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Local Development Plan 2030

PLAN STRATEGY REVISION

Assessments Scoping Report

October 2026







Antrim and Newtownabbey BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Have Your Say

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is consulting on this Preferred Options Paper (POP) and Assessments Scoping Report for the forthcoming Local Development Plan 2030: Plan Strategy Revision.

The POP represents the first public consultation stage, before the publication of a Plan Strategy draft Revision, concerning matters relating to the Abbey Centre retail area. This has occurred as a consequence of the issuing of a direction under Section 14(2)(b) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, by the Department of Infrastructure (DfI), to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council on 28 October 2025. The content of the Direction related to matters concerning the Abbey Centre retail area only and the proposed revision to the Plan Strategy is accordingly limited to these matters.

The comments received will assist in informing the Council's Plan Strategy Draft Revision, which will be subject to public consultation and Independent Examination.

Public Consultation on the Plan Strategy Revision POP and Assessment Scoping Report

The POP and Assessments Scoping Report are published for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks, beginning on 20 October 2026, and concluding at 5:00 pm on 15 December 2026.

Please note that representations received after the closing date will generally not be considered by the Council.

The POP is supported by the Assessments Scoping Report, as well as an evidence base in the form of an updated Retail Centres Report (June 2026), that have considered the content of the Section 14 Direction and has informed the preparation of various options relating to planning policy for the Abbey Centre retail area.

Copies of the documents are available to view on the Council's website at Preferred Options Paper or alternatively for public inspection at the Council Offices in Mossley Mill, Carnmoney Road North, Newtownabbey from Monday to Friday, between the hours of 08:30am and 5:00pm and Antrim Civic Centre, 50 Stiles Way, Antrim from Monday to Friday, between the hours of 9:00am and 5:00pm.

Should you require a copy of the documents in an alternative format, it can be made available on request in large print, audio format, DAISY or Braille. It may also be made available in minority languages to meet the needs of people for whom English is not their first language.

How to respond

The public consultation relates to the content of the POP and Assessments Scoping Report only and any other issues raised outside of this will not be considered by the Council. The proposed review of the Plan Strategy is limited to those matters specified in the Section 14 Direction. Please state if you support each of the conclusions and why; alternatively, if you disagree or wish to propose an alternative option, please submit supporting evidence with your response to the Council.

Representations should be made in writing, and we would encourage you to email them to the forwardplanningteam@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk; alternatively, a written response can be provided to the address below.

Forward Planning Team
Planning Section
Mossley Mill
Carnmoney Road North
Newtownabbey
BT36 5QA

Keeping the Community Involved

The Council wishes to encourage the ongoing involvement of the local community in the plan process. You can sign up to receive our Local Development Plan emails to keep up to date on the progress of the Plan and upcoming events.

If you would like to receive our Local Development Plan emails, please contact the Forward Planning Team using the contact details above.

General Data Protection Regulation

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by producing a specific Local Development Plan Privacy Notice, which lets you know how we manage any personal information we receive from you. It contains the standards you can expect when we ask for, or hold, your personal information and an explanation of our information management security policy. A copy of our Local Development Plan Privacy Notice is available on our website. All representations received will be published on our website and made available at Mossley Mill and Antrim Civic Centre for public inspection. All representations will be forwarded to the Department of Infrastructure in advance of Independent Examination.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Development Plan 2030 (LDP) Plan Strategy (PS) was adopted by the Council on 03 July 2025.

1.2 The adoption followed a period of public consultation on the Draft PS, which was published in June 2019 and subsequently subject to Independent Examination (IE) by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in May and June 2022.

1.3 The PAC advisory report into the IE concluded that the Draft PS, subject to a number of 'Recommended Amendments', satisfied all of the tests of 'soundness', as set out in Development Plan Practice Note 06 published by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Having considered the content of the PAC Report, in September 2024 DfI issued the Council with a Direction under section 12(1)(b) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, to adopt the Draft PS, subject to 93 no. modifications.

1.4 The vast majority of these modifications were minor in nature, however a number concerned the excising of the Abbey Centre from the PS, where it was proposed as a 'Large Town Centre' within the Hierarchy of Centres. The Direction also stated that following adoption of the PS, DfI would subsequently issue a Direction under section 14(2)(b) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which would require the Council to prepare a revision to the adopted PS, to provide new planning policy for the Abbey Centre.

1.5 Following the adoption of the PS, on 28 October 2025 DfI issued the Council with the Section 14 Direction. The Preferred Options Paper (POP) represents the first stage of the Council's response to that Direction, and it is now being published for a period of public consultation.

What is a POP and Why Is It Required?

1.6 A POP is a consultation document that considers key strategic planning issues arising within the plan area. It is used to promote public engagement and debate and sets out the Councils initial thinking on the direction of policy, before these are incorporated into the LDP. A POP sets out a range of possible options, as well as the Council's preferred option or approach and the reasoning for this. The Council first published a POP in January 2017, which covered a wide range of issues across the Borough and informed the publication of the Draft PS in June 2019.

1.7 This POP takes the form of a more targeted document and is a direct proportionate response to matters raised within the Section 14 Direction. This POP is required in order to satisfy legislation. Regulation 3 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 states that the regulations "*apply to the revision of a local development plan as they apply to its preparation",* and consequently, it is necessary to prepare a POP in accordance with regulations 9 to 11 of the same regulations.

1.8 Following this public consultation period, any responses will be considered, before preparation of our PS draft Revision to introduce planning policy for the Abbey Centre retail area. The revision itself will then be subject to a further period of public consultation and subsequent IE, before its adoption. An indicative timeframe for this process is set out in the Updated Revised Local Development Plan Timetable (October 2026).

Evidence Base and Assessments

1.9 The POP is supported by an updated Retail Centres Report (June 2026) evidence base, which has been prepared to address the issues raised in the Section 14 Direction and make subsequent recommendations. The updated evidence, as well as through engagement with consultation bodies[1], has been the primary source of baseline information, when identifying the various options within this POP.

1.10 In preparing the PS draft Revision, the Council is required to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA, incorporated with the SA); a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA); an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA); and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA), each Assessment is considered in turn in the following chapters. This Assessments Scoping Report sets out the requirement for the initial consideration of those Assessments. It has been prepared in support of the POP and to meet the requirements of Section 8(6) of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 and the other respective legislation.

1.11 These Assessments are typically required to be carried out in parallel with the LDP preparation, in this case the PS draft Revision process. Assessments are to be an integral and iterative part of that process, starting at an early stage. Therefore, this document sets out the early stage 'scoping' for the relevance of each Assessment, followed by an initial 'screening' of the PS Revision POP policy options.

1.12 These assessments are a key part of the process and have helped to inform the selection of the options and the Council's preferred option. This Assessment Scoping Report should be read in conjunction with the POP document.

2 The Section 14 Direction

2.1 The section below provides the key context for the publication of this POP document, following the issue of the Direction under Section 14 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 by DfI to the Council on 28 October 2025. The Direction is legally binding and sets out a number of things that the Council must do in preparing new strategic and operational planning policy in respect

[1] as defined in Regulation 2 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

of the Abbey Centre retail area. As a consequence, many of the POP options available to the Council in relation to these matters are necessarily limited.

2.2 The Direction requires the revised PS policy to take account the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and in particular the spatial framework guidance contained within SFG 3 to "Enhance the role of Belfast City Centre as the regional capital and focus of administration commerce, specialist services and cultural amenities".

2.3 In addition, the Council should also take account of the provisions of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), which reinforces that a precautionary approach should be applied in relation to future major retail development proposals. The aim of the SPPS is to support and sustain vibrant town centres through the promotion of established town centres as the appropriate first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions, consistent with the RDS.

2.4 The Direction states the Council should take account of the Regional Strategic Objectives for Town Centres and Retailing, which include and are not limited to: a town centres first approach for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses; adopting a sequential approach to the identification of retail and main town centre uses in the PS revision; and ensuring the PS draft Revision is informed by a robust and up to date evidence base.

2.5 The Direction contains a number of specific measures, however, most fundamentally para. 3.3 states that, "Abbey Centre will be designated as a 'District Centre' in line with the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) (para. 6.276)….". It states the Council should:

- Review and update the retail evidence base. This will require an update to Evidence Paper 4: Retail and Commercial Leisure Study (January 2019). Of particular relevance 'Market share & Capacity Assessment' and 'Policy and Proposals' sections in respect of the Abbey Centre. This will include review of but not limited to Para 6.16, 6.30 Figure 6.2, 6.59, 6.61 & 6.68, Appendix F.
- Review and update the hierarchy of centres to include Abbey Centre as a district centre in the Figure 5: 'Hierarchy of Centres in our Borough" and Table 4 as a district centre.
- To safeguard existing /established town centres and minimise adverse impact, the Council should define the spatial extent of the Abbey Centre district centre boundary, as supported by the updated evidence base.

2.6 The Direction also states that as result of the district centre designation, the Council should also review and update the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between neighbouring councils, to ensure that cross boundary working is appropriately documented and managed.

2.7 Following issue of the Direction, the Council entered into further correspondence with the Department in order to clarify a number of points raised in the Direction.

2.8 Consequently, the Council has carefully considered the content of the Direction and further clarification and has prepared a number of options, it considers addresses each of the issues raised.

2.9 Having considered the content of the Direction, the updated retail evidence base and through engagement with the consultation bodies, section 3 of the PS Revision POP sets out what the Council considers to be the preferred options for new strategic and operational planning policy at the Abbey Centre retail area.

3 Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating SEA) - Scoping

Non-Technical Summary

3.1 The Antrim and Newtownabbey LDP PS adopted by the Council on 03 July 2025. The adoption followed a period of public consultation in June 2019 on the Draft PS (DPS), along with a number of assessments, including a Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) Report (SA Report) which were subsequently subject to IE by the PAC in May and June 2022.

3.2 Having considered the content of the PAC Report, in September 2024 the DfI issued the Council with a Direction under section 12(1)(b) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, to adopt the Draft PS, subject to 93 no. modifications. The original Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Reports, which were carried out in relation to the DPS, comprised of:

- Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment) Report (June 2019) (DPS 002);
- Sustainability Appraisal Non-Technical Summary (June 2019) (DPS 003); and
- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2019) (DPS 004).

3.3 The vast majority of the section 12 Direction modifications were minor in nature, however, a number concerned the excising of the Abbey Centre from the PS, where it had existed as a 'Large Town Centre' within the draft Retail Hierarchy. The Direction also stated that following adoption of the PS, DfI would subsequently issue a Direction under section 14 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which would require the Council to prepare a revision to the adopted PS, to provide new planning policy for Abbey Centre.

3.4 An Addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal Report (July 2025) reviewed whether the modifications would substantially alter the previously appraised

likely significant effects. The conclusions of this Addendum were that none of the required modifications would result in any likely significant effects as a result of their inclusion within the adopted PS. The assessment and conclusions of the original 2019 SA Report remained unchanged as there were no likely significant effects on the environment from the implementation of the ANBC PS (as modified by the s12 direction).

3.5 Following the adoption of the PS in July 2025, on 28 October 2025 DfI issued the Council with the section 14 Direction. A POP is the first formal stage of the preparation of the revision, and a POP Options document has been produced in response to the section 14 Direction, and it is now being published for a period of public consultation.

3.6 The process of amending the LDP PS is subject to the same statutory processes as were required for the preparation of the PS. The Council is therefore required to carry out a SA of the PS draft Revision (Section 8(6) of the 2011 Act), incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Development Plan Practice Note 04 provides guidance on whether the SA Report should be updated if a PS is modified and states that the Council will need to exercise judgement as whether a revised SA report will be required. Section 3 of this Assessments Scoping Report, provides detail of the Council's approach to a SA proportionate to the level of change being made to the LDP PS.

3.7 This section highlights the effects that the required strategic and operational planning policy in respect of the Abbey Centre contained within the POP Options document is likely to have with regards to the original SA Report and concluded that the inclusion of the planning policy in relation to the Abbey Centre within the PS, would not have any likely significant effects previously appraised. The assessment and conclusions of the original 2019 SA Report remained unchanged as there were no likely significant effects on the environment from the options proposed.

Sustainability Appraisal

3.8 The Direction to amend the PS has the potential to change the appraisal of likely effects on social, economic and environmental interests, the Direction requirements therefore necessitate consideration through the SA process to determine if they alter or create additional likely significant effects to those identified within the original 2019 SA Report.

3.9 The SA must cover the social and economic effects of the LDP as well as the environmental effects. These legislative requirements are locally implemented through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 ('the EAPP (NI) Regulations').

3.10 The SA is an iterative process that runs in parallel with the preparation of the LDP. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) examines the environmental effects of the LDP proposals and is an integral part of SA.

3.11 The SA is underpinned by the 'SA Scoping Report', which presents the evidence base to inform the appraisals of each policy. The 'SA Scoping Report' also establishes the SA Framework for undertaking the appraisal. The SA Scoping Report was originally prepared to support the 'Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report', which was prepared for and published with the Preferred Options Paper in January 2017 and an updated version containing the findings of the assessment on the 'likely significant effects on the environment' of the implementation of the DPS was published in June 2019.

3.12 The purpose of the SA Framework is to provide a means of ensuring that the social, environmental and economic needs of the area are considered in plan preparation. It enables the effects of plan proposals to be described, analysed and compared. It also helps identify measures to minimise negative effects and enhance positive effects. All stages of plan-making will be assessed using the Framework, which may be reviewed and updated at each stage as further information becomes available.

The Sustainability Objectives

3.13 A total of fourteen social, economic and environmental sustainability objectives were identified in the 'SA Scoping Report 2019'. These have been informed by the strategic and policy context, a review of baseline information for the Council and any evidence of trends and issues. The objectives for sustainable development for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council are to:

3.14 **1…improve health and well-being**. Public policy seeks to increase healthy life expectancy, reduce preventable deaths, improve mental health and reduce health inequalities. Evidence shows that there is a need to address obesity, increase physical activity and reduce inequalities in health. It is also necessary to provide for the needs of an aging population and minimise the detrimental impacts of noise. This can be achieved by creating an environment that is clean and attractive; encourages healthy lifestyles; protects tranquil and quiet areas and enables access to health care facilities for all.

3.15 **2…strengthen society.** Regional policy is directed towards improving community relations and creating a safe society which is more united. Success will be represented by places which are inclusive, respect culture and identity, promote social integration and create a sense of pride. They will also be designed to feel safe and to reduce opportunity for crime or anti-social behaviour.

3.16 **3…provide good quality, sustainable housing.** The population is growing and therefore there is ongoing need for new housing in locations that meet regional policy, are accessible and balance the needs of society and the environment. The make-up of households is changing therefore design needs to meet long term requirements with good quality build to be sustainable. This objective

should reduce homelessness and ensure decent, affordable homes with a mix of types.

3.17 **4…enable access to high-quality education.** Good education improves opportunities for employment and also contributes to avoidance of poverty and healthier lifestyles. The provision of suitable accommodation for educational establishments in appropriate, accessible locations should play a part in making schools more sustainable and reducing inequalities in education.

3.18 **5…enable sustainable economic growth.** Regional policy seeks to develop a strong, competitive and regionally balanced economy. It is necessary to provide suitable locations for employment, with flexibility where necessary, to reflect current and future distribution of jobs across sectors, encourage new business start-ups, facilitate innovation, regenerate areas, attract investment and make employment as accessible as possible for all. This will reduce unemployment and poverty by helping more people to earn a living and increase their income.

3.19 **6…manage material assets sustainably.** Material assets such as infrastructure and sources of energy production are essential for society and the economy but need careful planning to ensure that they are designed for efficiency and to minimise adverse impacts. The concept of circular economy treats waste as resource which should be managed sustainably to reduce production and increase recovery, recycling and composting rates; new or adapted facilities may be required.

3.20 **7…protect physical resources and use sustainably.** Land, minerals, geothermal energy and soil are resources which require protection from degradation and safeguarding for future use. Sustainable agriculture, tourism and sustainable use of minerals and geothermal energy can help to support the economy.

3.21 **8…encourage active and sustainable travel.** There is a common goal to reduce traffic emissions and congestion which means reducing single occupancy car use and increasing other forms of transport, especially at peak times. The location of housing and key services can facilitate better access to public transport. Opportunities for active travel makes travel more affordable and may bring added health benefits while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Measures to manage car demand, such as parking and re-allocation of road space, which encourage a shift from car to public transport, walking and cycling will contribute to this goal.

3.22 **9…improve air quality.** Air pollution has serious impacts on human health as well as degrading the natural environment. This objective can be achieved through reducing sources of air pollution. Where air pollution cannot be totally excluded careful siting of development should avoid impacts on sensitive receptors.

3.23 **10…reduce causes of and adapt to climate change.** International commitments require greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced to lessen their effects on climate. Measures that help reduce energy consumption and enable renewable energy helps mitigate greenhouse gas emissions however adaption is also required to plan for the impacts of climate change.

3.24 **11…protect, manage and use water resources sustainably.** This objective encompasses reducing levels of water pollution, sustainable use of water resources, improving the physical state of the water environment and reducing the risk of flooding now and in the future. It meets the requirements of Northern Ireland legislation, strategies and plans in support of the Water Framework Directive and other Directives that relate to water and it takes account of the future impacts of climate change.

3.25 **12…protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.** International obligations which are adopted in Northern Ireland legislation and policies require the protection of biodiversity including flora, fauna and habitats. This is for their intrinsic value and for the wider services that they provide to people, the economy and the environment for example as carbon stores which lessen the effects of climate change. This objective includes protecting and enhancing biodiversity as well as protection of green and blue infrastructure to enhance the services that natural resources provide.

3.26 **13…maintain and enhance landscape character.** International and national policies seek to conserve the natural character and landscape of the coast and countryside and protect them from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development. This objective seeks to maintain the character and distinctiveness of the area's landscapes and to protect and enhance open spaces and the setting of prominent features, settlements and transport corridors.

3.27 **14…protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.** The historic environment and cultural heritage are resources that inform our history and bring character and sense of place. They also attract visitors and contribute to the economy and bring vibrancy to the places where we live, work and relax. This can be achieved by protecting and enhancing Conservation Areas, townscapes and other sites of historic and cultural value including their setting.

3.28 The scoring and descriptions used in the SA are presented in Table 1.

Rating		Description
+ +	**Significant Positive**	Policy/ proposal would greatly help to achieve the objective
+	**Minor Positive**	Policy/ proposal would slightly help to achieve the objective
0	**Neutral / no effect**	Policy/ proposal would have no overall effect
-	**Minor Negative**	Policy/ proposal would slightly conflict with the objective
- -	**Significant Negative**	Policy/ proposal would greatly conflict with the objective
?	**Uncertain**	The effect cannot be predicted because: • the approach has an uncertain relationship to the objective; or • the relationship is dependent on the way in which the approach is implemented; or • insufficient information may be available to enable an appraisal to be made.
ST	**Short Term**	Up to five years
MT	**Medium Term**	Five to 15 years
LT	**Long term**	Over 15 years

Key:	+ + Significant positive effect	+ Minor positive effect	0 No overall effect	- Minor negative effect	- - Significant negative effect	? Score uncertain

Table 1: Scoring and Definitions for the Sustainability Matrix

3.29 Development Plan Practice Note 04 Paragraph 9.1a (vi) states "a further appraisal may be required if a change substantially alters the draft plan and may have likely significant effects which have not previously been appraised…" "Modifications to the SA should be proportionate to the level of change being made to the draft plan. Therefore, changes to the draft plan that are not significant should not require any further SA. A council will need to exercise judgement as whether a revised SA report will be required".

3.30 The Council consider that the revisions required to the PS to meet the requirements of the Section 14 Direction would not alter the SA Framework/objectives identified in the 'SA Scoping Report 2019'.

3.31 The Council has considered if there have been any significant updates to the scoping baseline since the 2019 SA Report; it is found that there have been various routine statistical updates and the 2nd Edition of the SPPS has been published in December 2025. A list of updated/additional baseline evidence to consider was complied with DAERA and is set out in Appendix 1. It is concluded

that no significant baseline changes have occurred that would substantially alter the strategic issues identified in the baseline and the Key Sustainability Issues of the original 2019 SA Report.

3.32 This section has been prepared to document the series of options presented in the POP (Section 3) and should be read alongside the original 2019 SA Report and SA Addendum.

3.33 On adoption of the Council's PS draft Revision, a Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement will be prepared in accordance with Regulation 15(4) of the EAPP (NI) Regulations and published on the Council's website.

The Screening of the Plan Strategy Revision Options

3.34 Having considered the content of the legally binding Section 14 Direction in relation to the Abbey Centre and through engagement with consultation bodies, the Council considers that there are four (4) main areas of revision required to the LDP 2030, PS as adopted on 03 July 2025.

3.35 The Council have set out a series of options in Section 3 of the PS Revision POP and identified which is our preferred option in each case; these are limited due to the constraints imposed by the Section 14 Direction.

3.36 This section only examines whether the proposed options are likely to be significant in terms of the SA. The options have been assessed with regard to their interactions, if any, with the Sustainability Objectives, and their potential to produce significant effects on the specific components of the environment as identified through the Sustainability Framework.

3.37 This addendum includes the following:

- Screening of the options contained within the PS Revision POP to see if they 'materially' change (i.e., change what actions the LDP might inevitably lead to) what the original SA assessed, or what the original SA assumed about how the LDP would be implemented (Appendix 2);
- A detail assessment of the revisions 'Screened-In' and identified as requiring further assessment (Appendix 3).

Conclusion

3.38 The options in Section 3 of the PS Revision POP were reviewed in the context of Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 to determine whether they would have any likely significant effects which have not previously been appraised in the original 2019 SA Report.

3.39 The screening of the options, summarised in Appendix 2 of this report, found that they would not 'materially' change what the SA initially assessed, or what it assumed about how the LDP would be implemented. They do not change the aim or purpose of the policy from that originally evaluated in the 2019 SA.

3.40 Four (4) options were 'Screened–In', requiring further consideration in relation to the potential for implications for the original 2019 SA, with assessments carried out in relation to these options presented in Appendix 3.

3.41 No implications on the overall 2019 SA were identified and there will be no likely significant effects on the environment from the implementation of these options in the PS draft Revision.

4 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Rural Needs Assessment (RNA) Scoping

Non-Technical Assessment

4.1 The Antrim and Newtownabbey LDP 2030, DPS was adopted by the Council on 03 July 2025 alongside an Addendum to the Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, July 2025 (Addendum Equality RNIA 2025) which reviewed whether the modifications would alter the outcomes of the original 'Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Need Impact Assessment Report' published in 2019. The Addendum Equality RNIA 2025 screened the modifications directed through the section 12(1)(b) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to ascertain whether further assessment was required and, the conclusion of this addendum was that the directed modifications as set out in the section 12 Direction did not alter the outcome of the original Equality RNIA Report 2019. The assessment and conclusions of the original Equality RNIA Report 2019 remained unchanged from the implementation of the Council's PS (as modified by the s12 direction).

4.2 Following the adoption of the PS on 03 July 2025, on 28 October 2025 DfI issued the Council with the section 14 Direction. A POP has been produced in response to that Direction, that identifies a range of options available to address the Section 14 Direction and is now being published for a period of public consultation. The process of amending the PS is subject to the same statutory processes as were required for the preparation of the PS. The Council is therefore required to carry out an EQIA and RNIA of the PS draft Revision.

4.3 This section highlights the effects that the required strategic and operational planning policy in respect of the Abbey Centre contained within the PS draft Revision is likely to have with regards to the original Equality RNIA Report 2019.

4.4 Following a review of the impacts of the policy options proposed for the PS draft Revision, it is concluded that no adverse impacts were identified in relation to Section 75 groups as a consequence of the PS Revision options and therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

4.5 As Rural Needs cannot be screened in or out, a full assessment has been undertaken to assess for any differential impact these options would have in terms of the aim of the provision and the likely impact on rural needs. It has been concluded that the inclusion of the PS Revision options in relation to the Abbey Centre within the PS, set out within the PS Revision POP would not alter

the outcomes relating to 'Rural Needs' identified within the original Equality RNIA Report published in 2019.

4.6 The assessment and conclusions of the original 2019 Equality RNIA Report remain unchanged from the implementation of these options in the PS draft Revision.

The Screening of the Plan Strategy Revision Options

4.7 The Council has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to promote both equality of opportunity and the needs of people in rural areas under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 respectively. Consequently, in bringing forward the LDP, the Council is committed to ensuring that the needs of Section 75 groups and those in rural areas are considered. Throughout the process the Council has combined both assessments into one document due to the common steps that have been undertaken to engage with both Section 75 groups and the rural community.

4.8 The Council have set out a series of options in Section 3 of the PS Revision POP and identified which is our preferred option in each case; these are limited due to the constraints imposed by the Section 14 Direction.

4.9 This section only examines whether the options for revisions to the PS policies are likely to be significant in terms of the EQIA and RNIA and should be read in conjunction with the Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report 2019 and the Addendum to the Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report (July 2025).

Equality (Section 75) Screening

4.10 An assessment of whether the PS Revision options impact on the overall aim/purpose of the policy as originally assessed; and an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity for Section 75 groups as a result of the policy options beyond those original assessed was undertaken.

4.11 The Council has assessed the relevant provisions of the policy options in light of the s14 Direction for any differential impact that it may have when compared to the original, as well as the impact of cumulative changes to those provisions. The assessment set out in Appendix 2 has then been used as the basis for the completion of the 'Section 75 Policy Screening Form' set out in Appendix 4.

4.12 Following consideration of the PS Revision options in the context of the statutory requirements, it has been concluded that these options do not alter the outcomes relating to 'Equality (Section 75)' identified within the original Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report (June 2019).

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

4.13 An assessment of whether the policy options impact on the overall aim/purpose of the policy or strategy as originally assessed; and an assessment of the likely impact(s) of the PS Revision options on the rural community and/or the influence 'rural needs', was undertaken.

4.14 The PS Revision options were assessed for any differential impact they would have in terms of the aim of the provision and the likely impact on rural needs. The options have been assessed with regard to their interactions, if any, with the Sustainability Objectives, and their potential to produce significant effects on the specific components of the environment as identified through the Sustainability Framework.

4.15 Appendix 2 of this document presents the outcomes of the assessment of these policy options to determine whether it would 'materially change' the outcomes of the original 2019 RNIA. Appendix 5 of this document contains the completed Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)Template.

4.16 Following consideration of the PS Revision options, in the context of the statutory requirements, it has been concluded that the options do not alter the outcomes relating to 'Rural Needs' identified within the original Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report (June 2019).

Conclusion

4.17 The Council has now undertaken an exercise to assess the implications of the PS Revision POP a resultant of the DfI Departmental s14 Direction, in relation to the outcomes of the original Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, published in June 2019.

4.18 Whilst these options introduce an amended policy in relation to district centres, this is seen to provide clarification and improve the effectiveness, coherency and consistency of the plan.

4.19 The assessment of these options has determined that they do not materially change the aims or influence of the policies or strategies.

4.20 In reassessing the outcomes of the original 'Equality (Sec 75) Screening' and 'Rural Needs' Report issued alongside the DPS in June 2019, with regard to the POP policy options, it is considered that those outcomes are unchanged from the original assessment. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed options do not alter the likely impact of the PS policies and strategies on the Section 75 groups or the rural community, nor do they alter how much regard the PS has had to equality or rural needs.

5 Habitats Regulations Assessment – Scoping

5.1 Regulation 43 of the Habitats Regulations requires an appropriate assessment to be undertaken of plans and projects which are likely to have a significant effect on a European site in Northern Ireland, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This is known as Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and provides for assessment of the implications of a land use plan for

European sites in view of their conservation objectives. For the purpose of this report 'European sites' collectively may include existing or proposed Special Protection Areas (SPAs), existing or candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Community Importance (SCI), and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

5.2 A draft HRA was first undertaken in 2019 in support of the then DPS, this report was amended following the Direction from DfI to adopt the PS with modifications, with a final HRA Report 2025 published alongside the adopted PS in July 2025. The HRA Report 2025 took account of the views of the PAC expressed in the IE report, and of up-to-date information.

5.3 A total of twenty-four (24) European sites were identified that could potentially be affected by the PS. These include large sites such as Belfast Lough SPA and Ramsar site to smaller sites including Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay SAC which is located in the Borough. Sites beyond the Council area with an ecological connection were also included, for example those which are connected by marine mammals relevant to appropriate hydrological screening distances. All sites within 15km of the plan area were also considered. Appendix 5, of HRA Report 2025 illustrates the European sites in relation to the Borough.

5.4 Following the screening of the PS it concluded that, in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for likely significant effects to arise from forty-four (44) plan policies. In addition, nine (9) plans or projects were identified for consideration of in combination effects. These were all screened in for appropriate assessment and are presented in Section 5 of the HRA Report 2025.

5.5 The Direction issued to the Council under Section 14 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 directs the Council to prepare new strategic and operational planning policy in respect of the Abbey Centre retail area. Therefore, many of the options available to the Council set out in their PS Revision POP are necessarily limited.

5.6 The Abbey Centre is an existing centre within the Borough, the PS Revision options following the Section 14 Direction would place the Abbey Centre into the Retail Hierarchy, establish a boundary for the Abbey Centre and strengthen the 'town-centre first' approach. The location of the Abbey Centre is not within proximity to protected sites and due to the existing nature of the development itself, it is unlikely the options proposed would present hydrological connections to these protected sites.

5.7 The limited nature of the direction, impacts on Strategic Policy 2: Employment of the PS. Within SP2, the HRA Report 2025, found that policies DM1, DM2, DM4, DM5, DM6, DM7, DM8 and DM9 were screened in. The PS states that all relevant policies must be read together and in view of the policy caveats, constraints on development and Policy DM 37, it was considered that these policies could not undermine the conservation objectives of any European site.

It was concluded that no further policy amendments were required to Section 5: Employment Policies in relation to the modifications directed through the section 12(1)(b) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, for the adoption of the PS.

5.8 Due to the narrow focus of the PS Revision POP to the Abbey Centre, the requirement for the policies contained within the PS draft Revision to be read together with those policies contained in the adopted PS and the outcome of the HRA Report 2025, it is considered the options presented would not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

5.9 It is therefore concluded that the proposed options would not substantially alter the assessment and conclusions of the adopted LDP PS HRA Report 2025.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The Council was issued with a Section 14 Direction on the 28 October 2025 in relation to the reinstatement of the Abbey Centre into the adopted Plan Strategy. The Council have prepared a PS Revision POP with proposed options that directly proportionately respond to the matters raised within the Section 14 Direction.

6.2 This Assessments Scoping Report carries out the initial scoping associated with statutory strategic environmental assessment.

6.3 Section 3 of this report found there will be no likely significant effects on the environment from the implementation of these options and that the conclusions of the 2019 SA are not impacted. Further sustainability appraisal work will be undertaken as required in later stages of the revision process.

6.4 Section 4 of this report found that in reassessing the outcomes of the original 'Equality (Sec 75) Screening' and 'Rural Needs' Report issued alongside the DPS in June 2019, with regard to the POP options, it is considered that the proposed options do not alter the likely impact of the PS policies and strategies on the Section 75 groups or the rural community, nor do they alter how much regard the PS has had to equality or rural needs.

6.5 Section 5 of this report concludes that the proposed options would not substantially alter the assessment and conclusions of the adopted LDP PS HRA Report 2025.

6.6 These assessments have been carried out in relation to the scale of the PS Revision POP, taking into account the limited nature of the options available and assessing the likely impact these would have on the findings of the original assessments prepared for the adopted PS. Further assessment work will be undertaken as proportionate and required in later stages of the revision process. Any comments on the scope and level of detail of the information that should be included in these reports can be provided during this consultation.

6.7 These assessments have been reviewed by DAERA, who are generally content with the approach and findings taken by the Council in relation to the effects on the environment and impacts on European sites as a result of the PS Revision POP.

6.8 **Having considered the above Assessments and should you wish to make representation, please state if you support each of the conclusions and why; alternatively, if you disagree or wish to propose an alternative option, please explain your reasons and submit supporting evidence to the Council.**

Appendix 1 – Relevant Baseline Information

Sources for biodiversity in NI

Northern Ireland State of the Environment Reports: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/state-environment-report-2013

Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Reports: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/northern-ireland-environmental-statistics-report

The State of Nature Northern Ireland 2023
TP26055-SoN-N_Ireland-summary-report-v4-1.pdf

DAERA (2026) Habitats Regulation General Implementation Report for the Reporting Period 2019-2024 Northern Ireland
https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/habitats-regulations

Habitats Regulations Reporting replaces reporting under Article 17 and Article 12 of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive) and EU Directive on the conservation of wild birds (2009/147/EC) (Birds Directive) respectively.

Other relevant sources

Designated Scientific Sites: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/protected-areas
Regional Landscape Character Map viewer: https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/regional-landscape-character-areas-map-viewer

DAERA have a map browser for NI protected sites and known priority habitat: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/natural-environment-map-viewer

Our natural environment datasets are available at the link below: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/download-digital-datasets

Plans and Programmes

The Northern Ireland Environmental Principles Policy Statement (EPPS) NI Environment Principles Policy Statement | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 (as amended)

Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended)

The Environment (NI) Order 2002

The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Planning Policy Statements (PPS – in particular PPS2 and PPS18). It should be noted that the PPS's will be superseded by Local Development Plans when they are adopted.

Biodiversity Strategy for NI to 2020 https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/biodiversity-strategy-northern-ireland-2020-0

The Draft Green Growth Strategy Consultation on the draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

Draft Nature Recovery Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032 Draft Nature Recovery Strategy - Extended Consultation Period | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Environmental Improvement Plan Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Northern Ireland Energy Strategy 2050 Northern Ireland Energy Strategy 2050 | Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)

DfE (2025) Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan for Northern Ireland

The Path to Net Zero Energy (DfE 2021)

Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy to 2040

NI Peatland Strategy Delivery Plan April 2026 - December 2027. FINAL. 20-4-2026_0.PDF

Sustainability for the future DAERA's - Plan to 2050 (DAERA 2021)

Appendix 2: Review of the PS Revision POP

PS Revision POP Policy Options	Impact of the aim of the policy	Likely impact of the option to SA	Likely impact of the option to S75 groups	Likely impact of the option to rural community
Retail Hierarchy				
Option 1: Do Nothing Option 1 maintains the Retail Hierarchy as set out on page 79 of the adopted Plan Strategy, which does not include the Abbey Centre retail area.	No change.	No change would not alter the evaluation of the policy in the SA.	No change. Would not impact the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	No change. Would not impact the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.
Option 2: Include Abbey Centre within the Retail Hierarchy as a District Centre Option 2 brings the Abbey Centre retail area into an amended Retail Hierarchy, as set out in the table below.	No, this option does not change the aim/purpose of the policy from that originally assessed.	Modifications to the policy may have an impact on the implementation of the policy on the sustainability objectives. (See Appendix 2).	Amended wording for purposes of coherence and consistency, no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	Amended wording for purposes of coherence and consistency, no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.
Abbey Centre Boundary				
Option 1: Define Boundary based on BMAP 2015 District Centre Boundary Option 1 proposes a boundary which encompasses the main Lesley Abbey Centre itself and the surrounding the Abbey Retail Park and Longwood Road Retail Park. This boundary reflects that indicated in the original Preferred Options Paper (2017), albeit at that time proposed Abbey Centre as a Large Town Centre. Option 1 also closely	No, this option does not change the aim/purpose of the policy from that originally assessed.	Modifications to the policy may have an impact on the implementation of the policy on the sustainability objectives. (See Appendix 2).	The inclusion of the boundary map will have no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	The inclusion of the boundary map will have no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.

reflects the boundary that was purportedly adopted through the BMAP 2015 (2014 version) and was also identified as a proposed boundary in the Plan Strategy Retail Study and updated Retail Study 2026 which is published alongside this POP paper. The inclusion of a boundary for Abbey Centre District Centre was also required in the legally binding Section 14 Direction.				
Option 2: Define extended boundary to southwest Option 2 proposes the same boundary as Option 1, but with a small extension to take in existing retail development to the southwest, which fronts onto Shore Road, encompassing the Shore Retail Park.	No, this option does not change the aim/purpose of the policy from that originally assessed.	Modifications to the policy may have an impact on the implementation of the policy on the sustainability objectives. (See Appendix 2).	The inclusion of the boundary map will have no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	The inclusion of the boundary map will have no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.
Retail Policy				
Option 1: Do Nothing Option 1 does not include additional policy wording within DM 6, instead relying on the existing policy provisions of policy DM 6.5, to protect existing centres from any potential harmful development that may occur within District and Local Centres.	No change.	No change would not alter the evaluation of the policy in the SA.	No change. Would not impact the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	No change. Would not impact the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.
Option 2: Amend DM 6: Development within Centres policy wording Option 2 amends policy DM 6 by the inclusion of additional policy wording which expands on what a Retail	No, this option does not change the aim/purpose of the policy from	Additional policy may have an impact on the implementation of the policy on the sustainability	The amended policy wording will have no differential impact than the original in terms of its	The amended policy wording will have no differential impact

Assessment must demonstrate, namely that the role and function of the centre should not be unacceptably altered and that no unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability. Under this option, policy DM 6.5, would read: 'DM 6.5 A Retail Assessment will be required for any development proposal that involves an increase of more than 1,000m2 (gross) of retail floor space in District and Local Centres. The Retail Assessment should provide a proportionate response to the proposal being sought and incorporate an assessment of need, impact and the sequential test. This includes applications for an extension(s) which would result in the overall development exceeding 1,000m2 (gross) external area. The Retail Assessment should demonstrate that the proposal would not unacceptably alter the role and function of the centre itself, and that there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability of any existing centre within the catchment.'	that originally assessed.	objectives. (See Appendix 2).	impact on S75 groups.	than the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.
	Monitoring Framework			
Option 1: Do Nothing Option 1 does not include an additional monitoring indicator and retains the Indicative Monitoring Framework as	No change.	Modification of wording for purposes of coherence and consistency, does not alter the evaluation	No change. Would not impact than the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	No change. Would not impact the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.

adopted within the Local Development Plan 2030 – Plan Strategy.		of the policy in the SA.		
Option 2: Include additional indicator to monitor retail development within the Abbey Centre District Centre. Option 2 concerns the inclusion of an additional measure within the Indicative Monitoring Framework, which reads: 'The number of planning applications permitted for retail development and complementary uses and the area of new floor space (m^2) created, within the Abbey Centre District centre.'	No, this option does not change the aim/purpose of the policy from that originally assessed.	Modification of wording for purposes of coherence and consistency, does not alter the evaluation of the policy in the SA.	Amended wording for purposes of coherence and consistency, no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	The amended policy wording will have no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.
Option 3: Include additional indictor to monitor retail development within all District and Local Centres Option 3 concerns the inclusion of an additional measure within the Indicative Monitoring Framework, which reads: 'The number of planning applications permitted for retail development and complementary uses and the area of new floorspace (m2) created, within District and Local Centres.	No, this option does not change the aim/purpose of the policy from that originally assessed.	Modification of wording for purposes of coherence and consistency, does not alter the evaluation of the policy in the SA.	Amended wording for purposes of coherence and consistency, no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on S75 groups.	The amended policy wording will have no differential impact than the original in terms of its impact on the rural community.

Appendix 3: Review of SA 'Screened In' Options

Retail Hierarchy	Option 2: Include Abbey Centre within the Retail Hierarchy as a District Centre						
Sustainability Objective	**Previous Score**			**Revised Score**			**Comments**
	S	M	L	S	M	L	
Improve Health and Well-being.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Strengthen society	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Provide good quality, sustainable housing.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable access to high quality education.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable sustainable economic growth	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Manage material assets sustainably	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect physical resources and use sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Encourage active and sustainable travel	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Improve air quality	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Reduce causes of and adapt to climate change	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect manage and use water resources sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Maintain and enhance landscape character.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Conclusion							
DfI directs that the Abbey Centre be reinstated in the Retail Hierarchy (SP 2.12). The original 2019 SA indicated that policy SP 2.12 will be assessed under policies DM 6-8. The amended retail hierarchy remains to allow for the application of policies DM 6-8 and the 'town-centre first approach', through the identification of a hierarchy of town, district and local centres across the Borough. Option 2 would not result in significant changes to SA analysis under the amended Retail Hierarchy.							

Abbey Centre Boundary	Option 1: Define Boundary based on BMAP 2015 District Centre Boundary						
Sustainability Objective	**Previous Score**			**Revised Score**			**Comments:**
	S	M	L	S	M	L	
Improve Health and Well-being.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Strengthen society	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Provide good quality, sustainable housing.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable access to high quality education.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable sustainable economic growth	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Manage material assets sustainably	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect physical resources and use sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Encourage active and sustainable travel	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Improve air quality	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Reduce causes of and adapt to climate change	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect manage and use water resources sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Maintain and enhance landscape character.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Conclusion							
DfI directs that the Abbey Centre District Centre boundary be identified at the PS Stage as it has been identified as a strategic issue. The original 2019 SA indicated that policy SP 2.13 will be further considered at the local policies plan stage. Option 1 would not result in significant changes to SA analysis under this revision.							

Abbey Centre Boundary	Option 2: Define extended boundary to southwest						
Sustainability Objective	**Previous Score**			**Revised Score**			**Comments:**
	S	M	L	S	M	L	
Improve Health and Well-being.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Strengthen society	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Provide good quality, sustainable housing.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable access to high quality education.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable sustainable economic growth	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Manage material assets sustainably	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect physical resources and use sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Encourage active and sustainable travel	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Improve air quality	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Reduce causes of and adapt to climate change	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect manage and use water resources sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Maintain and enhance landscape character.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Conclusion							
DfI directs that the Abbey Centre District Centre boundary be identified at the PS Stage as it has been identified as a strategic issue. The original 2019 SA indicated that policy SP 2.13 will be further considered at the local policies plan stage. Option 2 would not result in significant changes to SA analysis under this revision.							

Retail Policy	Option 2: Amend DM 6: Development within Centres policy wording						
Sustainability Objective	**Previous Score**			**Revised Score**			**Comments**
	S	M	L	S	M	L	
Improve Health and Well-being.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Strengthen society	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Provide good quality, sustainable housing.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable access to high quality education.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Enable sustainable economic growth	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	+ +	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Manage material assets sustainably	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect physical resources and use sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Encourage active and sustainable travel	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Improve air quality	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Reduce causes of and adapt to climate change	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect manage and use water resources sustainably	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Maintain and enhance landscape character.	0	0	0	0	0	0	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage.	+	+	+	+	+	+	No significant change to analysis against the Sustainability Objective.
Conclusion							
DfI directs the inclusion of additional policy wording to provide a framework for decision making considering the economic success of Abbey Centre. The original 2019 SA indicated that policies DM 6-8 ensure the application of the 'town-centre first approach'. The additional policy wording remains to allow for the application of policies DM 6-8 and strengthens the 'town-centre first approach'. Option 2 would not result in significant changes to SA analysis under the modified policy.							

Appendix 4: Section 75 Policy Screening Form

This form should be used for all new or amended policies. It has five parts.

Part 1 – Policy scoping – provide details about the policy being screened and the available evidence to help assess the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Part 2 – Screening questions – look at the extent of the likely impact of the policy on each of the Section 75 categories.

Part 3 – Screening decision – the information provided in the previous sections is used to decide whether there is a need to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

Part 4 – Monitoring – sets how the effects of the policy will be monitored. Table 5 details how each step in the preparation of the LDP is monitored to determine any future potential equality impacts.

Part 5 – Authorisation and approval – to be completed upon publication of final document.

Section 75 Policy Screening Form	Implications of S14
Part 1 – Policy Scoping	The information provided in the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, pages 27 to 34, remains relevant.
Part 2 – Screening Questions	A detailed screening exercise in relation to the directed revisions of the Plan Strategy draft Revision and their likely impact on equality of opportunity is in included in Appendix 1 of this document. This screening exercise has been used to aid the completion of this form.
What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?	The assessment contained in Appendix 1 of this document, demonstrates that the options proposed do not change the aim or purpose of any of the provisions of the PS, or change the likely impacts which were previously identified under the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, pages 35 to 36.
Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for	The assessment contained in Appendix 1 of this document, demonstrates that

people within the Section 75 equality Categories?	the options proposed do not create additional opportunities to promote equality of opportunity over and above those already identified under the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, pages 36 to 38.
To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?	The assessment contained in Appendix 1 of this document, demonstrates that the options proposed do not change the aim or purpose of any of the provisions of the PS, or change the likely impacts which were previously identified under the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, page 38.
Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?	The assessment contained in Appendix 1 of this document, demonstrates that the options proposed do not create additional opportunities to promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group over those already identified in under the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, page 38.
Additional considerations	
Multiple identity People can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?	The assessment contained in Appendix 1 of this document, demonstrates that the options proposed do not change the aim or purpose of any of the provisions of the PS, or change the likely impacts which were previously identified under the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, page 39.
Disability Will the policy encourage disabled people to participate in public life or promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?	The assessment contained in Appendix 1 of this document, demonstrates that the options proposed do not change the aim or purpose of any of the provisions of the PS, or change the likely impacts which were previously

	identified under the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, page 39
Part 3 – Screening decision If the recommendation is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.	The recommendation is not to conduct an equality impact assessment. Further to the directed revision, no impacts on equality of opportunity have been identified on Section 75 groups either individually or cumulatively. Reasons as set out in the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, page 40 -41 remain valid. Therefore, the decision has been taken not to conduct an equality impact assessment.
Mitigation Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations? If so, give the reasons to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.	No N/a
Part 4 – Monitoring What data is required in future to ensure effective monitoring?	See the original 2019 Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report, page 42. Any issues raised during this consultation process will be considered before any decision is made in respect of the adoption of the plan strategy. The LDP will be subject to further equality screening during the second stage of the plan process, the Local Policies Plan.
Part 5 – Authorisation and approval	

SECTION 75: OUTLINE SCREENING FORM

TITLE: Publication of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Plan Strategy Revision POP

STEP ONE: AIM & BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council on the publication of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Plan Strategy Revision Preferred Options Paper in response to the Section 14 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

STEP 2: STAKEHOLDERS

Staff. Service users – all those who live in, work in, invest in, own land/property in or visit the Borough. Other public sector organisations. Voluntary/community/trade unions.

STEP 3: KEY FACTORS /CONTRIBUTIONS

The options have been proposed to provide coherence and consistency in relation to the options available for the Abbey Centre to satisfy the Section 14 Direction. As it is specific to the Abbey Centre, it is considered unlikely to impact specifically on S75 groups. The application of policies DM 6-8 and the 'town-centre first approach', through the identification of a hierarchy of town, district and local centres across the Borough remains.

STEP 4: INFORMATION

The Plan Strategy Revision POP addresses the DfI s14 Direction in relation to the reinstatement of the Abbey Centre into the retail hierarchy and retail policy relating to Abbey Centre as a District Centre.

STEP 5: SECTION 75 CATEGORIES
(Religious belief, political opinion, gender, race/ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, dependency)

In general, all Section 75 groups have the potential to benefit from this policy as it involves the reinstatement of Abbey Centre into the Plan Strategy.

STEP 6: GOOD RELATIONS

The reinstatement of Abbey Centre into the Plan Strategy will enable it to continue to function as a District Centre serving the community and all Section 75 groups.

PART 5 - AUTHORISATION AND APPROVAL

Screened by:

Signature E Aldridge

Job Title Senior Planning Officer

Date 07/10/2026

Signature of Director/Head of Service:

Signature 

Job Title Deputy Director of Planning and Building Control

Date 07/10/2026

Approving Committee: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Planning Committee, 21/09/2026
(Name and date):

Date of Council: 30/09/2026
Ratification

File ref: N/A

NOTE: A copy of the completed screening form should accompany each new or amended policy being submitted for Committee/Council approval. Information on the file reference, approving Committee and the date of Council ratification should be completed and copies of each form and the related policy should be forwarded by e mail to the Equality, Diversity and Policy Section as soon as the policy has been ratified by Council. Quarterly reports will be published on policies screened and will include links to the completed screening forms on the Council website.

Appendix 5: Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)Template

SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

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

Publication of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Plan Strategy Draft Revision in response to the Section 14 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy	☐	Strategy	☐	Plan	☐
Adopting a	Policy	☐	Strategy	☐	Plan	☐
Implementing a	Policy	☐	Strategy	☐	Plan	☐
Revising a	Policy	☐	Strategy	X	Plan	☐
Designing a Public Service		☐				
Delivering a Public Service		☐				

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Development Plan 2030 Plan Strategy Draft Revision.

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

Please refer to Chapter 2 of this report for details of the aims and objectives of the proposed amendments.

1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).	X
Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).	
A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.	

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.

N/A

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

N/A

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

N/A

SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes [ ] No [X] If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

N/A

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas *differently* from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

N/A

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

Rural Businesses	☐
Rural Tourism	☐
Rural Housing	☐
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	☐
Education or Training in Rural Areas	☐
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	☐
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	☐
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	☐
Poverty in Rural Areas	☐
Deprivation in Rural Areas	☐
Rural Crime or Community Safety	☐
Rural Development	☐
Agri-Environment	☐
Other (Please state)	

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The Plan Strategy Draft Revision addresses the DfI s14 Direction in relation to the reinstatement of the Abbey Centre into the retail hierarchy and retail policy relating to Abbey Centre as a District Centre. The revision has been proposed to provide coherence and consistency in relation to the Abbey Centre as it is specific to the Abbey Centre, it is considered unlikely to impact on people in rural or urban areas. The application of policies DM 6-8 and the 'town-centre first approach', through the identification of a hierarchy of town, district and local centres across the Borough remains.

SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes [ ] No [X] If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	[ ]	Published Statistics	[ ]
Consultation with Other Organisations	[ ]	Research Papers	[ ]
Surveys or Questionnaires	[ ]	Other Publications	[ ]
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			[ ]

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

N/A

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

N/A

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

The Plan Strategy Draft Revision applies to the Abbey Centre and its reinstatement to the retail hierarchy alongside amended policy – it does not differentiate between any specific community whether urban or rural.

The Plan Strategy Draft Revision has considered the impacts on a range of existing and potential stakeholders. As part of the consultation and engagement approach for this process, stakeholders representing key sectors and bodies will be consulted with during the public consultation period. This process will allow council to identify any social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

The council will use the consultation period to identify specific issues, to review and update the Plan Strategy Draft Revision and any improvements that will enhance the Council's planning processes.

SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

As part of the public consultation, a number of engagement events are to take place with key stakeholders and on our online engagement platform, which will enable maximum reach and participation. It will provide both rural and urban dwellers with the opportunity to participate in the consultation.

We welcome comments during this consultation from rural dwellers. Comments during this consultation will help inform the development of the Plan Strategy Draft Revision and its integration into the Plan Strategy.

SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes [ ] No [X] If the response is NO GO TO Section 5C.

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

N/A

If the response to Section 5A was YES GO TO Section 6A.

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

The Plan Strategy Draft Revision applies to the reinstatement of the Abbey Centre into the Retail Hierarchy alongside amended policy in relation to the Abbey Centre – the public consultation and engagement period will enable people in the rural and urban areas to participate and comment on the amendment. Feedback will be monitored to check if there are any specific rural issues arising.

SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

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

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Emma Aldridge
Position/Grade:	Senior Planning Officer
Division/Branch	Planning
Signature:	*E Aldridge*
Date:	07/10/2026
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Barry Diamond
Position/Grade:	Deputy Director of Planning and Building Control
Division/Branch:	Planning
Signature:	
Date:	07/10/2026

Antrim and Newtownabbey BOROUGH COUNCIL

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