

Local Development Plan | 2030

Draft Plan Strategy

Evidence Paper 21: Placemaking and
Good Design

June 2019

Forward Planning Team

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Planning Section

Mossley Mill

Newtownabbey

BT36 5QA

Tel: 0300 123 6677

Email: planning@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
1 Introduction.....	5
2 Legislative Context	5
3 Regional Policy Context	7
4 Local Policy Context.....	13
5 Preferred Options Paper	15
6 Soundness	16
7 Urban Design	16
8 Rural Design	23
9 Other Relevant Publications.....	24
10 Key Findings	27

Executive Summary

- Good design can deliver value outcomes, for example enhancing the environment, meeting the long terms needs of users, developing a positive sense of place and the efficient use of resources.
- The key to successful placemaking is the relationship between different buildings; the relationship between buildings and streets, squares, parks, waterways and other spaces; the nature and quality of the public domain itself; the relationship of one part of a village, town or city with other part; and the patterns of movement and activity that are thereby established.
- Good design has a role to play in achieving many regional policies within the Regional Development Strategy (RDS).
- 'Supporting Good Design and Positive Placemaking' is a core principle of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).
- The new Local Development Plan (LDP) must take into account where relevant the 10 principles of urban stewardship and design as set out in the supplementary planning guidance - 'Living Places: An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland'.
- Design guidance for development in the countryside is contained in 'Building on Tradition: A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside'. The new LDP must take into account where relevant the 6 themes within this document.
- Good design can contribute to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's Corporate Plan 'We will have succeeded if: People take pride in their surroundings. People feel safe. Our environment, natural habitats and built heritage are protected and enhanced. We have vibrant and welcoming towns, villages, neighbourhoods, and rural areas. We have an efficient planning process that promotes positive development and sustainable growth.'
- There are 3 Conservation Areas within the Council area each with their own design guide. These are Antrim Conservation Area, Merville Garden Village, Newtownabbey and Randalstown Conservation Area. The Council and the Department for Infrastructure have powers to designate new Conservation Areas in the Borough.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a series of background papers and studies being presented as part of the evidence base to inform the preparation of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Development Plan 2030 (LDP). This paper draws together the evidence base used in relation to the topic of Placemaking and Good Design. The evidence in this paper was collated at a point in time and may be subject to further updates. Evidence papers should be read collectively.
- 1.2 In line with Departmental guidance, the Council has updated its evidence base to inform the next stage of the LDP known as the Plan Strategy. This paper updates the 'Shaping Our Environment' baseline evidence paper, as it relates to Design of the Built Environment, which accompanied the Preferred Options Paper (POP) published in January 2017.
- 1.3 It should be noted that the evidence base collected to inform the draft Plan Strategy also forms the basis for additional assessments and appraisals required as part of the plan preparation process, most notably the Sustainability Appraisal (SA).
- 1.4 This paper discusses design of the built environment and collates evidence comprising:
 - Urban Design;
 - Rural Design; and
 - Other Relevant Publications.
- 1.5 The topic of design is a very wide-ranging one and goes beyond what our environment looks like in the narrowest sense, to broader themes about how we interact with the environment around us and how our spaces function.
- 1.6 Rather than being seen as a costly, prohibitive exercise, good design can deliver value outcomes, for example enhancing our environment, meeting the long terms needs of users, developing a positive sense of place and the efficient use of resources. Design also has the potential to contribute greatly in tackling the issue of climate change and also has significant health benefits. It involves issues such as placemaking and stewardship and is something that should be embedded at the centre of all working practices.

2 Legislative Context

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

- 2.1 The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (hereafter referred to as the 2011 Act) is the principal planning legislation in Northern Ireland, which underpins the reformed two-tier planning system that commenced on 1 April 2015. It introduced the plan-led system, where the LDP is the primary consideration for decision making on all new development schemes and proposals will be

required to accord with its provisions unless exceptionally other material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 2.2 Under the new Planning System introduced in 2015, the LDP will comprise of two documents, a Plan Strategy and a Local Policies Plan that will be prepared in sequence. It also requires the LDP to be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

- 2.3 These Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's new LDP is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedure of each stage in the LDP preparation process and Independent Examination.

The Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

- 2.4 These Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedures required. The Council published it's SCI in January 2016 the purpose of which is to define how the Council will engage with the community in the delivery of the LDP. It is set within the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and meets the requirements of the 2011 Act.

Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006

- 2.5 Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires all Northern Ireland Departments and Council's, in exercising their functions, to act in the way they consider best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Section 5 of the 2011 Act copper-fastens this duty by requiring those who exercise any function in relation to LDPs to do so with the objective of furthering sustainable development.

Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

- 2.6 The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 introduced a statutory link between the Council's Community Plan and LDP, and requests that the preparation of the LDP must take account of the Community Plan.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- 2.7 The Council has a statutory duty under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as a public authority, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.
- 2.8 Council has engaged and will continue to engage with Section 75 groups throughout the LDP process, adhering to the Council's SCI.

Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

- 2.9 The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides a statutory duty on public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services and came into effect for Councils in June 2017.
- 2.10 Rural needs will be an ongoing and integral component of the Council's LDP.

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004

- 2.11 It is a statutory requirement that all plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant environmental effect must be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The European Union Directive '2001/42/EC' states that an SEA is mandatory and was transposed into local legislation in the form of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 (the EAPP (NI) Regulations). The objective of the SEA directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the Council's LDP, with the view to promoting sustainable development.
- 2.12 The SEA is an ongoing process and must be carried out in conjunction with, and integrated into the LDP process. Under the provisions of the SEA Directive and the Regulations, an Environmental Report is published with the LDP document.

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

- 2.13 The LDP is required to consider its impact on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites (these comprise Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and RAMSAR Sites) and will be subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA). Similar to the SEA the HRA is an on-going process, which will take place at key stages during the preparation of the LDP. The Regulations contribute to transposing the requirements of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives.

3 Regional Policy Context

Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021

- 3.1 The key aim of the draft Programme for Government (PfG) is to grow a sustainable economy through investing in the future, tackling disadvantage, improving health and wellbeing, protecting the people and the environment, building a strong and shared community and delivering high quality services.
- 3.2 The delivery of many of the strategic outcomes will be the responsibility of central government, however, the LDP will play a supporting role in helping to deliver many of these. Particularly relevant are Outcome 2, 'We Live and Work Sustainably, Protecting the Environment', Outcome 12, 'We Have Created a

Place Where People Want to Live and Work, to Visit and Invest' and Outcome 13 'We Connect People and Opportunities through our Infrastructure'.

Sustainable Development Strategy Northern Ireland 2010

- 3.3 One of the key principles outlined in the Everyone's Involved - Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) relates to 'Living within Environmental Limits'. This promotes the need to protect and improve our environment with an emphasis on the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity and to ensure that finite resources are protected for future generations. One of the key priority areas relates to 'striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment'. This promotes sustainable land and marine management, better planning and management of development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.
- 3.4 Good design within the built environment, as a cross cutting theme, clearly has a significant contribution to make to achieving many of these aims, from the efficient use of resources, to promoting a positive sense of place and enhancing our environment.

The Regional Development Strategy 2035

- 3.5 Within the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), design has many cross-cutting themes and therefore has an important role to play in achieving the regional guidance set out below:
- Regional Guidance 6 seeks to - strengthen community cohesion through developing integrated services and facilities, fostering a stronger community spirit and sense of place and encouraging mixed housing development;
 - Regional Guidance 7 seeks to - support urban and rural renaissance by encouraging and bringing forward under-utilised land and buildings, particularly for mixed use development and promoting regeneration in areas of social need. Ensuring that environmental quality in urban areas is improved and maintained, particularly with adequate provision for green spaces;
 - Regional Guidance 8 seeks to - manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development by promoting more sustainable development within existing urban areas and ensuring an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone;
 - Regional Guidance 9 seeks to - Reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality;
 - Regional Guidance 11 seeks to - conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment; and
 - Regional Guidance 12 seeks to - promote a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management.

Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012

- 3.6 The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 identifies strategic transportation investment priorities and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives over the strategy period. The RTS is a 'daughter document' of the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2035, which sets out the spatial development framework for Northern Ireland up to 2035.
- 3.7 This Strategy was supported by three initiatives namely Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2004, Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 and the Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2007.

Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2004

- 3.8 The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) 2004 is the local transport plan for the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) including Metropolitan Newtownabbey. This plan delivered a phased and costed implementation programme of transport schemes to 2015. This plan took forward the strategic initiatives of the RTS 2002-2012.

Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (2005)

- 3.9 The former Department for Regional Development (DRD), now the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) prepared the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN TP) 2015. The Plan is based on the guidance set out in the RDS 2035 and the RTS 2002-2012. The Plan presents a range of multi-modal transport initiatives to manage, maintain and develop Northern Ireland's Strategic Transport Network. The Regional Strategic Transport Network of Northern Ireland comprises the complete rail network, five Key Transport Corridors (KTCs), four Link Corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network.

Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2007

- 3.10 The Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) 2007 covers Antrim and takes forward the strategic initiatives of the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002-2012. The SRTP deals with the transport needs of the whole of Northern Ireland with the exception of the BMA and the rail and trunk road networks, which are covered, in the BMA and RSTN TP.

Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future – 'A New Approach to Regional Transportation' 2011

- 3.11 Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) was developed to build on the RTS for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 and to refocus and rebalance the investment in the future. Unlike the 2002 Strategy, Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) does not include details of schemes or projects. Rather, the Department has set three high level aims for transportation along with twelve supporting strategic objectives, covering the economy, society and the environment. The ESTF complements the RDS 2035 and contains high-level aims

and strategic objectives to support the growth of the economy, enhance the quality of life for all and reduce the environmental impact of transport. It sets out the approach to regional transportation and is used to guide strategic investment decisions beyond 2015. Work is progressing on the implementation of the ESTF and the Council will ensure that any future transportation projects affecting the Borough are appropriately reflected in the LDP.

Forthcoming Transport Plans

- 3.12 The Department for Infrastructure is currently preparing new Transport Plans which will cover the Borough. This includes a new Regional Strategic Transport Network Plan for all of Northern Ireland and a new Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan which will cover Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council as well as Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is represented on the Project Boards for both plans along with other Councils.
- 3.13 As part of the preparation for the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Department is preparing a Transport Study for the greater Belfast area and the Council has taken the emerging study into consideration in the preparation of its draft Plan Strategy. Work will also continue to bring forward the next stage of the LDP, the Local Policies Plan, alongside the Department's Transport Plans.
- 3.14 Further information on the Transport Study and Transport Plans is available on the Department of Infrastructure's website <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/>.

Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2040

- 3.15 'Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)' sets out a range of initiatives to deliver the Executive's long term goal of a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland. The Strategy recognises how planning can impact on flood risk and water quality and aims to ensure that existing water and sewerage infrastructure and investment proposals inform future planning decisions and the preparation of LDPs.
- 3.16 The Strategy sets out a number of matters that the Council's new LDP will need to take into account which are summarised below:
- Ensuring planning decisions are informed by up to date information on the risk from all significant sources of flooding;
 - Prevention of inappropriate development in high flood risk areas and ensuring that future development does not increase flood risk;
 - Exceptional development within high flood risk areas must make provision for adequate mitigation measures;
 - Ensure surface water drainage is adequately addressed; and

- Planning policy should promote sustainable water and sewerage services by making appropriate space for water and sewerage infrastructure including sustainable drainage systems.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015

- 3.17 Design is identified as one of the core planning principles, under the heading 'Supporting Good Design and Positive Placemaking'. As set out in the SPPS it states that:

'Design involves shaping how all elements of the built and natural environment relate to each other through the construction of new buildings, restoration and redevelopment of historic buildings, creation of public spaces and environmental improvements. Design is not limited to the appearance of a building or place but should also encompass how buildings and places function in use and over the lifetime of the development.'

- 3.18 The SPPS identifies that the design of a proposed development must be consistent with the relevant LDP policies and/or supplementary planning guidance. LDP guidance should not be arbitrary or impose a particular style; however, it should promote and reinforce local distinctiveness and should be supported by clear LDP policies and/or supplementary design guidance that seeks to address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development. These policies should not lead to rigid and formulaic approaches to decision taking but encourage good design and responsible innovation, originality or initiative.

- 3.19 In terms of placemaking, the SPPS states that:

'Placemaking is a people-centred approach to the planning, design and stewardship of new developments and public spaces that seeks to enhance the distinctive qualities of a place, how these developed over time and what they will be like in the future. Key to successful place making is identifying the assets of a particular place as well as developing a vision for its potential.'

- 3.20 The key to successful placemaking is the relationship between different buildings; the relationship between buildings and streets, squares, parks, waterways and other spaces; the nature and quality of the public domain itself; the relationship of one part of a village, town or city with other part; and the patterns of movement and activity that are thereby established. The compatibility of a development with its immediate and wider context, and the settlement pattern of a particular area, are important considerations.
- 3.21 Planning authorities should consider positive ways to improve linkages between good places and the management and maintenance of those spaces.

Other Planning Policy

- 3.22 Current operational planning policy, in relation to aspects of placemaking and good design is primarily included within the following Planning Policy Statements (PPSs):

- PPS 3 Access Movement and Parking (particularly Policy AMP 1 Creating an accessible environment);
- PPS 6 Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage and its Addendum;
- PPS 7 Quality Residential Development (particularly Policy QD 1 Quality in New Residential Development);
- PPS 12 Housing in Settlements (particularly Planning Control Principle 2 Good Design);
- PPS 13 Transportation and Land use;
- PPS 15 Planning and Flood Risk;
- PPS 17 Control of Outdoor Advertisements;
- PPS 18 Renewable Energy;
- PPS 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside (particularly Policy CTY 13 Integration and Design of Buildings in the Countryside); and
- PPS 23 Enabling Development for the Conservation of Significant Places.

3.23 Design considerations were previously set out in PPS 1 General Principles; however, this has been superseded by the publication of the SPPS. Annex 3 of PPS 1 identified the design considerations that should be included in development plans. In addition, design considerations can be seen as a general thread running through most PPSs that deal with new development.

3.24 These PPSs, as well as the SPPS, have been taken into consideration in the formulation of the detailed development management policies, which are contained within the draft Plan Strategy document.

Departmental Guidance

3.25 The LDP has been prepared taking account of Departmental policy and guidance, which is available by contacting the Department for Infrastructure.

3.26 In terms of strategic approach for design contained in the SPPS, the design of the built environment needs to take account of Urban and Rural Design. The main supplementary guidance is contained in the Living Places and Building on Tradition Design Guides.

3.27 In terms of existing design guidance within the Borough there are 3 Conservation Areas (CAs) each with their own specific design guides. These are:

- Antrim Conservation Area;
- Merville Garden Village, Newtownabbey; and
- Randalstown Conservation Area.

3.28 As these CAs were designated by the Department, legislation states that the Department is the only body which may vary or amend the designation. Both

the Council and the Department have powers to designate any new CAs in the Borough.

- 3.29 These documents identify the boundary for each area and the historical background to growth. They identify an enhancement strategy whilst defining the characteristics that the conservation area exhibits. One of the most important aspects of the guides is that they provide design guidance for applicants for planning approval in the area, identifying the main architectural considerations which must be addressed in new proposals.
- 3.30 Supplementary planning guidance in relation to design is also included within 'Creating Places - Achieving Quality in Residential Development' (May, 2000). It is the principal guide for use by prospective developers in the design of all new housing areas.
- 3.31 Development Control Advice Note 8: Housing in Existing Urban Areas is also material to the determination of planning applications for small unit housing within existing urban areas.

4 Local Policy Context

Legacy Development Plans

- 4.1 The following is a list of the legacy development plans that apply to the Borough:
- Antrim Area Plan 1984-2001 and its alterations (AAP);
 - Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP);
 - Carrickfergus Area Plan 2001¹ (CAP);
 - Draft Newtownabbey Area Plan 2005 (dNAP); and
 - Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP).
- 4.2 It should be noted that the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan adopted in September 2014 was subsequently quashed as a result of a judgement of the Court of Appeal delivered in May 2017. As a consequence, the BUAP is now the statutory development plan for the Metropolitan Newtownabbey area of the Borough, with dBMAP remaining a material consideration.

Community Plan – Love Living Here 2017

- 4.3 The Council's Community Plan, 'Love Living Here', sets out a shared vision and agreed outcomes for the Borough up to 2030. The successful implementation of the Community Plan will be marked by a demonstrable improvement in how services are delivered across our Borough and the quality of life our citizens

¹ Insofar as it relates to that part of the legacy Carrickfergus Borough Council area at Greenisland that transferred to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough in 2015 under Review of Public Administration (RPA).

experience. As such the Community Plan is an important document and has been taken into account in the preparation of the Council's LDP.

4.4 The Community Plan sets out four outcomes which are as follows:

- Our citizens enjoy good health and wellbeing;
- Our citizens live in connected, safe, clean and vibrant places;
- Our citizens benefit from economic prosperity; and
- Our citizens achieve their full potential.

4.5 It also sets out one wildly important goal namely that our vulnerable people are supported.

Corporate Plan – Our Borough Your Vision 2019-2030

4.6 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out our vision for the Borough and identifies what it needs to do between now and 2030 to achieve this. The vision for the Borough up to 2030 is defined as,

'A progressive, smart and prosperous Borough. Inspired by our people; Driven by ambition.'

4.7 The Corporate Plan sets out a number of objectives in relation to Place, People and Prosperity. The LDP has a key role to play under the objective of 'Place' and the Corporate Plan states:

'We will have succeeded if: People take pride in their surroundings. People feel safe. Our environment, natural habitats and built heritage are protected and enhanced. We have vibrant and welcoming towns, villages, neighbourhoods, and rural areas. We have an efficient planning process that promotes positive development and sustainable growth.'

Council Masterplans/Village Plans

4.8 Through the Village Renewal Scheme as supported by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, the Council benefited from funding to devise and update plans for the development of villages in the Borough. Whilst these plans are non-statutory, they have prepared in close conjunction with local residents and identify a range of potential projects to improve the settlements. These range from short term goals to long-term aspirations. The village plans alongside the masterplans relating to the Borough will be considered in the preparation of the LDP where relevant.

Cross Boundary Policy Context

4.9 In considering the local policy context, it is important to note that the Borough does not sit in isolation. Accordingly, it will be important to take account of our neighbouring local authorities comprising Belfast City Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council; Mid Ulster District Council and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

4.10 Neighbouring Council's Preferred Options Papers (POPs), supporting evidence base and draft Plan Strategies have been taken account of, as these are regarded as the main cross boundary documents to be considered.

- 4.11 Table 1 indicates each Council's position in relation to placemaking and good design as set out in their POP and draft Plan Strategy documents.

Table 1: Neighbouring Council Position

Council	Document
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (ACBCBC)	ACBCBC's POP document includes an option for supporting good design and positive placemaking for development and advertisements. Their option is supported through a criteria based policy and they set guidance for specific important areas where appropriate.
Belfast City Council (BCC)	BCC's draft Plan Strategy includes a range of policies including: SP5: Positive Placemaking <i>'The council will support development that maximises the core principles of good design and positive placemaking in the creation of successful and sustainable'</i> . It also includes a range of policies for urban, 'master planning' and residential design.
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC)	LCCC's POP states that supporting good design and quality places is one of the cross-cutting themes underpinning policies to be contained in the LDP.
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC)	supporting good design and quality places is one of the cross-cutting themes, underpinning policies to be contained in the LDP. The POP also includes the option to identify Strategic Focus Areas within settlements in the LDP and develop bespoke design criteria for them.
Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC)	MUDC's draft Plan Strategy includes an urban design policy which contains a number of criteria for the consideration of proposals in settlements as well as development in the countryside.

- 4.12 The Council has responded to neighbouring Council's POPs and LDP documents as they are published. In addition, the Council is also represented on a number of working groups and project boards to discuss cross boundary issues. This includes the Metropolitan Area Spatial Working Group and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan Project Board.
- 4.13 In consideration of neighbouring Council's documents as well as regional policy, it is the opinion of the Council that it's draft Plan Strategy is sound and is not in conflict with neighbouring Council's emerging LDPs.

5 Preferred Options Paper

- 5.1 The Council's Preferred Options Paper (POP) was published in 2017 and was the first formal stage in the preparation of the LDP for the Borough and was designed to promote debate in relation to key strategic planning issues arising in the area. The POP set out a range of strategic options in relation to how and

where development should be located within the Borough. It included options for our settlements, our centres, employment land and housing locations, as well as a number of other key planning issues.

In addition, the Council asked the public for their views on a range of planning topics and issues. A total of 148 representations were received which were considered during the development of the draft Plan Strategy document and, where relevant, these will also be considered during the preparation of the Local Policies Plan. Details are set out in the Council's published 'Preferred Options Paper Public Consultation Report 2019'.

6 Soundness

- 6.1 The LDP has been prepared to meet the tests of soundness as set out in the Department for Infrastructure's Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017).

7 Urban Design

- 7.1 As indicated in the SPPS, the Council must take into account supplementary planning guidance for design and placemaking in terms of 'Living Places: An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland' (September 2014). This document is a key reference point for formulating LDPs. It states that a one-size-fits-all approach to guidance is counterproductive and instead should work to understand the context of a place. It seeks to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing and making urban places, with a view to raising standards across Northern Ireland.
- 7.2 Living Places stresses that many examples of good design exist within Northern Ireland and it is important to identify the attributes which make them successful in order to protect them in the future. Examples of good design include the wide leafy streets of South Belfast and the successful villages of Castlewella and Broughshane, with their thriving community pride.
- 7.3 The guide also identifies what are termed as 'bad places', whether unattractive, unsafe or uncared for. The impacts of these areas are wide-ranging going beyond visual amenity to, poor economic performance, susceptibility to antisocial behaviour and cost of maintenance and security.
- 7.4 It is also important to recognise the challenges which Northern Ireland faces in relation to successful place making. These include climate change, the economic landscape, socio-political circumstances, a car dependent culture and rigid government structures. However, these significant challenges can be overcome by jointly tackling them to improve urban spaces and the quality of life of those who live there.

7.5 The Living Places document sets out what it sees as 10 key principles of urban stewardship and design behind good place making and uses local case studies to illustrate them. The 10 principles are:

- **Visionary;** Many of our successful urban spaces have derived from a bold vision which was delivered and upheld. This process requires a common understanding between all those involved in shaping a specific space so that their actions contribute positively over time. This can be communicated to others through a strategic framework, masterplan or design and access statement. Strong leadership is required to bring different groups together, as is an appreciation and development of the skills which are involved in successful place-shaping.

Case study: Gracehill, Ballymena.

As Northern Ireland's first Conservation Area, Gracehill was the vision of its Moravian founders who planned a self-sustaining community where the skills of its residents were returned through a quality home to live in, which today exists as an urban place of exceptional quality.

- **Collaborative;** The shared use, extent and impact of urban places on us all is such that no single person or organisation is capable of mastering such complexity or shouldering such responsibility. Planning reform provides increased opportunities for the community to be involved in the development process and to contribute their views. It is also important to work together, transcending existing ownership and administrative boundaries to realise the full physical, social and economic potential of a place. Shaping places with rather than for those who will use it has many advantages including building relationships, harnessing collective expertise and enhancing collective ownership. Effective means of communication is central to the collaborative process of place making.

Case Study: Connswater Community Greenway, Belfast.

The 9km geographic scale of this project, required collaborative thinking across many different communities, land holdings and administrative boundaries between public, private and community sectors from the outset.

- **Contextual;** By successfully relating with this context, places not only function and look better, but they also make a more meaningful contribution to a wider 'sense of place'. Context can be cultural, social and economic as well as physical and visual. It is essential to understand a site and its context, through surveying the site and its vicinity and analysis of the survey to shape future proposals. Important to this is identification of the

important attributes of an area so that they can be protected and enhanced. It is also important to identify the natural systems within a site that need to be understood and integrated and be viewed as a positive opportunity to enrich a place. Similarly, our built heritage needs to be understood and integrated where possible. Harnessing such assets can contribute greatly to a place. The design must also be responsive to the context of the site, which may be visual, movement related or relate to the architectural style, scale and massing of the existing buildings. Edges, boundaries and transitions of areas can often lead to poor environmental quality. It is important that projects relate to their surrounding areas and add positively to their quality.

Case Study: Downpatrick Town Centre Masterplan

The complex drumlin and floodplain landscape context surrounding Downpatrick was mapped with the result being the development of projects such as a wetlands park area which provides not only a natural flood control in the first instance but also an economic asset through tourism and sports.

- **Responsible;** Successful places make the most of limited resources, be they natural, spatial or financial. As a consequence of climate change, the depletion of finite resources and the poor economic landscape, there is a responsibility upon us to create more resource efficient spaces. This can be achieved by conserving resources through the use of new technologies such as rainwater harvesting, solar and ground source heat pumps and improved building insulation. Similarly, resources can be conserved through the coordination of activities like public realm works in conjunction with the upgrade of underground utilities. Natural ecosystems can also be harnessed to improve the quality of our living environments, for example food production through local growing. The sourcing of building materials from the local area where possible reduces the need to transport long distances therefore reducing vehicle emissions and the consumption of fossil fuels. The actual space in urban areas is also a finite resource, therefore we must look to balance the needs of pedestrians and cars by means of shared space.

Case Study: Skainos, Belfast

The purpose of Skainos is to provide a shared space for community transformation and renewal and is home to a wide range of community projects and initiatives. It is environmentally responsible by employing a range of technologies including natural ventilation, biomass heating and a vertical garden on the front elevation of the building.

- **Accessible;** It is incumbent upon all those who design and manage urban places to ensure that everyone can reach them with ease. This requires an understanding of the different users and their needs, but also requires a balance so that the necessary infrastructure of access makes a positive contribution to the quality of our urban spaces. Successful buildings and spaces integrate access infrastructure into the overall design rather than as an afterthought. Careful consideration also needs to be given to the access requirements of people with different religious and political backgrounds avoiding the creation of permanent barriers be they physical or perceived. A sustainable transport hierarchy should be employed within urban spaces which place pedestrians and cyclists at the top and the private car at the bottom thus keeping urban spaces dominated by people instead of vehicles. Good urban spaces should be permeable and linked by interconnected streets rather than cul-de-sac arrangement. Open spaces should also be linked by paths, creating a valuable network of green infrastructure. Successful urban spaces should also be legible, in that they are easy to navigate through the use of visual cues like landmarks, corners and junctions and a hierarchy of streets and spaces. There should be strong visual connection between key destinations. Car parking provision should be met through a strategic approach so they are provided in the right location and together with park and ride/share and appropriate levels of on street parking can contribute to local activity levels.

Case Study: Peace Bridge, Londonderry

The Peace Bridge has added a striking landmark to the city and has created a foot and cycle link between the divided parts of the city. The bridge also links the historic city centre to the newly restored Ebrington Barracks.

- **Hospitable;** Successful places make us feel good. Human beings require to feel safe and comfortable in their surrounding environments. Climatic conditions must be taken into account to create shelter from the weather while avoiding the wind tunnel effect of tall buildings and wide streets. Care

must also be taken to harness the solar aspect of sunlight to create successful spaces. The layout of urban spaces can also influence the health of users by making cycling and walking more attractive, over the use of polluting vehicles. Urban areas should also feel safe, with public spaces overlooked by windows of adjacent buildings, with mixed use developments maintaining activity levels at all times of the day whilst adding a sense of ownership which deters anti-social behaviour. Adequate lighting can also encourage public use of urban areas during the hours of darkness. Spaces should also be welcoming to users, with a sense of arrival often announced by landmark buildings. Busy places are safe places, with high levels of pedestrian activity and the repopulating of our urban centres via over the shop living is considered the best deterrent for negative behaviour. However, effective partnerships and communication between police, local residents and businesses can also make a valuable contribution to the safety of the urban area.

Case Study: Belcoo, Co. Fermanagh

The attractive village of Belcoo with its traditional 2 and 3 storey buildings, active streets and generous open spaces has been subject to a series of measures like restorations, footpaths and signage which contribute to the local economy and reflect the hospitality of the local community.

- **Vibrant & diverse;** Great urban centres buzz with activity. They are formed by a concentration of different uses, services and facilities, thereby attracting different people over a sustained period of time. Busy places are safe, engaging and even exciting. It is vitally important that services and facilities are located in the centre of villages, towns and cities as it establishes a critical mass of activity which sustains their viability, whilst keeping them safe and engaging places to visit. Dispersal of these facilities leads to a decline characterised by vacancy and quiet streets, as well as a rise in car usage. Activity levels are directly linked to density of development, with medium and high densities resulting in greater physical, social and economic activity levels. Places of mixed use, type and tenure are also active and vibrant. Levels can be sustained during different parts of the day by mixed land uses for example mixed dwelling types. These are attractive to people at different stages of life and mixed tenure housing avoids the perception that areas are ghettoised by increasing diversity. Buildings can contribute to activity levels by the use of active street frontages at ground floor levels and the use of outdoor spill space for stalls and seating.

Case Study: Main St, Omagh

A successful new pedestrian street has been created between the High Street and a major parking area which is lined with bars, shops and cafes. It is active because of the daily throughput of people, the frequency of small units opening onto the street, a mix of uses open during the day and evening, encouragement of businesses to use the space in front of their units and outdoor events in the space.

- **Crafted;** Many of our successful urban places are also attractive. Design quality impacts significantly on the overall character of a place, as well as its ability to function and prosper. Well-designed places require a clear rationale based on evidence, together with a clear concept and be faithful to the underlying principles of the chosen architectural style. Aesthetic principles like proportion, rhythm and choice of materials are also important to successful design. Independent comment on emerging proposals through peer review can help to avoid subjective decision making and increase the quality of design. Quality in design, materials, construction and maintenance must run through the entire process from beginning to end keeping in line with the original concept. Place specific design is important as it reinforces a sense of place and positively contributes to the existing context of an area. For example use of locally prolific material like brick could be incorporated into a new design to reinforce local identity, however it does not have to result in pastiche or mimicry. Contemporary design can sit well within existing urban context if it is of sufficient quality and is responsive to its context.

Case Study: Lyric Theatre, Belfast

This award winning landmark building exhibits a contemporary design and is constructed from traditional red brick. It has responded to its context of a sloping riverbank site, set against the backdrop of traditional terrace streets.

- **Viable;** Good places last. The reasons for such survival are complex, as places are inevitably affected by changes that happen around them, be they economic, social or political. The key to good place making is flexibility that allows for unforeseen circumstances and the opportunity for the structure of buildings to adapt to these. Vacant buildings and spaces negatively affect the quality of urban spaces so efforts to identify temporary uses and interventions may help bring them back into use. This 'meanwhile occupancy' can often take the form of 'pop-up shops' which

operate in empty spaces for a limited period and at a reduced rate or rent. Successful urban spaces should also be serviced without detracting from the quality experienced by the general public. This requires an early understanding of utilities, maintenance, delivery and collection points to allow them to be integrated into the overall design approach. As urban places provide different structures based on their scale, infrastructure, and regional context, it is vital that these roles are understood by those shaping a vision for a specific urban area; in order to identify viable propositions relative to their context. The deliverability of proposals is also an important factor that must be understood early in the process in relation to the policy context, funding context, skills provision and the proposals must be broadly acceptable to those who will be affected by them. Testing the viability of a proposal in advance may also be useful, for example, an outdoor market could be trialled in advance.

Case Study: Ballymena Town Centre Public Realm Strategy

Six outdoor events were organised in the town centre to develop and test proposals through participative consultation with the public. These provided the context for discussion about the future of the town centre. This provided a practical opportunity to learn how different spaces should be designed and managed in the future.

- **Enduring;** Places never stand still. As time passes they evolve and adapt, and the people involved with them come and go. Places should be self-sustaining through mixed uses which not only boost activity but enhance resilience to external pressures. If problems occur in one sector, then the risk is spread and the place is less affected than if it were a single use. Finding new uses for old buildings is extremely important, as it helps re-energise places while ensuring their retention. Many of these buildings are where examples of greatest architecture can be found. They are often more adaptable than modern buildings and the potential may exist for them to generate additional funding through grant aid. The knowledge we learn about urban places must be recorded and passed on to others so that valuable understanding is not lost, therefore consideration must be given to the mechanisms to do this, enabling our places to grow and prosper.

Case Study: Killyleagh

Declining traditional industries resulted in dereliction and neglect. Over the past 20 years, the local development association has acquired and redeveloped empty properties within the town, which has contributed to the attractiveness of the town and its thriving mixed community.

8 Rural Design

- 8.1 Design guidance for development in the countryside is contained in 'Building on Tradition: A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside' (May 2012) which supports the application of PPS 21 Sustainable Development in the Countryside. Building on Tradition is an extremely important document, to help shape our countryside within the Borough.
- 8.2 Its primary aim is to support the essential needs of vibrant rural communities, to conserve rural landscape and natural resources, facilitate a sustainable rural economy and promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development in the countryside. Many of these concepts mirror those contained within the Living Spaces document which relates to the urban area.
- 8.3 This guidance was prepared in response to trends in relation to poor standards of design for developments in the countryside. Below is an outline of the principles that should be addressed when developing such proposals:
- **What makes a place special;** Each part of Northern Ireland is different to the next and it is important to appreciate how this distinctiveness has occurred, when developing proposals for development in the countryside. The character of our landscape has been shaped by geology, soil and water as well as the distinctive patterns of human settlement which have evolved from this. Accordingly, Northern Ireland can be divided into distinctive Landscape Character Areas each with their own distinct natural and settlement characteristics. Settlement types range from towns and villages, each shaped by their own historical, social and environmental circumstances, dispersed rural communities, through to small informal groupings of farms and individual farm yard settlement patterns. As well as traditional patterns of settlement, it is also important to identify the local context with regard to traditional building forms and materials, and draw cues from these with the use of their modern contemporary equivalents.
 - **Reuse and conversion;** Old buildings can not only have significant historic value, but also are the source of considerable embodied energy in the materials used in their construction, that would otherwise be lost if they were replaced by new buildings. Their reuse and refurbishment accords with reduce, reuse and recycle sustainability principles and their sympathetic conversion can ensure often redundant locally significant buildings are brought back into use and retained. It is also important to preserve the mature settings of such buildings, as these are also central to the character and appearance of local landscapes.
 - **Visually integrated buildings;** This is now a core principle of development in the countryside. Buildings should be visually linked to the countryside and/or other established buildings. Development is thus directed to within existing communities, at the edge of small settlements, within existing clusters and/or adjacent to existing farm groups. Or if the case can be made to depart from these, fully integrate into the surrounding landscape. The

rationale behind this is to achieve more focused regeneration of existing rural communities, more sustainable use of established building stock and settlement pattern and to better manage the impact of isolated development on the open countryside. The guidance goes on to give detailed advice on how visual integration can be successfully achieved.

- **Replacement;** Where buildings cannot be successfully reused, replacement projects (subject to criteria) can help to reinvigorate the rural landscape. Replacement uses the footprint of long established buildings, connects to services which are already in place and makes use of mature site boundaries. Basic rules for replacement projects state that, new buildings should be as close to the footprint of the existing building as possible, the new building should be of a sympathetic scale and form to the existing building, use the established boundaries and recycle existing building materials.
- **New build;** A new dwelling not related to the edge of an existing small settlement, existing cluster or existing farm group, is subject to the principles of good siting and location. It should respect the natural contours of the landscape and avoid cut and fill techniques on slopes or visually prominent hilltop locations. Siting should utilise natural and existing site boundaries helping the new building blend into the countryside and where appropriate supplement with planting of species native to the area. Suburban type hard landscaping and elaborate boundary treatments which are alien to the countryside should be avoided.
- **Building on tradition; The design process;** The first stage in the process involves the definition of a design brief, where the requirements of the project are set out. This will allow the architect to turn these instructions into drawings for consideration by the planning authority. The second stage involves an appraisal of context of the setting and location of the site, the dynamics of the landscape character and settlement pattern. The third stage involves a detailed appraisal of the site including boundaries, access, exposure, orientation, constraints, adjacent buildings and opportunities to build in habitats. The fourth stage is the development of a concept which brings together the setting and site appraisals and allows the arrangement of buildings on the site to be decided upon. This will provide the basis for the preparation of detailed drawings and the design concept statement.

9 Other Relevant Publications

- 9.1 The publication *21st Century High Streets* (2009), was produced by the British Retail Consortium in response to the threats which traditional town centre retailing faced, including the recession and wider shifts from high street to internet shopping. This makes a number of recommendations which see the high street as the focal point for local communities instead of focusing solely on retailing. Many of these recommendations are centred on design issues and similar to the *Living Places* document, including:

- Develop a unique sense of place, maximising local heritage and natural surroundings while building on existing strengths;

Case Study: Swansea Independence Day themed event saw footfall double during the event.

- Develop and maintain an attractive public realm, with stakeholders working together to seek investment. Social spaces and distinctive places with effective signage, appropriate street furniture and good quality lighting;

Case Study: Belfast 'Streets Ahead' public realm improvement initiative. A £28m public realm scheme on 14 streets to update the fragmented and outdated City Centre environment has made a significant improvement to the shopping environment.

- Plan for success with a framework and strategy and development of a clear vision is essential;

Case Study: Providing Dorchester with a Town Square. Research identified a gap in non-food spend and retail opportunities in the town centre were limited. A former historic brewery was redeveloped to provide a substantial mixed use scheme.

- Accessibility is important and should be primarily based on reducing congestion while offering incentives to use alternatives to the private car and innovatively managed parking solutions.

Case Study: Barnet's Seasonal Parking Scheme. Barnet introduced a reduced rate parking initiative over Christmas and the New Year resulting in increased use of car parks and footfall.

- Safety and security is important through working in partnership to deter retail crime and anti-social behaviour and the use of secured by design techniques. shoppers are not attracted to high streets if they feel unsafe.

Case Study: Community safety in Falkirk at night. With the opening of new large nightclub, a taxi marshalling initiative was trialled for 3 months, resulting in no incidents being reported to police where they were once frequent. This led to the introduction of the initiative every weekend, with the significant investment justified by positive feedback.

- 9.2 An additional example focuses on many of the design principles in the context of sustainable development, is the 'Lose of Re-Use' publication (2007) by Ulster Architectural Heritage Society. This examined the role of historic buildings in providing sustainable solutions in Northern Ireland, in particular catering for housing needs.
- 9.3 The publication illustrated how historic buildings can minimise construction waste, promote the use of environmentally-friendly materials, reduce the creation of planet-warming carbon dioxide, contribute to maintaining rural character, ensure traditional skills are retained, encourage a vibrant local economy and reinforce a sense of identity and civic pride.
- 9.4 It states that healthy, sustainable communities are those that work together to protect and preserve their culture, encourage employment and a vibrant economy, and make the best use of the resources available to them, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Case Study: In 2007, Hearth Housing Association started work on Ormeau Park House, the former gardener's house, which had been badly vandalised, Hearth looked at the building and assessed the constraints and advantages.

- 9.5 As the building was not listed, Hearth decided to experiment with new eco technologies in terms of sheep's wool insulation and thermal plasterboard. An air source heat pump was installed to supply constant underfloor heating and high levels of airtightness were achieved.
- 9.6 Over and above the retention of the historic built fabric and sustainability arguments, there are also significant cost savings in terms of restoration versus new build.

Case Study: The restoration rather than demolition of Portrush Town Hall (B1 Listed). A plan to knock it down and rebuild in a similar style was proposed in 1999, at an estimated cost of £1.75m. This scheme was eventually rejected in favour of restoration, which cost £1.6m. £1m of this cost was covered by grants paid out only because of the building's architectural and historical importance.

10 Key Findings

10.1 The following key findings in relation to placemaking and design have been identified:

- Good design can contribute to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's Corporate Plan 'We will have succeeded if: People take pride in their surroundings. People feel safe. Our environment, natural habitats and built heritage are protected and enhanced. We have vibrant and welcoming towns, villages, neighbourhoods, and rural areas. We have an efficient planning process that promotes positive development and sustainable growth.'
- Good design has a role to play in achieving many policies within the RDS.
- 'Supporting Good Design and Positive Place-Making' is a core principle of the SPPS.
- There are 3 Conservation Areas within the Borough, each with their own design guide. These are Department designations and therefore can only be amended or varied by the Department as the responsible body. The Council or Department can designate new Conservation Areas.
- The new LDP must take into account where relevant the 10 principles of urban stewardship and design within the 'Living Spaces' document.
- The new LDP must take into account where relevant the 6 themes within 'Building on Tradition'.
- Evidence from Great Britain suggests that good design principles can help meet the challenges which face retailing.
- Re-use of historic buildings has many ecological, economic, social and cultural benefit.



Mossley Mill
Carnmoney Road North,
Newtownabbey
BT36 5QA

Antrim Antrim Civic Centre
50 Stiles Way,
Antrim,
BT41 2UB

www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk