

Strategic Planning Directorate



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Jacqui Dixon
 Chief Executive
 Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
 Mossley Mill
 Carrmoney Road North
 NEWTOWNABBEY
 BT36 5QA
jacquidixon@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

Clarence Court
 10-18 Adelaide Street
 BELFAST
 BT2 8GB
 Tel: 0300 200 7830

Email: alistair.beggs@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk
courtney.mcgrail@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your Reference:
 Our Reference:

20 September 2019

Dear Jacqui

**ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBEY BOROUGH COUNCIL – DRAFT PLAN
 STRATEGY - CONSULTATION**

I refer to your letter to Katrina Godfrey, dated 24 June 2019, regarding the publication of the Local Development Plan, draft Plan Strategy. Katrina has asked me to respond on her behalf, using the agreed approach where my team co-ordinate a joint response from the Department.

In accordance with Regulation 15 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 the Council consulted with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in relation to the draft Plan Strategy.

Please find attached individual representations to the consultation from:-

- DfI Planning;
- Roads, Public Transport Division, Safe and Sustainable Travel Division;
- Rivers; and
- Water and Drainage Policy Division.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your invitation to the consultee workshop. A number of officials from various business areas across the Department were in attendance and found it beneficial. These events, in conjunction

with ongoing one-to-one meetings between your Council and the Plan Oversight Team demonstrate an encouraging level of engagement.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Alistair Beggs.

ALISTAIR BEGGS
Director

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Introduction

1. The Department for Infrastructure would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to comment on the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) draft Plan Strategy. The LDP should provide a 15-year framework to support the economic and social needs of a Council's district in line with regional strategies
2. The Council's LDP should support and spatially represent the Community Plan vision. Whilst the LDP and Community Plan should work in tandem toward this vision, the LDP has a distinct role in giving spatial expression to the Community Plan. It is also important to acknowledge that preparation of the LDP is subject to a different statutory process, including an Independent Examination (IE) to test Soundness of the Plan as a whole. This includes examining the content of the Plan by reference to tests set out in guidance. These require Council to take account of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 and other policy and guidance issued by the Department.
3. In view of the above, and in keeping with its oversight role, the Department offers this representation in the interest of good practice and to assist the Council to minimise the risk of submitting an unsound Development Plan Document (DPD). In developing this response the Department has looked for clear evidence that the tests set out in Development Plan Practice Note (DPPN) 06 'Soundness' have been addressed. All comments are offered without prejudice to a future Minister's discretion to intervene later in the plan process or to the IE of the draft Plan Strategy.
4. We acknowledge the considerable amount of work that the Council development plan team have put into preparing the draft Plan Strategy and supporting documents. We would urge the Council to seek legal advice to ensure that all the procedural requirements have been met, including Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). Responsibility for these matters rests with the Council.
5. This strategic response highlights broad areas which the Department considers are relevant to the tests of Soundness set out in DPPN 06. These are the Growth Strategy

and Spatial Planning Framework; Cross Boundary Working; Infrastructure availability and monitoring. These aspects have been highlighted by the Department in order to reinforce their importance to achieving an integrated and co-ordinated approach to higher-level regional planning aims and objectives. These matters are also aspects of Soundness and so the relevant Soundness Tests are highlighted.

6. Detailed comments in relation to specific operational policy matters are addressed in Annex 1.

Structure of Document

7. The Department welcomes the structure of the document including setting strategic and development management policies in the context of the strategic objectives of the plan. The approach to highlighting the link with the Council's Community Plan is also clear.
8. The Department notes the Council's approach taken in relation to designations and zonings which will come forward at the second stage of plan preparation (Local Policies Plan). The boundaries of settlements, local designations and zonings in the extant development plans will continue to apply in the decision making process until confirmed in the Local Policies Plan. The Council may wish to consider implementation of policies which relate to yet undesignated boundaries or zonings.

Spatial Growth Strategy

C1 Did the council take account of the Regional Development Strategy?

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

C4 Has the plan had regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the council's district or to any adjoining council's district?

CE1 The DPD sets out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations logically flow

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

CE3 There are clear mechanisms for implementations and monitoring;

9. The Department welcomes the focusing of core growth on Metropolitan Newtownabbey and the Major Hub Town of Antrim based upon existing committed development allocations and also the aim of consolidating and strengthening Ballyclare. Overall the Department strongly welcomes the approach to distributing 80% of total housing growth to the 3 largest settlements in the borough.
10. The aim of consolidating the role of Randalstown and Crumlin as local service centres and of sustaining and maintaining the role of villages as service centres, which also provides opportunities for housing is welcomed. The commitment to sustaining and maintaining the rural area through the provision of suitable housing and employment opportunities in hamlets and the countryside is also acknowledged.
11. The Department notes the aim to afford 'suitable protection to natural and historic environment in accommodating growth'. It is noted that this criteria is less spatial in character than criteria (a) – (f). It is suggested that the protection sought might be more appropriately expressed as the promotion of development patterns that do not have an adverse impact on environmental resources and built heritage, for instance compact urban forms and more housing within existing urban areas. The wording of SP1.11 may be more appropriate for inclusion, for example.
12. The focus in criteria (g) to promote the provision of facilities, services and infrastructure necessary to meet local needs and improve connectivity is understood. The Department would suggest that the council give consideration to the benefits of refocusing this criteria by emphasising the need to locate development to make best use of existing infrastructure and promote sustainable access to existing services¹.
13. The Department note that SP 1.7 Table 1, which indicates the hierarchy of places within the Borough across seven tiers, includes the countryside. The Department welcomes the approach but the Council may wish to clarify the reasoning for departing

¹ RDS 2035 SFG1, SFG 14 & RG 8 refer.

from the approach in the Settlement Evaluation paper which identifies six tiers and excludes the countryside.

14. At SP 1.9, the document states that ‘proposals on sites not allocated or otherwise identified for development but within settlement limits will be supported in principle where they accord with the relevant policies of the LDP and are of a scale and nature appropriate to their settlement classification and location’. In the context of the significant addition potential supply indicated in Table 12 of the Housing evidence paper (1466 units), has the council considered whether this approach supports sustainable patterns of residential development set out in the SPPS, including the encouragement of compact urban forms and reduced use of greenfield land?
15. The Department notes and welcomes the statement at SP 1.10 that other development will only be permitted where there are overriding reasons why it is essential and could not be located in the settlement. Council might give consideration to clarifying the circumstances when overriding reasons would justify approval - perhaps within the relevant DM policies or their amplification text.
16. The Department welcomes the support for proposals that re-use or make better use of vacant, derelict or under-used brownfield land or buildings where this is in accordance with the policies of the LDP (SP 1.11). The Council note that the re-use will be supported ‘in all locations’ which appears to include sites outside of settlements in the open countryside. The subsequent qualification that proposals will need to be in accordance with the policies of the LDP is welcomed. The Department understands this to mean that proposals to re-use land or buildings in the countryside should be in accordance with the opportunities set out in the DM policies such as the policies in relation to conversion of vernacular buildings. The overall focus within the SPPS is the reuse for housing and economic development purposes of previously developed land and buildings within settlements.

Employment

17. The Department notes the Council's Strategic Objectives in relation to employment and the economy of the Borough. The Council has recently signed up to the Belfast Region City deal which the Council believes will harness additional investment, create new jobs and accelerate economic growth.
18. Following on from the Employment Land Evaluation report, the approach to identify and safeguard a range of sites of industry and employment is generally welcomed. Of the 19 existing Strategic Employment Locations (SEL) identified, 17 are located in Metropolitan Newtownabbey, Antrim and Ballyclare. These higher tier settlements are best placed to take advantage of existing housing, services, facilities and infrastructure as advocated by the RDS and SPPS which highlights the importance of this relationship.
19. The Department understands that sites designated as SEL's are considered to be strategically important for the Council area and comprise employment land of over 10 hectares. A number of the SEL's identified have significant areas of remaining potential although the Council's evidence highlights that much of this residual capacity is subject to extant planning approvals and current planning applications. A SEL is also proposed at Belfast International Airport and the Council's evidence justifies this location as a gateway (identified in the SFG 15 of the RDS) and as result of its infrastructure.
20. The proposed SEL at Nutts Corner is justified by the Council on the basis of existing planning history and development, infrastructure and recognition in previous policy documents. It is identified as a key storage, distribution and industrial hub.
21. The Council's evidence states that Nutts corner comprises around 90 hectares of developed land which has become a rural employment location. The area of land proposed by the SEL will not be confirmed until the next stage of plan preparation however Evidence paper 3 – Economic Growth, highlights two possible areas for consideration.

22. Nutts corner is located approximately 6 miles south of Antrim, which is classified as a hub in the RDS. Within Antrim 8 SELs have been identified, although due to limited existing capacity a new SEL is proposed. It is noted that the Council did not take forward an earlier proposal to designate a further SEL at Randalstown due to its proximity to Antrim as it was considered that this may detract from the growth of Antrim (evidence paper 3, paragraph 8.7). Therefore in taking forward the Nutts corner designation, the Council should consider whether the proposed wording of Policy DM1 is precise enough to secure the appropriate control over development at Nutts corner in order to direct economic development to Antrim as appropriate. The Council should continue to engage with infrastructure providers to ensure that the policy approach can be supported by the necessary infrastructure at this rural location.

Retailing

23. The SPPS states that LDPs should include a strategy for town centres and retailing, and contain appropriate policies and proposals that must promote town centres first for retail and other main town centre uses (paragraph 6.275). To this end, Policy SP 2.12 states that the Council will operate a town centre first approach in considering the development of retail and other main town centre uses across the Borough. This will be achieved by applying the hierarchy for the Borough's retail centres set out in Table 4; as well as other criterion, ensuring that all development proposals for retail and other main town centre uses are of a scale and type that are commensurate with the centre's size and function within the retail hierarchy. However, in the absence of further detail in the amplification, on the desired role/function of centres within each tier of the retail hierarchy, it is difficult to see how this policy will be applied in practice.

24. The Council states that the aim of Policy DM 6 is to recognise and promote the positive role of the Borough's town, district and local centres as the most appropriate locations for retail development and other employment, leisure and cultural uses which meet the needs of residents. While it is not immediately clear from the policy text; the preceding narrative suggests that DM 6 applies to development proposals in all centres irrespective of position in the retail hierarchy.

25. The SPPS clearly identifies Town Centres as the appropriate first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions consistent with the RDS (paragraph 6.270). It also distinguishes between district and local centres in that Planning Authorities should retain and consolidate them as a focus for everyday shopping and ensure that their role is complementary to the role and function of town centres (paragraph 6.276). In this regard, it is inappropriate to apply the same general policy tests to development proposals in all centres. As no distinction is made between town, district and local centres, it is considered that policy DM 6 has not fully taken account of paragraph 6.277 of the SPPS which requires Councils to set out appropriate policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in the hierarchy of centres and other locations and the factors that will be taken into account in decision making.
26. In addition, there appears to be an omission in relation to district and local centres in that the current retail policy does not meet the provisions of paragraph 6.283 of the SPPS which requires all applications for retail or town centre type developments which are not proposed in a town centre location and are not in accordance with the LDP to undertake a full assessment or retail impact as well as need.
27. Policy DM 7.1 states that in considering development proposals for retail use and other main town centre uses outside the Borough's centres, the Council will apply a sequential test which requires locations for new development to be considered in the following order of preference of Town centre sites followed by Edge of Town Centre sites, and then Out of Centre locations that are, or can be made accessible by walking and cycling and public transport. This is not reflective of the overarching strategic policy set out in SP 2.12 which sets out the hierarchy for the Boroughs Retail Centres and includes district and local centres in tiers 3 and 4. The Council is reminded of the coherence and effectiveness tests and specifically the need to set out a coherent strategy from which its policies logically flow as well as the need to have clear mechanisms for implementation.

28. It is noted that the Council identifies Abbey Centre as a Large Town Centre to join Antrim in the top tier of the Retail Hierarchy (Table 4). The Council states in paragraph 5.3 that the Abbey Centre is the largest retail shopping area in Northern Ireland outside Belfast City Centre. The Abbey Centre was formerly an Out of Centre retail development recommended for designation as a district centre in draft BMAP.
29. Whilst the centre has a large retail offer and small doctor's surgery, it does not comprise the typical range of uses found in town centres as per the Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel in Diagram 2.2 of the RDS and 'community facilities, leisure, entertainment and businesses' as per paragraph 2.71, footnote 58 of the SPPS.
30. The Council states that 'there are good planning reasons to define Abbey Centre as a town centre.' The Department notes that Metropolitan Newtownabbey does not otherwise have a town centre and therefore to apply the sequential test development may be directed to Belfast or Antrim. The Council should therefore give consideration to the potential unintended consequences this designation may have on other town centres within the Borough including Antrim which is classified as a Main Hub and beyond to Belfast City Centre which is referred to as the 'Primary Retail location' in Northern Ireland in the RDS.
31. The Council seeks to elevate Whiteabbey from a village centre to a tier 3 district centre in the Hierarchy of Retail Centres in Table 4. The proposed designation appears to have been based on a qualitative exercise undertaken by the Plan Team as part of the Retail and Commercial Leisure Study. This concludes that of the various criteria used, 'the number of units was considered to be amongst the most important' (Paragraph 6.28). Despite having more units than the other centres outlined in tier 4 of the hierarchy, the Department would welcome further quantitative evidence/analysis in support of this designation. The Council is reminded that the strategy, policies and allocations should be realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base in line with soundness test CE2.

Homes

32. The Department notes the approach of the Council as set out in Strategic Policy 4 'Homes'. In particular the Department welcomes that Council has taken on board comments made in respect of its Preferred Option Paper (POP) regarding the evidence used to justify the previously preferred option for housing growth of 13,000 units.
33. The Department in principle welcomes the Council's approach to determining the amount of housing likely to be required. This acknowledges that the Housing Growth Indicator (HGI) is an estimate or starting point for determining the amount of housing required. The approach of the council in taking account of historic annual housing growth (derived from total housing stock statistics) is therefore acknowledged on this basis. This results in a figure of 9750 units over the plan period once an allowance is made for dwellings constructed in the countryside. The Department would have welcomed clarification within the draft Plan Strategy of the residual housing requirement as of 2019.
34. The Council will be aware that the Department recently undertook an exercise to refresh the housing growth indicators set out in the Regional Development Strategy. The revised HGI's have taken account of updated data for 3 of the components which previously made up the HGI's, mainly NISRA household projections, new house condition survey data published by NIHE and more recent data from the NISRA Central Survey Unit Combined Survey Sample. The Council should take account of this revised indicator alongside all other relevant evidence gathered to date to justify the housing requirement in the draft Plan Strategy. Depending on the methodology or approach used to arrive at this housing requirement this update may have a variable impact.
35. While the Department acknowledges that the assessment is not an exact science, use of the wording 'at least' in the policy wording of SP4: 'Homes' does not provide the certainty expected from a Plan Strategy². The approach also establishes a minimum target thereby appearing to contradict the statement at paragraph 7.7. It also raises

² Paragraph Development Plan Practice Note 7 'The Plan Strategy'

further questions in respect of the level of housing growth in excess of this figure that the Council might consider appropriate based on its assessment of the gathered evidence. While the Department appreciates that flexibility is required to account for existing commitments it is of the view that the housing requirement in the plan should be the amount of housing required to be delivered to meet the identified need over the plan period, based upon the HGI and other relevant evidence. In this sense the figure is neither a minimum nor a maximum.

36. As currently worded the policy creates some uncertainty for the public and developers in relation to the amount of housing that the councils wishes to see delivered in their area over the plan period. Furthermore it poses challenges for stakeholders in planning the provision of services and infrastructure necessary to facilitate sustainable housing growth. It is noted that the wording is at odds with the indicative monitoring framework which does not express this figure as a minimum target.
37. The Department acknowledges the information presented in Housing Evidence Paper 6 and other evidence papers, including those in relation to Economic Growth, Transport and Public Utilities. It would assist in demonstrating Soundness if Council can show that in arriving at the overall housing requirement it has also taken into account these related policy considerations to ensure an integrated and sustainable approach to the provision of housing in settlements. Advice on this aspect is set out in paragraph 13.4 of DPPN 7 'The Plan Strategy'. The Department would also reiterate comments made in respect of the councils POP that the growth strategy should have sufficient regard to the implications for other relevant plan policies/strategies, not just in the Council's own district but also in adjoining council areas and in the context of the Belfast Metropolitan Area.
38. The Department notes and welcomes the allocation of housing growth to settlements set out in Table 6. In particular the approach of focusing the majority (almost 80%) in Metropolitan Newtownabbey, Antrim and Ballyclare. It also welcomes confirmation that the allocation has had regard to the capacity tests as identified in the RDS Housing Evaluation Framework.
39. The allowance made to the countryside over the plan period is 750 units. This is based on an average build rate of dwellings in the countryside over the 3 years from April

2015 – March 2018. The Department acknowledges the uncertainties associated with estimating dwellings that may be delivered in the countryside over the plan period. It is however of the opinion that an allowance of 750 would appear conservative in the context of the councils own estimate of 15 years supply (795) and other relevant information including recent approvals rates. The Department considers that the impact of the proposed approach to well-defined sites and ‘wall stead’ replacement opportunities are likely to increase opportunities for housing in the countryside generally and offset any possible reduction in numbers through the designation of additional hamlets. Further information is presented in the section relating to Homes in the Countryside.

Identification of Land for Housing

40. Paragraph SP 4.4 states that a critical consideration in bringing forward future housing zonings will be committed housing zonings in Metropolitan Newtownabbey, Antrim, Ballyclare, Crumlin and Randalstown. Paragraph 7.14 provides clarification that the zonings referred to are new zonings in addition to any extant zonings that may be rolled forward from existing areas plans.
41. The statement that there will only be a minimal requirement to zone additional housing land unless location specific needs dictate otherwise is useful as is the further clarification in paragraph 7.17 that the identification of new sites will be undertaken in line with the RDS target to locate 60% of new homes on existing vacant and underutilised land. In the context of the existing high level of commitments the Department is of the opinion that zoning of additional land can still be justified where it is in line with the sequential approach and would support wider sustainability objectives, for example in relation to compact urban forms or increasing the proportion of housing delivered within the urban footprint of settlements. The Department is therefore supportive of the Council’s approach. Further clarification of what is meant by a location specific need would be welcomed.
42. The decision to zone additional land ought still to be supported by robust evidence including the need to have regard to the proportion of existing commitments likely to contribute to meeting the housing allocation to settlements made under the housing growth strategy. This is necessary to demonstrate continued broad alignment between

the allocation to settlements under the Plan Strategy and the housing zonings brought forward in the subsequent Local Policies Plan. In this regard, did the council consider any other measures to support a managed approach to the release of land, especially in relation to 'uncommitted' zonings and greenfield land that the Council has taken the policy decision to roll forward to the new plan?

Affordable Homes

43. The Department welcomes the commitment to promote the development of balanced communities and strengthen community cohesion. It also welcomes the confirmation that the council has taken into account the Housing Needs Assessment undertaken by the NIHE. The SPPS states that the development plan process will be the primary vehicle to facilitate any identified need by zoning land or through key site requirements where a proportion of a site may be required for affordable housing. This does not preclude other sites coming forward through development management.
44. The Department notes the 'Affordable Housing' element of DM 17 'Homes in Settlements' which will only permit residential developments of 40 units or greater where a minimum of 10% of total units are provided as affordable housing. While the Department welcomes any policy that maximises opportunities to deliver affordable units and mixed tenure developments, Council should continue to liaise with statutory partners including the Department for Communities and NIHE to ensure that the evidence base underpinning such approaches is robust and that measures are in place to support the practical implementation of the policy, for example guidance.

Homes in the Countryside

45. Paragraph 7.15 indicates that the plan maintains opportunities for new housing in countryside areas through the application of Policy DM 18 'Homes in the Countryside'.
46. Clarification is however sought on whether the council has considered the impact of the policy approach set out in DM 18.4 which provides an exception for well-defined sites on a farm holding. In the Department's view the practical effect of this exception is to provide a further option to locate a new dwelling away from buildings on the farm. It is therefore concerned that even though the policy is expressed as an exception the attraction of any opportunity to site a dwelling away from a group of existing buildings

on the farm has real potential to undermine the strategic policy approach to clustering as set out within the SPPS. The fact that an applicant need only demonstrate that the alternate site would have a 'more limited' impact on character and appearance than clustering with existing buildings is considered in reality a low test. This is especially the case where farm holdings may have relatively insubstantial farm groupings.

47. The practical operation of such a policy is likely also to prove more difficult as the focus of the assessment is inevitably reduced a much more subjective assessment of which alternative offers the best integration qualities or least impact on character and appearance.
48. In relation to DM 18B 'Replacement Dwellings', whilst the Department generally welcomes the provisions of the policy it has concerns regarding the 'wall stead' exception set out at DM 18.8. In the Department's view this represents a significant weakening of the replacement criteria set out in the SPPS. The other criteria, including a requirement for significant long-established boundary planting, are noted however the Department is concerned that these criteria do not provide sufficiently robust policy control. In particular, how is the meaning of 'long-established' to be assessed?

Windfall

49. The Department welcomes acknowledgement of the need to have regard to housing supply from windfall sources. Whilst welcoming a more planned approach to development and therefore a reduced reliance on windfall, it is the Department's view that the allowance should also be realistic and informed by robust evidence. It is noted that the time period used to inform the windfall allowance is marked by overall lower levels of housing completions and therefore of windfall supply. Did any other considerations inform the windfall estimate, for example the results of the strategic urban capacity study or consideration of development opportunity sites?
50. Paragraph 4.8 the Plan Strategy document states that the limits of settlements, land allocations and local designations will be set out in the Local Policies Plan. The Council's approach to the designation and/or adjustment of settlement development

limits in the LPP must be consistent with the estimated windfall component of supply set out in the Plan Strategy.

Cross Boundary working

CE1 The DPD sets out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations logically flow and where cross boundary issues are relevant it is not in conflict with the DPDs of neighbouring councils.

51. The RDS provides strong regional and sub-regional guidance through a Spatial Framework for Northern Ireland which divides the Region into 5 components based on functions and geography. Implementation depends upon effective joint working between Councils. This engagement is fundamental to ensuring that the aims and objectives of Council LDPs are integrated and provide a coherent, joined up approach to regional planning issues, including the policy approach to landscape and environmental designations. Such cross boundary working also ensures that LDPs do not conflict with each other and that potential areas of conflict are identified and resolved prior to a Development Plan Document being submitted to the Department to cause an Independent Examination. The Chief Planner's letter dated December 2016 refers.
52. The Council acknowledges the requirement that regard should be given to adjoining Councils' plans, policies and strategies and highlights that where cross boundary issues are relevant, it should be established if the LDP conflicts with plans of neighbouring Councils. The Department notes the Council shares boundaries with 5 Councils: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, and Mid Ulster District Council.
53. Evidence Paper 7 Historic Environment, Evidence Paper 17 Natural Environment and Evidence Paper 20 Loughs (Table 1), sets out adjoining Council's positions in relation to historic and natural environment issues however this is not further considered within either evidence papers or the draft Plan Strategy. The Council highlight their involvement in the Metropolitan Spatial working group, the Lough Neagh forum and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Project board. The Department recognises the

value and importance of these and other forums, providing the opportunity for Councils to work with neighbouring authorities to deliver a compatible approach across a range of relevant issues.

54. Cross boundary issues of relevance to the council include housing and the shared Belfast Housing Market Area (BHMA), the metropolitan transport network and the environmental designations such as the approach to the management of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg and other shared environmental assets.
55. The Council should be able to demonstrate that policy in respect of cross-boundary designations does not conflict with the DPDs of neighbouring councils as required by Soundness Test CE1. Cross boundary working is particularly important in securing wider regional planning objectives in relation to co-operation between areas.

Infrastructure

56. In line with the draft Programme for Government (PfG) the Department is focused on supporting inclusive growth by connecting people and opportunities through infrastructure.
57. The RDS 2035 seeks to support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of Northern Ireland. Importantly it identifies the need for a co-ordinated approach to the provision of services, jobs and infrastructure and a focus on co-operation between service providers. In particular, RG1 seeks to 'Ensure adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth'; while RG8 strives to 'Manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development' and RG12 'Promotes a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management'. These regional guidelines emphasise the importance of the relationship between the location of housing, jobs, facilities and infrastructure. The availability of necessary infrastructure, including transportation, sustainable water resources and sewerage capacity is therefore vitally important.
58. The Department is encouraged by the Councils commitment to working with its partners to improve accessibility and connectivity and its key aim to integrate transportation and land use in ways which enable people to carry out their everyday activities with less need to travel with maximum modal choice. The Department also

welcomes the Councils recognition of infrastructure capacity constraints particularly in relation to Waste Water Treatment. Working with neighbouring councils is important in this regard, particularly in light of the fact that a number of settlements within Antrim and Newtownabbey are currently served by treatment works in adjoining council areas. Consideration of cross-boundary issues is a key test of soundness as outlined above, and Councils should have regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to any adjoining District and ensure that their policies and allocations are not in conflict with the DPDs of neighbouring Councils.

Monitoring

CE3 – There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.

59. A council may revise its Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan at any time (after adoption), or by direction by the Department. This requires councils to keep under review the implementation of their plans to ensure that LDP objectives are being achieved.
60. The Department notes the provisions in the draft Plan Strategy on monitoring and welcomes the range of issues identified within the proposed monitoring framework. However the monitoring framework does not clearly identify the targets and triggers. For example, Policy SP4: Homes – Sustainable growth of 9,750 new homes between 2015-2013, and the associated indicator states ‘the number of new homes completed in Borough by settlement and in the countryside.’ This does not identify what point the trigger will be initiated. Council may find it difficult to measure policy effectiveness without specific targets to trigger a need for review. DPPN 6 states that ‘monitoring is essential for the delivery of the DPD and should provide the basis to trigger any requirement to amend the strategy, policies and proposals of the DPD’.

Annex 1 – Additional DfI Planning Comments

Further to those comments in the main response, the Department would like to detail some additional points for consideration regarding the operational policies contained within the draft Plan Strategy.

The SPPS states that a transitional period will operate until such times as a Plan Strategy for a council area has been adopted. During this time, planning authorities will apply policy contained within the suite of PPS's and SPPS policy, together with relevant supplementary and best practice guidance. Once the Plan Strategy has been adopted, existing policy retained under the transitional arrangements shall cease to have effect. Council should consider this in relation to those policies that refer to departmental guidance.

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development

Delivering Sustainable Outcomes

SP 1.13 – The use of the wording 'in appropriate cases' appears to imply that in some instances the council will not seek a contribution from a developer even where a development impacts on the provision of the boroughs services and environment.

SP 1.16 – The Department welcome's indication that the council will seek a financial guarantee or bond however council should consider how this will apply in practice.

Strategic Policy 2: Employment

Policy DM 1: Economic Development – Zoned Sites and Settlements

Local Employment Sites

DM 1.4 - The wording 'would not create problems for the remaining businesses at the site' could be open to interpretation.

DM 1.5 – It would be beneficial if it was clear what is required to demonstrate a proposal being 'firm'.

DM 1.6 - No suggestion business/employment related uses will be dealt with sequentially in line with paragraph 6.85 of the SPPS.

Policy DM 2: Economic Development - Countryside

Established and Industrial Business Use

DM 2.7(b) - States proposals involving a new building and or expansion will be acceptable where it is demonstrated that the proposal will make 'a significant contribution' to the local economy. Whilst this terminology is used in current policy, it may be useful to clarify what type of contribution is expected.

Major Economic Development

DM 2.9 – It states that the Council will support a proposal for a major new industrial of economic development project where it is demonstrated that the proposal will make a significant contribution to the regional economy. Although a requirement of the SPPS, it would be useful to indicate what is required to meet this element of the policy test.

Policy DM 3: Economic Development – Incompatible Uses

DM 3.2 – It is stated that 'in the assessment of such proposals, the Council will continue to apply the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Policy PED 8 of PPS 4 (2012).

Despite paragraph 1.14 of the SPPS stating that the Supplementary Guidance to PED 8 will continue to be treated as material considerations during the transitional period (or as the case may be after the expiry of the transitional period), it would be clearer if this content was repeated in the DPD or attached in the form of SPG.

Policy DM 4: Agricultural Development

There appears to be no reference to forestry development as per the SPPS. It is noted that forestry development is mentioned in the context of Landscape Protection (Policy DM 40) particularly in respect of Strategic Landscape Policy Areas. The Council should ensure there is consistency throughout the draft Plan Strategy policies.

Policy DM 6: Development within Centres

DM 6.1 – It states that all development proposal will be required to demonstrate that they will (a) contribute positively to the vitality and viability of the centre and (c) not

unacceptably impact on daytime footfall. The Department would welcome clarification on how the Council will assess these criterion. Would the applicant be required to submit quantitative and qualitative evidence?

DM 6.4 – It states that on upper floors of premises, particularly where property is underutilised, the Council will support the retention and **development of housing** and other complementary town centre uses. This would suggest that housing would be supported on the upper floors of the Abbey Centre and surrounding retailing.

General points

It is unclear if the small shops policy is the policy for considering development in Local Centres., however not all proposals in local centres will be retail related. The SPPS states that Planning Authorities should retain and consolidate existing district and local centres as a focus for local everyday shopping. Paragraph 5.42 states the aim of the policy is to protect the role, viability and vitality of existing town centres. The Department would welcome clarification as to the implementation of this policy in relation to new town centres proposed in the hierarchy.

Policy DM 7: Development outside Centres

Sequential Test

DM 7.1 – It states that the Council will apply a sequential test, under which locations for new development will be considered in preferential order. These locations are identified as town centre; edge of town centre; and out of town centre (that are, or can be made accessible by walking cycling and public transport). This sequential approach is not reflective of the Council's retail hierarchy set out within Table 4 at SP 2.12, which refers to large town centres, town centres, district centres and local centres.

DM 7.2 – The policy states that proposals for retail use and other main town centre uses which generate significant footfall in other out of centre locations will only be acceptable where all of the range of criteria are demonstrated. Criterion (a) relates to the demonstration that 'All town centre, edge of centre and other commercial centre options have been assessed'. The term 'commercial centre' is not defined within the draft Plan Strategy and is open to interpretation. Greater detail in relation to what are

considered to be quantitative and qualitative deficiencies would provide additional clarity with regard to this policy.

Retail Assessment

DM 7.5 – The policy stipulates that a Retail Assessment will be required for any development proposal that involves an increase of more than 1,000 square metres (gross) of retail floorspace outside any of the Borough's Centres. This appears to suggest that proposals under this threshold are acceptable as there is no apparent policy relating to the consideration of such proposals.

It is noted that the Council requires a Retail Assessment for any development that involves an increase of more than 1,000 square metres of retail floorspace outside any of the Borough's centres. However, paragraph 6.283 of the SPPS states that all applications above a threshold of 1,000 square metres gross external area which are not proposed in a town centre location and not in accordance with an LDP require a full assessment of retail impact, and importantly, 'this includes applications for an extension/s which would result in the overall development exceeding 1,000 square metres gross external area'. Whilst this omission may be unintended, Policy DM 7.5 could be seen to be more permissive and does not fully take account of the SPPS.

DM 7.6 – It states that applications to vary or delete restrictive conditions applying to existing out of centre premises, such as sale of bulky goods will be assessed under this policy. However, it is unclear whether this policy is applicable to all proposals involving an increase of more than 1,000 square metres, as it is noted that many restrictive conditions relate to retail warehouses that fall short of the 1,000 square metre threshold.

Small Shops

DM 7.7 - It is unclear if policy is applicable to Local Centres.

Villages and Hamlets

DM 7.8 – It would be useful if the policy defined what is considered to be 'small scale'.

The Countryside

DM 7.9 – It would be useful if policy defined what is considered to be 'small scale' in a countryside context. The policy appears to omit the requirement for proposals to

ensure that there will be no unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability of an existing centre within the catchment in line with paragraph 6.279 of the SPPS.

Policy DM 8: Development at The Junction, Antrim

DM 8.1 – The draft Plan Strategy says that the Council will support the ongoing redevelopment at The Junction in accordance with the terms of the Outline Masterplan approved by the Council. In order to ensure clarity and consistency with the aforementioned Masterplan, it would be beneficial to incorporate details into the DPD.

DM 8.2 – It states that in assessing future proposals at or within the environs of the Junction, in addition to the requirements of Policy DM 7, the Council will operate a presumption against development that is likely to impact adversely on the continued vitality and viability of Antrim Town Centre. Policy DM 7 however requires a quantitative assessment of impact only if the proposal involves an increase of more than 1,000 square metres gross retail floorspace and some of the units at The Junction are less than this threshold. It is unclear how a proposal below this threshold will be assessed.

It is noted that three examples are provided in relation to development which will be resisted, however, it is unclear if consideration will be given to any exceptional circumstances. An applicant could easily argue that their particular proposal will not result in a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of Antrim Town Centre by diverting trade from other retailers within The Junction. Whilst the intention of the policy is clear, further consideration should be given to how this policy will be implemented in practice.

Policy DM 9: Tourism Development

Tourist Accommodation

DM 9.3 – Refers to ‘easily accessible’ which may be open to interpretation. Greater clarification with regard to the intended meaning of this terminology could ensure certainty to aid application of this policy.

DM 9.4 – It is unclear if this policy solely relates to proposals outside settlement limits (i.e. countryside). The Council should also give consideration to how development proposals are ‘physically associated’. Depending on the scale of the proposed

development, it could serve to mar the distinction between the settlement and the rural area.

The proposed policy does not reflect the requirement to demonstrate that no suitable alternative sites are available within a settlement as outlined at Para 6.260 of the SPPS.

Major Tourism Development

DM 9.9 – Whilst this policy echoes the requirement set out within Para 6.261 of the SPPS to demonstrate the tourism/sustainability benefits of a proposal, it omits the thrust of the policy that such development will be in exceptional circumstances.

General Criteria

DM 9.10(c) – The term ‘easily accessible’ is open to interpretation. Greater clarification with regard to the intended meaning of this terminology could ensure certainty to aid application of this policy.

DM 9.10(d) – Reference is made to ‘satisfactory information’ being submitted in relation to tourism development in the countryside to demonstrate a robust business case. This term could prove open to interpretation and is perhaps too flexible. It may be prudent to outline what information will be considered acceptable and/or what information will be required in this regard.

DM 9.10(e) – Requires developers to demonstrate the extent to which the proposal will contemplate the Council’s Tourism Strategy. It is difficult to understand how this can be accomplished in an instance whereby a Tourism Strategy has not been adopted in final form, nor is the draft version available for the public to view as part of the evidence base.

Strategic Policy 3: Transportation and Infrastructure

Transportation Schemes

SP 3.2 – Specific locations are mentioned with respect to roads improvements, developments in bus and rail infrastructure as well as park and ride, however no geographically specific information is provided for active travel networks in the plan

area. Cycle routes and greenways are mentioned but there is no indication of where these are likely to be. The Department would highlight paragraph 6.300 of the SPPS states that “LDPs should identify active travel networks and provide a range of infrastructure improvements to increase use of more sustainable modes”

Active Travel

SP 3.6 – The council will seek to ensure that all new development encourages active means of travel but as above there is no mention of the requirement to identify active travel networks.

Transport Assessment and Travel Plans

SP 3.9 – The Council advise that Travel Plans will be required to set out a package of complementary measures for the overall delivery of more sustainable travel patterns, it appears to omit that such measures must also reduce the level of private car traffic generated in line with paragraph 6.303 of the SPPS.

The draft Plan Strategy states that, where appropriate, the submission of a Transport Assessment (and in some instances, a Travel Plan) may be required. This is reflective of paragraph 6.303 of the SPPS which outlines the requirement for Transport Assessments and Travel Plans.

Access and Parking

SP 3.10 – The Council states that access onto the network of Protected Routes identified by DfI will be restricted in accordance with Policy DM 10. Policy DM 10 relates to the wider issue of Access and Parking, whereas the policy relating to access to Protected Routes is contained within DM 11.

Car Parks

SP 3.11 – This policy is supportive of the development and extension of public car parks. The Department notes there is no attempt to provide specific Development Management policies to deal with the issue of car parking.

No consideration has been given to demand management measures to influence a modal shift away from reliance on the car to more sustainable travel in line with paragraph 6.301 of the SPPS.

SP 3.14 – This policy requires that development proposals for car parks make suitable provision for Electric Vehicle Charging Points.

Supplementary Guidance

Para 6.11 - It is noted that the Council will continue to apply the 'Transport Assessment Guidelines for Development Proposals in Northern Ireland' as published by DRD and DoE in 2006, and will consider this document to be supplementary guidance.

Policy DM 10: Access and Parking

DM 10.1 – This policy refers to the flow of traffic, and Council may wish to consider referring to “the flow of people or goods” in line with PfG outcomes and wider sustainability objectives.

DM 10.2 – It is noted that the Council will continue to take account of supplementary planning guidance set out in: Development Control Advice Note 15: Vehicular Access Standards; Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments; and, Parking Standards.

Policy DM 11: Access to Protected Routes

It is noted that this policy appears to be more restrictive than regional policy as paragraph 6.301 of the SPPS which states that an exception may be considered for motorway service areas where there is a demonstrable need.

Policy DM 13: Belfast International Airport - Operations

BIA Major Noise Zone

DM 13.4 – This policy seeks to operate a presumption against development in such areas that would be subject to unacceptable amenity impact, particularly due to noise. Proposals will be considered in accordance with DAERA Noise Level Maps until detail of noise zones are brought forward in the Local Policies Plan.

Policy DM 14: Public Utilities and Infrastructure

DM 14.1 & DM 14.2 – These policies outline criterion that are expected to be demonstrated within development proposals. This includes the requirement to demonstrate the criterion through the submission of 'sufficient information'.

Clarification would be welcomed on how consideration of 'sufficient information' would be assessed, to provide a degree of certainty for prospective developers/applicants.

Development in the vicinity of a wastewater treatment works

DM 14.4 – Council should ensure this policy fully aligns with the Odour Assessment Policy applied by NIW. The distances applied is dependent on the size and scale of the works and therefore may vary from development.

Policy DM 16: Telecommunication Facilities and Digital Services

DM 16.4 – It may be beneficial to clarify in the amplification the term 'Code System Operators and Broadcasters'.

DM 16.4(c) – Requires that a proposal involving the development of a telecommunications base station be accompanied by a statement 'indicating' a number of criterion. The term 'indicating' is somewhat ambiguous and suggests that a developer need only do just that – with no accompanying evidence to demonstrate that the criterion have been fulfilled. This is particularly the case with compliance with ICNIRP guidelines and assessment of interference caused by the proposed development.

DM 16.5 – Noted that account will still be taken of guidance within DCAN 14: The Siting and Design of Radio Telecommunications Equipment (DoE 2003) in assessing proposals.

Strategic Policy 4: Homes

SP 4.7 – The Department welcomes the commitment to the creation of balanced communities which accords with the SPPS. Did council consider identifying the proportion of affordable homes as part of the overall housing requirement indicated in SP4?

SP 4.8 – The Department welcomes the statement that the council has taken account of Housing Needs Assessment undertaken by the NIHE. Clarification would be welcomed on whether the HNA influenced the distribution of housing growth set out in Table 6.

7.13 – Council states that evidence suggests that “the committed supply of housing units is already significantly in excess of the 9750 dwellings required to meet need”. It is unclear if the council has undertaken further work to establish that commitments are in reality available to contribute to meeting the identified need over the period.

Specifically in relation to the strategic Urban Capacity Study, referred to in the housing evidence paper, the methodology appears to differ from that set out in PPS12 ‘Housing in Settlements’. This indicates that only ‘comprehensive surveys of the whole defined area are considered to be generally appropriate’ (page 42).

Policy DM 17 – Homes in Settlements

DM 17.1 – The Department notes the requirement for well-designed high density proposals at accessible locations in Metropolitan Newtownabbey and towns. The wording appears to suggest council will not set out density requirements in respect of zoned sites.

Affordable Housing

DM 17.3 – Council is reminded that the SPPS regional strategic approach is that development plan process is the primary vehicle to facilitate any identified need by zoning land or by indicating, through key site requirements where a proportion of the site may be required for affordable housing.

Department welcomes approaches that maximise the delivery of affordable housing within the district however should continue to liaise with relevant stakeholders including DFC and NIHE to ensure that the approach is underpinned by robust evidence and is capable of implementation. In light of the above council should clarify the basis for the level of contribution sought.

Policy DM 18 – Homes in the Countryside

Policy DM 18A – Farm Dwellings - Note wording of DM 18.3 and criteria (a) – (c) but note that the requirement is to position sensitively to cluster there is no reference to visual linkage test

Note the inclusion at DM18.4 that exceptionally consideration may be given to a new dwelling on a well-defined site enclosed by long established boundary planting – has

council considered the impact of this policy approach on the estimated housing allowance for dwellings in the countryside?

Council should note that the general approach to new development in the countryside is to cluster with existing buildings – the Department is concerned that even through the policy is expressed as being an exception it has the potential to undermine the strategic focus on clustering new development with existing buildings set out within the SPPS. This matter is addressed in the Departments strategic response. Note that the policy contains no other exceptions in relation to health & safety or verifiable plans to expand farm business. Welcome retention of 10 year limitation.

Policy DM 18B – Replacement Dwellings

The Department notes the wording of the policy including the criteria that the replacement dwelling should not have a visual impact greater than the existing building. Note that inclusion of an exception in relation to wall-steads as an exception. The Departments concerns in relation to this matter are addressed in the strategic response.

Has the council assessed the possible impact of this approach to wall-steads on the estimate/allowance made for housing in the countryside under the housing allocation?

What evidence/justification is the council relying on for this departure from the regional policy approach in relation to replacement dwellings set out in the SPPS?

Policy DM 18C – Dwellings in a built up frontage

The approach is welcomed, in particular to the clarification of substantial and continuously built up frontage as defined as 5 or more substantial buildings including at least 3 dwellings. This approach departs from the SPPS but is presumably the approach that the council consider appropriate in light of local evidence on building patterns/typology within the district. Furthermore it is noted that the policy relates to dwelling type development and not to any other infill type development such as appropriate economic development

Policy DM 18E – Dwellings in Exceptional Circumstances

Suggest that the amplification in relation to dwellings for a non-agricultural business could clarify that the need to provide improved security is unlikely to warrant a site specific need for the purposes of the policy

Policy DM 18G – Affordable Housing in the Countryside

The Department notes that the policy contains no upper limit to the number of dwellings permitted and that this will be determined having regard to the identified need, the size of the settlement, the level of service provision and the ability of the countryside to absorb the scale of the development proposed. Council should consider the implications of this approach for the overall number of affordable housing units developed outside of settlement limits.

Policy DM 20 – Traveller Accommodation

Note that where a need is identified for a transit site or serviced site which cannot be met in a settlement proposals will be required to meet the provisions of Policy DM 18G – this policy still requires a need to be demonstrated. In light of the above the Council may give consideration to the desirability of reflecting the terms of policy HS3 (Amended) Travellers Accommodation which states that exceptionally, and without a requirement to demonstrate need, a single family traveller transit site or serviced site may be permitted in the countryside.

Policy DM 22 – Residential Extensions and Alterations

The Department notes at DM 22.2 that the Council intend to take account of guidance set out in Annex A of the addendum to PPS until such time that the council published its own guidance. Council should be aware that the Addendum will be withdrawn upon adoption of the plan strategy. If council wishes to continue to rely this aspect it would be preferable to ensure that its own guidance is in place upon adoption.

Strategic Policy 5: Community Infrastructure

Policy DM 23 – Protection of Open Space

The Department welcomes policy at DM23.1. However, notes that DM 23.2 introduces an exception at (b) which is in addition to SPPS policy and introduces a further test. The Department would welcome clarity on this departure from regional policy.

Policy DM 24: Community Facilities

Development in the Countryside

DM 24.3 - introduce exceptions where Council will support proposals for new or enhanced community facilities and services within the countryside.

The Department notes the Council's definition of "community facilities" at DM 24.6 as including 'sports and recreation facilities as well as a range of community and public buildings'. Within the SPPS, at page 87, sports and recreation facilities are clearly included within the definition of an "intensive sport facility". The regional policy for Intensive Sports Facilities is clear at para 6.207, that they shall be located within settlements. The exception being sports stadia, which "may be allowed outside of a settlement, but only where clear criteria is established, which can justify a departure from this approach".

The council's approach of supporting this type of development within the countryside is not in line with regional policy and when coupled with the policies at DM 24 undermines the Council's own Growth Strategy at SP 1.12 which highlights that the council will "operate a presumption against development that mars the distinction between a settlement and the surrounding countryside".

Strategic Policy 6: Placemaking and Good Design

Policy DM 25 – Urban Design

Council might consider scope to cross refer to this policy within DM 17 'Homes in Settlements' for example in criteria (a) that refers to 'well designed' proposals.

Policy DM 27 – Rural Design and Character

Welcome approach but consider that policy should make clear that it relates to development permissible in accordance with policies for homes / economic development in the countryside

Policy DM 28 – Amenity Impact

Council should consider the need for consistency in referring to amenity impacts – this policy refers to 'unacceptable adverse impacts' however elsewhere amenity is

referenced differently. For example DM 1.4 refers to the need for proposals not to be 'materially detrimental' to amenity. Similarly DM 4.1 criteria (d) refers to 'detrimental impact' on amenity of residential dwellings outside the farm holding. DM 50 refers to a significant adverse impact on local amenity which differs again.

DM 28.2 – consideration might be given to other criteria including loss of amenity space for occupants of a building or other impacts arising from the type of development for example shadow flicker as set out in DM 45.

Policy DM 29 – Advertisements

Note that Council intend to depend on the guidance set out in Annex A - council should not that upon adoption of the plan the PPS cease to have effect in the district of the council and are not available to refer to. If council wishes to continue to rely this aspect it would be preferable to ensure that its own guidance is in place upon adoption.

Strategic Policy 7: Historic Environment

Policy DM 31: Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes

The reference at policy criterion at DM 31.1(b) which states that" adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of strategic importance to our borough" may lessen the level of protection which should be afforded to these designations.

Policy DM 33: Conservation Areas

The policy should reflect the Planning Act 2011 and the SPPS in relation to the emphasis on enhancement, and where this is not possible the character and appearance of the area should be preserved. Council should consider whether the amplification text at 10.46 would be better placed within the policy box.

Policy DM 34: Areas of Townscape Character

DM 34 – This policy could be expanded by referencing DM34.4-DM 34.6.

Strategic Policy 8: Natural Heritage

It is noted that the Council have undertaken a Landscape Character Assessment update where proposals include the designation through the LDP of Strategic Landscape Policy Areas which are a new designation. It is also noted that three proposed SLPAs are cross boundary.

Local Landscape Policy Areas - The criteria for identifying LLPAs is set out and this will be applied when preparing the LPP. May need to consider transitional arrangements

Policy DM 37: Designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance

The information on designations that have statutory protection is clear.

The wording of policy DM 37.5 in relation to permitting development “likely to have a significant adverse impact on a Local Nature Reserve or other site identified for its local nature conservation importance” could potentially weaken the regional policy intent of the SPPS. The drafting of policy DM 37.5 may cause confusion and should align itself more clearly with the SPPS.

Policy DM 38: Protected Species

The information on designations statutorily protected is clear. However, the Department notes that there is an additional criterion at Policy DM 38.1(b) which appears to widen the exceptions to the policy, and in relation to other protected species there are wording differences.

Policy DM 39: Habitats, Species and Features of Natural Heritage Importance

The policy is generally welcomed however it is noted that there is no reference to ‘damage’ to habitats, species and features of natural heritage importance, as stated in the SPPS and this may weaken the protection offered by this policy.

Policy DM 40: Landscape Protection

The Strategic LPAs (of which there are 7 named) include the cross boundary assets of Belfast Basalt Escarpment, Carrickfergus Escarpment and Lough Neagh and Lough Beg shoreline. Policy is tailored to each location/designation. Their precise boundaries will be brought forward in the LPP, therefore it is not clear if the policy for this new type designation will be able to be implemented on existing designations in extant development plans where these assets are spatially defined. There is a presumption

against minerals development in these areas and it is questioned how neighbouring councils will deal with these assets.

Policy DM 41: Coastal Protection

A Coastal Policy Area is designated along Belfast Lough. The Council should consider the implementation of this policy as the coast line is shared between a number of councils. The Department would query how this will be demonstrated in line with the LPP.

Policy DM 42: Trees and Development

The Department welcomes the approach and this new policy. However, in relation to trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders and/or those in Conservation Areas, Council must adhere to requirements set out in legislation.

Strategic Policy 9: Natural Resources

The strategic policy sets out that there is a presumption against minerals development in Strategic Landscape Policy Areas, Coastal Policy Area, Registered Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, and sites of nature conservation importance (international, national and local). Demonstrates application of regional policy to the characteristics of the local area.

The Department also notes there is a presumption against fracking, which reflects the SPPS stance.

Policy DM 43: Minerals Development

DM 43.2 - The minerals development policy reflects the SPPS fully, and in addition includes a criterion on cumulative impacts where there are 2 or more consented sites that could raise similar impacts within 5km of a nearby settlement. Department welcomes this addition and would seek clarification on the evidence base to support this.

DM 43.3 – The Department notes the inclusion of policy consideration in relation to the requirements of The Planning (Management of Waste from Extractive Industries) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Policy DM 44: Mineral Reserve Policy Areas

DM 44.2 - A Minerals Reserve Policy Area is identified for the lignite reserve SW of Crumlin although its precise boundary and details of local minerals reserves will be set out in the LPP. Part of the policy refers to proposed development within 250m of identified reserves. The Department questions how this will be applied prior to the LPP stage in the absence of a defined boundary for the Reserve Policy Area.

Policy DM 45: Renewable Energy Development

Council should be satisfied that the approach to the wording of DM 45 is consistent with regional policy approach set out in SPPS

45.1 & 45.2 – The Department considers that the wording ‘address’ and ‘resolve’ is ambiguous. It would be beneficial if Council considered policy wording that makes clear all renewable energy development must not give rise to unacceptable adverse impacts in relation to all of the matters set out at (a) – (h).

DM 45.1 (b) – although this policy makes reference to any unacceptable adverse impacts to residential amenity (including noise impact), it fails to include ‘human health’ as per paragraph 6.224 of the SPPS. Human health covers a broad range of impacts which may extend beyond noise and residential amenity.

DM 45.1 (g) – although this policy makes reference to any unacceptable adverse impacts to watercourse engineering, it fails to include ‘water quantity’ as per paragraph 6.224 of the SPPS. This may be an issue specifically with regards hydropower development proposals.

DM 45.2 - It is also noted the additional considerations relating to the impact on operations of Belfast International and Belfast City Airport.

DM 45.5 – The Council have proposed a Spatial Framework for wind energy and identify 3 groups that proposals may be categorised in. The Department notes that in Group 1 wind turbines will not be acceptable in Strategic Landscape Policy Areas. These areas have been identified in the draft PS but their extent will not be apparent until the LPP. Clarification is requested on how such a policy may be implemented in

the interim period. It is also difficult to assess the likely impact of this policy on wind energy development without knowing the extent of these areas.

Group 2 areas (comprising International and National Sites of Nature Conservation Importance; Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes and 1 km areas around settlements proposals) proposals will generally only be acceptable in circumstances where any significant effects on the amenity and qualities of these area can be substantially overcome. It is not clear how this approach can be applied in respect of the environmental designations or those settlements and hamlets which have yet to have Settlement Development Limit identified.

Has the council considered the combined effect of the spatial framework groupings on the potential for wind energy development across the district? The approach should be supportive of SP 9.4 to support a diverse range of renewable energy technologies in appropriate locations. Council should ensure that they have robust evidence to justify the approach taken in respect of the Spatial Framework. In light of these comments clarification as to the outworking of this policy would be beneficial.

Strategic Policy 10: Environmental Resilience and Protection

Policy DM 46: The Control of Developments in Flood Plains

With regard to the implementation of DM 46.2, it may be of beneficial to provide greater clarification, and Council should liaise with DfI Rivers to ensure consistency of approach.

Policy DM 47: Surface Water Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems

The Department welcome the promotion of the use of SuDS as the preferred means of treating surface water and managing flow rates for development proposals where feasible.

This policy approach is consistent with the provisions of the SPSS and Departmental Guidance on the preparation of LDP Policies for Flood Risk Management.

Policy DM 50: Pollution

DM 50.1 - Council should ensure that the policy has regard to the need for consistency with the wording of policy DM 28 'Amenity Impact' which refers to unacceptable adverse impact in amenity. This is addressed generally at the start of this annex.

Council might give consideration to how LDP policy can have regard to any declared local Air Quality Management Areas within the district.

Policy DM 53 Waste Management and Disposal facilities.

DM 53.2 - The policy refers to 'likely significant adverse effect' on character and amenity. Council should consider the need for consistency with DM 28 'Amenity Impacts' which refers to unacceptable adverse impact.

DM 53.9 – Policy refers to measures for restoration and aftercare however consideration might be given to referring to decommissioning of waste plant as well as restoration and aftercare.

DfI Roads Comments on Antrim & Newtownabbey Draft Plan Strategy

1. Policy – ‘explicit read across all policy’

From the wording in the Positive Planning Note (Page 11) it is clear (from the 2nd paragraph) that there should be read across with the Strategic Policy and the Detailed Policy within a particular policy area. However it is not conveyed that there should be policy read across all the different policy areas.

It should be made clear that the like of Roads Policy will apply across all the other policy areas.

2. Clarifying the issue above will address a number of our other areas of concern within the DPS such as;

Under Policy DM 1 Economic Development (Page 89) – Zoned Sites and Settlements. DM 1.5 should also refer to Transportation and Infrastructure or add text “and accord with other relevant policies within the LDP”.

3. There is a query as to whether existing policies can be referenced within the DPS, e.g. **under Policy DM 3 Economic Development – Incompatible Uses** (Page 93). DM 3.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance contained within PPS 4 is referenced.

It was our understanding that the existing policies are to be collapsed.

It should be clarified with DfI Strategic Planning if the existing planning policies/guidance referenced will still be available when PPSs are collapsed and removed. Council may wish to consider hosting the referenced policies/supplementary guidance on their website for ease of reference.

4. Policy SP 3 Transportation and Infrastructure (Page 110). SP 3.2 Transportation Schemes – The schemes listed are the Council priorities and will not agree with the Department’s priorities within the Borough. Also the Council may wish to include the entire A26 Corridor within the policy not just the section south of Antrim.

5. Policy SP 3 Transportation and Infrastructure (Page 110). An additional section should be added to this policy to cover for historic legacy road schemes/alignments. These schemes/alignments exist from previous development plans and should be carried through to the new LDP. Detailed consideration would take place at a later stage of the development plan process.

6. Policy SP 3 Transportation and Infrastructure (Page 112). Reference within SP 3.10 to DM 10 should be amended to DM 11 (Access to Protected Routes).

7. Policy DM 10 Access and Parking (Page 118). DM 10.1 (a) There is the capacity on the local road network to accommodate

The word 'local' should be removed from the sentence. The reason for this change is that the capacity issue may extend beyond the local roads. Removal of the word will address this concern.

8. Policy DM 10 Access and Parking (Page 118). Add additional bullet point to DM 10.1 :- (d) the proposal does not conflict with policy DM 11 Access to Protected Routes.

9. Policy DM 10 Access and Parking (Page 118). DM 10.2 requires to be redrafted as the wording "take account of" is too light and not strong enough. A wording change to such as "in accordance with" should be introduced.

10. Policy DM 10: Access and Parking, Amplification 6.22. The text is fine but the following line should be added: - "For the purposes of clarification of the policies in this Plan Strategy, a field gate does not constitute an access."

11. Policy DM 11 Access to Protected Routes (Page 120). Add additional bullet points to DM 11.3 :- (d) Proposal meets suitable other criteria for development within the countryside. (e) Access to comply with requirements of DM 10.

As per No 1 above, the amendment of the Positive Planning Note on page 11 to clarify that all policies must be read together will assist.

12. Policy DM 11 Access to Protected Routes (Page 120). DM 11.3 (b) should be restricted to proposals of regional significance. The prefix "sub" should be removed from the wording. The reason for this change is that the Protected Routes Network are identified routes which facilitate the efficient movement of the travelling public throughout Northern Ireland. These routes serve right across the province rather than a specific individual council area. They facilitate efficient movement of traffic and goods over long distances in NI. These routes are protected and any additional junctions onto them must have sound justification. This must be limited, controlled and managed on a regional justification rather than a local council/sub-regional basis.

13. Policy DM 11 Access to Protected Routes (Page 121). DM 11.4 point b should be extended to refer that road safety should also not be compromised.

Suggested DM 11.4 (b) "A residential proposal, where this assists in the creation of a high quality urban design without compromising standards of road safety and does not result"

The word "excessive" has also been introduced in terms of the number of additional access points, the Department is not adverse to the introduction of this word but would request a definition in terms of its use in this respect.

14. Policy DM 11 Access to Protected Routes (Page 121). It must be noted within the policy that a field gate does not constitute an access. No 9 as above will address this concern.

15. Policy DM 12 Active Travel (Page 121). DM 12.1 (b) should also include reference to walking and clarification on the distance being considered when using the word “nearby”. The appropriateness of the word “nearby” or a suitable alternative is difficult to identify. To introduce a specific figure as a distance would not be appropriate as it would ‘lock in’ a figure.

Suggested wording of DM 12.1 (b) Safe, convenient, attractive walking and cycling linkages to existing or programmed works nearby.

16. Policy DM 12 Active Travel (Walking and Cycling) (Page 121) DM 12.1 (e) The need for showering and changing facilities should not be restricted to ‘major’ employment generating developments. The use of the word ‘major’ could be construed as misleading given its use now within the planning legislation. A suitable amended wording should be considered which will also take account of cumulative applications increasing the size of the development.

17. Policy DM 13 Belfast International Airport – Operations (Page 124). Additional point to be added to DM 13.2:- (c) Proposals should be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement which will take account of policies DM 10, DM 11, DM 12 and DM 25.

As per No 1 above, the amendment of the Positive Planning Note on page 11 to clarify that all policies must be read together will assist in addressing this point.

18. Policy DM 15 Development Relying on Non-Mains Sewerage (Page 127). The text is fine but the following line should be added: - “Adoption of streets by DFI Roads within a development of this type will only be permitted if the Non-Mains Sewerage system is compliant with ‘Sewers for Adoption, Northern Ireland’ produced by NI Water and it is the applicant’s intent to have same adopted.”

19. Policy DM 18 Homes in the Countryside (Page 148). Access requirements within DM10 and DM11 should be referenced within this policy.

Amendment of the Positive Planning Note on page 11 should address this issue.

20. Policy DM 22 Residential Extensions and Alteration (Page 164). DM 22.2 It should be clarified if the existing planning policies/guidance referenced will still be available when the PPSs are removed. Guidance contained in Annex A of PPS7 may have to be reproduced within this document if this is part of council policy.

21. Strategic Policy 6 Placemaking and Good Design Policy SP 6.4 (Page 185). Policies DM 10, DM 11 and DM 12 must be referenced within this policy.

Amendment and clarification of the Positive Planning Note on page 11 should address this issue.

22. Policy DM 25 Urban Design (Page 187). Policies DM 10, DM 11 and DM 12 must be referenced within this policy.

Amendment and clarification of the Positive Planning Note on page 11 should address this issue.

23. Policy DM 29 Advertisements (Page 198). There is no reference to road safety concerns. The road safety paragraphs within PPS 17 should be referenced or reproduced within this document. The relevant PPS 17 paragraphs are: - Roads Legislation, 2.10 and 2.11 and Public Safety, paragraphs 4.9 to 4.16.

Council Planning should check with DfI Strategic Planning to clarify if the supplementary planning guidance referenced will still be available when PPSs are collapsed and removed. Council should consider hosting the required supplementary guidance on their website for ease of reference.

24. Policy DM 45 Renewable Energy Development (Page 273). DM 45.4 Guidance contained in the Best Practice Guidance to PPS18 should be reproduced within this document if this is part of council policy.

As above Council Planning should check with DfI Planning to clarify if the supplementary planning guidance referenced to will still be available when PPSs are removed. Council may need to consider hosting required supplementary guidance on their website for ease of reference.

25. Monitoring of Our Plan (Page 315). Policy SP 3 Transportation & Infrastructure – The number of strategic transport schemes / improvements delivered by DfI, including the extension of the Belfast Rapid Transport – Glider and improved trunk road schemes are referenced as an indicator to monitor the health of the plan. This is inappropriate as delivery of these schemes are the responsibility of a separate organisation i.e. DfI and not under the control of the Council.

In consideration of the Draft Plan Strategy and our comments/concerns, DfI Roads is not satisfied with the document and therefore deem it to be unsound.

DfI Roads will require the Council to consider the points made and to address each in turn. DfI Roads have met and discussed these issues with Council Planning and will be happy to liaise further with Council on them.

Comments prepared 17th September 2019

TPMU Comments on Antrim & Newtownabbey Draft Plan Strategy

There is no compelling reason to consider the document unsound. When the policies are read together the strategy appears acceptable – ie it could be argued that it would allow the planning and delivery of sustainable development from a transport point of view.

However, the strategy does have weaknesses:

- There appears to be no reference (in paras 2.77 – 2.82) to the heavy commuting flow to Belfast and the capacity of the transport networks – they are already at capacity at peak times. Neither is there reference to Belfast City Council proposals to add substantial employment which is likely to generate additional commuting flows, including from Antrim & Newtownabbey. This is a significant omission in terms of transport context.
- The existing zonings and extant permissions appear to make up the majority of allocations in the Spatial Growth Strategy SP1.6 item (a)
 - It is not clear how many of these could be considered sustainable when they are likely inaccessible other than by private car.
 - The settlement strategy and housing allocations SP4.3 Table 6 favour Metropolitan Newtownabbey, Antrim and Ballyclare yet each of these is likely to add to an already congested network as Belfast City employment is proposed to grow. There is no clear statement as to how it is intended to deal with this.
- Transport Assessments are proposed SP3.7 as the principal tool to ensure that development is sustainable from a transport point of view. However Transport Assessments, even when supported by a Travel Plan, do not on their own make a site accessible or a development sustainable. It should therefore re-state that a Transport Assessment should where appropriate, propose a package of measures designed to promote access to the site by walking, cycling and public transport, while reducing the role of car access as much as possible.
- Paras 6.14 – 6.16 need re-wording in view of the move from Transport Strategy to Transport Study
- TPMU have stated on several occasions that Nutts Corner does not have acceptable accessibility by public transport. However, a Strategic Employment Zone (SEL) is proposed at Nutts Corner at SP1.6 item (f). Whilst DM1.1 confirms that the acceptable uses would be limited there is no explanation as to why ie lack of public transport accessibility.
- Belfast International Airport (BIA) parking provision is covered in SP3.12. This may be appropriate and the wording seems clear however it seems a little unusual to identify BIA specifically in this way.
- SP 3.4 (page 111): We welcome the Council's commitment to promote the reuse of disused transport routes for transportation or recreation purposes. We would encourage it to continue to liaise with neighbouring Councils to give priority to developing greenways in line with 'Exercise – Explore – Enjoy: a Strategic Plan for Greenways' published by the Department in November 2016.

TPMU Comments on Antrim & Newtownabbey Draft Plan Strategy

- SP 3.5(e) (page 111): We welcome the requirement for new developments to bring forward measures that will promote enhanced pedestrian and cycling linkages. We would encourage the Council to adopt something stronger such as 'create' rather than 'promote'. We believe that coherent and connected walking and cycling provision are essential in new developments and should be the default requirements if we are to deliver on the draft Programme for Government commitment to increase the percentage of all journeys made by walking, cycling and public transport. A similar comment applies to SP 3.6 (page 112): where the word 'encourages' should be replaced by 'provides'.

ANTRIM and NEWTOWNABEEY COUNCIL DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY

Comments provided by the Department for Infrastructure's

Water and Drainage Policy Division

September 2019

The Department for Infrastructure's (the Department) Water & Drainage Policy Division (WDPD) has reviewed the contents of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Council Draft Plan Strategy and has a number of comments to make on it.

Soundness Test: C3 Did the Council take account of policy and guidance issued by the Department?

Comments: The Department has previously met with relevant Council officials and presented current policy and legislation on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), development in proximity to reservoirs and Waste Water Treatment Works (WwTW) capacity constraints. In addition to this, the Department also provided comments on these issues through Council's consultation on the Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper. There are however a number of issues, highlighted below, which the Council will wish to consider.

Soundness Test: CE4 It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.

Comments: The Department would encourage the Council to request further updated information from Northern Ireland Water in respect of all the sewerage networks and wastewater treatment works especially Whitehouse. The Council should also confirm to NI Water, the assumptions made in the Plan in respect of Antrim and Ballyclare wastewater treatment works.

Evidence Paper 11 - Public Utilities – Water and Wastewater Network (Pages 45-52)

The information on the water and wastewater network in this paper is welcomed, as it sets out the level of available water and wastewater capacity, which is an important aspect to consider when planning for future growth.

In respect of the provision of clean water, the paper highlights the four water treatment works which provide water to the council area and states that there is existing capacity in the water network to accommodate the planned growth in the LDP period. Going forward, it will be important that there is good two-way communication between the Council and NI Water, to ensure both parties are aware of the latest position regarding growth and available clean water, to help facilitate development. This approach will also help to inform NI Water's business planning, which aims to address future water needs.

With regard to wastewater capacity the Council has referenced NI Water's wastewater capacity table which sets out the current planning status of each works as well as the level of growth each works can accommodate. This information has helped the council to realise the wastewater capacity constraints at Whitehouse and Moneyglass.

The Council has had the foresight to highlight to NI Water, the increased growth at Nutts Corner and Belfast International Airport and also to encourage developers to contact NI Water as soon as possible in the design stage, to determine if water / wastewater capacity is available for new development. This approach will help NI Water to keep this situation under close scrutiny, to determine if additional water supply / wastewater treatment is needed to facilitate further growth.

Given that the Council is aware of the locations with wastewater capacity constraints, it is important that it helps to alleviate the pressure on the wastewater network by carefully considering wastewater treatment capacity when zoning land and also the possibility of adopting a phased approach to development.

The Department understands that NI Water will also continue to help manage this issue by working closely with the Council, to help facilitate development, where possible.

Going forward, it will be important that there is good two-way communication between the Council and NI Water, to ensure both parties are aware of the latest position regarding growth and available wastewater capacity, to help facilitate development. This approach will also help to inform NI Water's business planning, which aims to address future water and wastewater needs.

Living With Water Programme (LWWP)

This evidence paper does not currently mention the Living With Water Programme (LWWP). Given that the programme will help to address issues at Whitehouse wastewater treatment works, it would be prudent for the Council to highlight this programme in the evidence paper and also the Draft Plan Strategy. The Council may, therefore, wish to include a reference to the programme along the following lines:-

"The Living With Water Programme (LWWP) has been established to progress a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan in order to provide a holistic and integrated approach to drainage. Work has been ongoing to identify and prioritise infrastructure issues which need addressed. Through the LWWP, major issues with the Whitehouse sewerage network system and in particular with regard to discharges in Belfast Lough, have been identified. These issues have the potential to impact on capacity for new connections and may lead to new connections being refused.

Evidence Paper 14 - Flooding

Section 2.17 – 'The approval for surface water run-off from development will be under the responsibility of the water course management section of the Department for Infrastructure.' - This point is incorrect. The watercourse management section of DfI is DfI Rivers but it does not have the initial responsibility for surface water management. NI Water would be the main party for acceptance of surface water into its systems - with the proviso that DfI Rivers finds any knock-on requirement for discharge to watercourse systems (via NIW's systems) acceptable.

Section 2.18 – 'NI Water will accept the design standards based on the CIRIA SuDS Manual C753 published in November 2015.' – Need to add further clarity here to avoid possible

misunderstanding. NI Water will consider all SuDS design standards carefully before accepting them. The acceptance of SuDS design standards by NI Water does not indicate that NI Water will adopt the SuDS system. Any proposal for NI Water to adopt a SuDS system will be carefully assessed against its adoption criteria.

Section 2.20 – ‘The Flood Risks Directive 2007/60/EC was transposed into local legislation by The Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009, superseded by the 2017 legislation.’ – Flood Risks Directive’ is not the recognised terminology – should use ‘Floods Directive’. The 2017 legislation referred to here is likely to be the Amendment to the Regulations but it only amends the Regulations and does not supersede them – the two amendments were dated in 2018. The two amendment regulations were, The Water Environment (Floods Directive) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2018 and The Water Environment (Floods Directive) (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2018.

Section 3.2 – Directive date typo (20017).

Section 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 - There appears to several errors in this section, it starts off detailing the Water Framework Directive and then lists the 3 stages from the Floods Directive.

Section 4.22 – ‘Managing Storm water - A Strategy for Promoting the Use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within Northern Ireland 2011’. This section goes on to state that the Stormwater Management Group has been established to facilitate a number of recommendations from this NIEA strategy. Suggest rewording this sentence to state that the aim of Stormwater Management Group is to promote and deliver sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

Section 4.31 – Suggest deleting the text “which is current practice”. The Guidance was introduced in February 2019 so “current practice” is now to use Climate Change flood mapping.

Section 8.9 – ‘DfI Rivers maintains and inspects watercourses in Northern Ireland to make sure these are free flowing to help prevent flooding and improve land drainage.’ – Only designated watercourses are maintained and inspected by DfI Rivers.

Section 8.21 – ‘For each APSFR identified, the Floods Directive Regulations require that flood hazard and flood risk maps are reviewed and updated. Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) for the period 2021 – 2027, aimed at managing and mitigating the risk of flooding within APSFRs, are currently being prepared by DfI Rivers and will be published for public consultation by 22 December 2020.’ - The FRMP is currently being prepared by DfI Water and Drainage Policy Division.

Section 12.3 – ‘The SPPS recognises that the planning system should help to mitigate and adapt to environmental change by working with natural environmental processes, for example, the use of SuDS to reduce flood risk and improve water quality. The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 also provide a legal imperative to consider the introduction of measures such as SuDS and water level control to mitigate against floods.’ – the Council should seek clarification to confirm there is a legal imperative to consider SuDS in the Water Framework Directive.

Evidence Paper 19 – Coast

Coastal Local Councils, government departments and other key stakeholders should collaborate through the Coastal Forum, to consider issues and manage risks relating to coastal erosion.

The Baseline Study and Gap Analysis of Coastal Erosion Risk Management NI was published on 8th January 2019. The Report is an important first step in identifying areas that may be vulnerable to coastal erosion. The study has identified a number of key issues for consideration that will be useful in determining the way forward, subject to appropriate policy/legislative cover and availability of resources. There are limits to what can be done without Ministers in place. However DfI and DAERA convened a meeting of the Coastal Forum on 2 May 2019. At this meeting, it was agreed that the Coastal Forum would be the mechanism through which coastal management issues would be progressed collaboratively by Central and Local Government and the National Trust. As such, any new or emerging policies or strategies should be incorporated into LDPs.

It was also agreed that the Coastal Forum would progress the development of best practice guidance to assist Local Councils in helping to inform local development plans and ensure sound and consistent coastal management decisions are taken.

Section 8.2 - It should be noted that Flood Maps NI also contains Flood Risk maps as well as Flood Hazard maps.

Section 8.14 - PPS15 is referred to in the 'Coast' paper whereas in the 'Flooding' paper the focus is the SPPS. The 2 papers should be consistent.

Consultation Period

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council has published its draft Plan Strategy, the first formal stage of the new Local Development Plan 2030, for public consultation.

The draft Plan Strategy is the first of two documents, which comprise the Local Development Plan 2030. It has been developed following extensive engagement with the public, stakeholders and our elected Members, including the publication of our Preferred Options Paper.

The draft Plan Strategy sets out how our Borough will grow and change up to the year 2030. It puts forward our Plan Vision for the future. It also contains a Spatial Growth Strategy indicating at a strategic level where growth should go in the Borough. It also sets out a range of Strategic Policies and Detailed Management Policies, which together will guide future planning decisions.

The draft Plan Strategy is published for formal public consultation over an 8-week period and the Council is inviting the submissions of representations, beginning on **Friday 26 July and closing on Friday 20 September 2019 at 5pm.**

The submission of representations in relation to the Council's draft Plan Strategy provides an opportunity for the public to influence the policies and proposals for the future planning and development within Antrim and Newtownabbey.

Please note that representations received after the closing period will not be accepted and will be subsequently returned.

Published alongside the draft Plan Strategy are a range of assessments including Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment), a draft Habitats Regulation Assessment and an Equality (Section 75) Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment Report. These assessments are also subject to public consultation during the formal public consultation period closing on Friday 20 September 2019 at 5pm.

Copies of the draft Plan Strategy and all supporting documents are available to view and download from our website at:

www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/draftplanstrategy.

Copies of all documents are also available for inspection at the Council Offices in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey and Antrim Civic Centre, Antrim from Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm. Hard copies of the draft Plan Strategy are also available upon request.



Soundness Testing

A key feature of Northern Ireland's new Planning System is 'Soundness' which requires the draft Plan Strategy document to be tested at Independent Examination (IE) in terms of content, conformity and the process by which it has been prepared. Derived from established practices in England and Wales, it is considered that 'Soundness' testing will provide a more effective basis for examining Local Development Plans and consequently contribute towards a shorter IE process.

The purpose of the IE is to determine if the draft Plan Strategy satisfies statutory requirements and is 'sound'. The presumption will be that the draft Plan Strategy is 'sound' unless it is shown to be otherwise as a result of evidence considered at the IE stage.

The tests of soundness are based upon three categories which relate to how the draft Plan Strategy has been produced, the alignment of the document with central government regional plans, policy and guidance and the coherence, consistency and effectiveness of the content of the draft Plan Strategy. The tests of soundness are set out below:

Procedural Tests	
P1	Has the DPD* been prepared in accordance with the Council's timetable and the Statement of Community Involvement?
P2	Has the Council prepared its Preferred Options Paper and taken into account any representations made?
P3	Has the DPD been subject to sustainability appraisal including Strategic Environmental Assessment?
P4	Did the Council comply with the regulations on the form and content of its DPD and procedure for preparing the DPD?
Consistency Tests	
C1	Did the Council take account of the Regional Development Strategy?
C2	Did the Council take account of its Community Plan?
C3	Did the Council take account of policy and guidance issued by the Department?
C4	Has the Plan had regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the Council's district or to any adjoining Council's district?
Coherence and Effectiveness Tests	
CE1	The DPD sets out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations logically flow and where cross-boundary issues are relevant it is not in conflict with the DPDs of neighbouring Councils.



CE2	The strategy, policies and allocations are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base.
CE3	There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.
CE4	It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.
*Development Plan Document (DPD) – Comprises of the draft Plan Strategy	

Further information on Soundness can be found in Development Plan Practice Notes published by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Of particular relevance is Practice Note 6 'Soundness' (Version 2) and Practice Note 9 'Submission and Handling of Representations', both are available to view at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/development-plan-practice-notes>.

In addition, the Planning Appeals Commission has also produced guidance entitled 'Procedures for Independent Examination of Local Development Plans' available at <https://www.pacni.gov.uk/procedural-guides>.

Making a Representation

As the main purpose of the IE is to determine whether the Development Plan Document (DPD) is 'sound', any person(s) wishing to make a representation to any part of the Plan should do so on the grounds of soundness. Any representation proposing a change to the Plan must demonstrate why the document is not sound having regard to the tests of soundness. Every representation should say precisely how the Plan should be changed in order to achieve soundness and should be supported, succinctly, by all the evidence thought necessary to justify the proposed change. Once the public consultation period has closed, **there will be no further opportunity to submit information unless the Commissioner requests it.**

Where several people share a common view on how the draft Plan Strategy should be changed, we encourage you to co-operate with each other, pool resources and make a single representation, for example, a local community group.

Those who make representations to the draft Plan Strategy should state whether they wish to have their representation considered at IE in writing or as an oral hearing. Unless people specifically request an oral hearing, the Commission will proceed on the basis that you are content that your representation will be considered in writing. The Commissioner will give every representation the same careful consideration regardless of whether the person who made it is heard orally or in written form.



Points to Remember:

- Representations will be made publicly available for inspection at the Council's Offices and online for counter-representations;
- Complete all relevant sections of the response form;
- Clearly state why you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be 'unsound', having regard to the soundness tests;
- There will be no further opportunity to submit information once the public consultation period closes unless the Commissioner requests it;
- We would encourage you to submit separate forms for each representation you wish to submit;
- Every representation should say precisely how the draft Plan Strategy should be changed in order to achieve soundness;
- Representations should be supported, succinctly, by all the evidence thought necessary to justify the proposed change; and
- Clearly, state whether you wish for your representation to be heard orally or in writing.

Submitting Your Representation

We recommend that you submit your representation via our on-line consultation hub, at www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/consultations, as this is the most efficient way to make a representation.

However, you can make a representation by completing this form and returning to us by **5pm on Friday 20 September 2019** either by email or by post.

Representations received after the closing period will not be accepted and will be subsequently returned.

What Happens Next

When the consultation has closed, the Forward Planning Team will collate the representations received and as soon as reasonably practicable, publish these online for a further 8-week period of consultation to allow counter-objections to be made. The representations will also be available for public inspection during this period at the Council's Offices in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey and Antrim Civic Centre, Antrim from Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5pm.

Once this period of counter-representations has closed, the Forward Planning Team will collate the counter-representations and publish these online. They will also be made available for public inspection at the Council's Offices in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey and Antrim Civic Centre, Antrim from Monday to Friday 8:30am to



5pm. The next anticipated step will be for the Council to contact the Department for Infrastructure to request an Independent Examination of the draft Plan Strategy.

Contact Us

For further assistance, please contact the Forward Planning Team at Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey:

By Post – Forward Planning Team

Mossley Mill

Carnmoney Road North, Newtownabbey

BT36 5QA

By Email – planning@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

By Telephone – 0300 123 6677



SECTION A – DATA PROTECTION AND CONSENT

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council complies 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.

The Local Development Plan Privacy Notice can be found on our website at www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/gdpr/planning-gdpr/.

Please note that when you make a representation (or counter-representation) to the Local Development Plan your personal information (with the exception of personal telephone numbers, signatures, email addresses or sensitive personal data) will be made publicly available on the Council's website.

Copies of all representations will be provided to the DfI and an Independent Examiner (a third party) as part of the submission of the Local Development Plan for Independent Examination. A Programme Officer will also have access to this information during the IE stages of the Plan preparation

DfI, the Programme Officer the Independent Examiner will, upon receipt, be responsible for the processing of your data in line with prevailing legislation.

1. Please tick to confirm that you have read and understood the Council's Local Development Plan Privacy Notice.

- ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the Local Development Plan privacy notice and I give my consent for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council to hold my personal data for the purposes outlined.

You can contact the Council's Data Protection Officer via:

Post - Antrim Civic Centre, 50 Styles Way, Antrim BT41 2UB

Email - DPO@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

Phone - 028 9446 3113



SECTION B – YOUR DETAILS

2. Please specify if you are responding as an individual, as an organisation, or as an agent acting on behalf of an individual, group or organisation?

If you are responding as an agent or representing an organisation you will be the main point of contact for your client/organisation.

(Please select only one item)

- ☐ Individual
- ☒ Organisation
- ☐ Agent

	Personal Details	Agent Details (If Applicable)
Title	Mr	
First Name	Walter	
Last Name	Morhall	
Job Title (where relevant)		
Organisation (where relevant)	Department for Infrastructure Rivers	
Client Name (where relevant)		
Address	44 Seagoe Industrial Estate CRAIGAVON	
Post Code	BT63 5QE	
Telephone Number	028 3839 9110	
Email Address	Walter.Morhall@infrastructure- ni.gov.uk	



SECTION C – REPRESENTATION

Your comments should be set out in full. This will help the Independent Examiner understand the issues you raise. You will only be able to submit further additional information to the Independent Examination if the Independent Examiner invites you to do so.

3. To which part of the draft Plan Strategy does your representation relate?

i) Paragraph Number: _____

ii) Policy Heading: _____

➤ Strategic Policy (SP) Paragraph Number:

➤ Detailed Management Policy (DM) Paragraph Number:

iii) Page Number in Document: _____

iv) Proposal Map (if relevant state location): _____

4. Do you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be:

☒ 'Sound' (i.e. support)

☐ 'Unsound' (i.e. object)

DfI Rivers considers the Draft Plan Strategy to be sound, the policies proposed align adequately with Policies FLD 1 to FLD 5 of Revised Planning Policy Statement 15 "Planning and Flood Risk" and the Flood Risk section of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland. For ease of application, in respect of DM 46.2, it would be useful if the last line of the aforementioned paragraph was amended to read *"These should be set out in the accompanying FRA and should demonstrate that: (a) All sources of flood risk to and from the proposed development have been identified; and (b) There are adequate measures to manage and mitigate any increase in flood risk arising from the development"*.

The proposed Policy DM 48 Reservoir Flood Risk, reflects Department for Infrastructure current thinking on this matter.



5. If you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be '**SOUND**' and wish to support the draft Plan Strategy, please set out your comments below.

(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)



6. If you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be '**UNSOUND**' please identify which test(s) of soundness your representation relates to having regard to the Department for Infrastructure's published Development Plan Practice Note 6 'Soundness' (Version 2).

Soundness Tests:

- ☐ **P1** - Has the DPD¹ been prepared in accordance with the Council's timetable and the Statement of Community Involvement?
- ☐ **P2** - Has the Council prepared its Preferred Options Paper and taken into account any representations made?
- ☐ **P3** - Has the DPD been subject to sustainability appraisal including Strategic Environmental Assessment?
- ☐ **P4** - Did the Council comply with the regulations on the form and content of its DPD and procedure for preparing the DPD?
- ☐ **C1** - Did the Council take account of the Regional Development Strategy.
- ☐ **C2** - Did the Council take account of its Community Plan?
- ☐ **C3** - Did the Council take account of policy and guidance issued by the Department?
- ☐ **C4** - Has the DPD had regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the Council's district or to any adjoining Council's district?
- ☐ **CE1** - Does the DPD sets out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations logically flow and where cross-boundary issues are relevant it is not in conflict with the DPD's of neighbouring Councils?
- ☐ **CE2** - Are the strategy, policies and allocations realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base?
- ☐ **CE3** - Are there clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring?
- ☐ **CE4** - Is it reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances?

¹ Development Plan Document (DPD) – Comprises of the draft Plan Strategy



Details

7. Please give details of why you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be '**UNSOUND**' having regard to the test(s) you have identified above. Please be as concise as possible.

*Please Note: Your representation should be submitted in full and cover succinctly all the information, evidence, and any supporting information necessary to support/justify your submission. **This representation will be considered during the IE***



and here will be no further opportunity to submit information unless the Commissioner requests it.



(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)



Modifications

8. If you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be '**UNSOUND**', please provide details of what, if any, modifications do you think should be made to the section, policy or proposal which your representation relates to? What specific modifications do you think should be made in order to address your representation? Please briefly state how your proposed alternative would meet the requirements of the Sustainability Appraisal and other published assessments.



(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)



9. If you are seeking a change to the draft Plan Strategy, please indicate how you would like your representation to be dealt with at Independent Examination:

Please Note: Unless you specifically request an oral hearing, the Commission will proceed on the basis that you are content to your representations considered in written form only. The Commissioner will give every representation the same careful consideration regardless of whether the person who made it is heard orally or not.

Please select only one item;

☐ Written Representation

☐ Oral Hearing

Signature:

Mr. Stephen Lancashire

Date:

11th September 2019

Thank you for your response.

