions?**

**No - Identifying sites where developer contributions would be required would not be sound because it would prejudice an assessment that would be best made during the development management process.**

**Furthermore, in determining the preferred options the Council has not undertaken any assessment of the impact that the preferred option would have on the deliverability of sites.**

**As such it fails against soundness tests CE2 & CE3**

3.8 The Council’s preferred option is:

3.9 *Option 1a: provide strategic policy on developer contributions through the Local Development Plan and identify sites where developer contributions would be appropriate in the Local Policies Plan.*

3.10 The statement that *“In order to facilitate development through contributions, so that it does not deter investments, consideration will also be given to the exact level of development contributions,”* confirms the importance of ensuring development remains viable. In considering the requirement for developer contributions, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Preferred Options Paper – Page 37

likely level of contributions to be sought, the Council should assess the viability of contributions. This will assist in ensuring that viable sites are zoned for development and ensure the deliverability of the LDP. To proceed to zone land without an understanding of the financial implications of requirements for open space, highway or infrastructure improvements and affordable housing etc, could undermine the deliverability of sites.

- 3.11 To set developer contributions requirements through the plan making stage would require engagement in a level of detail which is not yet available. Many other factors are at play in viability, such as abnormal costs, infrastructure requirements and the costs and values of development. These would be unknown at zoning stage and could also change during the lifetime of the plan. Policies relating to the provision of developer contributions should therefore be sufficiently flexible to facilitate site specific circumstances or changes through time.

## 4. Key Issue 2: Spatial Growth Strategy – Settlement Hierarchy

4.1 The Council's preferred option is:

*“Option 2b: Define a new settlement hierarchy allowing for the reclassification of existing settlements and potential introduction of new settlements.”*

### **Q12. Do you agree with the preferred option?**

4.2 No issue provided the reclassification of or introduction of new settlements does not impact the ability of villages and small settlements to provide for sustained growth to support existing populations and local services.

4.3 Within the Council's preferred option 2b it is stated that:

4.4 *“The small settlements predominantly lack facilities and services; therefore, the emphasis is on consolidation through infill opportunities or small scale rounding off rather than inappropriate expansion into the countryside.”*

4.5 Lisbane is one of the larger small settlements within the Borough and benefits from a range of facilities and services which provide amenity provision for the residents of the settlement and the wider rural area. We therefore consider that this settlement does not lack facilities and services as suggested in the POP.

4.6 We would support the principle of small scale rounding off of small settlements and promote the extension of Lisbane onto the subject site in this context. The scale of this expansion would not be inappropriate, nor would the location adjacent to an existing successful residential development near local facilities.

4.7 Section 5.4 of Development Plan Practice Note 5 (DPPN 5): Preferred Options Paper recommends that survey and information gathering should be carried out for a range of topic areas to enable the Council to formulate policies and proposals. For settlements it is recommended that the paper provides information on the character, development potential, areas of protection etc.

4.8 Section 8.2 of DPPN 5 goes on to state that *“The POP should also provide a description of the plan area's needs, issues, natural resources and constraints as well as a description of the characteristics of each settlement in order to identify strengths, opportunities, constraints and existing development potential.”*

4.9 The POP does not set out a detailed assessment of each settlement within the plan area to demonstrate if full consideration has been given to the specific characteristics and needs of each settlement in the Borough. Our assessment of Lisbane is set out below.

4.10 The small settlement of Lisbane is one of small settlements within the Borough which benefits from a good level of provision in terms of facilities and services for the local

community and the surrounding rural population in the convenience retail, Petrol Filling Station, coffee shop, restaurant, medical centre, play park and community centre. The settlement has developed along either side of the A22 Killinchy Road with more recent development having been focused on the southern extent of the settlement, growing the settlement to both the west and east.

- 4.11 Sustaining the local facilities is important to provide community and cultural facilities at locations accessible to the local community and also facilitate the needs of the Borough in respect of health, education and other services. These aspects are both Strategic Objectives of the POP. The sustainability of the facilities can be achieved by facilitating a proportionate scale of additional housing in the settlement. Such an approach is more sustainable than continued construction of single houses in the open countryside.
- 4.12 Through the provision for modest growth of the settlement this will help contribute to the future sustainability of the local facilities and services in Lisbane. A proportionate level of growth required to sustain the settlement will not impact upon the plan's wider growth strategy which should focus the majority of the Borough's growth in larger settlements.
- 4.13 The provision of housing in support of local services will also assist in the delivery of the Council's growth strategy which seeks to:

*"Maintain and protect the diversity and quality of our rural area and encourage local development which supported the population and services of local communities."*

**Q13. Do you think the existing settlement hierarchy should be maintained or that settlements should be re-classified within the hierarchy and new settlements identified?**

- 4.14 It is accepted that it is appropriate to review the positions of settlements in the settlement hierarchy during the plan-making process.

**Q14. Do you agree with the indicative settlement hierarchy shown in the Preferred Options Paper**

- 4.15 Yes, however we note that the Council has not provided a detailed analysis of settlements, as recommended in Development Plan Practice Note 5.

**Q15. Do you have any suggested changes? Are there any new settlements that you think should be considered?**

- 4.16 No.

## 5. Key Issue 3: Housing Allocation

5.1 The Council's preferred option is:

*“Option 3b: Re-evaluate existing housing zonings and allocate additional housing land, if required, to ensure continued modest housing growth (using sequential approach in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement).”*

### Q17. Do you agree with the preferred option?

**No. We fundamentally disagree with this preferred option. It is unsound in both its approach to housing need and supply side assumptions.**

**It fails against soundness tests CE1 & CE2.**

5.2 While the Council has ostensibly sought to meet housing needs in full, it has limited its assessment of the scale of this need – and as such, the proposed housing requirement – to the Housing Growth Indicator (HGI) published by the Department for Infrastructure in 2016. This approach is considered unsound for the following reasons:

- Whilst it is agreed that the HGI is an important reference point in establishing a locally evidenced requirement, they are produced only ‘as a guide for the preparation of the LDP’ as correctly acknowledged by the Council within the POP;
- The POP claims that the ‘proposed strategy will deliver the housing that is needed within the borough’, yet it is unclear how this conclusion has been reached in the absence of evidence on the actual housing needs of Ards and North Down, beyond the citing of the HGI. This is not covered in any of the 17 Position Papers published by the Council alongside the POP, despite individual papers focusing on “Population and Housing” and the “Housing Allocation”;
- The proposed level of housing provision does not appear to have been considered in the context of baseline forecasts which suggest that 4,500 jobs are likely to be created in the borough over the plan period, nor the Council’s objective to create 7,500 jobs by 2030. In this regard the proposed approach is incoherent with other objectives of the plan;
- Furthermore, the HGI is predicated upon an average level of annual population growth that has been exceeded in all but three of the past fifteen years. It does not take account of the significant growth that has occurred in the Borough in more recent years.

5.3 The Council should undertake a comprehensive review of the evidence base that it is relying upon to support the proposed housing requirement to ensure that:

- A process of sensitivity testing is undertaken to determine whether the population growth and underpins the HGI is representative of the prevailing demographic trend in the board;

- An assessment of the housing growth that will be needed to grow the labour force and support ambitions for job growth in the Borough is undertaken; and
  - Consideration is given to planning housing provision and whether it will effectively meet the need for affordable housing, and improve existing affordability pressures that have been caused by any historic under-provision.
- 5.4 The POP also sets out the Council’s conclusion that there is existing capacity on existing zoned sites for 8,047 units, which when considered against a proposed housing requirement of 8,190 units would suggest that there is no need for additional land across the plan period. However, the Council has failed to provide sufficient evidence to support the assertion that no additional land will be required. The Council has failed:
- To undertake a detailed housing land assessment of all sites to demonstrate that they are deliverable (suitable, available and developable) and realistic;
  - To undertake a detailed assessment of the potential yield from all sites across the plan period, taking in to account physical constraints, availability, site preparation time and build out rates; and
  - To undertake an assessment of the housing market to demonstrate that zoned sites are within areas of need or demand for housing.
- 5.5 Housing growth will be required within small settlements to sustain populations and local services and therefore consideration should be given to allowing for appropriate development in such locations. This could include revisions to settlement boundaries and/or identification of suitable sites.
- 5.6 It is our consideration that whilst the Subject Site has not previously been zoned for development, the recent development adjacent to the site has proven the conditions of deliverability for housing on the site. It has also resulted in positive outcomes for local people by providing a source of housing close to services facilities they wish to access, so reducing the need to travel and meeting a need for houses which would otherwise have been likely to have been satisfied less sustainably in the open countryside.
- 5.7 The land is owned by our client Chambers Homes and is immediately available for development without any legal or land ownership / rights of way restrictions. Given the condition and topography of the site, it is our understanding that no significant site preparation work, such as cut and/or fill that would dramatically alter the character of the area would be required to facilitate development on the site.
- 5.8 The construction of the adjacent Oakwood Park residential development required the installation of utility infrastructure to serve the site. In order to facilitate the development, Chambers Homes Ltd constructed a new wastewater pumping station on the site to service the development. The Pumping Station was designed with additional capacity to that required to serve the existing development and the additional capacity is sufficient to also serve the quantum of development likely to be achieved on the Subject Site.

- 5.9 It would therefore be feasible that the Subject Site could be connected to this infrastructure subject to agreement from statutory providers. The capacity for the infrastructure to accommodate the additional load would be assessed through consultation during development management process on the basis of the quantum of development proposed for the site.
- 5.10 A search conducted using the DfI Rivers online Flood Map does not identify the site as having any previous history of flooding, nor does it identify the site as lying within any fluvial or pluvial floodplain. Similarly, the DfI Rivers Reservoir Flood Mapping for Emergency Planning does not indicate that the site lies within an inundation area of a reservoir.
- 5.11 The current settlement limit boundary between the adjacent residential development and the Subject Site is only defined by a timber palisade fence at intermittent points along the boundary which otherwise is undefined. The Subject Site is defined to the east by mature hedgerow which would provide a natural and mature boundary to define the edge of the settlement.
- 5.12 On the basis of the Subject Site being able to accommodate the same density of development as the adjacent lands to the north, we consider the site may have capacity for around 15 dwellings.

## 6. Key Issue 7: Urban and Rural Housing – Facilitating Affordable Housing

6.1 The Council's preferred option is:

*“The LDP will provide affordable housing through the use of the proportional approach, Key Site Requirements or zoning of entire sites, dependent on a number of factors, including identified need.”*

**We partially support the Council's preferred option in that we agree that the Local Development Plan is the mechanism through which affordable housing should be delivered.**

**However we consider that without further consideration the proposed policy approach could fail against soundness tests CE1, CE2 and CE4.**

### **Q24. Do you agree with the preferred option?**

6.2 The SPPS (paragraph 6.143) sets out that:

*“The HNA/HMA undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, or the relevant housing authority, will identify the range or specific housing needs, including social/affordable housing requirements. The development plan process will be the primary vehicle to facilitate any identified need by zoning land or by indicating, through key site requirements, where proportion of a site may be required for social/affordable housing.”*

6.3 We therefore support the approach that the provision of affordable housing will be facilitated through the Local Development Plan.

### **Q25. Do you agree with the Council's preferred option for addressing affordable housing need in the borough?**

6.4 Whilst we support the intention of the Council to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing through the LDP, it is considered that there is insufficient evidence provided to justify the preferred approach and therefore it could be unsound, for the following reasons:

- Whilst the Council's Position Paper acknowledges that NIHE has confirmed a need for affordable/social homes across the plan period the Council has not provided the HNA/HMA in support of the preferred option;
- It is unclear from the information provided by the Council where the need for social housing is in the borough;
- The proposed approach could conflict with other policies. In particular the Council contents in the POP that there is sufficient land available within the borough to deliver the Council's housing requirement and that no additional

land is needed. The preferred options could result in land being zoned for social housing, where it is needed which may not be in the same location as committed sites; and

- The Council also contends that there is sufficient land within the borough to deliver housing need, however no assessment has been undertaken to understand whether committed sites would be viable following the introduction of a requirement for affordable housing.

6.5 In preparing a policy approach to be identified with the draft Plan Strategy, the Council should ensure that the approach:

- Is based on robust assessment of locational need;
- Is coherent with other policies within the plan; and
- Does not impact of the deliverability of site.

## 7. Key Issue 8: Urban and Rural Housing - Facilitating the delivery of lifetime homes.

7.1 The Council's preferred option is:

*"Option 8a: The LDP shall provide a proportion of Lifetime homes in new developments."*

**Q26. Do you think the LDP should direct a proportion of Lifetime Homes to be included in new development?**

**No. This approach is not entirely consistent with the approach endorsed in the SPPS and therefore would fail against soundness test C3.**

7.2 The POP sets out that:

*"Lifetime Homes are designed to create better living environments for everyone, from raising children, coping with illness or dealing with reduced mobility later in life. They seek to provide homes that are accessible and adaptable, therefore allowing people to remain independent for longer in their own homes. The development housing to the Lifetime Homes standard is especially important in the context of an ageing population and can help prevent costly and disruptive adaptations."*

7.3 The Council is proposing that proportion of all new homes will be required to be built to Lifetime homes standards. Whilst the SPPS encourages that Councils identify local design policies and guidance within the LDP, it does clearly state that:

*"Local design policies and guidance should not lead to a rigid and formulaic approach to decision-taking but encourage good design and responsible innovation, originality or initiative."*

7.4 The Council references the importance of Lifetime Homes in the context of an ageing population, however no housing need figure for such provision has been provided. A better, more sustainable approach to address specific housing needs would be to identify housing requirements for special housing and provide planning policies to support their development.

7.5 Furthermore the provision of housing that is bespoke to specialist needs would free up other forms of housing for families etc. For example whilst a family house could be adapted to accommodate an elderly person, would they wish to live in a large house or should consideration be given to the provision of bespoke accommodation which would enable family housing to be freed up?

7.6 Rather than introduce an arbitrary requirement, the council should undertake a detailed analysis of the housing stock and the future housing need to ensure that housing developments in the future provide for a suitable range of housing style and size. This approach would be better aligned with the measures that should be contained within the LDP, as outlined at paragraph 6.142 of the SPPS.

## 8. Sustainability Appraisal – Interim Report and Scoping (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment).

**Q91. Do you have any comments of the content or findings of the Sustainability Appraisal Interim or Scoping Reports?**

**No. The SA is fundamentally flawed and as such the plan fails against soundness test P3.**

8.1 This representation relates largely to the Spatial Growth Strategy for the borough and whilst we agree with some of the preferred options it is considered that the SA is flawed for the following reasons:

- There is a failure of the SA Process to meet the requirements of the EAPP Regulations in the development and justification of the options assessed in relation to Strategic Growth in Ards and North Down Borough;
- There is a failure to consider all reasonable alternatives for housing allocation as it relates to an up to date evidence base and proposed settlement hierarchy; and
- The non-technical summary within the Interim SA report fails to meet the information requirements of Schedule 2 within the EAPP Regulations.

## Appendix 1: Site Location Plan



Aerial Image: Google Earth – dated 25/05/2018 (accessed 07/08/2019)

**Turley Office**  
Hamilton House  
3 Joy Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8LE

T 028 9072 3900

**Turley Office**  
Belfast

028 9072 3900

**Turley**