

Screening Form

- 1. Is this a** Plan
- 2. Name of Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service** Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Development Plan, Draft Plan Strategy
- 3. Reference** 405
- 4. Category of Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service** New

5. Please provide a description of the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service

The draft Plan Strategy is the first of two development plan documents, which together will comprise the Local Development Plan (LDP). The main purpose of the LDP is to inform the general public, statutory authorities, service providers, developers and other interested parties of the policy framework and land use proposals that will implement the strategic objectives of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the LDP objectives and guide decisions on planning applications for development in Ards and North Down until 2032.

The LDP will aim to provide sufficient land to meet anticipated needs for housing, employment, and services, over the Plan period to 2032. It will also seek to ensure that all new development is of high quality and in the most suitable locations - which themselves should be enhanced by the development. A 'suitable location' will generally be a where the development proposal can help meet economic and social needs without compromising the quality of the environment. This is referred to as 'sustainable development' which has been defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

In seeking to deliver sustainable development, the LDP will serve to implement the regional direction set out in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and other central government policies. It will also take account of the Council's Community Plan by helping to deliver on these strategies, priorities and actions that can be influenced through the planning system.

6. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The main aim of the draft Plan Strategy is to meet the development needs of Ards and North Down over the Plan period (2017-2032) in a sustainable manner.

Accordingly, the LDP seeks to deliver 'sustainable development' which has been defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". In seeking to deliver sustainable development, the LDP will serve to implement the regional direction set out in the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and other central government initiatives. In line with the vision of the LDP it will also help to improve the quality of life for residents and those who travel to the Borough for employment or visit for leisure purposes.

A further outcome will be to provide certainty by informing the general public, statutory authorities, service providers, developers and other interested parties of the planning policy framework and the land use proposals that will guide decisions for development in the Ards and North Down Borough area until 2032.

- 7. Who initiated or wrote the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service?** The Local Development Plan (LDP) is being prepared by Ards and North Down Borough Council under the provisions of the

Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (NI) 2015 ('the LDP Regulations'). The Planning Act requires the LDP to be produced in two stages – the first being the Plan Strategy, followed upon adoption, by the Local Policies Plan. This report relates to the draft Plan Strategy and to the strategic proposals and policies contained therein.

8. Who is responsible for the implementation of the Policy/Strategy/Plan/Public Service?

The policy is owned and implemented by Ards and North Down Borough Council and will largely be implemented by the Council through the determination of planning applications that will be assessed against the policies and proposals in the LDP. Other decision takers who may also implement the LDP's policy are the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), as the independent planning appellate body, and the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) in determining regionally significant or 'called-in' planning applications.

9. Is this policy affected by timetables established by other relevant Public Authorities?

No

Equality

1. Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

Yes

1a. If Yes, which Section 75 categories are expected to benefit?

All

1b. How are they expected to benefit?

The vision of the LDP is a spatial reflection of the Community Plan's vision to improve the quality of life for everyone, in that:

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

Therefore, it is expected that all Section 75 category groups have the potential to benefit as result of the Plan. It is anticipated that a number of the policies and proposals will be of benefit to particular Section 75 groups (e.g. housing policies in relation to housing design – including accessible and adaptable homes, affordable housing, and also some open space policies).

2. Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Yes

2a. If yes, are they:

X Financial There is potential that any future budgetary constraints could influence the intended aim/outcome of the various policies. This is unknown at this stage. X Legislative As noted above the draft Plan Strategy has been prepared under the provisions of the Planning Act and the LDP Regulations. Any future changes to planning legislation or the legislation controlling the activities of service providers may have a bearing on the LDP and the intended aim/outcome of the various policies. X Other, please specify • Planning Appeals Commission decisions • Planning decisions issued by the Department for Infrastructure • Judicial Review decisions by the Courts • Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) including revised policy or introduction of new regional strategic planning policy • Statutory Consultees • Developers • Objectors • Planning Committee • Government Departments • Government Finance • Unauthorised development • Political Instability

3. Who are the internal/external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

Staff, Service Users, Other Public Sector organisations, Voluntary/Community/Trade Unions, Potential Visitors,

All members of the public living, working in or visiting Ards and North Down • Developers • Service Providers • Business and Economic Development Enterprises/Sectors • Voluntary/Community Groups • Registered Housing Associations • Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) • Environmental Groups • NI Government Departments and Agencies • Adjoining Councils • Power Suppliers • NI Water • Translink • Staff This list should not be considered to be exhaustive.

4. Is this policy associated with any other Council Policy (or Policies)?

Yes

4a. If yes, please state the related Policy (or Policies)

See As required by the Planning Act, in preparing the draft Plan Strategy the Council has taken account of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 which sets out the government's overarching spatial strategy for Northern Ireland up to 2035, as well as the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2015 (SPPS) which provides the regional planning policy framework. In addition, The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 sets out a statutory link between a council's Community Plan and

the LDP. Ards and North Down's Community Plan 'The Big Plan' 2017-2032 has therefore been taken into consideration in the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy.

The draft Plan Strategy has also taken account of a wide-ranging list of other policies and guidance issued by DfI and other government departments. Regard has also been had to various Council plans and strategies operating at the local level. A list of these documents is provided below; however, it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive. Where relevant, additional regional or local policies and/or guidance are referred to within the draft Plan Strategy and its associated Technical Supplements.

- Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024-2028
 - Ards and North Down Borough Council Integrated Tourism Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy – 2018-2030
 - Ards and North Down Borough Council Play Strategy 2021-2032
 - Ards and North Down Sports Facility Strategy 2021-2032
 - Ards and North Down Age Friendly Strategy 2023-2027

 - Ards and North Down Borough Council – Roadmap to Sustainability and Climate Adaptation

 - Ards and North Down Borough Council Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 2022-2032
 - Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive), New Decade New Approach and subsequent Draft Programme for Government
 - The Sustainable Development Strategy - Everyone's Involved - 2010 (NI Executive)
 - Suite of existing Planning Policy Statements, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Design Guides and Development Control Advice Notes (DfI)
 - A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland - 1993 (DfI)
 - Sustainable Water - A Long Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2040 (DfI)
 - Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future - A New Approach to Regional Transportation - 2011 (DfI)
 - Delivering Resource Efficiency - Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy - 2015 (DAERA)
 - Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland - 2018 (DAERA)
 - The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (May 2011)
 - The Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 (DAERA)
 - Lifetime Opportunities - Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland - 2006 (DfC)
 - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' (DAERA) Rural Needs Act (NI) guidance and template (March 2018)
 - Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (DAERA)
 - Northern Ireland Regional Landscape Character Assessment - 2015 (DAERA)
 - Northern Ireland Regional Seascape Character Assessment - 2014 (DAERA)
 - Exercise - Explore - Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways - 2016 (DfI)
 - Northern Ireland Changing Gear: A Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland - 2015 (DfI)
 - Ards and Down Area Plan 2015
 - Draft BMAP 2015 in combination with the Planning Appeals Commission Inquiry report for legacy North Down
 - Bangor Town Centre Plan 2001
 -
 - North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984 – 1995
 -
 - Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001
 - Neighbouring Council Context – LDP Plans and Strategies from Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.
- form attached

5. Does this policy affect Internal or External users?

Both

Evidence to help inform the Section 75 screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data.

6. What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to

inform this policy?

All

Religious belief evidence

In 2011, the population within Ards and North Down consisted predominately of a Protestant and other Christian background at 75% (above NI average) with 13% from a Catholic background (below NI average). The proportion of people who were brought up in a different religion or with no religion was 11% (above NI average) (Source: NISRA, 2011 Census, Religion or Religion Brought Up In: KS212NI, statistical and admin geographies).

The Northern Ireland Census 2021 (NISRA) statistics for the Borough area show the religious group the person belongs to, or for people with no current religion their religious group of upbringing. People with no current religion and no religion of upbringing are labelled 'None'.

On Census Day 2021 in Northern Ireland just under one person in five (19.0%) either had 'no religion' (17.4%) or 'religion not stated' (1.6%).

Nearly one person in three in Ards and North Down (32.1%) had 'no religion' or 'religion not stated' On Census day 2021, bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 45.7% of the population were either Catholic or brought up as Catholic, while 43.5% were recorded as 'Protestant and other Christian (including Christian related)'. Again, bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 1.5% of the population are classified as 'other religions' and 9.3% of the population identified that they neither belonged to, nor were brought up in, a religion. This points to the increasingly secular nature of the population ('None').

Political opinion evidence

Electoral Office data from recent Local Government elections (2023) and Northern Ireland Assembly elections (2022) detail the political representation on Ards and North Down. Data also shows the turnout to vote. This tends to be lower than the rest of Northern Ireland, suggesting less strong political opinions, however the results show a preference in Ards and North Down for Unionist Parties.

Constituency

North Down	70,176	60%
Strangford	70,755	68%
Northern Ireland	1,373,731	63%

District Electoral Area	Eligible Electorate	Votes Polled
Overall turnout (2023)		
Ards and North Down Borough Council Area	123,736	57,677
Overall Turnout (2023) Northern Ireland	1,380,372	745,400

Ards and North Down Local Government Election Results (Electoral Office data from Local Government Elections 2023 and NI Assembly Elections 2022)

Vote share:

Number of seats per Political Party - Ards and North Down Borough Council, 2019

Racial group evidence

On Census Day 2021, 3.4% of the population of AND, or 65,600 people, belonged to minority ethnic groups. This is around double the 2011 figure (1.8% - 32,400 people) and four times the 2001 figure (0.8% - 14,300 people). Taken together, the bulletin reports and tables released today show an increasing diversity from 2011 to 2021 in Northern Ireland's population across statistics on ethnic group, main

language, country of birth and passports held. This increasing diversity is evident to a greater or lesser degree across all 11 Local Government Districts.

All Usual Residents 163,660

White	159,892
Irish traveller	24
Roma	19
Indian	388
Chinese	500
Filipino	308
Pakistani	87
Arab	28
Other Asian	468
Black African	309
Mixed	1236
Other Ethnicities	266

Note: In the following analysis the label 'minority ethnic group' is used. This relates to all persons who have an ethnicity classification other than the 'White' option.

In 2021, the number of people in AND with a white ethnic group was 159,892 (97.7% of the population). Conversely, the total number of people in AND with a minority ethnic group stood at 3,768 people (2.3% of the population). Within this classification, the largest groups were mixed ethnicities (1,236 people) and Chinese (500 people).

The percentage of the population with a minority ethnic group in AND increased between 2011 and 2021 from 1.5% to 2.3%.

Age evidence

Ards and North Down has a larger proportion of older people aged 65 and over than any other Local Government District. The median age is 44.

Population projections show that the proportion of those aged 85 and over are expected to more than double within the next 25 years.

Age yrs	0–14	15–39	40–64	65+
NI	365,213 (19%)		594,361	
	(31%)	617,125		
	(32%)	326,475		
	(17%)			
AND	27,763			
	(17%)	44,206		
	(27%)	55,466		
	(34%)	36,225		
	(22%)			

Age Breakdown of Residents in Ards and North Down Borough – Census 2021

Since 2001, the proportion of pensioners in AND has been above the NI average and population projections to 2032 indicate that this trend will continue to be the case.

Population increase was greatest in the older group. On census day 2021, AND had the largest increase in the number of people aged 65 and over. This rose from 27,692 (17.7%) in 2011 to 36,226 (22.1%) in 2021, demonstrating the scale of population change due to ageing.

At the time of the 2021 Census the Median Age of the Borough was 44.

Marital status evidence

Statistics classifies people aged 16 and over according to their legal marital or civil partnership status on Census Day 21 March 2021. The law in relation to marriage and civil partnership changed in the ten years to 2021. A summary of the changes is given below:

- Civil partnership for opposite sex couples became legal in 2019;
- Marriage for same sex couples became legal in 2020; and

- In late 2020 a couple in a civil partnership could convert their status from civil partnership to marriage.

The rise in 'single' population and the fall in 'married' population here is in line with census results in England and Wales. These figures mirror changes in society and specifically in personal relationships that has been witnessed over the last 50 years. Ards and North Down has the oldest demographic profile of all the 11 Local Government Districts and has the highest percentage of adults who were widowed at 8%.

In 2011, single people were more likely to be male (34.53%) than female (28.48%). By contrast women are considerably more likely to be widowed (10.68%) than men (3.37%). The relatively higher life expectancy for women accounts for this finding.

Marital Status Northern

Ireland AND

Single 575,966 41,540

Married or in Civil Partnership 682,065 68,340

Separated, Divorced or Formally in a Civil Partnership 151,570 13,400

Widowed or Surviving partner from a Civil Partnership 97,004 10,720

Marital and Civil Partnership Status NISRA Census 2021

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy / decision?

7. Please provide details of different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the categories

It is likely that the LDP will accommodate the specific needs of a wide range of identities linked to the various Section 75 category groups, either singly or in combination. Generally, the needs, experiences and priorities listed below are considered to be of importance to all Section 75 category groupings. All the identified needs, experiences and priorities will be afforded due consideration, as far as practical, in implementing the LDP.

- Have opportunity for housing needs to be met and feel safe and secure where they reside.
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing with access to vibrant town centres and opportunities to adopt active lifestyles through access to open space and facilities.
- Access to health, education, community and cultural facilities
- Access to employment opportunities, economic development opportunities and training facilities.
- Access to a well-managed sustainable natural and historic environment
- An approach which allows for a well-managed environment responding to the challenges of climate change
- Planning for connectivity through infrastructure

The draft Plan Strategy has a number of Strategic Objectives to deliver for these needs.

Strategic Objectives

Spatial and Cross-cutting Objectives

- Promote sustainable growth in the right places and at the appropriate level, to meet the needs of all those who live, work, visit and invest in the Borough.
- To create sustainable places throughout the Borough through design, layout and mix of uses that enhance the character and identity of settlements and landscape; create attractive, safe and accessible places to live, work and visit; and promote prosperity, and well-being of citizens.
- To support sustainably located and designed development that supports mitigation and adaptation to climate change and increases local environmental resilience. This includes carbon reduction through the use of renewable energy development and incorporation of sustainable design principles and features.

Social

- To provide a sufficient supply of land for new housing to support the Council's growth ambition and facilitate delivery to meet diverse housing needs up to 2032.
- To create sustainable residential environments which are designed to a high standard, well connected and inclusive of all potential residents.
- To support rural communities by providing appropriate and sustainable opportunities for development in the countryside.
- To build sustainable resilient communities where people have good access to housing, employment, shops, public transport, active travel, healthcare, community and cultural facilities.
- To improve health and wellbeing - by facilitating health, education, community and cultural facilities in accessible locations and creating places that encourage a healthy lifestyle through the provision of high-quality open space and sporting facilities, informal leisure spaces and increase opportunities to walk, cycle or ride.

Economic

- To support a thriving, well-connected, diverse economy to enable and encourage business growth and attract inward investment and businesses in appropriate growth sectors.
- To support the Council's ambition of employment growth through the provision of accessible land for employment, including for start-ups and grow-on spaces in a choice of sites at a range of locations.
- To sustain and enhance vibrant and attractive town centres, serving the needs of residents, visitors, tourists and businesses.
- To support sustainable tourism in the Borough by creating and identifying opportunities for sustainable tourism development and by safeguarding key tourism assets from inappropriate development.
- To facilitate sustainable mineral development through balancing specific need along with the need to protect and conserve the environment.

Infrastructure

- To promote and facilitate investment in physical and digital infrastructure and facilities for power, water, waste-water and waste management
- To support more sustainable movement patterns by promoting a mix of land use allocations in accessible locations alongside improved digital connectivity, whilst providing opportunities for active travel and integrated sustainable transport above use of the private car.
- To facilitate development of renewable energy infrastructure whilst minimising impact on visual amenity and the environment
- To promote across the Borough the efficient use of natural resources, including providing increased opportunities for water efficiency, energy efficiency, renewable energy, recycling and waste reduction.

Environmental

- To protect, enhance and manage the natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems and the connectivity between them, while at the same time generating benefits for the economy, tourism, health and well-being. This includes the Borough's protected sites, protected species and other biodiversity, and its high quality and distinctive landscapes and seascapes.
- To conserve, enhance and protect the historic environment and cultural heritage of Ards and North Down for the future while realising benefits for the economy, tourism and social well-being.
- To ensure that new development in the Borough takes account of the risk of flooding, both existing and in the future, including the need to avoid inappropriate development in areas that are at risk from flooding, or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, and the need to design development, including the use of natural flood management measures and sustainable drainage, to appropriately manage flood risk and surface water run-off.
- To protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate, excessive or obtrusive development that would cause harm to its visual amenity and natural and historic assets, whilst accommodating appropriate sustainable development to sensitively enhance the developed coast.
- To identify and develop a network of green and blue infrastructure to encourage nature recovery and biodiversity whilst supporting resilient ecosystems and good health and wellbeing.

The Borough has a predominately Protestant/other Christian population, with those of Catholic belief and other belief are in a minority. Those of no religion increased since the 2011 census to that in 2021. It is recognised that the needs and priorities are relevant irrespective of religious belief.

Key priorities for those of different, or, indeed, no religious belief include safe places to live with a quality environment along with access to health, education, community and cultural facilities.

The Borough has a predominately Unionist population. Irrespective of political opinion it is recognised that the needs and priorities of the Borough's residents are relevant.

Good quality, safe places to live along with access to shared and safe environments including community facilities are identified as key priorities for those of different political opinion.

2021 Census data indicates that the Borough has a low representation of people of different ethnic backgrounds. It is recognised that the priorities of such group categories centre around good quality, safe places to live, access to shared and safe environments as well as access to employment, services and facilities.

Access to health, education, community and cultural facilities may also be important for ethnic minorities in order to assist against isolation and to aid community integration.

The population of the Borough is ageing. There are particular priorities in relation to appropriate housing provision including the need for accessible and adaptable homes. Other identified priorities for older people include access to healthcare provision, opportunities for improving health and wellbeing which may also include access to outdoor open space and places to live a healthy and active lifestyle.

The provision of shared and safe environments, access to public transport and an active travel network, as well as access to retail and retail services are also identified as important to those older people who may have mobility issues and experience feelings of isolation.

For the Borough's working age population, the main priorities are identified as access to good quality, safe places to live, access to employment opportunities, education and training facilities and access to business and retail.

For our population under the age of 16 - the main priorities are identified as access to education and training facilities or indeed employment. Priorities also include access to open space, sport and outdoor recreation and play facilities.

Just over half of the Borough's residents are married or in a civil partnership, with the remainder either

single, divorced or widowed. No specific priorities of one group over another is identified, however it is recognised that those of different marital status may have different needs in terms of housing.

It is recognised that members of the LGBT+ community can often be marginalised or experience feelings of isolation. The community may have concerns regarding safety, therefore good quality, safe places to live, access to shared and safe environments which may include access to community facilities are identified as key priorities.

The Borough has a slightly higher number of women than men. Access to employment, education and training facilities are identified as key priorities for men and women generally, but perhaps more so women who are under-represented in the labour market or for those returning to work.

The 2021 Census indicates that 25.3% of Ards and North Down residents have a long-term health problem or disability which limits daily activities. This represented an increase of 31% from 2011, in part reflecting the Borough's ageing population.

Key priorities for those living with disabilities therefore are identified as good quality, safe places to live, appropriate housing, access to healthcare, improved health and wellbeing, shared and safe environments and access to community facilities. For those with mobility issues, in particular, access to public transport infrastructure is identified as a key need.

Those living with disabilities tend to be underrepresented in the labour market therefore access to education, training and employment is also important.

There is a decreasing number of households within the Borough with dependant children. The percentage varies across local government districts, but it is lowest in Ards and North Down at 17%. This decline in household size raises particular priorities in terms of appropriate (type and size) housing provision. It is also recognised within our Borough that a significant proportion of the population provide care. Particular priorities for both these groups are identified as the need for good quality, safe places to live, access to community facilities, access to health facilities, improved health and wellbeing, access to sport recreation and play facilities, access to public transport and an active travel network, as well as access to retail. For those with dependants, often underrepresented in the labour market or seeking to return to work access to education, training and employment is a key priority.

8. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Religious belief?

None

9. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Political opinion?

None

10. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Racial group?

Minor

10a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Racial group

No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at this stage. It is anticipated that the overall aim and strategic approach of the draft Plan Strategy will be of benefit to this category as a whole.

Appendix A indicates that a number of policies and approaches included within the draft Plan Strategy have the potential to have positive impacts for those within this group. Ethnic minorities within our Borough are predominately located within or near to our main city and town centres. Policies in relation to Economic Development, Town Centres and Retailing, for example, are likely to be of benefit as they direct the provision of services and employment largely to these locations. Policies for Housing in Settlements are also anticipated to be of benefit as they seek to provide safe residential environments. The policies in relation to Town centres and Retailing and Open Space also have potential to provide positive impacts through facilitating the creation of shared spaces, thereby assisting integration with the wider community. NIHE has not identified any need in relation to Traveller Accommodation in the Borough at this time; however, should the need arise over the Plan period Policy HOU5 will support and facilitate the provision of a suitable accommodation.

Minor positive

11. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Age?

Minor

11a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Age

No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at this stage. It is anticipated that the overall vision, objectives, strategies and policies of the draft Plan Strategy will be of benefit to all age groups.

Appendix 1 indicates that a number of policies and approaches included within the draft Plan Strategy have the potential to have positive impacts for older people. The General Principles Policy applicable for all Development will be of benefit as it seeks to enhance accessibility. Town Centre and Retail policies, for example, seek to focus such development in the most accessible locations. Open Space policies seek to deliver accessible opportunities for active lifestyles. The draft Plan Strategy approach to both Housing in Settlements, (Policy HOU 4 in particular providing for Accessible and Adaptable Homes), and Housing in the Countryside aim to allow opportunities for older people to stay in their homes for longer.

Supporting the provision of Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities where there is a need and in accessible locations also has the potential to have positive impacts for this group. This is also the case for Infrastructure policies in relation to Transportation and Telecommunications and Overhead Lines by supporting improvements in accessibility and connectivity.

As indicated in Appendix 1, it is anticipated that those of working age will benefit from the Economic Development Strategy and the Strategic Allocation of Land for Economic Development Land as they encourage a range of employment opportunities in the most sustainable and accessible locations. The Retail Strategy and associated policies could also be considered benefit those of working age.

Positive impacts for younger people are also anticipated through the Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation policies such as Policy OS 4: New Open Space in Residential Developments which seeks to provide safe and accessible places to play.

Again, supporting the provision of Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities in accessible locations and where there is a need also has the potential to have positive impacts for this group.

Minor positive

12. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Marital status?

Minor

12a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Marital status

No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at this stage. It is anticipated that the overall aim of the draft Plan Strategy and strategic approach will be of benefit to people of different marital status.

Appendix 1 indicates that a number of policies and approaches included within the draft Plan Strategy (including housing policies) have the potential to have positive impacts for this group

Minor positive

13. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Sexual orientation?

Minor

13a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Sexual orientation

No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at this stage. It is anticipated that the overall aim and strategic approach of the draft Plan Strategy will be of benefit to those within this category, irrespective of sexual orientation.

Appendix 1 indicates that a number of policies and approaches included within the draft Plan Strategy have the potential to have positive impacts for the LGBT+ community. The General Principles Policy for

all Development and policies in relation to Housing in Settlements, HOU2 for example, strive to create safer public spaces and residential environments that have been designed to deter crime.

Minor positive

14. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Men and women generally?

None

15. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Disability?

Minor

15a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Disability

No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at this stage. It is anticipated that the overall aim and strategic approach of the draft Plan Strategy will generally benefit those living with and without disability.

Appendix 1 indicates that a number of policies and approaches included within the draft Plan Strategy, have the potential to have positive impacts for those living with disability.

Retail and Economic Development policies, for example, could benefit those with disabilities by directing such development to the most accessible locations.

The Open Space policies which protect and provide for accessible open space will bring both physical and mental health benefits.

In addition, the General Policy for all Development will be of benefit as it seeks to enhance accessibility and takes account of the particular needs of people with mobility difficulties.

The draft Plan Strategy approach to both Housing in Settlements, Policy HOU 7 in particular, and Housing in the Countryside aims to allow opportunities for housing that will support people living with disability to stay in their homes for longer.

Supporting the provision of Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities where there is a need and in accessible locations also has the potential to have positive impacts.

Infrastructure related policies such as Transportation are also anticipated to be of benefit in seeking to ensure development takes account of the mobility needs of all.

Minor positive

16. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, in relation to Dependants?

Minor

16a. Impact on equality of opportunity - Dependants

No adverse impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified at this stage. It is anticipated that the overall aim and strategic approach of the plan will be of benefit generally to both those with and without dependants.

Appendix 1 indicates that a number of policies and approaches included within the draft Plan Strategy have the potential to have positive impacts for those with dependants.

Retail policies, for example, could benefit those with dependants by focusing such development in the most accessible locations.

Policies in relation to Economic Development are also anticipated to benefit by providing a generous supply of economic land to meet employment needs in the most accessible locations, where the majority of our population are located giving a sustainable approach in line with existing population distribution, infrastructure and service provision. The Open Space policies seek to provide safe and accessible open space and play parks thereby benefitting families with dependant children. Policies in relation to Housing in Settlements and Housing in the Countryside aim to provide for a range of house types, sizes and tenures to meet all housing needs. Supporting the provision of Health, Education, Community and Cultural Facilities where there is a need and in accessible locations also has the potential to have positive impacts for those with dependants. This is also the case for Infrastructure policies in relation to Transportation and Telecommunications and Overhead Lines by supporting improvements in accessibility and connectivity.

Minor positive

17. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories? If Yes, provide details. If No, provide reasons.

Religious belief

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Political opinion

See form attached

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Racial group

See form attached

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Age

See form attached

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Marital Status

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Sexual orientation

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Men and women generally

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Disability

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote

equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

Dependants

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all, no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity are apparent at this stage.

However, any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further in the LDP process will be considered in a proportionate way.

18. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial group?

Minor

18a. Please describe the details of the policy impact on good relations

The draft Plan Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

The strategic objectives of the draft Plan Strategy, particularly our social objectives, should assist in the creation and enhancement of shared spaces.

The draft Plan Strategy recognises the importance of providing quality shared spaces that are accessible and valued by everyone.

This is reflected in our General Principles Policy for all Development and throughout many other policies within the draft Plan Strategy.

The draft Plan Strategy specifically safeguards against the loss of valued neighbourhood services and supports infrastructure such as public open space and greenways, which play an important role in social interaction and community cohesion.

It is anticipated that the proposals and policies in relation to town centres and retailing, economic development, open space, housing and tourism will impact positively upon good relations between people of different religious belief.

Further assessment of the likely impact on good relations will be undertaken at Local Policies Plan (LPP) stage when, for example, land for purposes such as housing, economic use and various forms of open space will be zoned or otherwise identified and protected.

In addition, the draft Plan Strategy will be subject to a statutory consultation process and any further issues raised in relation to Section 75 groups during the process will be taken into account.

Minor Positive at this stage. Further assessment at LPP stage.

19. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and/or racial group?

Yes

19a. Please provide your reasons below

The draft Plan Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

The strategic objectives of the draft Plan Strategy, particularly our social objectives, should assist in the creation and enhancement of shared spaces.

The draft Plan Strategy recognises the importance of providing quality shared spaces that are accessible and valued by everyone.

This is reflected in our General Principles Policy for all Development and throughout many other policies within the draft Plan Strategy.

The draft Plan Strategy specifically safeguards against the loss of valued neighbourhood services and supports infrastructure such as public open space and greenways, which play an important role in social interaction and community cohesion.

It is anticipated that the proposals and policies in relation to town centres and retailing, economic development, open space, housing and tourism will impact positively upon good relations between people of different religious belief.

Further assessment of the likely impact on good relations will be undertaken at Local Policies Plan (LPP) stage when, for example, land for purposes such as housing, economic use and various forms of open space will be zoned or otherwise identified and protected.

In addition, the draft Plan Strategy will be subject to a statutory consultation process and any further issues raised in relation to Section 75 groups during the process will be taken into account.

Minor Positive at this stage. Further assessment at LPP stage.

No, the draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve the quality of life for all and therefore offers potential to promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

It is anticipated that the proposals and policies in relation to, retailing and economic development, open space, housing and tourism will all assist in the delivery of opportunities for social and cross community interaction, thereby enhancing prospects for promoting good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

Any Section 75 issues raised during consultation or further down the line will be considered in a proportionate way.

Disability Discrimination Order (NI) 2006

20. Is there evidence to suggest that this policy would promote positive attitudes towards people with a disability?

Yes

20a. Provide details of opportunities identified

The draft Plan Strategy aims to focus major growth and opportunities for development within our Principal Settlements, whilst providing for sustainable growth in towns, villages and smaller settlements and in the countryside. By focusing housing and economic growth in areas where there is the greatest access to services and facilities as well as better public transport links it is considered that this will encourage and help facilitate participation of disabled people in public life.

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve connectivity and accessibility as well as improving the health and wellbeing of all our citizens.

The General Principles Policy seeks to ensure that accessibility and ease of access for people with disabilities is taken into consideration in the design of development and in the consideration of movement patterns.

Appendix 1 references a number of policies within the draft Plan Strategy that are expected to have positive impacts for people living with disabilities. These include policies that seek to protect and facilitate quality and accessible public open space due to the physical and mental health benefits that all forms of open space can provide.

It is the intention that housing policies such as Policy HOU4: Accessible and Adaptable Homes, will allow people with disabilities to stay in their own homes and communities for longer.

It is anticipated that the draft Plan Strategy will promote positive attitudes towards disabled people as it seeks to ensure that proposals take into account the needs of people with disabilities in the design of development proposals.

21. Is there evidence to suggest that this policy would encourage the participation of people with a disability in public life?

Yes

21a. Provide details of opportunities identified

The draft Plan Strategy aims to focus major growth and opportunities for development within our Principal Settlements, whilst providing for sustainable growth in towns, villages and smaller settlements and in the countryside. By focusing housing and economic growth in areas where there is the greatest access to services and facilities as well as better public transport links it is considered that this will encourage and

help facilitate participation of disabled people in public life.

The draft Plan Strategy seeks to improve connectivity and accessibility as well as improving the health and wellbeing of all our citizens.

The General Principles Policy seeks to ensure that accessibility and ease of access for people with disabilities is taken into consideration in the design of development and in the consideration of movement patterns.

Appendix 1 references a number of policies within the draft Plan Strategy that are expected to have positive impacts for people living with disabilities. These include policies that seek to protect and facilitate quality and accessible public open space due to the physical and mental health benefits that all forms of open space can provide.

It is the intention that housing policies such as Policy HOU4: Accessible and Adaptable Homes, will allow people with disabilities to stay in their own homes and communities for longer.

It is anticipated that the draft Plan Strategy will promote positive attitudes towards disabled people as it seeks to ensure that proposals take into account the needs of people with disabilities in the design of development proposals.

Additional Considerations

22. Are there any potential impacts of the policy / decision (positive or negative) on people with multiple identities?

Yes

22a. Where appropriate, provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities? (For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

The draft Plan Strategy has been prepared with recognition that people may fall in to more than one Section 75 category.

The vision of the LDP is to improve the quality of life for everyone, and the overall outworking of the strategies and policies is likely to promote equality of opportunity for people with multiple identities. No negative differential impacts have been identified at this stage. However, as the draft Plan Strategy will be subject to consultation process, any further issues raised in relation to Section 75 groups during the consultation process will be taken into account.

Monitoring Arrangements

23. Outline what data you could collect in the future to monitor the impact of this policy / decision on equality, good relations and disability duties

The draft Plan Strategy will be subject to consultation with the public and will include specific consultation with a variety of Section 75 groups.

Any Section 75 Category issues raised during consultation will be considered prior to finalising the Plan Strategy. The LDP will also be subject to further equality screening at Local Policies Plan stage.

Monitoring and review of the LDP is an integral part of the plan making process. The draft Plan Strategy includes a Monitoring and Review Framework which highlights that a five-year review of the LDP will be carried out subsequent to adoption to ensure the policies and proposals are achieving their objectives.

There will also be further scope for any impacts on Section 75 groups to be considered through this review.

25. On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy/decision is

Screened Out - No negative impacts

26. Monitoring Recommendations

The draft Plan Strategy will be subject to consultation with the public and will include specific consultation with a variety of Section 75 groups.

Any Section 75 Category issues raised during consultation will be considered prior to finalising the Plan Strategy. The LDP will also be subject to further equality screening at Local Policies Plan stage. Monitoring and review of the LDP is an integral part of the plan making process. The draft Plan Strategy includes a Monitoring and Review Framework which highlights that a five-year review of the LDP will be carried out subsequent to adoption to ensure the policies and proposals are achieving their objectives. There will also be further scope for any impacts on Section 75 groups to be considered through this review.

Conclusion

The LDP draft Plan Strategy shall be subject to public consultation. Reports for draft Sustainability Appraisal, draft Habitats Regulations Assessment, Rural needs impact Assessment and the Screening for Equality Impact shall also be provided for consultation.

The Council's Local Development Plan team will facilitate a series of public engagement events. Arrangements for these events will be published on the Council's website and in local newspapers.

The aims of these events are to:

- Promote understanding of the draft Plan Strategy;
- Explain how it will be tested at Independent Examination; and
- Provide guidance on the submission of representations to the public consultation.

We shall welcome comments on the content of the Equality Screening Report, Rural Needs, SA and HRA reports from everyone with an interest in Ards and North Down and its continuing development over the Plan period to 2032. All formal representations received will be given due consideration and may assist further drafting or amendment of policies prior to an Independent Examination.

Please upload any supporting documents for review



Draft Screening - LDP dPS jotform.docx



RNIA LDP dPS jotform_5387.docx

Email

leona.maginn@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Screening Panel Comments

Appendix - Religious Belief

Religious belief (Internal)

* Small numbers removed as individuals could be identifiable

	Catholic	Protestant & other Christian	Other religions	Total
Males F/T	33	388	34	425
	8%	84%	8%	100%
Males P/T	*	*	*	8
	25%	63%	13%	100%
Females F/T	58	223	6	287
	20%	78%	2%	100%
Females P/T	12	20	5	35
	32%	54%	14%	100%
Total	105	606	46	757
	14%	80%	6%	100%

Religious belief (External)

The Northern Ireland Census 2021 (NISRA) statistics for the Borough area show the religious group the person belongs to or for people with no current religion their religious group of upbringing. People with no current religion and no religion of upbringing are labelled 'None'.

On Census Day 2021 in Northern Ireland just under one person in five (19.0%) either had 'no religion' (17.4%) or 'religion not stated' (1.6%). Nearly one person in three in Ards and North Down (32.1%) had 'no

religion' or 'religion not stated' On census day 2021 bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 45.7% of the population were either Catholic or brought up as a Catholic, while 43.5% were recorded as 'Protestant and other Christian (including Christian related)'. Again, bringing together information on current religion and religion of upbringing, 1.5% of the population are classified as 'other religions' and 9.3% of the population identified that they neither belonged to nor were brought up in a religion. This points to the increasingly secular nature of the population ('None').

	All usual Residents	Catholic	Protestant and other Christian Religions	Other Reglions	None
Ards and North Down	163,659	22,912	111,288	1,636	27,822
Northern Ireland	1,903,178	875,461	818,366	19,031	171,286

	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
All Usual residents	163,659	1,903,178
Catholic	18,003	799,334
Presbyterian	47,461	323,540
Church of Ireland	22, 912	228,381
Methodist	6,546	38,063
Other Chrtistian Religions	16,365	133,222
Other Religions	1,636	19,031
No Religion/Not stated	52,370	361,603

Appendix - Political Opinion

Political opinion (External)

Electoral Office data from recent Local Government elections (2023) and Northern Ireland Assembly Elections (2022) detail the political representation on Ards and North Down. Data also shows the turnout to vote. This tends to be lower than the rest of Northern Ireland, suggesting less strong political opinions, however the results show a preference in Ards and North Down for Unionist Parties.

Constituency	Registered Voters	Turnout
North Down	70,176	60%
Strangford	70,755	68%
Northern Ireland	1,373,731	63%

District Electoral Area	Eligible Electorate	Votes Polled
Overall Turnout (2023)		
Ards and North Down Borough Council Area	123,736	57,677
Overall Turnout (2023)		
Northern Ireland	1,380,372	745,400

Party	Local Government Seats Held	Local Government Seats Held	NI Assembly Elections seats held	NI Assembly Elections seats held
	ANDBC	Northern Ireland	North Down and Strangford	Northern Ireland
Alliance	12	67	4	17
Aontù	0	0	0	0
DUP	14	122	3	25
Green	2	5	0	0
Independants	3	19	1	2
People before Profit	0	1	0	1

SDLP	1	39	0	8
Sinn Fèin	0	144	0	27
TUV	0	9	0	1
UUP	8	54	2	9
Other	0	1	0	0

Appendix - Racial Group

Racial group (Internal)

* Small numbers removed as individuals could be identifiable

Racial Group	Total	Percentage
White	682	78.66%
Black	*	*
Chinese	*	*
Other	*	*
Did not want to answer	*	*
Left Black	176	20.30%

Racial group (External)

On Census Day 2021, 3.4% of the population, or 65,600 people, belonged to minority ethnic groups. This is around double the 2011 figure (1.8% – 32,400 people) and four times the 2001 figure (0.8% – 14,300 people); Taken together the bulletin reports and tables released today show an increasing diversity from 2011 to 2021 in Northern Ireland's population across statistics on ethnic group, main language, country of birth and passports held. This increasing diversity is evident to a greater or lesser degree across all 11 Local Government Districts.

All Usual Residents	163,660
White	159,892
Irish Traveller	24
Roma	19
Indian	388
Chinese	500
Filipino	308
Pakistani	87
Arab	28
Other Asian	468
Black African	309

Black Other	135
Mixed	1,236
Other ethnicities	266

Main Language	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
English	160,385	1,808,019
Other	3,279	95,158

Passports Held	Ards and North Down	Northern Ireland
All Usual Residents	163,659	1,903,178
UK only	109,651	894,493
Ireland Only	13,092	513,858
Uk and Ireland	13,098	95,158
Other Passport(s)	4,909	95,158
No Passport	21,275	304,508

Appendix - Age

Age (Internal)

Age Profile	Female	Female %	Male	Male %
16 to 29	20	6%	26	65%
30 to 39	75	23%	83	19%
40 to 49	105	33%	121	27%
50 to 59	80	25%	176	39%
65+	42	13%	41	9%
Total	322	100%	447	100%

Age (External)

On Census Day 2021 Ards and North down had the largest increase in the number of people aged 65 and over. This rose from 27,692 (17.7%) in 2011 to 36,226 (22.1%) in 2021, demonstrating the scale of population change due to ageing.

Age Profile	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
0 to 14	361,602	27,822
15 to 39	589,983	44,187
40 to 64	609,015	55,644
65+	323,539	36,226
Total	1,903,173	163,659

Appendix - Marital Status

Marital Status (Internal)

* Small numbers removed as individuals could be identifiable

Marital Status	Total	Percentage
Single	180	20.76%
Married	405	46.71%
Divorced	35	4.04%
Co Habiting	14	1.61%
Separated	25	2.88%
Civil Partnership	*	*
Left Blank	207	23.88%

Marital Status (External)

Statistics classifies people aged 16 and over according to their legal marital or civil partnership status on Census Day 21 March 2021. The law in relation to marriage and civil partnership changed in the ten years to 2021. A summary of the changes in Northern Ireland is given below:

- civil partnership for opposite-sex couples became legal in late 2019;
- marriage for same-sex couples became legal in 2020; and
- in late 2020 a couple in a civil partnership could convert their status from civil partnership to marriage.

The rise in the 'single' population and the fall in the 'married' population here is in line with results from recent censuses in England and Wales. These figures mirror changes in society and specifically in personal relationships that has been witnessed over the last 50 years. Ards & North Down LGD, which has the oldest demographic profile of all 11 LGDs, has the highest percentage of adults who were widowed, at 8%.



Marital Status	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
Single	575,966	41,540
Married or in Civil Partnership	682,065	68,340
Separated, Divorced or Formally in a Civil Partnership	151,570	13,400
Widowed or Surviving partner from a Civil Partnership	97,004	10,720

Appendix - Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation

Statistics show that 2.1% (31,600) of NI population aged 16 and over identified as 'lesbian, gay, bisexual or other (LGB+)' and 90.0% (1,363,900) identified as 'straight or heterosexual'. More urban LGDs have a higher percentage of people who identified as LGB+. Almost 8% of our population aged 16 and over (119,300) either ticked 'prefer not to say' or chose not to answer the question. Taken together, these are labelled 'No sexual orientation stated' in these statistics.

8.8% percent of people who identified as LGB+ in Northern Ireland live in the Ards and North Down Borough, Statistics also show that 800 Households in the Borough are living in a same sex couple relationship.

Living in households by relationship	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
Living in a Same Sex Couple	9,600	800
Not Living as a Couple	694,600	53,500
	Northern Ireland	Ards and North Down
All usual Residents (over 16)	1,515,700	134,000
Straight or Hetrosexual	1,364,130	121,940
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or other Sexual orientation	30,314	2,680
No sexual orientation stated	121,256	9,380

Appendix - Men and Women Generally

Men and women generally (Internal)

Male	Female	Total
511	356	867
58.94%	41.06%	100%

Men and women generally (External)

The Northern Ireland usually resident population increased by 5.1% (92,300) from 2011 to 2021. The Census 2021 population is recorded at 1,903,175 people up from 1,810,863 people in 2011. Ards & North Down had an increase of population from 2011 of 7,000, which is 4.5%.

The census day population comprised of 967,000 females and 936,100 males. Statistics show that for every 100 females in Ards and North Down Borough there were 94.9 males.

Statistics show that 54% of the Borough are employed 2% are Unemployed and 43% are Economically inactive. Of those employed, 37% were in the Public administration, education and health Industry and 2% were in the Agriculture, energy and water industry.

62% of employed people travelled to work in a car or van and 34% travelled 5km-20km to their place of work.

There were 70,445 households recorded in Ards and North Down 4,400, 5.9% were unoccupied at the time of the survey.

The average household size in sits at 2.30 (2.44 in NI). 31% are single occupancy and 6% had more than 6 people living in the property.

72% of the Borough owns their own property, this has decreased by 2% from 2011 where 13% are Social rented and increase of 2% increase in 2011.

LGD	Male	Female

Northern Ireland	932,554	970,618
Ards and North Down	80,192	83,466

Appendix - Disability

Disability (External)

A self-assessment of whether a person has a long-term health problem or disability that limits daily activities and which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. It includes problems that are due to old age. The 2021 Census (NIRSA) demonstrates an increase of 15% or more in the percentage of people who reported a long-term health problem or disability which limited day-to-day activities. 41,300 or 25.3% of people in Ards and North Down had a limiting long-term health problem or disability. Ards & North Down experienced an increase of 31.4% from 2011. These changes are in part a reflection of the Boroughs ageing population.

The following statistics show a breakdown in residents in Northern Ireland and Ards and North Down borough with a Disability that is expected to last 12 months or more.

The figures show that 7.2 per cent of the Borough have deafness or partial hearing loss, 68% being over the age of 65. 2% have blindness or partial sight loss, 11% of those people are aged 0-39 years. 1.6 % have mobility or dexterity difficulty that requires the use of a wheelchair, in comparison to Northern Ireland statics this means that 9.3% of all those who have mobility or dexterity difficulty that requires the use of a wheelchair reside in the Borough.

0.8% have an intellectual or learning disability including dyslexia and Downs Syndrome. 1.6% have Autism or Asperger syndrome, 49% are between 0-14 years whilst 40% are aged 15- 39 year. 8.1 % have an emotional, psychological or mental health condition, includes depression and schizophrenia, this is highest in the age ranges of 40 – 64 years (47%). 2% have frequent periods of confusion or memory loss, including Dementia, this is most prevalent with ages 65+. 10% of residents have another condition, for example Cancer, Heart Disease or Diabetes, again this is most prevalent in age 65+. Taken together these results show that policy making must consider Ards and north Down aging population and health and disability issues as well as recognition for those that provide unpaid care throughout the Borough.

LGD	All usual residents	Activites Not Limited	Limited a little	Limited a lot
Northern Ireland	1,903,178	1,446,415	247,413	209,349
Ards and North Down	163,659	122,744	22,912	18,002

Long term Health Conditions	None	1	2	3 or More
Northern Ireland	1,237,065	342,572	152,254	171,286
Ards and North Down	101,468	32,731	14,729	14,729
Disability Breakdown Age range (0 - 65+)	Ards and North Down		Northern Ireland	
Deafness or Partial Hearing loss	11,802		109,457	
Blindness or Partial Sightloss	3,214		33,961	

Mobility or dexterity difficulty that required the use of a wheelchair	2,641		28,138	
Intellectual or learning disability include dyslexia and Downs Syndrome	1,469		16,923	
Autism or Asperger Syndrome	2,628		35,367	
Emotional, psychological or mental health condition inc depression and schizophrenia	13,275		165,127	
Frequent periods of confusion or memory loss inc Dementia	3,432		37,789	
Other conditions E.g Cancer, Heart Disease or Diabetes	167,752		16,636	

Appendix - Dependants

Dependants (External)

For the Purposes of S75 a dependant can be classed as Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.

In Census 2021 one person in eight of NI population aged 5 or more (or 222,200 people) noted that they provided unpaid care. One important point to note in Policy making is that 2,600 children aged 5 to 14 in Northern Ireland provide unpaid care.

Ards & North Down LGD had the highest percentage of people who provide unpaid care throughout Northern Ireland , 13.7% estimated at 30,414 residents. 'Unpaid care' covers looking after, giving help or support to anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age

A dependent child is a person aged 0 to 15 in a household (whether or not in a family) or aged 16 to 18 in full-time education and living in a family with his or her parent(s) or grandparent(s). 'No dependent children' includes households with no children and households where all children are non-dependent.

In Ards and North Down there were 27,822 Children (defined as those aged 0 to 14). Children make up 19.2% of the Northern Ireland population. This percentage varies across the Local Government Districts and is lowest in Ards and North Down where the proportion is 17.0%.

According to Birth statistics on NISRA Ards and North Down recorded 2,854 births between 2020 and 2022 , giving an indication of the numbers using buggies or prams in use.

	Dependent children in household: None	Dependent children in household: one	Dependent children in household: Two	Dependent children in household: Three
Northern Ireland	71%	11%	11%	6%

Ards and North Down	74%	11%	11%	4%
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24. Does this policy require an Equality Impact Assessment?

No

1. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. E.g

Ards and North Down Local Development Plan – 2032 – Draft Plan Strategy.

The Plan Strategy is the first of two Local Development Plan documents to be produced in accordance with Part 2 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

2. What definition of 'rural' is the Plan using in respect of Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition)

Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

3. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes

3a. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The definition of rural is those settlements with a population of 5000 or less and therefore anywhere outside of the settlements of Bangor, Newtownards, Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood is classed as rural.

Draft Plan Strategy Strategic Proposals and Policies

The draft Plan Strategy (draft PS) contains a Spatial Growth Strategy, Countryside Strategy, General Principles policy, Climate Change and Mitigation strategic policy, Planning Agreements policy, subject strategies and related operational policies which will apply across the Ards and North Down Borough Council area. In consideration of the coverage of the draft PS to the entire Borough, it is therefore likely to have an impact on what is defined as the rural area.

The overall aim of the draft PS is to further sustainable development across the Council area. To achieve this, the draft PS sets aforementioned Strategies and an associated operational policy framework forming the basis for the decision taking for development management proposals.

The draft PS aims to deliver on the main pillars of sustainable development which are the economy, the environment and the societal needs and aspirations. In so doing, the potential impact upon the rural area can be considered to relate to these themes. The draft PS sets out spatial and cross cutting objectives and strategic objectives related to social, economic, environmental and infrastructure considerations. Through operational policies including, but not limited to, those related to housing, economic development, town centres and retailing, tourism, the natural and historic environment and infrastructure, the draft PS will have a direct influence on development.

The policy aims are to contribute towards positive improvements, for example, sustaining and providing for job opportunities in the rural area. Ultimately the Plan Strategy shall help towards sustaining rural settlements and hinterlands as vibrant communities.

Overall, the implementation of the draft PS is likely to contribute to a positive impact on rural dwellers and the rural area in terms of supporting economic growth, social inclusion and seek to underpin its future sustainability. It is considered that some policies will have a more direct impact on the rural areas while other policies may be more indirect in their outcomes on the lives of rural dwellers.

3b. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

The draft PS has had regard to the regional policy contained in the RDS with the focus of growth being directed towards settlements. Therefore, the Spatial Growth Strategy and policies in the draft PS seek to ensure appropriate sustainable development opportunities across the Ards and North Down Borough Council area, including urban and rural areas.

Similarly, the LDP seeks to support and sustain all our communities, both urban and rural. Whilst the policies may make distinctions between the application of policy in settlements and the countryside, the aim is to deliver sustainable development irrespective of location.

It is considered that the policies do not seek to impact on urban and rural people differently but aim to deliver positive outcomes across the range of land use areas, such as housing and economic development, in a sustainable way benefiting everyone across the Council area.

Ards and North Down Borough Council area has a mix of both diverse urban and rural areas.

Approximately 74 % of the total population live in urban settlements with the remaining 26% of the usually resident population living in the rural settlements and countryside (referred to in 1F above). 'The Big Plan' Ards and North Down's Community Plan, also recognised that this can result in some individuals and communities experiencing social isolation.

Irrespective of size, settlements including rural towns and villages provide support to the wider rural hinterland in terms of employment opportunities, and services, retail, entertainment and other facilities. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the needs of people in rural areas can be met both in an urban or rural context. The fact that a policy is viewed as a rural or urban policy does not mean that the out-workings of that policy are confined to the rural or urban area of the Borough but viewed in the wider context of delivering the overall vision of the draft PS.

The LDP has the important aim of supporting rural communities by providing appropriate and sustainable opportunities for development in the countryside. To achieve this aim, the Countryside Strategy will seek to

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

Rural industry and employment differ from that of towns and cities. Difficulties with access to services, and issues with connectivity, social and digital, can have a disproportionate impact on rural dwellers. In terms of individual policies, while not specific to the rural area, there are several that, by the nature of the development associated, will have more likely significant impacts on the countryside and smaller settlements.

The Countryside Strategy seeks to set out the range and types of development which are considered to contribute to the aims of sustainable development and are therefore considered in principle to be acceptable in the Countryside. There are a range of operational development policies that relate to the rural area of the countryside (i.e. that area outside any settlement limits). The Countryside Strategy sets out opportunities for a range of types of residential and non-residential development in CS 1 and links to related operational planning policies.

The Countryside Strategy also contains a retained approach in relation to Rural Wedges. The function of these specific areas is to distinguish and maintain separation between settlements and serve to maintain the rural character of the countryside.

Social

Housing by its nature will have a degree differential impact in the rural area. The Housing Strategy seeks to create balanced communities with high quality sustainable residential environments to meet the housing needs of everyone. While the Housing Strategy seeks to promote higher density housing developments in our town centres and in other suitable locations that benefit from high accessibility to public transport, it also seeks to support rural communities by facilitating sustainable, well-designed residential development

in the countryside. Rural housing has been considered extensively through the development of the dPS; for example, in the strategic allocation and the drafting of the related operational planning policies. Opportunities have been afforded to the rural area and in the countryside provided the relevant planning criteria have been met.

Open space, sport and outdoor recreation facilities play an important role in improving health and wellbeing not limited to location. The protection and enhancement of sporting and outdoor recreational facilities in urban areas may also reduce the demand for such activities in the countryside and may have an impact on rural dwellers. This can sometimes help provide relief for more fragile environments in the rural area. Those policies for outdoor recreation in the countryside will impact on the people in the rural area positively and will improve the service provision of the rural area as well as improving the health and wellbeing of rural dwellers. Open space enriches the character of the Borough and can contribute towards civic pride and community cohesion. Outdoor recreation in the countryside is important not only to the local community but benefits the rural economy and can promote tourism. The key purpose of the LDP in relation to outdoor recreation in the countryside is to ensure it operates as sustainably as possible.

Economic

Economic Development Strategy and policy direction generally reflects the Spatial Growth Strategy for the LDP. The draft Plan Strategy directs planned economic development growth that is balanced with the sustainability objectives of the LDP to ensure that environmental quality for the countryside is not compromised. Whilst there may be a perception that the rural policies are prohibitive, they reflect the importance of sustaining vibrant rural communities. The dPS recognises the role small enterprise plays in rural life and provides a degree of flexibility for a number of uses, provided that the established rural character is retained.

Proposed policies in relation to Town Centres and Retailing reflect the overall thrust of the dPS in that development is directed to appropriate locations. A retail hierarchy is proposed and for the consideration of development proposals in a sequential test approach. The LDP acknowledges the role of village and other rural settlements which help sustain rural communities by meeting daily shopping and service needs of residents. This has a variety of positive and negative impacts on the rural area.

Opportunities for tourism development exist principally within settlements where infrastructure is already in place. A tourism hierarchy is identified for the Borough. The priority areas are principal settlements, within settlements, urban waterfronts and town centres. The Tourism policies, e.g. tourist amenities in the countryside, are influenced by the need to protect our natural heritage for future generations. The Tourism policies in the countryside have potential to impact differently on people living in urban and rural areas. The policies include a specific policy in relation to safeguarding tourism assets, as well as policies for tourism development in the urban and countryside areas. The proposals that come forward to be assessed through the policies and be developed will attract more visitors resulting in a beneficial impact on the rural economy and will result in employment opportunities that will benefit the rural community.

The minerals industry, through extraction and processing, makes a significant contribution to the local and wider economy as a valued provider of employment, particularly in rural areas. There are also a number of challenges arising from this form of development. A suite of policies in relation to Mineral Development is included in the dPS. Specific proposals can have potential adverse impacts on the environment and on the amenity and wellbeing of people living in proximity to extraction and processing sites. The scale of extraction can present a visual intrusion and degradation of the landscape. Minerals can only be extracted from sites where they occur thus presenting a challenge as there may be limited opportunities for consideration of alternative sites. While the Borough has a history of a range of minerals extraction, today sandstone is the only rock currently extracted in the Borough. The extraction sites in the Borough are all located in rural areas and produce a third of the sandstone extracted in Northern Ireland. The Borough contains quarries that extract rock with a highly polished stone value – highly valued for road building and exported to Great Britain.

Environmental

Policies for the Natural Environment have the potential to impact on the rural area more than urban areas due to extent and coverage, as much of our natural environment is located in rural areas. The impacts largely stem from the level of protection given to the conservation of natural assets, such as habitats and landscapes; for example, in the rural area versus those in the urban area where there is a presumption in favour of development (subject to relevant material considerations). The Borough is rich in varied

landscapes, habitats and landscape features. Our greatest Natural Environment assets are in the rural area. The Borough is also subject to extensive natural environment designations both international e.g. Ramsar, Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and National – e.g. National Nature Reserves. The proposed Natural Environment policies retain existing high level designations.

There is little which separates the impacts of Historic Environment policies on the rural area from the urban area. The policy provisions are the same for rural and urban areas and so no meaningful differential exists. One new designation of an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest has by virtue of its rural siting and related policies a slight differential impact.

The dPS presents policies in relation to Coastal Management. The Coastal Management Strategy shall seek to protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate excessive or obtrusive development. Designation UCZ1 in relation to the undeveloped coastal zone is by virtue of location outwith settlement limits and wholly in the rural area. The designation is intended to provide additional protection for the unique landscape value, visual amenity, and nature conservation interest of the Borough's coastline. Coastal change policy included in the dPS has a policy presumption against development in known areas of land instability and coastal erosion in coastal areas.

Flooding can be a potential issue for all areas as it can stem from several sources. Deforestation, agricultural drainage and changing land use practices can lead to increased flows in watercourses and increased potential from fluvial flooding. If there is a significant differential impact it would be in favour of the rural area in that less development of a certain nature could have reduced potential for surface water flooding. It is considered that the proposed flooding policies, therefore, are not more or distinctively impactful on the rural area.

Infrastructure

Renewable and low carbon energy and minerals policies by virtue of the nature of the existing or likely location of proposals related to that form of development shall have potential for impact in the rural area. All forms of renewable energy have potential impacts on the rural area that are not arguably matched at present in urban areas. Wind energy development proposals are more likely to be located in rural areas. While the Borough does not have any wind farms at present, there are single turbines. Wind energy development proposals are sited usually where wind speeds are sufficiently fast and cannot normally be sited in close proximity to developed areas where sensitive receptors such as residential development will be. Therefore, there are more likely impacts – both positive and negative, on the rural area. A degree of visual impact and impact in relation to landscape character is to be expected, but there will also be financial benefits to individual landowners (who are normally resident in the affected area) in terms of renewable energy for their own operations and for selling to the national grid. While the dPS seeks to positively facilitate the Borough's full potential for renewable and low carbon energy development, the support for these forms of renewable energy generation and storage is in suitable locations where they are not considered likely to cause unacceptable adverse impacts. A cautious approach will be adopted within those areas considered to be most sensitive to proposals for renewable energy and storage.

Solar energy and hydro schemes, by their nature, are also more likely to be in rural areas and, like wind energy, can have associated amenity issues such as visual impact. Hydroelectric development also has the potential to negatively impact on fisheries and nature interests in rivers. Applications under policy should include assessments and reports in relation to impacts on priority species and habitats. Similarly, biomass energy - particularly through combustion, can impact on such things as air quality and water quality (through emissions) and can produce significant noise. However, it also has financial benefits for the local economy; and biomass fuel can secure a long-term income for farmers, forestry owners and contractors, and transport operators in rural areas.

There are differential impacts associated with Transportation policies as the provision of public transport and transport infrastructure is mostly centred around our urban centres. Private transport is a necessity in many rural areas in terms of access to employment and basic services. Data from NISRA's continuous household survey indicates that 92% of rural households in Northern Ireland had access to at least one car or van. There is a lower amount in terms of public transport provision to the rural areas; however, this should be considered in the context of the population these transport services support. The draft Plan Strategy has an Active Travel Policy. Provisions for such things as active travel and high levels of

connectivity may be considered more difficult to achieve in rural areas; however, it is anticipated that such requirements will be applied in a way that is proportionate and appropriate to the scale and locational context of a proposal.

There are some differential impacts associated with development related to waste management in the rural area. Waste policy can direct certain types of waste disposal development to rural areas e.g. re-use of former mineral extraction sites. Given the low likelihood of such developments, the impact is likely to be negligible over the Plan period. Due to the location of some developments there is likely to be no access to mains sewerage and thus non-mains sewerage is required usually through a septic tank. This can have an additional cost attributed to it whilst an accumulation of these types of developments can have an impact on the environment.

The draft PS also contains overarching General Principles Policy for all forms of development in both urban and rural areas. It has a specific principle for furthering sustainable development and threads this aim throughout the chapter as a common theme underpinning the other principles.

This chapter includes specific reference to development proposals in the countryside needing to demonstrate account of rural design guidance.

The Strategic Policy for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation applies to proposals across the entire Borough. It signposts to relevant operational planning policy.

3c. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on

Given the interrelationship between urban and rural areas, the strategies and policies of the draft PS will primarily impact upon the following social, economic, and environmental aspects of rural areas: • Rural Businesses; • Rural Tourism; • Rural Housing; • Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas; • Education or Training in Rural Areas; • Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas; • Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas; • Poverty in Rural Areas; • Deprivation in Rural Areas; • Rural Crime or Community Safety; • Rural Development; and • Agri-Environment. • Other – Coastal Development, Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Energy Development, Landscape (natural and built/historic environment), Minerals

Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service? Deprivation levels can be found at Home Page | NI Area Statistics | NISRA

Yes

4a. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders

Consultation with Other Organisations

Published Statistics

Research Papers

Other Publications

4b. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

- consultation with the community
- consultation with other organisations (Stakeholder and Statutory/Non-Statutory Consultees)
- evidence position papers
- published statistics
- other Council publications
- Government publications
- data from the Community Plan

See further detail in Appendix 1 of information sources and references.

Preferred Options stage

A series of Position Papers were produced to inform the LDP process at the Preferred Options Paper stage. Each Position Paper identified a separate topic area and provided an executive summary of the current position in relation to that topic area. Baseline reviews took place along with consideration of regional strategic planning policy and any locally distinct need identified, used to justify the policy direction for each topic area which is carried through to the draft PS.

Information for Position Papers was collated through research, consultation and discussion with government departments, agencies and public bodies. Desk based research was undertaken of local and central government websites, published research and reports. Topic papers were published as part of the Preferred Options Paper (POP) following consultation with Elected Members.

The POP was published with a full public consultation exercise inviting comments from all interested parties. Public consultation events were held at various venues/locations and at various times throughout all the District Electoral Areas of Ards and North Down Borough Council area. Council officers from the LDP team attended these engagement opportunities to aid interested parties in understanding the POP and how to respond to it. At these events various topics were discussed and expanded upon. Views expressed largely included the specific housing, economic and social needs relating to the rural areas of the Borough. The POP was also forwarded to statutory consultees, including government departments. At the end of the consultation period all the responses received were collated and a Public Consultation Report produced to inform the LDP process going forward.

Engagement with Elected members

The formulation of the draft Plan Strategy for the LDP has involved engagement with Elected Members, both through a series of policy workshops and Committee meetings where Members actively engaged in the process of drafting and reviewing specific policies. Members who represent District Electoral Areas which are rural in nature and in service to those constituents, are particularly aware of the social and economic needs of those areas which play a pivotal role within the Council as a whole.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

During the SA process the approach and policies of the draft Plan Strategy have been considered in detail with the aim of ensuring the overarching aim of sustainable development is considered throughout the document.

4c. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 sets out at a strategic level the approach to the delivery of growth across the whole of Northern Ireland which includes rural areas. The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) sets out the planning requirements for the whole of Northern Ireland. The SPPS sets out rural policy and the delivery of sustainable development across a range of

topics including employment, housing and economic growth. The Council is required to have regard to these strategic documents along with other government advice and guidance to ensure that the needs of the entire Council area are delivered in a sustainable manner.

The RDS seeks to sustain rural communities living in the smaller settlements and the open countryside and to improve accessibility for rural communities (SFG13 and SFG 14). Key considerations of the RDS are the role and function of rural settlements and accessibility to services. The RDS in respect of the rural area identifies the need to:

- Establish the role of multi-functional town centres. These should be the prime locations for business, housing, administration, leisure and cultural facilities both for urban and rural communities.
- Connect rural and urban areas. This is necessary to widen the economic base of town, village and countryside, provide support and networking opportunities to encourage the formation of local alliances to exploit complementary resources and facilities.
- Revitalise small towns and villages. This is particularly relevant to those towns and villages which have been static or declining and contain areas of social need. Deprivation happens in different ways in different places. An integrated approach between government departments, agencies and communities will ensure that regeneration plans reflect the specific needs of each community.
- Facilitate the development of rural industries, businesses, and enterprises in appropriate locations. Farming plays a major part in sustaining rural community networks, as employers, consumers and producers. Forestry and fishing also contribute to communities, in employment and commercial terms, as well as in terms of recreation opportunities. Other industries such as tourism and renewable energy can provide further jobs and opportunities in rural areas as long as they are integrated appropriately within the settlement or rural landscape.
- Encourage sustainable and sensitive development. The expansion of rural tourism and development which is both sustainable and sensitive to the environment should be encouraged. This includes the ability of settlements and landscapes to absorb development.
- Improve the overall connectivity of rural communities to services and other parts of the Region by exploring innovative ways of bringing these services to the communities. Using the community hall, local school or church hall for visiting service providers will help keep people living in rural areas connected. Different service delivery approaches could include outreach and mobile services or increased use of digital technology.
- Integrate local transport. Promoting integrated rural transport initiatives which meet the needs of those living in isolated areas and in particular elderly and disabled people.

Ards and North Down has vibrant rural areas with active communities and sectors that contribute to the overall employment base. Our rural settlements and hinterlands also have considerable character and importance. The local communities have a strong business bases but require to be supported and sustained to remain vibrant. There is a need to support and sustain through a range of planning policies that can address appropriate levels of development in housing and employment opportunities whilst protecting the character and heritage of rural settlements and the open countryside. As well as the need to sustain vibrant rural communities and consolidate their current base, there are also various elements of rural life which have been identified as needing to be improved.

Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

5. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the Social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

In the formulation of the Spatial Growth Strategy, Countryside Strategy and the suite of policies for the draft PS, the future sustainability of the rural area has been considered.

As previously identified, in order for communities in the rural area to be sustained, an appropriate level of housing and economic opportunities is required. Policies contained in the draft Plan Strategy offer appropriate and sustainable uses in such rural locations and seek to deliver towards maintaining the existing population and giving opportunity to future residents to live and work there.

Housing

The Council will seek to meet housing need over the Plan period through appropriate land and housing provision across the settlement tiers. An allocation to those rural settlements shall consolidate their role

and function as local centres for housing, employment and services whilst sustaining and maintaining the villages and the smaller settlements. The provision of an allocation to the open countryside is in line with the aim of facilitating sustainable rural development of an appropriate scale.

The Strategic Policy for the Countryside, Policy CS 1, sets out the range of types of development which are considered to contribute to the aims of sustainable development and are therefore considered in principle to be acceptable. In the countryside, the draft Plan Strategy shall continue to provide opportunity for people who need to live in the countryside to continue to do so e.g. to ensure that active farm holdings have opportunities for new residential development to maintain the active farm business and special personal and domestic circumstances.

The draft Plan Strategy has considered the housing needs of other rural dwellers that are not farmers or associated with a non-farming business. The dPS provides a number of other opportunities for non-farming community through policies for infill dwelling proposals, clustering and replacement and conversion of existing buildings (subject to other relevant material considerations).

As mentioned above, the draft PS also provides for opportunities for housing within settlement limits of the Borough's rural settlements.

Economic Need

Meeting the need for appropriate employment opportunities to sustain the rural population is recognised - reflecting The Community Plan Outcome 4 - All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy. There is a need to balance the provision of opportunities without harming the character and amenity of the countryside. The draft PS acknowledges the need to support existing businesses in the rural area and allow sufficient flexibility to facilitate their expansion. The policies allow diversification to help sustain farming, with new employment opportunities to present themselves in the rural area.

Balance between Housing and Employment – there is a need for employment opportunities and housing provision to be balanced to ensure a sustainable rural community, therefore the housing and economic policies contained in the draft PS ensure this link is maintained and built upon. The key challenge in the draft PS is the balance of development which brings social and economic benefits while protecting a unique resource and sense of pride in a place.

Protection of Rural Areas - To protect the natural and historic environments of the countryside from inappropriate development requires the management of housing and economic uses in a sustainable manner that also supports and sustains rural communities. In addition, the protection of natural and historic environments in rural areas is ensured through appropriate designations, for example, the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), to ensure the countryside is maintained for future generations to enjoy. The draft Plan Strategy sets out strategies and policies for housing, employment and historic/natural environments in the countryside and for coastal management – in particular the undeveloped coast.

The draft Plan Strategy contains operational planning policies with key policy tests which development proposals must meet to ensure appropriate, sustainable development can be accommodated whilst offering the highest possible protection of rural areas.

Transportation infrastructure and service provision is an ongoing issue in rural areas with rural dwellers dependant for the most part on private vehicle usage and the contraction of services by the public transport provider. The provision of public transport is particularly important for people who do not have access to a car. The draft PS seeks to address this issue, in conjunction with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) as the competent transport authority, through the Local Transport Study and a forthcoming Transport Plan. The Transport Study prepared by DfI encourages a modal shift across the entire Council area reducing the reliance on the car and a move to public and other modes of transport. The use of technology is vital for rural people and to allow rural business to succeed. The need to connect places physically and digitally has been acknowledged in the policies. These linkages all help reduce a sense of isolation and improve connectivity for businesses and people in the rural area.

Community Facilities - there is a need to ensure that facilities such as health and education can be accommodated so that rural people have adequate access to these facilities in appropriate locations. It is important that rural dwellers have access to necessary facilities in order that their day-to-day needs can

be met. The suite of policies promotes the requirement for such facilities and their long-term viability. Linking to economic opportunities, villages and rural centres also provide for sustaining rural communities by meeting daily shopping and service needs and adding to vitality of rural settlements commensurate with the position in the hierarchy.

Tourism - there is a need for appropriate tourism facilities with links to the wider area through walking and cycling provision (active travel). Strategic Greenways are also key to encouraging sustainable growth and connectivity between places, attractive to residents and visitors alike. This area of economic activity can ensure the long-term viability of the rural area and rural businesses. The growth in various forms of tourism is encouraged and the appropriate use of the rural area as a resource for tourism activity. The linkages to the overall protection of the existing historic and natural assets of the rural area are retained in the draft PS.

Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

6. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes

6a. Please explain how the development, adopting, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service been influenced by the rural needs identified.

The Spatial Growth Strategy, Countryside Strategy, other subject strategies and planning policies as set out in the draft PS are aimed at encouraging sustainable growth across the rural area to sustain rural communities. The draft PS seeks to address the issues of the rural needs identified in previous sections (3C and 3D). The draft PS seeks to ensure that the entire Council area and its residents have the opportunity for better access to employment, housing, transport, public services and facilities and that the historic and natural heritage is safeguarded for future generations.

The objectives and planning policies in the draft PS will encourage sustainable growth across the rural area delivering towards sustaining our vibrant rural communities and resisting economic and social decline.

In order to facilitate a sustainable level of rural housing, the draft PS makes a provision for housing proposals across the settlement tiers which include rural settlements and also to the countryside, subject to normal planning considerations.

In relation to housing in the countryside, the draft PS contains a policy provision for dwellings on farms, dwellings for established rural businesses restoration and replacement of rural dwellings and the conversion and reuse of other rural buildings.

Provision is made in the draft PS for clustering, infilling, special personal and domestic circumstances and affordable housing in the countryside. All of these opportunities are all subject to meeting the relevant policy tests and criteria set out in the draft PS.

Economic Need

In terms of economic development in the rural area, the Countryside Strategy and Economic Development Strategy, along with operational planning policies, have been designed to allow for opportunities for small rural start-up businesses. The Strategy also seeks to provide more opportunities for existing businesses in the rural area to expand and grow in order to support employment in our vibrant rural communities.

Minerals

The draft PS balances facilitating minerals development against the need to protect the environment and our most vulnerable and scientifically important landscapes. The draft PS acknowledges the importance of continuing to permit the extraction of minerals in the rural area, as this is an area which provides rural employment both directly and indirectly through associated manufacturing and construction industry.

Social Need

The draft PS recognises the importance of connectivity and the need to ensure that rural areas remain linked both via physical roads and infrastructure and through improvement in telecommunications infrastructure. The direct provision of such infrastructure is beyond the remit of the LDP; however, the Council shall continue to work with government departments and stakeholders in relation to these matters.

The draft PS will facilitate telecommunication development where it is appropriate, without causing negative environmental impacts or effects on human health.

In relation to environmental protection, all rural development proposal will be subject to criteria-based policies as well as strategic designations which will protect the most vulnerable of our unique landscapes from inappropriate development.

Documenting and Recording

7. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information complied.

Sustainability is a holistic approach that considers ecological, social and economic dimensions, recognising that all must be considered together to find lasting prosperity.

Sustainable development is all about meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Depending on your answer your answer may be a 'positive' impact or a 'negative' impact. Specific guidance at each question.

There may be 'no impact'.

If you are not sure complete as 'don't know'

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, I recommend that this policy / decision is

Screened Out - No negative impacts

1. Is Data Protection relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

No

Data Protection Officer Comments