

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

28 July 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee of the Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held in the Council Chamber, 2 Church Street, Newtownards, on **Tuesday, 04 August 2026** commencing at **7.00pm**.

Yours faithfully

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

- 1. Apologies
- 2. Declarations of Interest
- 3. Matters arising from minutes of Planning Committee 07 July 2026
- 4. Planning Applications

4.1	LA06/2024/0576/O	Dwelling, garage and all associated site works Land immediately to rear of 54a High Bangor Road, Donaghadee Speaker in Support – Mr A Stephens
4.2	LA06/2025/0330/F	Proposed alterations to, and extension of, the existing vacant Dickson’s home and garden centre to accommodate a new garden and antique centre with ancillary farm/deli shop/café, restaurant, landscaping and children’s play area. Development includes the reconfiguration of the existing car park and all other associated site and access works. Former Dickson's Home and Garden Centre, 77-79 Cootehall Road, Bangor Speaker in Support – Mr T Stokes

4.3	LA06/2026/0457/F	Retention of open space (Two-year time extension to temporary permission LA06/2024/0182/F) Land immediately east of 41 Hamilton Road, South of 1 Springfield Ave (Site of former Hamilton House and Sea Scout Hall), Bangor
4.4	LA06/2026/0323/A	Erection of 2 Signs - Sponsorship Signage Roadside verge between Croft Road and Bangor Road, Holywood (retrospective)

Reports for Approval

- 5. Proposed Charges for Building Control and Planning Service (report attached)
- 6. RTPI NI Politicians in Planning event (report attached)

Reports for Noting

- 7. Update on Planning Appeals (report attached)
- 8. Follow up from DFI Minister post meeting re NIW (report attached)

*****In Confidence*****

Report for Approval

- 9. Advance Notice of Listing (report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF PLANNING COMMITTEE (16 MEMBERS)

Councillor Cathcart	Councillor McCollum (Chair)
Alderman Graham (Vice Chair)	Alderman McDowell
Councillor Harbinson	Alderman McIlveen
Councillor Hennessy	Councillor McKee
Councillor Kendall	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Smart
Alderman McAlpine	Alderman Smith
Councillor McClean	Councillor Wray

ITEM 8**3****ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

A hybrid meeting (in person and via Zoom) of the Planning Committee was held in the Council Chamber, Church Street, Newtownards, on Tuesday 7 July 2026 at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Alderman Graham

Aldermen: McAlpine (Zoom) McIlveen
McDowell Smith

Councillors: McClean (8.13 pm) Smart
McKee Wray
Morgan (Zoom)

Officers: Director of Place and Prosperity (B Dorrian), Head of Planning and Building Control (A McCullough), Principal Planner (G Kerr), Senior Planner (J Hanna) and Democratic Services Officer (H Loebnau)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from the Chair (Councillor McCollum) and Councillor Cathcart. Apologies for lateness were given by Councillor McClean.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alderman McAlpine declared an interest in the following applications.

Item 4.3 - LA06/2025/0707/S54 – Strangford Integrated College, Carrowdore

Item 4.6 - LA06/2025/0948/F – 8 The Crescent, Holywood

Item 4.7 – LA06/2025/0950/LBC – 8 The Crescent, Holywood

NOTED.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF 9 JUNE 2026**

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above.

AGREED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the minutes be noted.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

4.1 LA06/2020/0770/F – INSTALLATION OF FLOODLIGHTS TO SERVE 3 TENNIS COURTS, BANGOR LAWN TENNIS CLUB, COURTS 4-6, IMMEDIATELY WEST OF 28 FARNHAM PARK, BANGOR

(Appendices II - V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor West

Committee Interest: Local Objection

Proposal: Installation of floodlights to serve 3 tennis courts.

Site Location: Bangor Lawn Tennis Club Courts 4-6, immediately west of 28 Farnham Park, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer began by explaining that this Item was for the Installation of floodlights to serve 3 tennis courts (courts 4-6) at Bangor Lawn Tennis Club and the application was being recommended for approval of planning permission. The application was being considered by the Committee as there were six or more applications contrary to the officer recommendation. It was noted that at the time of publication of the case officer's report there were 76 objections from 16 separate addresses, and also 6 letters of support and a petition of support with 181 signatures.

Since the publication of the case officer's report an additional objection had been received with an addendum to the issues raised, prepared, published and circulated to Members.

Members should note that the original proposal was for eight lighting columns at a height of 10m and that was amended during the processing of the application to six columns at 12m in height which was what was being considered.

The recommendation was to grant planning permission.

The site was located within the settlement development limit of Bangor as shown in the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 and the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015 and was located within a proposed Area of Townscape Character BR 15) as per draft BMAP.

Vehicular and pedestrian access was through Farnham Park to the east. There were a total of 6 tennis courts on the site, three of which with existing floodlighting at courts 1-3.

Bangor Lawn Tennis Club was a long established club set within Bangor West within a residential area and a picture was shown providing some context of the site and its surrounds.

The image from Farnham Park and Maxwell Park respectively showed that public vantage points of the tennis club and existing lighting did not appear prominent and read as a contained recreational use that integrated well within its landscaped surroundings. The use of fencing, boundary walls and mature vegetation assisted in mitigating visual impact and allowed the development to blend into the established residential townscape.

Turning to the site where proposed floodlighting was to be located at courts 4-6 it was explained that the tennis courts were surfaced with artificial grass and were enclosed by metal mesh fencing approximately 3m in height. Boundary treatments between the tennis club and adjoining residential gardens comprised a mixture of fencing, walls and mature vegetation, which provided a degree of physical and visual screening. Views into the site were generally restricted until reaching the immediate vicinity of the site entrance, approximately 3-4m from the boundary. As a result, visibility of the proposed floodlighting structures from the surrounding area would be limited.

During various site visits the case officer also took images from inside 19 Knockmore Park to assess the site from a neighbouring property. In respect of existing floodlighting on the site an image was shown of courts 4, 5 and 6, together with the existing floodlighting serving the courts located to the south of the clubhouse. The existing lighting infrastructure comprised 10 steel floodlight columns, each approximately 10m in height. According to historical records it would appear that lighting had been in place since at least 2005. Those existing floodlit courts were also situated within a residential context and, despite the presence of floodlighting, did not appear visually dominant or incongruous within the surrounding area.

It should be noted that the existing floodlighting operated without any restriction on hours, having been confirmed as lawful through a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development.

The Planner turned to the proposal itself and showed the proposed location of the six flood lights on the block plan. The red line indicated the extent of the boundary for the submitted lighting (lux) assessment. Each column was 12m in height to serve tennis courts located within the northern part of the club site. The proposed floodlighting columns would be two metres higher than those currently on the site but it was considered when taking the site as a whole within the context of its setting the overall development would appear similar in scale and appearance to the existing lighting on site, as well as to other vertical elements and street furniture within the surrounding residential area.

Views into the site are generally restricted until reaching the immediate vicinity of the site entrance, approximately 3-4m from the boundary. As a result, visibility of the proposed floodlighting structures from the surrounding area would be limited. Given the context of the immediate site and surrounding area it was the opinion that the proposal would not appear visually incongruous within the context of Bangor West Area of Townscape Character.

The agent acting on behalf of the applicant had confirmed that the floodlights were anticipated to be used predominantly between 7 pm and 9 pm, approximately three to four times per week during the winter months and only during periods of suitable weather. A curfew of 10 pm was sought to allow for occasional competitive matches associated with the Club's participation in the Belfast and District leagues, which may occasionally extend beyond 9 pm.

Given the existing use and floodlighting already on the site what was required to be considered this evening was the intensification of an existing and established use rather than the introduction of a new form of development. The proposed floodlights would introduce an additional illumination during evening hours and so the assessment therefore focused on whether the proposal would give rise to an *unacceptable intensification* of impact, rather than the elimination of any impact.

The assessment therefore focused on the impact of the proposed floodlighting itself, which could be appropriately regulated through conditions relating to hours of operation and lighting levels.

Significant weight was afforded to the professional advice of Environmental Health as the competent authority in assessing lighting impacts. Accordingly, it was considered that sufficient and robust technical information had been provided through updated reports to allow a full and proper assessment of the proposal, and that the concerns raised in relation to the lighting reports had been appropriately addressed through the revised submissions and consultation process.

Environmental Health confirmed that the cumulative vertical illuminance at the nearest receptors had been assessed through the combination of the Musco Lighting Report (September 2023), supplementary information received in January 2024, and site measurements undertaken in December 2023. Additional measurements undertaken in December 2023 indicated that cumulative light levels remained within the 10 lux limit set out for Environmental Zone E3 and was satisfied that the proposed scheme would not give rise to unacceptable levels of light intrusion.

With regard to representations, it was acknowledged that the proposal had attracted a high volume of representation. Full details of the issues raised were detailed in the Case Officer's report with clarification provided.

Objections had been received raising concerns in relation to potential light spill, noise disturbance and traffic nuisance arising from the proposed floodlighting and impact on biodiversity.

In response to objections, additional supporting information was submitted which included a detailed lighting assessment published on the planning register in March 2026. Environmental Health confirmed that it had no objections and provided clarification regarding the assessment of lighting impacts and proposed mitigation measures.

For mitigation, the lighting scheme incorporated oversized visors designed to limit upward and lateral light spill, ensuring that illumination was directed downwards onto the tennis courts.

The design approach assisted in minimising light trespass beyond the site boundaries.

Further mitigation was secured through the recommended planning conditions including as followed:

- compliance with ILP GN01:2021 for Environmental Zone E3
- limitations on vertical lux levels at neighbouring receptors
- submission of a Lighting Verification Report
- restriction of operating hours to 22:00 hours

With regard to biodiversity, Part 2 of the Biodiversity Checklist identified that the proposal had the potential to impact bats due to the provision of floodlighting. In response, the applicant submitted a bat activity survey alongside a revised lighting plan and NIEA: Natural Environment Division (NED), were consulted on the proposal and additional supporting information.

Having taken into consideration the updated bat survey and the revised lighting plan (dated 19 July 2023), NED welcomed the inclusion of light-spill reduction measures and advised that the proposal was unlikely to have a significant impact on the local bat population, provided that the use of the floodlighting was restricted outside the core bat activity season. It was therefore recommended that the operation of the floodlights be limited to the period from 1 November through to 31 March and that had been conditioned. The seasonal restriction would ensure that potential disturbance to bats during their most active months was avoided.

Clarification with NED prior to this committee meeting had confirmed that they were content no updated bat survey would be required.

In conclusion, Members were advised that, based on the submitted information, consultation responses, and proposed conditions, it was the planning judgement that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents that would warrant a refusal of planning permission.

The proposal had been fully conditioned in the Case Officer's Report with all consultees content with objections raised, fully detailed and rebutted and on balance the recommendation was to grant planning permission subject to conditions.

Councillor McKee referred to the addendum to the report and noted that it had not been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. He acknowledged that the document had been available on the Planning Portal but had not been included within the published committee papers. He stated that, whilst the addendum largely summarised matters already contained within the report, it raised concerns regarding the proposed lighting and the associated technical assessment. He also noted that a number of the issues raised had already been considered within the Case Officer's Report. It was requested that the addendum be read to the Committee, and the Planning Officer read its contents for the Committee.

Alderman McAlpine queried the proposed height of the lighting columns. She noted that the existing columns were approximately 10 metres in height, whereas the proposed columns would be 12 metres high. She asked why an increase in height was considered necessary when the existing lighting arrangements appeared to be acceptable and questioned whether the same level of light spill could be achieved with columns of a similar height to those currently in place. In response, it was noted that the Committee was required to determine the application as submitted. Members were advised that the original proposal had sought eight lighting columns at a height of 10 metres and that the current application represented a reduction in the number of columns, albeit with an increase in their height.

The Chair invited Mr Haghighi to speak on behalf of the objectors to the application. Mr Haghighi thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present the concerns of local residents to the tennis courts. He clarified that the objectors were not opposed to the development of tennis facilities, sport and recreation but were concerned that the assessment of the proposed lighting had been carried out incorrectly. He stated that the development would result in unacceptable light pollution and overspill affecting neighbouring properties and the local habitat. He further advised that the lighting assessment was incomplete, that issues relating to glare had not been adequately addressed, and that those matters should be resolved as part of the application rather than through any future enforcement action.

Mr Haghighi referred to Farnham Park and other nearby properties and stated that the lighting modelling did not accurately assess impacts on both ground floor and first floor windows of those. He advised that no revised lighting model had been submitted and that not all affected properties had been included within the assessment. He also expressed concerns regarding the absence of baseline data and the potential difficulties that created when assessing the impact of the proposals. In addition, he raised concerns about the seasonal use of lighting and stated that the existing lights had frequently remained lit beyond 10 pm and, on occasions, until 11 pm. For those

reasons, local residents objected to the application in its current form. He concluded by requesting that Members undertake a site visit to observe the situation for themselves.

Alderman McIlveen referred to concerns raised by residents regarding the lighting remaining on for extended periods. He noted that the proposed conditions included a non-overridable switch and asked for clarification on the type of control system that would be used. In response, it was explained that concerns arose from the current arrangement whereby club members used the courts and then left, requiring neighbours to contact the Club when lights remained on late into the evening. It was noted that the proposed system would allow only the courts in use to be illuminated. However, it was also acknowledged that the issue related more to the actions of court users than to the Club itself and that it was not possible to determine how frequently such incidents occurred. Alderman McIlveen thought that an over-rideable switch could help but agreed with the objector's comment that no system could be considered entirely foolproof and noted that that formed part of the residents' concern.

Councillor McKee thanked Mr Haghighi for his presentation and sought clarification regarding the closest residential property to the tennis courts. He observed that photographs shown during the presentation suggested that the courts were located further from neighbouring properties than might actually be the case. In response, Mr Haghighi stated that No. 28 Farnham Park was situated only a short distance from the boundary hedge and that the hedge provided the only form of screening between the property and the tennis courts, with no other physical barrier present.

There were no further questions to the objector and he returned to the public gallery. The Chair then invited Ms Whitla to speak in support of the application.

Ms Whitla thanked Members for the opportunity to speak and explained that she was the Club Captain of Bangor Lawn Tennis Club, a not-for-profit organisation that had served the local community for approximately 100 years. She advised that the Club currently had around 150 junior members and stated that, although the Club had experienced a decline in participation two years previously, the appointment of a new tennis coach and the introduction of a range of coaching programmes had resulted in significant growth, particularly in junior and adolescent participation.

She stated that the Club catered for both male and female members but was currently restricted to the use of three courts during the winter months, creating a bottleneck in court availability. She advised that court capacity was greatly reduced during the darker evenings and noted that other comparable facilities, including CIYMS in Belfast, benefited from fully lit courts. She highlighted the health and wellbeing benefits provided by the Club for members ranging in age from four to ninety-four years old.

The speaker emphasised the role of the Club in providing positive recreational opportunities for young people, including coaching and youth activities on Sunday evenings. She stated that additional court lighting would help facilitate participation, encourage greater involvement in sport, and provide an alternative to online activities

and other pressures facing young people. She further advised that the Club was actively seeking to attract new participants from the wider community and was committed to engaging with older people and individuals with disabilities to ensure that opportunities were available to all.

In relation to the application, she acknowledged that the provision of floodlighting carried responsibilities which the Club took seriously. She advised that the Club had been pursuing the proposal for approximately seven years and had invested significantly in modern lighting technology to minimise impacts. She stated that the Club was willing to work with any reasonable conditions relating to operating times and switching controls to ensure the lighting was managed appropriately. She indicated that she had not been aware of reports of lights remaining on after 11 pm and stated that such occurrences would not be acceptable. She also noted that Environmental Health officers had rigorously assessed the updated reports and had raised no objections to the proposal. Finally, she advised that the floodlighting would only operate between November and March and that the Club would adhere to those timescales.

Alderman Smith asked how frequently the proposed 10 pm operating time would be used, noting that 9 pm would be the usual finishing time. He thought that use until 10 pm should be kept to a minimum and remain focused on courts 1 to 3.

Ms Whitla advised that there were currently no restrictions in place, although timers had been installed and members were encouraged to comply with Club operating practices. A 10 pm curfew had been proposed to provide consistency and flexibility during darker months for members who worked during the day. It was explained that the Club generally regarded 10 pm as its operating ceiling and would comply with any condition restricting use to that time.

Councillor Wray sought clarification on whether the lighting could be controlled on an individual court basis. Ms Whitla confirmed that courts 1 to 3 could already be lit individually and that the proposed lighting scheme would also allow individual court control. It was stated that all six courts would rarely be illuminated simultaneously, with larger league matches typically requiring no more than four courts. Courts 1 to 3 were identified as the Club's primary courts, while courts 4 to 6 experienced lower levels of use.

Alderman McAlpine asked whether there were any restrictions on use of courts 1 to 3 and whether they were lit during the summer months. Ms Whitla confirmed there were no restrictions on those courts throughout the year, while courts 4 to 6 were generally used during autumn and winter. In response to a question on the proposed 12 metre columns, it was explained that the additional height allowed lighting to be directed more accurately onto the courts and reduced light spill to neighbouring properties.

The Chair asked whether the specification focused light onto the courts rather than creating a wider spread. The Committee was advised that modern LED lighting was significantly more directional than older systems and would reduce overspill.

In response to concerns that the lighting report was no longer accurate due to changes in screening, the Planning Officer advised that Environmental Health had advised that the updated report had addressed cumulative lighting impacts. Environmental Health had reviewed the revised assessment and was satisfied that the proposal complied with relevant standards and that lighting levels remained acceptable.

Alderman Smith referred to concerns raised regarding glare. The Planning Officer explained that glare and light intrusion had been assessed against recognised criteria. Environmental Health was satisfied that the proposal would not result in unacceptable light intrusion and noted that visors and modern LED technology would reduce glare and direct light downward.

Councillor McKee sought clarification regarding assessment of the nearest residential properties and was advised that assessments had been based on the closest façades facing the courts. The assessment had demonstrated compliance with relevant standards, and officers were satisfied that impacts on more distant properties would also be acceptable. The officer further confirmed that changes to boundary screening had been considered and did not alter the conclusions of the assessment.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that planning permission be granted.

In supporting the application, Alderman McIlveen acknowledged the difficulty of balancing the needs of an established sports facility within a residential area but considered that mitigation measures had been thoroughly assessed and that the proposal was acceptable on balance.

Councillor Morgan stated that reasonable steps had been taken to minimise adverse impacts and considered the proposal acceptable overall.

Alderman Smith noted that the Club had operated for approximately 100 years and that floodlighting had existed for around 20 years. He considered the proposal to represent an intensification of an existing use rather than a new use and was satisfied that concerns regarding lighting had been adequately addressed by Environmental Health.

On being put to the meeting, with 7 voting FOR, 0 voting AGAINST, 2 ABSTAINING, and 7 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (7)
Aldermen
 McAlpine
 McDowell
 McIlveen
 Smith

AGAINST (0)

ABSTAINED (2)
Alderman
 Graham
Councillor
 McKee

ABSENT (7)
Councillors
 Cathcart
 Harbinson
 Hennessy
 Kendall

Councillors

Morgan
Smart
Wray

Kerr
McClean
McCollum

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be granted.

(Councillor McClean entered the meeting 8.13 pm).

4.2 LA06/2025/0587/F – REPLACEMENT DWELLING AND GARAGE (CHANGE OF HOUSE TYPE TO PREVIOUSLY APPROVED APPLICATION LA06/2022/1288/F – 17 DEMESNE PARK, HOLYWOOD

(Appendices VI - IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Holywood and Clandeboye

Committee Interest:

Proposal: Replacement dwelling and garage (change of house type to previously approved application LA06/2022/1288/F

Site Location: 17 Demesne Park, Holywood

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer outlined the application advising that it was for a replacement dwelling and garage at 17 Demesne Park, Holywood.

The application was coming before the Committee due to there being six or more representations contrary to the recommendation for approval of planning permission. Members were also drawn attention to the fact that this was for a Change of House Type to a previously approved application LA06/2022/1288/F. The principle of development had been established at this site and it was the amendment of the design which was the subject of the application.

All consultees were content and the recommendation was to grant planning permission.

Members were advised that the application lay inside the settlement of Holywood within the proposed Holywood South Area of Townscape Character (as designated in dBMAP).

The surrounding area was largely residential in character, with neighbouring dwellings generally consisting of a traditional style. Holywood Golf Club sat directly to

the rear of the site with the site sitting at a prominent location at the top of Demesne Park.

The former dwelling had been fully demolished, with the site cleared ready for development with retaining structures and a significant amount of excavation towards the rear of the site, in line with the rear of the proposed dwelling.

The site was steeply sloped, with steps to the northern boundary of the site, and a steep driveway along the south. The boundaries were largely defined by hedging, with a lawn at a higher level to the rear boundary of the site.

To provide some context, images were shown of the site and its surrounds and the planning history was of particular material significance.

The demolition of and replacement of the existing dwelling, detached garage, retaining wall and fence at the site was granted *Approval of planning permission on 12 August 2024 under Planning ref LA06/2022/1288/F*. Subsequent applications for NMCs as detailed in the case officer's report were refused.

The principle of a replacement dwelling within a ATC had been established and implemented through the previous permission.

Further slides were shown of the elevations of the proposal detailed (against that originally approved).

The proposal was considered to comply with the requirements set out in policy QD1 of PPS7.

The design of the proposal was largely similar to that previously approved in terms of its general design. The dwelling was split-level, with the ground floor only visible to the front of the site, forming a partially sub-terranean dwelling. From the rear and sides, it would effectively have the appearance of a single storey dwelling. It was also noted in this instance that careful consideration had been taken in regard to the external finish of the dwelling, with the brick finish agreed under LA06/2025/0188/DC to be "Multicoloured Belfast Solid Brick", from Architectural Salvage.

The garage on the site was originally directly at the roadside, but amended plans were submitted showing the current position 7.7m back allowing for two car parking spaces at the front of the site, and a further parking space within the garage.

The amended positioning was largely similar to the original approval and the principle in this location was acceptable.

In addition, the reduced scale of the garage shown on the amended plans resulted in it having a similar visual impact to the former garage on the site.

By having the garage set back from the road it allowed for a densely planted bank adjacent to the garage, which softened the visual impact of the proposal when viewed from the north.

Given the sloping site retaining structures were included in the proposal.

Retaining structures on the southeastern boundary would not be visible due to boundary landscaping.

The northwestern boundary retaining walls would be finished in “fair faced block”. They would not be directly visible from the public road and therefore would not detract from the character of the area.

There was also a retaining structure to the rear of the planted bank next to the garage, and again that would not be directly visible due to the planting adjacent to it.

With regard to hardstanding the ratio to green space within the site was approx. 2.6:1 in favour of hardstanding which included the dwelling. The ratio of hardstanding to green space varied in the area and given the irregular plot sizes and varied designs of dwellings. As the majority of hardstanding was to be located to the rear with planting to the front and sides of the dwelling it would not be out of character with the area.

Careful consideration had been given to the external finish of the dwelling under the discharge of condition consideration with it determined that the dwelling shall be finished in “Multicoloured Belfast Solid Brick” from Architectural Salvage. That was the closest match to any neighbouring properties on Demesne Park, finished in brick and did not detract from the appearance of the surrounding proposed ATC.

Full details of representations received had been detailed in the Case Officer’s Report. All material matters had been addressed with clarification set out within the report.

The application had been fully assessed with amendments sought during the processing of the application with structural drawings submitted for retaining walls. This was a residential area with amendments to a previous approval for a replacement dwelling sought. There was a presumption in favour of development within settlement limits as long as no demonstrable harm was caused. Given the extant previous permission on the site which represented a fallback position, the compliance of planning policy and no objections from consultees the recommendation was to grant planning permission.

Alderman McIlveen asked for clarification on the extent to which objections relating to engineering aspects could be taken into account when determining the application.

The Planning Officer advised that the planning assessment was concerned with the principle of development only and confirmed that structural engineering reports had

been submitted. The Officer stated that the proposed retaining walls met the relevant requirements and that planning officers were satisfied with that.

Alderman McIlveen further queried water egress, noting that the proposed development differed significantly from what had originally been on the site and would be located very close to the boundary of the neighbouring property. He asked whether any evidence had been submitted regarding the potential impact of that.

The Planning Officer advised that there had previously been a dwelling on the site and reiterated that there were separate planning and building control processes. The Officer stated that Planning was satisfied that the appropriate drawings had been submitted and that officers were content with the information provided.

The Chair invited the objectors, Jason and Paula McGonigle, to speak to the Committee about their concerns in respect of the application.

Mrs McGonigle thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and advised that she resided at 15 Demesne Park. She stated that the previous year had been stressful, challenging and costly for neighbouring residents, with increasing insurance claims. She expressed the view that the officer's report did not adequately reflect the concerns raised by neighbours and contended that the application should be refused in its current form.

She stated that her concerns related to overdevelopment, the deliverability of the project and loss of amenity. She argued that the proposal was not a straightforward build and represented an overdevelopment of the site. In her view, the development could not be constructed without the use of neighbouring land and she noted that, while the site had reduced in size, the scale of the proposed development had increased considerably. She also referred to a reported 3% increase in site coverage from similar previously submitted drawings and considered that the proposal was contrary to the character of the area.

The objector further stated that photographs included within the application did not accurately reflect the extent of construction already undertaken at the rear of the site and encouraged Members to undertake a site visit.

In relation to deliverability, she questioned whether the development could be adequately constructed and drained, noting that the engineering requirements had increased as the site had reduced in size. She stated that, during the most recent neighbour consultation process, drawings had been removed with the suggestion that these could be provided at a later stage. She also raised concerns regarding excavation works and the absence of retaining wall details, which she considered had not been sufficiently explained. She requested that the terrace be moved further back within the site to maintain drainage arrangements.

The objector also raised concerns regarding loss of amenity, stating that the assessment focused on the front of the development while ongoing privacy issues affecting neighbouring gardens had not been adequately addressed. She contended that officers had placed significant reliance on a previously approved proposal, despite the site now being smaller and the scale of development larger, which she considered amounted to a fundamental change. Taking account of the cumulative impact of those changes, she requested that the application be refused or deferred to allow further consideration of whether the proposal constituted overdevelopment of the site.

Members were invited to ask questions and Alderman Smith thanked the objector for speaking and asked them to elaborate on two points in relation to overdevelopment of the site and the fact that the site had shrunk.

Mr McGonigle advised that there had been a boundary dispute which had been the subject of High Court proceedings and had subsequently resulted in an agreement with neighbouring landowners to redefine the boundary. He stated that, following the boundary adjustment, there was no longer any overlap and the site plan had been amended accordingly.

Mr McGonigle contended that the previously approved dwelling no longer fitted within the revised site boundaries and had therefore been altered. He stated that the amended proposal had been adjusted to fill the available site area and argued that it represented an intensified form of development. He expressed concern that a substantial retaining wall would require access over neighbouring land and that access would also be necessary to address drainage matters. He further argued that the close proximity of the building to the boundary would necessitate the use of neighbouring land during construction and for future maintenance purposes and suggested that the dwelling should be moved further back from the boundary.

Mr McGonigle also raised concerns regarding the provision of screening, stating that the constrained nature of the site left limited space for effective screening measures. He noted that the proposal appeared to rely on screening associated with a neighbouring property, while neighbouring landowners had indicated that they had their own plans for the use and development of their land.

The Chair then invited Mr Robert Jamison to speak in support of the application. Mr Jamison advised that he was speaking for the applicant for the proposal in respect of 17 Demesne Park, Holywood.

Mr Jamison stated that the proposal was, at its core, a straightforward application to replace the existing dwelling with a high-quality family home. He advised that the proposal had been carefully assessed and found to comply with relevant planning policy, would not result in any unacceptable impacts and would make a positive contribution to the character of the area. He noted that the officer's report had concluded that the application met the required planning standards.

Mr Jamison explained that the original application had been submitted in 2022 and approved in 2024. However, construction costs had increased significantly and the amendment sought represented a modest change involving the realignment of an external wall in order to reduce construction costs. He stated that the amendment did not alter the height of the building or increase its footprint.

Mr Jamison also referred to separate legal proceedings relating to the site boundary and noted that the planning process had been ongoing for approximately 43 months. He stated that he was seeking to replace the existing dwelling and reminded Members that planning applications had a significant impact on those involved. He urged the Committee to determine the application on planning grounds, noting that the principle of development had already been accepted through the previous approval. He stated that, after more than three and a half years, he wished to proceed with a development that had already been deemed acceptable in principle. He thanked the Committee and confirmed that he was available to answer any questions from Members.

Councillor Wray, going back to what the objectors had said that they did not believe that the work could be carried out within the confines of the proposed site, asked for clarity on that. Mr Jamison referred to the Planning Officer having spoken regards the application going through both the Planning process and Building Control, and both had viewed and approved the application. Structural engineers had been appointed for the build to ensure that what the applicant processed was buildable and deliverable.

Following from Councillor Wray's question, Councillor McClean said that it was his understanding that there was a distinction between the planning process and civil issues. In order to provide mitigation and difficulties between the neighbours he asked if there could be assurances given that the red line would not be crossed into the adjoining property. Mr Jamison assured the Committee that there was no need to go beyond the site boundaries, and it was professional practice to ensure boundaries were maintained/made good.

Alderman Smith asked the Planning Officer to summarise the changes that had taken place since the previous application and the Committee was advised that the garage had been repositioned and the property itself was slightly larger, the front garden had been reshaped, the roof lights had been altered and the flue repositioned but the general design of the building was similar. Referring to the boundary dispute she explained that they were outside the remit of a planning application.

Alderman McDowell asked if there would be the potential for overlooking and it was explained that there would be privacy glazing in all windows that had the potential to overlook. The front of buildings was not considered to be private amenity place so the privacy screening at the front of the property was deemed to be sufficient. The neighbouring property would not be impacted by overlooking.

Councillor McKee asked for clarification on the comments made by the objectors about the size of the ground floor size. The Planning officer stated that the floor size was

slightly larger being 134 metres square compared to the previous permission which was for 129 metres square. It was still considered that there was sufficient amenity and living space. Further to that Alderman McIlveen asked how that area was spread and Members were advised that overall the footprint had not changed and she understood that the increase was related to the repositioning of the garage but that was still deemed to be acceptable in planning terms.

Councillor Smart referred to the terrace and asked was he right in thinking the previous proposal for the terrace was slightly larger, it had been at the front but was now at the side of the proposal. He asked for assurances about drainage and the Planning Officer explained that the provision of a walkway would not warrant a drainage assessment.

Proposed by Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the planning consent be granted.

Alderman McIlveen believed that the planners had thoroughly questioned the application, there was planning permission already for the site and the new proposal did not differ substantially from that and he was content to propose. Seconding that Councillor Morgan was happy to concur with Alderman McIlveen's view.

Councillor Wray was concerned about the application and did not feel comfortable giving it his approval since he viewed the changes from the original proposal substantial.

On being put to the meeting, with 5 voting FOR, 2 voting AGAINST, 3 ABSTAINING, and 6 ABSENT, the proposal was CARRIED.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (5)
Aldermen
 McAlpine
 McDowell
 McIlveen
Councillors
 McClean
 Morgan

AGAINST (2)
Councillors
 McKee
 Wray

ABSTAINED (3)
Alderman
 Graham
 Smith
Councillor
 Smart

ABSENT (6)
Councillors
 Cathcart
 Harbinson
 Hennessy
 Kendall
 Kerr
 McCollum

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Morgan, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be granted.

(Having declared an interest in Item 4.3 Alderman McAlpine was excluded from the meeting at 8.56 pm)

- 4.3 LA06/2025/0707/S54 – PHASED CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SCHOOL BUILDING AND SPORTS HALL, WITH ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE INCORPORATING THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS: PHASED DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS, IN-CURTLAGE CAR/BUS PARKING AND CIRCULATION AND ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS, PROVISION OF 3 NO. PLAY FIELDS, PROVISION OF 4 NO. TENNIS COURTS, CULVERTING OF WATERCOURSE, ELECTRICITY/WASTE/SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE, HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING WORKS, BOUNDARY TREATMENTS, DRAINAGE WORKS AND OTHER ASSOCIATED SITE WORKS. VARIATION OF CONDITION 2 OF PLANNING APPROVAL LA06/2019/1207/F RE VEHICULAR ACCESS AND SIGHT SPLAYS. STRANGFORD INTEGRATED COLLEGE ABBEY ROAD, CARROWDORE**
(Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Ards Peninsula

Committee Interest:

Proposal: Phased construction of a new school building and sports hall, with associated infrastructure incorporating the following components: phased demolition of existing buildings, in-curtilage car/bus parking and circulation and access arrangements, provision of 3 No. playing fields, provision of 4 No. tennis courts, culverting of watercourse, electricity/waste/serviced infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping works, boundary treatments, drainage works and other associated site works. Variation of Condition 2 of planning approval LA06/2019/1207/F re vehicular access and sight splays

Site Location: Strangford Integrated College Abbey Road, Carrowdore BT22 2GB

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer explained that this was a Section 54 application for variation of condition 2 of LA06/2019/1207/F for the phased construction of a new school building and sports hall, with associated infrastructure incorporating a number of elements shown on the slide. The application was before the Committee since it fell within the major category of development.

No objections had been received in relation to the application.

The application site was located on Abbey Road, Carrowdore, and comprised the existing Strangford College and associated playing fields and adjacent agricultural field.

Under Section 54 Members would note that it was only the question of the condition which must be considered. In this instance the application sought to vary Condition 2 of the original approval relating to the provision of access to the site. The proposal sought to amend the condition to have the access in place prior to occupation instead of commencement. The approved access arrangement would cause difficulties in the ongoing operation of the school during construction and was the reasoning behind the variation of the condition.

The existing access to the school was shown which was still in use and which would be part of the upgrade prior to the operation of the new buildings.

The service access to the school would be utilised by construction traffic. DFI Roads had been consulted and offered no objection to the proposal. Officers were content it met policy requirements under PPS3 and recommended the proposal for approval.

Proposed by Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Wray, that planning permission be granted.

Alderman McIlveen, in terms of the rewording of the condition prior to commencement of use asked what the practical difference was between those, the Planning Officer said it was a more practical wording to permit the pitches to come into use if necessary.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Wray, that planning permission be granted.

(Alderman McAlpine entered the meeting at 9.00 pm).

RECESS 9.00 pm

RECOMMENCED 9.14 pm

4.4 LA06/2025/1074/F – PROPOSED BMX TRACK, JUMP PARK AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING SPECTATOR STAND FOR BICYCLE WORKSHOP AND SHARED SPACE AREA. BANGOR SPORTSPLEX, 292 OLD BELFAST ROAD, BANGOR

(Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor West

Committee Interest:

Proposal: BMX Track, Jump Park and alterations to existing spectator stand for bicycle workshop and shared space.

Site Location: Bangor Sportsplex, 292 Old Belfast Road, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer stated that this was a full application submitted by the Council for a proposed BMX track, Jump Park and alterations to existing spectator stand for bicycle workshop and shared space area. There had been 8 letters of objection and 59 letters of support in relation to the application.

The application site was located on the grounds of the Bangor Sportsplex off the Old Belfast Road within the settlement limit of Bangor. The site had been utilised for a variety of sporting uses. An aerial image was shown which gave more context to the site. The application involved an old hockey pitch on the western end and it was surrounded by a number of residential properties with the tree lined boundary.

Further slides showed the site layout of various elements and their proposed locations.

Turning to the existing spectator stand it could be seen that it was proposed to add cladding to create a bike workshop and shared space.

It was noted from the plans that the Jump Track was in close proximity to several trees. Those were protected by a TPO on the site and were being retained. The Council's tree officer was content that those would not be adversely impacted subject to conditions which were noted in the Case Officer's Report.

In respect to the impact on amenity, there were several residential properties bordering the site. There was a strong vegetation boundary consisting of trees at large sections which would help screen the development and reduce impacts on visual amenity.

The existing use of the site was material to the assessment with the proposed activities considered to not be more significant than those which could already take place on the site. A noise impact assessment had also been provided and Environmental Health had no objections. It was noted that some aspects such as the repurposing of the spectator stand would lead to a reduction in noise.

The proposal was just a section of a wider site for the purposes of outdoor sports and recreation, PPS8 was material to the proposal and as noted within the officer's report was considered to comply with all relevant policy. The wider site was also considered to be capable of handling traffic to the site with approximately 30 less movements a day being anticipated. In this respect it was considered to comply with PPS3.

The site in its current form was discussed. The underlying land was formerly used as a Council landfill site; however, subsequent site investigation reports indicated no significant contamination and consultees were content.

There was some subsidence on the site. The proposed development consisted primarily of earthworks, surface cycle tracks and associated recreational infrastructure. No permanently occupied buildings, deep foundations or sensitive structures are proposed. It was considered that the submitted assessments provided sufficient information to demonstrate that the site was suitable for the intended use.

As noted from the Case Officer's Report, several objections were submitted raising issues such as;

- Subsidence
- Destruction of Habitat
- Electrical Infrastructure
- Noise
- Events occurring on site
- Anti-Social Behaviour

Members would note detailed responses within the Officer's report. Officers were content those had been fully considered and given appropriate weight in the consideration.

In summary, officers were content the proposal met the relevant policy provisions and recommended the proposal for approval.

Councillor McKee referred to trees that had been removed close to the boundary and close to the jump track and he asked if that had been considered in terms of screening and noise disturbance to neighbouring homes. The Planning Officer confirmed that it had been considered and Environment Health was aware of the site and the noise impact report had shown only a slight rise in noise which is roughly the same volume as someone speaking in a regular conversation. Officers were content with the application and there would be no detrimental impact on the amenity for the surrounding area.

Councillor Smart referred to subsidence and asked was the material described appropriate for that. It was explained that this would be a stone and aggregate construction which was tailored in that way because of problems at the site in respect of potential subsidence. It would be of crushed aggregate and bitmac with ridges to stop wear and tear which was a standard approach to those developments.

Proposed by Councillor Wray, seconded by Alderman Smith, that planning permission be granted.

Councillor Wray viewed the application as a positive proposal for the Borough and was reassured that the noise would not be intense and was pleased the objections had been considered. As seconder, Alderman Smith echoed those comments but thought it unfortunate that NI Water could not provide water for a café and toilets at the site.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted and planning permission be granted.

**4.5 LA06/2026/0317/F – SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION –
BRYANSBURN RANGERS FOOTBALL CLUB, BALLYWOOLEY
PLAYING FIELDS, CRAWFORDSBURN ROAD, BANGOR**
(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Bangor West

Committee Interest: Council Interest

Proposal: Single Storey Extension

Site Location: Bryansburn Rangers Football Club, Ballywooley Playing Fields, Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer outlined the application for a single storey extension. The application was before the Council as it was on land in which the Council had an interest.

No objections had been received in relation to the application.

Members would recollect an application the site before the Committee in November. The site was located at the Ballywooley Playing Fields with access off the Crawfordsburn Road and sat within the countryside. There was a single storey detached building, used as a clubhouse, e in the northwestern corner of the playing fields. To the east of that there was a gravel parking area, and two football pitches were located to the south.

Slides were shown of the extent and location of the proposed extension on the existing building and details of the existing elevations of the building and the proposed layout. The floorspace did not exceed what was approved for the same use under LA06/2025/0538/F.

It could be seen from the elevations with the alternative single level design that that previously considered by the Committee.

Further images were shown and officers were content that the separation distance from nearby properties would result in no adverse affect and the proposal complied with the relevant policy provisions under the SPPS and PPS8.

Officers recommended the proposal for approval.

Councillor McClean thanked officers for processing the application so quickly to help the Club develop further.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McClean, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be granted.

(Having declared an interest in the following applications Alderman McAlpine withdrew from the meeting at 9.25 pm)

4.6 LA06/2025/0948/F – TWO-STOREY EXTENSION SIDE AND REAR; RENOVATION WORKS (DEMOLITION OF SIDE AND REAR RETURNS), 8 THE CRESCENT, HOLYWOOD
(Appendix XIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Hollywood and Clandeboye

Committee Interest: Applicant an Elected Representative

Proposal: Two-storey extension side and rear; renovation works (demolition of side and rear returns)

Site Location: 8 The Crescent, Hollywood

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

The Planning Officer explained that this was a full application for a two-storey extension side and rear; renovation works (demolition of side and rear returns). The application was before the Council as it had been made by a member of the Planning Committee.

No objections had been received in relation to the application.

The site was located at 8 The Crescent within the settlement limit of Hollywood. It was a Georgian three storey end terrace and was also Listed. The building also sat within the Hollywood conservation area and proposed Hollywood South Area of Townscape Character.

The properties with The Crescent were in the form of two terraced blocks facing onto a central green. The development was gated with views available within The Crescent itself.

Slides were shown of the site layout of the proposed extensions beside the existing floor plans of the building and the elevations in detail.

The proposed elevations could be seen and it was intended to replace the side and rear returns with a more modern extension. The extension would be two-storey to the side and single -storey to the rear. The extension had a very contemporary design which would be in sharp contrast to the house. The proposal would use brick, would have a flat roof and be designed with large panels of glazing. In terms of footprint, the proposal

would not be significantly different to the existing extensions. Furthermore, the extension to the side was itself 'stepped' and set back from the front elevation and would be very much subordinate in scale to the host building. Given the secluded nature of the site, it was considered that it would not have an adverse affect on the prosed ATC or Conservation Area. PPS8 was also material and the proposal was considered to comply with Policies BH8 and BH10. HED had been consulted and was content with the proposal.

The floor plans were shown and Members noted some internal alterations to the layout of the existing rooms. The rear amenity space was shown. It was not considered that the works raised any material concerns in respect to residential amenity. The house was set in a corner of The Crescent with no other property beyond. Number 7 was adjacent and was the only property that could potentially be affected. However, the extension at the rear was built away from the property boundary and was single storey. There would be no loss of light, no sense of dominance and no overlooking.

Adjacent trees were protected given the location in the Hollywood Conservation Area. The application had been accompanied with a Tree Survey. The Survey had identified four trees to be removed. The Council's Tree Officer was consulted on the proposal. Due to the health and condition of the trees, the officer raised no objections to their removal. The survey indicated that trees would be replaced with beech trees on a one for one basis.

It was noted that access and parking would not be affected. There was a large rear garden and there would be no material impact on amenity space. In summary, officers considered the proposal to meet all relevant policies and recommended the proposal for approval.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Wray, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted and that planning permission be granted.

4.7 LA06/2025/0950/LBC – TWO-STOREY EXTENSION SIDE AND REAR; RENOVATION WORKS (DEMOLITION OF SIDE AND REAR RETURNS), 8 THE CRESCENT, HOLYWOOD

(Appendix XIV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Case Officer's report.

DEA: Hollywood and Clandeboye

Committee Interest: Applicant was an Elected Representative

Proposal: Two-storey extension side and rear; renovation works (demolition of side and rear returns)

Site Location: 8 The Crescent, Hollywood

Recommendation: Grant Listed Building Consent

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor McKee, that the recommendation be adopted and that Listed Building Consent be granted.

(Alderman McAlpine was readmitted to the meeting).

5. TREES AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE BOROUGH (Appendices XV & XVI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that Members may remember the NI Public Services Ombudsman undertook 'an own initiative' investigation into concerns raised with her office indicating potential systematic maladministration in how public bodies fulfilled their duties to protect trees within the planning system. That resulted in publication of an overview report on tree protection in the planning system entitled 'Strengthening our Roots'. This was reported to Members as Item 8 of meeting of Planning Committee on 7 November 2023.

This report was prepared in response to concerns about the protection given to trees and the lack of enforcement action following reported breaches of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The Council's response to the findings was attached for Members' convenience.

Recommendation 3 of that Report was worded as follows:

Recommendation 3

Councils should ensure that they have their own procedural guidance in place to supplement the legislative framework around trees which are subject to TPOs and conservation area protection. Given the difference in the level of protection afforded, the guidance should also set out clearly the circumstances TPOs should be used instead of, or alongside, planning conditions to best secure the long term protection of trees.

In response to the above, officers had produced the attached document entitled 'Trees and Development in the Borough' which was intended as a guidance document on trees in the Borough, including protected trees, with advice on submitting a planning application on sites with existing trees. The document set out the legislative basis for tree protection, the TPO process, and how to deal with applications for consent to carry out works to protected trees. It further advised those intending to carry out development in and around trees, a comprehensive list of FAQs and a detailed glossary.

It was proposed to publish this document on the planning pages of the Council's website.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agrees this report and the attached Guidance Document.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

6. APPEALS UPDATE
(Appendices XVII – XXIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailed as follows:-

Appeal Decisions

1. The following appeal was dismissed on 29 May 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/A0112
Council Ref	LA06/2025/0549/F
Appellant	J McNinch
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for: Replacement dwelling (retrospective).
Location	14 Ballyvester Road, Donaghadee

The Council refused the application via the delegated list 12 November 2025 for the following reasons:

- i. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that there are no overriding reasons why this development is essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.
- ii. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 3 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the building which has been replaced exhibited the essential characteristics of a dwelling and that all external structural walls were suitably intact. As such, the proposal fails to meet the criteria for a replacement dwelling in the countryside.
- iii. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 8 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, in that it does not constitute a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of two houses within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage and therefore contributes to ribbon development.
- iv. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY 14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable

Development in the Countryside, in that, if approved, the proposal would contribute to a ribbon of development in line with Policy CTY 8.

- v. The proposal is contrary to Policy AMP2 of Planning Policy Statement 3, Access, Movement and Parking, in that it has not been demonstrated that access will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

The application was made in relation to a structure that had been previously removed from the site, and an assertion that the structure for replacement was a dwelling eligible for replacement under the policy.

Due to the prior removal of the structure prior to submission of the planning application, reliance was placed on other evidence submitted to assess the eligibility of that since-removed structure for replacement under Policy CTY3; however, the Commissioner found that the limited supporting evidence was not persuasive in proving the former structure was a dwelling eligible for replacement under Policy CTY3.

The Commissioner sustained the third and fourth reasons for refusal in relation to ribbon development and impact on rural character, alongside part of refusal reason five, insofar as the existence of an access to a dwelling capable of replacement was unfounded.

2. The following appeal was allowed on 28 May 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/A0076
Council Ref	LA06/2025/0388/O
Appellant	Castlesaint LLP
Subject of Appeal	Non-Determination of outline planning permission 8 no. apartments with associated carparking and landscaping
Location	Lands south of 1-17, NE of 2 and SE of 4 Rockfield Meadows, Carrowdore

The Council had previously refused this proposal under LA06/2018/0996/F which was appealed but found to be an invalid appeal due to an issue with the proposal address. The application was then re-submitted and the applicant lodged an appeal with the Commission against non-determination. The previous refusal reasons were as follows:

- i. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) in that it has not been demonstrated that the adjacent minerals development is not likely to compromise safety or to significantly impair the amenity of people living in the proposed dwellings.
- ii. The proposal is contrary to Policy QD1 of Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Developments, in that it has not been demonstrated that residents of

the proposed dwellings will not be adversely affected by noise and dust arising from activities of the adjacent quarry.

The Commissioner was satisfied that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on residential amenity, including in respect of noise and dust from the adjacent quarry. Furthermore, it was found that the proposal would provide a quality residential environment which respected the character of the surrounding area.

3. The following appeal was dismissed on 10 June 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/A0104
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0708/O
Appellant	W J Law Bespoke LLP
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of Outline Planning Permission for Erection of 5No. detached dwellings with associated landscaping, internal road layout and access provision
Location	Lands to the south and adjoining No. 90 Crawfordsburn Road and to the west of No's 71, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91 and 97 Crawfordsburn Road, Newtownards

The Council refused the application at its Committee meeting of 7 October 2025, further to an officer recommendation of approval, for the following reasons:

- i. The proposal is contrary to paragraph 6.201 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland ("SPPS") and Policy OS 1 of Planning Policy Statement 8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation ("PPS8") in that it would result in the loss of open space and no exceptions to the policy have been demonstrated
- ii. The proposal is contrary to paragraph 6.192 of the SPPS and Policy NH 5 of Planning Policy Statement 2 Natural Heritage in that it would likely result in the loss of, or damage to, known long-established woodland and no exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated where the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the value of the species, habitat or feature.

The Commissioner found that the proposal would result in the loss of open space of public value, contrary to Policy OS 1 of PPS 8, and would also result in damage to long-established woodland, a feature of natural heritage importance, contrary to Policy NH 5 of PPS 2 and paragraph 6.192 of the SPPS. Whilst having regard to the mitigation proposed by the appellant, and the absence of significant adverse ecological effects identified by consultees, he did not consider that those outweighed or would overcome the identified policy conflicts.

4. The following appeal against an Enforcement Notice resulted in the Notice being varied, but upheld, on 19 June 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/E0064
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Council Ref	LA06/2021/0360/CA
Appellant	Peter Kelly
Subject of Appeal	Alleged unauthorised agricultural shed and area of hardstanding
Location	Land adjacent to the rear boundary of 2a Ballyblack Road, Portaferry

The Notice was appealed under the following grounds:

- (a) Planning permission ought to be granted
- (f) steps required to be taken exceed what is necessary to remedy the breach
- (g) the period specified in the Notice for which the remedy must be completed by falls short of what should reasonably be allowed

In respect of (a), the main issue related to whether the appeal development was acceptable in the countryside. It fell to be considered under PPS 21, Policy CTY 12 – Agricultural and Forestry Development. The Council argued that insufficient evidence had been submitted to demonstrate that the shed was necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding.

Whilst acknowledging that evidence of a family dispute currently being heard before the High Court gave rise to practical difficulties in accessing established farm buildings, the Commissioner considered this a private and unresolved matter, concluding that the policy test required an assessment to be made of the holding in its entirety, rather than to personal/temporary constraints affecting the operation. The Commissioner agreed with the Council that insufficient evidence had been submitted to prove that the shed was essential to the efficient operation of the holding – and considered that a range of buildings already existed which could be utilised.

The Commissioner, in further consideration of the Policy agreed with objectors that vehicle movements and associated activity in respect of the location of the shed extremely close to the rear boundary of the curtilage of 2a Ballyblack Road could result in detrimental impact on the residential amenity.

It was also considered that the shed was overbearing, adversely affecting privacy and reducing light to 2a Ballyblack Road.

Policy CTY 12 further required that new buildings were sited beside existing farm buildings (plural) and the Commissioner considered that one of the buildings relied upon was a domestic garage, which did not constitute a farm building. Additionally, it was not accepted that a cattle shed was located too far from the appeal building to be considered as 'sited beside' as required by the policy.

Finally, the Commissioner referred to a lack of evidence to demonstrate that there were no alternative sites and no health and safety considerations to make the appeal building

acceptable. Therefore, the appeal building failed to comply with Policy CTY 12 and ground (a) failed.

The appeal under ground (f) failed in relation to removal of the shed, but the Commissioner deleted removal of 'area of hardstanding' from the Notice.

In relation to ground (g) the Commissioner increased the time period for removal from 70 days to 9 months from the date of the appeal decision.

5. The following appeal was allowed on 18 June 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/A0079
Council Ref	LA06/2023/1556/O
Appellant	William Gilmore
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of permission for a dwelling on a farm
Location	50m NE of 51 Kempe Stones Road, Newtownards

The Council had requested the Commission to amend the decision as it erroneously referred to this as having been an appeal against a non-determination of a proposal.

The Council refused this application on 13 October 2025 further to being heard at Planning Committee for the following single reason:

- The proposal is contrary to Planning Policy Statement 3, Access, Movement and Parking, Policy AMP 3, in that it would, if permitted, result in the intensification of use of an existing access onto a Main Traffic Route/Protected Route, thereby prejudicing the free flow of traffic and conditions of general safety.

The Council considered that traffic generated by the proposal would exceed the 5% intensification threshold such that it would prejudice the free flow of traffic and conditions of general safety in relation to the Kempe Stones Road, a protected route.

The Commissioner was satisfied that the appellant's 24-hour traffic survey, based on a metrocount and TRICS database analysis, provided an accurate assessment of the baseline, and additional traffic movements using the existing access would not exceed the 5% threshold.

Furthermore, the Commissioner considered his experience at the site in that he was able to safely enter the road on a number of occasions without causing any disturbance to the free flow of traffic or any conditions of general safety.

The appeal was granted subject to conditions including a ridge height and underbuild restriction and retention of the existing site visibility splays in perpetuity.

6. The following appeal was dismissed on 18 June 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/A0132
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Council Ref	LA06/2024/0058/F
Appellant	Glenn McDowell
Subject of Appeal	Refusal of planning permission for a two-storey detached dwelling with attached garage
Location	Site between 45 Ballyhay Road and 11 New Line, Donaghadee

The Council refused the above application on 2 November 2025 for the following reasons:

- i. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that there are no overriding reasons why this development is essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.
- ii. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and Policy CTY8 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the proposal does not constitute a small gap sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of two houses within an otherwise substantial and continuously built-up frontage, and would, if permitted, result in the loss of an important visual break in development and, if permitted, result in the creation of ribbon development along New Line.
- iii. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and policy CTY14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the dwelling would, if permitted result in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing and approved buildings and create a ribbon of development which would therefore result in a detrimental change to further erode the rural character of the countryside.

The Commissioner agreed with the Council's assessment that a substantial and continuously built-up frontage consisting of at least three buildings existed, but that the gap between those buildings exceeded what could reasonably be regarded as 'a small gap'. The Council's consideration that the proposal would erode an important visual break along the frontage and result in ribbon development was also sustained by the Commissioner, in that the proposed dwelling would share a common frontage with No. 11 New Line and its associated outbuildings, and would appear visually linked to No. 45 Ballyhay Road, thereby forming a ribbon of development.

All three refusal reasons were sustained and the appeal dismissed.

New Appeals

7. The following appeal was lodged on 17 June 2026.

PAC Ref	2026/E0027
Council Ref	LA06/2025/0141/CA
Appellant	Matthew McAree
Subject of Appeal	Alleged unauthorised cabin for residential and storage use
Location	Land at land approx. 40m SE of No.4 Cunningburn Road, Newtownards

Appeals Withdrawn

8. The following appeal was withdrawn on 26 May 2026, after planning permission was granted under LA06/2025/0981/F for a farm dwelling (retrospective) on 22 May 2026.

PAC Ref	2025/E0075
Council Ref	LA06/2022/0134/CA
Appellant	Denis Crawford
Subject of Appeal	Enforcement Notice appeal – alleged: Unauthorised erection of a building used as a dwelling unit; Unauthorised laying of an area of hardstanding; Unauthorised erection of an oil tank
Location	Land adjacent to 2d Tullymally Road, Portaferry

Details of appeal decisions, new appeals and scheduled hearings could be viewed at www.pacni.gov.uk.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report and attachments.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted.

7. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON TREES

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing that this report represented the quarterly update to Planning Committee regarding detail relating to Tree Preservation Orders served and applications for consent to carry out works to protected trees. This update provided information from 1 April 2026 to 15 June 2026.

Table 1 Tree Preservation Orders Served

TPO (Full or Provisional)	Date Served	Address
Confirmed	6 May 2026	Lands to the north and west of Killaire House, 22 Killaire Road, Bangor
Provisional	2 April 2026	Lands at 9-11 Whinney Hill, Holywood
Provisional	15 April 2026	'Dromkeen House', Sullivan Upper School Prep Department, 1 Alexandra Park, Holywood

Provisional	23 April 2026	Lands to the rear of 2 Dalwhinney Road, Holywood
Provisional	20 April 2026	Lands at 67 Station Road, Holywood

Table 2 Consent for Works Decisions

TPO or Conservation Area	Consent Granted / Notification Accepted*	Consent Refused
Tree Preservation Orders	7	0
Address		
1. 45 Glen Road, Holywood		
2. 2 Croft Manor, Holywood		
3. 26a Old Cultra Road, Holywood		
4. 40 Ballymenoch Road, Holywood		
5. Prospect House, 10 Prospect Road, Ballygowan		
6. Tudor Park Development, Holywood		
7. 6 Ballymullan Road, Crawfordsburn		
Conservation Area	4	0
Address		
1. 1 Riverside, Holywood		
2. 18 Church Avenue, Holywood		
3. Brook Street Surgery, Brook Street, Holywood		
4. Tudor Park Development, Holywood		

* Notification referred to when the Council received notification of proposed works to trees within a conservation area. If the Council did not accept the proposed works, it must serve a TPO within the 6-week period from the date of notification. 'Notification Accepted' meant that the Council did not consider it necessary to serve a TPO and thus there was no objection to the proposed works.

Detail

Works to Trees - Tree Preservation Order Protection

1. 45 Glen Road, Holywood – felling of 7 no. trees

- 7 no. trees were requested for felling for safety reasons. 2 no. trees were not protected and therefore consent was not required from the Council to remove these trees.
- 4 no. trees showed a significant loss of vigour, one of which had significant decay at the base. 1 no. tree was located on the riverbank and requested for removal for this reason.

- The Council considered the felling works to 4 no. trees to be acceptable for safety reasons.
- The Council considered the felling of 1 no. tree located on the riverbank to be unacceptable. Appropriate remedial works for the tree were agreed through liaison with the applicant.
- Replacement tree planting was conditioned with 4 no. standard native trees at a height of 3-3.5m to be located within the curtilage of the property and carried out during the next available planting season following commencement of the works permitted.

2. 2 Croft Manor, Holywood – works to 1 no. tree

- 1 no. tree was requested for remedial works for management and safety reasons.
- The tree had evidence of Kretzschmaria at the base. That was a fungal pathogen which was characterised by its ability to decay wood and lead to structural instability
- The Council considered the remedial works to 1 no. tree to be acceptable as they would aid the stability of the tree.

3. 26a Old Cultra Road, Holywood – works to 3 no. trees

- 3 no. trees were requested for remedial works for management and maintenance reasons.
- The Council considered all remedial works to 3 no. trees to be appropriate and acceptable for management and maintenance reasons.

4. 40 Ballymenoch Road, Holywood – to fell 2 no. trees and carry out works to 4 no. trees and 3 no. tree groups

- 2 no. trees were requested removal for safety reasons and the remaining works to 4 no. trees and 3 no. tree groups were requested for management and maintenance reasons. 2 no. trees requested for removal and 3 no. tree groups requested for remedial works were not protected and therefore the Council's consent was not required to carry out works to those trees.
- The Council considered all remedial works to 4 no. remaining trees to be acceptable and appropriate.

5. Prospect House, 10 Prospect Road, Ballygowan – felling of 1 no. tree and works to 1 no. tree

- 1 no. tree was requested for removal for safety reasons and 1 no. tree for remedial works for management and maintenance reasons.
- The tree requested for removal had poor form and showed a significant loss of vigour.
- The Council considered removal of 1 no. tree acceptable for safety reasons.
- The remedial works proposed to 1 no. tree were considered appropriate and acceptable for management and maintenance reasons.
- Replacement tree planting was conditioned for the tree to be felled with 1 no. standard beech tree at a height of 3-3.5m. The tree was to be located in as

close proximity as possible to the tree to be removed and planting carried out during the next available planting season following commencement of the works.

6. Tudor Park Development, Holywood (specifically to the rear of 2 Martello Gate) – felling of 1 no. tree and works to 7 no. trees

- 1 no. tree was requested for removal for safety reasons and 7 no. trees for remedial works for management and maintenance reasons. 1 no. tree requested for removal was considered dangerous and therefore was exempt under Section 122(5) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. It was also agreed that 3 no. trees required no action by liaising with the applicant.
- The Council considered the remedial works to the 4 no. remaining trees to be appropriate and acceptable.

Conservation Area Notifications

1. Riverside, Holywood – works to 1 no. tree

- The applicant served notice on the Council of intent to carry out remedial works to 1 no. tree for safety and management reasons.
- The tree had suffered storm damage and required a reduction and removal of damaged branches.
- The Council considered works to 1 no. tree to be appropriate and acceptable.

2. 18 Church Avenue, Holywood – felling of 11 no. trees

- The applicant served notice on the Council of intent to fell 11 no. trees for safety reasons. 1 no. tree was dead and 1 no. tree had already failed on site and therefore notification to the Council of intent to remove these trees was not required as they were exempt under Section 122(5) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- 1 no. tree had an advanced stage of ash dieback, 2 no. trees had significant decay at the base and a showed a loss of vigour as a result, and the remaining 6 no. trees had poor form and very small crowns which showed a significant loss of vigour. Given the poor condition of those trees, they would not merit protection by virtue of a TPO.
- The Council considered all felling works to 9 no. trees to be acceptable for safety reasons.
- Replacement tree planting was not a requirement within a Conservation Area, however, was recommended in this case.

1. Brook Street Surgery, Brook Street, Holywood – felling of 7 no. trees

- The applicant served notice on the Council of intent to fell 7 no. trees for safety reasons.

- All 7 no. trees were located on the edge of the riverbank and leant significantly towards the surgery building. All 7 no. trees had an advanced stage of ash dieback, poor form and a significant loss of vigour was evident within the crowns. Given the poor condition of the trees, they would not merit protection by virtue of a TPO.
- The Council considered all felling works to 7 no. trees to be acceptable for safety reasons.
- Replacement tree planting was not a requirement within a Conservation Area and was not recommended in this case given the restricted nature of the site.

2. Tudor Park Development, Holywood (specifically to the rear of 2 Martello Gate) – felling of 7 no. trees

- The applicant served notice on the Council of intent to fell 7 no. trees due to their location and damage to an adjacent wall.
- All 7 no. trees were young single stemmed trees which ranged between approximately 2m and 3m in height. All trees were located immediately adjacent to a boundary wall with Martello Terrace and, although, there was no evidence of damage to this wall it was noted that the trees were located below the canopy of a number of very mature trees. That restrictive location would impact upon the condition and form of those trees over time as they strive to mature. The trees would not be considered for protection by virtue of a TPO due to their present stature and limited public visual amenity.
- The Council considered all felling works to 7 no. trees to be acceptable given the restricted location of the trees.
- Replacement tree planting was not a requirement with a Conservation Area and was not recommended in this case given the restrictive nature of the site.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the recommendation be adopted.

8. UPDATE FROM MINISTERIAL FORUM

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report from the Director of Place and Prosperity detailing the following;

Background – Planning Improvement Programme

Members would be aware of the inception of the NI Planning Improvement Programme (PIP) following recommendations arising from both the NI Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee Reports into Planning in Northern Ireland, published February and March 2022 respectively.

Planning Improvement Learning and Engagement Programme – Ministerial Engagement

As part of the PIP, NILGA previously held a Planning Improvement Task and Finish Advisory Group meeting on 18 May 2026 as part of the wider Planning Improvement Learning and Engagement Programme.

At that meeting, through NILGA's planning improvement engagement work with DfI and Solace NI, elected Members from Planning Committees engaged with the DfI Chief Planner, Rosemary Daly, on the challenges and opportunities within the planning system, and on how elected members could be supported to make sound and defensible decisions.

The discussion generated valuable practical insight, examples of good practice, and a clearer shared understanding of the areas where further support and improvement activity may be beneficial. NILGA was now working with DfI and Solace NI to reflect these issues in draft proposals for a future programme of work and would engage further with councils in due course as that developed.

A key strand of the wider Planning Improvement Learning and Engagement Programme had been to strengthen direct political engagement between the Minister and Council Planning Committees, ensuring that local government experience and elected member perspectives could help inform the ongoing improvement agenda.

As such, Chairs of Planning Committee or nominated Committee Members were invited to attend a meeting with Minister Liz Kimmins MLA on 18 June 2026 at James House, Cromac Avenue, Belfast.

Ministerial Planning Forum

A pre-meet was held via MS Teams with NILGA on 16 June for Members to summarise discussion points in order to support constructive engagement with the Minister on key system-wide issues facing delivery, investment and local place-shaping.

The Council's Head of Planning and Building Control, Ann McCullough, attended the meeting in her capacity as Chair of the NI Heads of Planning Group, alongside Councillor McCollum as Chair of ANDBC Planning Committee.

A precise of the discussion in relation to the topic areas raised is outlined below:

- Strategic Planning Framework (RDS / Regional Alignment)
- Planning for rural towns, villages and countryside
- Infrastructure – Planning policy and investment alignment
- Operation Performance and Statutory Consultees
- Major and Regionally Significant Applications
- Placemaking and Quality of Development
- Strategic Whole-System Thinking

Strategic Planning Framework (RDS / Regional Alignment) & Planning for Rural towns, villages and countryside

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 was a long term plan which aimed to deliver the spatial aspects of the Programme for Government. In doing so it recognised the important role of Belfast in generating regional prosperity and that Londonderry was the focus for economic growth in the North West. To ensure all areas benefited from economic growth, the RDS reflected the Programme for Government approach of balanced sub-regional growth and recognised the importance of key settlements as centres for growth and prosperity. The RDS had a statutory basis and was material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. Local councils must take account of the RDS when drawing up their Development Plans.

Concern was voiced in respect of more rural council areas in what was viewed by some as a moratorium on development in the countryside. Social and economic impacts of lack of growth was visible whereby businesses were struggling, more people requiring access to childcare, family carer responsibilities via housing in the countryside etc.

The Minister was cognisant of those matters, referencing a meeting held with representatives of the GAA in the context of its response to Ireland's Demographic Shift, in which it highlighted the ripple effect of the explosive growth of urban towns and cities of decimating and eroding rural life, and the resultant impact on such clubs.

Whilst recognising there needed to be a balance between meeting rural needs and protection of the countryside, her officers had commenced scoping work in respect of a review of the RDS and the SPPS with potential for matters to be addressed in a Planning Bill. The Minister acknowledged elected members were familiar with their respective local contexts and communities and the PIP had recognised a need for examining whether the regional policy framework remained fit for purpose.

The Chief Planner reiterated the need for growth in the rural areas to be balanced against protection of the environment, recognising a constant tension in attaining sustainable outcomes.

Infrastructure – Planning policy and investment alignment

There occurred the obvious discussion regards the state of the water and drainage infrastructure which the Minister addressed in the context of the current budget review, in which the monies required to address the necessary upgrades in NI costed more than the entire budget allocation to DFI. She referenced ongoing NIW pilots in settlements to try and release capacity at lower costs, and steps to maximise the amount of investment by NIW.

Operation Performance and Statutory Consultees

Members heard of the impact of the introduction of statutory validation checklists in respect of ensuring applications were properly front-loaded before being accepted into the system, as well as the formation of the Planning Statutory Consultee Forum for discussions around improvement and efficiencies, such as introduction of more Standing Advice for planning officers to negate requirement for consultation etc.

The Chief Planner advised Members of ongoing work between the Department and Heads of Planning to formulate a protocol to tackle the late submission of information or late objections, often seen as attempts to frustrate the determination of applications in the system.

Councillor McCollum raised concern with the legislative ability to determine an application in the absence of a consultee response within the statutory timeframe as it could put councils in an invidious position if road safety or environmental governance were compromised because of such decisions.

In referencing the tension between development and the environment, Councillor McCollum was keen that a meeting to include the DAERA Minister could be organised in the same vein as this forum to permit similar Member engagement, which the DFI Minister was very receptive to.

Engagement with agents was highlighted as opportunity to improve behaviour in this regard, in addition to ensuring planning officers made clear to statutory consultees what they were being asked to comment upon.

Investigation into the use of AI in terms of validation procedures was discussed in the context of how it could reduce administrative burden on planning officers to enable focus on policy assessment.

Major and Regionally Significant Applications

Frustration was aired in relation to the Department's ability to call-in applications and lack of timeframes for decisions.

The Chief Planner referenced the legislation requiring notification to the Department for major or local proposals, in the context of ensuring there was no inadvertent undermining of regional policy/setting of unwanted precedents, but was receptive to review of the legislation in this regard, to ensure not stymying development.

The Minister highlighted that the Department normally did not want to deal with such applications, but that third parties often requested DFI call-in proposals as an additional oversight check – appreciating that that needed to be addressed.

Placemaking and Quality of Development

Discussion around this theme focussed again on rural communities in the context of providing homes, services and employment opportunities.

Strategic Whole-System Thinking

Members generally welcomed the transfer of planning powers as a positive, and the Chief Planner advised of Heads of Planning being asked to put forward examples of positive outcomes in the planning system to counter-balance negativity and criticism. That would further enable greater understanding of the PIP and strengthen communications regards the planning system.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes this report.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the recommendation be adopted.

*****ITEM 9 IN CONFIDENCE*****

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the public and press be excluded from the following item of confidential business.

9. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON ENFORCEMENT MATTERS (Appendix IX)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

Exemption Reason: 6a. Exemption: Statutory Provision

The report was presented in confidence to Members under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014, Exemption 6a – Information which reveals that the council proposes to give under any statutory provision a notice by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person. It related to the status of current Planning Enforcement cases or Summons in respect of proposed actions.

It provided updates for Members in respect of the status of live enforcement notices, court proceedings and proposed summons action.

READMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

AGREED on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the public and press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.38 pm.

Development Management Case Officer Report  Ards and North Down Borough Council				CTY2A	
Reference:	LA06/2024/0576/O	DEA: Bangor East & Donaghadee			
Proposal:	Dwelling, garage and all associated site works	Location:	Land immediately to the rear of 54a High Bangor Road, Donaghadee		
Applicant:	Tania Henry				
Date valid:	03.07.2024	EIA Screening Required:	no		
Date last advertised:	11.07.2024	Date last neighbour notified:	03.07.2024		
Consultations – synopsis of responses:					
DFI Roads		No objection subj to condition			
NI Water		No objection			
NIEA WMU		No objection			
Environmental Health		No Objection			
Letters of Support	0	Letters of Objection	0	Petitions	0
Summary of main issues considered: • Principle of development • Design and Appearance • Impact on privacy or amenity of neighbouring properties • Impact on the character and appearance of the rural area • Biodiversity					
Recommendation: Refuse Planning Permission					
Report Agreed by Authorised Officer					
Full details of this application, including the application forms, relevant drawings, consultation responses and any representations received are available to view at the Planning Portal Northern Ireland Public Register (planningssystemni.gov.uk) using Public Access					

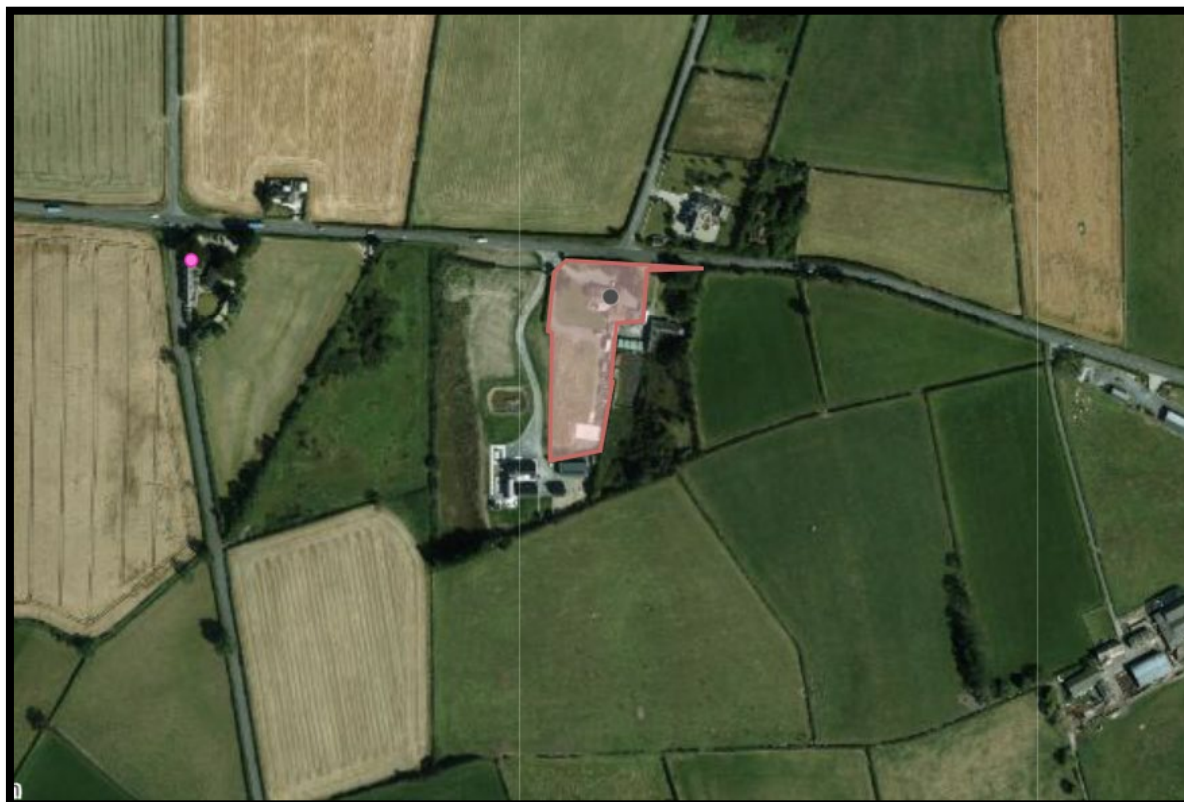
1. Site and Surrounding Area

The site is located on land to the immediate rear of 54a High Bangor Road, Donaghadee. The site is an area of grassland which is accessed through its own laneway which runs along the western boundary of no.54a. The site is set between no.56 to the west and no.54 to the east, with no.54 to the north. To the south is an outbuilding associated with no.56.

The site is uneven, slightly raised above the level of the surrounding land and grassed.

The site is located outside any settlement limits and within the countryside as shown within the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.

2. Site Location Plan



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3. Relevant Planning History

LA06/2020/0876/F - Domestic shed for storage of classic cars - Location - 54a High Bangor Road, Donaghadee – Withdrawn.

LA06/2020/0496/F - Erection of sliding entrance gates, pillars to existing lane, and proposed boundary wall – Location - Postal No. 56 (Lands 140m SW of No 54a) High Bangor Road Donaghadee BT21 0PB - Granted 17/08/2020.

LA06/2019/0161/F - New dwelling with garage and outbuilding, access and landscaping - Change of house type from previous approval LA06/2017/1003/F – Location - Lands 140m SW of 54a High Bangor Road Donaghadee BT21 0PB - Granted 23/10/2019.

LA06/2017/1003/F - Change of house type, in substitution of previous approval X/2011/0663/F - a "live" Permission), and amendments to ground levels to facilitate new landscaping (Change of Description) - Location - Dwelling on site 140m SW of 54a High Bangor Road Donaghadee BT21 0PB – Granted 11/06/2018.

X/2011/0663/F - Single storey dwelling clustered with a group of established horticultural buildings - Location - Dwelling on site 140m SW of 54a High Bangor Road Donaghadee BT21 0PB – Granted 11/10/2013.

X/2010/0113/F - Extension to existing domestic garage including raising roof by 1.5m - Location - 54A High Bangor Road Donaghadee Co Down BT21 0BP – Granted 19/05/2010.

X/2007/0672/F - Single storey extension to rear, porch to front and new large domestic garage including increase in curtilage - Location - 54A High Bangor Road, Donaghadee – Granted 7/07/2010.

X/2001/0949/F - New access to dwelling - Location - 54A High Bangor Road, Donaghadee - Granted 2/11/2001.

X/2000/0223/F - Alterations and extensions to form roofspace conversion, balcony to the rear elevation, construction of conservatory, porch to the front elevation, plus large domestic garage to rear of dwelling - Location - 54A High Bangor Road, Donaghadee – Granted 2/11/2001.

X/1993/0438 - Garage - Location - 54A High Bangor Road, Donaghadee - Granted 7/09/1993.

X/1991/0253 - Replacement dwelling - Location - 54A High Bangor Road, Donaghadee - Granted 16/06/1991.

4. Planning Assessment The relevant planning policy framework, including supplementary planning guidance where relevant, for this application is as follows: • Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 • The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland edition 2 (SPPS2) • Planning Policy Statement 2: Natural Heritage (PPS 2) • Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement and Parking • Revised Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning and Flood Risk • Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside Planning Guidance: • Building on Tradition: A Sustainable Design Guide for the NI Countryside (BoT)

Principle of Development

Compliance with the Development Plan

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 is the principal piece of planning legislation. Section 45 (1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires in dealing with a planning application regard to be had to the Local Development Plan, so far as material to the application and to any other material considerations. Section 6 (4) of this Act states that where regard is to be had to the Local Development Plan, the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 is the Local Development Plan for this area. According to ADAP 2015 (ADAP) the site is located outside the designated Settlement Limit of Bangor in open countryside.

Strategic Planning Policy

Regional planning policies of relevance are set out in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement and other retained policies, specifically PPS 21. Building on Tradition is also a material consideration. The guiding principle of the SPPS2 in determining planning applications is that sustainable development should be permitted having regard to the Development Plan and all other material considerations, unless the proposed development will cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

The applicant seeks full planning permission for a dwelling house with domestic garage and vehicular access way in accordance with the policies within the SPPS2 and PPS21. Policy CTY1 of PPS21 sets out a range of types of development which in principle are considered acceptable in the countryside. One type is development within an existing Cluster. Policy CTY2a relates. Policy CTY2a states that planning permission will be granted for a dwelling at an existing cluster of development provided six criteria are met.

Within the agent's supporting statement it is mentioned that *"The criteria are not mandatory requirements and any failure to meet one or more of them must be considered against the broad thrust and direction of the policy objectives and other material considerations, as per the direction in appeals 2017/A0222, 2014/A0245 and 2010/A0202."* It is the Council's view that all the criteria are mandatory as supported by more recent PACNI decisions 2020/A0117, 2021/A0119, 2022/A0015 & 2021/A0239 and a very robust reasoning must be provided to find that non-compliance with one or more criteria is justified.

The Council considers the relevant Area Plan and relevant planning policies consistently when assessing planning applications. Other material planning matters are considered, including recent planning appeal decisions.

- 1. The Cluster of development lies outside of a farm and consists of four or more buildings (excluding ancillary buildings such as garages, outbuildings, and open sided structures) of which at least three are dwellings.**

A cluster is not defined in Policy CTY 2a but the first three criteria give an indication of its intended meaning. In this the first of the criterion, the site should be contained within a cluster of development outside a farm and consist of four or more buildings, three of which are dwellings.

The agent has stated that the cluster of development at this location consists of dwellings at Nos.54, 54A, and 56 on the southern side of the road and dwellings at No.65, 63 and 60 on the northern side of the road with the T-junction of Stockbridge Road.



Figure 1: Aerial view of potential “cluster”.

1. No.60 Dwelling
2. No.65 Dwelling
3. No.63 Dwelling
4. No.54a Dwelling
5. No.54 Dwelling
6. No.56 Dwelling

On view from above as the aerial photo shows, there are more than 4 dwellings, I would argue that no.56 is detached from any “cluster” which the remaining buildings create. This is again confirmed when travelling to the site from the west, no.56 is visually removed from the small “cluster” at the road. No.56 is not visible travelling from the east and is screened from view travelling from the north. The agent has confirmed that the dwelling at no.54a while granted permission as a farm dwelling is no longer a part of a farm. On balance I would not dispute that there is a cluster, but that it is represented by nos.60, 65, 63, 54a and 54.

2. The Cluster appears as a visual entity in the local landscape.

This, the second criterion, requires the cluster to appear as a visual entity in the landscape and so an assessment on approach to the site from the three possibilities has been considered.

On approach from the east due to the dwellings orientation and separation from the road, along with dense mature vegetation there is very little awareness of any buildings at this section of the road - nos.60 and 65 are not visible when just south of them. No views are available from nos.54a, 54 and 56 while in transit. There is no visual entity.



Figure 2 & 3: Photos on approach travelling west along High Bangor Road.

On approach from the west, no.56 is set back at a distance from the road, it is not visually read with any other buildings. No.60 presents a front elevation of white render and is prominently visual on approach to the "T" junction, no.65 presents a gable wall and appears as an ancillary building to no.60. These are both separated by the straight High Bangor Road to the dwelling at no.54a which is also surrounded by mature vegetation. These buildings at no point along this road present a visual relationship which could be considered to be a cluster of four or more buildings. The mature roadside boundaries serve to reinforce the physical separation between the buildings and any impression of them representing a 'cluster' of development which appears as a visual entity. Again, there is no visual entity.



Figure 4 & 5: Photos on approach travelling east along High Bangor Road.

Travelling south along Stockbridge Road, towards the “T” junction with High Bangor Road, again no.60 is prominent due to the white render finish and scale and massing of it and its ancillary building. The roof of no.54a is visible but mostly screened from views by mature vegetation. No.56 is not visible, nor is no.54. There is no visual entity.



Figure 6 & 7: Photos on approach travelling south along Stockbridge Road.

The current visual relationship between the buildings identified as part of the suggested cluster is such that it does not appear as a visual entity in the landscape from any of the three possible routes towards the site. Rather, there is an awareness of a dispersed rural settlement pattern in the area. Due to the mature vegetation along the road the buildings are all screened from view when approaching from the east. Approaching from the west, no.56 is completely detached from any relationship with other buildings due to its separation. No.60 which would be the most prominent building in the “cluster” however, is physically separated from nos.54 and 54a by the High Bangor Road and visually separated by the vegetation along the road boundary the properties have.

3. The Cluster is associated with a focal point such as a social/community building/facility or is located at a crossroads.

The third criterion of Policy CTY 2a requires that the cluster be associated with a focal point such as a social / community building / facility or is located at a crossroads.

The tests within Policy CTY2a predominantly relate to physical features or the proximity of the proposed development site to existing physical features in order to determine its suitability in respect of a new dwelling at an existing cluster.

The agent has suggested that the focal points are a cross-roads located at Kylestone Road approx. 270m west of the site and the Creative Gardens – garden centre located approx. 350m north on the Stockbridge Road.

With the “cluster” considered as part of the first criterion of this policy, which contains a “T” junction, it would be my planning judgment that there is no focal point within the cluster to which it would be associated with. It would be my planning judgment that a garden centre, which would be contained within section A1 of the Use Class order, not to be a social / community / building or facility. I would also conclude that the Creative Gardens garden centre is so physically removed from the proposed site that it does not form part of the cluster or is it intervisible with the “cluster”. The

crossroads is similar in that it is approximately 370m west of the site. (similar to appeal 2017/A0080).



Figure 8: Aerial view of site in red and agents' suggestion to focal points in purple.

As discussed, it is my planning judgement that the group of buildings identified by the agent as the cluster is not a visual entity in the local landscape and even if it was, the focal point suggested by the agent would be visually separated from the "group". This is similar as to how planning appeal 2021/A0119 was assessed by the commissioner. In this more recent appeal, it is also iterated that all criteria of the policy are relevant and required to permit development.

In appeal 2022/A0015 the commissioner also considered a proposal where the focal point was physically detached from the "cluster".

"Although the church is a community focal point which may serve dwellings at Grahamstown and the wider area, there is a significant gap of around 100m between it and the nearest building in the cluster of development. This means that on the ground the church does not read as part of the same visual entity as the main cluster of development to the north of the appeal site. The Policy requires that the cluster is associated with a focal point such as a social / community building (my emphasis). The church can be considered to be associated with Grahamstown being its nearest community building, but in spatial terms, it is not physically within the cluster of development."

These two recent appeal decisions show that the PAC considers that the focal points are required to be both physically within the cluster and visually related to it. Again, it also shows that all criteria of the policy are required to permit development. With this the proposed development is not acceptable.

The agent has referred to BOT document and specifically pages 68 and 69 with regard to cluster and focal points. Within this the diagrams show that the sites are located within a large cluster and so is the focal point referred to. This is not the case with this proposal as described in this report.

4. The identified site provides a suitable degree of enclosure and is bounded on at least two sides with other development in the Cluster.

The fourth criterion clearly considers the physical and visual relationship of the existing development pattern relative to the subject site. In this circumstance the subject site it is enclosed on all sides and is contained by development on three of its four sides. It is argued that the site is not bounded on at least two sides by development within the “cluster” as in my planning judgment no.56 is not part of the “cluster”.



Figure 9: Ariel view of site showing it bounded on at least two sides with development in the cluster.



Figure 10: Proposed site layout.

The proposed site is bound on two sides by development, no.54a to the north and no.56 to the south. However, it cannot and does not comply with the fourth bullet point, which requires the appeal site to be bound on at least two sides with other development in the cluster.

5. Development of the site can be absorbed into the existing cluster through rounding off and consolidation and will not significantly alter its existing character, or visually intrude into the open countryside.

The fifth criteria seeks the development site to be absorbed into the existing cluster and is essentially a visual appraisal of the proposal in its setting, as it requires the site to be absorbed into the existing cluster through rounding off and will not significantly alter its existing character or visually intrude into the open countryside.

Given my assessment of the first criteria in this policy I do not consider no.56 to be a part of a “cluster” and so any dwelling on this site cannot and does not comply with the fifth criterion, which requires the site to be absorbed into the existing cluster through rounding off and consolidation.

The proposal fails this criterion.

6. Development will not adversely impact on residential amenity

Due to the location of the proposed dwelling on the site the closest dwelling would be the applicant's to the north. There is also another dwelling to the south-west, no.56 which I would not consider to be within the "cluster". Without detailed drawings of a dwelling an accurate assessment of any impact cannot be carried out. This said it would be my planning judgment that a carefully designed dwelling of low ridge height could ensure there will be no impact on adjacent dwellings. Therefore, the proposed dwelling is not considered to result in overlooking or subsequent loss of privacy.

In conclusion with regard to my assessment of PPS21 CTY2a, it is my planning judgement that a dwelling on this site fails to meet all the criteria of PPS21 CTY2A. Failing parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the policy.

Policy CTY1 of PPS 21 identifies a range of types of development which in principle are considered to be acceptable in the countryside and which will contribute to the aims of sustainable development. Given the location of the site and supporting information from the agent I will also assess the proposal under CTY8.

Policy CTY8 relates to the issue of ribbon development in the countryside. It states that planning permission will be refused for a building which creates or adds to a ribbon of development. The headnote of the policy states "*an exception will be permitted for the development of a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of two houses within an otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage and provided this respects the existing development pattern along the frontage in terms of size, scale, siting and plot size and meets other planning and environmental requirements. For the purpose of this policy the definition of a substantial and built up frontage includes a line of 3 or more buildings along a road frontage without accompanying development to the rear*".

The first step in the assessment is to confirm that there is a substantial and built-up frontage (SCBUF) including a line of 3 or more buildings along a road frontage without accompanying development to the rear.

The site is located approximately 50m back from the edge of the High Bangor Road. As can be seen from figure 11, the site does not have a road frontage with the High Bangor Road. The dwelling at no.54a High Bangor Road has a road frontage, the site is to the rear of the dwelling. In considering the SCBUF, the planning history on site is material. Recent case law has also been explicit in considering the facts on the ground of particular sites' circumstances. Planning approval X/2007/0672/F indicates approval for various elements at no. 54a including an increase in curtilage. Furthermore, it can be seen on the site that the proposal site is permeable with no.54a and can be considered as part with the access lane serving to the rear of the property. In this respect it is considered that both lanes along the road form part of the frontage of no54a.



Figure 11 - Ariel photo of site proposed

The dwelling at no.54a fronts High Bangor Road and with the access lane which serves the site. The dwelling at no.56 while set back from the road by 140m shares frontage with the High Bangor Road.

The site does not share frontage with the road. The site has a frontage with the access lane.

The policy states the definition of a substantial and built-up frontage includes a line of 3 or more buildings along a road frontage without accompanying development to the rear.

It would be my planning judgement that there is a substantial and continuously built-up frontage which includes a line of at least three buildings. No.54, no.54a and no.56 have frontage with High Bangor Road and together make up a substantially built up frontage along high Bangor Road.

The second part of the assessment is to confirm that as per CTY8, that an infill opportunity exists for the development of a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate up to a maximum of 2 houses within a SCBUF. The amplification text goes on to state that, for the purposes of the policy, the 'gap' is between buildings. Again, the proposal site must be considered in its context as part of the rear curtilage of no54a. As such it is a backland development and does not sit within the SCBUF.

As the site is not considered to be a small gap within a substantially built-up frontage, it cannot fall within the exception provided under CTY8.

While there is not considered to be a small gap in an otherwise substantially built-up frontage, in my planning judgment, the site does not represent an important visual gap between two visually separate buildings.

In conclusion with regard to my assessment of PPS21 CTY8, it is my planning judgement that a dwelling on this site fails to meet the criteria of PPS21 CTY8.

CTY13 – Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside states that - Planning permission will be granted for a building in the countryside where it can be visually integrated into the surrounding landscape and it is of an appropriate design.

Six of the seven criteria included in this policy are relevant to this proposal which ensure any new buildings will integrate into the proposed site.

Prominence

The policy requirement is not for the new building to be invisible, but for it to integrate into the surrounding landscape, each site has its own specific features and so all proposals will be assessed on their own merit. The proposed application is for outline planning permission and so limited details are to be assessed. It would however be my planning judgement that a modest dwelling on this site will not be prominent in the landscape due to the natural features surrounding the site. While the principle of development is not acceptable, it is my planning judgment that a modest dwelling will integrate into the natural rural area.

Boundaries and enclosure

The site has existing boundaries to the west and the proposed site would require boundary treatment to the north, east and south in order to provide enclosure. I do not consider this detrimental to the integration of the dwelling on this site. Additional planting would assist blending the dwelling into the countryside and aid biodiversity.

Landscaping

The proposed site would not require landscaping in order to provide integration but if deemed acceptable, I would request planting within the site at the front so that the new dwelling would have a natural boundary between it and no.54a. With any new development in a rural setting the introduction of new planting is important and will not only provide integration but further biodiversity to the local area.

Ancillary Works

The application is outline and no details have been provided other than the location of a garage.

Design of the building

The application is outline and no details have been provided.

Blend with the landform

The site is generally flat and well bounded on all sides, it would be my planning judgment that the if a modest dwelling was permitted it would blend with the landform.

The proposal does not conflict with any of the criteria of CTY13 of PPS21.

CTY14 – Rural Character states that - Planning permission will be granted for a building in the countryside where it does not cause a detrimental change to, or further erode the rural character of an area.

Five criteria are included in this policy which ensure any new buildings will be in keeping with the rural character of the area.

Prominence

The policy requirement is not for the new building to be invisible, but for it to integrate into the surrounding landscape, each site has its own specific features and so all proposals will be assessed on their own merit. The proposed application is for outline planning permission and so limited details are to be assessed. It would however be my planning judgement that a modest dwelling on this site will not be prominent in the landscape due to the natural features surrounding the site. While the principle of development is not acceptable, it is my planning judgment that a modest dwelling will blend into the character of the rural area.

Suburban Style Build up

The proposed dwelling cumulatively with the other buildings adjacent to it and their ancillary features in the vicinity, result in a build-up of development detrimental to the rural character of that area.

Existing traditional pattern

The proposed site for a dwelling on a site set back from the road, while there is no principle for development, a dwelling on this site would not be detrimental to the rural character of the area with regard to the existing pattern of development in the local area.

Ribboning

PPS21 does not provide a comprehensive definition of ribbon development, however paragraph 5.33 of Policy CTY8 indicates that it does not necessarily have to be served by individual accesses nor have a continuous or uniform building line. Buildings sited back, staggered or at angles and with gaps between them can still represent ribbon development if they have a common frontage or they are visually linked. As discussed, the site will not add to or create a ribbon of development. As discussed within the assessment of CTY8 the site does not represent a small gap within an otherwise substantially built-up frontage. The proposal does not abide by CTY8 of PPS 21 but does not conflict the ribboning criteria of CTY14.

Ancillary works

The application is outline and no details have been provided.

The proposal is in conflict with criteria b) of CTY14 of PPS21 and so would result in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing buildings.

Residential Amenity

The application proposed is for outline planning permission and no details of the dwelling proposed have been submitted. It will therefore be left to consider any impact the dwellings may have on adjacent properties in any application following permission granted for this.

Biodiversity

Part 1 of NIEA's Biodiversity Checklist was employed as a guide to identify any potential adverse impacts on designated sites. No such scenario was identified. The potential impact of this proposal on Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites has therefore been assessed in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended).

In terms of protected and priority species, Part 2 of the Checklist was referred to and did not identify a scenario where survey information may reasonably be required.

Access, movement and parking

DFI Roads has advised that if the proposal complies with the protected routes policy under policy AMP3 it would have no objections to the proposal. The dwelling will be accessed off a private road serving several dwellings and businesses. DFI Roads have requested that existing visibility splays are maintained in perpetuity.

Sewerage, Water Supply & Drainage

NI Water have been consulted regarding existing water and sewer infrastructure and have no objections. They have confirmed there is no public water main within 20m of the proposed development boundary, however access is available via extension of the existing water supply network and a requisition for a water main extension is required to be submitted.

The applicant has indicated it is not their intention to connect to the public wastewater system as a means of disposal but to use on site wastewater treatment. The use of which will be subject to consent being obtained from NIEA.

DAERA Water Management Unit (WMU) were consulted and refer to Standing Advice, Conditions and Informatives to ensure the development will not have an adverse effect on the water environment.

5. Representations

No letters of objection have been received.

6. Recommendation

Refuse Planning Permission

7. Refusal Reasons

1. The proposal is contrary to The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2 and Policy CTY1 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that there are no overriding reasons why this development is essential in this rural location and could not be located within a settlement.
2. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2 and Policy CTY 2a of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the cluster does not appear as a visual entity in the local landscape; the cluster is not associated with a focal point such as a social / community building/facility, or is located at a cross-roads, the identified site provides a suitable degree of enclosure but is not bounded on at least two sides with other development in the cluster; development of the site cannot be absorbed into the existing cluster through rounding off and consolidation and will not significantly alter its existing character, or visually intrude into the open countryside.
3. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2 and Policy CTY 8 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the site does not represent a small gap within an otherwise substantially built-up frontage.
4. The proposal is contrary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2 and Policy CTY 14 of Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside in that the proposal would result in a suburban style build-up of development when viewed with existing buildings.

Addendum to Case Officer Report - LA06/2024/0576/F**Item 4.1a**

Further to inclusion of the above application on the schedule for Planning Committee, to be heard at its meeting of 04 August 2026, a letter of support was received from Alex Easton MP on 3 August 2026.

The contents of the letter of support have been fully considered; however, they do not alter the original recommendation made by the case officer.

As acknowledged within the letter of support, the proposal does not satisfy the relevant policy criteria set out in Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS 21): Sustainable Development in the Countryside. Consequently, there is no established policy basis or principle of development for the proposed dwelling at this site. This matter is addressed in detail within the published Planning Case Officer's Report.

It asserts that the proposed dwelling has been designed to integrate sympathetically into the surrounding landscape, and that it is modest in scale and traditional in design. These comments are misplaced as this is an Outline application for which no details of the design have been submitted.

It further states that the proposal also reflects the established pattern of development in the locality. Planning Service would contest this statement as the proposal is essentially backland development, of which there is no similar pattern in the vicinity of the site.

The letter of support also requests further consideration of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) in relation to sustainable development. However, the application has been assessed against the current policy framework, including SPPS 2 and the relevant planning policy relating to sustainable development in the countryside.

As set out in the Planning Case Officer's Report, neither SPPS 2 nor PPS 21 provides a policy basis for approval of the proposed site.

Accordingly, the recommendation remains that planning permission should be refused.

Development Management Case Officer Report				 Ards and North Down Borough Council	
Reference:	LA06/2025/0330/F		DEA: Hollywood & Clandeboye		
Proposal:	Proposed alterations to, and extension of, the existing vacant Dickson's Home and Garden Centre to accommodate a new garden and antique centre with ancillary farm/deli shop/café, restaurant, landscaping and children's play area. Development includes the reconfiguration of the existing car park and all other associated site and access works.		Location:	Former Dickson's Home and Garden Centre, 77-79 Cootehall Road, Bangor, BT19 1UP	
Applicant:	Justro Properties Ltd				
Date valid:	09/12/2024		EIA Screening Required:	Yes	
Date last advertised	06/02/2025		Date last neighbour notified:	20/07/2026	
Consultations – synopsis of responses:					
DFI Roads			No objections		
DFI Rivers			No objections subject to conditions		
NI Water			No objections		
Shared Environmental Service			No objections subject to conditions		
NIEA Natural Environment Division			No objections subject to conditions		
NIEA Water Catchment Unit			No objections subject to standing advice		
Environmental Health			No objections		
Letters of Support	16	Letters of Objection	0	Comments	0
Summary of main issues considered: • Principle of development • Design, Visual Impact and Impact on character of the area					

- Impact on Residential Amenity
- Access, Road Safety and Car Parking
- Designated Sites/Other Natural Heritage Interests
- Impact on flooding and drainage
- Other Planning Matters

Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission

Report Agreed by Authorised Officer

Full details of this application, including the application forms, relevant drawings, consultation responses and any representations received are available to view at the Planning Portal.

1. Site and Surrounding Area

The application site comprises a plot of land which incorporates the existing buildings associated with the former Dickson's Home & Garden Centre. There were three other businesses on the site comprising Tobermore, Clearly Aquatics and Advanced Conservatories. Clearly Aquatics is the only other business currently operating on the site.

The site is currently accessed from Cootehall Road on the eastern boundary, which is to be retained. An existing informal car park is shared among the businesses within the site, with space for c.60 cars. The Belfast Road (A2) is to the south, and existing trees and vegetation are located along the west boundary, which were recently maintained after becoming overgrown.

Belfast Road (A2) which runs along the southern boundary of the site which is designated as a 'Protected Route' connecting Bangor, Holywood and Belfast City.

2. Site Location Plan

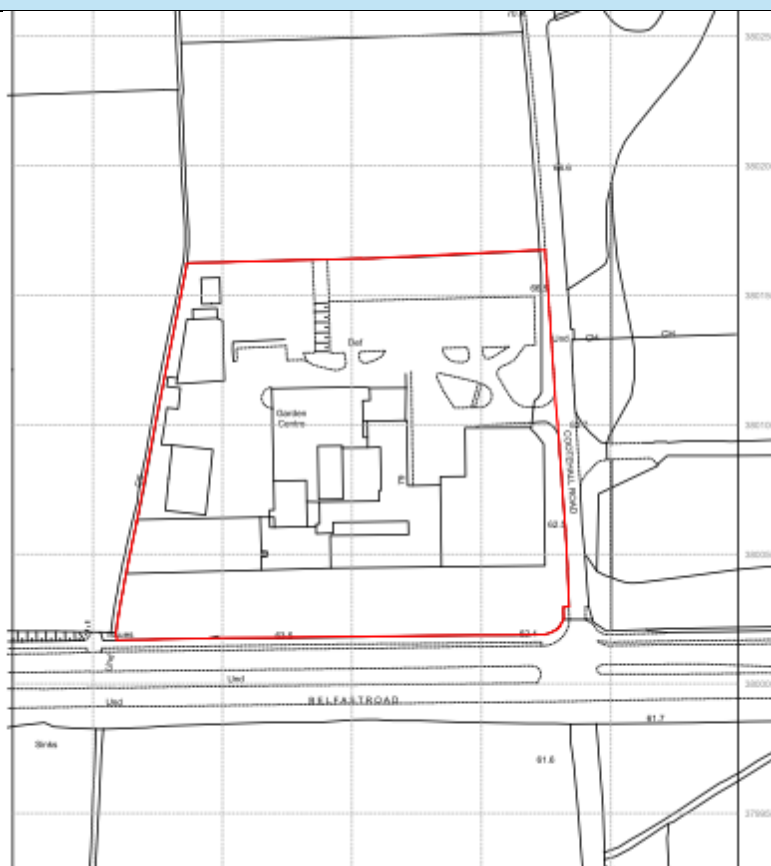


Figure 1: Site Location Plan



Figure 2: Orthophotography showing application site

3. Relevant Planning History

There is no recent planning history relating to the application site. However, a planning history search has confirmed the site has a long history as a home and garden centre with associated restaurant dating back to the late 1980s as below:

W/1988/0115 - Demolition of existing complex and erection of new indoor Garden Centre and Restaurant with associated external horticultural areas – Permission Granted

W/1991/0432 - Extension to existing garden centre – Permission Granted

W/1997/0090 - Office, Conservatory, sample shed and area for the display of paving products – Permission Granted

W/2006/0462/F - Proposed showroom for sale of gardening materials and equipment – Permission Granted

Planning Assessment

The relevant planning policy framework, including supplementary planning guidance where relevant, for this application is as follows:

- North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984 – 1995
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland, Edition 2
- Planning Policy Statement 2: Natural Heritage
- Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement & Parking
- Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning and Flood Risk
- Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside

Planning Guidance:

- ‘Building on Tradition’ – A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside
- DCAN 15 – Vehicular Access Standards

Legislative Requirements**Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) and Consideration of Pre-Application Community Consultation (PACC) Process**

As the proposal falls within the category of major development as outlined in The Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the DM Regs), this proposal was subject to legislative requirements to carry out pre-application community consultation prior to submission of the planning application.

A PAN was submitted to the Council on 10 September 2024. The Council confirmed on 25 November 2024 that the PAN submission was acceptable. The current planning application was submitted on 16 April 2025, more than 12 weeks after receipt of the PAN, as required by Section 27 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('the Planning Act').

In accordance with Section 28 of the Planning Act, a Planning Application Community Consultation (PACC) Report was submitted with the application. The report satisfactorily outlines how community consultation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of Section 27 of the Planning Act and Regulation 5 of the DM Regs.

The PACC report outlines that four comment cards were completed and returned in which three of the respondents 'strongly agreed' with the statement that they support the development proposals for the former Dickson's Home and Garden Centre. One respondent did not answer this section but included positive feedback on the card, and one of the respondents suggested any changes to the proposals.

On the basis of the above considerations, the applicant determined that no amendments were required to be made to the scheme following the public consultation process.

Design and Access Statement (DAS)

As the proposal involves major development, a DAS has been submitted in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Planning Act and The Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The submitted statement provides an analysis of the existing site conditions and surrounding context identifying the constraints and opportunities that have informed the development of the proposals. The statement outlines the design concepts that have been applied to the development. The key design principles set out in the DAS are summarised as follows:

- Extensions and replacement buildings have been added to the existing building to offer an enhanced experience and better flow throughout the complex, currently the retail spaces are somewhat disjointed & poorly interconnected;

- Visitors can meander through the main circulation route to the different retail spaces as they go with a trolley park area facilitated close to the central garden centre area, at this point they could continue to have refreshments in the restaurant or to the external retail space before finishing their journey at the till area;
- The existing restaurant has been extended to increase table numbers and generally improve the visitor experience with an enhanced interior design/ themed fit out proposed to draw visitors to find refreshment and complete their visit with a high-quality culinary experience as is common in most Garden Centres;
- The design, scale and finish of this enclosure have been carefully considered to respond sensitively to its countryside context. The existing retained location is ideal as it allows the surrounding building, vegetation and tree planting to shield the main mass of the enclosure from public view along the A2 Carriageway and Cootehall Road;
- The existing Dickson's Home & Garden Centre site has limited landscaping apart from the planted bank areas adjoining the Cootehall Rd and Belfast Road which have been recently maintained to retain healthy planting and removing planting of poor quality / condition. The proposed arrangement also creates an opportunity to enhance the landscaping provision throughout the site for easier management; and
- Existing boundary vegetation should be retained.

Environmental Impact Assessment

A determination was carried out upon receipt of the application under Regulation 12(1) of The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 (the 'EIA Regs') as to whether the proposal would be EIA development. Based on the submitted information provided by the applicant, the Planning Service determined that the proposal was not considered to be EIA development and as such did not need to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

Principle of Development and Development Plan Considerations

Section 45 (1) of the Planning Act requires that due regard must be given to the Development Plan, so far as material to the application and to any other material considerations. Section 6 (4) states that where regard is to be had to the Development Plan, the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Until the Council adopts its new Local Development Plan, planning applications will continue to be assessed against the provisions of the Department's Plans and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) which contain the main operational planning policies for the consideration of development proposals.

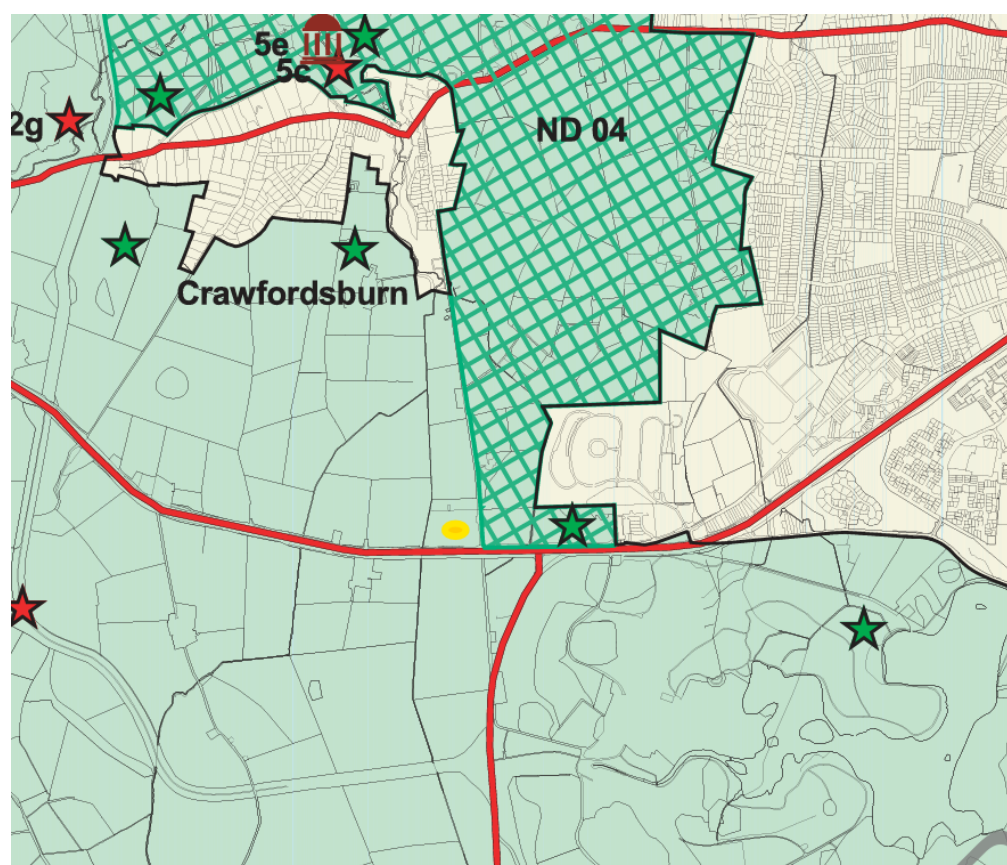
The Court of Appeal declared the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) to be unlawful on 18 May 2017. The North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984 - 1995 (NDAAP), despite its vintage, operates as the LDP for the area the site

lies in. A further consequence of the Court of Appeal judgment is that the draft BMAP, published in 2004, is a material consideration in the determination of the application.

The site lies within the greenbelt in both the NDAAP and Draft BMAP. (The policy provisions of PPS 21 take precedence over the Green Belt policy provision in both Plans).

As can be seen in Figure 3 below, the site is not affected by any proposed designations within dBMAP and is situated to the immediate north of the A2 Bangor – Belfast Road – a protected route.

The NDAAP at section 41.4 states that planning permission for non-residential development will be considered on the basis of the needs of the local community, the proximity of alternative urban locations and the circumstances of each case.



**Figure 3: Extract from North Down Countryside Map, draft BMAP
(Proposed site is identified by the yellow circle)**

Whilst the site is located immediately to the west of the settlement of Bangor and south of Crawfordsburn, in the 'countryside' - it is an existing developed site with considerable planning history demonstrating a range of retailing uses over some decades.

The Planning Statement accompanying the application outlines those traders that have occupied the site, these are wide ranging and include:

- Dickson's Home & Garden (retail of garden products and plant and tree nursery and the retail of home furnishings, gifts and seasonal shop)
- Herron's Furniture (furniture retailer)
- Hamilton's (Garden, furniture and interiors retail)
- Dickson's Tile Centre (retail showroom for tiles)
- Clearly Aquatics (retail of aquatic supplies)
- Pets and Ponds (retail pet supplies)
- Tobermore (display and retail of decorative stone and paving)
- Eglantine Timber products (retail of timber furniture, huts and children's climbing frames etc.)
- J Hair Motors (used car sales)
- Advanced NI Conservatories (retail conservatory showrooms, offices & workshops)
- The Hot Tub Centre (retail of hot tubs, saunas and steam rooms)
- David Gibson (retail of sunrooms and conservatories)
- The Paving Centre
(retail and installation of paving)
- Exploding Dice (retail of role-playing games)
- Party Animals (retail pet shop) and
- in the 1990s and early 2000s there was a company dealing in caravan retailing

The proposal seeks to accommodate the re-location of 'On The Square Emporium' ('OTSE') from existing premises in Belfast with the incorporation of a garden centre.

On the Square Emporium merged with 'Refound' in 2014 and comprises a considerable collection of furniture, lighting, decor, carpets/rugs, collectibles, salvage, art, garden/outdoor, ironmongery and much more. It is currently based in Heron Road, Belfast, as '14,000 sq ft of treasure – a treasure trove for the modern vintage lover'.

According to the Supporting Statement the vision (in respect of OTSE and this application site) is to 'bring these two uses together in Northern Ireland, and revitalise this existing vacant garden centre, with a clear focus on reduce, reuse, recycle across both the antique and garden centre elements'.

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI – Edition 2 (SPPS)

The SPPS sets out the guiding principle relating to the grant/refusal of development contained within paragraph 3.8. This states that sustainable development should be permitted, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, unless the proposed development will cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

The SPPS refers at paragraph 6.61 to development proposals in the countryside and states, 'In addition to its role and function as a recreational and tourist asset the countryside also supports our important agricultural industry, offers potential

opportunities for sustainable growth in new sectors, and is home to a considerable rural population.'

It is accepted that the site has evolved since its original planning approval and many businesses have operated retailing a variety of comparison and bulky goods.

Para 6.277 of SPPS states, *'The aim of the SPPS is to support and sustain vibrant town centres across Northern Ireland through the promotion of established town centres as the appropriate first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions, consistent with the RDS.'*

In relation to retailing in the countryside the SPPS is clear at Para 6.286 where it states, *'Retailing will be directed to town centres, and the development of inappropriate retail facilities in the countryside must be resisted. However, as a general exception to the overall policy approach some retail facilities which may be considered appropriate outside of settlement limits include farm shops, craft shops and shops serving tourist or recreational facilities. Such retail facilities should be required to be located within existing buildings. All policies and proposals must ensure there will be no unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability of an existing centre within the catchment and meet the requirements of policy elsewhere in the SPPS.'*

The proposal does not require the application of the sequential test or a retail need/impact assessment under the SPPS. The SPPS makes clear that these requirements apply to proposals for main town centre uses located outside established centres, where there is potential to impact upon the vitality and viability of those centres. However, in this instance the development comprises the reuse and diversification of an established garden centre site, which is a use inherently suited to a rural location and not one that would reasonably be expected to locate within a town or city centre. The inclusion of antiques is complementary in nature and does not alter the overall character of the use as a specialist, destination-based retail offer. As such, the proposal is unlikely to give rise to significant adverse impacts on Bangor city centre or Newtownards town centre and the application of the sequential test and retail impact/need assessment is not considered to be necessary in this case.

In the overall planning balance, significant weight can be attached to the established lawful use of the site as a garden centre, as originally approved under planning reference W/1980/0628 for garden centre display and production and subsequently redeveloped under permission W/1988/0115 for a new indoor garden centre and restaurant with associated external horticultural areas.

While the 1988 permission, and later the 1991 extension, imposed a condition limiting retail sales to gardening and horticultural products only, this nonetheless confirms a lawful fallback position for a garden centre use of a substantial scale. This fallback establishes a baseline level of commercial activity, traffic generation, and built form that could occur on the site without further consent. Although evidence suggests that the site has accommodated a broader range of retail goods in more recent years, these activities were not authorised and therefore do not constitute a

lawful fallback; however, they remain of contextual relevance in demonstrating the site's operational evolution and market function as a retail destination. The proposed garden and antiques centre, making use of the existing building, can be viewed as a diversification of the established garden centre use rather than a fundamental departure, and is unlikely to give rise to impacts materially greater than those associated with the lawful fallback. Accordingly, when weighed against the realistic prospect of the site reverting to a fully operational horticultural garden centre in accordance with extant permissions, the proposal is considered acceptable in the overall planning balance, consistent with the objectives of the SPSS to facilitate sustainable rural economic development.

This approach is further strengthened by the following Planning Appeals Commission decision – 2021/E0026. This was an appeal against an Enforcement Notice served by the Council upon 'J Hair Motors' in mid-2021 in respect of an alleged unauthorised '*Change of use from yard area to car sales premises on land behind Dickson's Garden Centre.*'

The Commissioner treats the land to the rear of Dickson's Garden Centre as forming part of a wider, established retail planning unit rather than as a separate or redundant parcel. The Commissioner does not identify any abandonment of the lawful use and instead implicitly recognises the continued existence of a garden centre-related retail function across the wider site. Accordingly, the decision supports a credible fallback position whereby the land could be brought back into use as an extension of Dickson's Garden Centre for retail purposes, including outdoor sales, display and other ancillary activities typically associated with such an operation.

The Enforcement Notice was upheld, and the deemed application for the car sales business was dismissed. J Hair Motors has since moved to an approved site in the Jubilee Road Industrial Site in Newtownards.

The position set out by the PAC in the above appeal is not undermined by the current vacancy of the land, as the decision does not equate non-use with abandonment, and the lawful retail use must therefore be regarded as subsisting. On this basis, the revitalisation/renaissance of the site for retail purposes, including an antiques centre, is supported insofar as it remains consistent with the established character of the overall garden centre planning unit.

Policy CTY 1 of PPS 21 supports sustainable economic development in the countryside where it accords with other policy provisions. In this case, the proposal involves the reuse of established buildings on a site with a lawful garden centre use, as confirmed by permissions W/1980/0628, W/1988/0115 and the 1991 extension. It therefore does not represent new encroachment into the countryside, but the continuation of an existing use. The proposed garden and antiques centre is compatible with the rural setting and unlikely to generate impacts beyond the lawful fallback. As such, it aligns with the aims of CTY 1 in facilitating appropriate and sustainable rural economic development.

Council Plans and Strategies

The Council's **Corporate Plan 2024-2028** sets a vision of '*A Sustainable Borough*'. This planning proposal aligns with the identified Corporate Plan priority of '*increased economic growth attracting more businesses and jobs*'. Its approval will assist in growing the local economy through relocation of this business into the Borough and its expansion into a more varied overall provision of mixed, but complementary, retail uses. A growing economy leads to more and better jobs and creates further opportunities for people to develop skills and to take advantage of improved opportunities for employment.

The Council's **Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2018-2030 'Blue:Green, Creatively Connected'** (ITRDS) highlights that this Borough has a particular strength in the creativity of our people, shaped from earliest times to present day producers, artisans, designers and engineers. This redevelopment proposal provides opportunity for such creative elements.

The ITRDS has set a target to **increase share of overnight trips** and visitor expenditure. The application's Supporting Statement attributes percentages of ROI market activity across its forecasted range of customers:

- 10% customers travelling from ROI
- 40% commercial customers travelling from ROI

The ITRDS sets out key visitor markets as domestic, non-domestic and **ROI** which are key to increasing overnight trips. Since the Strategy was written, NI has seen a growth in ROI trips, more recently demonstrated in its recent 360-degree report of 10% increase Jan – March 2026 in comparison to 2025.

The application's Supporting Statement identifies this proposal as intending to be the '*largest antique and garden centre with deli/farm shop*'. The 'largest' of this type would provide a unique selling point within the island of Ireland which aligns to the ITRDS's **visitor impact** '*raising awareness and generating stand out*'.

The visitor proposition within the ITRDS focuses on four key areas:

- Water's Edge Encounters
- Time Depth Encounters
- Creative Encounters and
- Great Food Encounters

This proposal indicates inclusion of a range of **creative** elements including direct business (movie props etc.) to Screen Tourism (20% from the ROI market and 80% NI). Screen tourism has been identified as a niche market within the ITRDS, and an audience which is recognised by Tourism NI as continuing to grow.

The inclusion of a deli/farm shop indicates increasing the availability of local produce which would support the theme of **food and AND local producers (AND Food and Drink Destination Development Action Plan)**. There is also a reference to supporting 60 jobs – craftsmen and local producers supporting the ITRDS target of

increasing jobs in the Borough. Agri-food is identified as a priority sector within ITRDS alongside Food. This proposal aligns directly with the ITRDS specifically in terms of supporting 'food tourism' which has a particular relevance to this Borough and artisan foods in particular present opportunities to showcase local ingredients, specialities and present gift opportunities for visitors. There is also opportunity for this proposal to act as a destination alongside the city of Bangor which is undergoing renaissance through the redevelopment of Queen's Parade, and the Bangor Waterfront Project including Pickie Fun Park.

Design, Visual Impact and Impact on Character of the Area

The site contains a building formerly used as a garden centre/cafe alongside, Clearly Aquatics (still active) and a building formerly operating as Tobermore.

The site and subject buildings have a long-established retail use in this countryside location (demonstrated in the planning history section of this report) with orthophotography showing the buildings in 2005.



Figure 4: Council GIS orthophotography of the site 2005



Figure 5: Council GIS orthophotography of the site 2022 (latest available)

The proposal involves the re-use and alteration of the existing building, including extensions and rebuilding of parts.

The existing garden centre development comprises a range of different materials and building styles. The proposed scheme utilises smooth render with mock Tudor detailing and hardwood windows and doors. There are several existing smaller external retail sales buildings associated with the former Conservatory business which are proposed to be retained for reuse in their current form.



Figure 6: CGI of proposal

The existing buildings of the former Dickson's garden centre comprise a range of different materials and building styles and are not considered to be of any particular historical merit or architectural style. The large site currently appears disjointed.



Figure 7: Existing Building from A2 (Google Streetview images 2022)

The existing buildings on the application site are partially visible from the main A2 Belfast Road (as shown above); they are relatively low profile and have a height of approximately 6.1m.

Proposed elevations show an increase in height and massing of the proposed main building. The two-storey extension element is proposed have a height of 8.8m approx. from ground level meaning an increase in height of this portion of the building of approx. 3m; however, due to lower ground levels at this location, the eaves height ties in with the remainder of the garden centre building.



Figure 8: Proposed elevation from A2

The proposed development represents a substantial alteration to the existing garden centre in terms of both visual appearance and architectural character.

The **SPPS** places an emphasis on achieving high quality, sustainable design which responds positively to local context and enhances visual amenity. In this regard, the existing building is of a utilitarian garden centre form, characterised by simple massing, limited articulation, and a palette of materials including red brick, corrugated sheeting and polycarbonate roofing, which collectively offer limited architectural merit or visual integration. The proposed elevations introduce a more coherent and articulated built form, varied roof heights, improved façade composition, and high-quality materials including painted render, timber cladding

and composite panelling. These changes give rise to a more visually cohesive development, in line with SPPS objectives.

Policy CTY 13 of PPS 21 requires development in the countryside to be appropriately designed and visually integrated into the surrounding landscape. The proposal must be considered in the context of the existing established site.

The development does not introduce a new standalone building in the countryside but extends and alters an existing building. While there is an increase in overall height and massing (the proposed extension element is approx. 3m higher than the existing roof) the design incorporates a stepped roof profile and varied building forms, which helps break up the bulk and reduce the potential for visual dominance. Furthermore, the use of timber elements and a more refined material palette assist in softening the overall appearance. As such, the development is considered to achieve an acceptable degree of integration, particularly when viewed against the baseline of the existing built form.

Policy CTY 14 of PPS 21 seeks to ensure that development does not cause a detrimental change to, or further erode the rural character of the countryside. The proposal increases the overall scale and bulk of development through both horizontal extensions and increased roof heights. While the stepped roof profile helps to break up massing, the development will nonetheless appear more prominent within the site. However, this must be balanced against the current character of the site and the location of the increased roof element situated approx. 60m from the roadside.

The development introduces a higher quality architectural design which is considered to enhance the site and avoid the proliferation of unsympathetic structures. The incorporation of traditional and vernacular-inspired detailing, including timber features and mock shopfronts, ensures that the development does not appear incongruous but rather presents as a more ordered and visually pleasing cluster of buildings.

On balance, while the proposal will increase built form and visual impact, it is considered that the improvements in design quality, material finish, and mitigate against any potential adverse impact on rural character. The development would not result in a suburbanising effect or unacceptable urban sprawl but instead represents an enhancement of an existing commercial site.

The proposal includes a children's play area towards the southern boundary, adjacent and accessed via the proposed cafe area. Plans show two Viking boats placed on top of bark. The boats have been used as props in a number of television and movie productions including, "Vikings", "The Northman" and "How to Train your Dragon", as such, the significance of the boats will provide an additional attraction for film and television fans and an opportunity to see and touch props which hold much significance in the industry. The play area is ideally located adjacent to and accessed from the proposed restaurant terrace, enabling parents to avail of refreshments whilst having effective oversight of their children.



Figure 9: Proposed boat to be used in play area



Figure 10: Proposed elevation

The boats are low in height compared to the main building and are read against the backdrop of the larger built form. In visual terms, the proposed wooden boats would have a limited impact and would not dominate views of the site. The wood finish helps to soften their appearance and allows them to sit comfortably when viewed alongside the proposed planting and retained trees. The location of the boats within the landscaped strip ensures they will not be prominent features.

Overall, the visual impact of the wooden boats is considered to be acceptable, providing an element of interest without detracting from the overall appearance of the building or the wider landscape setting.

Accordingly, the development is acceptable in terms of visual impact and character and is considered to be in compliance with Policies CTY 13 and CTY 14 of PPS 21.

Access, Road Safety and Parking (PPS 3)

The existing layout of the site incorporated a less formalised car parking arrangement of approx. 60.no spaces. The agent has confirmed that at peak demand periods the car park regularly operated over capacity. The current proposal includes 147no. car parking spaces, + 6no. disabled spaces and 2no. van spaces.

The submitted Transport Assessment Form (TAF) indicates that given the rural location and the nature of development, combined with lack of footpath on the Cootehall Road it is unlikely that the site will be accessed on foot or bicycle. It is understandable that people travelling by foot/bicycle would be unlikely to transport

larger items from the site, but there is still opportunity for people travelling by foot/bicycle from the Crawfordsburn direction to avail/enjoy other elements of the proposal. Planning Service has no reason to dispute the findings of the submitted TAF.

Policy AMP 7 of PPS 3 relates to car parking and servicing arrangements, stating, *'The precise amount of car parking will be determined according to the specific characteristics of the development and its location having regard to the Department's published standards or any reduction provided for in an area of parking restraint designated in a development plan. Proposals should not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic'*.

In reviewing the Parking Standards to a garden centre, the proposed Use Class applied will be non-food retail. As such it is considered that there is a requirement of 1 space per 20m². However, this is not reflective of the 'mixed use' of the site.

Further information was sought from the Planning Agent regarding justification for the proposed level of car parking. Further clarification was provided which set out the following points:

- If one were to apply full parking standards based on a blunt 1/20 GFA rate assessment for retail then 259 spaces would be needed, but this would misrepresent the land use and over provide parking on site.

The Planning Agent has supplied an assessment of the application against comparator sites in the UK (there is no direct comparison in Northern Ireland).

Table 4 Comparator Garden Centre Sites GFA Per Parking Spaces

Site	GFA	No. of CP Spaces	GFA M ² / Parking Space (m ²)
Near Bridgend	2820m ²	74	38.10
Near Seaham	3060m ²	83	36.86
Near Colchester	5831m ²	96	60.63
Mobill	700m ²	10	70.00
Inswitch	2100m ²	50	42.00
Bathpool	12060m ²	264	45.68
AVERAGE	4429 m ²	264	48.87

Table 5 Cootehall Road Proposal Comparator

Site	GFA	No. of CP Spaces	GFA M ² / Parking Space (m ²)
Garden Centre Proposal	5182m ²	153	33.86
Garden Centre + Existing 3 Businesses on site	5182m ² + 1684.50 =6866.6	153	44.87

Figure 11 – Comparison of car parking to similar sites in UK

The Planning Agent has considered parking by providing a comparison of similar garden centre development extracted from TRICS (a system of multi-modal trip generation analysis for developments in the UK AND Ireland).

The proposed car parking level for the garden centre falls within average GFA/m² comparison (44.87), i.e. 1 parking space per 44.87m² and shows that a reasonable, average level of car parking is proposed that is in line with similar garden centre sites. Planning Service has no reason not to accept this comparison.

No changes are proposed to the existing visibility splays.

In the context of the lawful fallback position, the site could operate as a garden centre with approximately 60no. informal parking spaces, which from site inspection are not clearly defined within the site. The proposed development would provide 147no. formalised car parking spaces, + 6no. disabled spaces and 2no. van spaces. This is a significant improvement on the existing situation.

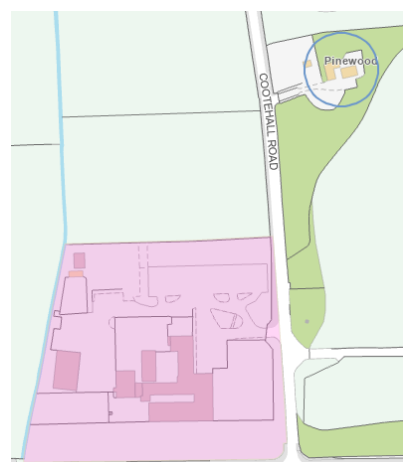
As stated previously, a lawful fallback position exists, meaning the site could already operate for retail-related purposes with associated parking demand.

Policy AMP 7 of PPS 3 allows for a degree of flexibility where reduced parking provision would support wider planning objectives, including rural regeneration/renaissance, improved quality of development and the beneficial reuse of an existing site. In this instance, the proposal would bring the site back into active use and improve the overall appearance and function of the site within the countryside. Given these benefits, alongside the established retail use of the site, on balance, a reduced level of parking provision is considered to be acceptable.

Further to a request for 6m aisle between the end on car parking spaces, DFI Roads has no objection to the application.

Impact on Residential Amenity

It is important to consider any potential impact the proposal may have on residential amenity of neighbouring properties. The closest residential property is 88 Cootehall Road (blue circle) and this is located in excess of 120m from the red line site boundary. Whilst it is acknowledged there is a potential for an increase in traffic and visitors to the application site, the separation distance is considered sufficient to ensure there is no unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of the surrounding residential properties in terms of privacy or noise and disturbance.



Environmental Health has been consulted on the proposal and raised no concerns regarding the proposal.

Designated Sites/Other Natural Heritage Interests (PPS 2: Natural Heritage)

Ards and North Down Borough Council in its role as the competent Authority under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), and in accordance with its duty under Regulation 43, has adopted the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) report, and conclusions therein, prepared by the Shared Environmental Service, dated 25 September 2025. This found that the project would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, subject to conditions relating to a buffer maintained between the location of all areas used for refuelling, storage of oil/fuels, concrete mixing and washing areas, storage of machinery/materials/spoil etc. and the watercourse bordering the western edge of the red line boundary. Additionally, the operational drainage for the site must be designed in accordance with submitted Drainage layout and consent to discharge will be required.

Policy NH 1 of PPS 2 relates to European and Ramsar Sites. The potential impact of this proposal on Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites has been assessed in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 43 (1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). The proposal would *not be likely to have a significant effect* on the features, conservation objectives or status of any of these sites.

Policy NH 2 of PPS 2 states that planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to harm species protected by law. To this end, the NI Biodiversity Checklist has been used to identify whether the proposal is likely to adversely affect certain aspects of biodiversity including protected species. The proposal would not be likely to harm species protected by law.

NIEA Natural Environment Division (NED) reviewed the submitted ecological information, including the revised Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, bat survey information, Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP), Drainage Layout and updated Lighting Impact Assessment. NED is satisfied that, subject to the development being carried out in accordance with the submitted details and mitigation measures, the proposal is unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts on natural heritage interests.

In relation to bats, NED is content with the survey work undertaken and the conclusions reached. Regarding the nearby watercourse, NED is satisfied that the proposed mitigation measures within the oCEMP are sufficient and that no significant impacts are anticipated.

NED also considered the updated lighting assessment. NED concluded that, given the existing light environment (lightspill from the adjacent carriageway) and predicted lighting levels at the watercourse, the proposal is unlikely to have significant adverse impacts.

Accordingly, NED offers no objection to the proposed development and is satisfied that the proposal complies with the requirements of the Conservation (Natural

Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended), subject to adherence to the submitted mitigation measures.

It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with Policies NH 1, NH 2 and NH 5 of PPS 2 and will have no likely adverse impacts on designated sites, protected or priority species, habitats or features of natural heritage importance.

Sewerage Infrastructure

Initial consultation with NIW indicated network capacity issues. This establishes significant risks of detrimental effect to the environment and detrimental impact on existing properties. For this reason, NI Water is recommending connections to the public sewerage system are curtailed. Amendments to the application changing the foul sewer connection from mains to septic tank were received and NIW reconsulted. The latest response from NIW is that the application can be approved.

Water Catchment Unit (DAERA) has no objection in principle to the proposed development and raises no concerns regarding impacts on the aquatic environment, subject to the inclusion of standard DAERA standing advice and pollution prevention measures.

The proposal incorporates a septic tank system for foul drainage and Northern Ireland Water has confirmed it is content with the proposed arrangements. DAERA advises that any required discharge consents under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 should be obtained prior to operation of the development and that appropriate measures should be implemented during both the construction and operational phases to prevent pollution of surface waters and groundwater. Subject to compliance with the relevant DAERA standing advice, the proposal is not considered likely to result in an unacceptable impact on the water environment.

Flooding and Drainage (PPS 15 Planning and Flood Risk)

The site is bounded at the west by a watercourse which is designated under the terms of the Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 and known as 'Clandeboy Drain'. The Flood Maps (NI) indicates that the western boundary of the site lies within the 1 in 100-year strategic fluvial flood plain of Clandeboy Drain. However, as there is a steep bank elevation at the area of the western boundary a Flood Risk Assessment is not required on this occasion. DFI Rivers does advise in line with the precautionary approach that finished floor levels are a minimum of 600mm above surrounding ground levels.

Policy FLD 2 of PPS 15 requires an adjacent working strip to be retained beside the watercourse to facilitate future maintenance by Rivers Directorate, other statutory undertakers or the riparian landowners. The working strip should have a minimum width of 5m, but up to 10m where considered necessary, and be provided with clear access and egress at all times. The submitted drainage layout identifies a maintenance strip adjacent to the watercourse along the western boundary of the

site. While it appears that the strip is located largely outside the applicant's ownership on third-party lands, no built development, engineering works, ground raising or other operational development is proposed within proximity of the watercourse. The proposed construction, parking areas and associated infrastructure are set back from the drain and would not impede existing access arrangements or prejudice future maintenance of the watercourse. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal would not adversely affect the operational maintenance of the watercourse and is acceptable in this regard.

A drainage assessment has been provided and DFI Rivers has advised it has no reason to disagree with its conclusions. Compliance with the submitted drainage assessment will be included as a planning condition.

Policy FLD 5 - Whilst it is noted that the site is in a potential area of inundation emanating from both Ballysallagh Lower Reservoir and Ballysallagh Upper Reservoir, DFI Rivers has confirmed that Ballysallagh Lower Reservoir has 'Responsible Reservoir Manager Status'. Consequently, DFI Rivers has no reason to object to the proposal from a reservoir flood risk perspective.

Climate Change - Regarding flood risk in the climate change scenario, Rivers Directorate has advised that a small portion of the site, along its western boundary, lies within the 1 in 100-year climate change floodplain, and this is acknowledged as a material consideration in applying the precautionary approach. However, the proposal relates to an extension to an existing commercial building and is considered to fall within the 'Exceptions' of Policy FLD1 of PPS 15. The extension is limited in scale, proportionate to the existing development, and remains ancillary to the established use, without resulting in a significant intensification of activity. Furthermore, given the extent and location of the area identified within the climate change scenario, the proposal can be accommodated without increasing flood risk on site or elsewhere. On this basis, it is considered that the development meets the criteria for an exception under Policy FLD 1 of PPS 15 and is acceptable in principle.

Landscaping

A comprehensive landscape plan has been submitted, and it is acknowledged that removal of some trees within the site is required to facilitate works. These trees are not protected, and removal does not require specific consent.

Along the southern boundary, which runs alongside Belfast Road, native screen planting and a species-rich hedgerow is proposed. This will help improve visual amenity by softening views into the site and integrate the development into the wider countryside setting. To the western boundary, there is an existing native boundary treatment. Additional proposed planting and retained vegetation will help to soften the edge of the site and provide continuity with existing landscape features.

Along the northern and eastern boundaries, the emphasis is on a combination of retained existing trees and supplementary native planting, including woodland-style groups and hedgerows. This approach strengthens existing vegetation, reinforces enclosure, and provides further visual screening alongside encouraging biodiversity.

Within the site, areas surrounding the buildings and car parking are characterised by more formal, ornamental planting, including raised planters, specimen trees, and mixed shrub and herbaceous beds designed to provide colour, texture, and seasonal interest. Circulation areas, entrance spaces and the plaza are defined by hard landscaping, including paving, seating, and structured planting. Additional features such as species-rich grassland, informal grass areas, and a planted bank with relocated trees further soften the development.

Other planning matters

22

4. Representations

No objections have been received.

16 representations of support have been received with the main points raised outlined below.

- Redevelopment of a long-derelict and underutilised site.
- Re-establishes a historic and appropriate commercial use.
- Regeneration of a visually poor and vacant site within the business site.
- Significant inward investment of approximately £5 million.
- Creation of circa 80 jobs across a range of sectors.
- Increased visitor footfall supporting the wider Bangor and North Down economy.
- Potential to act as a regional destination, attracting visitors from across Northern Ireland and beyond.
- Opportunities for local producers and suppliers through farm shop and café use.
- Provision of a community hub including café and social spaces.
- Inclusion of children's play area promoting family use.
- Enhances opportunities for social interaction and community cohesion.
- Creates a destination-style development rather than traditional retail.
- Well-located with access from Cootehall Road and proximity to the A2.
- Complements rather than competes with Bangor city centre.
- Enhances attractiveness and vibrancy of the wider area.
- Improves visual amenity of a currently run-down site.
- Contributes to wider regeneration of North Down.
- Valuable and much-needed addition to the area.

The submitted representations demonstrate strong support for the proposal from a range of political representatives and wider public.

6 Recommendation

Grant Planning Permission

7 Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: As required by Section 61 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

2. No development should take place on-site until the method of site drainage disposal has been agreed in writing with Northern Ireland Water (NIW) or a consent to discharge has been granted under the terms of the Water (NI) Order 1999.

Reason: To ensure a practical solution to site drainage disposal is possible at this site.

3. If during the development works, new contamination or risks are encountered which have not previously been identified, works shall cease, and the Council shall be notified immediately. This new contamination shall be fully investigated in accordance with the UK technical framework as outlined in the Land Contamination: Risk Management (LCRM) guidance available at <http://www.gov.uk/guidance/land-contamination-how-to-manage-the-risks>. In the event of unacceptable risks being identified, a remediation strategy shall be agreed with the Council in writing and subsequently implemented and verified to its satisfaction.

Reason: Protection of public health to ensure the site is suitable for use

4. After completing all remediation works required under Condition 3 and prior to commencement of the proposed use, a verification report must be submitted to and agreed in writing by Council. This report should be completed by competent persons in accordance with the UK technical framework as outlined in the Land Contamination: Risk Management (LCRM) guidance. The verification report shall present all the remediation and monitoring works undertaken and demonstrate the effectiveness of the works in managing all the risks and achieving the remedial objectives.

Reason: Protection of public health to ensure the site is suitable for use

5. Use of the development hereby approved shall not commence until the parking and turning areas have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. Such areas shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking and turning of vehicles and shall remain free of obstruction for such use at all times.

Reason: To ensure adequate car parking within the site.

6. The operational drainage for the site must be designed in accordance with planning drawing 19 'DRG 19 – Drainage Layout' (Sheehy Consulting) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drainage layout/plans. All drainage measures shall be permanently retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory drainage and to prevent increased flood risk and ensure the project will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site

7. A clearly defined buffer of at least 10m must be maintained between the location of all areas used for refuelling, storage of oil/fuels, concrete mixing and washing areas, storage of machinery/materials/spoil etc. and the watercourse bordering the western edge of the red line boundary.

Reason: To ensure the project will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site.

8. Each building shall be provided with such sanitary pipework, foul drainage and rain-water drainage as may be necessary for the hygienic and adequate disposal of foul water and rainwater separately from that building. The drainage system should also be designed to minimise the risk of wrongly connecting the sewage system to the rain-water drainage system once the buildings are occupied.

Reason: In order to decrease the risk of the incorrect diversion of sewage to drains carrying rain/surface water to a waterway.

9. All hard and/or soft landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details as shown on DRG 20. The works shall be carried out prior to the commencement of use of the development unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council. Any existing or proposed trees or plants indicated on the approved plans which, within a period of five years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged, diseased or dying, shall be replaced during the next planting season with other trees or plants of a location, species and size, details of which shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. All hard surface treatment of open parts of the site shall be permeable or drained to a permeable area. All hard landscape works shall be permanently retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

10. No works or development shall commence on site, including demolition, site clearance and site preparation, until a final Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The final CEMP must identify the perceived risks to the aquatic environment, potential pollution pathways and mitigation measures to negate such risks. The final CEMP must, as a minimum, include the mitigation measures included within the outline CEMP. No works, development, demolition, site clearance or site preparation shall be carried out unless in accordance with the approved Final CEMP.

Reason: To ensure effective avoidance and mitigation measures have been planned for the protection of the water environment and designated sites.

11. A proprietary odour abatement system shall be installed to suppress and disperse odours created from cooking operations in the premises. The system installed shall be permanently retained and maintained in full working order and an appropriate cleaning schedule adopted.

Reason: In the interests of human health.

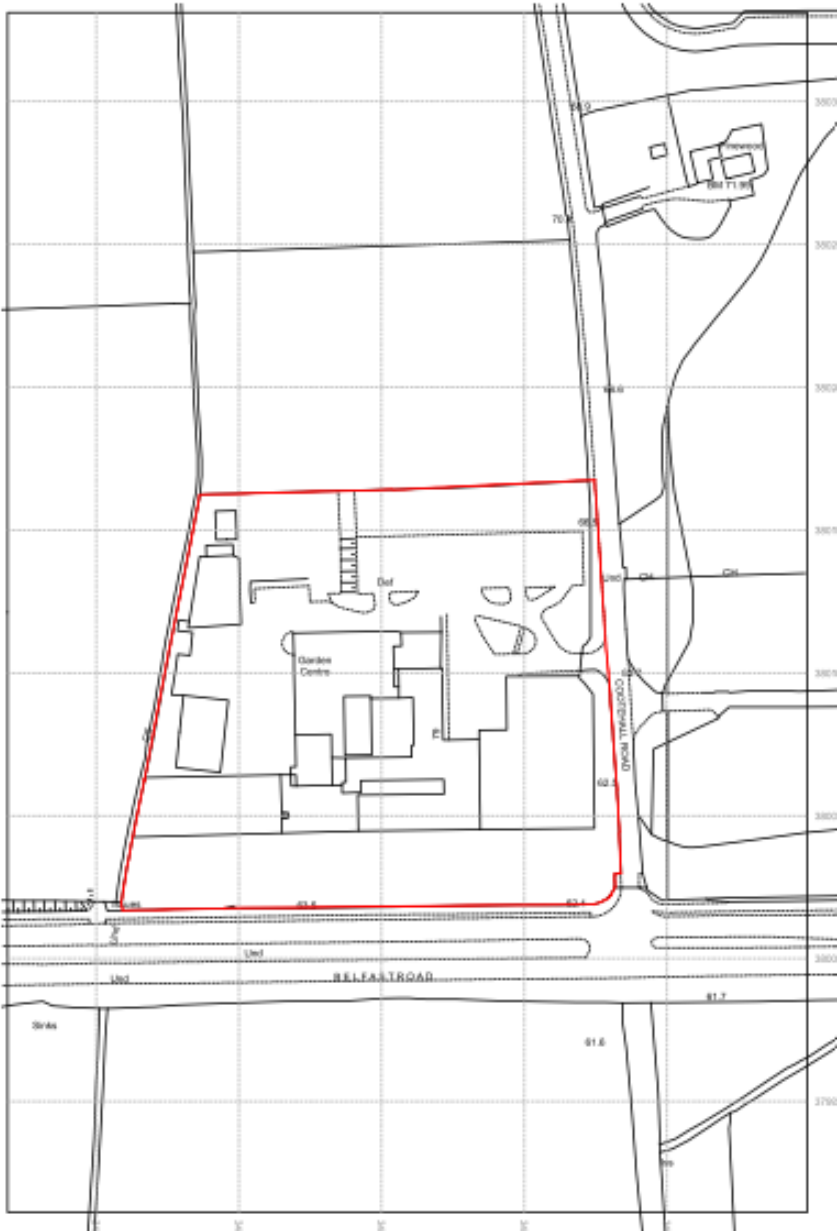
12. The development hereby approved shall only be used for a garden centre and antiques centre, including ancillary farm/deli shop, café, restaurant and children's play area, and shall not be used for any other purpose without express planning permission.

Reason: Alternative use requires further consideration by the Council, having regard to the Local Development Plan and relevant material considerations.

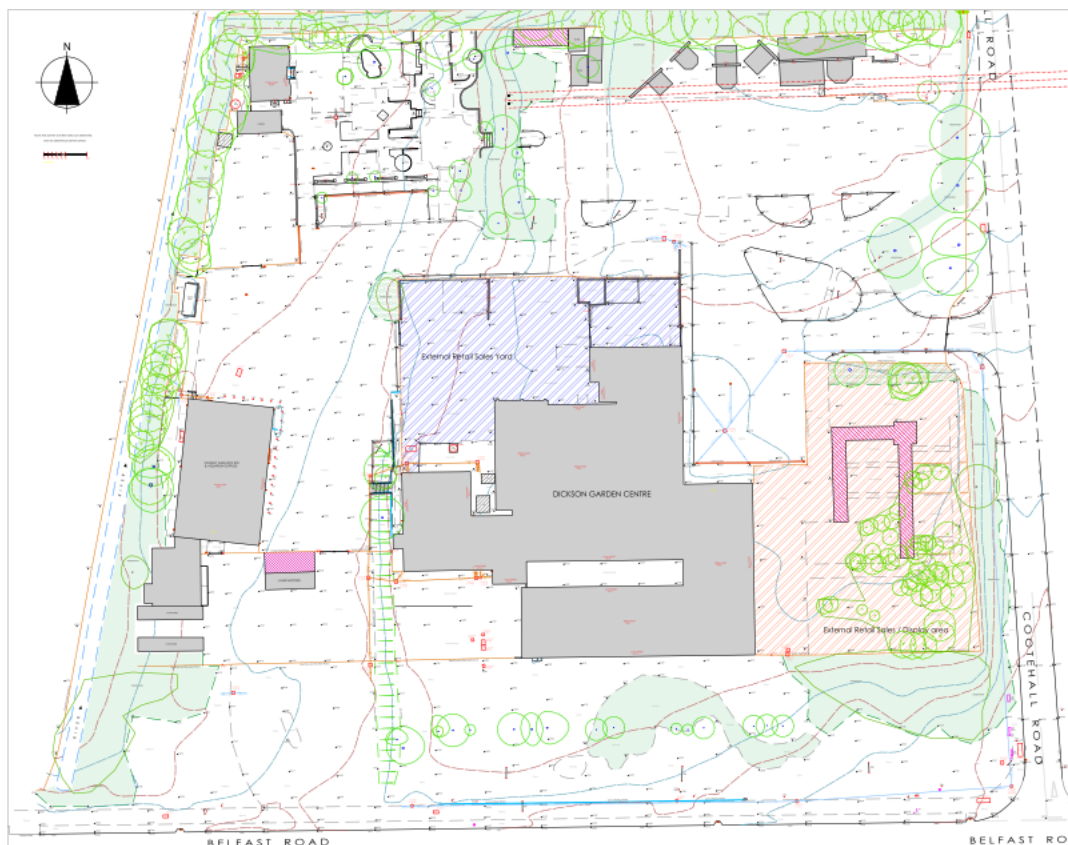
Informatives

1. This Notice relates solely to a planning decision and does not purport to convey any other approval or consent which may be required under the Building Regulations or any other statutory purpose. Developers are advised to check all other informatives, advice or guidance provided by consultees, where relevant, on the Portal.
2. This approval does not apply to any signs or advertising material which the developer or occupier may wish to erect at the premises, which may require separate approval under the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (NI) 2015.

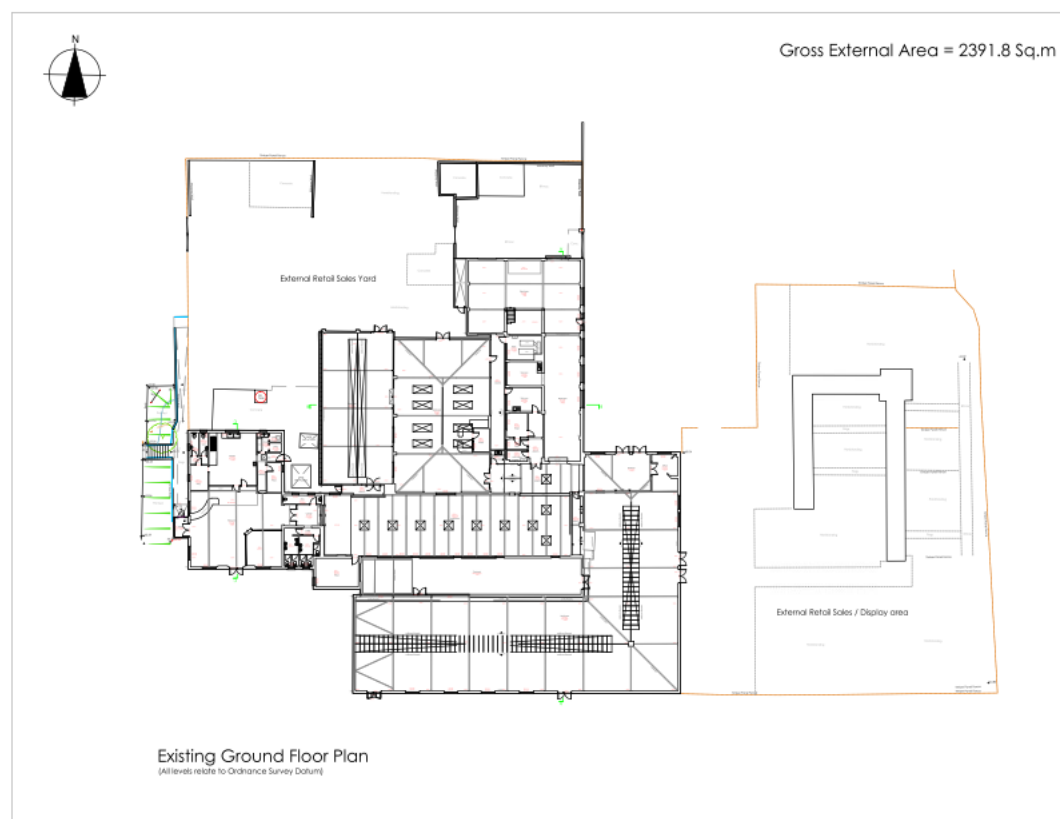
Plans



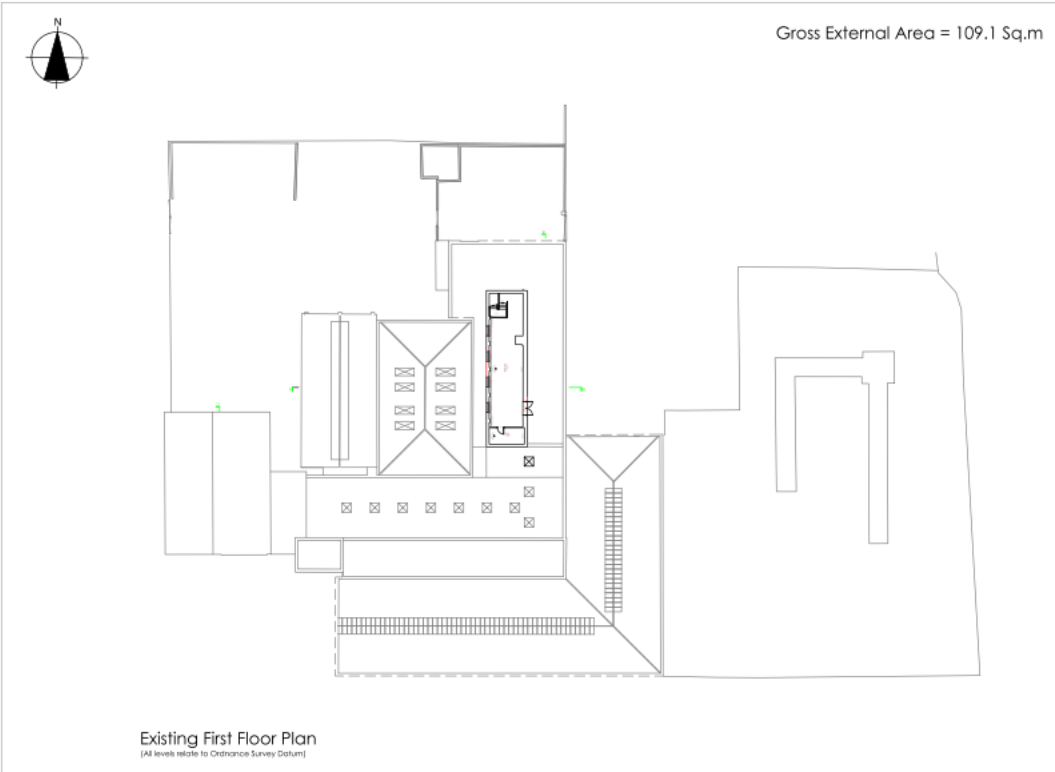
Site location Plan



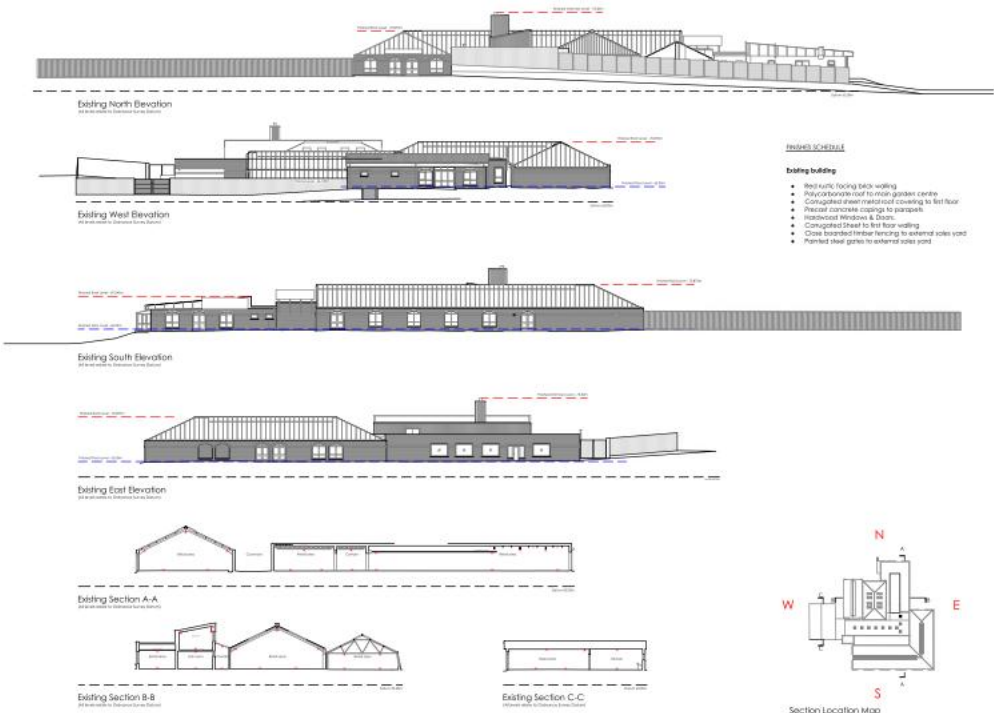
Existing site plan



Existing Ground Floor Plan



Existing First Floor Plan



Existing Elevations

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT @ DICKSON GARDEN CENTRE, 75 COOTESALL RD.

PROPOSED SITE PLAN

LEGEND

VEGETATION & LANDSCAPE PLAN:

- Green: Existing mature trees (over 100mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (100-200mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (200-300mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (300-400mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (400-500mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (500-600mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (600-700mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (700-800mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (800-900mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (900-1000mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (1000-1100mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (1100-1200mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (1200-1300mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (1300-1400mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (1400-1500mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (1500-1600mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (1600-1700mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (1700-1800mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (1800-1900mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (1900-2000mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (2000-2100mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (2100-2200mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (2200-2300mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (2300-2400mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (2400-2500mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (2500-2600mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (2600-2700mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (2700-2800mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (2800-2900mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (2900-3000mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (3000-3100mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (3100-3200mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (3200-3300mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (3300-3400mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (3400-3500mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (3500-3600mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (3600-3700mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (3700-3800mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (3800-3900mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (3900-4000mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (4000-4100mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (4100-4200mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (4200-4300mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (4300-4400mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (4400-4500mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (4500-4600mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (4600-4700mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (4700-4800mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (4800-4900mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (4900-5000mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (5000-5100mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (5100-5200mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (5200-5300mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (5300-5400mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (5400-5500mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (5500-5600mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (5600-5700mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (5700-5800mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (5800-5900mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (5900-6000mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (6000-6100mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (6100-6200mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (6200-6300mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (6300-6400mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (6400-6500mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (6500-6600mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (6600-6700mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (6700-6800mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (6800-6900mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (6900-7000mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (7000-7100mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (7100-7200mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (7200-7300mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (7300-7400mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (7400-7500mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (7500-7600mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (7600-7700mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (7700-7800mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (7800-7900mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (7900-8000mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (8000-8100mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (8100-8200mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (8200-8300mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (8300-8400mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (8400-8500mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (8500-8600mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (8600-8700mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (8700-8800mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (8800-8900mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (8900-9000mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (9000-9100mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (9100-9200mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (9200-9300mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (9300-9400mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (9400-9500mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (9500-9600mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (9600-9700mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (9700-9800mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (9800-9900mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (9900-10000mm dbh)

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT @ DICKSON GARDEN CENTRE, 75 COOTESALL RD.

PROPOSED SITE PLAN

LEGEND

VEGETATION & LANDSCAPE PLAN:

- Green: Existing mature trees (over 100mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (100-200mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (200-300mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (300-400mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (400-500mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (500-600mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (600-700mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (700-800mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (800-900mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (900-1000mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (1000-1100mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (1100-1200mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (1200-1300mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (1300-1400mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (1400-1500mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (1500-1600mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (1600-1700mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (1700-1800mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (1800-1900mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (1900-2000mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (2000-2100mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (2100-2200mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (2200-2300mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (2300-2400mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (2400-2500mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (2500-2600mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (2600-2700mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (2700-2800mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (2800-2900mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (2900-3000mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (3000-3100mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (3100-3200mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (3200-3300mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (3300-3400mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (3400-3500mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (3500-3600mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (3600-3700mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (3700-3800mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (3800-3900mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (3900-4000mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (4000-4100mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (4100-4200mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (4200-4300mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (4300-4400mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (4400-4500mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (4500-4600mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (4600-4700mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (4700-4800mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (4800-4900mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (4900-5000mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (5000-5100mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (5100-5200mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (5200-5300mm dbh)
- White: Existing trees (5300-5400mm dbh)
- Light Blue: Existing trees (5400-5500mm dbh)
- Dark Blue: Existing trees (5500-5600mm dbh)
- Light Green: Existing trees (5600-5700mm dbh)
- Dark Green: Existing trees (5700-5800mm dbh)
- Orange: Existing trees (5800-5900mm dbh)
- Red: Existing trees (5900-6000mm dbh)
- Blue: Existing trees (6000-6100mm dbh)
- Yellow: Existing trees (6100-6200mm dbh)
- Grey: Existing trees (6200-6300mm dbh)
- Black: Existing trees (6300

30

Gross External Area = 3757.1 Sq.m

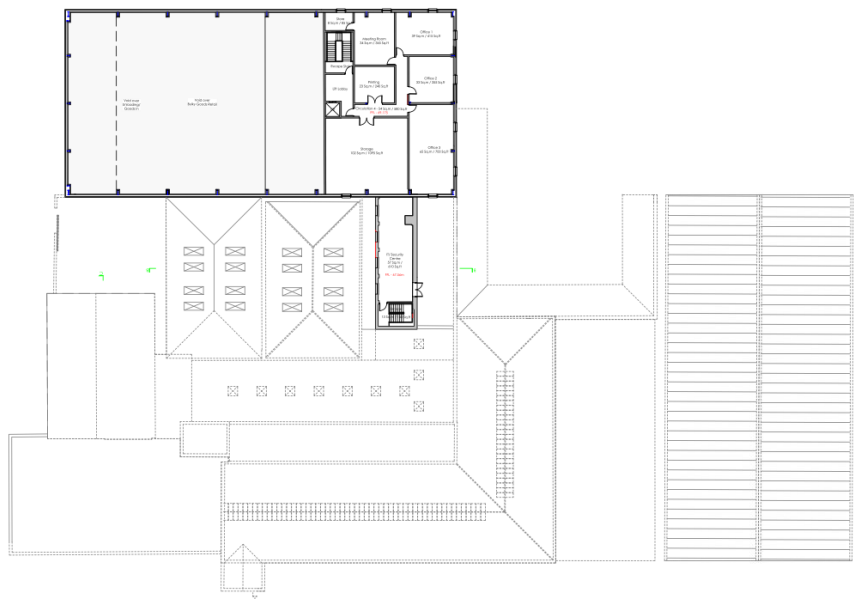


Proposed Ground Floor Plan
(All in-kind works to be completed before start)

Hatch & Linetype Key:

- Denotes demolitions
- Denotes existing walling retained
- Denotes new walling

Proposed Ground Floor Plan

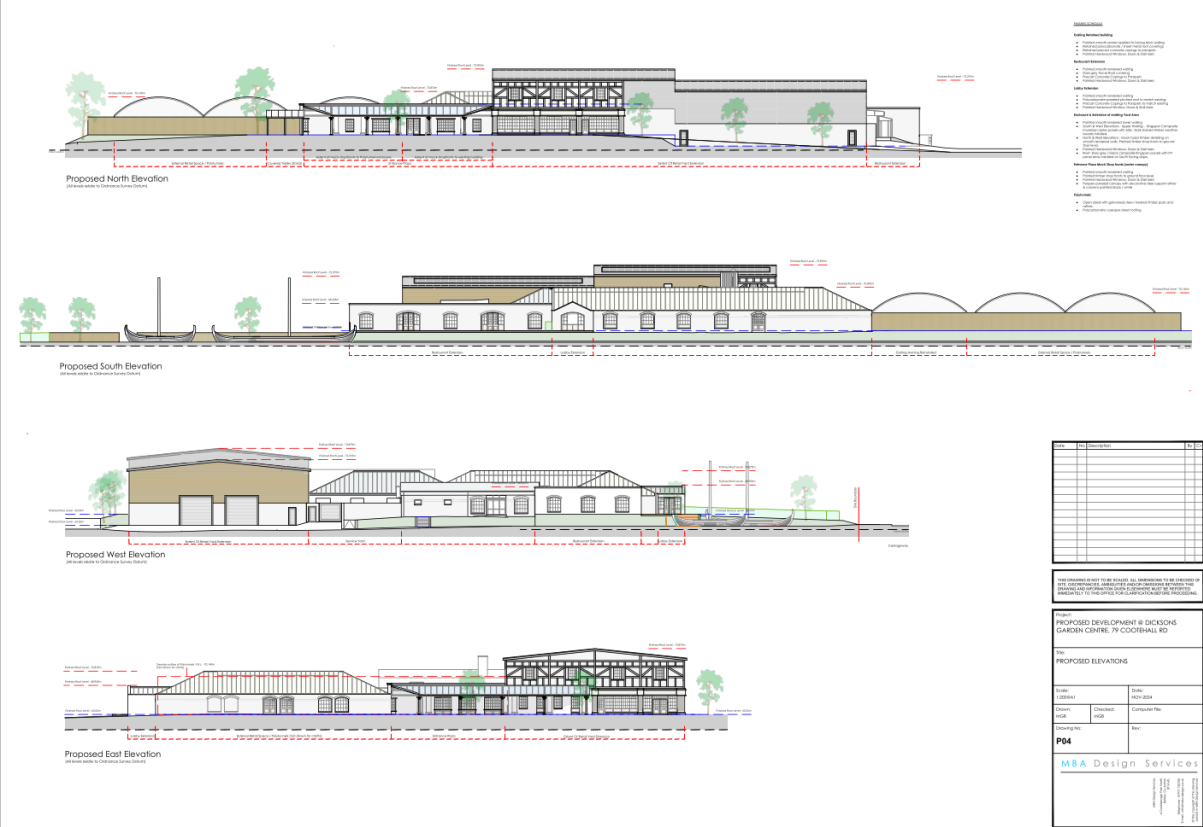


Proposed First Floor Plan
(All in-kind works to be completed before start)

Hatch & Linetype Key:

- Denotes demolitions
- Denotes existing walling retained
- Denotes new walling

Proposed First Floor Plan



Proposed Elevations



Proposed Use areas

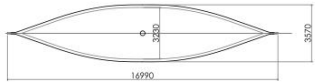


Photographs of Viking Ships For Informal Play Area

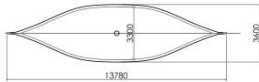
FINISHES SCHEDULE

Ships 1 & 2

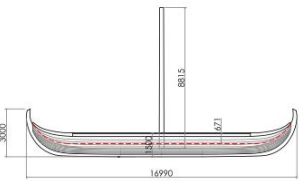
- Painted timber clad ship frame with reinforced lead bow and stern
- Painted timber mast



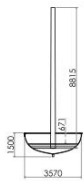
Ship 1 - Plan



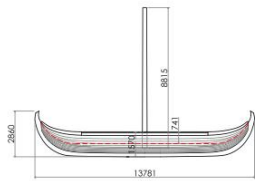
Ship 2 - Plan



Ship 1 - Elevation



Ship 1 - Section



Ship 2 - Elevation



Ship 2 - Section

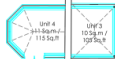
Proposed ship type



Plan of Retail Sales/ Display Unit 1



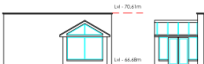
Plan of Retail Sales/ Display Unit 2



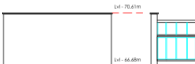
Plan of Retail Sales/ Display Units 3 & 4



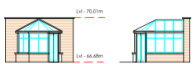
Plan of Retail Sales/ Display Unit 5



Front Elevation - Unit 1



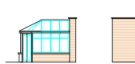
Side Elevation - Unit 1



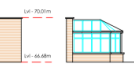
Rear Elevation - Unit 1



Side Elevation - Unit 2



Front Elevation - Unit 2



Side Elevation - Unit 2



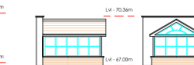
Rear Elevation - Unit 2



Front Elevation - Units 3 & 4



Side Elevation - Units 3 & 4



Rear Elevation - Units 3 & 4



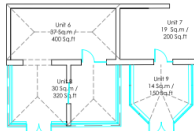
Side Elevation - Unit 5



Front Elevation - Unit 5



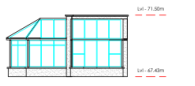
Side Elevation - Unit 5



Plan of Retail Sales/ Display Unit 6-9



Front Elevation - Units 3 & 4



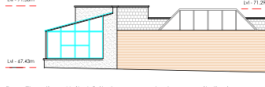
Side Elevation - Units 6-9

FINISHES SCHEDULE

- Walls**
- Painted smooth render
 - Daubed render
 - Facing Brick
 - Vertically laid tiles
- Windows & Doors**
- White / Brown / Black upvc
- Roofs**
- Concrete Tiles / Synthetic Slate
- Rainwater Goods**
- White / Brown / Black upvc



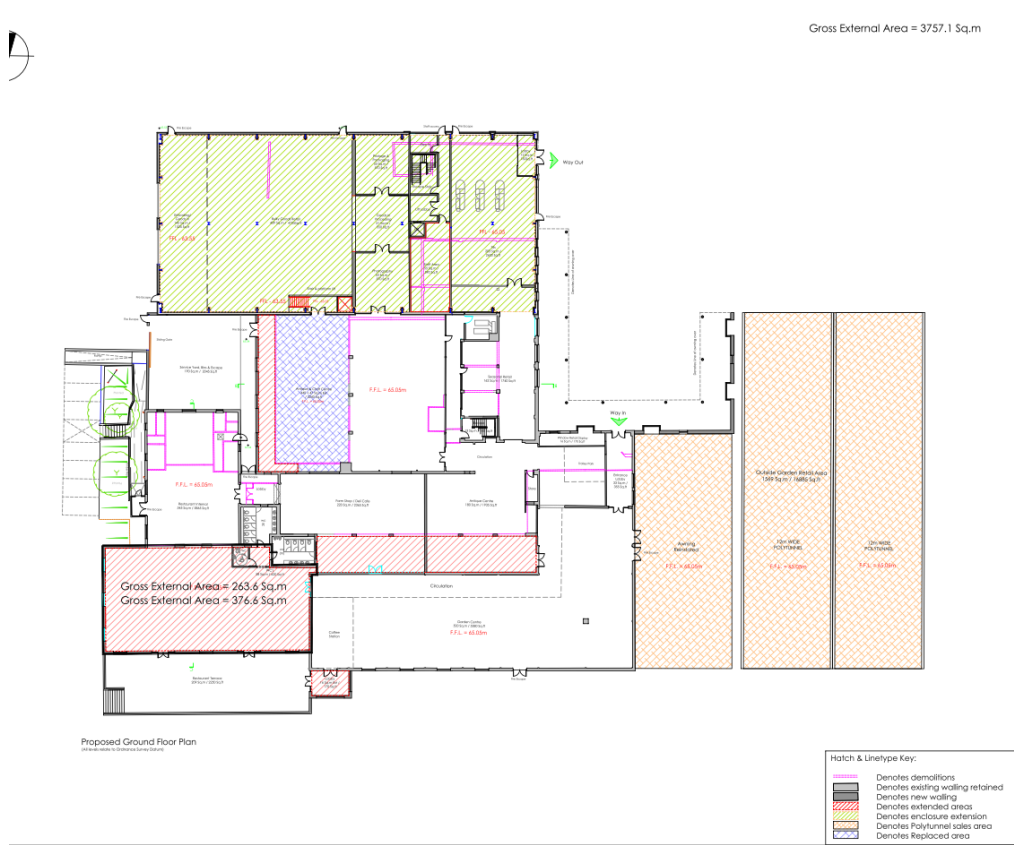
Side Elevation - Units 6-9



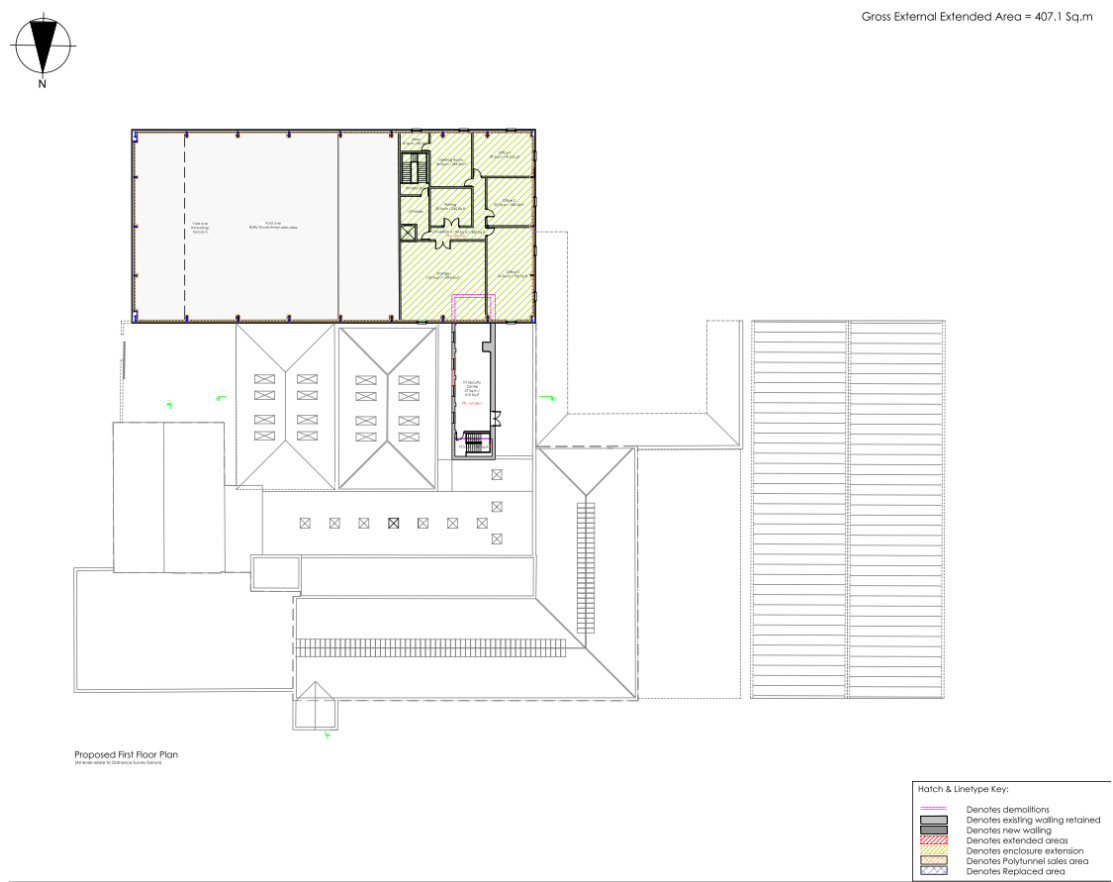
Rear Elevation - Units 6-9 (to be surveyed - dense vegetation)

Gross External Area = 191.4 Sq.m

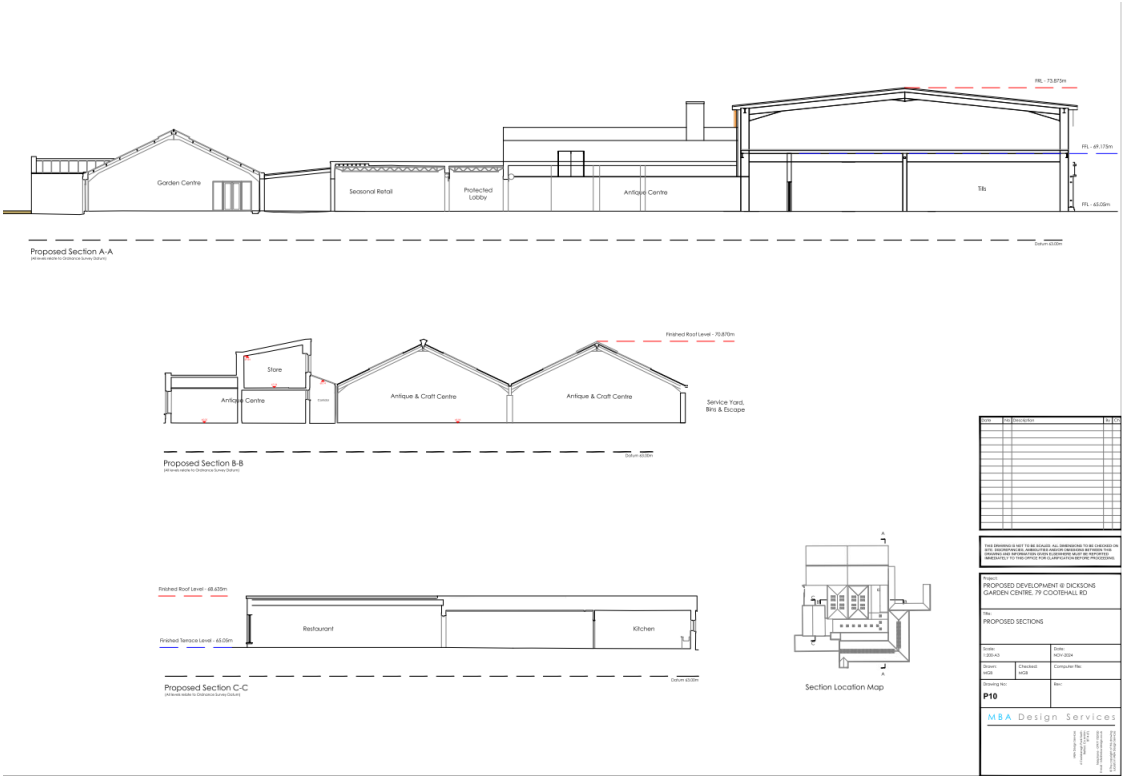
Existing and Proposed retail/display units



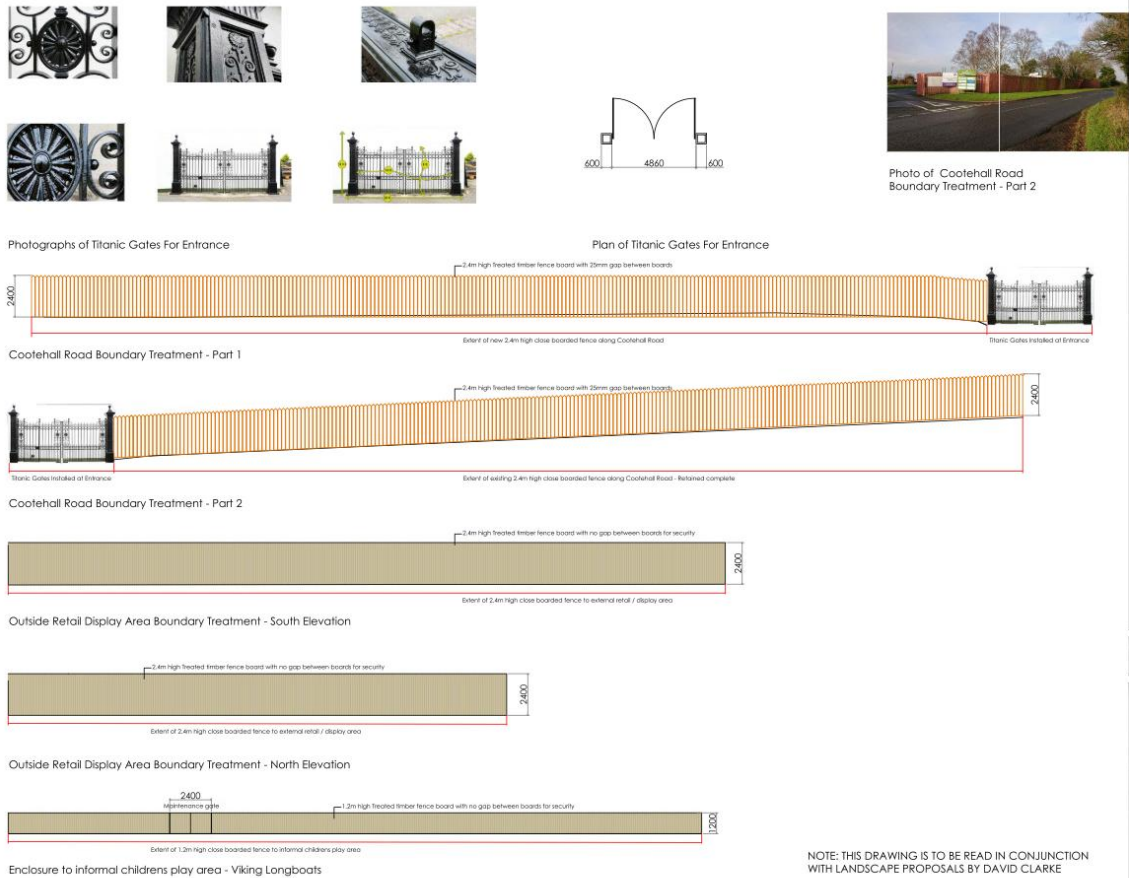
Proposed Ground Floor Alterations



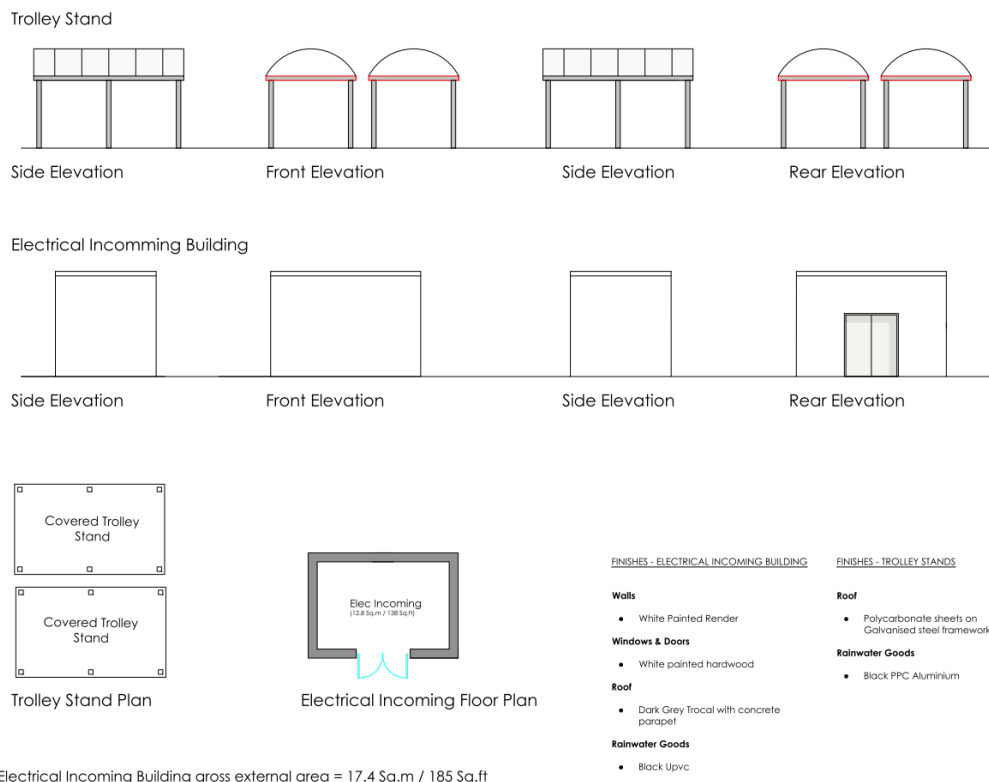
Proposed first floor plan



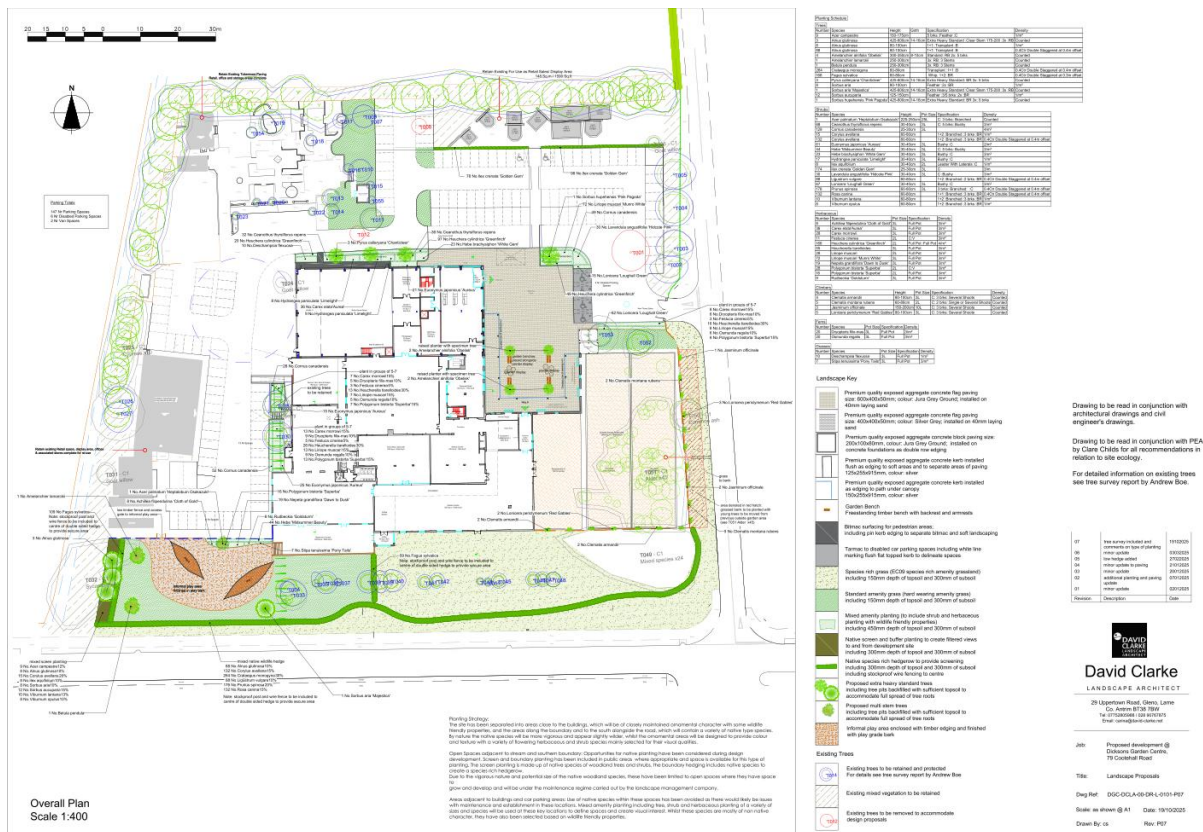
Proposed sections



Proposed boundary treatment



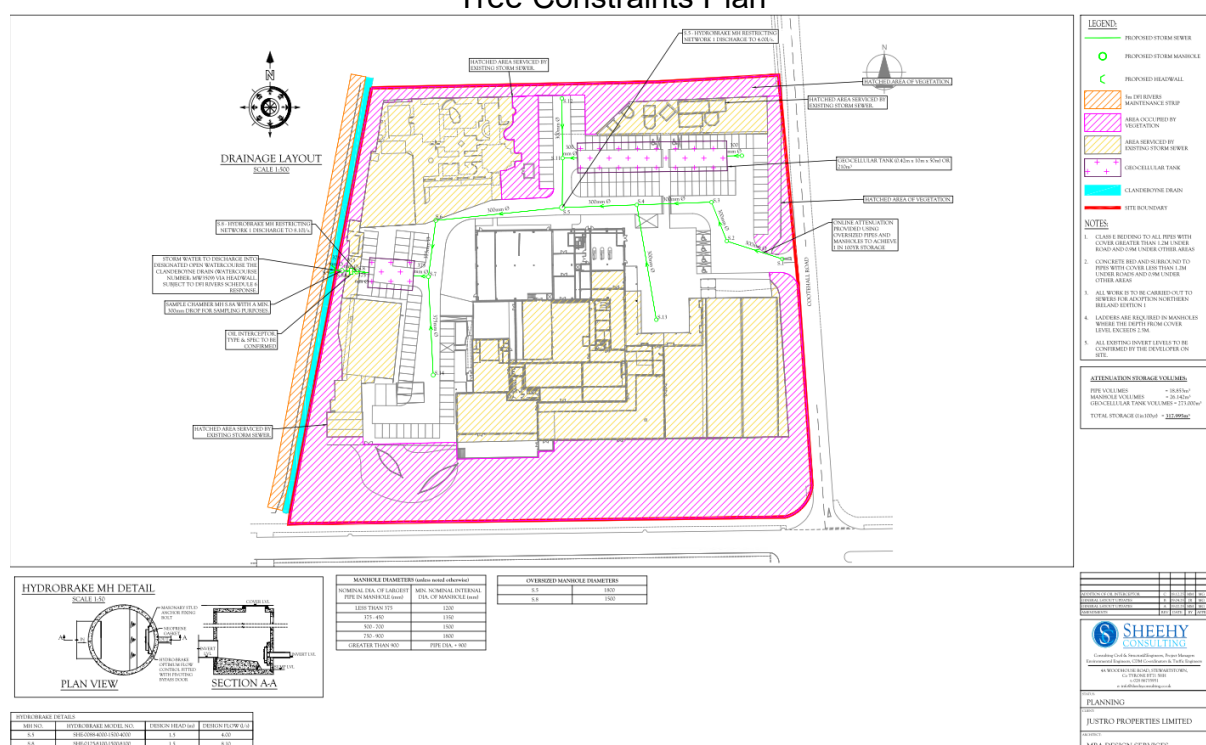
Proposed electrical incoming building and trolley stands



Landscape Proposals



Tree Constraints Plan



Drainage layout

Photographs



Clearly Aquatics building



Wooden Viking boat



Existing conservatory units to be used as retail display



Previous yard area proposed for inclusion into building



Internal of existing building formally used as Dickson's Garden Centre



View from grass verge alongside Belfast Road

Development Management Case Officer Report  Ards and North Down Borough Council		
Reference:	LA06/2026/0457/F	DEA: Bangor Central
Proposal:	Retention of open space (Two year time extension to temporary permission LA06/2024/0182/F).	
Location:	Land immediately east of 41 Hamilton Road, South of 1 Springfield Ave (Site of former Hamilton House and Sea Scout Hall), Bangor	
Applicant:	Ards and North Down Borough Council	
Date valid:	02/06/2026	EIA Screening Required:
Date last advertised:	11/06/2026	Date last neighbour notified:
Letters of Support: 0		Letters of Objection: 0
Petitions: 0		
Consultations – synopsis of responses: Consultation not required.		
Summary of main issues considered: Principle of Development		
Recommendation: Grant Planning Permission Report Agreed by Authorised Officer		
Full details of this application, including the application forms, relevant drawings, consultation responses and any representations received are available to view at the Planning Portal		

1. Site and Surrounding Area

The application site is located to the direct east of no.41 Hamilton Road, within the Town Centre of Bangor and the proposed Bangor Central ATC under draft BMAP. It consists of a 0.32ha plot of grassland, with two small pathways and a bench. It slopes upward towards Hamilton Road and has three points of access – two from Springfield Avenue to the north, with stairs, and one from Hamilton Road to the south. The site is bound by hedging and sparse trees to the north, east and south, and by concrete walls to the west.



Figure 1 – Springfield Avenue entrance



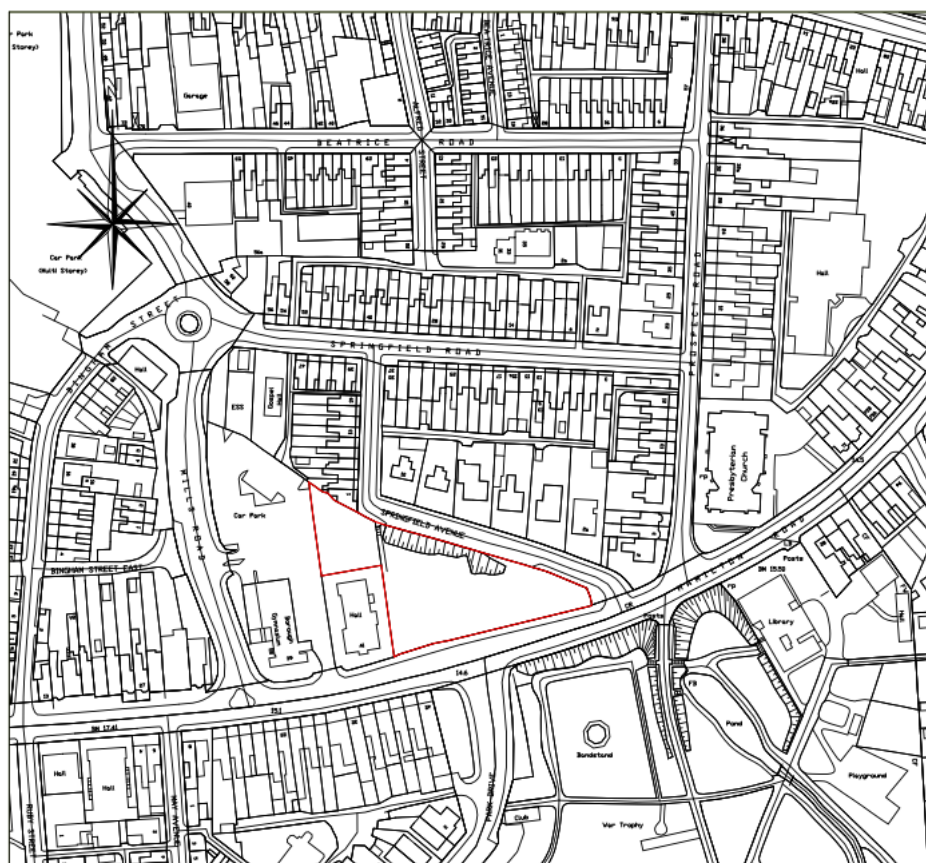
Figure 2 – northwestern corner of site



Figure 3 – view across site northwest – southeast

The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character, with two storey terraced, detached and semi-detached dwellings, as well as the Royal British Legion directly abutting the site to the west.

2. Site Location Plan



3. Relevant Planning History

LA06/2020/0113/F – Demolition of former Hamilton House and Sea Scout Hall, and temporary permission for an area of open space – **Granted**

LA06/2020/0947/NMC – Non-material change to Planning Approval
LA06/2020/0113/F – reduction in length and height of the fence stipulated in Condition 3 – **Granted**

LA06/2022/0231/F – Retention of open space (two year time extension to temporary permission issued under LA06/2020/0113/F) – **Granted**

LA06/2024/0182/F – Retention of open space (two year time extension to temporary permission issued under LA06/2022/0231/F) – **Granted, extant until 08/07/2026**

4. Planning Assessment

The relevant planning policy framework, including supplementary planning guidance where relevant, for this application is as follows:

- North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (NDAAP)
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP)
- The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Edition 2 (SPPS 2)

Principle of Development

Development Plan

The application site is located within the settlement of Bangor, as defined within the extant Ards and North Down Area Plan and the proposed town boundary as outlined in draft BMAP.

It is of note that the adopted Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) has been quashed as a result of a judgment in the Court of Appeal delivered on 18th May 2017.

In context of the same, the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (NDAAP) therefore remains the statutory development plan for the area with draft BMAP remaining a material consideration.

The site is situated within the proposed Bangor Central Area of Townscape Character (ATC). The proposed ATC designation in draft BMAP is a material consideration relevant to this application.

The principle of development and retention of the site as a temporary area of open space was determined by the Council as being acceptable under previous

applications LA06/2020/0113/F, LA06/2022/0231/F and LA06/2024/0182/F. Each permission granted approval for a temporary period of 2 years. Under LA06/2020/0113/F, which involved the demolition of the original buildings on the site, it was accepted that there were significant costs to the Council in maintaining and securing the site due to antisocial behaviour which had resulted in a detrimental impact on neighbouring residents. Therefore, the buildings were demolished and the site retained as open space as a temporary design solution. Temporary permission was therefore granted for two years, renewed in 2022 for a further two years, and again in 2024 for a further two years. These previous applications were sought to allow for the Council to finalise its Estates Strategy and determine the best value for money use of the site for the benefit of the public purse. It is now proposed to allow a further two years permission for the same. It is understood that the Council has marketed the site for sale for redevelopment, subject to conditions, and that plans are currently being considered for the site, which has necessitated a further extension to the permission to maintain the mean-while use. In conclusion, I consider it appropriate to accept the proposal with inclusion of a time condition restricting the permission to a period of 2 years, in order for a suitable replacement scheme to be applied for within a reasonable timeframe.
--

5. Representations

No representations have been received.
--

6. Recommendation

Grant Planning Permission

7. Conditions

1. This temporary use is approved for a period of 2 years only from the date of decision. Reason: This type of temporary use is such that permanent retention would harm the character and amenity of this draft Area of Townscape Character.

Informative

This Notice relates solely to a planning decision and does not purport to convey any other approval or consent which may be required under the Building Regulations or any other statutory purpose. Developers are advised to check all other informatives, advice or guidance provided by consultees, where relevant, on the Portal.
--

Development Management Case Officer Report			 Ards and North Down Borough Council	
Reference:	LA06/2026/0323/A	DEA: Holywood & Clandeboye		
Proposal:	Erection of 2 Signs - Sponsorship Signage			
Location:	Roadside verge between Croft Road and Bangor Road, Holywood (retrospective)			
Applicant:	Ards and North Down Borough Council			
Date valid:	11/05/26	EIA Screening Required:	N/A	
Date last advertised:	N/A	Date last neighbour notified:	N/A	
Letters of Support: 0		Letters of Objection: 0		Petitions: 0
Consultations – synopsis of responses:				
DFI Roads		No Objection – Informative provided		
Summary of main issues considered: - Design of the proposal - Impact upon private amenity of any domestic properties nearby - Impact upon the character of the local area - Impact on public safety				
Recommendation: Grant Consent				
Report Agreed by Authorised Officer				
Full details of this application, including the application forms, relevant drawings, consultation responses and any representations received are available to view at the Planning Portal				

1. Site and Surrounding Area

The site is located within the settlement limit of Holywood as per the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP) and the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (NDAAP). The site consists of a grass verge located between Bangor Road and Croft Road. The site contains planting toward the centre along with a number of mature trees, a pedestrian footpath passes through the centre of the site flanked by grass on each side. Two sponsorship signs are present within the site located to the northeast and northwest, these signs are the subject of the application.

the



Figure 1:
View of
site when
travelling
west

Figure
of the
when



**2: View
site**

travelling east

2. Site Location Plan



3. Relevant Planning History

There is no planning history on the site pertinent to the proposal

4. Planning Assessment

The relevant planning policy framework, including supplementary planning guidance where relevant, for this application is as follows:

- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP)
- North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (NDAAP)
- The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland Edition 2 (SPPS)
- Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement and Parking (PPS 3)
- Planning Policy Statement 17: Control of Outdoor Advertisements (PPS 17)

4.1 Proposal

The application consists of two advertising signs located to the northeast and northwest of the site, the elevations and siting can be seen in figures 3 & 4 below.

Figure 3:
Signage
elevation

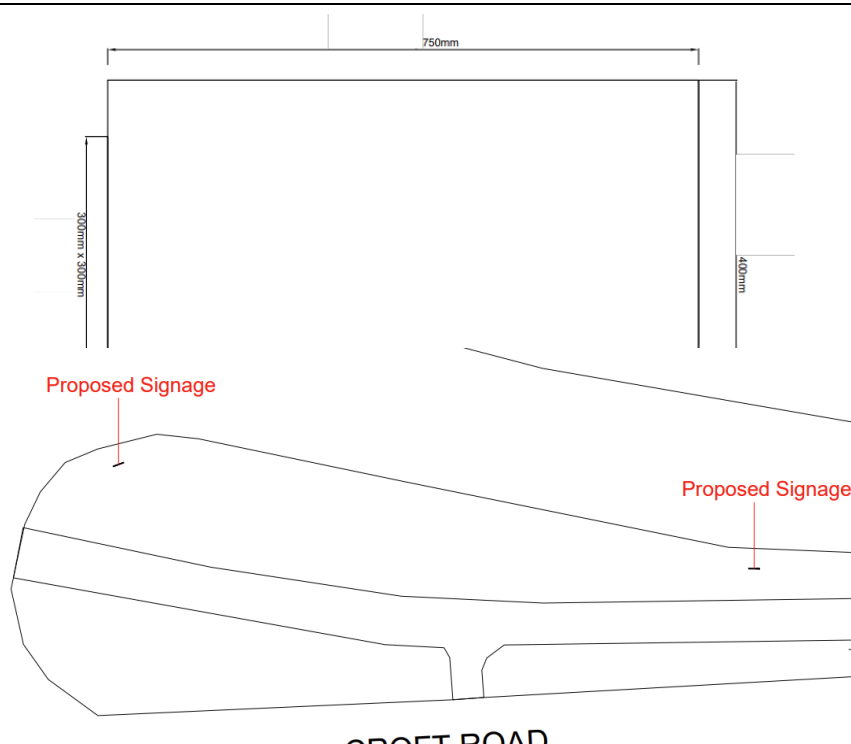


Figure 4: Block Plan

4.2 Principle of Development

Development Plan

Section 45 (1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires regard to be had to the Development Plan, so far as material to the application and to any other material considerations. Section 6(4) states that where regard is to be had to the Development Plan, the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Until the new Development Plan Strategy is adopted the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 is the statutory Development Plan for the legacy North Down area, with draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan remaining a material consideration. The site is within the settlement limit of Holywood with no zonings or designations within the site which are pertinent to the application.

The SPPS sets out the guiding principle relating to the grant / refusal of development contained within paragraphs 3.8. The principle states that sustainable development should be permitted, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, unless the proposed development will cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

The SPPS sets the context for the control of outdoor advertisements (6.52). The strategic policy recognises the potential impact of outdoor advertising on amenity. It

therefore states there is a need to balance the business need with protection of the character and appearance of our settlements.

At a strategic level, objectives for the control of advertisements are to ensure they respect amenity and do not prejudice public safety (including road safety), and second, help everyone involved in the display of adverts contribute positively to the appearance of a well-cared-for and attractive environment.

Planning Policy Statement 17 applies, as such the proposal will be assessed against policy AD1 of PPS17 which stipulates that advertising applications will be acceptable where:

- i) **It respects amenity, when assessed in the context of the general characteristics of the locality; and**
- ii) **It does not prejudice public safety**

Assessment under AD1 has been provided under subsequent headings along with consideration of Annex A of the policy document.

4.3 Impact on Amenity

In relation to advertisements the term amenity is usually understood to mean its effect upon the appearance of the building, structure or the immediate neighbourhood where it is displayed, and/or its impact over long distance views. Annex A of Planning Policy Statement 17 provides additional guidance in relation to poster panel displays of this type, the policy notes that such advertising relies on its size and siting for their impact, and as such they have the potential to be over dominant and obtrusive to the street scene if care is not taken with their scale and siting. Therefore, there is need to ensure that such advertising respect the scale of their surroundings and prevent clutter and dominance.

The signage measures 0.6m from ground level and 0.75m in width, both signs are set back approximately 1.2m from Bangor Road to the North, with the sign to the west set 3.7m from the junction between Bangor Road and Croft Road. The proposal acts as advertising signage containing the name and logo of a sponsor chosen in line with Ards and North Down Borough Council Roundabout Sponsorship Policy. The site currently consists of planting and mature trees, which extend in height beyond the signage (see figure 2) the planting will therefore act as a backdrop and reduce the potential visual dominance of the signs. The signage is visible when travelling along Bangor Road however, is sufficiently set back from the road so as not to obstruct the view of road users. Considering the modest scale of the signage and positioning within the site, I do not consider the signs to appear overly prominent, nor do I consider them to visually dominate the area. The materials do not appear out of keeping with the area and are appropriate for the given site and expected of advertising of this type. It is therefore considered that the signage is compliant with the relevant sections of Policy AD 1 and guidance set out within Annex A of Planning Policy Statement 17.

4.4 Impact on Public Safety

Considering the location of the signage at a junction between Bangor Road and Croft Road, DFI Roads have been consulted for comment in relation to road safety.

DFI Roads

Has no objections but advised that its consent is required before any advertisement is placed on its land. Such consent, if approved, will be by way of a licence agreement. Planning permission for any advertisement does not convey DFI's consent for any advertisement on its land.

The signs are set back approximately 1.2m from Bangor Road to the North with the sign closest to the junction set 3.7m from the junction between Bangor Road and Croft Road to the West. I do not consider this to visually obstruct the junction or prejudice the safety of road users. The signage does not appear similar to, nor obstruct, road signage and is not of a scale I would consider obtrusive. The signs do not contain illumination or features which will significantly distract or impair road users.

Considering the scale and siting along with comments provided by DFI Roads, I do not consider the signage to have significant undue impacts on public safety and as such consider the signage to be compliant with the relevant section of policy AD1.

5. Representations

No representations have been received in relation to the application

6. Recommendation

Grant Consent

7. Conditions

1. The signage hereby approved shall be erected in the position shown on approved plan drawing 02

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity

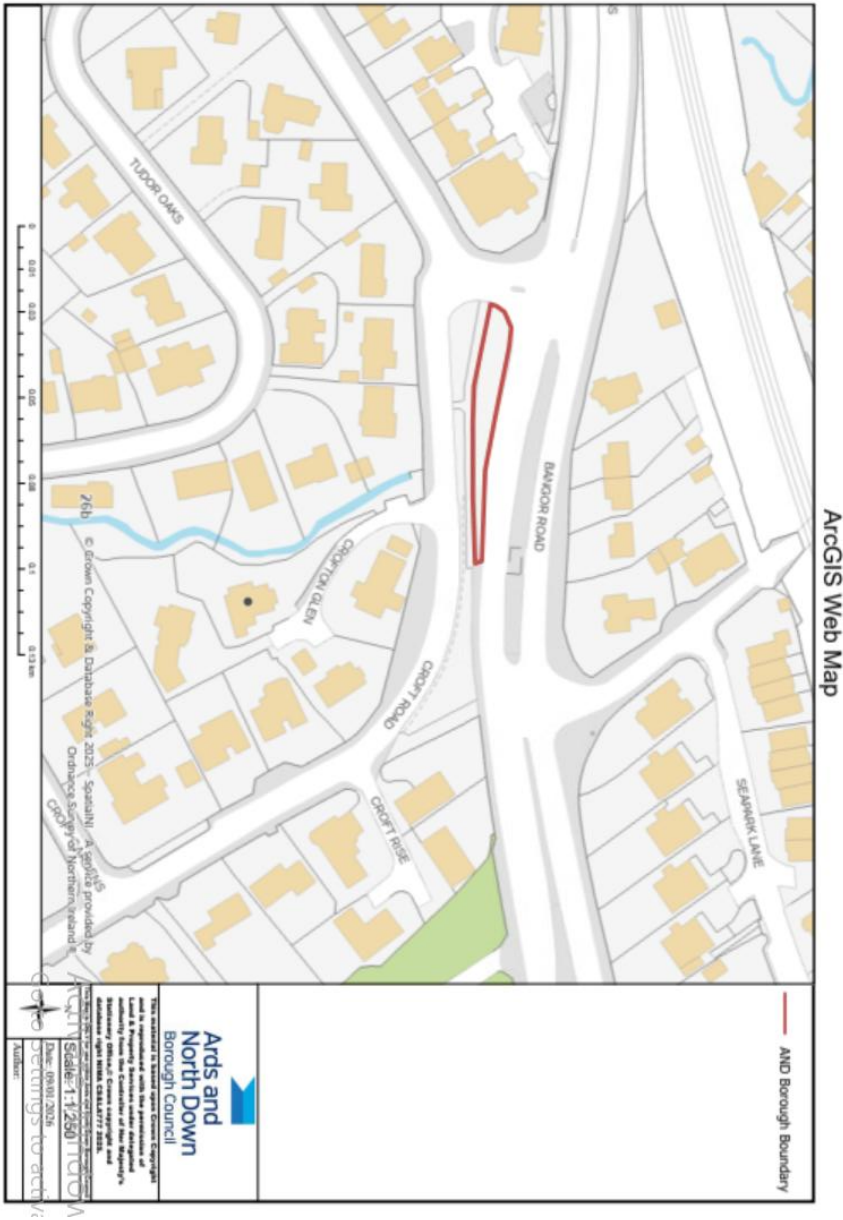
2. Any advertisements displayed shall be maintained in a clean and tidy condition.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity

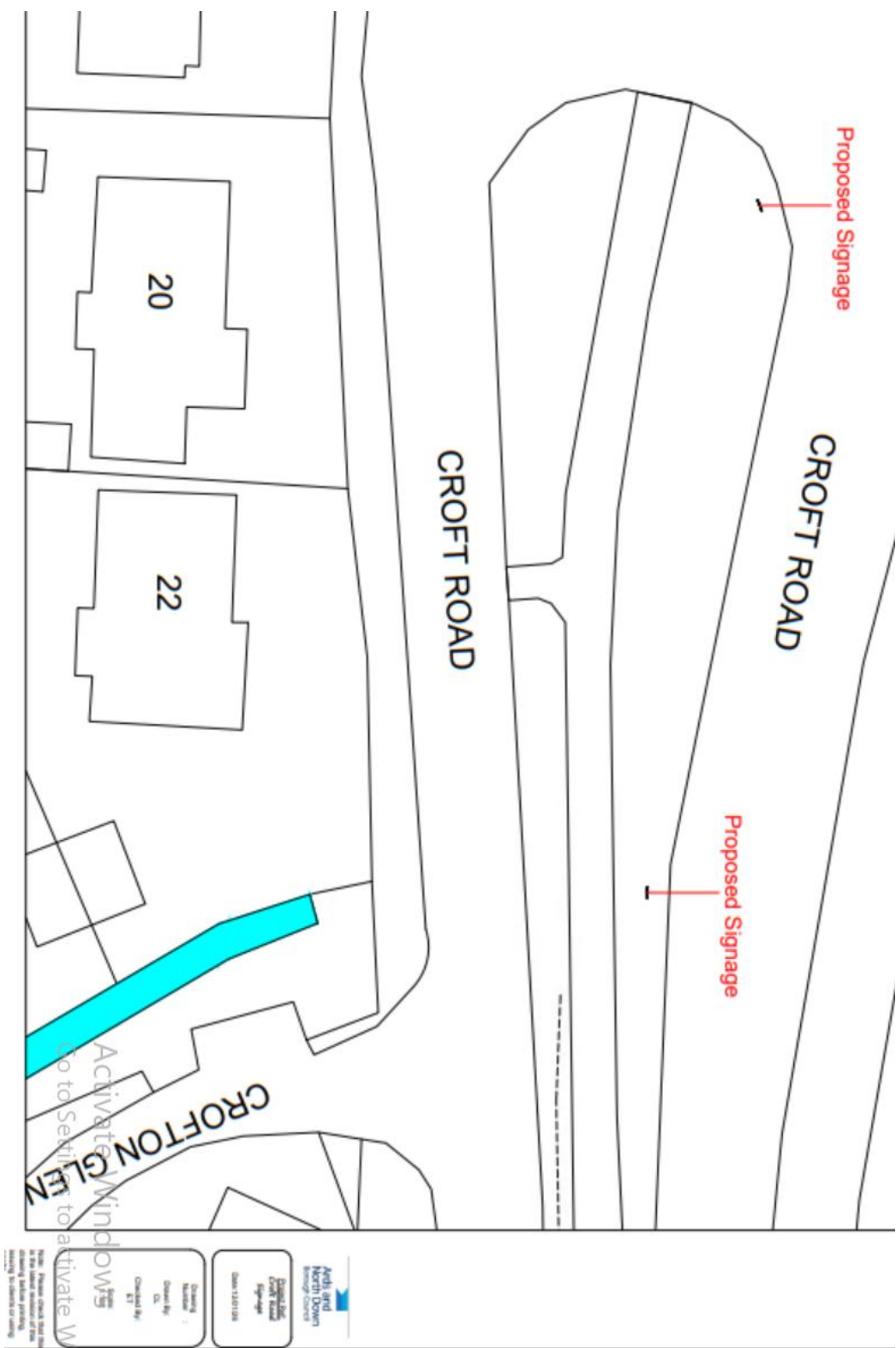
Informative

This Notice relates solely to a planning decision and does not purport to convey any other approval or consent which may be required under the Building Regulations or any other statutory purpose. Developers are advised to check all other informatives, advice or guidance provided by consultees, where relevant, on the Portal.

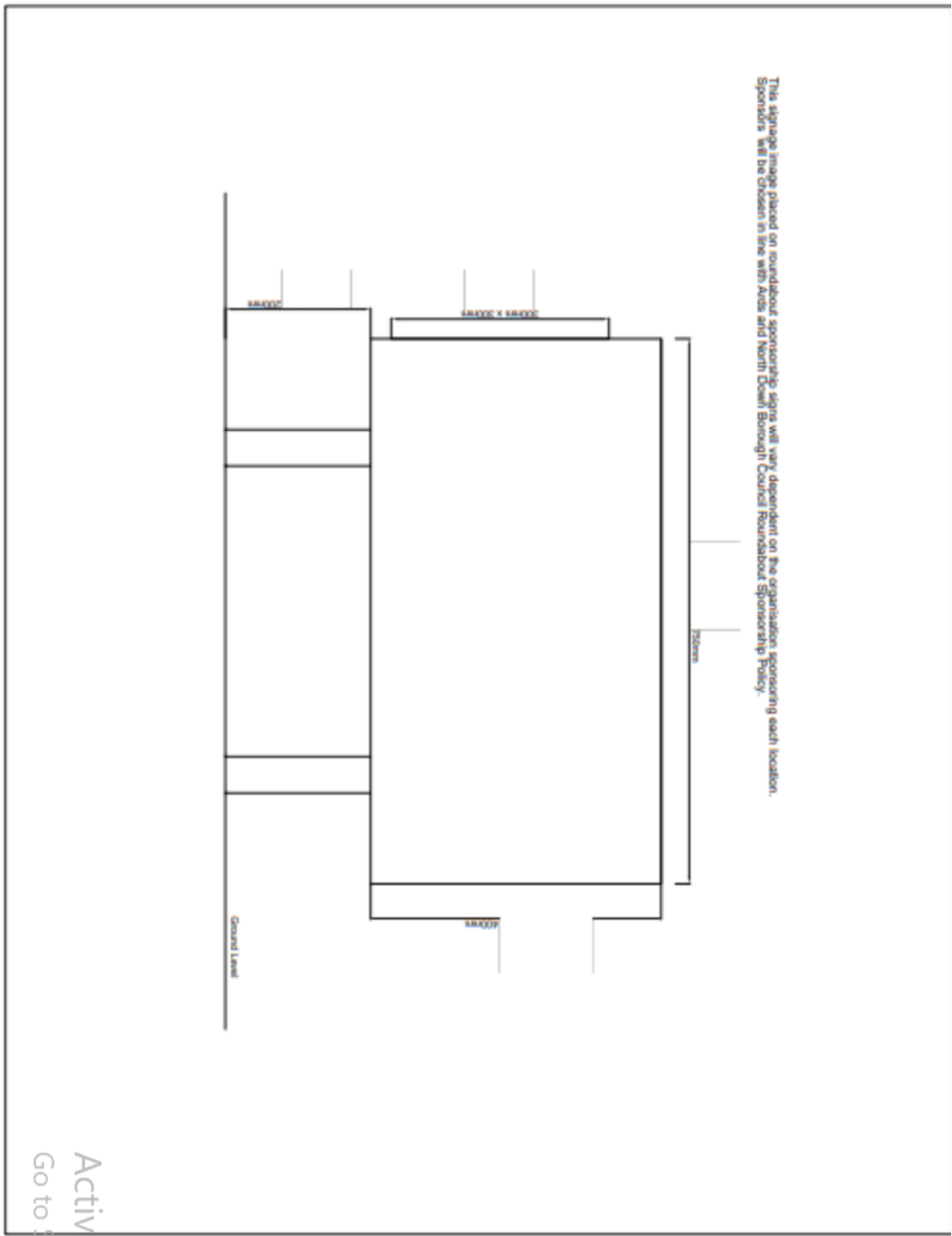
Appendix 1: DRG 01 Site Location Plan



Appendix 2: DRG 02 Block Plan



Appendix 3: DRG03 Signage Elevation



Appendix 4: Site as viewed when travelling westward



Appendix 5: Site as viewed when travelling westward on the public footpath



Appendix 6: Site as viewed when travelling eastward



Unclassified

ITEM 5

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting	04 August 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Building Control
Report title	Proposed Charges for Building Control and Planning Service
Attachments	a. Table of Proposed Charges
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Other
Resource Implications	None Narrative: Information requests are dealt with under BAU - new charges will more realistically reflect the cost of providing this service.
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Priority 1: Economic 7. Ards and North Down Borough Council is a high performing organisation If multiple:

Background

The Council's Building Control Service hold drawings and information relating to the construction of buildings and alterations dating back to 1973 in the legacy North Down Borough area, and to 1995 in the legacy Ards Borough area. Hard copy files are retained and information has to be physically obtained, sorted, redacted and where appropriate, reproduced and released. While this information is sought after by people for a number of reasons, Building Control files are not public domain information, and release is controlled in line with guidance. The location and consideration as to whether information can be released takes up an increasing amount of the Service's resources.

Key Issues

Since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), requests to Building Control have increased in number and complexity over the years, with associated staff time and costs. Whilst FOI requests are still dealt with under that legislation, the including of the provision of such information on the Council's list of publications allows Council to charge appropriate costs for this service.

The provision of Local Government Property Certificates is included within this register of charges; however, the fee has been established across the 11 councils and in agreement with the Law Society. There is an agreement for a three yearly inflationary cost review, most recently updated in April 2026. Charges would be reviewed yearly for April amendment in line with Council's charging policy.

In relation to Planning Service, charges for copy documents/history searches have not been increased since c2018. It is proposed to apply an appropriate increase to reflect resource requirements.

Next Steps

Should Council approve this proposal, the next steps would be to publish the charging schedule, giving notice of its introduction (one month).

Once the notice period expires, the charging schedule would be applied to all the requests for the noted information.

Summary

The introduction of the proposed non statutory charges would cover the costs of the staff resource currently committed to this service.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council **Approves** the attached Charging Schedule for Building Control and Planning Services

Building Control

Service Provision	AND Building Control PROPOSED	Comments
Confirm Exemption	£40	Including where an application has been made for an Exempt building “in Error”
Copy Completion Cert / Approval	£40	
Photo copy of original Comp Cert	N/A	Considered as a copy at £40
Pre 94 Completion letter	£40	
Additional or revised stamped set of Approved Plans	£50 for up to 5 drawings, and £5 per drawing thereafter	
Postal no Cert		Issued as standard part of application procedure
Confirmation of address letter	£40	
Review of archive or file retrieval (subject to GDPR)	£50 (note copies of drawings in addition to retrieval fee)	
Spec notes for EPC (Subj. GDPR)		
Copies of Archived drawing	In addition to retrieval fee Digital copy £2.50 each Paper copies A0 £5 A1 £5 A2 £5 A3 £2 A4 £2	
Withdraw Application (after valid)	£60	After validated but before assessment. Once assessed the Plan fee is spent.
VAT exempt letter (HMRC)	£50	Letter for review
Pre Submission Consultation	N/A	Pre-consultation is only in relation to specific items (Not a general overview)
Refund of BN ‘withdrawn’ applications	£60	
Legal Enquiry – Work Stages	£50	

Planning Service

Document type	Current Charge	Current Charge		Proposed charge - Aug 2026	Proposed charge - Aug 2026
	Hard copies	PDFs		Hard copies	PDFs
Copy of Decision Notice	£3	£3		£5	£5
Copy Documents A4	20p	10p		50p	20p
A3	50p	10p		£1	20p
A2	£2	20p		£5.00	50p
A1	£5	20p		£8.00	50p
A0	£8	20p		£10	50p
Planning History Search	full search - £30			full search £40	

Unclassified

ITEM 6

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting	04 August 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Building Control
Report title	RTPI NI Politicians in Planning event
Attachments	6a RTPI email
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Other The Planning Act (NI) 2011
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Choose an item. Choose an item. If multiple:

The Head of Planning and Building Control has received the attached notification of an event to be hosted by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) as part of its Politicians in Planning theme.

The event, to be held on 15 October, 10:00 -14:00, at Burnavon Arts Centre, Cookstown, will focus on Shaping better Places and is aimed at elected members and those involved in planning committees. The programme is designed to explore the issues that matter to elected members, support informed decision-making and strengthen confidence in the planning process.

Each Council has been allocated 8 complimentary places for elected members and those involved in planning committees. Further places will be limited but can be booked for a £20 (plus vat) fee. Booking closes on Friday 9 October 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Agrees to nominate elected members to attend and the Head of Planning and Building Control will book accordingly.

Dear Head of Planning,

Following on from our successful Politicians in Planning event last year, we are pleased to be able to hold a similar event this year. The event which will be held on 15 October, 10.00am-14.00pm, Burnavon Arts Centre, Cookstown will focus on Shaping better Places and is aimed at elected members and those involved in planning committees. The programme is designed to explore the issues that matter to elected members, support informed decision-making and strengthen confidence in the planning process.

Each Council has been allocated 8 complimentary places for elected members and those involved in planning committees and as Head of Planning you will also receive a free place to attend. Further places will be limited but can be booked for a £20 (plus vat) fee.

Booking is now available on our website and bookings close on Friday 9 October 2026. Please choose the correct package for your Council. There is a separate Head of Planning package. Alternatively let me have the names and dietary requirements and I will manually book the places for you. [Shaping better Places - Politicians in Planning event | The Royal Town Planning Institute](#)

Please let me know if you have any further queries.

Thanks

Julie

Julie Sullivan

**Northern Ireland Member
Services Officer**



RTPI
Royal Town
Planning Institute

[+44 \(0\)20 7929 8193](tel:+442079298193)

[+44 \(0\)7455 710 809](tel:+442079298193)

julie.sullivan@rtpi.org.uk

www.rtpi.org.uk

The Royal Town Planni
ng Institute

PO Box 69

CARRICKFERGUS

BT38 8WX



Unclassified

ITEM 7

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting	04 August 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Building Control
Report title	Update on Planning Appeals
Attachments	
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Other Planning Appeals Commission (Decisions on Appeals and Making of Reports) (No. 2) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2006 as amended
Resource Implications	None
	Narrative:
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Choose an item. Choose an item. If multiple:

Appeal Decisions

No decisions since date of last report

New Appeals

1. The following appeal was lodged on 23 June 2026:

PAC Ref	2026/A0033
Council Ref	LA06/2024/0882/O
Appellant	Angus Alan
Subject of Appeal	Dwelling on a farm
Location	Land approx.. 65m south-east of 1 Dunover Road, Ballywalter

2. The following appeal was lodged on 17 June 2026:

PAC Ref	2026/E0027
Council Ref	LA06/2025/0141/CA
Appellant	Matthew McAree
Subject of Appeal	Alleged unauthorised cabin for residential and storage use
Location	Land at land approx. 40m SE of No.4 Cunningburn Road, Newtownards

Details of appeal decisions, new appeals and scheduled hearings can be viewed at www.pacni.gov.uk.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report

Unclassified

ITEM 8

Ards and North Down Borough Council

Report Classification	Unclassified
Exemption Reason	Not Applicable
	If multiple:
Meeting	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting	04 August 2026
Responsible Director	Director of Place and Prosperity
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Planning and Building Control
Report title	Follow up from DFI Minister post meeting re NIW
Attachments	a - Chief Executive letter 18 June b - DFI Minister letter c - Turley Report on Wastewater Constraints
File Reference (if applicable)	
Legislation	Other
Resource Implications	None Narrative:
Screening Requirements	<i>The Council will commit to consider the implication of all reports under the categories of Section 75, Rural Needs, Data Protection, Climate and Sustainability:</i> Screening of decision not required
Link to Corporate Plan Priority and Outcome	Choose an item. Choose an item. If multiple:

Members will recall that at the Planning Committee meeting of 03 March 2026, the Head of Planning brought Item 5 on NIW Closed Catchments. Further to discussion it was determined to request for a cross-party delegation to meet with the DFI Minister. The Chief Executive and Head of Planning accompanied Aldermen McDowell and McIlveen and Councillors Brady and Smart to that meeting which was held on 15 June at Parliament Buildings.

There was detailed discussion held, and it was proposed to follow up with further correspondence seeking clarification on some matters – see Chief Executive’s letter dated 18 June attached.

The Minister’s response to those points of clarification is attached for Members’ attention.

Further to this letter being received, the Head of Planning had opportunity to attend an event held in Parliament Buildings on 01 July, held by the Wastewater Infrastructure Group and entitled: ‘The Cost of Doing Nothing’, at which a report entitled ‘Wastewater Constraints and the cost of delay in Northern Ireland – an economy with the brakes on’ was launched. A copy of the report is attached for Members’ information, and highlights that there could be a resultant economic opportunity gap of £10.9bn in NI by 2040 if our current wastewater infrastructure deficit continues to constrain capital expenditure.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Notes this report and the attached letters and report



Ms Liz Kimmins
Minister for Infrastructure
Department for Infrastructure Headquarters
3rd Floor, James House Gasworks site
2-4 Cromac Street
Belfast
BT7 2JA

18 June 2026

Via email only: private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Dear Minister,

I would like to thank you for the meeting with the delegation from Ards and North Down Borough Council on Monday of this week. The Council appreciated being able to update you on a few of the key issues currently facing the Borough, particularly in relation to economic growth and the challenges with NIW capacity constraints within the area.

It was also good to be able to highlight the challenges being faced in bringing derelict buildings back into business use through the Council's 'Empty to Energise' grant scheme, particularly within Newtownards, as it is a 'closed catchment'. The discussion with the you and your officials in NIW, although not always able to bring solutions, was appreciated.

As discussed at the meeting, Council would appreciate if you could review two specific areas; these being:

- How the Department can ensure a level playing field in terms of planning, particularly in relation to the perceptions that some areas are more open to business than others, and how messages around NIW connections shouldn't be misrepresented in the public domain.
- The likelihood of improvements coming forward to protect the urban centres, in terms of wastewater infrastructure requirements.

We welcome your further consideration of these matters and look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Susie McCullough".

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive

From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
LIZ KIMMINS MLA

Susie McCullough
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

Susie.McCullough@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk

Private Office, 3rd Floor,
James House, Gasworks Site,
2 - 4 Cromac Avenue,
BELFAST, BT7 2JA
Telephone: (028) 9054 0540
Email: Private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your reference:
Our reference: COR-0570-2026
08 July 2026

Susie, a chara,

FOLLOW-UP TO MEETING WITH ARDS & NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 June 2026, regarding our recent meeting on 15 June.

Under the two-tier planning system local councils are independent sovereign planning authorities, responsible for the proper administration and lawful processing of their own planning functions. It is not for the Department to supplant the role of a council or to direct how they discharge their statutory duties. However, in its oversight role, officials continue to work collaboratively with all councils to identify operational challenges, blockages and delays, and to support more consistent system-wide practice where appropriate.

Officials regularly engage with councils to encourage and enhance performance improvement across the planning system. A number of strategic forums, attended by councils and the Department, are held regularly to ensure issues impacting the planning system are identified and best practice is shared, with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. Targeted pilots, structured engagements and focused workshops are underway or nearing completion to shape targeted support, shared learning and best practice across the planning system.

Work is also progressing through the Planning Statutory Consultee Forum, which brings statutory consultees (including NI Water) and councils together to improve consultation performance, strengthen engagement, share good practice and provide strategic consultee support.

I am aware of the challenges facing various sectors and acknowledge the important role the planning system plays in supporting the delivery of sustainable development and providing confidence to investors. The planning system in the North is inherently complex, and it continues to face a range of pressures, including delays and capacity constraints.

The management of the public water and wastewater infrastructure is an operational matter for NI Water. NI Water is working on its plans for the next Price Control period, 2028-2033, which will be subject to sufficient funding. It is not possible to confirm at this stage which projects will be taken forward, but NI

Water does not expect to be able to upgrade the South Street Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) in Newtownards during this price control period.

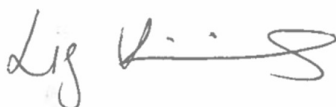
I am progressing a three-pronged approach to addressing wastewater capacity issues by securing more funding from the Executive to invest in our wastewater infrastructure; progressing the Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Bill to enable more sustainable drainage solutions; and developing a voluntary developer contributions scheme to assist in unlocking additional capacity, which I announced in March 2026

Developers are encouraged to engage early with NI Water via the pre-planning process, where it will advise on the availability and location of services to serve the development.

Providing investment confidence is an important component of the planning system, and my Department continues to work in partnership with local government and key stakeholders through the planning improvement agenda with the aim of enhancing the performance and long-term effectiveness of the planning system.

I trust you find this response helpful.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Liz Kimmins', with a stylized flourish at the end.

LIZ KIMMINS MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

OCO GLOBAL

132

Wastewater Constraints and the cost of delay in Northern Ireland

An economy with the brakes on

July 2026

Turley

Report Sponsors:

Construction Employers Federation

NI Chamber

Chartered Institute of Housing

Additional WIG members and contributors:

Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations

Manufacturing Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Retail Consortium

Institute of Directors (NI)

OCO Global

Turley

Marrac Design

Graham

OCO GLOBAL

Turley



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Foreword

Last June the Wastewater Infrastructure Group (WIG), commissioned a position paper *Confronting NI's Wastewater Crisis* setting out the projected economic impact of an acute slowdown in housing delivery as a result of our widespread wastewater infrastructure constraint.

In the same month, the Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland warned that decades of underinvestment in wastewater infrastructure are crippling our economic development, stalling new housing, and failing environmental standards in their *Sustainability Report 2025: special focus – Water (June 2025)*.

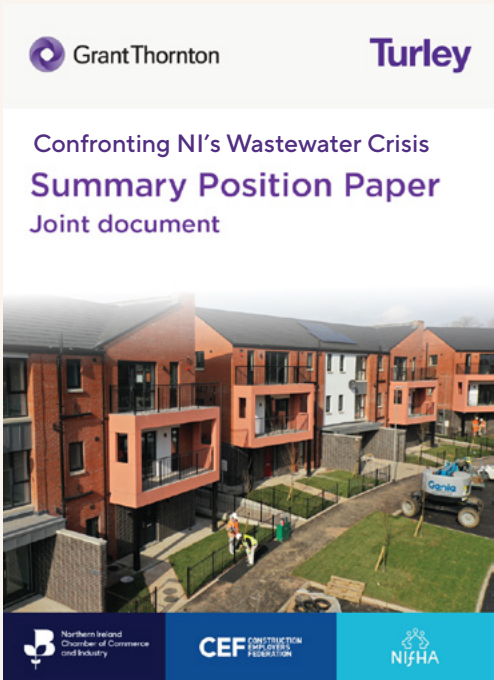
Our paper proposed five key actions, detailing solutions that could work towards an appropriately funded capital budget for our wastewater infrastructure, including the sustainable resourcing of NI Water to the appropriate level established by the Utility Regulatory through the existing Price Control mechanism.

In practical terms, the proposed solutions are a blended package to address a complex problem:

- secure early capital through an **Infrastructure Transformation Fund** (Regional Deal) or comparable UK Government support;
- reduce future pressure on the wastewater system through **Sustainable Urban Drainage Solutions** (SuDS) legislation, but not as a near-term solution to the current capacity crisis
- re-establish a sustainable link between water infrastructure and the rates system through a ringfenced **progressive household levy** to enable long-term borrowing to address the infrastructure deficit;
- use **voluntary developer contributions** to supplement, not replace, strategic infrastructure investment to enable development; and
- **build public and business support** through a clear programme of engagement on the scale of the challenge and the choices required.

We recognise that some progress has been achieved in the past year, with additional investment through monitoring rounds of around £30m to unlock almost 5,300 new homes, since Autumn 2024. These tactical interventions are welcome, recently unlocking new homes and opportunities for development in Derry~Londonderry, Newry and Belfast. However, with limited technically suitable opportunities for other lower-cost interventions, we need strategic solutions that will unlock capacity across the 23 towns and villages in Northern Ireland where all new construction has already halted.

We welcomed the Minister for Infrastructure's SuDS consultation and proposed legislation (*Water, Sustainable Drainage and Flood Management Bill*), and the acknowledgement that whilst needed in future, the measures introduced would address only a tiny fraction of the capacity needed to address our current issues. We also welcome the Minister's announcement following consultation that legislation would be brought forward to allow voluntary developer contributions to strategic wastewater infrastructure. However, with time running out in the remainder of this Northern Ireland Assembly term, actions to progress these legislative measures are urgently needed.



Earlier this year, the need for revenue raising was recognised in the draft multi-year budget, with a proposed 5% increase in regional household rates. However, even with this rates increase, the draft budget confirmed that the Northern Ireland Executive cannot meet wastewater needs from existing capital envelopes. Prior to the draft budget, the 2025 report forecast a funding shortfall of £1.69bn in PC28, which would have resulted in a borrowing repayment need of £86.1m a year funded through an infrastructure levy. When applied to annual domestic household rates this would have equated to an average of approximately £100 per household. If this was adjusted to take account the of the draft multi-year budget and baseline allocation to NI Water for PC28 of £321m per annum, this would have resulted in a reduced forecast in the funding shortfall to £1.29bn for PC28, with a corresponding decrease in the average levy to £65 per household per annum.

The scale of the deficit remains an enormous challenge to the Northern Ireland Executive, and its block grant. The current budget allocation alongside non-domestic revenue addresses less than half of baseline expenditure required over the remainder of the existing price control period (PC21). As a result, we estimated last year that during the remaining price control period (up to April 2028) some **6150 homes** simply will not be built, resulting in the loss of **1,690 construction jobs** and **£1.3 billion investment forgone**.

Throughout this year we have continued to see housing starts fall to record low levels, planning applications fall to a 20-year low, indicating that the market is already losing confidence. NI Water has advised that 55,000 new home connections are impeded by some level of wastewater constraints. What this means for ordinary people is rising house prices, higher rents and a growing housing waiting list.

The cost of delay is mounting, and we call on all current and future Executive parties to commit to the sustainable funding of NI Water to the value of the price control agreed by the Utility Regulator. This report has been commissioned to illustrate the impact not just on housing, but to the whole of the Northern Ireland economy if collective action is not taken.

On behalf of the Wastewater Infrastructure Group (WIG):

Chartered Institute of Housing

Construction Employers Federation

Institute of Directors (NI)

Manufacturing Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Chamber

Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations

Northern Ireland Retail Consortium

“
**we call on all current
and future Executive
parties to commit to the
sustainable funding of NI
Water to the value of the
price control agreed by
the Utility Regulator**

”

Executive Summary

Wastewater infrastructure has become one of the most significant constraints on Northern Ireland’s economic ambitions, with effects visible across the Programme for Government objectives, housing supply, economic growth and environmental recovery. This constraint appears as delayed homes, reduced development density, regeneration projects that take longer to come forward, businesses that cannot expand in the locations where they wish to invest, and continuing pressure on rivers, lakes and coastal waters.

This report uses a bespoke economic model of the Northern Ireland economy to assess two economic outcomes – one where we continue on the path we are on, i.e. our wastewater infrastructure deficit continues to constrain capital expenditure, and one where wastewater infrastructure receives the investment required to unlock our economic potential. The model estimates the difference between those two outcomes indicating that the economy in 2040 is more than £10bn smaller than it could be. For context, this is equivalent to around £5,500 per household.

**2040 Economic
opportunity gap
£10.9bn**

The housing consequence is the most immediate expression of the wider economic cost. Around 55,000 homes (*NI Water, Developer and Agents Briefing, February 2026*) are estimated to be impeded by some level of wastewater capacity constraints¹. In a region facing acute housing pressures, rising rents and a substantial social housing waiting list, this is one of the clearest examples of how infrastructure failure becomes a household cost.

**Homes impeded by
wastewater capacity
constraints
55,000**

The model also identifies the housing construction component of annual opportunity foregone. By 2040 this reaches £3.9bn of GVA². Two important distinctions are required for this housing impact. Firstly, this figure should not be added to the headline £10.9bn opportunity gap. It is part of the same annual foregone opportunity, drawn out to demonstrate a socially visible component of the constraint. Secondly, the figure relates to GVA. If we consider the turnover impact on the construction sector of building (or in this case, not building) 55,000 homes, taking a standard 3-bed semi, approximately £10.5bn in construction turnover is lost.

The question this report poses is this: do we want a different economic path to the one we are on? If the answer is yes, solving our wastewater constraints is critical to the future economic prosperity of Northern Ireland.

1 This is based on data provided by NI Water to a Developer Agents Briefing on 2nd February 2026. The 55,000 homes figure is broken down as: c.37,500 can connect, with the majority requiring a developer self funded, zero detriment solution. c.17,500 are unable to connect to the wastewater system as they are above high polluting assets, unsuitable for developer funded solutions. This report treats all 55,000 homes as having some level of impediment. Developer Solutions, such as stormwater offsetting, are not therefore as straightforward as presented as evidence has shown they are likely to impact on scheme viability, can take years for their design to be approved and can face challenges in adoption once constructed.

2 Gross Value Added (GVA) is the value that producers have added to the goods and services they have bought.

01.

**Wastewater has
become a major
growth constraint
for construction**

CASE STUDY 1: MIXED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (NORTH BELFAST)

140



Development Proposed is a mixed-use building of 209 residential units (208,357 sq ft), 70 affordable housing units (73,410 sq ft) and a commercial space (12,540 sq ft).

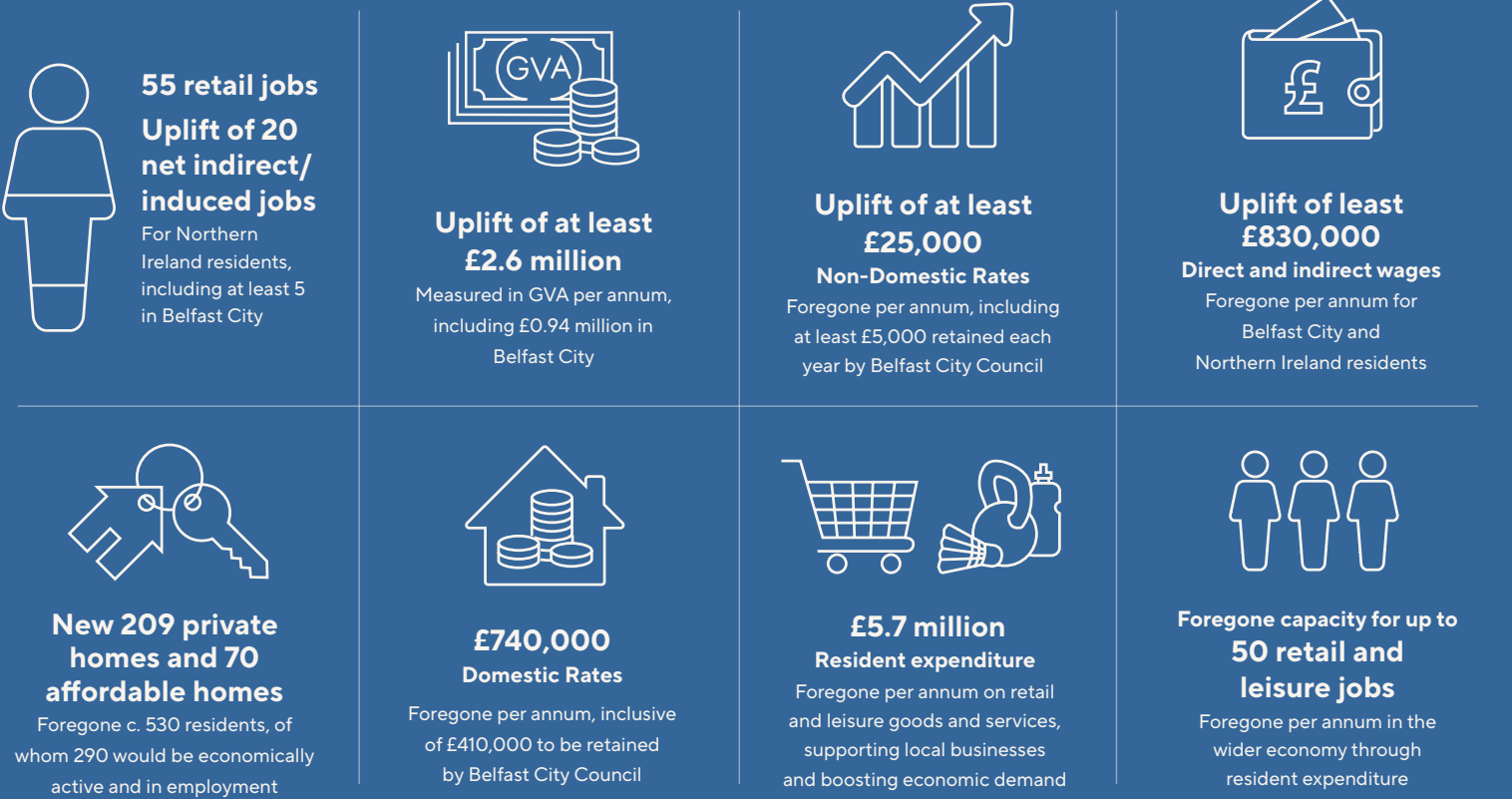


The proposed development is stalled due to significant infrastructure constraints identified by NI Water. The public foul sewer network cannot adequately service the development due to capacity issues, with downstream sewer systems in the Belfast catchment operating above capacity and Unsatisfactory Intermittent Discharges (UIDs), which discharge into the Lagan. Additionally, no public storm sewer is available to serve the site.

Foregone Impacts from Construction Phase¹



Foregone Impacts from Operational Phase¹



¹ Economic methodology and assumptions detailed in Appendix
² GVA (Gross Value Added) measures the value of output created (i.e. turnover) net of inputs used to produce a good or service (i.e. production of outputs). Put simply the GVA is the total of all revenue into businesses, which is used to fund wages, profits and taxes.

Introduction

Economic growth and competitiveness rely on a range of factors summarized by the OECD’s *Growth and Competitiveness Framework diagram*. Physical infrastructure such as roads, and water systems are noted as enabling factors and are crucial elements of a competitive economy. Northern Ireland faces a range of constraints across many elements of our infrastructure, but it is wastewater that forms the focus of this report due to the clear evidence that a lack of wastewater capacity is now actively constraining the economy. For example, it is estimated that around 55,000 homes are delayed or impeded due to some level of capacity constraints. As the ‘Addressing NI’s Water Infrastructure Gap: Funding Options’ report from the Wastewater Infrastructure Group (WIG)³ in 2025 noted:

“Northern Ireland’s wastewater infrastructure is at a crossroads. Chronic underinvestment, combined with a funding model that no longer meets the needs of a growing economy and population, has created an unsustainable situation. Without urgent action, NI Water faces a funding gap estimated to be in the order of £2 billion by the end of the PC28 period (2027-2033), directly threatening new housing development, economic growth, and environmental protection.”

While not a significant material improvement, the allocations within the NI Executive’s draft multi-annual Budget, inclusive of the Department for Infrastructure’s baseline allocation to NI Water of £321m of capital expenditure per annum, mean that there is a reduction in the forecast shortfall in PC28 to £1.29bn. This reduction in capital expenditure deficit also reflects that the next Price Control will be five years in length as opposed to the originally proposed six.

This continued shortfall matters because Northern Ireland’s major policy ambitions on housing, town centre regeneration, regional balance, private investment, climate adaptation and environmental recovery all require a wastewater system capable of supporting growth.

Because the cost of this constraint does not appear as one line in one single departmental budget, being dispersed through other outcomes such as homes not built, jobs not created, investment lost or delayed, and public confidence in delivery weakened, the purpose of this report is to make the cost visible by modelling contrasting economic paths to 2040 - one that continues on the constrained path we are on, and one where can deliver growth unconstrained by wastewater capacity issues.

3 The Wastewater Infrastructure Group comprised NI Chamber of Commerce, Construction Employers Federation, and NI Federation of Housing Associations. It has expanded to include Chartered Institute of Housing, Manufacturing NI, NI Retail Consortium, and the IoD.

The Foundations for Growth and Competitiveness Framework



02.

**Economic
Consequences of
underinvestment
in wastewater**

CASE STUDY 2: PURPOSE-BUILT STUDENT
ACCOMMODATION (SOUTH BELFAST)

144



Development Proposed is the construction of a Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) development comprising approximately 610 bedrooms

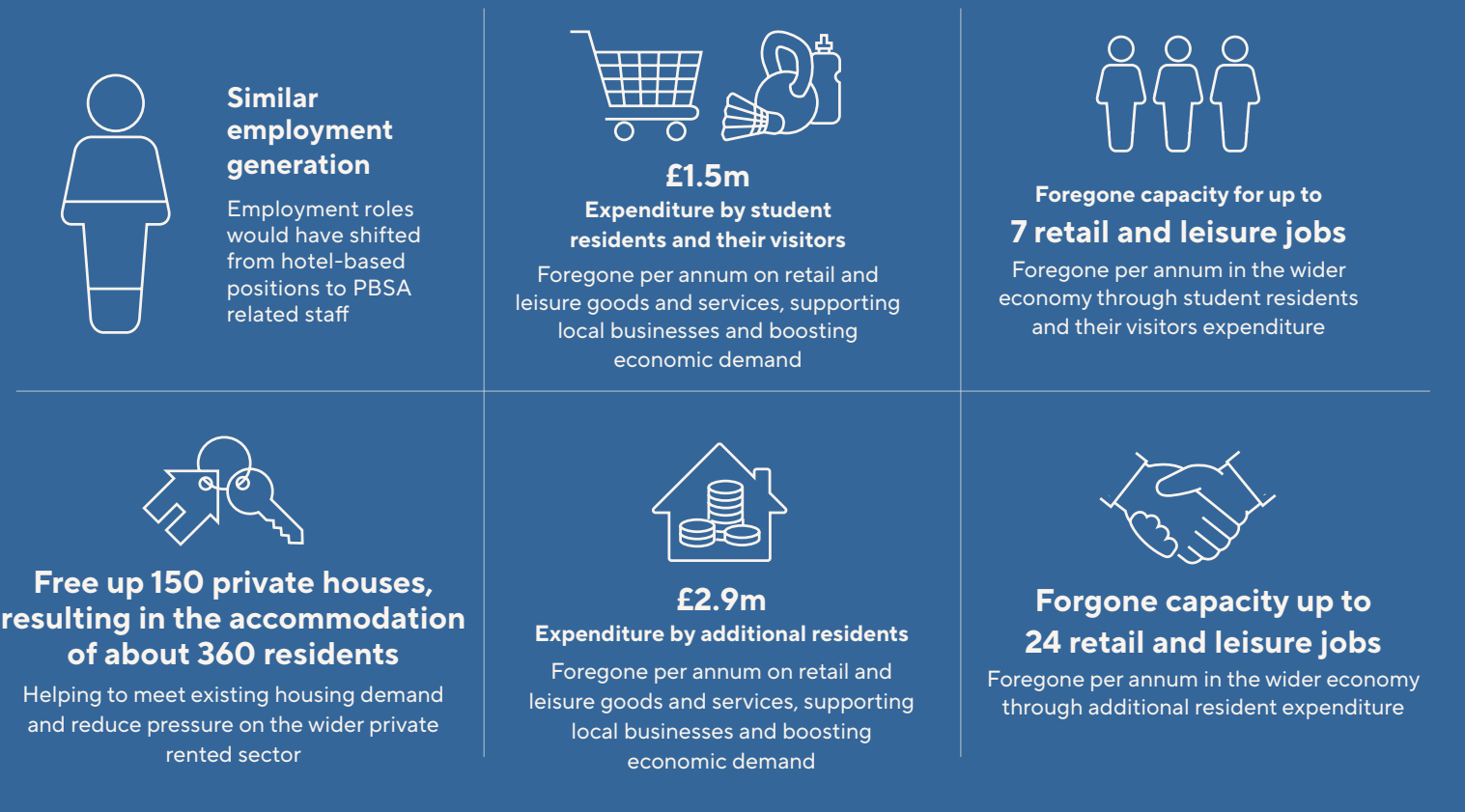


The proposed development is stalled due to significant infrastructure constraints identified by NI Water. The surrounding wastewater network is already operating under severe constraint, with multiple downstream Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). These CSOs experiencing problems such as inadequate watercourse dilution, lack of screening, and insufficient storage, alongside extensive lengths of downstream pipeline with limited capacity, all of which prevent any additional foul sewage loading from the site. NI Water identified these assets as “high polluting” and confirmed that they are not funded for upgrade within the current Price Control 21 (PC21, 2021–27) investment period

Foregone Impacts from Construction Phase¹



Foregone Impacts from Operational Phase¹



¹ The economic methodology and underlying assumptions are set out in Appendix 2.

² GVA (Gross Value Added) measures the value of output created (i.e. turnover) net of inputs used to produce a good or service (i.e. production of outputs). Put simply the GVA is the total of all revenue into businesses, which is used to fund wages, profits and taxes.

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2.1 Constraint is not a static problem

Currently, the most visible consequence of wastewater constraint is in housing. Homes that should be progressing are delayed and investment that should be flowing into places is deferred. As noted previously, the scale of the housing issue is significant. Around 55,000 homes are estimated to be impeded by some level of wastewater capacity constraints. This is occurring in a context of already acute housing pressure, social housing need at record levels, rents and house prices rising, and annual housing delivery remaining well below the level required to meet demand.

The estimated distribution of these impeded homes shows that the housing constraint is not confined to one location. While the largest estimated exposure is in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, significant numbers of homes are also impeded in Lisburn and Castlereagh, Belfast, Newry, Mourne and Down, Mid Ulster and Antrim and Newtownabbey.

The distribution reinforces the central policy point. Wastewater constraint is a regional housing delivery issue, not a narrow Belfast infrastructure problem. It affects large urban housing markets, commuter belt locations and regional growth centres. This matters because each delayed home is not only a missed housing unit; it also represents deferred construction activity, weaker labour mobility, slower regeneration and continued pressure on affordability.

The Programme for Government 2024-2027 ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’ has a Housing Supply Strategy targeting a minimum 33,000 social home completions by 2039, and in the shorter term at least 5,850 new build homes by the end of the current mandate (2024-27). This means work must start on at least 2,600 social homes before the next mandate, but much of where the housing need is greatest correlates with current wastewater constraints.

The economic significance of this is straightforward. Housing is not only a social outcome. It is also a major component of economic capacity. New homes support construction activity, local supply chains, household formation, labour mobility, town and city centre regeneration, and the viability of public and private services. When housing delivery is slowed by infrastructure constraint, the effect is felt well beyond the construction sector.

This is not a static problem. Each of the 11 local councils across Northern Ireland have prepared, or are preparing, growth ambitions for housing, and other land uses within their local development plans. When mapped against known wastewater constraint, the impact on this planned growth ambition across the region is significant, and growing.

LDP Housing Ambitions	Potential yield of housing monitor sites	Potential yield of sites not impacted by Closed Catchments	Potential yield of sites impacted by Closed Catchments	% of housing monitor capacity impacted by Closed Catchments
Antrim and Newtownabbey	8,369	7227	1,142	14%
Ards and North Down	6,893	5422	1,471	21%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon*	-	-	-	-
Belfast	20,246	5955	14,291	71%
Causeway Coast and Glens**	-	-	-	-
Derry City and Strabane*	-	-	-	-
Fermanagh and Omagh*	-	-	-	-
Lisburn and Castlereagh	7,995	7,408	587	7%
Mid and East Antrim	6,763	3404	3,359	50%
Mid Ulster*	-	-	-	-
Newry, Mourne and Down	10,186	7336	2,850	28%
Total	60,452	36,752	23,700	39%

* Data not available to inform assessment

** Latest NI Water Constraints Map does not show any closed catchments

Table 2.1: Comparison of Local Development Plan (LDP) housing ambition against known Closed Catchement Areas across the 11 Councils.

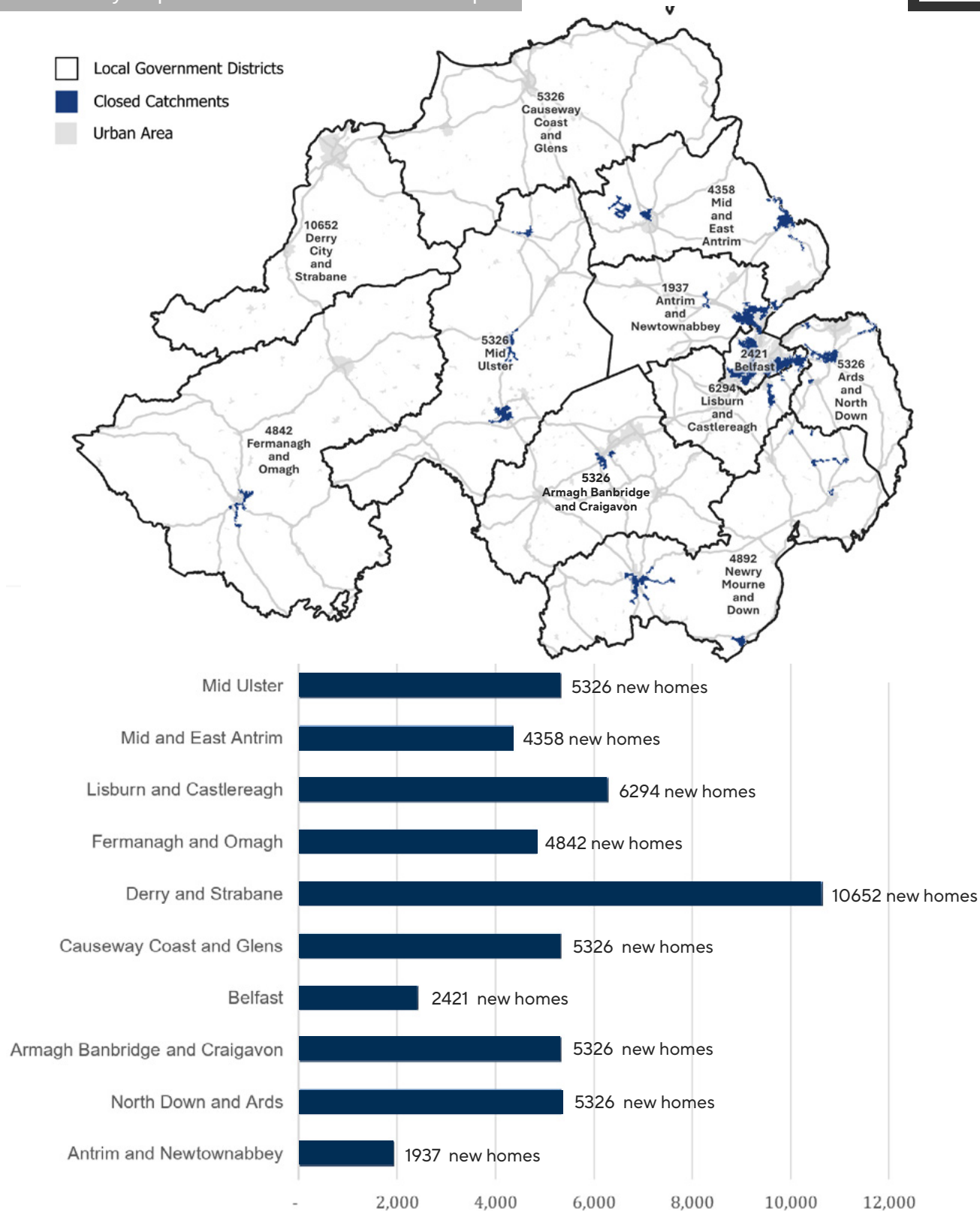


Figure 2.1: Indicative distribution of the 55,000 homes impeded by some level of wastewater capacity constraints

A review of the currently available housing land availability monitors, compared to the local development plan ambitions and known Closed Catchment areas (*NI Water Wastewater System Capacity Information - October 2025*) illustrates the impact that the current lack of infrastructure upgrades may have on future housing delivery across Northern Ireland.

Each of the 11 council's have already, or will be updating the land identified to meet their housing growth ambition as part of their

Local Development Plans.

Based on available data this demonstrates many of those ambitions can not be realised without addressing the gap in wastewater infrastructure.

For example **an estimated 71% of all housing land identified for future housing in Belfast faces significant wastewater infrastructure constraint.**

2.2 Planning permission is not enough if the system cannot connect

Wastewater capacity now needs to be understood as a development constraint rather than simply a utility or environmental issue. Planning permission, private finance and development appetite are not sufficient if the system cannot accept new connections. In those circumstances, the economy does not stop completely, but it grows on a lower path than it otherwise could.

That lower-growth path can be difficult to see in real time. It rarely appears as one single cancelled project. It is more likely to appear as slower delivery, reduced density, higher costs, phased development, weaker investor confidence and postponed regeneration. Over time, those individual effects accumulate into a material economic gap.

2.3 Measuring the economy Northern Ireland is not building

The modelling undertaken for this report estimates the scale of that lower-growth path. It does so by comparing three potential trajectories for Northern Ireland’s council-level economy:

- a baseline forecast, based on historic council-level GVA growth trends;
- a constrained forecast, which reflects the drag placed on development-sensitive activity by wastewater capacity limitations; and
- a success forecast, which represents the economic path that could be achieved if wastewater constraints were progressively addressed and development activity was able to move closer to its underlying potential.

The model uses Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) as a way of strengthening the link between capital investment in physical development and economic growth in the region. This is important because wastewater constraints do not affect every part of the economy equally. They are most relevant to activity that depends on development, capital investment, new buildings, regeneration and the physical expansion of housing, employment and commercial space.

Areas with higher development-capital intensity are more exposed to the consequences of a system that cannot accommodate growth. The model therefore applies a GFCF dependency index to capture the extent to which each council area’s future economic performance is likely to be shaped by its ability to accommodate capital investment and development activity.

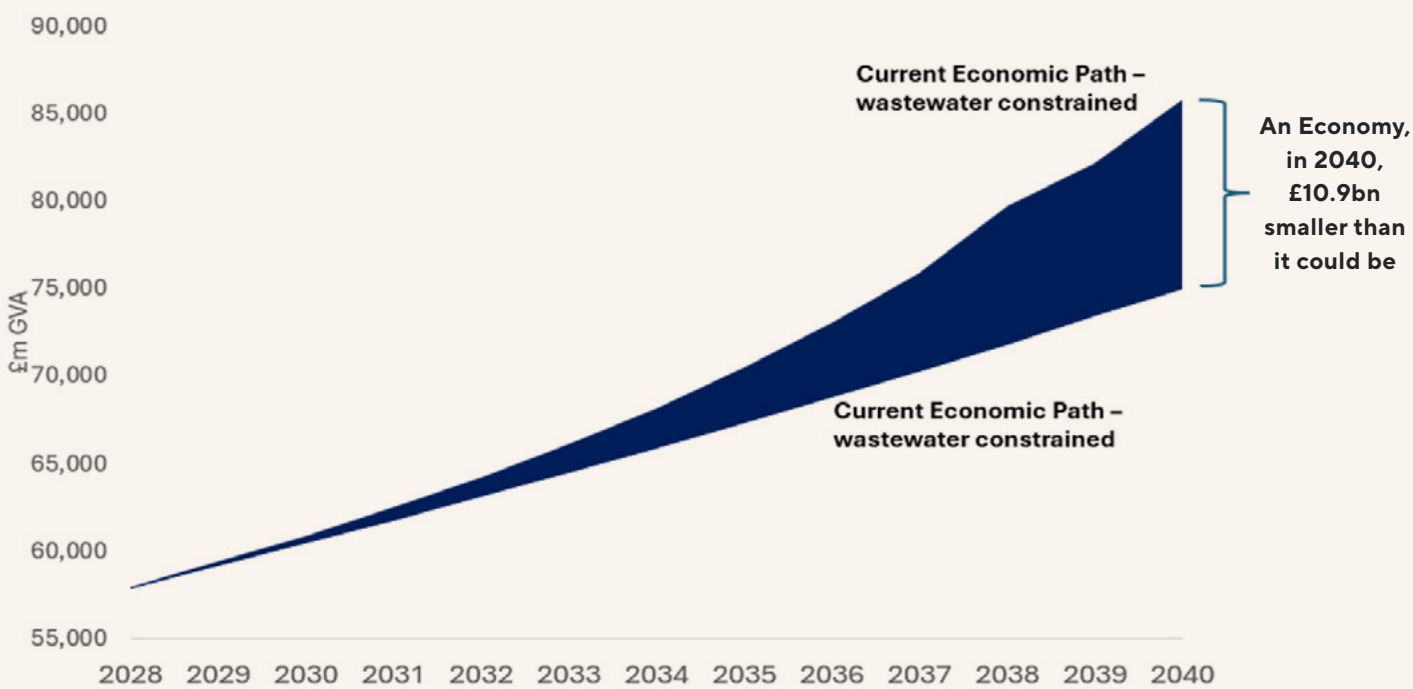


Figure 2.1: Northern Ireland GVA forecast paths, baseline, constrained and success scenario, 2028 to 2040

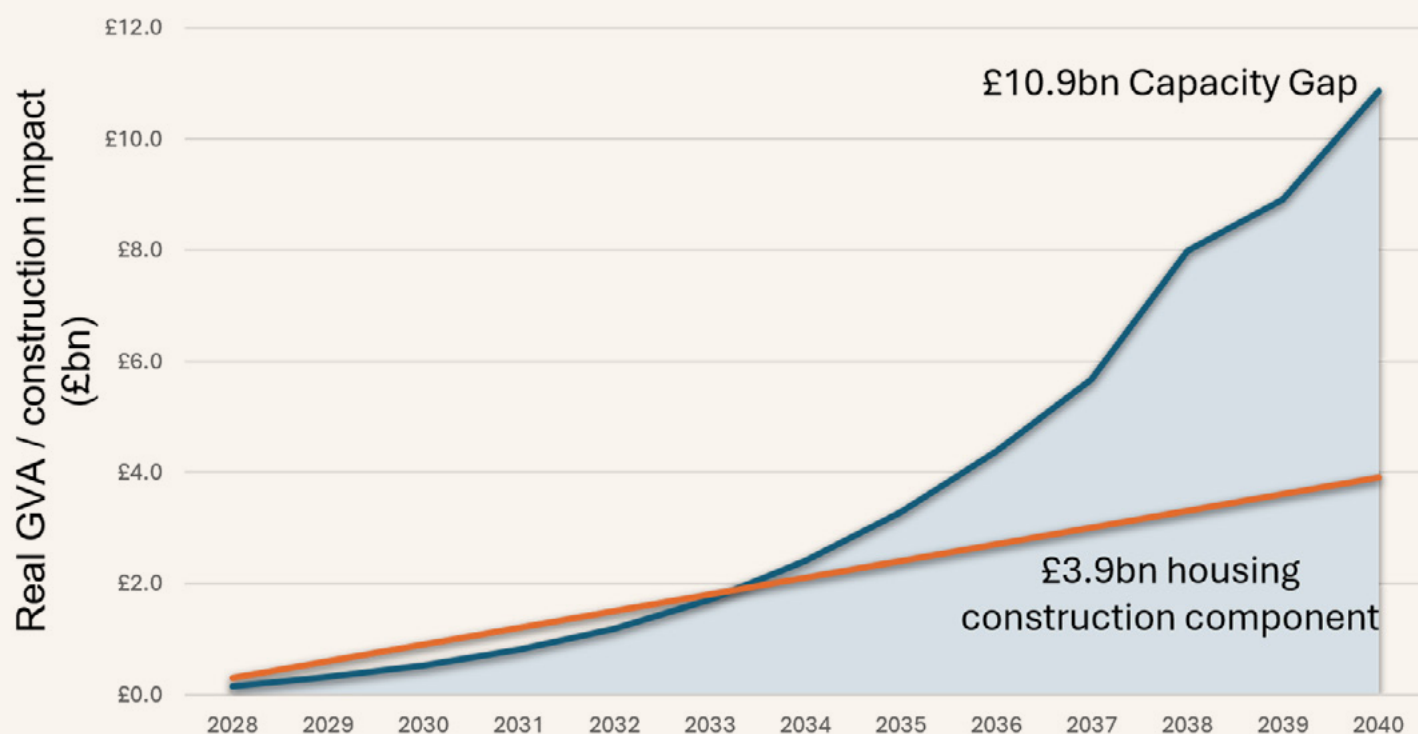


Figure 2.2: Housing within the total impact

The success forecast scenario assumes that the additional wastewater investment required to relieve development constraint is supported through a household levy. The model allows for the levy to reduce household disposable income and consumer spending. It does not therefore assume that the funding mechanism is costless.

At the same time, consumer spending is modelled as part of the wider economic path rather than as a fixed deduction. Over the forecast period, consumer spending is affected not only by the levy, but also by additional employment, wage growth and the wider economic activity associated with enabled development. The model therefore reflects both the near-term spending drag associated with the levy and the medium-term uplift associated with a stronger economy.

They show the estimated economic path associated with levy-funded wastewater recovery, allowing for the interaction between household contribution, consumer spending, employment, wages and development activity over time.

The result is a widening gap between the economy Northern Ireland could build and the economy it risks accepting if wastewater investment remains constrained. By 2040, the model estimates an annual gap in GVA terms between the constrained and success scenarios.

This should not be interpreted as a single lost project or a one-off economic shock. The model illustrates a cumulative effect of development being slowed, diluted or displaced over time, resulting in an economic base that becomes smaller than it could have been. For context, within this model, **households in NI are on average £2,750 per annum worse off that they would otherwise be. This impact grows over time, from £325 per household in 2028, to £3,085 in 2035 and £5,500 in 2040.** By 2040, the model illustrates an economy £10.9 billion smaller than it could be⁴.

The housing component of the model is central to this story. The housing construction impact identified in the model should be understood as part of the annual opportunity foregone, not as an additional impact to be added separately to the headline GVA gap. It has been pulled out because it is politically and economically important in its own right, but it remains one component of the wider annual foregone opportunity.

⁴ Forecasts are not definitive and should be understood as indicative modelled outputs intended to illustrate the likely scale and direction of economic opportunity foregone where wastewater constraints impede development-sensitive activity.

The purpose of highlighting housing is not to double-count the impact. It is to show that the headline economic gap has a direct connection to the everyday pressures facing households and communities. The same infrastructure constraint that suppresses economic growth also limits the delivery of new homes, worsens affordability pressures, constrains social housing delivery and weakens the ability of towns and cities to regenerate.

The model therefore gives quantitative expression to a wider policy reality. Wastewater underinvestment is not just delaying pipes, treatment works and network upgrades. It is delaying the development that depends on them.

Note on Construction Turnover and GVA

GVA measures the net value created in the economy. It is different from turnover, which measures the total value of sales or activity before deducting input costs.

The figures in this report are presented in GVA terms. However, the turnover effect of not building 55,000 homes is significant. Using a standard three-bedroom semi-detached house as the reference point, approximately £10.5 billion of construction turnover is lost to the economy. This should be read as the scale of lost construction activity, not as the net GVA impact.

2.4. Policy meaning

If Northern Ireland continues to fund wastewater infrastructure through short-term, constrained and uncertain allocations, it will continue to ration development capacity. That rationing will appear as slower delivery, reduced density, higher costs, phased development, weaker investor confidence and postponed regeneration.

For politicians, the central issue is therefore not whether wastewater investment is desirable. It is whether Northern Ireland is prepared to accept the economic and social consequences of not funding it properly.

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Impact grows over time, from £325 per household in 2028, to... £5,500 in 2040
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03.

Regional Impacts

CASE STUDY 3: SOCIAL HOUSING
(WEST BELFAST)

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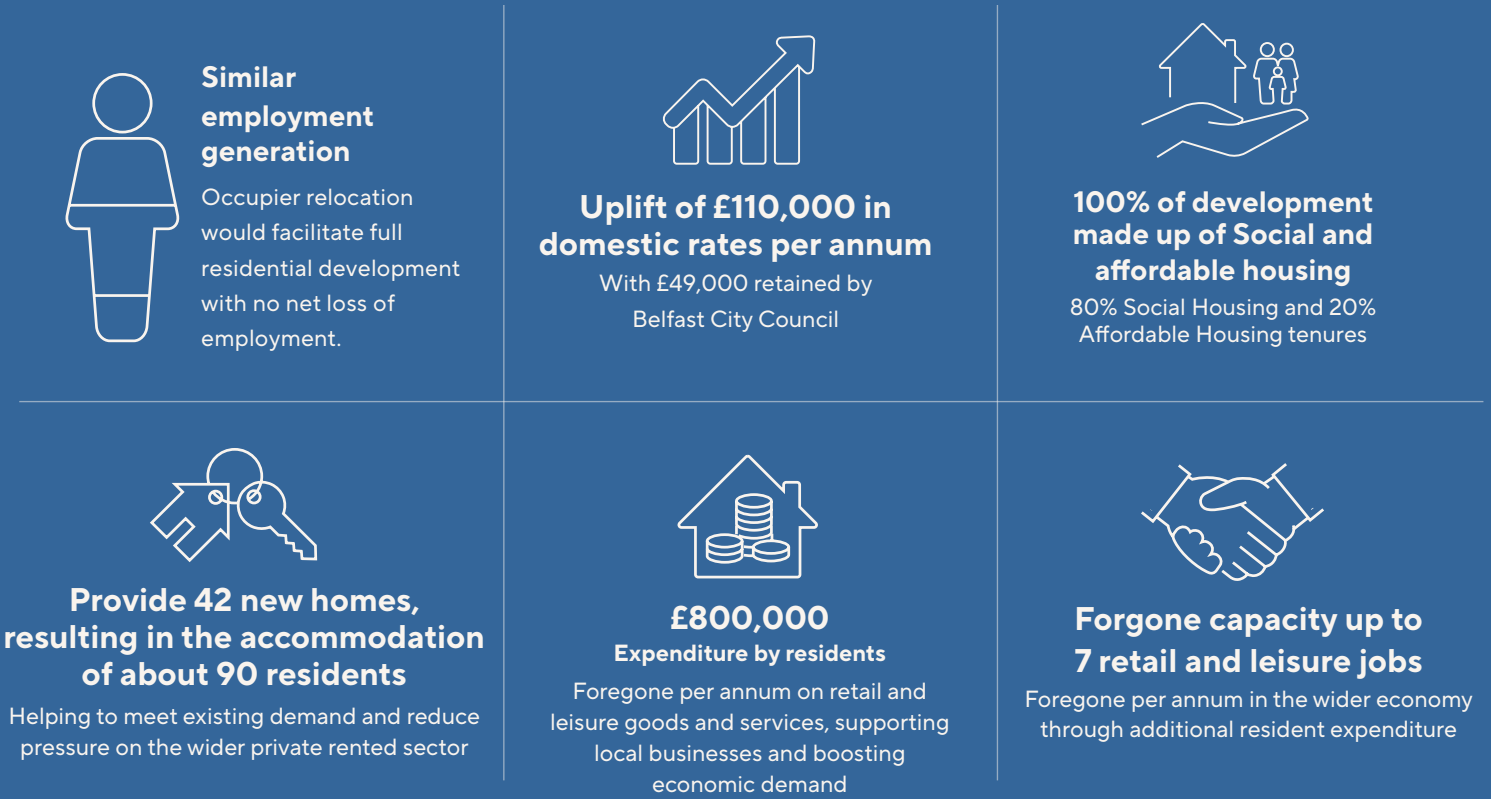
Development Proposed is mixed tenure residential buildings across three sites delivering 42 residential dwellings (80% Social Housing and 20% Affordable Housing), including a 26-unit apartment building and 16 town houses.
- 

The proposed development is stalled due to insufficient capacity within the existing wastewater network and the presence of failing downstream combined sewer overflow infrastructure identified by NI Water. Progression of the scheme is therefore dependent on major wastewater infrastructure upgrades, which are currently unfunded within the 2021 - 2027 investment period, with no confirmed timeline for resolution.

Foregone Impacts from Construction Phase¹



Foregone Impacts from Operational Phase¹



¹ The economic methodology and underlying assumptions are set out in Appendix.
² GVA (Gross Value Added) measures the value of output created (i.e. turnover) net of inputs used to produce a good or service (i.e. production of outputs). Put simply the GVA is the total of all revenue into businesses, which is used to fund wages, profits and taxes.

3.1. A regional challenge

Wastewater capacity is often discussed through the lens of individual schemes, specific wastewater treatment works or particular localised constraints. That is understandable, because the practical consequences are usually encountered site by site.

However, the evidence points to a wider regional challenge. Wastewater capacity constraints are now affecting the development potential of multiple council areas across Northern Ireland. The impact is not uniform, but nor is it isolated. It is being felt across large urban areas, commuter-belt locations, regional growth centres and towns with identified housing and regeneration need.

This matters for policy. If wastewater constraint were only a narrow localised issue, it could be treated as a project-level delivery problem. The modelling suggests something more significant. It indicates that wastewater capacity is shaping the economic path of places by affecting their ability to accommodate development, capital investment and future growth.

3.2. The opportunity cost is spatially uneven

The council-level results show that the estimated opportunity foregone is not distributed evenly across Northern Ireland. This reflects differences in economic scale, historic growth trends, sector composition, development exposure, GFCF dependency and the assumed intensity of wastewater constraint.

In simple terms, places with a larger development-sensitive economy, stronger growth potential or higher dependency on capital formation are more exposed to the economic consequences of infrastructure constraint. Where wastewater capacity acts as a brake on housing, regeneration or employment land, the effect is not simply a delay to individual projects. It can also mean a lower economic trajectory for the place as a whole.



Figure 3.1: Cumulative opportunity foregone by council, 2040

The model identifies the largest estimated 2040 total opportunity gap in Belfast, followed by Mid Ulster, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Newry, Mourne and Down, Derry City and Strabane, and Antrim and Newtownabbey.

The chart also separates out the housing component within the wider opportunity foregone. This is important because the total economic gap and the housing component do not follow exactly the same pattern. Belfast has the largest overall opportunity cost, reflecting the scale and concentration of its economy. However, the housing-related element is more widely distributed, with significant estimated impacts across Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Belfast, Newry, Mourne and Down, Mid Ulster, Antrim and Newtownabbey, and Ards and North Down, reflecting NI Water constraints.

Belfast has the largest economic exposure: Belfast records by far the largest estimated opportunity gap in the model. This reflects the city's scale and its role within the regional economy. Belfast contains a significant concentration of development activity, including city centre residential development, regeneration schemes, employment space, higher education activity, public sector assets and major mixed-use opportunities.

The economic significance of wastewater capacity in Belfast is therefore amplified by scale. Constraint in Belfast does not only affect local delivery. It affects the performance of the wider Northern Ireland economy, given the city's role as the principal employment, education, commercial and investment centre.

The chart also shows that Belfast's total estimated opportunity lost is much larger than its housing component alone. This is an important finding. It suggests that, while housing is a significant part of the development constraint, the wider economic cost in Belfast also reflects the city's broader development and investment role. Wastewater capacity therefore matters not only for homes, but for the city's ability to absorb commercial, institutional, regeneration and employment-related growth.

In a dense urban setting, the issue is not simply whether land exists or whether there is market interest. The issue is whether the infrastructure beneath the city can support the level of housing, regeneration and employment growth expected of a modern regional capital. Where capacity is constrained, the consequences are likely to be felt through slower residential growth, more difficult regeneration delivery, higher project costs and weaker confidence in the pace at which the city can accommodate investment.

Mid Ulster and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon demonstrate development pressure beyond Belfast: After Belfast, the chart points to material opportunity costs in Mid Ulster and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon. This reinforces the point that wastewater constraint is not only a metropolitan issue.

These council areas play important roles in Northern Ireland's wider economic geography. They contain growth towns, industrial and employment locations, housing demand pressures and development corridors that are central to regional balance. They are also places where physical development, business expansion, construction activity and land availability matter directly to future economic performance.

In these areas, wastewater capacity constraints risk weakening the ability of local economies to convert growth potential into delivered development. The consequence may not be as visible as a major city centre scheme being delayed, but it can be equally important over time. Housing delivery, employment site activation, commercial expansion and town centre regeneration all depend on the infrastructure capacity to support growth.

The chart also suggests different local profiles. Mid Ulster shows a large estimated opportunity cost relative to its housing component, indicating that the wider economic exposure extends beyond housing alone. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon shows both a significant housing component and a substantial total opportunity cost, reflecting the combined importance of housing growth, development activity and economic scale.

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Wastewater capacity acts as a brake on housing, regeneration and employment land, the effect is not simply a delay to individual projects

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Lisburn and Castlereagh, Newry, Mourne and Down, and Antrim and Newtownabbey: housing markets and development corridors: Lisburn and Castlereagh, Newry, Mourne and Down, and Antrim and Newtownabbey also show material estimated opportunity costs. These areas are significant because they sit within, or interact strongly with, wider regional housing and labour markets.

In these council areas, wastewater constraint has particular relevance to housing delivery and development corridors. Demand is shaped by proximity to employment centres, transport links, household formation, commuter patterns and, in the case of Newry, Mourne and Down, wider cross-border dynamics. Where the delivery of new homes is impeded, the effects can spread beyond the immediate council area through affordability pressures, longer commuting patterns and reduced labour mobility.

The policy point is that housing constraints are not contained neatly within administrative boundaries. A failure to accommodate housing in one area can affect labour market access, household costs and economic opportunity across a wider functional region.

Derry City and Strabane: regional balance and the North West:

Derry City and Strabane's estimated opportunity gap remains significant in policy terms. The North West has long been central to discussions about regional balance, inclusive growth and the need to strengthen economic opportunity beyond the Belfast metropolitan area. In this context, wastewater capacity should be viewed as part of the enabling infrastructure required to support the North West's development potential. Housing, regeneration, education, tourism, business growth and cross-border economic activity all require basic infrastructure capacity.

A constrained wastewater system risks weakening the delivery of wider policy ambitions for the North West. It can slow development, reduce investor confidence and make it more difficult to translate strategic plans into physical delivery.

3.3. The regional picture strengthens the policy case

The regional pattern points to a more important conclusion than the ranking of council areas alone. Wastewater constraint is now shaping the growth capacity of places. It is affecting where homes can be built, where firms can expand, where employment land can be brought forward and where regeneration plans can move from strategy into delivery.

The effect is not the same everywhere and has significant relevance to the economic ambition of regional balance. In Belfast, the issue is bound up with the performance of the regional capital and its ability to absorb new housing, employment, higher education, commercial and mixed-use development. In Mid Ulster and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, the issue is more closely linked to growth towns, industrial activity and capital-intensive expansion. In commuter-belt and corridor locations, the pressure is felt through housing delivery, affordability and labour market access. In the North West, it has a direct bearing on regional balance and the credibility of long-term regeneration ambitions.

This is why the model should not be read simply as a list of places with wastewater problems. The largest opportunity costs arise where capacity constraints meet economic scale, development pressure and the potential for future growth. A constraint in one location may delay a housing scheme. In another, it may limit the activation of employment land, weaken a town centre regeneration plan or make a strategic investment harder to secure. The economic cost is shaped by what the infrastructure constraint prevents from happening.

The policy implication is clear. Wastewater is no longer a narrow utility issue to be dealt with scheme by scheme or treatment works by treatment works. It has become part of the economic infrastructure of the region. If capacity remains constrained, Northern Ireland will continue to ration development in practice, even where policy says it wants more homes, more investment, stronger places and better regional balance.



04.

Capital Rationing or Capital Recovery?

CASE STUDY 4: INDUSTRIAL AND MANUFACTURING FACILITY (LISBURN)

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Development proposed comprises a predominantly vacant employment-zoned landholding (with one building complete), including a live planning application site and an indicative layout demonstrating development potential. The assessment considers five Class B2 buildings, comprising one in planning and four in future phases, totalling c.21,300 sq.m.
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The proposed development is stalled due to insufficient capacity within the existing wastewater network and the presence of failing downstream combined sewer overflow infrastructure identified by NI Water. Progression of the scheme is therefore dependent on major wastewater infrastructure upgrades, which are currently unfunded within the 2021 - 2027 investment period, with no confirmed timeline for resolution.

Foregone Impacts from Construction Phase¹



£20.8m

Investment Foregone

In the construction of the Proposed Development



105 gross direct jobs

FTE (full time equivalent) jobs forgone on average throughout the construction period (circa 3 years)

Including 80 net direct jobs

FTE jobs supported in Northern Ireland, including 50 in Lisburn & Castlereagh (3-year construction period)

Plus 40 net indirect/induced jobs

FTE jobs forgone in Northern Ireland, including 12 in Lisburn & Castlereagh (3-year construction period)



£13.3m

Economy Boost

Measured in GVA², foregone in Northern Ireland during construction, including £11.0m in Lisburn & Castlereagh

Foregone Impacts from Operational Phase¹



530 on-site jobs per annum

400 net direct jobs per annum

FTE jobs supported in Northern Ireland, including 240 in Lisburn & Castlereagh

200 net indirect/induced jobs per annum

FTE jobs supported in Northern Ireland, including 60 in Lisburn & Castlereagh



£43.3 million

Economy Boost

output per annum, including £11 million in Lisburn & Castlereagh



Occupational variety

A range of managerial, professional, technical, skilled and elementary jobs supported



£410,000

Non-Domestic rates

Foregone per annum, including £190,000 retained each year by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council



£9.8 million

Direct and indirect wages

Foregone per annum for Lisburn & Castlereagh and Northern Ireland residents

¹ The economic methodology and underlying assumptions are set out in Appendix.
² GVA (Gross Value Added) measures the value of output created (i.e. turnover) net of inputs used to produce a good or service (i.e. production of outputs). Put simply the GVA is the total of all revenue into businesses, which is used to fund wages, profits and taxes.

4.1. An erosion of confidence

The evidence set out in this report points to a clear conclusion. Northern Ireland's wastewater infrastructure is no longer only a technical, environmental or utility management issue. It is now a core economic and housing delivery issue.

The current funding model for NI Water is producing a rationed outcome. Capacity is constrained. Housing is impeded. Development is delayed. Environmental improvement is made harder. Economic opportunity is foregone. This does not mean that every project stops. The effect is more subtle and, for that reason, more precarious. Development takes longer. Sites are phased. Costs rise. Density is reduced. Investment confidence weakens. Some activity is displaced. Some opportunities are lost entirely. Over time, those effects compound into a lower economic path as confidence erodes.

The policy question is therefore no longer whether wastewater infrastructure matters. That question has been answered. The question is whether Northern Ireland is prepared to fund the system at a level consistent with its ambitions for housing, growth, regeneration and environmental recovery.

4.2. The current path is managed rationing

Continuing broadly as now results in wastewater investment remaining dependent on constrained public allocations, short-term funding decisions and periodic interventions to relieve the most pressing local bottlenecks.

That approach carries significant economic and social costs. It means development capacity is rationed through delay, uncertainty and constraint with the housing system carrying a lot of the consequences of underinvestment in infrastructure. Bluntly, it means the economy moves forward in first gear with the handbrake on.

Managed rationing also creates a credibility problem. Northern Ireland cannot credibly seek to accelerate housing delivery, attract investment, regenerate town and city centres and improve environmental outcomes if the infrastructure required to support those ambitions is not funded.

The risk is that wastewater becomes a practical veto on delivery. Planning strategies, housing targets, regeneration plans and economic ambitions, indeed Programme for Government ambitions, may remain in place, but the physical capacity to deliver them is constrained.

4.3. The cost of indecision

The central finding of this report is that the cost of further delay or inaction is not a hypothetical. It is demonstrable in the homes that are impeded, investment that is deferred and economic opportunity that is foregone.

Currently, around 55,000 homes are understood to be impeded by some level of wastewater capacity constraints. Beyond housing, other capital expenditure ambitions fall away. The modelling undertaken for this report estimates a 2040 annual GVA opportunity gap of approximately £10.9 billion between the success forecast and the constrained forecast. These figures are different expressions of the same underlying problem: Northern Ireland is trying to pursue growth without funding one of the core infrastructure systems required to deliver them.

Northern Ireland can continue with managed rationing and accept the consequences. Or it can move to funded recovery and treat wastewater infrastructure as a foundation for housing, investment, environmental improvement and regional growth.

4.4. Recovery requires a funded, multi-year approach

A funded recovery approach would treat wastewater infrastructure as enabling economic infrastructure and fund it accordingly. A credible recovery approach would need to be multi-year, transparent and delivery-focused. It would need to move beyond short-term allocations and provide sufficient certainty for NI Water, departments, councils, developers, housing providers and investors to plan with confidence.

This was a critical finding of the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council's report, which underscored the unsustainable nature of the Executives current customer subsidy, and that funding is increasingly dependent on monitoring rounds and consistently falls short of regulatory recommendations, limiting the wastewater network's capacity to handle new housing developments and commercial projects.

The WIG group’s previous report, proposal introduced the suggestion of a household infrastructure levy, supported by SUDs, voluntary developer contributions, and called for the establishment of an Infrastructure Transformation Fund to kick-start construction work and provide certainty to engineering and construction contractors, on identified wastewater treatment plant and combined sewer overflow (CSO) priority projects. Such a fund, could operate under similar terms of other regional growth and city investment deals, committing funding for a defined period for specified works.

Prioritise necessary investment in water infrastructure, targeted to areas of greatest need, to protect the environment, facilitate building of homes and economic development, was also a key recommendation of the IoD (NI) *Getting infrastructure and investment back on track report*, and echoed our previous call for Introduce an infrastructure levy, collected via the rates system and ring-fenced for capital investment in essential infrastructure.

Indeed, in contrast to the 5% increase in household regional rates proposed in the draft multi-annual Budget, when adjusted for the reduced estimated shortfall in PC28 resulting from the draft multi-annual Budget of £1.29bn, our proposed levy would apply less pressure on households. Assuming a baseline allocation to NI Water of £321m per annum, if the draft Multi-Annual budget was implemented there would be a notable decrease in the average levy to £65 per household per annum – **or £1.25 per week** – previously it was anticipated to average £100 per household per annum. On these updated figures, the borrowing repayment of our proposed levy would fall to £55.9m a year.

Whatever route forward is chosen, increased household rates, alternative sources of funding, or a dedicated ringfenced infrastructure levy or a combination of measures, it is clear a decision must be made quickly, and in tandem with identifying immediate opportunities for prioritised tactical intervention across the wastewater system. This could be supported by another IoD recommendation, and the convening of *“comprehensive review of alternative arrangements, led by suitably qualified experts as recommended by the NI Audit Office in 2024”*, or as we have sought a Wastewater Working Group facilitating ongoing engagement between the construction and economic sectors, NI Water, DfI and DAERA and their other agencies, to pursue agreement on both tactical and strategic interventions.

Recovery requires a co-ordinated multi-annual approach, and clear transparency and engagement with the public as to the value of this investment, to ensure clean healthy water, a cleaner environment and to enable development, housing and jobs.

05.

Conclusion

CASE STUDY 5: MANUFACTURING PLANT
(SOUTH DOWN)

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The proposed development comprises a manufacturing plant building of approximately 47,000 sq.m on a greenfield site.
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The proposed development is stalled due to insufficient capacity within the existing wastewater network and the presence of failing downstream combined sewer overflow infrastructure identified by NI Water. Progression of the scheme is therefore dependent on major wastewater infrastructure upgrades, which are currently unfunded within the 2021 - 2027 investment period, with no confirmed timeline for resolution.

Foregone Impacts from Construction Phase¹



£90m

Investment Foregone

In the construction of the Proposed Development



450 gross direct jobs

FTE (full time equivalent) jobs forgone on average throughout the construction period (circa 1.5 years)

Including 340 net direct jobs

FTE jobs supported in Northern Ireland, including 300 in Newry, Mourne and Down (1.5 years of construction period)

Plus 170 net indirect/induced jobs

FTE jobs forgone in Northern Ireland, including 80 in Newry, Mourne and Down (1.5 years of construction period)





£57.4m

Economy Boost

Measured in GVA², foregone in Northern Ireland during construction, including £49.8m in Newry, Mourne and Down

Foregone Impacts from Operational Phase¹



1,110 on-site jobs per annum

830 net direct jobs per annum

FTE jobs supported in Northern Ireland, including 750 in Newry, Mourne and Down

415 net indirect/induced jobs per annum

FTE jobs supported in Northern Ireland, including 185 in Newry, Mourne and Down



£90.4 million

Economy Boost

output per annum, including £74 million in Newry, Mourne and Down



Occupational variety

A range of managerial, professional, technical, skilled and elementary jobs supported



£860,000

Non-Domestic rates

Foregone per annum, including £430,000 retained each year by Newry, Mourne and Down Council



£41.2 million

Direct and indirect wages

Foregone per annum for Newry, Mourne and Down and Northern Ireland residents and Northern Ireland

¹ The economic methodology and underlying assumptions are set out in Appendix.
² GVA (Gross Value Added) measures the value of output created (i.e. turnover) net of inputs used to produce a good or service (i.e. production of outputs). Put simply the GVA is the total of all revenue into businesses, which is used to fund wages, profits and taxes.

5.1. Conclusion

The central point of this report is that wastewater constraints are actively hampering Northern Ireland's economic ambitions. They are restricting housing delivery, delaying investment, constraining business expansion and limiting the ability of towns and cities to realise their growth potential. Where wastewater infrastructure cannot accommodate additional development, economic opportunities are postponed, scaled back or lost altogether.

Around 55,000 homes are understood to be impeded by some level of wastewater capacity constraints. This is happening at a time of acute housing need, rising affordability pressure and continuing concern about the pace of new housing delivery. The consequence is not confined to housing. Delayed homes mean delayed construction activity, weaker labour mobility, slower regeneration and reduced confidence in the ability of places to accommodate growth.

The modelling undertaken for this report gives scale to that problem. It does not suggest that wastewater constraint creates a single economic shock. It suggests something more persistent: a lower development path – an economy moving in first gear with the handbrake on. By 2040, the economy we are heading towards is £10.9 billion smaller than the economy we could have if we invested in wastewater. Continuing wastewater constraint means accepting a smaller economy than Northern Ireland could otherwise support, and each household will be £5,500 less well off.

Continuing with the existing approach means accepting managed rationing. The alternative is to treat wastewater infrastructure as enabling economic infrastructure and fund it accordingly through a credible, multi-year recovery approach, with clear investment requirements, a sustainable funding mechanism, protection for those least able to pay, ringfenced delivery and transparent reporting on what is being unlocked.

On the evidence set out in this report, wastewater capacity has become one of the foundations of Northern Ireland's economic future. If it remains underfunded, the cost will be measured in lost economic performance and each NI household materially worse off.

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By 2040, the economy we are heading towards is £10.9 billion smaller... and each household will be £5,500 less well off

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Appendix 1

Technical Annex (OCO Global)

1. Purpose of the model

This annex summarises the method used to estimate the economic opportunity foregone associated with wastewater infrastructure constraints in Northern Ireland.

The purpose of the model is not to produce a project-by-project cost-benefit appraisal. It is designed to provide a regional, policy-relevant estimate of the economic gap that may emerge where wastewater capacity constrains housing delivery, regeneration, employment land activation and other development-sensitive activity.

The model therefore estimates the difference between two future economic paths:

- a constrained path, where wastewater capacity continues to limit development-sensitive growth; and
- a success path, where wastewater constraints are progressively reduced and development activity is able to move closer to its underlying potential.

The difference between these two paths is interpreted as the annual economic opportunity foregone. The modelling is undertaken at council level and then aggregated to Northern Ireland level.

2. Model structure

The model uses council-level Gross Value Added (GVA) as the primary measure of economic output. Historic real GVA trends are used to establish a baseline growth path for each of Northern Ireland’s eleven local government districts.

The model then identifies the share of each council economy that is more likely to be affected by wastewater infrastructure constraints. This is described as the development-sensitive share of the economy. It reflects sectors and activities where growth is more closely linked to physical development, construction, housing, regeneration, employment space and capital investment.

A wastewater constraint factor is then applied to this development-sensitive share. The model assumes that wastewater constraints do not suppress all economic activity. Instead, they affect the portion of growth that depends on new development capacity. This is important because the impact of wastewater underinvestment is not felt evenly across the economy. It is most relevant where new connections, new buildings, housing delivery or serviced development land are required.

The core model logic is:

$$\text{Constrained growth} = \text{baseline growth} \times (1 - H)$$

Where H is the constraint adjustment applied to the development-sensitive share of growth.

The constraint adjustment combines four elements:

- the share of the local economy exposed to development-sensitive activity;
- the intensity of the wastewater constraint;
- a haircut factor, to avoid assuming that all exposed growth is lost; and
- a Gross Fixed Capital Formation dependency index.

The model then produces a constrained forecast for each council. A success forecast is also produced, representing the path that could be achieved if wastewater constraints were progressively addressed and development activity moved closer to its baseline potential. The opportunity foregone is the difference between the success forecast and the constrained forecast.

3. Role of Gross Fixed Capital Formation

Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) is used to strengthen the link between infrastructure capacity and economic growth.

GFCF measures investment in fixed assets such as buildings, infrastructure, machinery and equipment. In the context of this model, it is used as a proxy for the extent to which future economic performance in a council area is linked to physical development and capital investment.

This is relevant because wastewater constraints are most likely to affect places where growth depends on development capacity. A council area with higher development-capital intensity is more exposed to wastewater constraint than an area where growth is less dependent on new housing, new commercial space or physical expansion.

The model therefore applies a council-level GFCF dependency index. This compares each council's development-related GFCF intensity with the Northern Ireland average. To avoid extreme results, the index is bounded using a floor and cap. This ensures that the model recognises differences in capital dependency between councils without allowing any one factor to dominate the results.

The GFCF linkage improves the policy relevance of the model. It means the analysis is not simply applying a flat wastewater adjustment across Northern Ireland. Instead, it reflects the fact that infrastructure constraint matters more in places where growth is more dependent on development, construction, housing and capital formation.

4. Forecast scenarios

The model compares three forecast paths.

The baseline forecast applies historic real GVA growth trends to each council. This provides a reference point for what the economy might be expected to do in the absence of an additional wastewater constraint.

The constrained forecast applies the wastewater constraint adjustment to the positive growth component of development-sensitive activity. This reflects the principle that wastewater capacity constraints suppress or defer part of the growth that would otherwise occur.

The success forecast represents a stronger growth path in which wastewater constraints are progressively addressed. It is not a theoretical maximum. It is intended to reflect the economic path that could be achieved if infrastructure capacity were improved and development-sensitive activity were able to move closer to its underlying potential.

The success forecast scenario assumes that the additional wastewater investment required to relieve development constraint is supported through a household levy. The model allows for the levy to reduce household disposable income and consumer spending. It does not therefore assume that the funding mechanism is costless.

At the same time, consumer spending is modelled as part of the wider economic path rather than as a fixed deduction. Over the forecast period, consumer spending is affected not only by the levy, but also by additional employment, wage growth and the wider economic activity associated with enabled development. The model therefore reflects both the near-term spending drag associated with the levy and the medium-term uplift associated with a stronger economy.

The published results reflect the combined effect of these interacting channels within the modelling framework and should be interpreted as a strategic assessment of the economy-wide implications of a levy-funded recovery scenario.

The model reports results over the period to 2040, with particular emphasis on the widening gap from 2027 onwards. By 2040, the model estimates that the annual GVA gap between the success forecast and the constrained forecast is approximately £10.9 billion.

This figure should be interpreted as the estimated annual economic opportunity foregone in 2040. It is not a one-off loss, and it should not be added to previous annual figures as if it were a cumulative net present value calculation.

5. Housing construction component

The model separately identifies a housing construction component within the annual opportunity foregone.

Construction firms and workers may undertake alternative projects, meaning that reduced housing delivery does not necessarily translate into an equivalent reduction in overall construction activity. However, wastewater constraints influence what can be built, where it can be built and when it can be built. As a result, while some construction activity may be displaced rather than lost entirely, the constraint still limits housing delivery and associated regeneration and economic development opportunities. Under the success forecast scenario, investment in wastewater infrastructure enables additional housing construction and related development activity, supporting stronger growth in the construction sector over the forecast period.

This reflects the importance of housing within the overall development constraint. Around 55,000 homes are understood to be impeded by some level of wastewater capacity constraints. This is a central policy issue because housing delivery is linked to affordability, social housing need, labour mobility, construction activity and regeneration.

The housing construction impact has been pulled out within the model because it is economically and politically important. However, it should be interpreted carefully. It is part of the annual opportunity foregone, not an additional impact to be added separately to the headline GVA gap.

The housing impact within the model is not dependent solely on migration. Additional housing increases economic capacity through a number of channels, including household formation, labour mobility, worker retention and the ability of firms to access labour in areas of demand. Increased housing supply may also help to ease affordability pressures. Migration can contribute to these outcomes, but it is only one of several mechanisms through which additional housing supports GVA.

In practical terms, the housing component helps explain the nature of the wider economic gap. Wastewater constraints affect output partly because they delay or reduce housing-related construction activity. They also affect the wider economy through reduced development, weaker investment, slower regeneration and constrained employment space.

The analysis focuses specifically on wastewater infrastructure because it is currently a binding constraint on development in a number of locations. The modelling should not be interpreted as suggesting that wastewater infrastructure is the only factor influencing future growth or development capacity. Population and economic growth can increase demand for a range of supporting infrastructure and public services, including transport, education and healthcare. Addressing wastewater constraints is therefore one component of enabling sustainable growth and does not remove the need for continued planning and investment across other infrastructure and service areas. The purpose of the analysis is to assess the economic implications of relieving wastewater constraints, rather than to provide a comprehensive assessment of all infrastructure requirements associated with future growth.

6. Interpretation and use

The model should be understood as an indicative policy model rather than a scheme-level appraisal.

It is designed to support strategic decision-making by estimating the broad scale of economic opportunity that may be foregone if wastewater constraints continue to impede development. It does not replace detailed engineering assessment, project appraisal, investment planning or regulatory analysis.

The results should therefore be interpreted as an estimate of direction and scale. They show that wastewater underinvestment can create a material and widening economic gap. They also show that the effect is not evenly distributed across Northern Ireland. The largest estimated opportunity costs arise in places where economic scale, development exposure, growth potential and capital dependency combine most strongly.

The model's main value is that it links wastewater infrastructure to the wider economy in a transparent and policy-relevant way. It demonstrates that the issue is not only about environmental compliance or utility management. It is also about housing delivery, regional development, private investment and the economy Northern Ireland is able to build.

The central conclusion from the model is that continuing wastewater constraint creates a lower economic path. The cost is not always visible as a single cancelled project. It appears through delayed homes, slower regeneration, reduced development capacity and weaker growth over time. By comparing the constrained and success paths, the model provides an estimate of the economic opportunity that could be unlocked through a more credible and sustained approach to wastewater infrastructure investment.

Appendix 2

Technical Annex (Turley Economics)

1. Case Studies

Economic Methodology

Turley Economics has undertaken independent economic assessments to estimate local and Northern Ireland economic benefits for 5 case studies. The assessments have been prepared with reference to published guidance on standard economic impact methodologies and recognised industry best practice.

The assessments are informed by the Home & Communities Agency's¹ (HCA, now known as Homes England) Additionality Guide¹ and Employment Density Guide² and draws on a range of published statistical data sources, including the NISRA 2021 Census³ and ONS. Where relevant, this has been supplemented by information provided by the Applicant.

For each case study, a local impact area has been defined to assess the extent to which benefits are retained locally, as well as at the wider Northern Ireland level.

2. Additionality Assumptions

The assessment applies standard additionality factors to estimate the net additional economic impact of the Proposed Development. These comprise deadweight, leakage, displacement and multiplier effects.

Deadweight refers to the economic outcomes that would be expected to occur in the absence of the Proposed Development.

Leakage reflects the proportion of economic benefits, including employment, that may be taken up by people or businesses outside the local impact area or outside Northern Ireland. This reduces the level of benefit retained within the target area. Leakage assumptions are informed by NISRA Census 2021 Origin and Destination Workplace data.

Displacement captures the extent to which the Proposed Development may shift existing jobs, activity or investment from elsewhere within the target area to the Site, rather than generating wholly additional economic activity. In line with the HCA Additionality Guide, and recognising that some displacement may occur, a low displacement rate of 25% has been applied at both the local impact area and Northern Ireland scales.

Multiplier Effects capture the wider economic benefits generated through supply chain expenditure and employee spending in the local economy. In line with the HCA Additionality Guide, a multiplier of 1.25 has been applied at the local impact area level, increasing to 1.5 at the Northern Ireland level.

3. Employment and GVA Impacts

The assessment estimates the potential employment and productivity impacts arising from the Proposed Development. These are presented in terms of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs and Gross Value Added (GVA) (productivity).

Gross FTE job creation has been estimated using average turnover per FTE employee in Northern Ireland's construction industry, based on ONS Business Population Estimates 2025 for Northern Ireland.

GVA impacts have been estimated using average GVA per FTE employee for the relevant sectors considered in each case study, based on Experian economic data for 2025.

4. Wider Data Sources and Supporting Assumptions

A range of additional assumptions and data sources have been applied to support the assessment. These include:

- Average household size and relationships, informed by NISRA Census 2021 data on accommodation type, usual residents and households.
- The proportion of residents who are economically active and in employment, informed by NISRA Census 2021 Economic Activity by Sex data.
- Income data for Northern Ireland residents and by occupation type, sourced from the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.
- Turnover per employee in the retail, arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services sectors, used to estimate the number of jobs supported and/or generated. This is informed by the Department for Business and Trade 2025 Business Population Estimates for Northern Ireland.
- Domestic and non-domestic rates, informed by the Department of Finance 2025 Rate Poundages.

¹ Homes & Communities Agency (2014) Additionality Guide, 4th Ed.

² Homes & Communities Agency (2015) Employment Density Guide, 3rd Ed.

³ Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2023) 2021 Census: Northern Ireland

- Average spend per overnight visitor, sourced from NISRA Northern Ireland Tourism 2024.
- Accommodation expenditure ratios, sourced from VisitBritain’s 2025 Great Britain Domestic Overnight Trips dataset. The Great Britain benchmark has been used in the absence of equivalent data for Northern Ireland.
- Room occupancy rates, source from NISRA 2024 Northern Ireland Hotel Occupancy Rates by Local Government District 2014-2024. Assumption that 50% of rooms are occupied by one person and 50% are occupied by two people.
- For PBSA impacts, it has been assumed that 50% of international students live in PBSA, and that only these students generate additional leisure and retail expenditure. It has also been assumed that all students receive at least two visits per year from friends or relatives.

5. Case Study Information

Further details on the sources and assumptions applied to each case study are set out below.

CASE STUDY 1: MIXED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (NORTH BELFAST)

Source of information: Graham Group.

Construction costs were estimated at £80 million, with an upper and lower sensitivity range of 10%.

Deadweight has not been applied, as the site is greenfield and is therefore assumed not to support existing operational activity.

The operational use is assumed to be Use Class A1, Retail.

CASE STUDY 2: PURPOSE-BUILT STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (SOUTH BELFAST)

Source of information: Turley Planning.

Deadweight has been considered in relation to the existing hotel’s economic and tourism impacts. However, the overall level of employment generated would likely have remained broadly similar, although these roles would shift from hotel-based positions to PBSA related staff.

CASE STUDY 3: SOCIAL HOUSING (WEST BELFAST)

Source of information: Turley Planning.

Construction cost figure estimated by Turley Economics based on a £/m² benchmarking parameter derived from the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) dataset.

Deadweight has not been applied, as the existing business is being relocated rather than discontinued, and the overall level of employment generated by the current business is expected to remain broadly similar.

CASE STUDY 4: INDUSTRIAL AND MANUFACTURING FACILITY (LISBURN)

Source of information: Turley Planning.

Construction cost figure estimated by Turley Economics based on an average of the £/m² benchmarking parameter derived from the BCIS dataset, and of the and the estimated outturn cost of the existing building on site.

Deadweight has not been applied, as the site is greenfield and is therefore assumed not to support existing operational activity.

The operational use is assumed to be Use Class B2, Industrial and Manufacturing.

CASE STUDY 5: MANUFACTURING PLANT (SOUTH DOWN)

Source of information: Manufacturing NI.

Deadweight has not been applied, as the site is greenfield and is therefore assumed not to support existing operational activity.

The operational use is assumed to be Use Class B2, Industrial and Manufacturing.



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