



THE PARISH OF BALLYGALGET

9 Ballygalget Road, Portaferry, BT22 1NE

St Patrick's Church

Local Development Plan Team,
Ards and North Down Borough Council
2 Church Street,
Newtownards,
BT23 4AP

12th December 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

Draft Local Development Plan Strategy 2032

I write on behalf of the parish of St. Patrick's, Ballygalget to place on record our full support for the submission made by Fay Planning Consultancy regarding the proposed retention of Ballygalget as a small settlement within the Ards and North Down Local Development Plan 2035 and fully support the arguments for a modest extension to the settlement limits to provide much needed additional homes for young families.

I am the parish priest for the parish of Ballygalget, which, due to declining numbers, is now jointly administered with St. Patrick's Portaferry. Ballygalget parish comprises circa 300 families but in recent years there has been a notable decline in numbers of children being baptised and in the number of children entering the primary school. The number of young families in the parish has been declining due to a lack of suitable and affordable housing in the area.

As a result, the age profile of the parish and surrounding area is becoming increasingly dominated by the older generation. The young families who do still live in the area are very active in the community and school life. Consequently, despite the relative isolation of this part of the Ards Peninsula, the community has retained a strong sense of belonging. There is a strong tradition of grandparents providing childcare which brings them into contact with the primary school and other community activities on a daily basis.

The area does suffer from issues associated with geographical isolation and therefore the inherent links that exist between the church and community hall, the school premises and the local GAA club are strong and multi-layered. All of these premises are used to great effect for inter-generational and cross-community events that have strengthened community cohesiveness and reduce any sense of rural isolation. The activities are many and varied, including faith based but importantly also wider community activities for youth groups, and social outreach for older people from the local area and further afield. These include adult fitness classes, cross-community senior citizens 'walking & talking' groups, dance classes, flower arranging and an annual senior citizen Christmas dinner. This is crucial to bonding the community locally and thankfully, there is a very strong common interaction between peoples of different traditions in this locality where farmers have always helped each other on a daily basis as the need arises, regardless of background and also come together for local social events.

The local school is an absolutely vital presence in the heart of the community. It has a great reputation for excellence in providing learning for children of all abilities and benefits immensely from the fact that the staff are also drawn for the local area of the lower Ards Peninsula.

60, Windmill Hill, Portaferry, BT22 1PH

Tel: 028 427 28234

Email: Ballygalget@downandconnor.org

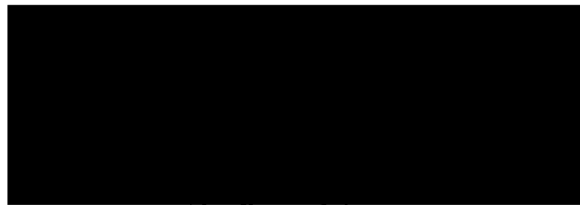
These links and level of interaction are crucial to life in this locality, and it is a concern that the number of young families who provide the energy and drive that interaction, are declining in numbers. There are limited opportunities for the housing needs of young families to be met in this rural area given that current planning policy restricts opportunities for new houses in the countryside to essentially one house on a farm for each generation. That drives up the cost of building sites and creates a deficit in the supply of affordable homes for young families who are then forced to move out of the area, often closer to their work. That breaks the intergenerational interaction and linkage, and the local area suffers as a consequence.

It is a matter of great concern to me and to the wider community, that the numbers in the primary school are declining and approaching a level where the Department of Education may consider it to be unviable. The school plays a vital role in the educational, social, and cultural life of the area and is at the core of much of the social interaction that is so critical to sustaining our local community. If the trend of declining numbers is allowed to continue, it could have devastating consequences for the local community, including the loss of a key educational and social hub.

I strongly support the position that modest and appropriate growth within Ballygalget is essential to support the viability of local services, including our school. The existing settlement beside our school and church, within walking distance, provides an important base of families. The proposed extension to the settlement opposite the church and school would offer young couples an alternative to moving away to find suitable housing. It would help to attract and retain families, support pupil numbers, and ensure St. Patrick's Primary School can continue to play its crucial role at the heart of the community and serve future generations.

I respectfully urge the Council to reconsider the current designation and support the proposed growth strategy for Ballygalget.

Yours sincerely,



(V. Rev.)

P.P. Ballygalget.