

# Local Development Plan

Preferred Options Paper: March 2019



Ards and  
North Down  
Borough Council

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# Foreword

Ards and North Down Borough Council is pleased to present the Preferred Options Paper (POP) marking an important initial stage in the development of the Borough's first Local Development Plan (LDP).

This is one of the highest quality places to live in Northern Ireland. The Preferred Options Paper is an opportunity for discussion on the matters which the LDP will deal with through the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan. The LDP shall seek to present a sustainable future for our Borough, by providing the land required for homes and jobs needed in a way that respects the unique historic and natural environment of our Borough.

The LDP seeks to support the delivery of spatial aspects of the Council's Community Plan – 'The Big Plan'. The Big Plan sets a partnership framework for improving services and facilitating growth of residents and businesses in an equitable way. Ards and North Down's LDP shall provide the planning framework for the Borough up to 2030. The LDP shall be progressed along with the Big Plan in the context of the identified economic and social outcomes for the Borough, while providing the delivery of sustainable development.

The Preferred Options Paper (POP) is the first formal stage in the preparation of the LDP, and the first of three main public consultation documents that we will issue during the Plan process. The POP is designed to promote focused debate on key issues of strategic significance which are likely to influence the direction of future development within our Borough to 2030. This Paper sets out the key Plan issues and options available to address them, along with our Preferred Options.

The purpose of this consultation is to encourage feedback from a wide variety of interests and stakeholders so that they may be taken into account during the preparation of the Draft Plan Strategy, which is the next phase of the LDP. The POP therefore offers the opportunity to influence the LDP documents, which will contain the planning policy framework and land use proposals to guide future development decisions within the Borough up to 2030.

# Have your say

## Public Consultation and Next Steps

Due to the discovery of an inadvertent error with the previous version, public consultation on the Preferred Options Paper (POP) and associated documents will begin anew on 17 May 2019 and will be open for a period of 12 weeks, ending on 9 August 2019 at 4.30pm.

### Availability of Preferred Options Paper

The POP document and supporting information, including the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Interim Report and Scoping Report, will be available on the Council's website:

[www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

The POP document is also available in hard copy to view during office hours at the following locations:

Planning Office – 2 Church St, Newtownards, BT23 4AP  
Bangor Town Hall, The Castle, Bangor, BT20 4BT

Your comments on the POP Document and supporting information can be submitted by the various means below:

By e-mail: [planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:planning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

By post: LDP Team  
The Planning Office  
Ards and North Down Borough Council  
2 Church Street  
Newtownards  
BT23 4AP

By web: [www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](http://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

Please note that representations made at the POP stage should relate to strategic planning issues affecting our Borough. There will be an opportunity to engage in respect of more specific issues later in the LDP process as set out in our Statement of Community Involvement which is available on the Council website.

The POP and supporting documents can be made available upon request in other formats, and alternative languages where possible, by contacting the Council's Planning Office using the email or postal address above or by telephone – 028 91 824006.

Through the course of this consultation period there will be a series of public engagement sessions, during which you will have opportunity to view the POP document and supporting information and engage with members of our Local Development Plan team. Details of these events are available on the website.

# Introduction

## The Purpose of Planning

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*The objective of the planning system, consistent with Part 1, Section 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, is to 'secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering health and wellbeing.'*

The planning system should positively and proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland. The Council, therefore, simultaneously pursues social and economic priorities alongside the careful management of our historic and natural environments for the overall benefit of our society.

Creating places where communities flourish and enjoy a shared sense of belonging, both now and into the future, is fundamentally what planning is about. In order to make positive change on the ground the Council will seek to prioritise timely and predictable decision-making to support positive place-making and effective stewardship that contributes to shaping high quality sustainable places to live, invest, work and spend leisure time in.

A key dimension of sustainable development for Northern Ireland and the Council area is economic growth. This requires the planning system to continue to provide protection to the things we cherish most about our historic and natural environment, including our heritage assets, while unlocking development potential, supporting job creation and aiding economic recovery for the benefit of all our residents, businesses and visitors.

Sustainable development is at the heart of the planning system. Whilst there are a variety of expressions of the term sustainable development one of the more widely accepted definitions is found under Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations Assembly:

*Sustainable Development is defined as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*

Furthering sustainable development also means ensuring the planning system plays its part in supporting wider government policy and strategies in efforts to address any existing or potential barriers to sustainable development. This includes strategies, proposals and future investment programmes for key transportation, water and sewerage, telecommunications and energy infrastructure (including the electricity network).

# Why have a Local Development Plan?

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The Local Development Plan (LDP) will apply regional policies at the local level and inform the general public, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies of the policy framework and land use proposals that will guide development decisions within our Borough up to 2030.

The Planning Act (NI) 2011 provides for the plan-led system. It states that where, in making any determination under the 2011 Act, regard is to be had to the local development plan, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Under the plan-led system, the LDP will be the prime consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development or use of land.

## *The purpose of our Local Development Plan is to:*

- *provide a 15-year plan framework to support the economic and social needs of the Borough, in line with regional strategies and policies, while providing for the delivery of sustainable development;*
- *facilitate sustainable growth by co-ordinating public and private investment to encourage development where it can be of most benefit to the wellbeing of the community;*
- *allocate sufficient land to meet society's needs;*
- *provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, including the public, to have a say about where and how development within their local area should take place;*
- *provide a plan-led framework for rational and consistent decision-making for the public, private and community sectors, and those affected by development proposals; and*
- *deliver the spatial aspects of The Big Plan – the Council's Community Plan.*

The LDP Plan will replace the current statutory development plans that apply to the Borough as follows:

- North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995
- Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995
- Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 for that part of Knocknagoney which is now within Ards and North Down Borough area;
- Ards and Down Area Plan 2015
- draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015

## Key Stages of the Local Development Plan

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The indicative timescales for the key stages in the LDP process are outlined in the Local Development Plan Timetable which is available on the Council website.

## Stage 1

### • Initial Plan Preparation

- This first stage comprises the preparation of the LDP Timetable and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) alongside the preparation of a Preferred Options Paper (POP).
- The POP aims to stimulate public comment and help interested parties to become involved in a more meaningful way at this earliest stage of plan preparation. This is crucial to identify relevant local issues which need to be considered from the outset of plan preparation.
- Following consultation on the POP, the council must take account of any representations received before it prepares the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan.

## Stage 2

### • Plan Strategy

- This LDP document will set out the Council's objectives in relation to the development and use of land in our Borough and the strategic policies for the implementation of those objectives and other relevant matters. The Plan Strategy will be based on both the information gathered and also the public and stakeholder's responses to the POP.
- As part of this process, the Council will also carry out a range of assessments including Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Rural Proofing before publishing the draft Plan Strategy and all the above assessments for public consultation.

## Stage 3

### • Local Policies Plan

- The Local Policies Plan will comprise detailed site specific proposals for the Borough and must be consistent with the adopted Plan Strategy. The Plan Strategy must be adopted before the draft Local Policies Plan is published for consultation, subjected to Independent Examination and adopted.
- The draft Local Policies Plan and associated assessments will also be published for public consultation. Following this, the process for Independent Examination and adoption of the Local Policies Plan will be similar to that of the Plan Strategy.

## Stage 4

### • Monitoring and Review

- This final stage is essential to establish progress against the stated objectives of the LDP and to determine whether any changes are required.
- An annual monitoring report will be prepared and submitted to the Department of Infrastructure in relation to housing, employment and any other relevant information on the implementation of the LDP.
- The Council will also be required to undertake regular reviews of our LDP and submit our findings to the Department.



A number of relevant assessments and reports are published alongside the main Plan documents:

The [Sustainability Appraisal \(SA\)](#) assesses the sustainability of the LDP proposals and how they will combine and interact in the LDP to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The SA, which incorporates the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a continual process that runs parallel with the preparation of the LDP. Integral to this process is the consideration of social, economic and environmental issues.

The POP should be read in conjunction with the interim Sustainability Appraisal report. This shows the options that have been considered, their assessment against sustainability objectives, and explains why the options chosen are preferred over those rejected.

Section 75 Screening and interim Rural Screening is also carried out to assess the likely impact of the LDP proposals on all the different sections of the community and whether it appropriately and proportionately caters for those living in rural areas as well as in urban areas.

## What is a 'POP'?

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The Preferred Options Paper is the first formal document in the preparation of the LDP. It identifies a range of strategic planning issues that have been identified in the Borough. These issues have generally emerged from our review of baseline information or from prior informal consultation with statutory consultees, elected members and Council officials.

The POP aims to stimulate public comment and help interested parties to become involved in a more meaningful way at the earliest stage of plan preparation. It is crucial to identify relevant local issues which need to be considered from the outset.

***The purpose of the POP is to set out:***

- *A series of options for dealing with key issues in the Borough*
- *Evidence to appraise the different issues and options*
- *The Council's preferred options and justification for these*

At this stage in the process it is important to note that, whilst a preferred option has been identified for each of the issues, no final decision has been made by the Council. The feedback received in respect of this consultation will assist in informing the appropriate way forward for the LDP. Integral to this process is the consideration of social, economic and environmental issues.

The POP also includes a review of the existing operational planning policies, largely contained within the suite of Planning Policy Statements. Again, the aim is to stimulate public debate on whether the existing policies are still suitable or whether a different approach would be more appropriate to meet local circumstances.

In summary, the POP aims to ensure that all the interests of the public, stakeholders and other parties are engaged fully at an early stage in the LDP preparation process. Whilst the focus is on strategic planning matters which apply across the Borough, there will be an opportunity at a later stage to engage on matters of a more site-specific nature.

# Challenges Facing the Borough

Whilst Ards and North Down Borough generally offers a high quality of life, it will need to manage a series of issues over the lifetime of the LDP to support economic prosperity and to mitigate negative impacts of development. These issues include:

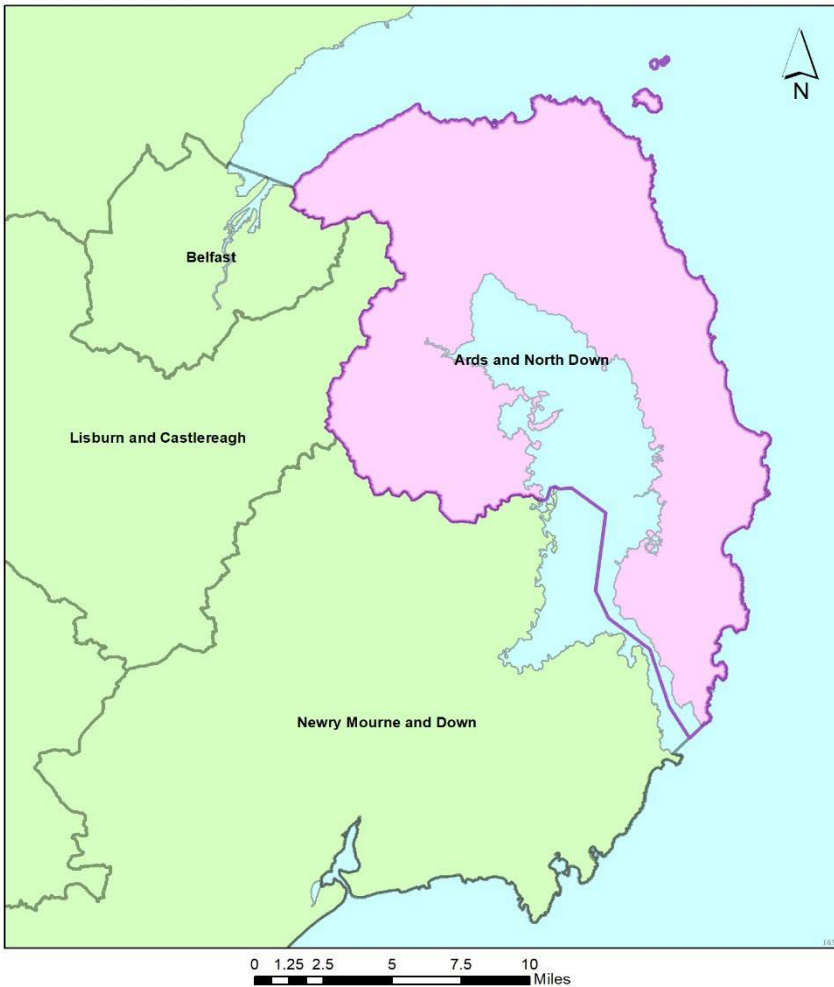
- The Preferred Options Paper is emerging at a time of austerity and uncertainty. Spending cuts will limit central government funding towards projects in the short to medium term. Uncertainty also stems from a need to re-establish the Northern Ireland Assembly and the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. The former influences infrastructure investment and the latter relates to implications of Brexit for administration and the economy, the details of which remain largely unknown at the time of writing;
- There is a need to ensure that the local economy is supported and businesses borough-wide are able to thrive and grow. This Borough has high levels of out-commuting, which can have impacts on traffic levels and environmental quality and income spend during the day. It is important appropriate employment opportunities are promoted within the Borough to ensure people who live locally have an opportunity to work locally;
- While outside the control of the Council, it is recognised that there are issues with respect to sewerage and water infrastructure. It is important that the LDP is progressed in a compatible way to deal with circumstances;
- Transport infrastructure is under strain in terms of service provision to parts of the Borough such as the Peninsula;
- An important part of achieving sustainable communities is the regeneration and support of the town centres to reach full potential - places which are attractive, thriving centres each maintaining their own distinctive role and character in our Borough;
- House prices in the Borough are relatively high, and this can cause affordability issues, particularly for young people. There is also a projected increase in people aged over 85 years living in the Plan area and new development will need to meet the changing needs of all residents;
- While overall the Borough is generally affluent, there are small areas where income levels are significantly lower and/or access to local community services is not as good and this can create social exclusion;
- There is a need to achieve sustainable, attractive and inclusive communities to ensure that the Borough continues to benefit from low crime levels, good health and an attractive natural and historic environment; and,
- There is a need to promote development that is energy- and resource-efficient and increases the environmental, as well as economic, sustainability of communities within the Borough, and its ability to adapt to climate change.

# Borough Profile

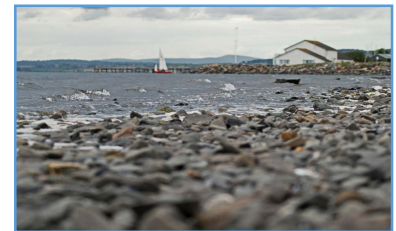
## Location

Ards and North Down Borough is situated to the east of Northern Ireland, comprising the Ards Peninsula, most of Strangford Lough and the southern shore of Belfast Lough.

It encompasses a geographical area of nearly 228 square miles and combines attractive coastline with many pleasant open spaces. The diverse range of landscapes include the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a mix of coastal, rural and urban settlements and the drumlins and islands of the Strangford Lough coastline.



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### Map 1: Extent of Ards and North Down Borough Council area

The Borough shares its boundary with three council areas, Belfast City Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. In order for cross-boundary issues to be effectively addressed, Ards and North Down Borough Council will continue engagement with these neighbouring councils throughout the LDP process.

At a length of 115 miles, the Borough's coastline is one of the longest in Northern Ireland. Ards and North Down has always had a close connection with the sea. The seascape has become an

important part of local identity, given the majority of the key settlements in the Borough situated in coastal areas.

## Key Borough Facts

As a backdrop to the key issues that this Preferred Options Paper will consider, this section provides a broad overview of the Borough, including key information in relation to our population, households, economy, infrastructure and environment.

Population	
<b>160,098</b>	Borough population in 2017
<b>164,004</b>	Borough's projected population by 2030
<b>3%</b>	projected population increase from 2016-2030 (4411 people)
<b>0-15 Age</b>	29,983, 19% of the Borough Population in mid-year 2016
<b>16-64 Age</b>	97,159, 61% of the Borough Population in mid-year 2016
<b>65+ Age</b>	32,451, 20% of the Borough Population in mid-year 2016
<b>82.6 years</b>	Female life expectancy
<b>79.3 years</b>	Male life expectancy
<b>51.5%</b>	Female population of the Borough
<b>48.5%</b>	Male population of the Borough
<b>16.7%</b>	Population that are employment deprived
<b>20.08%</b>	People with a long term health problem or disability (according to 2011 Census)
<b>33.7%</b>	Proportion of school leavers not achieving 5 or more GCSEs at Grade A-C (NI average 35.7%)
<b>65,985</b>	Number of households in 2017
<b>70,100</b>	Number of households projected in 2030
<b>2.38</b>	Average Household size in 2017 (persons)
<b>2.31</b>	Average Household size projected by 2030 (persons)

## Economy

<b>4,670</b>	VAT and or PAYE registered businesses in the Borough (2018)
<b>38,746</b>	Employee jobs in the Borough
<b>3.4%</b>	Employed in construction within the Borough
<b>7.4%</b>	Employed in manufacturing within the Borough
<b>88.2%</b>	Employed in services within the Borough
<b>0.9%</b>	Employed in other sectors within the Borough (source: NI Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), September 2018)
<b>£24,003</b>	Full-time median wage of those in the Borough
<b>5.8%</b>	2016 AND GVA Contribution to the NI Economy (£2.1bn, NISRA)
<b>687</b>	Farms within the Borough (DAERA – 2017)
<b>£150,131</b>	Average house price within the Borough (Quarter 1, 2018)
<b>282,000</b>	Overnight trips to the Borough in 2017
<b>£46 million</b>	Estimated expenditure on overnight trips in 2017
<b>18.9%</b>	Average town centre property vacancies, (Bangor 23.9%, Comber 21.4%, Holywood 10.2%, Newtownards 19.4% and Donaghadee 19.5% (DfC))
<b>82.5%</b>	School leavers' achievement of at least 5 GCSE's grades A-C (2015)
<b>6</b>	Active/Operating Quarries

## Settlements

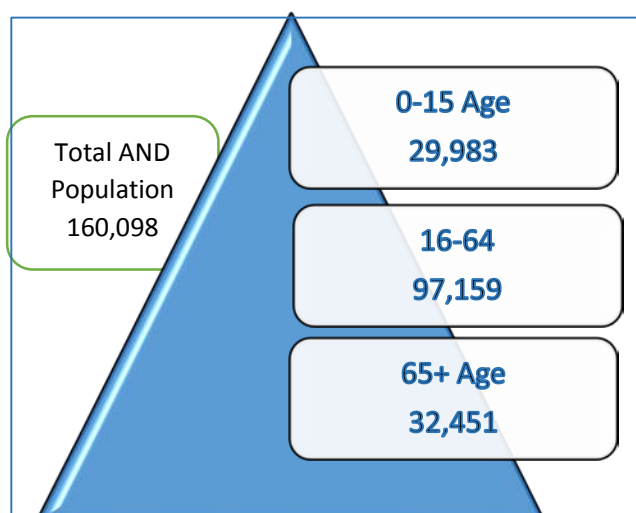
<b>5</b>	Towns
<b>17</b>	Villages
<b>20</b>	Small settlements
<b>81%</b>	Households with internet access (NISRA 2016)
<b>1159km</b>	Road length in the Borough
<b>98,853</b>	Licensed vehicles in the Borough (2017)
<b>49.19%</b>	% of Borough's household waste prepared for reuse, recycled and composted (2016)

<b>1</b>	Railway station (Halts at Bangor West, Carnalea, Helen's Bay, Seahill, Cultra, Marino and Holywood)
<b>9</b>	Council-operated recycling centres within the Borough
<b>6</b>	Fire and Rescue stations in operation within the Borough
<b>Environment</b>	
<b>14</b>	State Care archaeological sites and monuments within the Borough
<b>17</b>	Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest
<b>849</b>	Listed Buildings/Structures
<b>3</b>	Designated Conservation Areas (Donaghadee, Holywood and Portaferry)
<b>18</b>	Areas of Townscape/Village Character (ATC/AVC)
<b>10</b>	Landscape Character Areas

## Demographic Profile of the Borough

The Borough has a population of 160,098 (2017). The usually resident population is broadly split on a 50/50 basis between men and women in both Ards and North Down.

The Northern Ireland trend is that, while the number of children aged 0 to 15 and people aged 16 to 64 are projected to decrease over the next 25 years, the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase. Since 2001, the number of pensioners in Ards and North Down has been above the NI average, numbers have increased and are also projected to rise further between 2008 and 2023. The projected proportion of Borough residents aged over 65 is 23.27% in 2023, an increase of 3.36% since 2008.



**Fig 1: Demographic composition of the Borough**

Northern Ireland statistical trends suggest that the number of people aged 85 and over in Northern Ireland has grown by around 900 people per annum throughout the decade ending mid-2016 (NISRA, 2017). At Local Government District (LGD) level, the proportion of people aged 85 and over in mid-2016 ranged from 1.4 per cent (2,100 people) in Derry & Strabane, to 2.4 per cent (3,900 people) in Ards & North Down. The Borough therefore has the highest proportion of the population aged 85 and over.

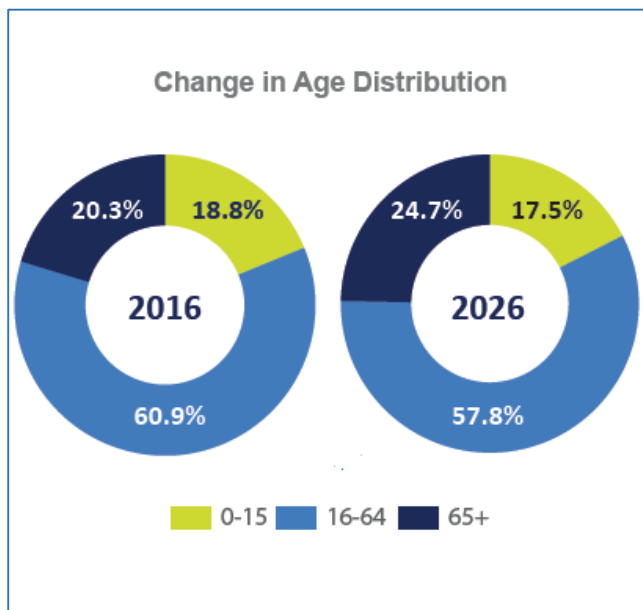


Fig 2: Change in Age Distribution 2016-2026

Life expectancy continues to improve for both males and females within the Borough. In 2016 Ards and North Down was the only LGD where the estimated population aged 65 and over exceeded the estimated number of children (NISRA).

This aging population profile can have implications for the overall health of the Borough and the number of ailments commonly associated with older people. As of 2014, there were 1567 people on the Dementia Register (all ages) and 413 people on the Osteoporosis Register (aged 50 plus years) within Ards and North Down (NINIS). A total of 12,379 patients were on the Obesity Register within the Borough in 2015. The childhood obesity rate amongst Primary 1 pupils within Ards and North Down is higher than comparable figures for Northern Ireland as a whole, calculated as a three year rolling average.



The largest towns, in order of size, are Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee and each is located in the north of the Borough. 80% of residents live in the northern 25% of our Borough. Smaller villages and small settlements are dispersed throughout the countryside. The Borough's proximity to Belfast, via both rail and road linkages, helps to make Ards and North Down an attractive option for both business investment and for people to live and work.

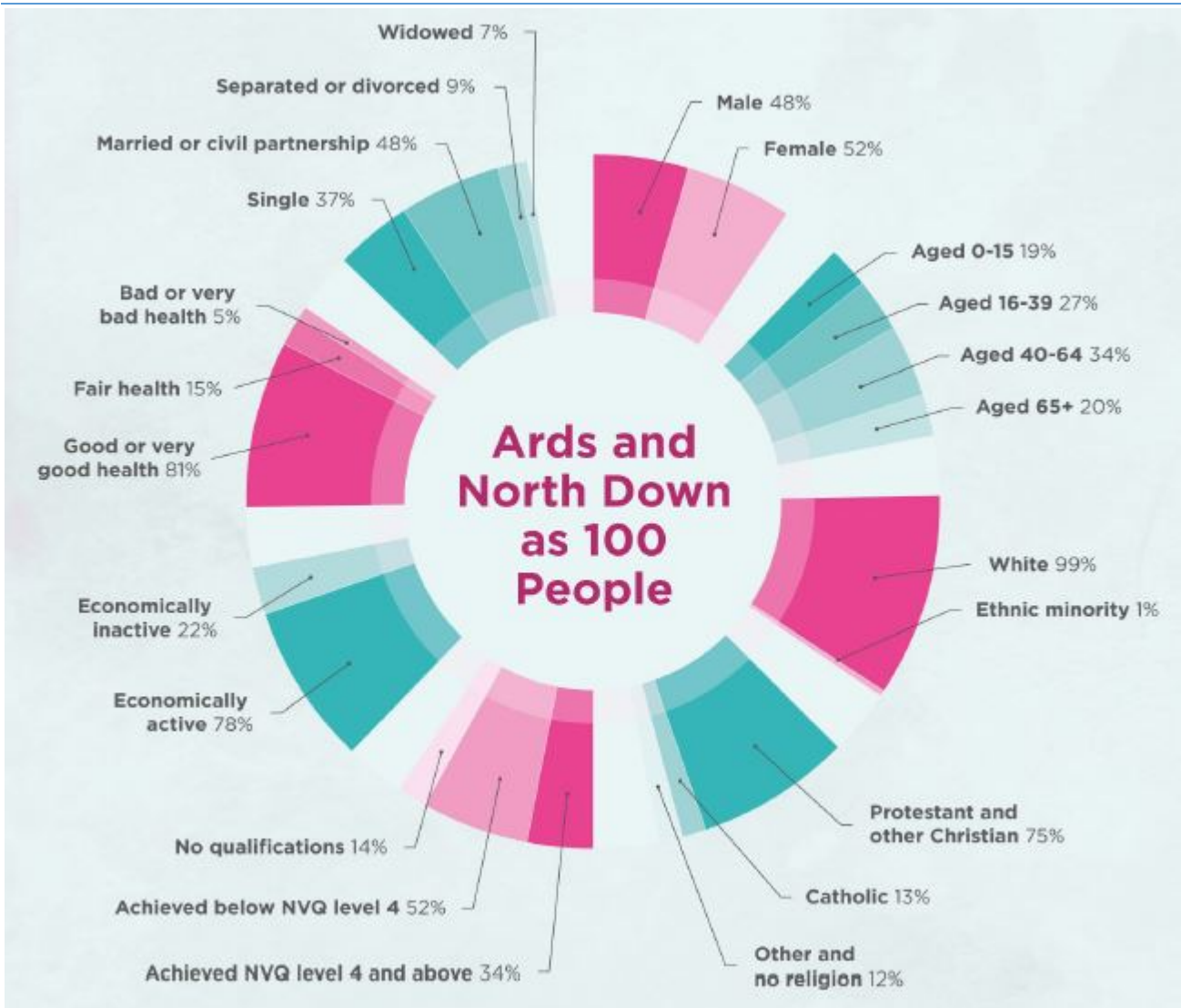


Fig 3: Ards and North Down as 100 People Source: Community Plan – The Big Plan.

## Economic Profile

In 2016, the working age population (the term ‘working age’ refers to the population aged 16-64 years for both males and females) was 97,159, 61% of the population - compared with 63.2% for Northern Ireland.

As of December 2018 there were 4,670 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in Ards and North Down, accounting for 6% of the Northern Ireland total. The largest sector in our Borough is that of the service sector, with 67% of total registered business stock, which includes tourism, retail, health, education, and financial and professional services. The majority of the businesses in Ards and North Down are ‘Micro’ – that is comprising 1-9 employees.

Approximately 203 hectares of land within the Borough are identified (in current Development Plans) as areas of existing or future employment and industry use. It is estimated that



approximately 62.68 hectares of land identified as employment and industry use remain undeveloped/vacant. Of this, 54.3% is located within Bangor, with 45.7% located in Newtownards.

Invest NI Briefing for this Borough indicates that it is home to world class advanced manufacturing companies including:

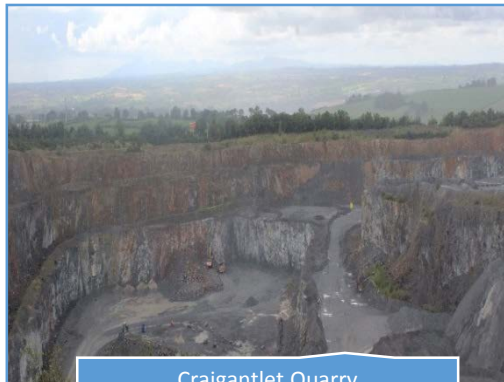
- Munster Simms Engineering ('Whale Pumps'), specialists in water pumps, located in Bangor;
- Denroy Plastics - designer and manufacturer of plastic moulded components such as the Denman hairbrush), also located in Bangor; and
- Magellan Aerospace - supplying machined components, sub-assemblies and logistics to the global aerospace and defence industry (located in Greyabbey).

The agri-food sector is represented in the Borough among others by:

- Pritchitts - part of Lakeland Dairy Group producing powdered milk products in Newtownards;
- Mash Direct and Willowbrook Farms – producing fresh and ready-made vegetable products, located in Newtownards and Killinchy;
- Clandeboye Estate's production of hand-crafted yoghurts in Bangor; and
- Echlinville Distillery (Kircubbin) which produces a gin product stocked on a UK-wide scale in supermarkets.



Barley harvesting on Ards Peninsula



Craigantlet Quarry

'Life and Health Science' is also recognised as a strategically important growth sector in the NI economy. TG Eakin Limited, a medical device manufacturer, dedicated to the production of high-quality skin protection products for use in stoma and wound care, is located at Ballystockart Road, Comber, and received planning permission to extend its premises in 2008 and 2011.

Rural-based enterprise such as farming and mineral extraction is clearly important to the Borough. Fishing has been a major industry in the area for many years with local communities (such as Portavogie - the second largest fishing port in Northern Ireland after Kilkeel) remaining at the centre of the trade today.

## Natural Environment

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The Ards and North Down Borough contains a rich diversity of environmental assets, each providing unique habitats for an abundance of flora and fauna. These sites are protected using various landscape designations to ensure that the natural environment retains its special characteristics and unique biodiversity. The highlights include Strangford Lough (one of Europe's most important natural heritage features), the Copeland Islands, the North Down Coastal Path and Crawfordsburn Country Park. These, along with a host of other wild places, provide many opportunities to explore and enjoy the richness of our natural environment.



Cloughey Beach

Our unique natural environment can be used for cultural, educational and leisure purposes, supporting our tourism industry and economy and enhancing the life of our citizens. Care must be taken to ensure that development is achieved in a sustainable way, which does not cause harm to designated areas.

A number of the environmental designations in the Borough straddle council boundaries:

- Strangford Lough Ramsar, Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation (partly within Newry, Mourne and Down);
- Belfast Lough Ramsar, Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation (partly within Belfast City); and
- Heron and Carrigullion Loughs, and Aughnadarragh Lough (partly within Newry Mourne and Down);

Similarly, some sites designated by the existing Development Plans take in lands that include areas outside Ards and North Down Borough, including Craigtantlet Area of High Scenic Value (which falls partly in Lisburn and Castlereagh and Belfast City Council areas) and Comber and Newtownards Rural Landscape Wedges.

The ongoing management and protection of these areas will require a sensitive and appropriate approach from the Council in the case of any proposed new designations that cross or adjoin our boundary.

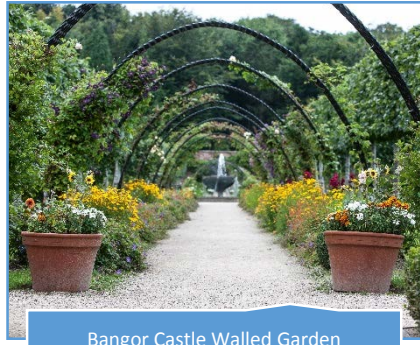
## Historic Environment

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The historic environment of Ards and North Down is rich in heritage assets including listed buildings, archaeological sites and monuments, historic gardens and demesnes, and marine heritage features. The value of the historic environment lies not only in the physical value of the individual assets, but also in the contribution that it can make to civic pride, education, sustainability, tourism, health and wellbeing and economic development.



Bangor Castle



Bangor Castle Walled Garden



Mew Island Lighthouse, Copeland Islands

There are numerous examples of buildings within the Borough that were previously at risk from decay but have been repaired and regenerated to provide amenities for the Borough and the Council has an opportunity to build upon these successes. Funding programmes, such as the Townscape Heritage Initiative and public realm schemes, have already made major improvements to townscapes throughout the Borough. Sensitive design is a key approach to working in harmony with our built environment.

There are many examples of significant townscapes in the Borough. **Hollywood** possesses a rich built heritage with a mix of Medieval, Victorian and Edwardian architecture. This sits within a well preserved historic street pattern and a unique landscape setting all culminating to create a unique character. In acknowledgement of its special architectural and historic interest Hollywood was designated as a conservation area in May 2004 and includes the Maypole and the neighbourhood known as 'High Hollywood.'

The settlement of **Bangor** has monastic origins but its present form and character largely reflect its growth as a seaside resort in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, following the arrival of the railway line in 1865. Today, Bangor comprises five distinct character areas which include the town centre, the Victorian urban waterfront promenade and seaside villas flanking the urban waterfront.

**Crawfordsburn** originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century as a small settlement on an important route way. It has retained elements of this history including the coaching inn in the village.

Within the Borough there are currently three designated conservation areas - Donaghadee, Hollywood and Portaferry. Each is accompanied by a dedicated design guide to provide advice for developers and residents. There are also 18 Areas of Townscape or Village Character (ATC/AVCs) in the Borough. Conservation Areas and ATC/AVCs provide a high quality built environment that have the potential to attract tourism and economic opportunities.



Portaferry Market House

The Council area also contains a range of industrial heritage features, ranging from old mills and bridges to railway stations and lighthouses. Given the extensive coastline of the Borough, there is a huge potential for a wealth of marine heritage assets on our shores.

## Infrastructure



Bangor Train Station

Ards and North Down is served by 1152 kilometres of public roads. Although there are no motorways, the settlements of the northern portion of the Borough are well connected via eight protected routes, as well as key link corridors that cross the Borough boundary into the Belfast Metropolitan Area. Accessibility to Belfast is further enhanced by bus and NI Railways services, but reliance on the private car remains high. This is particularly true in the small settlements and more rural locations on the Ards Peninsula where public transport availability is more sporadic.

The Portaferry to Strangford ferry service provides a well-used connection to Newry, Mourne and Down District, whilst links to destinations that are further afield are provided at George Best Belfast City Airport, just outside the Borough.

Energy within our Borough is primarily produced by the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity, from power stations outside our administrative boundary. There has been a rise in planning applications for renewable energy sources such as solar farms and single wind turbines in recent years.

Access to a high speed internet connection is critical for the economic development of the Borough and can also help to address social deprivation. Broadband connectivity improvement work has taken place across a number of settlements, meaning that 81% of our households have access to the internet and only 2% of premises are unable to get speeds greater than 10 megabits per second.

There are 24 waste water treatment works (WWTWs) throughout the Borough and these are the responsibility of NI Water. Of these 24 sites, five are at capacity and are programmed for upgrade between 2018 and 2021.



Carrowdore Solar Farm

There are nine Council-operated recycling centres within the Borough. In addition to the facilities at Waste Recycling Centres, Ards and North Down also has 'bring sites' consisting of glass bottle banks, with some sites having additional banks for textiles. Further to the Council's bid to reduce reliance on single use plastics in the Borough, we are the first to install sea bins in Northern Ireland. The pilot project has commenced to assist with the reduction of plastics and other hazards to marine life.

# Policy Context

The Local Development Plan (LDP) is required to take account of the regional planning framework provided by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035, prevailing planning policy and any other policy issued by central government, such as the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS). The LDP must also consider the Council's Community Plan (The Big Plan) and other Council plans and strategies.

The POP has been prepared by taking account of the regional policy context and the local policy context, as detailed on the following pages.

## Regional Policy Context

### Draft Programme for Government



The Programme for Government (PfG) is the highest level strategic document of the Executive – setting out the priorities that it will pursue in the current Assembly mandate, and the most significant actions it will take to address them. The draft PfG contains 14 strategic outcomes which, taken together, set a clear direction of travel and enable continuous improvement on the essential components of societal wellbeing. They touch on every aspect of government, including the attainment of good health and education, economic success and confident and peaceful communities. In addition to merely fulfilling our statutory obligations, we will in future be able to target those things that make real improvements to the quality of life for the citizen.

### Everyone's Involved – Sustainable Development Strategy



The Executives' Sustainable Development Strategy's aim is to identify and develop actions that will improve the quality of life for current and future generations. The Strategy is designed to provide a framework that can support and inform the decisions and actions taken by individuals, groups and organisations in progressing the sustainability agenda in Northern Ireland.

The goal of the Sustainable Development Strategy is to put in place economic, social and environmental measures to ensure that we can continue to grow our economy, improve our society and communities and use and capitalise on our natural resources effectively in years to come.

The delivery of the Strategy is based on six guiding principles:

- Living within environmental limits;
- Ensuring a strong, healthy, just and equal society;
- Achieving a sustainable economy;
- Using sound science responsibly;
- Promoting opportunity and innovation; and
- Promoting good governance.

## Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)

The Regional Development Strategy 'Building a Better Future', published in March 2012, is the Government's overarching spatial strategy for Northern Ireland up to 2035.

It aims to take account of the economic ambitions and needs of the Region, and put in place spatial planning, transport and housing priorities that will support and enable the aspirations of the Region to be met.

The RDS contains 8 aims:

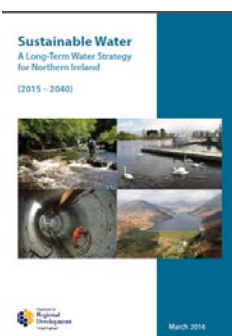
- Support strong, sustainable growth for the benefit of all parts of the Region;
- Strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver and Londonderry as the capital of the North West;
- Support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential;
- Promote development which improves the health and wellbeing of communities;
- Improve connectivity to enhance the movement of people, goods, energy and information between places;
- Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake;
- Take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate adaptation to climate; and
- Strengthen links between north and south, east and west, with Europe and the rest of the world.



## Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS)

Regional transportation is addressed through Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) – 'A New Approach to Regional Transportation' (2011). It complements the RDS with strategic objectives to support the growth of the economy through transportation, enhance the quality of life for all, and reduce the environmental impact of transport. The RTS sets out the Department for Infrastructure's approach to regional transportation and is intended to be used to guide strategic investment decisions beyond 2015.

## Regional Water Strategy- Sustainable water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)



To help to achieve the vision of a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland, the Government published Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040).

The Strategy presents a clear framework for action which will facilitate implementation of a range of initiatives aimed at delivering the long-term vision to have a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland. To achieve this vision, the Strategy encourages a sustainable and integrated approach to managing all our different water needs in a way which promotes regional development, without compromising the environment or increasing flood risk.

## Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

Across the UK, new systems of marine planning have been introduced. The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) and the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (The Marine Act), require the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), as the Marine Plan Authority (MPA), to prepare marine plans, for the better management of the Northern Ireland marine area. This will facilitate the sustainable development of the marine area.

The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland is made up of two plans, one for the inshore region under the Marine Act and one for the offshore region under the MCAA. The Marine Plan (when adopted) will be used by public authorities in taking decisions which affect or might affect the marine area, including authorisation or enforcement decisions, and decisions that relate to the exercise of any function capable of affecting the marine area.

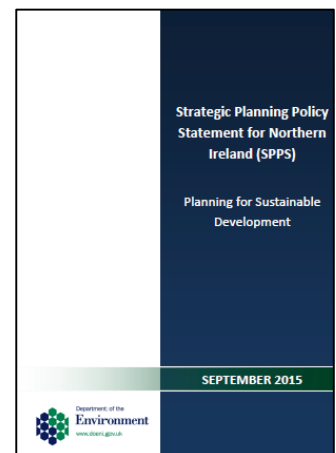
## Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is a statement of government's policy on important planning matters that should be addressed across Northern Ireland. It has a statutory basis under Part 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving wellbeing. The provisions of the SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of the LDP.

It also sets out that in plan-making and decision-taking furthering sustainable development in the long term public interest requires the integration and balancing of complex social, economic and environmental factors. To assist with this approach, the SPPS sets out five core planning principles as follows:

- Improving health and wellbeing;
- Creating and enhancing shared space;
- Supporting sustainable economic growth;
- Supporting good design and positive place-making; and
- Preserving and improving the built and natural environment

The SPPS provides a regional planning policy framework which sets out the strategic direction within which Councils will bring forward detailed operational policies through their LDPs. This framework sets out regional strategic objectives and regional strategic policy by subject area (such as housing, economic development, natural environment) and how these are to be delivered through the LDP process.



## Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

Planning Policy Statements set out the policies of central government on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents must be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to individual planning applications and appeals.

In accordance with the SPPS, the existing PPSs will cease to be operational once the Council adopts its Plan Strategy.

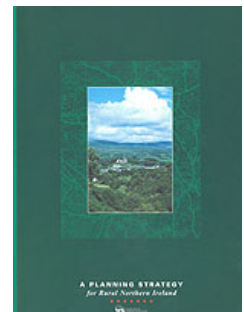
Until that time, these policies will be retained under transitional arrangements as set out in the SPPS.



## A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (The Rural Strategy)

The Rural Strategy covers all of the towns, villages and countryside of Northern Ireland outside Belfast (and adjoining built up areas) and Londonderry.

The Strategy establishes the objectives and the policies for land use and development appropriate to the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland and which need to be considered on a scale wider than the individual District Council Area.



Many policies within this Strategy have gradually been replaced by the subsequent PPSs and the SPPS. However, a small number of policies remain in operation, and as with the PPSs, these remaining policies will cease to be operational once the Council adopts its Plan Strategy.

## Supplementary Planning Guidance



Central government also prepares planning guidance to supplement, clarify or illustrate by example its policy statements and plans. This can take the form of design guides such as the 'Creating Places' guide for residential development or design guides prepared for Conservation Areas. It also includes a set of eight Development Control Advice Notes that explain the criteria and technical standards to be considered when dealing with specific categories of, or particular aspects, of development.

These guidance documents will be retained as material considerations during the transitional period as set out in the SPPS.



# Local Policy Context

## Local Development Plan links to other Council Plans and Strategies



**Fig 4: Local Development Plan Links to Other Plans and Strategies**

## Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-19

The Corporate Plan outlines the purpose, priorities and objectives of the Council over the four-year period 2015-2019.

### The Corporate Plan Vision

‘Our vision is that Ards and North Down will be a place to be proud of which is more prosperous, vibrant, healthy, sustainable and where people enjoy an excellent quality of life.’

The objectives of the Corporate Plan are grouped under three headings, People, Place and Prosperity. In order to clarify how the Local Development Plan shall contribute to achieving the objectives of the Corporate Plan, the topic areas set out in the POP shall be grouped into the three objective headings.



**Fig 5: The Objectives of the Corporate Plan**

## Community Plan – ‘The Big Plan for Ards and North Down – 2017-2032’



The Big Plan provides an overarching framework setting out a shared vision and ambition that Ards and North Down’s Strategic Community Planning Partnership has agreed to work towards over the next 15 years.

This is the first community plan for the Borough, and it aims to ensure greater collaboration between statutory agencies to achieve better outcomes for local people. Although not solely a Council Plan it is the umbrella plan that other plans and public agencies should look to for guidance.

### The Big Plan’s Vision:

‘Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be.’

The Big Plan contains five outcomes. These are ambitious statements that we aspire to in order to accurately reflect the situation of the people who live in Ards and North Down by the year 2032.

The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 introduces a statutory link between the Community Plan and our LDP, to ensure that in preparing the LPD we take account of the Big Plan. It is intended that the LDP will be the spatial reflection of the Big Plan and that the two should work in tandem towards the same vision for a council area and its communities and set the long term social, economic and environmental objectives for the area.



## The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018 – 2030



The Integrated Strategy presents a coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in this Borough. It responds to the vision and outcomes of the Big Plan and is to be used as the common point of reference for all those contributing to the growth of our economy, the welcoming of visitors and the improvement of our places, both urban and rural.

The vision for this Integrated Strategy is:

“Blue Green, Creatively Connected” as Ards and North Down has three particular strengths – the natural landscape of sea, loughs and land. It also describes an ethos proposed for our Borough which combines these core strengths to convey a fresh approach to how we look after, develop, promote and celebrate Ards and North Down as a place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

In order to realise the vision set by this strategy, a series of outcomes and targets have been identified. Effective delivery against the identified targets will require focused and collaborative effort by all relevant stakeholders and delivery organisations including Planning. The LDP shall have regard to the findings of the Integrated Strategy.

## Integrated Arts and Heritage Development Strategy 2018-2023



This strategy defines how arts and heritage will help achieve our cultural, social and economic ambitions by enriching our people and places and empowering residents to make the most of their creativity.

It responds to the vision and outcomes of the Big Plan and contributes to the delivery of the Integrated Strategy, responding to its vision and propositions from the arts and heritage perspective to help deliver its vision of Blue Green, Creatively Connected.

## Food Destination Development Plan 2018 – 2021

This plan arose from the recognition that food destination development forms an integral part of the wider visitor offer in the UK, Ireland and throughout Europe. The plan, which will be delivered over the next three years, will position the Borough as a premier food tourism destination on the island of Ireland with the overall aim to “consistently enhance the visitor experience through food and drink and make a strong contribution to overall tourism revenue growth”



## Other Council Plans / Masterplans

The Council has produced a number of other Masterplans / Plans for the Borough including Town Centre Masterplans, Village Plans etc.

Each of the five towns within the Borough has a Town Centre Masterplan. These aim to ensure that the viability and vitality of the town centres are enhanced and that they are visually attractive to residents, businesses and visitors, whilst also improving the overall accessibility.

There are several Village Plans for the Borough which are currently under review. These plans help to identify and address the current issues facing each village to facilitate economic, environmental, physical and social improvement.

These documents have informed the preparation of the POP and will continue to be taken into account throughout the LDP process.

## Extant Development Plans

Prior to the Review of Public Administration, the Ards and North Down area was the responsibility of two separate councils. On 1 April 2015 the two councils merged and Ards and North Down Borough Council was formed. The merged council area has continued to be covered by separate Development Plans. The Development Plans applicable to the Ards and North Down Borough are:

- Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 – for the legacy Ards Borough Council area;
- North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 - for the legacy North Down Borough Council area;

- Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 for that part of Knocknagoney which is now within Ards and North Down Borough area;
- draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP) – for the legacy North Down Borough Council area; and
- Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995.

It should be noted that BMAP was adopted in September 2014 but was subsequently quashed as a result of a judgment of the Court of Appeal delivered on 18 May 2017. As a consequence of this, the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995, the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001, and Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995 are now the statutory Development Plans for the North Down area, with dBMAP remaining a material consideration.

These plans remain extant until replaced by the new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the Borough. The existing plans are an important consideration in the LDP process, as they provide a starting point for the review of our spatial planning options.

# LDP Vision

This section explores the relationship between the LDP and the Council's Corporate and Community Plans, from which the Vision for the LDP has been developed. It will also provide an overview of the Overarching Principles that will guide the plan-making process and the Strategic Objectives that support the Vision of the LDP and link across the topic themes.

The Council's vision for the Borough is set out in the Community Plan. Given the statutory link, the LDP shares that vision:

**“Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to live.”**

The Council's Community Plan contains five key outcomes:

1. All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential;
2. All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing;
3. All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure;
4. All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy; and
5. All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.

The Community Plan focuses on a partnership approach – that is working together with public bodies such as education, health, transport, sport and police to address the issues that organisations cannot deliver in isolation. Similarly, the Community Plan and the Local Development Plan (LDP) need to work in tandem to realise benefits for all our citizens.

As outlined, the LDP is legislatively required to take account of the Community Plan and is therefore informed by it. Delivery of outcomes from the Big Plan will be achieved via Delivery Plans taken forward by the Community Plan thematic groups. The linkages to the LDP are cross-cutting.

The LDP, as a spatial reflection of the Community Plan, can provide support for key priority areas and activities through future patterns of development, land use and planning policy, offering optimum benefits for our citizens.

# Strategic Objectives

The LDP will seek to deliver the above shared vision, underpinned by priority themes that promote the development of sustainable communities:

- Protecting and enhancing the environment;
- Promoting economic vitality;
- Ensuring cohesive and safe communities and supporting healthy lifestyles.

## Strategic Objectives

The Council as a planning authority is required to deliver on all three pillars of sustainability in a balanced way, therefore no one theme or objective should be given priority over another but, rather, the strategic objectives should be approached in line with the widely accepted term of sustainable development of 'meeting the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

Strategic objectives are intended to assist in the delivery of the vision for the LDP whilst taking full account of the regional direction set out in the Regional Development Strategy. The LDP strategic objectives stem from the 'pillars' of sustainable development which indicate economic, social and environmental priorities.

In setting out strategic objectives for the LDP, no one objective or theme is regarded as having priority over any other. This recognises the inter-relationship and mutually beneficial nature between the objectives.

These shall be considered under People, Place and Prosperity or Social, Environmental, and Economic.

## People/Social

- To support a settlement hierarchy which promotes towns and villages as attractive and vibrant service centres, providing for a level of development appropriate to the position in the settlement hierarchy;
- To provide a sufficient supply of land for new housing to meet the housing needs up to 2030;
- To facilitate for a diverse range of specific housing needs over the LDP period;
- To support rural communities by providing appropriate and sustainable opportunities for development in the countryside;
- To facilitate development of community and cultural facilities at locations accessible to the local communities they serve;
- To create environments that are accessible to all members of the community;

- To facilitate the needs of the Borough in respect of health, education and other services; and
- Improvement of health and wellbeing - by creation of places that encourage a healthy lifestyle by the provision of high-quality cultural and sporting facilities, informal leisure spaces and opportunity to walk, cycle or ride to common destinations.

### **Place/Environmental**

- To conserve, enhance and protect the natural and historic environment;
- To manage and plan for future development in a sustainable manner, whilst taking account of the value of natural heritage and historic environment assets and designated sites;
- To protect the undeveloped coast and to support the sensitive enhancement of the developed coast;
- To manage flood risk and promote sustainable drainage. Promotion of sustainable high quality design in all developments to assist with climate change adaptation and place-making;
- To improve accessibility and promote more sustainable patterns of transport and travel;
- To safeguard unique sensitive landscapes from inappropriate development;
- To protect and enhance open space in the Borough;
- To identify and develop a network of green and blue infrastructure which affords opportunities for connectivity, active travel, recreation and tourism, with the associated benefits to health and wellbeing and biodiversity through the connections between areas of the natural environment; and
- To facilitate development of energy infrastructure whilst minimising impact on visual amenity and the environment.

### **Prosperity/Economic**

- To facilitate sustainable development that supports a vibrant economy;
- To ensure an adequate provision of accessible land for a range of employment uses which offers a choice of sites at a range of locations;
- Sustaining a vibrant rural economy - to facilitate economic development of an appropriate nature, scale and location in the countryside, including employment;
- To support and sustain vibrant town centres through a town centre-first approach;

- To support sustainable tourism development in the Borough by creating and identifying opportunities for sustainable tourism development and by safeguarding key tourism assets from inappropriate development;
- To facilitate investment in power, water, sewerage infrastructure and waste management, particularly in the interests of public health;
- To protect strategically important transportation and public utilities infrastructure and, where possible, enhance connectivity; and
- To facilitate sustainable minerals development through balancing the need for specific minerals development proposals against the need to safeguard the environment.



# Overarching Principles

'Overarching Principles' for the LDP set out general criteria that all development proposals must have regard to. The Overarching Principles seek to promote sustainable development and high quality design.

These principles are reflective of those within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland and align generally with outcomes from the Community Plan as follows:

- Improving Health and Wellbeing;
- Creating and Enhancing Shared Space;
- Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth;
- Supporting Good Design and Positive Place Making; and
- Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment.

## Improving Health and Wellbeing:

The Council's corporate vision is for 'an excellent quality of life' and Outcomes 1 and 2 of the Community Plan seek to address the same.

Wellbeing is the whole system consideration of a person's life experiences rather than solely physical or mental health. Health, which is defined by the World Health Organisation as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, is an important component of wellbeing. This also considers purpose and meaning, life satisfaction and positive emotions and relationships. Wellbeing is important because evidence shows that people with high levels of wellbeing live longer, have more positive health behaviours and generally have better physical and mental health. The relationship between health and wellbeing is not a simple one – not everyone who reports having good health also reports having high levels of wellbeing.

*The Ards and North Down LDP shall seek to bring forward health-enabling local policy and spatial planning that explicitly addresses environmental inequalities and the effective use of public protection and regulation. Supportive options in relation to transportation shall assist to promote healthy lifestyle choices and access to the natural environment.*

Ards and North Down has a high quality environment and its residents value tranquillity and freedom from unpleasant noise, smell or light glare. There are a wide range of environmental and amenity considerations, including noise and air quality, which should be taken into account by planning authorities when proposing policies or managing development. The planning system has a role to play in minimising potential adverse impacts, such as noise or light pollution on sensitive receptors by means of its influence on the location, layout and design of new development. The planning system can also positively contribute to improving air quality and minimising its harmful impacts (e.g. transportation option re active travel and sustainable transport, renewable energy requirements, carbon reduction policy etc).

Other amenity considerations arising from development, that may have potential health and wellbeing implications, include design considerations, impacts relating to visual intrusion, general nuisance, loss of light and overshadowing. Adverse environmental impacts associated with development can also include sewerage, drainage, waste management and water quality. However, the above mentioned considerations are not exhaustive and planning authorities will be best placed to identify and consider, in consultation with stakeholders, all relevant environment and amenity considerations for their areas.

### **Creating and Enhancing Shared Space:**

Outcome 3 of the Council's Community Plan seeks that 'All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure'. Building strong and safe communities in good quality neighbourhoods with decent homes for all, health-promoting natural and built environments, community facilities and public spaces and accessible local services. Enabling people of all ages to play an active role in their community and engage with arts and culture and other activities to promote social cohesion and good mental health and wellbeing.

Planning has a role to play in terms of emphasis on good design and civic stewardship in the built environment. Attention to the shared use of space and enabling access for everyone regardless of differences in backgrounds. "Access for all" is critical to the long term objective of a shared future and will avoid the creation of physical or perceived barriers particularly in urban areas.

All development will be required to meet and maintain high standards of accessibility so that all users can use them safely and easily. This will apply to all development, including changes of use, refurbishments and extensions, open spaces, the public realm and transport infrastructure, and will be demonstrated by the applicant.

### **Supporting Good Design and Positive Place Making:**

Good design goes beyond traditional aesthetic considerations and should be an aim for all development proposals within the Borough.

Ards and North Down has a high quality built and natural environment and this requires the design of new development to respect the character of our towns and villages as well as the character of the buildings. The approach requires high quality in design with new development that contributes positively to the private and public realm (including streets and open spaces), protects valued townscapes, and creates accessible environments. The Council wishes to set out its desire to lift the quality of development within the Borough and to create places that work well and are pleasant and distinctive. It recognises that new development can be the vehicle for building a strong sense of place and creating a positive impression of the Borough.

We shall seek to maximise the principles of good design:

- to create places that look good, are of an appropriate and efficient density, fully respect their local context and are successfully integrated with adjoining areas;
- to design buildings that are resilient and can easily adapt to changing future needs;
- to design attractive areas where people feel safe and have a sense of ownership.

All new development will be required to be of a high quality, sustainable design and make a positive contribution to the creation of distinctive communities, places and spaces. The LDP shall seek to endorse this by insisting that developers of land in our Borough apply the following principles:

- *Adopt an appropriate response to the local character and context of the built and landscape setting so that layout, scale, form, massing, height, density, colour, materials, detailing and impact on the historic and natural environment are addressed within development proposals;*
- *Provide legible development which is easy to get around and which ensures a sense of continuity and enclosure;*
- *Provide a diversity of land uses to create balanced communities and add vibrancy throughout the day;*
- *Create interconnected streets, squares and spaces as distinctive places, which are safe, accessible, vibrant and secure and incorporate public art, where appropriate;*
- *Provide a healthy and convenient environment for all users that supports the principles of community safety, encourages walking and cycling, enables employment, essential services and community facilities to be accessible by sustainable transport and maximises the contribution of networks of multi-functional and connected open spaces to encourage healthier lifestyles;*
- *Maximise renewable energy solutions;*
- *Achieve a resource efficient and climate responsive design that provides sustainable water and waste management solutions and minimise emissions from transport, homes and industry;*
- *Achieve an adaptable design that can respond to future social, economic, technological and environmental requirements;*
- *Promote the efficient use of land, by developing at highest practicable densities and, where appropriate, achieve the remediation of land contamination;*
- *Ensure no undue effect on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and connect positively to surrounding communities;*
- *Foster inclusive design, by ensuring buildings, streets and spaces are accessible to all users and is adaptable to future changes in lifestyle.*

## **Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment:**

Our Corporate Plan recognises the value of 'Place'. It seeks to ensure we make the very best of the Borough's assets; likewise, the Council's Integrated Strategy recognises the need to nurture assets.

The sea, loughs, and land formation contribute to the quality environment and local distinctiveness of the Borough. Maintaining and enhancing our natural networks, providing the green and blue natural spaces needed to support the social and economic wellbeing of the Borough, coupled with safeguarding the natural environment for future generations. Coupled with facilitation of new development is the importance of conserving and enhancing areas of importance for biodiversity and nature conservation.

While a number of buildings and their settings are protected through the listing process (or through inclusion within designations such as Conservation Areas) others may not have such protection yet still have important value. Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic and natural environment can contribute significantly to the unique identity and character of a place.

# Developer Contributions

## Strategic Aim: To facilitate development through Developer Contributions

Implementation of a mechanism for developer contributions arises from the principle that developers should be required to bear reasonable or proportionate costs of works required to facilitate their development proposals. Developer contributions are secured through a legally binding agreement between the relevant planning authority (usually Council) and a landowner and/or developer referred to in legislation as those with 'an estate in the land'.

The LDP should be the point at which consideration of the potential need for and use of planning agreements begins. This is advocated by the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) Development Management Practice Note 21 'Section 76 Planning Agreements.' Regional strategic planning policy in the SPPS sets out examples of circumstances where developer contributions may be required, including where a proposed development requires the provision or improvement of infrastructural works over and above those programmed in a LDP:

- where earlier than planned implementation of a programmed scheme is required;
- where a proposed development is dependent upon the carrying out of works outside the site; and/or
- where archaeological investigation or mitigation is required.

### Examples

- The provision of necessary infrastructure may include sewerage or road works over and beyond those programmed to facilitate the development. Developer contributions are intended to ensure that developers address any impact on infrastructure created by the new development (i.e. not to address existing deficits).
- Developer contributions could also include community facilities or the provision of blue/green infrastructure depending on the location and scale of the development.
- Housing developments would mainly benefit from a developer contributions policy. Key site requirements for a housing zoning could specify the need for a financial contribution by the developer towards the development or upgrade of nearby play park provision by the Council or other open space.

### Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The SPPS sets out how the Council can require developers to bear the costs of work required to facilitate their development proposals and how mechanisms to use in the delivery of developer contributions include planning agreements under Section 76 of the 2011 Act and under Article 122 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 in terms of infrastructure works.

Further it states that, in some circumstances, community benefits may be offered voluntarily by developers to communities likely to be affected by a development. Community benefits can take a variety of forms including payments to the community; in-kind benefits; and shared ownership arrangements. Whilst committed to ensuring that local communities benefit from development schemes in their area, the SPPS is clear that such community benefits cannot be considered

material considerations in decision-taking and are distinct from developer contributions and planning conditions.

## Key Issue 1

To facilitate development through developer contributions

**Option 1a: Provide strategic policy on developer contributions through the Local Development Plan and identify sites where developer contributions would be appropriate in the Local Policies Plan**

**Option 1b: Assess the requirement for developer contributions on an application-by-application basis**

### **Preferred Option: Option 1a**

Developer Contributions may contribute towards achieving sustainable communities' environment and economy, by enabling development whilst providing mitigation for any potential impacts. Policy formulation for developer contributions requires careful consideration to ensure that the policy test is robust; to ensure that it is necessary, reasonable and relates to the proposed development as either a direct consequence of the development or as a cumulative impact of development in the area.

In order to facilitate development through contributions, so that it does not deter investment, consideration will also be given to the exact level of developer contributions.

Developer contributions would not be sought for all development proposals, and as such the Strategic Policy would seek to clarify when developer contributions are required, including the anticipated level of contribution and any exemptions if necessary.

The LDP could also identify sites in the Local Policies Plan where developer contributions would be appropriate. As such this would provide a high level of certainty for developers and other stakeholders involved in the development process from an early stage.

This approach will place a resource demand on the Council in the administration of Developer Contributions.

While Option 1b appears to be a more flexible approach, it is considered that this option does not provide sufficient clarity and certainty for all those involved in the development process.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with the aim of Developer Contributions?**

**Do you agree with the approach to Developer Contributions?**

# Spatial Growth Strategy

## Aim: Deliver Jobs, Homes and Infrastructure

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The LDP is required to include a Spatial Growth Strategy which will specify where future growth will be directed for housing, employment and commercial development throughout the Borough over the Plan period.

It will help underpin how the vision and strategic objectives are achieved. In progressing a spatial growth strategy, the distribution of land for development in the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan will be decisively informed.

The Spatial Growth Strategy is shaped by the requirements of the Regional Development Strategy 2035, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement, the existing statutory and draft plans for the Borough and the accompanying Preparatory Position Papers which can be found on the Council's website.



A fundamental role of the LDP is to consider the need for growth and development within the Ards and North Down Borough, and to accommodate such growth appropriately and sustainably.

Our Growth Strategy will seek to:

- **Guide the majority of development, including local housing and employment opportunities, to locations within those large towns that have the capacity to accommodate new development that can be well integrated with existing infrastructure, and which serve as accessible centres within the larger rural hinterland;**
- **Maintain and protect the diversity and quality of our rural area and encourage local development which supports the population and services of local communities;**
- **Provide opportunities for appropriate diversification of the rural economy.**

# Regional Policy Context

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## The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

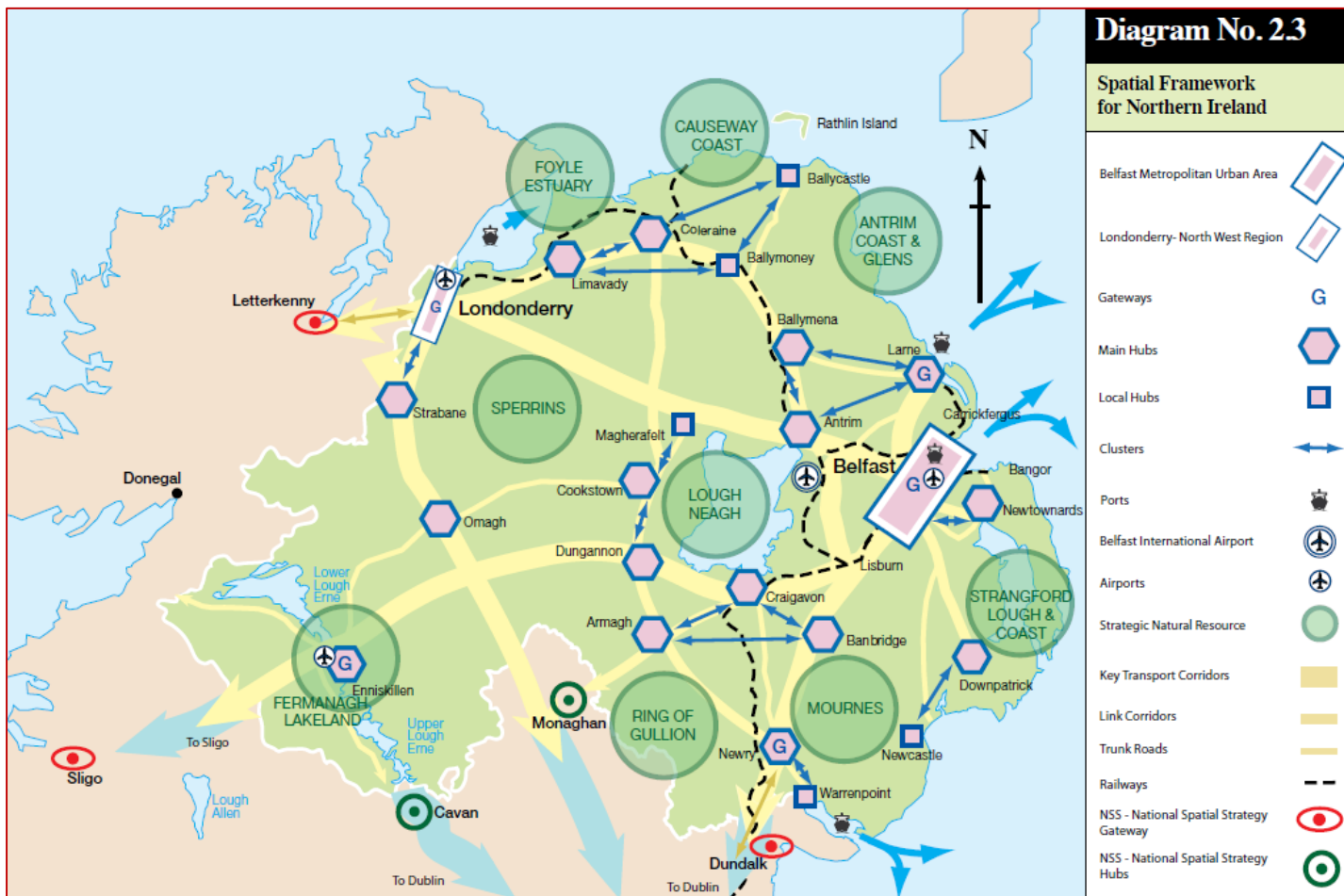
The RDS 'Building a Better Future' aims to ensure that all places benefit from economic growth, maintaining a balanced sub-regional growth approach and recognising the importance of key settlements as centres for growth and investment. The RDS sets objectives to foster population growth and economic development in the main Urban Areas and Hubs. The importance of the rural area is also recognised and the objectives of the RDS aim to ensure rural communities living in small towns, villages, rural small settlements and the open countryside are sustained.

Housing is acknowledged within the RDS as being a key driver of physical, economic and social change. The RDS emphasises the importance of the relationship between the location of housing, jobs, facilities, services and infrastructure. The RDS recognises significant opportunities exist for the redevelopment of appropriate vacant land and underutilised land for new housing. The RDS sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints of settlements with a greater than 5000 population.

The RDS identifies the need to understand the role and function of settlements and their role in serving rural communities and the importance of promoting co-operation between places. It encourages clustering of towns and cities so services can be shared, rather than duplicated and it also identifies those settlements within close proximity to each other which have the potential to cluster.

The RDS also identifies the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) within its Spatial Framework for Northern Ireland. The large town of Bangor and small town of Holywood are defined as being within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area by the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP). Crawfordsburn, Helen's Bay and Seahill are located between Holywood and Bangor and are defined, within dBMAP, as being located within the Metropolitan Rural Area. Newtownards is identified as a Main Hub and the remaining settlements are considered to form the rural area and perform an essential role for rural communities.





**Fig 6: Source- RDS 2035 Spatial Framework for Northern Ireland**

The Borough's location ensures it is strategically positioned to maximise the linkages and growth potential of the Gateway Belfast City. The Borough benefits from Holywood and Bangor being located within the BMUA and from Newtownards being identified as a Main Hub with the potential to cluster with the BMUA. This supports the enhancement of the role of Newtownards and recognition of the complementary responsibility the town has regarding provision of the capacity needed to deliver quality services.

The RDS also encourages the growth of population to the Hubs and cluster of Hubs, therefore directing the provision of additional housing to Newtownards. This is in order to counter the recent trend of disproportionate growth of smaller settlements. If this pattern were to continue, it could be contrary to the RDS objectives for strong growth to the larger urban areas and impact on the role of the larger settlements. The key to population growth is the provision of additional housing, which has associated linkages to regeneration of urban centres.

The Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel (Figure 7) illustrates the range of public and private services needed to ensure citizens have access to the necessary economic, social and cultural opportunities, as well as the infrastructure required by businesses to build a competitive, dynamic and innovative economy. These services include transport and communication networks, education, health, social, environment, commercial and justice. The wheel outlines the patterns of service provision that are likely to be appropriate at different spatial

levels including neighbourhoods, smaller towns, regional towns (or groups of towns) and cities or at regional level.

The model recognises the relationship between settlement size and the level of service provision, offering a forward perspective in order to understand the level of facilities and services anticipated at different spatial levels, rather than solely reflecting the existing position. There is recognition within this approach that settlements often provide either a greater or lesser range of services than the population statistics indicate. Appreciation is therefore given to the role the population of rural hinterlands perform in supporting services within urban areas.

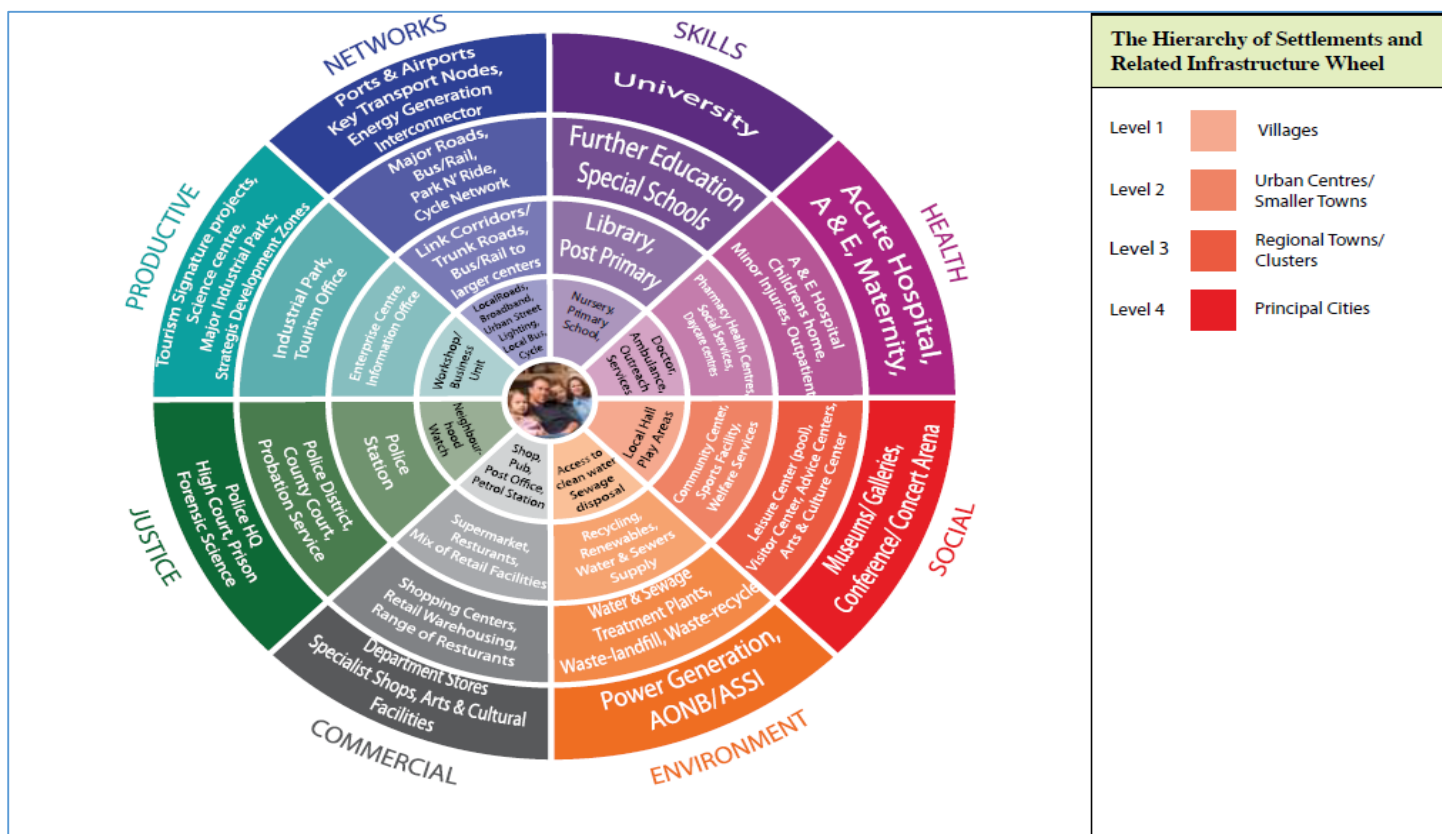


Fig 7: Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel

Source: RDS 2035

The model therefore expresses the importance of having access to services and facilities. Creating a critical mass to support a level of services raises numerous challenges for service providers in meeting the needs of spatially dispersed populations.

As well as providing a hierarchy of settlement types, the RDS also provides Spatial Framework Guidance which is a significant consideration shaping the dispersal of growth throughout Northern Ireland (see Table 1).

**Table 1: RDS Hierarchy of Settlements, Spatial Framework Guidance and relevance to the Borough**

RDS Hierarchy	Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG)	SFG relevance to Ards and North Down Borough Council
<p><b>Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA)</b></p> <p><i>Includes Bangor and Holywood</i></p>	<p><b>SFG1:</b> Promote urban economic development at key locations throughout the BMUA and ensure sufficient land is available for jobs.</p> <p><b>SFG4:</b> Manage the movement of people and goods within the BMUA.</p> <p><b>SFG5:</b> Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets.</p>	<p>Promote the regeneration of Bangor town centre.</p> <p>Improve public transport service, including the introduction of a Rapid Transit system.</p> <p>Protect areas of high scenic value, undeveloped coast line, Belfast Lough and the hills around the BMUA from development.</p> <p>Protect and enhance the network of open spaces in the BMUA.</p> <p>Make use of green space to help manage access to important wildlife sites and minimise the potential for damage due to visitor pressure.</p>
<p><b>Hubs and Clusters of Hubs</b></p> <p><i>Includes Newtownards</i></p>	<p><b>SFG10:</b> Identify and consolidate the roles and functions of settlements within the clusters.</p> <p><b>SFG11:</b> Promote economic development opportunities at Hubs.</p> <p><b>SFG12:</b> Grow the population in the Hubs and cluster of Hubs.</p>	<p>Newtownards is a key commuter town to Belfast and due to its proximity and accessibility to the city plays a growing role in the functioning of the BMUA by attracting commuters, tourists and businesses and as such has the potential to cluster with the BMUA.</p>
<p><b>Rural Area</b></p> <p><i>Includes the open countryside and the towns, villages and settlements outside the BMUA and Hubs</i></p>	<p><b>SFG13:</b> Sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside.</p> <p><b>SFG14:</b> Improve accessibility for rural communities.</p>	<p>Establish the role of multi-functional town centres as prime locations for business, housing, administration, leisure and cultural facilities for both urban and rural communities.</p> <p>Connect urban and rural areas.</p> <p>Revitalise small towns and villages.</p> <p>Facilitate the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations.</p> <p>Encourage sustainable and sensitive development.</p>
<p><b>Gateways and Corridors</b></p>	<p><b>SFG15:</b> Strengthen the Gateways for regional competitiveness.</p>	<p>A number of link and trunk corridors are identified within the Borough. These include:</p> <p>A2 Belfast – Bangor</p> <p>A20 Belfast – Newtownards</p> <p>A21 Bangor – Newtownards – Comber</p> <p>A22 Dundonald - Comber</p>

# Spatial Growth Strategy

## Key Issue 2

### Settlement Hierarchy

The settlement hierarchy for the LDP seeks to honour the direction set by the RDS and ensure the settlements within the Borough are sustainable places to live, work and visit. There is an emphasis on bringing housing, jobs, services, and facilities closer and increasing integration with public transport in order to make them more accessible to local communities.

### Extant Development Plans

The existing Settlement Hierarchy for Ards and North Down Borough is set out in the extant development plans – Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP) and Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP) and North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995.

There are currently 42 Settlements designated within the Ards and North Down Borough, consisting of 2 Large Towns, 3 Small Towns, 17 Villages and 20 Small Settlements. The existing settlements contrast significantly in terms of size, form, function, capacity to accommodate growth and in the role each plays in the Borough.

**Table 2: Existing Settlement Hierarchy for Ards and North Down Borough**

Settlement Hierarchy	Ards and Down Area Plan 2015	Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015
<b>Large Town</b>	Newtownards	Bangor
<b>Small Town</b>	Comber Donaghadee	Holywood
<b>Village</b>	Balloo Ballygowan Ballyhalbert Ballywalter Carrowdore Cloughey Greyabbey Killinchy Kircubbin Millisle Portaferry Portavogie Whiterock	Crawfordsburn Groomsport Helen's Bay Seahill
<b>Small Settlement</b>	Ardmillan Ballybarnes Ballyboley Ballycranbeg Ballydrain Ballyeasborough Ballyfrenis Ballygalget Ballystockart Cotton Glastry Kilmod Kirkistown Lisbane Loughries Rubane	Craigantlet Orlock Six Road Ends Gray's Park*

\*Confirmed as small settlement in now quashed adopted BMAP 2015

Bangor and Newtownards function as the main centres for housing, employment, retail and professional services, and for cultural and recreational activities. The small towns of Comber, Donaghadee and Holywood operate as important local service centres, not just for the population of those within the large and small towns, but also the rural hinterland. The villages throughout the Borough, such as Ballygowan, Portaferry and Millisle, have an equally important function, in terms of service provision, to meet the daily needs of those within the rural area. Finally, the small settlements provide a focus for the rural areas, helping to maintain a sense of community and belonging. The small settlements often take the form of rural clusters or development around crossroads.

Further information on settlements can be found in the LDP Position Paper on the Council's website.

**Option 2a: Retain existing settlement hierarchy with no new settlements or movement between settlement tiers**

**Option 2b: Define a new settlement hierarchy allowing for the re-classification of existing settlements and potential introduction of new settlements**

### **Preferred Option: Option 2b**

Option 2a would maintain the existing settlement hierarchy (as shown in Table 2 above), which is derived from the settlement hierarchy designated within the existing Ards and Down Area Plan (ADAP) 2015 and draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015. Retaining the existing settlement hierarchy would not allow for the reclassification of existing settlements or the designation of new settlements in order to reflect changes to settlement size, form, function or capacity since the designation of these settlements within ADAP or dBMAP.

The regional spatial focus is primarily on the development of the towns, particularly large towns, with priority following regional direction to re-use land within existing urban areas whilst containing outward expansion. Large scale expansion of villages would be restricted in the majority of cases to ensure development is focused on the existing towns with adequate existing infrastructure. The small settlements predominantly lack facilities and services; therefore, the emphasis is on consolidation through infill opportunities or small scale rounding off rather than inappropriate expansion into the countryside. However, there may be opportunity to assist smaller settlements in the rural hinterland through use of developer contributions and partnerships with government agencies to assist in addressing deficiencies in infrastructure and services which could promote appropriate growth.

The preferred option allows for a more consistent approach within the LDP to settlement designation based on the Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel which recognise the strong relationship between settlement size and service provision. The RDS and Infrastructure Wheel also accept that settlements can provide either a greater or lesser range of services and facilities than the core population may dictate.

This option would allow for consideration of the re-designation of existing villages as small towns and for the possible re-classification of other settlements within the hierarchy. Determination of the position of the settlement within the Settlement Hierarchy and consideration of the designation of a new settlement will be based on a number of issues, including; settlement size, population, infrastructure, transport links, level of service provision and importance to the wider rural hinterland.

It is likely this option would result in limited changes to the settlement hierarchies found within the existing Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 and draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and that the existing settlement hierarchy would largely be retained, with limited amendments, to provide a more contemporary and accurate reflection of the range of settlements. This option would also allow for the identification of new small settlements within the hierarchy.

Table 3 below is shown for indicative reasons to illustrate possible changes to the existing settlement hierarchy. The proposed Settlement Hierarchy below includes Ballygowan and Portaferry re-classified as small towns, and the designation of Ardkeen and Ballywhiskin as new small settlements. Furthermore, Gray’s Park would be confirmed as a small settlement in the continuing absence of lawful adoption of BMAP.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Table 3: Indicative Settlement Hierarchy resulting from Option 2b**

<b>Large Town</b>	Bangor Newtownards
<b>Small Town</b>	Ballygowan Comber Donaghadee Holywood Portaferry
<b>Village</b>	Balloo Ballyhalbert Ballywalter Carrowdore Cloughey Crawfordsburn Greyabbey Groomsport Helen’s Bay Killinchy Kircubbin Millisle Portavogie Seahill Whiterock
<b>Small Settlement</b>	Ardmillan Ardkeen Ballybarnes Ballyboley Ballycranbeg Ballydrain Ballyeasborough Ballyfrenis Ballygalget Ballystockart Ballywhiskin Cotton Craigantlet Glastry Gray’s Park Kilmoody Kirkistown Lisbane Loughries Orlock Rubane Six Road Ends

Do you think the existing settlement hierarchy should be maintained or that settlements should be re-classified within the hierarchy and new settlements identified?

**Map 2: Strategic Growth Map incorporating proposed settlement hierarchy**



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## **Aim: Allocate Housing to Accommodate Future Growth**

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The LDP process is the principal mechanism for assessing future housing land requirements across Ards and North Down Borough. Future housing growth and the planning for such growth is probably the primary undertaking of the LDP. Housing provision supports population growth and therefore provides a foundation for the delivery of health and education services, community facilities, infrastructure and various other services.

## **Key Issue 3**

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### **Housing Allocation**

The RDS sets out the regional housing needs in the form of Housing Growth Indicators (HGI), which are produced as a guide for the preparation of the LDP. The HGI is an estimate of new dwelling requirement for the Borough between 2012-2025. From the HGI we can extrapolate the housing allocation for the Plan period (2015-2030).

The Department of Regional Development reviewed the published HGIs 2008-2025 to reflect the new local government structures which took effect in April 2015. The HGI figures were revised down to reflect a lower than predicted population growth and higher household sizes than previously predicted. The 2016 amended HGI 2012-2025 for Ards and North Down Borough is 7100 dwellings. The HGI figure is projected on a pro rata basis to 2030 (to cover the LDP life span (2015-2030)) and results in a figure of 8190 for the Plan period or 546 dwellings per annum.

Consideration of the housing allocation for the Borough should take into account the fact there remains a considerable amount of land zoned for housing which is presently undeveloped, as well as significant housing potential from other unzoned land, previously developed sites (windfall sites), urban capacity study sites and existing housing commitments.

Given the early stage in the Plan process, it is not considered necessary to set out the precise allocation for the settlements, but it is logical to set out the overall scale of housing growth and distribution throughout the settlement tiers. The specific amount of housing to be allocated to each settlement will be indicated at a later stage in the Plan process. This allocation will be informed by settlement size, availability of services and facilities, housing commitments, infrastructure and environmental capacity for development. The housing allocation options outlined below have regard to RDS direction, including the RDS Hierarchy of Settlements and Spatial Framework Guidance, HGI and the SPPS.

The Council currently undertakes an annual monitor of housing to determine the amount of housing built and to allow an assessment of remaining housing potential within settlements throughout the Borough. Rural housing, houses built within the countryside, is not currently monitored. Therefore, the rural figure is an indicative estimate based on recent planning approvals which add to the housing stock. Further research and analysis of information is

required to determine past rural dwelling trends and its translation into future housing growth in the countryside.

## The Evidence Base

The population in Ards and North Down is projected to rise from 159,119 in 2015 to 164,004 by 2030. This continued increase in population is also reflected in household projections, 65,638 in 2015 rising to 70,100 by 2030. The continuous aging population and the persistence of the trend towards smaller households also impacts on the household projections.

The Ards and Down Area Plan (ADAP) and draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP) zoned 625 hectares of land for housing within the Borough. The table below (Table 4) details the amount of zoned housing land, area and estimated yield, which remains to be developed both in ADAP and dBMAP. The figures within the table are formed from an analysis of information produced by the annual housing monitor. This provides the most recent evidence on remaining housing capacity.

The table indicates there is significant housing capacity available on existing zoned sites which are yet to be developed. In total 344.36 hectares of zoned land, with a capacity for approximately 8047 housing units, is undeveloped within the Borough.

**Table 4: Available Capacity on Zoned Housing Sites in Ards and North Down**

Area Plan	Total		Built		Remaining	
	No.	Area (ha)	No.	Area (ha)	No.	Area (ha)
ADAP	9655	416.12	2857	131.11	6776	285.01
dBMAP	5455	209.836	4184	150.486	1271	59.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>15110</b>	<b>625.956</b>	<b>7041</b>	<b>281.596</b>	<b>8047</b>	<b>344.36</b>

The tables below (Tables 5 and 6) give a clearer representation of the distribution of remaining housing capacity upon zoned sites within the settlements in ADAP and dBMAP. Table 5 demonstrates that approximately 57% of the remaining zoned housing capacity within ADAP is within Newtownards. With regards to the total figure of 8047 for both ADAP and dBMAP, Newtownards accounts for approximately 48% of the remaining zoned housing capacity. Table 6 below also indicates that Bangor accounts for approximately 14.5% of the total remaining zoned housing capacity over both ADAP and dBMAP.

**Table 5: Available Capacity on Zoned Housing Sites per Settlement in ADAP**

Settlement	Total		Built		Remaining	
	No.	Area (ha)	No.	Area (ha)	No.	Area (ha)
Newtownards	4975	206.7	1071	51.31	3891	155.39
Comber	1765	67.77	337	11.19	1428	56.58
Donaghadee	802	42.48	357	17.66	436	24.82
Balloo	2	0.1	0	0	2	0.1
Ballygowan	176	8.77	108	5.25	68	3.52
Ballyhalbert	361	16.22	165	7.31	196	8.91
Ballywalter	159	5.07	159	5.07	0	0
Carrowdore	109	3.06	58	1.45	51	1.61
Cloughey	286	15.61	202	10	84	5.61
Greyabbey	11	0.09	0	0	11	0.09
Killinchy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kircubbin	63	3.96	50	3.87	13	0.09
Millisle	309	13.76	180	7.21	129	6.55
Portaferry	253	15.63	68	6.33	185	9.3
Portavogie	348	13.28	99	4.16	249	9.12
Whiterock	36	3.62	3	0.3	33	3.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>9655</b>	<b>416.12</b>	<b>2857</b>	<b>131.11</b>	<b>6776</b>	<b>285.01</b>

**Table 6: Available Capacity on Zoned Housing Sites per Settlement in dBMAP**

Settlement	Total		Built		Remaining	
	No.	Area (ha)	No.	Area (ha)	No.	Area (ha)
Bangor	4731	171.74	3564	123.6	1167	48.14
Holywood	358	18.736	285	10.876	73	7.86
Crawfordsburn	23	2.53	15	2.25	8	0.28
Groomsport	252	9.35	246	8.9	6	0.45
Helen's Bay	54	3.72	45	2.37	9	1.35
Seahill	37	3.76	29	2.49	8	1.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>5455</b>	<b>209.836</b>	<b>4184</b>	<b>150.486</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>59.35</b>

The tables also identify scope for moderate development for housing within the smaller towns and to lesser degree the villages and small settlements within the Borough as a result of the remaining zoned housing capacity. Further opportunity for housing development also exists in small settlements and villages in the form of rounding off, consolidation and infilling.

As stated above, the HGI for the Plan period indicates a figure of 8190 new dwellings, while the existing total remaining zoned housing capacity for both ADAP and dBMAP is approximately 8047.

In line with the Regional Development Strategy, account also has to be taken of housing potential on land not zoned for housing. The Housing Allocation Position Paper details analysis of potential housing capacity for each settlement and includes the remaining potential on land with approvals which was either not started or ongoing for housing at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Across the towns and down to small settlement level, this figure equates to approximately 2240 additional dwelling units in addition to the figure of 8047 dwelling units on zoned land. This total of 10,287 represents a surplus of 27% above the HGI figure for the Plan period.

## Regional Policy Context

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### The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The RDS provides regional guidance for future housing development throughout the Borough. This includes Regional Guidance to '*Strengthen community cohesion*' (RG6) which involves creating integrated and cohesive communities, fostering a sense of belonging, a sense of place and cultivating a stronger community spirit. One of the methods for creating a shared sense of place and identity is through the development of neighbourhoods which include a variety of house types, sizes and tenures.

Regeneration is recognised as a method to create more accessible and vibrant town centres, offering people greater choice for a variety of functions. '*Support urban and rural renaissance*' (RG7) states regeneration can attract investment, assist with revitalisation and increase the mix of uses. This will ensure the improvement and maintenance of the environmental quality of urban areas.

*'Manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development'* (RG 8) aims to ensure the varied housing needs of the whole community are met. The RDS acknowledges housing to be a key driver of physical, economic and social change, emphasising the importance between the location of housing, jobs, facilities, services and infrastructure. It highlights the need to manage housing growth to ensure the focus is maintained on developing more high quality accessible housing within existing urban areas, without adversely impacting on local character, environmental quality or residential amenity. Recognition is given to the opportunity to develop housing on appropriate vacant and under used land. This emphasis on a sustainable approach to housing includes a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located on appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints of settlements with populations greater than 5,000.

The RDS sets out the regional housing needs in the form of Housing Growth Indicators, which are produced as a guide for the preparation of the LDP. The HGI is an estimate of the new dwelling requirement for the Council over a fixed period (2012-2025). In the allocation process due weight needs to be given to reinforcing the leading role of the Hubs and clusters of Hubs and to the objective of growing the population of these Hubs and cluster of Hubs.

## Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)

The SPPS acknowledges that good quality housing shapes our lives and our communities. It is a fundamental human need, with a home playing an essential role in people's lives, contributing to the establishment of a safe, healthy and prosperous society.

The SPPS highlights the policy approach must be targeted at providing an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of all. This approach should also promote more sustainable housing development within existing urban areas; and the provision of mixed housing development including a variety of house sizes and tenure. This method will result in more balanced sustainable communities and support the need to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services.

The SPPS states that the preparation of a housing strategy shall be included in the process of formulating the LDP. The housing strategy, appropriate policies and proposals must result in the delivery of:

- increased housing density without town cramming – particularly in town and city centres.
- sustainable forms of development – including reducing the amount of housing on greenfield land and encouraging mixed use development.
- good design – resulting in the creation of attractive and safe places to live.
- balanced communities – through the provision of good quality housing of a variety of house types, sizes and tenures which results in greater community cohesion and more balanced communities.

The SPPS also identifies the following considerations which should inform the housing allocation within the LDP:

**RDS Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)** – produced as a guide in the preparation of development plans, they provide estimates for the new dwellings required in each Council area.

**The RDS Housing Evaluation Framework** – takes account of the varying capacities of settlements and will assist councils in making judgements on the allocation of housing growth.

<b>TABLE 3.2: Housing Evaluation Framework</b>	
<b>Resource Test</b>	Studies should be carried out to assess and detail the existence of community assets and physical infrastructure such as water, waste and sewage, including spare capacity.
<b>Environmental Capacity Test</b>	An assessment of the environmental assets of the settlement, the potential of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off and its potential to accommodate future outward growth without significant environmental degradation should be made.
<b>Transport Test</b>	Studies should be carried out to assess the potential for integrating land use and public transport and walking and cycling routes to help reduce reliance on the car.
<b>Economic Development Test</b>	The potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance and to unlock any major strategic development opportunities should be assessed and detailed.
<b>Urban and Rural Character Test</b>	Assessment should be made of the potential to maintain a sense of place, and to integrate new development in a way that does not detract from the character and identity of the settlement.
<b>Community Services Test</b>	The potential to underpin and, where necessary, reinforce the community service role and function of the settlement should be assessed and detailed.

Fig 8: Source RDS 2035 Housing Evaluation Framework

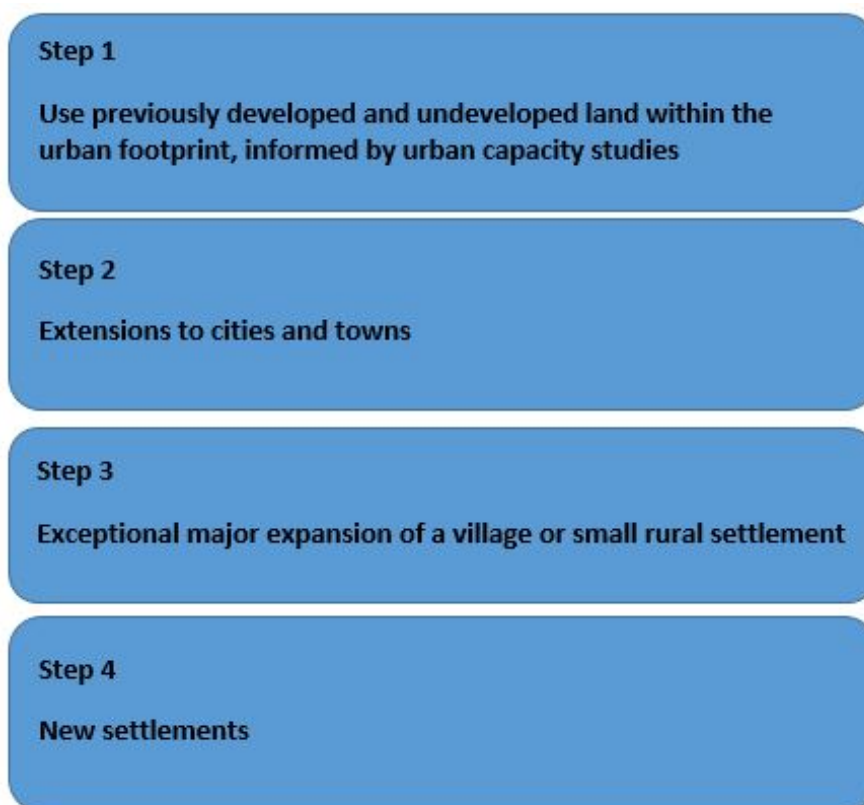
**Allowance for existing housing commitments** – dwellings already constructed from the base date, approvals not yet commenced and residential development proposals likely to be approved.

**Urban Capacity Studies** – an assessment of potential for future housing growth within urban footprints, including a variety of types and densities of housing. This should take account of opportunities for housing development resulting from previously developed land (brownfield sites), infill sites, conversions and changes of use.

**Allowance for windfall housing** – an estimate of potential housing sites that were neither zoned nor anticipated during the formulation of the LDP but which become available during the lifetime of the plan. This forms a key element of the urban capacity study.

**Application of a sequential approach and identification of suitable sites for settlements of over 5000 population** – identification of suitable sites in larger settlements through a sequential approach. This strongly favours the provision of housing within existing urban areas through the re-use of land and buildings. The sequential approach is shown in Figure 9.

**Fig 9: Sequential approach and identification of suitable sites**



Strategic Planning Policy Statement

**Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Market Analysis (HNA/HMA)** – undertaken by Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), these provide an evidence base to guide the amount of land needed to facilitate the correct mix of housing tenures including open market and special housing needs such as affordable housing, social housing, supported housing and Travellers accommodation.

**Transport Assessment** – these may be required for certain sites proposed for residential use in order to achieve increased integration with public transport and other alternatives to the car.

The SPPS sets out a ‘plan, monitor and manage’ approach to ensure, as a minimum, a five year supply of housing land is maintained.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12: Housing in Settlements**

This PPS provides strategic direction and guidance to assist the implementation of the RDS. PPS 12 flows directly from the vision, spatial strategy and strategic planning guidance contained in the RDS. The PPS includes three major themes; Managing housing growth and distribution; Supporting urban renaissance; and Achieving balanced communities.

PPS 12 sets out the processes for allocating housing land and the measures to be contained in development plans. An ‘implementation, monitoring and review’ approach is outlined for housing allocation.

## Local Policy Context

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### Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

The themes within the Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan have direct relevance in relation to future housing growth. Under the strategic priority heading **PEOPLE**, the Council’s Corporate Plan sets aims to ‘Develop more engaged, empowered and integrated communities’. Whilst under the heading **PLACE** one of the aims is to ‘Promote a clean, green, healthy, safe and sustainable environment’, another is to ‘Invest in and promote the borough’s rich cultural heritage and environment’ and the final aim is to ‘Enhance our towns, villages and coastlines’. Finally, the **PROSPERITY** section includes the aims to ‘Develop a thriving rural economy’.

### The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017 - 2032

Future housing growth coincides with a number of the aspirations incorporated within the Council’s Community Plan.

- Outcome 2 of The Big Plan ‘All People in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing’, Outcome 3 ‘All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure’,
- Outcome 4 ‘All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy’ and
- Outcome 5 ‘All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment’.

### The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development: Ards and North Down 2018 - 2030

The Council’s Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development underscores the importance the Council places in job creation, increased economic activity, regeneration and spatial growth.

The Integrated Strategy recognises that the towns, villages and rural locations throughout the Borough all have distinctive qualities which reinforce the Borough’s unique identity and sense of place. It advocates a continued and increased commitment to spatial planning, placemaking and urban stewardship, with the emphasis on the relationship between developments and their settings.

The Integrated Strategy also embraces the principles of sustainable planning and the relationship between the distribution of development and infrastructure. It recognises the need for appropriate



urban densities and the reduction of sprawl; and highlights the placemaking concept and linkages between development and their settings.

### **Extant Development Plans**

The existing allocation and distribution of housing development for Ards and North Down Borough is set out in the existing development plans – Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP) and draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (dBMAP) and North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984 - 1995.

### **Ards and Down Area Plan 2015**

A total of approximately 317 hectares of land is zoned for housing by ADAP within the legacy Ards Borough. This comprises of 207 hectares in Newtownards, 68 Hectares in Comber and 42 hectares in Donaghadee. This equates to approximately 4500 housing units in Newtownards, 1700 in Comber and 1000 in Donaghadee.

### **Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015**

The legacy North Down Borough had approximately 186 hectares of land zoned and identified for housing within dBMAP. This equated to approximately 6049 dwelling units within the settlement development limits of Bangor, Holywood and the villages and small settlements.

In addition to the land within both the above Development Plans, there was capacity for 2240 dwellings to be accommodated within the settlement limits of the villages and small settlements.

Further information on housing can be found in the LDP Position Paper on the Council's website.

**Option 3a: Maintain existing housing growth through retention of housing zonings within extant plans**

**Option 3b: Re-evaluate existing housing zonings and allocate additional housing land, if required, to ensure continued modest housing growth (using sequential approach in the SPPS)**

**Option 3c: Allocate housing land proportionally across settlements based on population size (Census 2011)**

**Preferred Option: Option 3b**

Option 3a continues to direct the majority of housing growth to the existing zonings, as designated within ADAP and dBMAP, and housing commitments throughout the Borough. The focus of the existing zonings is based on Bangor, which is located within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area, and Newtownards, which is identified as a Main Hub in the RDS. Newtownards, as a Main Hub, is identified as clustering with the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area, including Belfast City and Bangor, which allows for the sharing of services. Housing growth would also be directed, to a lesser extent, to the small towns and villages which have varying degrees of remaining capacity.

The existing total remaining zoned housing capacity for both ADAP and dBMAP is approximately 8047 and the HGI for the Plan period sets a requirement for 8190 new dwellings. Therefore, the majority of the HGI guide for housing growth for the Borough would be directed to sites which are currently zoned. Also of significance is the figure of c2240 additional dwellings available on land that is not zoned for housing, resulting in a figure of 10,287 in total. This represents a surplus of 27% above the HGI for the Plan period.

Account also needs to be taken of housing potential within the countryside throughout the Borough. The Council does not currently undertake a monitor of dwellings built outside of settlement limits, in the countryside. A Rural Housing Monitor will be undertaken prior to the Plan Strategy which will provide accurate and up-to-date information on the number of houses constructed in the countryside.

Analysis of past trends indicates a notional approval rate of 90 residential units per annum, equating to 1350 dwellings over the Plan period. Build rates for dwellings in the countryside have varied significantly in the recent past. Taking into account these past trends, an estimate of houses built in the countryside is between 50 and 90 dwellings per year, resulting in an additional 750 – 1350 dwellings over the life of the Plan.

**Table 7: House Building rates within Ards and North Down (2008 – 2017)**

Houses Built	2008-2012	2013-2017
<b>Rural</b>	437 (17%)	256 (9%)
<b>Annual Build Rate</b>	87.4	51.2
<b>Urban</b>	2221 (83%)	2481 (91%)
<b>Annual Build Rate</b>	444.2	496.2
<b>Total Annual Build Rate</b>	<b>531.6</b>	<b>547.4</b>

Source: LPS

When the total remaining potential on zoned housing sites is combined with the potential development of dwellings in the countryside, it is estimated the housing growth within the Borough would be between 8,800 – 9,400. This would result in housing growth approximately 7 – 15% higher than the HGI of 8190 new dwellings to 2030.

In addition, there are a large number of committed housing sites on sites within settlement limits that are not zoned for housing within the Borough and account also has to be taken of the dwellings completed since 2015. It would therefore appear there is more than sufficient housing capacity land to meet the Council's housing need over the Plan period, even before an urban capacity study is undertaken or windfall calculated.

Option 3a would not facilitate a full review of all uncommitted housing zonings, including the potential for these housing zonings to be delivered. It would also not allow for the consideration of any new housing zonings. In effect, this option would maintain the direction set by existing development plans without allowing for a detailed consideration and analysis of housing allocation within the Borough, and the opportunity to set new aims and objectives for housing growth.

Large areas of greenfield land are zoned for housing within the Borough, particularly within ADAP. The RDS has a requirement for 60% of new housing allocated to settlements of greater than 5000 population to be delivered on appropriate brownfield sites within the urban footprint. This preferred option would allow the Council to undertake an evaluation of all existing uncommitted or uncommenced zoned housing land to determine the current status and any possible constraints to its development. The Council could subsequently identify and de-zone any uncommitted existing housing zonings which are unlikely to be developed over the Plan period. This may result in the zoning of additional brownfield sites within the towns as a replacement for those de-zoned sites and would also allow the Council to consider alternative greenfield sites to those currently zoned within development plans.

This approach may also allow for the identification of new housing development sites within the villages to replace those identified within existing development plans which have not been commenced and therefore allow for a degree of housing to be directed to the villages. Small scale housing growth within the small settlements would be provided through infill opportunities and rounding off.

This preferred option would therefore allow the Council to further the RDS objective of managing housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development, as it has regard to the inter-relationship between housing, jobs, services and infrastructure. The Council would also be in a better position to adopt a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach and ensure a five year supply of land for housing is maintained through the implementation of this option.

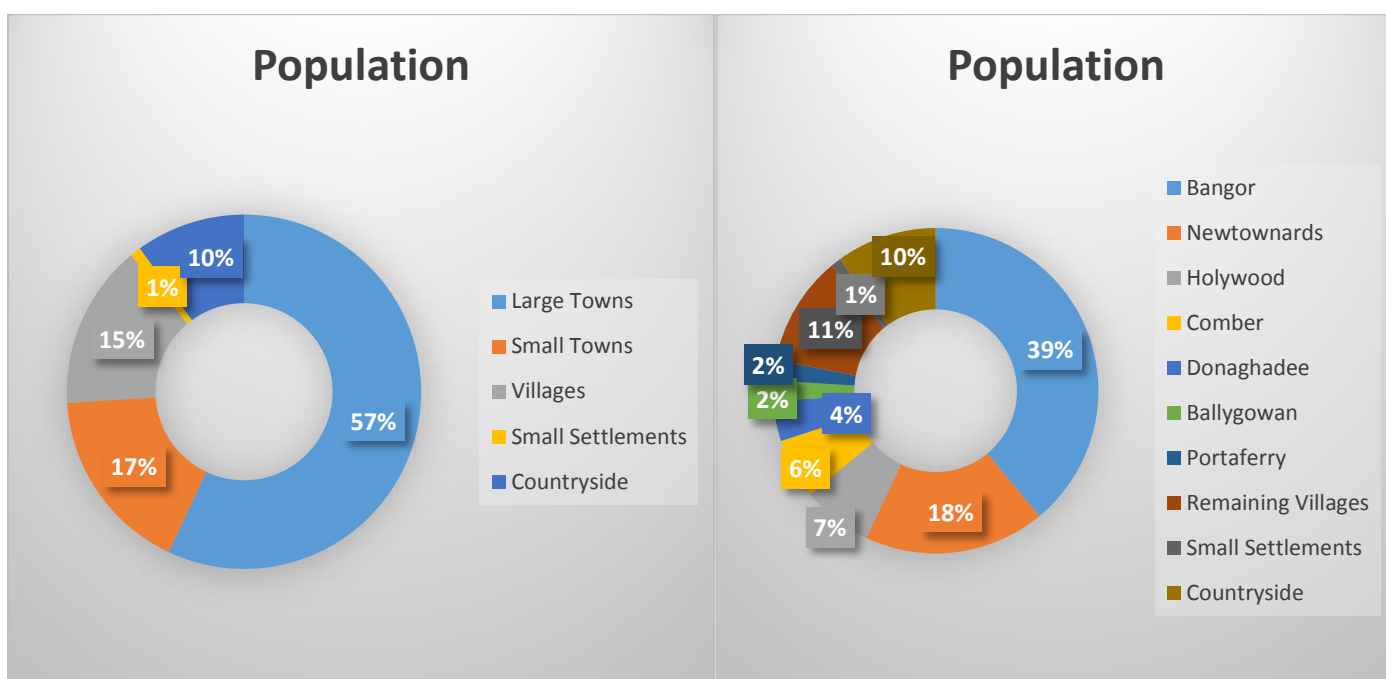
The allocation of housing land proportionally across settlements based on population would be an alternative approach to considering housing growth based on the existing housing zonings. The approach under Option 3c would base its approach regarding the allocation of housing to the settlements and settlement tiers based purely on the existing population.

This option would direct the majority (67%) of new housing to the large and small towns within the Borough. Bangor has the largest population within the Borough, followed by Newtownards, which has a population of less than half of Bangor's population. As a result, 39% of new housing growth

would be directed towards Bangor and only 18% towards Newtownards. This would be in contrast with the RDS objective of growing the population of the Hubs (Newtownards).

This option would result in large areas of greenfield housing sites, which are currently zoned in development plans, particularly in Newtownards, being de-zoned (if uncommitted) as a result of the proportion of housing directed to the large towns and the difference between the populations of Newtownards and Bangor.

The allocation to the countryside and villages would be disproportionately high as a result of this option and this is not considered to represent a sustainable approach. This approach also fails to recognise the level of facilities, services and infrastructure available within the individual settlements.



**Fig 10: Population distribution by settlement tier and by settlement**

Our proposed strategy will deliver the housing that is needed within the Borough. Under our preferred approach we intend to review the current sites which are zoned within the extant development plans which have not yet come forward for development. We'll also review any existing key design criteria on zoned sites to ascertain if they're appropriate or presenting an obstacle to development.

Taking account of sites which are already permitted or allocated, we are already well in excess of the Housing Growth Indicator as set out by the DFI. However, we realise that we have an aging population, and given how popular our Borough is to live in, we consider it appropriate to consider a 'modest' growth appropriate across the Borough, to accommodate lower density housing, such as bungalows, to facilitate older or less mobile residents. It is apparent that some of the existing commitments are being re-applied for by developers with a different range of house types to accommodate the changing needs of our Borough, and as such, whilst we appear to have a comfortable provision of housing land, it may be prudent to maintain this further modest growth, where sustainable, to ensure we are responding to the specific needs of Ards and North Down.

Settlements in the rural area, especially in the Peninsula have been constrained in respect of even modest growth as a result of lack of provision of appropriate infrastructure and access to services. It may be appropriate to accommodate some modest growth across these tiers in the settlement hierarchy, supported by development contributions.

The majority of planned growth will continue to be realised within Newtownards, through the developments occurring on land zoned within the extant development plan and through which major developer led infrastructure will be provided. Newtownards is identified within the RDS as a Hub, with the potential to cluster with Belfast, and therefore accommodating the existing growth promoted with the extant development plan is considered to be consistent with sustainable growth.

Newtownards and the other main towns of Bangor, Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee continue to support the area's economic functions, and the LDP will seek to encourage and support the existing and further growth of these economies.

The preferred option scored as the most sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

## Spatial Growth Strategy: Economic Development

The Spatial Growth Strategy for Economic Development will establish how much land is required for economic development within the Borough and where this land should be located. Whilst the LDP cannot deliver jobs, it does have a key role to ensure there is ample supply of suitable land available to meet the economic development needs within the Borough.

The LDP has an important role to play in achieving the prosperity visions of the Council's Corporate Plan, the Community Plan, and the Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development, by ensuring that a generous and suitable supply of land is allocated in the appropriate locations to promote sustainable economic growth.

The Spatial Growth Strategy for Economic Development will seek to meet the Council's aspirations while taking account of the regional direction set out in the Regional Development Strategy 2035 and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.

The LDP should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that Ards and North Down needs.

In taking cognisance of the overarching regional planning framework and the Council's own ambitions, viewed through its Corporate and Community Plans and associated strategies, the LDP will aim to support the delivery of additional jobs through ensuring there is an appropriate supply of lands zoned for employment and industry, and by formulating policies to encourage and accommodate economic growth.

Whilst having a jobs target is not a requirement of the LDP, it is a clear aspiration held by the Council through its Integrated Strategy for Regeneration, Economic Development and Tourism, with an ambitious figure of 7500 to be achieved by 2030. Whilst every one of those jobs will not require an allocation of land, the LDP, through supporting policies, will seek to facilitate such jobs growth, in addition to the ample supply of economic development land.

## Regional Policy Context

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### The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The RDS promotes economic growth in the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) which includes Bangor and Holywood. The Spatial Framework also aims to exploit the economic potential of the strategic network of Hubs which includes Newtownards. The benefits of a diversified and competitive rural economy are also extolled.

In essence the RDS directs that by protecting zoned land through the development plan and by promoting potential for economic development at Hubs, and clusters of Hubs first, then development can capitalise on the opportunity for the concentration of people and goods and existing infrastructure<sup>1</sup>.

It also recognises the importance of sustaining rural communities by facilitating rural industries, business and enterprises in appropriate locations. This means not only farming, forestry and fishing-related businesses, but other industries such as tourism which can provide further jobs and opportunities in rural areas as long as they are integrated appropriately within a settlement or rural landscape<sup>2</sup>.

In the local context, the RDS notes that many of the population of Bangor commute to Belfast to work and recognises that Bangor is an important retail and commercial centre. It also promotes the regeneration of Bangor town centre and states that it is important to extend the employment and retail base of Bangor to serve its catchments.

The RDS identifies Newtownards as a *‘vibrant service, commercial and shopping centre serving an extensive hinterland in the Ards Peninsula and North Down with potential to develop as a “growth pole” for the clustering of economic development’*. It also refers to tourism as a significant and growing part of the local economy and that Ards is developing a diverse economy, particularly in the added food and engineering sectors.

The RDS regards Newtownards to be one of the towns in Northern Ireland which can provide a counter balance to the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) and recognises that Newtownards

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<sup>1</sup> RDS 2035 page 72 SFG11

<sup>2</sup> RDS 2035 page 74 SFG 13

has the potential to cluster with the BMUA. As a main Hub, Newtownards is expected to be a major location for employment, services and a range of cultural and leisure activities.

The RDS 2035 sets a policy direction to 'Ensure adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth'<sup>3</sup>. Advocating that the land should be accessible and located to make best use of available services, the RDS sets out that the focus will be on larger urban centres and regional gateways taking advantage of their locations on the regional transport network.

The RDS directs development plans to assess the quality and viability of sites zoned for economic development. A three stage Employment Land Evaluation Framework is set out that seeks to enable planning authorities to identify robust and defensible portfolios of both strategic and locally important employment sites in their development plans as follows: (see Fig 11)

- ▶ consideration of existing lands,
- ▶ understanding anticipated future need, and
- ▶ the identification of a range of new sites based upon established appraisal criteria.

The RDS considers that the framework shall 'safeguard both new and existing employment areas for employment rather than other uses'.

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<sup>3</sup> RDS 2035 page 31, RG1

The Employment Land Evaluation Framework (Source: RDS)	
<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Taking Stock of the Existing Situation</p>	<p>An initial assessment of the ‘fitness for purpose’ including the environmental implications of the existing employment land portfolio.</p> <p>This is principally in order to identify the ‘best’ employment sites to be retained and protected and identifying sites that should clearly be released for other uses.</p>
<p>Stage 2</p> <p>Understanding Future Requirements</p>	<p>Quantify the amount of employment land required across the main business sectors during the development plan period. This is achieved by assessing both demand and supply elements and assessing how they can be met in aggregate by the existing stock of business premises and by allocated sites.</p> <p>Account should also be taken of turnover of existing sites due to relocation or closures. Both short/medium term and strategic provision need to be considered in this process.</p>
<p>Stage 3</p> <p>Identifying a ‘New’ Portfolio of Sites</p>	<p>Devise qualitative site appraisal criteria to determine which sites meet the occupier or developer needs. Confirm the existing sites to be retained, replaced or released, and any gaps in the portfolio. In this allocation, consideration should be given to previously used sites, and in the reallocation, the environmental impact of one site relative to others should be included.</p> <p>The results of Stage 2, together with this site - appraisal should provide a robust justification for altering allocations for employment land.</p>

**Fig 11: The Employment Land Evaluation Framework**

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement sets out that its aim is to facilitate economic development needs in ways consistent with the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development. The regional strategic objectives for economic development are to:

- a) promote sustainable economic development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- b) tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation by ensuring the provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development and a choice and range in terms of quality;
- c) sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale;
- d) support the re-use of previously developed economic development sites and buildings where they meet the needs of particular economic sectors;
- e) promote mixed-use development and improve integration between transport, economic development and other land uses, including housing; and
- f) ensure a high standard of quality and design for new economic development.



The SPPS reiterates that an important role for the LDP is to ensure that there is an ample supply of suitable land available to meet economic development needs within the Plan area. LDPs should zone sufficient land for economic development and offer a range of choice of sites in terms of size and location to promote flexibility and provide for the varying needs of different types of economic activity. Account should also be taken of accessibility by all members of the community, connectivity with transportation, availability of adequate infrastructure, the specialised needs of specific economic activities, potential environmental impacts and compatibility with nearby uses.

The SPPS also aims to facilitate economic development proposals in the countryside which are likely to benefit the rural economy and support rural communities in line with the RDS. The SPPS recognises the need to protect or enhance rural character and the environment and that farm diversification, the re-use of rural buildings and expansion proposals for industrial and business purposes will offer the best opportunities for sustainable economic development in the countryside.

## Employment Land Evaluation Framework

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The Employment Land Evaluation Framework (ELEF) set out in the RDS and Fig 11 will be used to inform the LDP of the amount of employment land required and identify where new sites should be located.

In relation to the Employment Land Evaluation Framework (ELEF), neither an analysis of trends based on past take-up patterns nor an assessment of economically active or employment trends were considered sufficiently comprehensive or robust to be relied on. Therefore, the Council commissioned an Employment Land Review to assess the supply of and demand for employment land within the Borough for the duration of the Plan period. This study included a review of current employment land, an assessment of the local economy, and the identification and appraisal of the need for potential new employment sites. This included a review of the rural economy and potential employment needs.

The Employment Land Review Report (ELRR) provides an assessment of current employment land in the Council area and considers how the future needs for new and/or additional employment land could be delivered in a sustainable and rational manner through the LDP process.

The ELRR follows the Employment Land Evaluation Framework (ELEF) approach as set out in the RDS 2035. It considers the current provision of zoned and existing employment/industrial land within the Borough and undertakes a qualitative and quantitative assessment of these lands to establish their suitability to assist in providing an ample supply of land for economic development use over the lifetime of the emerging LDP. Consideration is also given to potential brownfield sites within the main settlements in the Borough, to assess whether these lands are suitable to accommodate economic development in the future.

This ELRR will assist in the preparation of the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan stages of the LDP.

## Stage 1 Taking Stock of Existing Situation

This will establish how much zoned employment/economic land is still available within settlement limits that have the potential to be used for employment/economic uses. It will also identify sites that could be released for other uses.

The ELRR surveyed all land zoned for employment/industry within Ards and North Down and found that of the total 203.23ha zoned in dBMAP 2015 and ADAP 2015, 62.68ha remains undeveloped. The remaining undeveloped land is split between the two legacy Boroughs as follows:

- 34.05ha in Bangor
- 28.63ha in Newtownards

## Stage 2 Understanding Future Requirements

The Council's Integrated Strategy proposed growth potential for employment by sector across the Borough to 2026 (as set out in Annex 1 of the Appendices document of the Integrated Strategy). The proposed growth rates from the Integrated Strategy have been applied and extrapolated to 2030 to inform the LDP. These forecasts suggest that employment in the Borough will be approximately **4,500** higher than 2018 levels. The Council's Integrated Strategy set a greater ambition than baseline forecasts were predicting and in a 'strategy success' scenario, **7,500** additional employees are assumed in the Borough by 2030.

The ELRR has calculated employment space demand by converting the employment figures by sector into square metre requirement using a matrix of use class by sector. For each sector, employment from 2018 to 2030 is applied to the use class by sector matrix to calculate square metre demand by year. This is a relatively detailed assessment that will be set out in more detail at the Plan Strategy stage. However, the results of the employment space demand suggest that Ards and North Down will require a total of **126,000 additional sq. m.** by 2030 for employment based on the baseline employment forecast and for the 'strategy success' scenario set out in the Council's Integrated Strategy, this suggests a demand for **205,000 sq. m.** will be required.

The overall projected future floor-space demand within the Borough to 2030 is **126,000 sq. m. (or 12.6ha or 31 acres)** for the baseline employment forecast and **205,000 sq. m. (or 20.5ha or 50.65 acres)** for the 'strategy success' scenario in line with the Council's Integrated Strategy. When the need for associated ancillary land is taken into account (i.e. car parking areas, ancillary plant and accommodation), the overall projected land requirement to accommodate future economic development demand is estimated to be **15ha or 37 acres** for the baseline employment forecast and **c.25ha or c.62 acres** for the 'strategy success' scenario in line with the Council's Integrated Strategy.

## Stage 3 Identifying a new portfolio of Sites

A qualitative assessment of the remaining available zoned land was carried out to inform whether the zoned land should remain so or de-zoned/re-zoned for alternative uses. The qualitative assessment will be based on a scoring process, according to each site's assets or constraints, and result in a short list of sites suitable for economic/employment use. These sites will be ranked according to the score received during the qualitative assessment process to reflect the site's suitability (or otherwise) for accommodating economic/employment development.

As discussed above this is a detailed process that will be used to inform the Plan Strategy stage but initial findings indicate that all the existing sites are still suitable for economic development use. As discussed above there is still c.63 ha of economic development land that remains undeveloped and although this is greater than the predicted requirement of 12.6 ha for the baseline forecast and 20.5 ha for the 'strategy success' scenario, the retention of the existing zoned and available lands in the new LDP will ensure there is an ample supply of economic development land in accordance with the requirements of the RDS and SPPS to meet future needs and demand. Furthermore, an ample supply of economic development land will ensure the potential to accommodate unexpected future economic growth.

As referred to in the introductory sections of the POP, the Corporate Plan describes the overall vision for the Borough. This is to ensure that Ards and North Down is a prosperous, vibrant healthy and sustainable place where people enjoy an excellent quality of life.

The Corporate Plan objectives, listed under the three social, environmental and economic pillars of **People, Place** and **Prosperity** carry equal importance in terms of the creation of a Borough where people want to live, work, visit and invest.

The LDP will seek to assist in the delivery of these objectives and also on the shared vision highlighted in the Community Plan as 'Creating positive outcomes for everyone.'

The issues put forward for discussion in the document are all inextricably linked and no one topic carries any more importance than another. The following section outlines the issues and the options for addressing them through the LDP.

## PEOPLE

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The Corporate Plan sets out aims (amongst others) to develop engaged and integrated communities, improve health and wellbeing and increase pride in the Borough. The LDP can assist in the achievement of these goals through formulating policies and appropriate land use designations and zonings for facilities for the community. These include housing and other public services and utilities such as schools, cemeteries and healthcare. In addition, it gives us the opportunity to incorporate renewable and more sustainable forms of energy supply into policies and determine where they would be best located to meet the energy demands of the Borough.

The protection and provision of open space through the LDP process can also assist in the creation of attractive places where people want to live. Appropriately located areas of open space can increase connectivity between communities, for example through the provision of greenways, with indirect benefits for health and wellbeing and encouraging sustainable modes of transport.

Five topics and 12 Key Issues have been identified for consideration under **PEOPLE/SOCIAL** as below:

1. Energy;
2. Housing;
3. Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation;
4. Public Services, Health and Wellbeing; and
5. Utilities.

# Energy

**Aim: To facilitate development of energy infrastructure whilst minimising impact on visual amenity and the environment**

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The main sources of renewable energy are wind, sun (solar), moving water (hydropower), heat extracted from the air, ground and water (including geothermal energy) and biomass (wood, biodegradable waste and energy crops such as for use in an Anaerobic Digester).

The overriding objective of the planning system is to deliver sustainable development. The Council has a responsibility to strive to meet the UK's emissions targets by encouraging energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

The planning system is a key mechanism by which the Council can make an important input into the delivery of the NI Executive's objective of a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% of 1990 levels by 2025. This is a contribution towards the 2008 UK climate change target, which extends to Northern Ireland, to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050.

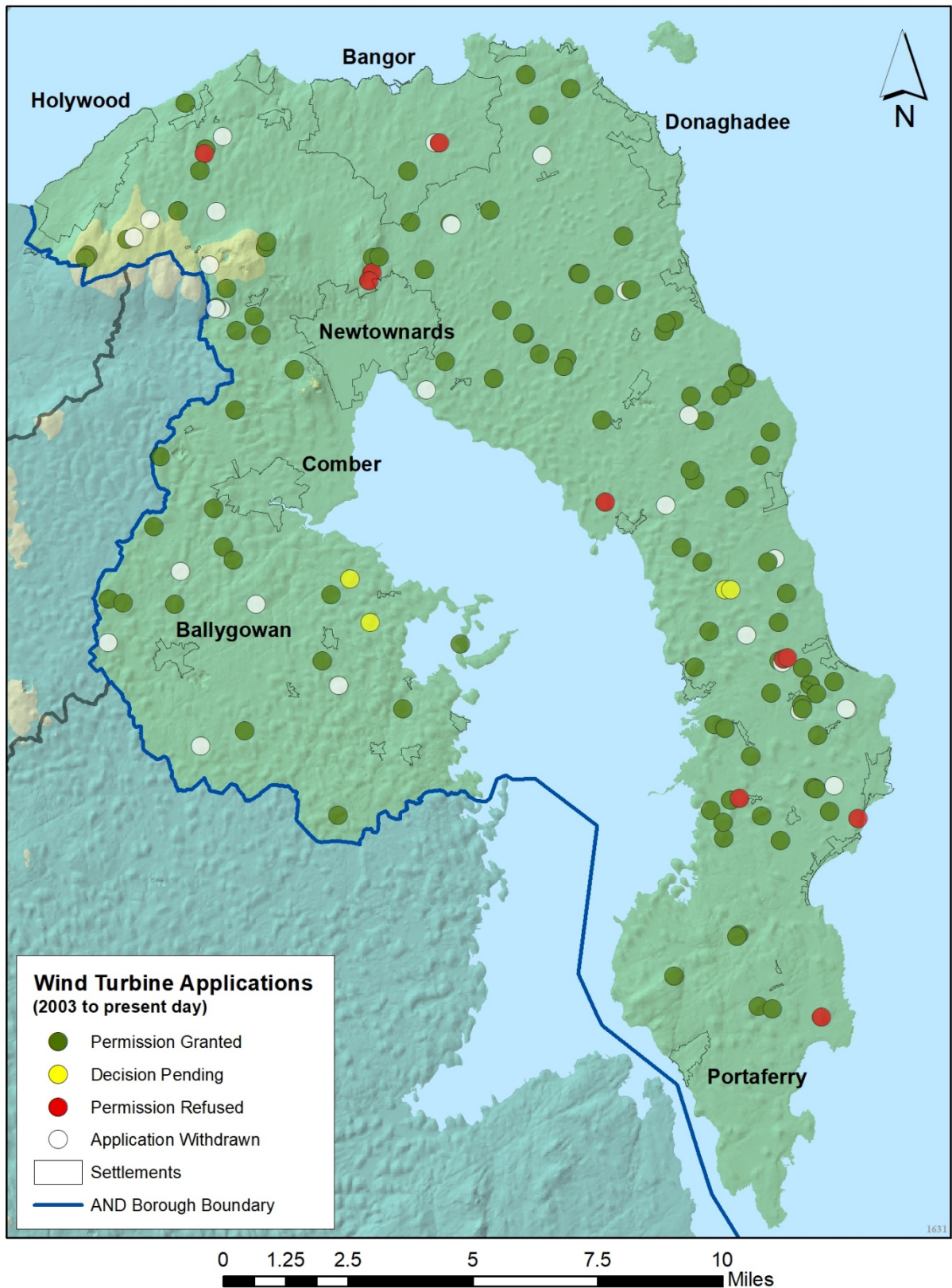
The land use planning system has an important role to play in mitigating and adapting to climate change and supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy. Spatial planning is critical in facilitating beneficial human behaviours, in helping to determine whether lifestyles are more or less carbon intensive. The core business of planning considerations will have long term consequences for climate mitigation and adaption.

## The Evidence Base

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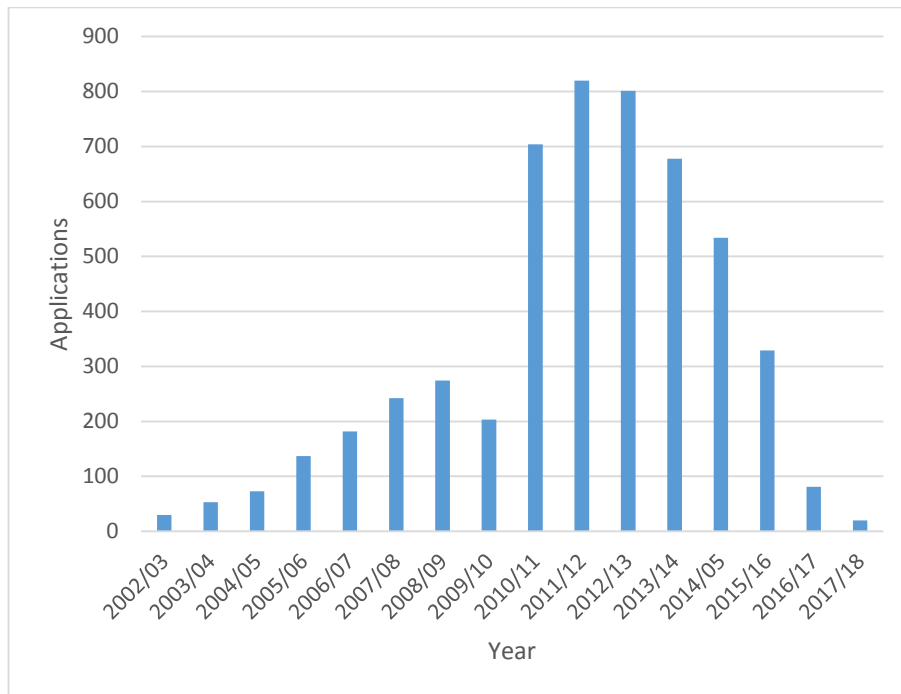
Northern Ireland is considered to have one of the best wind resources in Europe, with the Ards Peninsula considered particularly suitable for harnessing wind energy in terms of the potential wind speeds. However, this suitability must be balanced against the desirability of preserving the quality and character of the landscape – particularly given the designation of much of the western portion of the Peninsula as the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Map 3: Wind Turbine Applications within the Borough



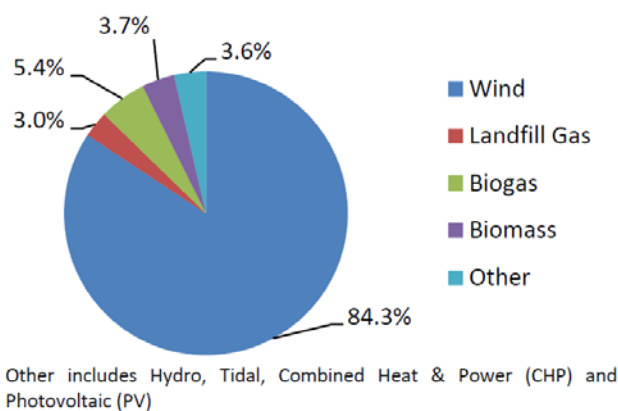
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**Fig 12: Renewable Energy applications in NI annually from 2002/03 – 2017/18**  
 (Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics Bulletin)



Applications for renewable energy development peaked around 2011/2012 and submissions have steadily declined since then. The sharp decline in recent years may be partly due to a reduction in government funding available, as well as the lack of capacity of the power grid to enable new connections.

**Fig 13: Renewable Electricity Generation by type (April 2017 to March 2018)**

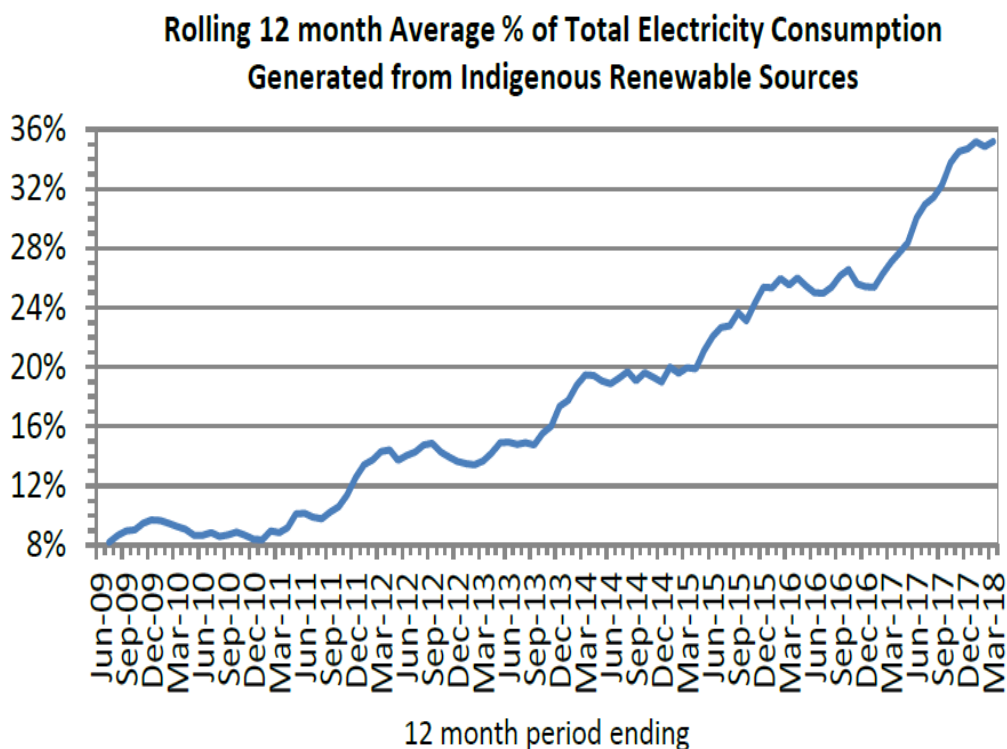


Source: Department for the Economy's (DfE) Analytical Services Unit (ASU)

The vast majority of renewable electricity generated within Northern Ireland comes from wind sources (84.3% over the 12-month period April 2017 to March 2018); however, a number of other renewable sources contribute to the overall total as shown above.

For the 12-month period April 2017 to March 2018, 35.2% of total electricity consumption in Northern Ireland was generated from renewable sources located in Northern Ireland. This represents an increase of 8.1 percentage points on the previous 12-month period (April 2016 to March 2017) and is the joint highest rolling 12-month proportion on record.

Fig 14:



(Source: Analytical services statistics information, Analysis and Research Department for the Economy, June 2018)



The provision of natural gas as a fuel supply to properties within the Borough is limited. The Phoenix Natural Gas current licence area only covers the north of the Borough. There is no current provision for gas supply to properties in and around the Killinchy area, or the Peninsula. It has not been indicated by Phoenix Natural Gas if or when the licence may be extended to include these areas.

## European and National Context

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### The Climate Change Act 2008

The Climate Change Act (2008) established a legislative framework to enable a reduction of UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050 and by 34% by 2020. The Act also introduces legally binding five-year carbon budgets, which set a ceiling on the levels of GHG the UK can emit to secure the 2050 target.

### The United Nations Paris Agreement

This is a legally binding agreement in international law, requiring all signatories to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions to limit global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius, and that efforts should be pursued to limit to 1.5 degrees. The agreement is an important step forward, to limit global temperature rises and to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. This is vital for long term economic and global security.

## Regional Policy Context

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### Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS)

The RDS highlights that decision makers will have to balance potential adverse environmental effects against the benefits of a secure renewable energy stream and the potential for cleaner air and energy for industry and transportation. Measures include:

- increasing the contribution that renewable energy makes to the overall energy mix;
- strengthening the grid to accommodate increasing numbers of renewable electricity and heat installations;
- provision of new gas infrastructure;
- working with neighbouring jurisdictions; and
- developing “Smart Grid” initiatives.

Regional guidance contained within the RDS aims to “reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaption to climate change whilst improving air quality”<sup>4</sup>.

Suggested measures include: more energy efficient forms of transport; improving the energy efficiency and adaptability of buildings; increasing the use of renewable energies; and utilising local production of heat and/or electricity from low or zero carbon.

## **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) clearly specifies sustainable development as one of the core principles of the reformed planning system.

According to the SPPS, the planning system should therefore help to mitigate and adapt to climate change by:

- considering the energy and heat requirements of new developments when designating land for new residential, commercial and industrial development and making use of opportunities for energy and power sharing, or for decentralised or low carbon sources of heat and power wherever possible;
- promoting the use of energy efficient, micro-generating and decentralised renewable energy systems;

The SPPS states that councils should set out policies and proposals in their LDPs that support a diverse range of renewable energy development, including the integration of micro-generation and passive solar design. Renewable energy options may include, but are not limited to, photovoltaic solar panels and small wind turbines for electricity production, solar hot water heating systems and geothermal systems for space heating and cooling.

## **Draft Programme for Government (2016-21)**

The Draft Programme for Government agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive indicates the commitment to the implementation of goal 13 of the UN 2030 sustainable development goal which requires us to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

## **Everyone’s involved: Sustainable Development Strategy**

This document states, ‘the impacts of climate change are already being witnessed in Northern Ireland. We all need to start to operate within sustainable development principles if inappropriate flooding, habitat loss, water pollution etc. are to be addressed’.

# **Local Policy Context**

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## **Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

By placing sustainability at the heart of the corporate plan, Ards and North Down Borough Council recognises that even at a local level, biodiversity and the environment are vitally important to our

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<sup>4</sup> RDS 2035 RG9 page 45

future health, wellbeing and prosperity. Under the **PLACE** category the Corporate Plan aims to ‘promote a clean, green, healthy, safe and sustainable environment’.

### **The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032**

The most relevant outcome linked to energy is Outcome 5: “All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment”.

### **The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030**

The actions relevant to energy include:

‘To truly fulfil the vision of a Blue Green, Creatively Connected Borough, it will be necessary to embrace the principles of sustainable planning and design one of which is outlined as ‘committing to sustainable sources of energy and forms of transportation.’

It is proposed that Ards and North Down pursues an ambitious programme to reduce carbon emissions at the local level, contribution to wider regional and national efforts. This will involve the identification and implementation of measures that can demonstrably lower emissions within the Borough. Target areas are likely to include switching, where possible, to renewable energy sources, while taking further steps to conserve energy through building insulation and updated technologies.’

## **Key Issue 4**

**Facilitate the siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations**

**Option 4a: Identify specific landscape policy areas suitable for renewable energy development**

**Option 4b: Consider all renewable energy proposals coming forward on a case by case basis whilst adopting the ‘cautious approach’ within designated landscapes as endorsed by the SPPS**

### **Preferred Option: Option 4b**

The SPPS aims to facilitate the siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment in order to achieve Northern Ireland renewable energy targets, and to realise the benefits of renewable energy without compromising other environmental assets of acknowledge importance.

The Borough has been identified as having above average mean wind speeds and this, although not necessary for renewable wind generation, lends itself to wind development in this area.

Previous Landscape Character Assessments have helped to classify areas in relation to their sensitivity to wind energy development. Any updated character assessment will take into

consideration turbines which have subsequently been erected within the Borough and also sensitivity within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Such a study will provide the evidential context for any new policy coming forward.

Option 4a: Specific areas/zones allocated to renewable energy development in the Borough would provide some certainty for landowners and applicants; however, it may also have unintended consequences. If the Council were to restrict wind energy development in one area and be more permissive in others, this may lead to concentrations of wind energy development and the cumulative impact would need to be considered carefully.

Option 4b: The SPPS applies a cautious approach to renewable energy development within designated landscapes e.g. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It acknowledges that it may be difficult to accommodate renewable energy proposals including wind turbines without detriment to the region's cultural and natural heritage assets.

Retention of the existing policy approach will 'support renewable energy proposals' unless they would have unacceptable adverse effects which are not outweighed by the local and wider environmental, economic and social benefits of the development'<sup>5</sup>.

This policy approach should protect against inappropriate concentrations of wind energy development within the Borough.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with the Council's approach in relation to wind turbines in sensitive landscapes?**

## Key Issue 5

On-site renewable generation and reduced energy consumption in new developments

**Option 5a: Introduce policy requiring applicants to demonstrate how the integration of on-site renewable generation and measures to reduce energy consumption have been considered and incorporated in all proposals for new development**

**Option 5b: Introduce a policy requiring applicants to demonstrate how the integration of on-site renewable generation and measures to reduce energy consumption have been considered and incorporated in proposals for new development over a certain threshold (e.g. 'major' applications, numbers of dwellings, floor space, site area etc.)**

<sup>5</sup> Planning Policy Statement 18 'Renewable energy'. Department of the Environment, August 2009.

## Option 5c: Retain existing policy approach encouraging renewable energy and passive solar design in new development

### Preferred Option: Option 5a

The sustainable design of buildings involves thought into their location, orientation and layout and making use of passive solar heating and natural daylight and ventilation. The use of sustainable building materials and construction techniques is preferred. Passive design features should be integrated into design process of new buildings. This will go some way to alleviate both the environmental impact and the running costs of the building over its lifetime.

Sustainable building design does not necessarily involve costly additions or radical designs. Buildings can be more sustainable with only slight changes at the design stage to maximise solar energy, passive design features will add to the buildings efficient operation in the long term.

There are many methods by which developers may incorporate on-site renewable and low carbon energy generation which includes PV, solar, micro wind generation, biomass, ground and air-source heat pumps, and site wide measures such as combined heat and power systems.

Measures to reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency within developments may incorporate energy efficient design which maximise solar gains, natural light and ventilation, air tightness, insulation, and heat recovery systems.

The Council wishes to explore the potential in introducing such measures not only in terms of their environmental benefits but also the potential to reduce fuel poverty and to increase energy security.

Developer contributions may be appropriate in some instances and the potential for carbon offset payments should also be explored whilst being mindful of not stymying development.

Some examples of how developers could incorporate passive solar design include but are not limited to:

**Orientation:** making best use of high summer sun angles and low winter sun angles on southern exposures while minimising excessive solar gain on the east and specifically west exposures from year round sun angles.

**Glazing:** sizing, position and detailing windows to get the most benefit from the sun while avoiding overheating in summer and heat loss in winter.

**Thermal Mass:** providing sufficiently exposed thermal mass to store heat from the sun in the winter and act as a heat sink for cooling in the summer. The benefits of thermal mass are often lost through the roof, walls, doors, windows and floors.

**Natural ventilation:** designing clear and robustly controlled air flows through buildings for daytime and night time cooling. Building air-tightness forms a critical component for achieving effective natural ventilation.

**Zoning:** providing thoughtful zoning to allow different thermal requirements to be compartmentalised. Substantial savings can be achieved.

Sustainable buildings do not have to cost more, provided that good passive design features are fully integrated into the design process from the earliest stages rather than tacking on expensive overtly-environmental features to fix problems that could be designed out in the first place.

The submission of a 'statement' along with the planning application will outline how the proposal shall incorporate sustainability and energy reduction throughout the buildings life span. The detail submitted in the statement will be proportionate to the scale of the proposed development. Option 5b will put the emphasis on the developer to demonstrate how the integration of on-site renewable generation and measures to reduce energy consumption have been considered and incorporated in proposals for new development over a certain threshold as opposed to all development proposals

As with Option 5a the submission of a 'statement' along with the planning application will outline how the proposal shall incorporate sustainability and energy reduction throughout the buildings life span.

Option 5c will maintain the status quo as Regional Planning Policy currently encourages the integration of renewable energy and passive solar design. Although encouraging renewable energy and passive solar design in new development, this option, does not require applicants to *actively* demonstrate how they have considered renewable generation and measures to reduce energy consumption in proposals.

The preferred option is the most sustainable. Options 5a and 5b scored the same across the Sustainability Appraisal. However, by introducing requirements for all new development proposals, Option 5a delivers more on a number of sustainability objectives including health and wellbeing, providing good quality, sustainable housing and improving air quality.

Do you agree with the Council's approach that all new development proposals should demonstrate how the integration of on-site renewable generation and measures to reduce energy consumption have been considered and incorporated into the design?

# Urban and Rural Housing

## Aim: Provide sustainable rural housing

The countryside is one of our most valuable resources. The countryside is shaped by its distinctive and attractive landscapes and cultural and environmental assets including internationally important and designated nature conservation sites.



The countryside is plentiful in built and natural heritage and has a rich tapestry of biodiversity. It is an important tourism and recreational asset which contributes considerably towards a unique sense of place and identity for rural communities. It supports the important agricultural and agri-food industries, with many of those living in the countryside employed in farming and local businesses.

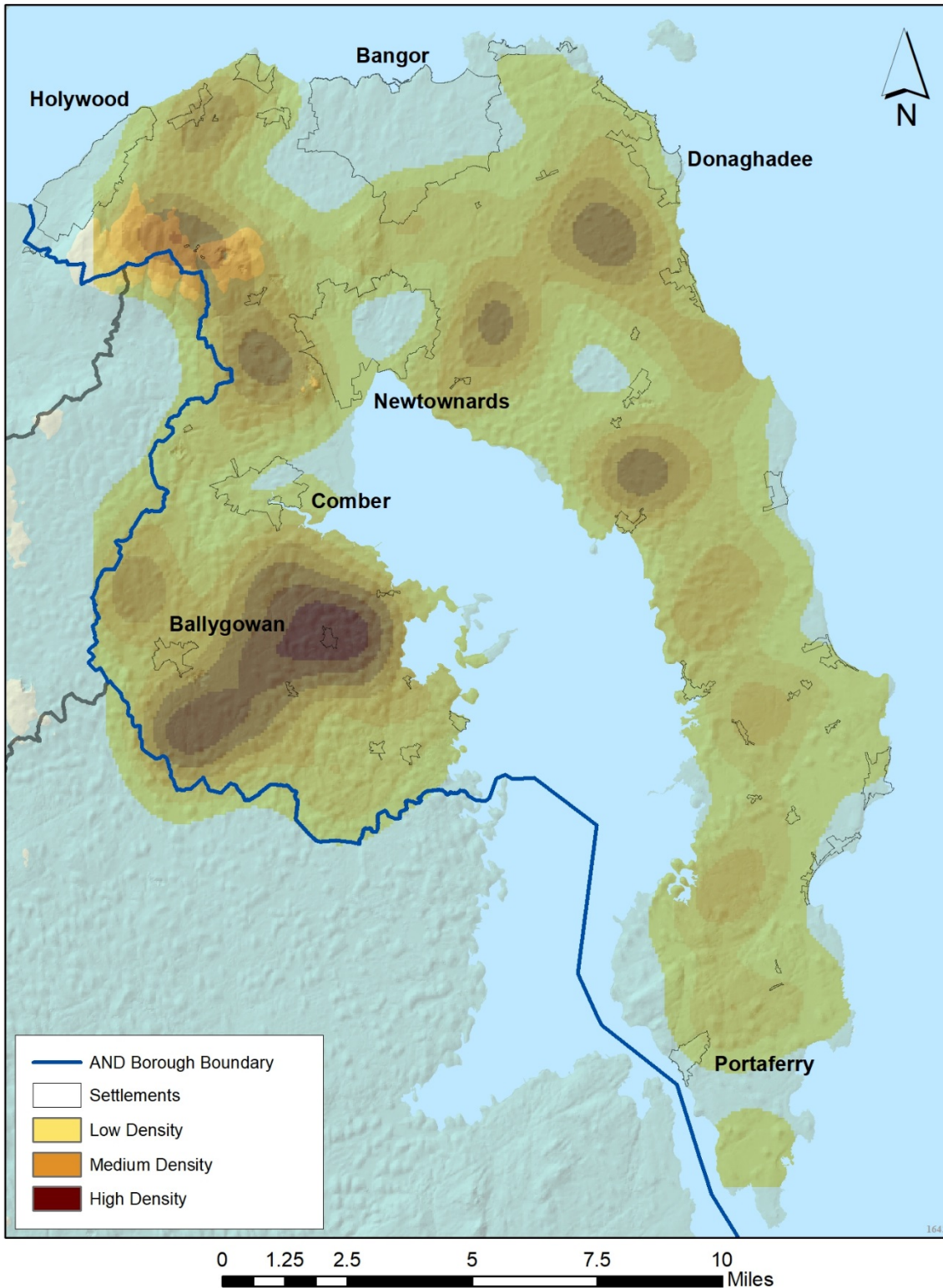
The LDP has an important function in facilitating appropriate rural development in appropriate locations, which contribute to the character, economy and unique sense of place of the countryside, whilst also protecting the Borough's environmental assets and natural resources.

## The Evidence Base

The countryside is defined as the land located outside settlement limits and is often seen as a desirable place to live, work and visit. This has resulted in significant pressure for housing, particularly single dwellings, within the countryside (see Map 4).

This development has had an adverse visual impact on parts on the landscape as a result of sprawl, and also caused the loss of habitat. Development in the countryside can also have adverse impacts on water quality as a result of increased use of non-mains sewerage systems, and is contrary to the RDS direction of achieving sustainable patterns of residential development.

**Map 4: Ards and North Down Rural Housing Approvals 2010 - 2016**



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Analysis of past trends indicates a notional approval rate in the Ards and North Down countryside of 90 residential units per year, which would equate to 1350 approved dwellings over the LDP period. However, build rates for dwellings in the countryside have varied significantly in the recent past due to various factors, including planning policy and the economy.



Taking into account these past build-rate trends, an estimate of houses built in the countryside is between 50 and 90 dwellings per year, which if continued would potentially result in an additional 750 – 1350 dwellings over the life of the Plan period.

The Council does not presently undertake a formal monitor of rural housing completions; however, monitoring of annual rural dwelling completions will be commenced prior to the preparation of the Plan Strategy. This will provide accurate and up-to-date information on the number of houses constructed in the countryside and will help to identify, in more detail, the areas subject to pressure for rural dwelling provision.

## Regional Policy Context

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### The Regional Development Strategy 2035

The RDS sets strategic guidance to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside, recognising there are variations across Northern Ireland and the need for local development to reflect these regional differences.

The need to improve accessibility for rural communities is also identified in the RDS. This is balanced against the guidance to conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment. This includes recognising and conserving local identity and distinctive landscape character, which makes a place unique, as well as protecting and enhancing areas recognised for their landscape quality and protecting designated areas of countryside from inappropriate development.

### Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The aim of the SPPS with regards to the countryside is to manage development in a manner which strikes a balance between protection of the environment from inappropriate development, while supporting and sustaining rural communities consistent with the RDS.

The SPPS has four Regional Strategic Objectives for rural development, to:

- manage growth to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development which supports a vibrant rural community;
- conserve the landscape and natural resources of the rural area and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from the actual or potential effects of pollution;
- facilitate development which contributes to a sustainable rural economy; and
- promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development.

The SPPS requires the Council in preparing its LDP to bring forward a strategy for sustainable development in the countryside, together with appropriate policies and proposals that must reflect the aims, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS, tailored to the specific circumstances of our Plan area. The common policy approach, however, is to cluster, consolidate, and group new development with existing established buildings; promote the re-use of previously used buildings and the use of existing services; and to minimise visual impact.

Strategic policies for nine types of residential development in the countryside are set out in the SPPS; these are in line with current operational policy in Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS 21), and provide a range of opportunities for development of dwellings in the countryside - including replacement dwellings, infill/ribbon development and dwellings on a farm.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside**

PPS 21 aims to manage development in a manner consistent with the strategic objectives of the RDS, by striking a balance between the need to protect the countryside from unnecessary or inappropriate development, while supporting rural communities.

The objectives of PPS 21 are carried over into the SPPS, in relation to rural development. PPS 21 includes 16 detailed policies, nine of which provide opportunities for housing development in the countryside subject to detailed criteria.

## **Local Policy Context**

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### **Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

A number of themes within the Council's Corporate Plan have direct relevance to housing in countryside. Under the strategic priority heading **PEOPLE**, the Council's Corporate Plan sets aims to 'develop more engaged, empowered and integrated communities'; whilst under the heading **PLACE**, aims include 'Promote a clean, green, healthy, safe and sustainable environment' and 'Enhance our towns, villages and coastlines'. Finally, the **PROSPERITY** section includes the aim to 'Develop a thriving rural economy'.

### **The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017 – 2032**

There are direct relationships between rural housing and Outcome 3 - 'All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure' and Outcome 5 - 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment'.

### **The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030**

The Council's Integrated Strategy recognises the importance of the Borough's landscape and the need for careful stewardship of the natural environment through embracing the principles of sustainable planning and design.

# Key Issue 6

## Facilitating Sustainable Rural Housing

**Option 6a: Introduce an approach to rural housing in line with existing policies and regional direction, tailored to meet local circumstances**

**Option 6b: Retain existing approach to rural housing in line with existing policies and regional direction**

### **Preferred Option: Option 6a**

The SPPS requires the Council, in preparing the LDP, to bring forward a strategy for sustainable development in the countryside, together with appropriate policies and proposals that must reflect the aims, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS, tailored to the specific circumstances of the plan area. The SPPS sets out a variety of policies which provide opportunities for housing development in the countryside subject to detailed criteria.

Option 6a incorporates the policies included within the SPPS for housing development in the countryside, but with certain alterations to reflect the Council's wider approach to the rural area under other key issues (e.g. landscape designations and design) and to best reflect local circumstances, where appropriate.

This approach may involve a number of minor amendments and clarification of the current policy approach, allowing the Council to bring clarity to its planning policy for housing development in the countryside.

It is intended that any changes to rural policy brought through in the LDP will remain compliant with the balanced approach of the SPPS between protecting the environment and our landscapes and enabling appropriate development in the countryside in order to support rural communities.

It is also important to note that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is currently reviewing the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) in relation to 'Development in the Countryside', and the Council will reconsider its rural policies in the context of any revisions to regional policy.

Option 6b would adopt the current policy based approach as set out in PPS21 and the SPPS for residential development in the countryside. It would provide the same level of development opportunity as currently provided and is in keeping with the SPPS. It does not, however, consider the amendment of rural planning policies, to more closely align with the needs of the Borough, nor the opportunity to provide clarification or address any shortfalls.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

## Aim: Achieve sustainable balanced communities

Housing continues to exert the greatest pressure on the Borough's land resource and it is likely to continue to be the most widespread urban land-use change for many years to come. Meeting affordable housing need and providing lifetime homes for older people and those with disabilities is an important part of achieving balanced communities.

## The Evidence Base

The Northern Ireland trend is that of an aging population, over 20% of the population is projected to be over 65 by the end of the Plan period in 2030.

Historically, the number of residents aged 65+ within our Borough has been above the NI average. In 2011 17.7% of the Borough's population was aged 65+, with Northern Ireland having 14.56% of the population aged 65+. This trend is projected to continue and by 2030 it is estimated over 25% of the population of Ards and North Down will be aged 65+.

According to the 2011 Census, 21% of the population of Northern Ireland and 20% of the Borough had a long-term health problem or disability which limited their day-to-day activities. Responses to the Continuous Household Survey (2013-2016), specified 29% of respondents in Ards and North Down indicated that they had a limiting longstanding illness. Evidence would therefore indicate a large proportion of the Borough's population suffers from long-term health issues.

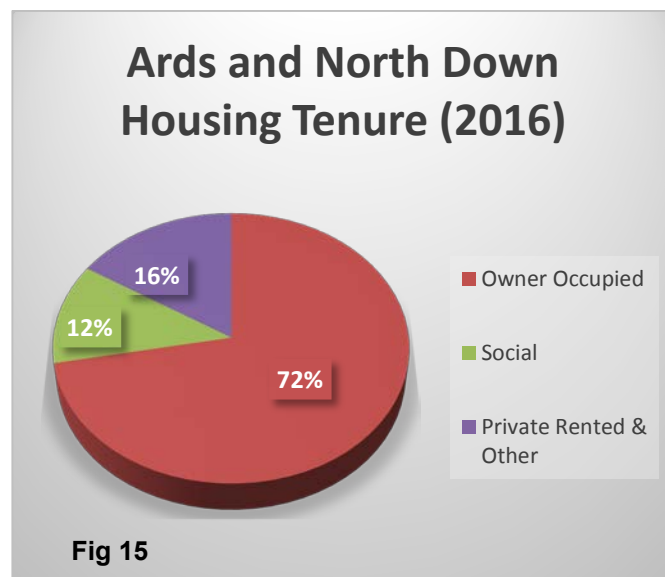
The Borough contains three out of the 100 most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in NI. The urban areas within Ards and North Down Borough tend to have the more deprived SOAs, seven of the ten most deprived SOAs in the Borough are in urban areas.

The House Condition Survey 2016 (HCS) estimates that social housing forms 12% of the housing tenure for the Borough, whilst Northern Ireland has an average of 16% of housing provided by social housing.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plan 2018 Update indicates there is a continual demand for more social housing provision in Ards and North Down. The Update states there were 6,310 NIHE dwellings available in the Borough in 2018 and further social housing is provided by the Housing Associations. As of March 2018 there were 3,060 submissions for social housing in the Borough, with a total of 830 allocations made between March 2017 and March 2018. The NIHE projected social housing need is 706 units over the five-year period 2017-22.

Further statistics and data relating to the associated topics have been gathered and analysed from a number of sources, including government agencies and internal departments within the Council.

For further information, refer to LDP Position Paper – Population Growth and Housing which can be found on the Council's website.



# Regional Policy Context

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## **The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035**

The RDS recognises the importance of creating sustainable communities and the provision of affordable housing can also help to build strong balanced communities. The RDS encourages mixed housing developments which include a range of sizes and tenures as this can reduce social isolation and lead to more stable communities.

It supports urban and rural renaissance through the process of development and re-development in urban areas and revitalising the centres of small towns and villages.

The RDS also highlights the need to manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development, ensuring the varied needs of the whole community are met. This includes the availability of affordable and special needs housing, and ensuring the continued focus on developing more high quality, accessible housing within existing urban areas.

It states that the Council as a planning authority should take account of housing need identified through the Housing Executive's Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Market Analysis.

## **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

The SPPS also highlights the objectives of promoting more sustainable housing within existing areas, and providing mixed housing development with a variety of sizes and tenures in order to create more balanced sustainable communities.

The SPPS requires the Council in preparing its LDP to bring forward a strategy for housing, together with appropriate policies and proposals that reflect the SPPS approach, tailored to the specific circumstances of our Borough. The LDP is also required to identify sites or areas within settlements where the site (or part thereof) is required to meet one or more category of housing need and clearly state the proportion required.

## **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12: Housing in Settlements**

PPS 12 provides operational policy in relation to housing in settlements. Its policies cover Living over the Shop, Social Housing, Travellers Accommodation (as amended) and House Types and Sizes.

Also contained within PPS 12 are four Planning Control Principles, which should be taken into account in the preparation of development plans. These encourage increased housing density without town cramming, good design, sustainable forms of development, and balanced communities.

The PPS states land for social housing should be achieved through either the zoning of land or the outlining of key site requirements through the Development Plan process.

# Local Policy Context

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## **Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

A number of themes within the Council's Corporate Plan have direct relevance: under the strategic priority heading PEOPLE it sets aims to 'improve health, wellbeing and promote active lifestyles'; whilst under the heading PLACE one of the aims is to 'Promote a clean, green, healthy, safe and sustainable environment'.

## **The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017 – 2032**

There are direct relationships with each of the outcomes prescribed within the Big Plan as set out below:

Outcome 1 - 'All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential' links to people growing old in comfort and making the most of their ability;

Outcome 2 - 'All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing' links with health and happiness;

Outcome 3 - 'All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure' relates to strong balanced communities where people feel welcome, safe, secure and have respect for each other;

Outcome 4 - 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy' through affordable housing being available to all; and

Outcome 5 - 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment' by having access to the natural and historic environment and enjoying the health and economic benefits these present.

## **The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030**

The Integrated Strategy underscores the importance the Council places on embracing the principles of sustainable planning and design. This relates to matters such as, the distribution of development, developing appropriate urban densities and designing with longevity and flexibility in mind.

# Key Issue 7

## Facilitating Affordable Housing

The provision of affordable housing is a major issue for the Borough and the LDP is required to consider how best to meet this particular need.

The SPPS compels the LDP to identify sites, or part thereof, to meet affordable housing need and clearly state the proportion required. Therefore, it is necessary for the LDP to consider policy that will help deliver affordable housing units to meet the need of the Borough over the Plan period.



**Option 7a:** The LDP will zone sites solely for affordable housing

**Option 7b:** The LDP will provide a proportion of affordable housing in new developments

**Option 7c:** The LDP will provide affordable housing, where a need has been identified, through the inclusion of Key Site Requirements for housing zonings

**Option 7d:** The LDP will provide affordable housing through the use of the proportional approach, Key Site Requirements or zoning of entire sites, dependent on a number of factors, including identified need

### **Preferred Option: Option 7d**

Option 7a would continue the current approach of zoning sites specifically for affordable housing, however this may prohibit the creation of balanced and sustainable communities.

Option 7b would involve a Strategic Policy requiring all housing development sites over a certain threshold to provide a proportion of affordable housing, where a need has been identified. For example, a 20% proportion could be required for developments of 50 units or more (or 1 hectare or more) in the towns within the Borough.

In areas of high affordable housing need the threshold could be reduced to 25 units in the towns and 10 units or more (or 0.5 hectare or more) in the villages. Affordable housing units would be required to be dispersed throughout a development, rather than concentrated in one area, in order to encourage social cohesion and balanced communities.

Option 7c would involve a Strategic Policy to include key site requirements for specific housing zonings to provide a proportion of affordable housing units, where a need has been identified. The proportion of affordable housing to be provided would be based on the size of the settlement and the level of need identified. This would allow for affordable housing to be integrated into larger housing developments, aiding the drive to create sustainable communities.

Option 7d, as preferred, allows for the use of three different approaches to affordable housing provision in order to provide certainty and ensure contribution to the provision of balanced communities.

The addition of a proportional policy in the Plan Strategy would help to address affordable housing need in the Borough until the Local Policies Plan (LPP) is adopted and sites zoned for affordable housing are brought forward. The proportionate approach would continue to be used following adoption of the LPP where a need for affordable housing has been identified. Key site requirements on zoned housing sites would also be used to provide affordable housing, where a need has been identified, following the adoption of the LPP. Zoning sites solely for affordable housing can be beneficial in areas of high need.

Options 7c and 7d scored similarly against the sustainability objectives but Option 7d is the preferred option, as it would enable the most flexibility, to deliver appropriate and proportionate sustainable solutions.

**Do you agree with the Council's preferred option for addressing affordable housing need in the Borough?**



# Key Issue 8

## Facilitating the delivery of Lifetime Homes

Lifetime Homes are designed to create better living environments for everyone, from raising children, coping with illness or dealing with reduced mobility later in life. They seek to provide homes that are accessible and adaptable, therefore allowing people to remain independent for longer in their own homes. The development of houses to the Lifetime Homes standard is especially important in the context of an ageing population and can help prevent costly and disruptive adaptations.

**Option 8a: The LDP shall provide a proportion of Lifetime Homes in new developments**

**Option 8b: The LDP shall not provide a proportion of Lifetime Homes in new developments**

### **Preferred Option: Option 8a**

The preferred option, 8a, would involve the introduction of a new Strategic Policy that would require a proportion of housing development sites, over a certain threshold, to be built to Lifetime Homes standards. This would have benefits with regards to meeting the varied needs of the community, providing high quality housing, securing sustainable housing and providing a better living environment.

Option 8b would rely solely on developers future proofing the new homes they build and would fail to ensure any houses are built to the Lifetime Homes standards. As a result, account would not be taken of the needs of our aging population or of those coping with illness or dealing with reduced mobility within the Borough. This option is unlikely to add to the aim of tackling isolation and achieving balanced communities.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you think the LDP should direct a proportion of Lifetime Homes to be included in new development?**

# Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

**Aim: Safeguard existing open space and identify and provide new areas of open space**

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Open space plays an important role in contributing to quality of life; it can enrich the character of urban areas, civic buildings and civic spaces. Open space offers places to participate in sport and provides areas to socialise, relax, exercise and play. Open Space areas can also promote renaissance and regeneration in urban areas and assist in attracting business and tourism to the Borough.



Open space is not restricted to formal areas, such as playing fields, parks and playgrounds; but also includes informal amenity space, allotments, cemeteries and inland bodies of water, such as rivers. Open space areas often act as a visual break, offer amenity benefits, can reduce flood risk and act as a buffer between competing land uses.

Open space areas also offer recognisable biodiversity benefits and act as important linkages for wildlife. Other benefits include community cohesion, social interaction, physical activity and

mental wellbeing. Open space therefore contributes to health and wellbeing, the environment, the economy and can help tackle inequality within communities.

Given the numerous cultural, health, social, economic and environmental benefits of open space, it is crucial to protect and enrich this precious resource throughout the Borough. The LDP has an important role to play in protecting existing areas of open space, sport and outdoor recreation and also in identifying and facilitating the provision of new areas of open space.

# The Evidence Base

Ards and North Down Borough includes an extensive range of open space, sport and outdoor recreation assets, a number of which are of the highest quality found throughout Northern Ireland.

Details of the key strategies, policies and documents informing the subject matter of open space, sport and outdoor recreation; and further information on the scale and variety of open space, sport and outdoor recreation assets within the Borough are included in the LDP Position Paper – Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation which can be found on the Council’s website.



Although the Position Paper identifies a deficit within the Borough with regards to outdoor playing space, children’s casual play areas, equipped playgrounds and amenity open space, this is largely offset by outstanding facilities such as Crawfordsburn and Scrabo Country Parks and Mount Stewart and Castle Espie. The figure below summarises some of the Borough’s main assets:

**Fig 16: Open Space Assets in Ards and North Down**



In addition to the above, Ards and North Down Borough has over 140 hectares of Council or privately owned grass and synthetic pitches, bowling greens and tennis courts.

Educational facilities within the Borough provide a further 30 grass or synthetic pitches. The Borough is also rich in facilities for equestrianism, motorsport, angling, canoeing, athletics, sailing, cycling, gymnastics and a variety of other sports.



## Regional Policy Context

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### The Regional Development Strategy 2035

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 recognises the link between environment, health and wellbeing; emphasising the need to support healthy lifestyles and the promotion of health in the community. The regional guidance also recognises the importance of accessible green infrastructure and the benefits it can offer, not only to people, but also its significance to urban and rural renaissance and to improving the overall environment.

The RDS highlights the importance of the setting of the BMUA and the need to protect and enhance this setting and its environmental assets. This includes the network of open spaces within the BMUA, incorporating country parks, landscape wedges, parks, forests and community greenways. These green spaces help establish a sense of place and identify a sense of character for urban communities. Importance is placed upon linkages between the green and blue infrastructure, therefore supporting biodiversity by connecting existing ecological areas.

### Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) highlights the importance of open space, sport and outdoor recreation both now and in the future. It states that everyone should have easy access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational activity. Even if public access to open space is not available, open space areas are important as they contribute to the quality of urban life by providing green lungs, visual breaks and wildlife habitats in built up areas. The SPPS also underlines the role open space plays in

enhancing the character of residential areas and contributing to the aesthetic value of civic buildings and conservation areas. Open space areas can help to attract business and tourism, as well as aiding urban and rural renaissance and regeneration.

**Fig 17: The Benefits of Open Space**



The SPPS requires the LDP to prepare an Open Space Strategy (OSS) which reflects the aim, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS. This should be tailored to the specific circumstances of the Plan area. The SPPS also requires all existing areas of open space to be protected and for there to be a presumption against the loss of open space irrespective of its physical condition and appearance.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation**

PPS 8 sets out the planning policies for the protection of open space, the provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development, to the promotion of a more active and healthy lifestyle and to the conservation of biodiversity.

The policies within PPS 8 cover the protection of existing open space (OS 1); the provision of public open space in new residential development (OS 2); the development of proposals for outdoor recreation in the countryside (OS 3); intensive sports facilities (OS 4); noise generating sports and outdoor recreational activities (OS 5); development of facilities ancillary to water sports (OS 6); and the floodlighting of sports and outdoor recreational facilities.

A definition of what constitutes open space is included within Annex A of PPS 8. Policy OS 1 includes a clear presumption against the loss of existing open space or land zoned for the provision of open space. Policy OS 2 gives the parameters around open space provision within new residential developments and states how much open space shall be provided, including identifying when a children's play area should be included.

Annex C of PPS 8 identifies key bodies who make a valuable contribution to the development of areas of open space, sport and outdoor recreation. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is one of those bodies and Annex C advises there may be a substantial community benefit in permitting redevelopment of a part of the open space provision which would decisively outweigh the loss of the open space. An agreed process was established between the then Department of Environment and NIHE regarding the information required to be submitted for any applications supported by NIHE for the redevelopment of areas of open space.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7: Quality Residential Environments**

Policy QD1 of PPS 7 requires the adequate provision of public and private open space and landscaped areas as an integral part of any new residential development. Reference is made within the amplification to the requirements of Policy OS 2 of PPS 8.

## **Local Policy Context**

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### **Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

A number of themes within the Council's Corporate Plan have direct relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation. Under the strategic priority heading **PEOPLE**, the Council's Corporate Plan sets aims to 'improve health, wellbeing and promote active lifestyles'. Whilst under the heading **PLACE** one of the aims is to 'invest in and promote facilities and outdoor spaces'. Finally, the **PROSPERITY** section includes the aim to 'enhance the visitor experience and to increase visitor spend'.

### **The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017 - 2032**

The protection of existing areas of open space and provision of new areas of open space reinforces a number of aspirations included within the Community Plan. There are direct relationships between open space and Outcome 2 'All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing' due to the links with open space areas and exercise and leisure activities. Outcome 3 'All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure' relates to open space through the provision of shared spaces such as parks, playgrounds and areas of public realm. Access to open space areas, the provision of community greenways and linkages between blue and green infrastructure all correlate with Outcome 5 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment'.

## The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030

The Council's Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development underscores the importance the Council places on open space, sport and outdoor recreation areas and how these can encourage and inspire tourism, regeneration and economic development.

The Integrated Strategy reiterates the value and benefit of water and land for sport and recreation, highlighting the fact that three quarters of the Borough's settlements are located on the coast. The prominence of open space in shaping places and the importance between developments, their settings and the open spaces which connect them are also identified. The popularity of the existing Comber Greenway and North Down Coastal Path are testament to the potential for expansion and linkage, which will result in further investment from residents, businesses and visitors. This importance is illustrated by the ethos for the Integrated Strategy: Blue:Green, Creatively Connected.

## Key Issue 9

### The Protection of Existing Areas of Open Space

**Option 9a: Protect existing areas of open space.**

**Option 9b: Protect existing open space, re-evaluate existing open space zonings and provide new areas of open space.**

#### **Preferred Option: Option 9b**

The SPPS requires an Open Space Strategy to be formulated which will inform the LDP of existing open space provision and the future needs of the Borough. The Open Space Strategy will be informed by an assessment of existing open space provision. Public and private open space should be included within this assessment and the different needs the open space areas serve will be identified. Outdoor recreational facilities within the countryside may also be considered within the assessment.

Open space is often threatened as a result of competing development pressures; this threat tends to be greatest in urban areas. A presumption against the loss of this open space will apply apart from exceptional circumstances where it is demonstrated redevelopment would have substantial community benefit outweighing the loss of the open space.

Option 9a would protect existing areas of open space and would rely on these open space areas, along with open space areas provided in new residential developments, for future open space provision. No new areas of open space would be zoned to meet the future needs of the Borough.

Option 9b continues to afford protection to existing areas of open space as directed by regional policy, but also allows for a review of the areas zoned for open space in the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015. As such an assessment of the suitability of these existing zoned areas can be undertaken and consideration given to the development of the land for other uses. This approach may help to facilitate new community facilities, infrastructure, or allow for the development of affordable housing to meet an identified local need.

Furthermore, Option 9b allows for new open space zonings to be designated to meet the needs of future generations, with greater consideration to be given to the content of the SPPS. As such new open space zonings would take account of accessibility to and from existing and proposed housing developments; the potential for any detrimental impact on biodiversity or on sensitive environmental areas and features; the contribution open space can make to the quality of the environment, sense of place and community life; the importance of protecting linear open spaces such as pedestrian and cycle routes, community greenways, former railway lines and river and canal corridors many of which are valuable in linking larger areas of open space and providing important wildlife corridors/ecological networks; promoting and protecting public access to and along the coast; making adequate provision of green and blue infrastructure; and identifying and designating areas of open space which perform a strategic function, such as landscape wedges in urban areas.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Do you think that 'exceptional circumstances' should be considered on a case by case basis, or should the LDP specify those instances in which it will apply?

Should the existing open space zonings be re-evaluated to allow for possible development as another use?



# Key Issue 10

## Community Greenways

### Option 10: Identify and facilitate the development of Community Greenways

The Department for Infrastructure's (DFI) Strategic Plan for Greenways: 'Exercise – Explore – Enjoy', is a 25-year plan for the development of greenways. This Strategic Plan identifies a Primary Greenway route which links the existing Comber Greenway with Newtownards. A number of secondary greenway routes are also identified within the Borough.

**Map 5: A Strategic Plan for Greenway Network**

Community Greenways are a network of routes, free from traffic, which provide for both pedestrians and cyclists; and allow opportunities for recreation and exercise. Community Greenways seek to establish corridor links between open space areas such as parks, playing fields, golf courses, woodlands, natural areas; and the countryside, the coast and urban areas.



Source: DFI Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways, November 2016

Greenways can also provide a link between neighbourhoods, services and facilities.

The SPSS highlights the importance of linear open space and linkages between open space. The creation of a green network offers benefits in terms of health and wellbeing, flood relief and encouraging wildlife and biodiversity. Community Greenways may follow existing cycle networks, disused railway lines, river corridors and canal towpaths.

The proposed option intends to identify potential greenways and protect the identified greenways in order to provide a network of linkages between open space areas and also allow access from new development.

Given the regional direction and the identification within the Borough of both primary and secondary greenways in the Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Plan for Greenways, no alternative option is proposed.

The preferred option was the only option considered in the Sustainability Appraisal. However, the scores reflect the cross-cutting benefits that greenways can deliver.

# Public Services, Health and Wellbeing

**Aim: To improve the health and wellbeing of all sections of society and facilitate development in respect of health, education, community and other public facilities**



The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.'

Our society is getting older, people are living longer, often with long term health conditions. This presents a challenge in terms of demands and pressure on health and social care services. People today want to lead full and productive lives, staying independent for longer. In line with wider societal changes we all expect improved access, choices and control when it comes to public services.

The provision of health and education facilities is beyond the role of Planning; however, in areas where a need has been identified land can be protected by the LDP.

The Local Development Plan provides the Council with an opportunity to promote positive behaviours which improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of its residents through appropriate land-use allocation and the formulation of planning policy.

## The Evidence Base

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The Northern Ireland trend is that while the number of children aged 0 to 15 and people aged 16 to 64 are both projected to decrease over the next 25 years, the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase. Since 2001, the number of pensioners in Ards and North Down has been above the NI average, numbers have increased and are also projected to rise further between 2008 and 2023. The projected proportion of Ards and North Down residents aged over 65 is 23.27% in 2023 an increase of 3.36% since 2008.

The NISRA statistical notice of 27 September 2017 highlights that the number of people aged 85 and over in Northern Ireland has grown by around 900 people per annum throughout the decade ending mid-2016. At Local Government District (LGD) level, the proportion of people aged 85 and over in mid-2016 ranged from 1.4 per cent (2,100 people) in Derry & Strabane to 2.4% (3,900 people) in Ards & North Down. The Borough therefore has the highest proportion of the population aged 85 and over.

According to NISRA, from 2011 – 2013 in North Down and Ards area male life expectancy was 79.3 years and female life expectancy was 82.6 years, both of which were higher than the Northern Ireland average.

The aging population in the Borough will have implications in the delivery of health services such as hospitals and GP services, as well as the need for additional residential care homes and community facilities. This includes the impact of age related conditions such as dementia and associated challenges in relation to the design of developments and retro-fitting and adaptation of existing.

Over the period (2006-2026), the population of 0-15 year olds within Northern Ireland is projected to grow by 0.1%. However, Ards and North Down is one of five LGDs where the number is expected to decrease. The population change of 0-15 year olds in the Borough is -4.5%.

Projected population change of the 16-64-year-old age group is currently -2.7%

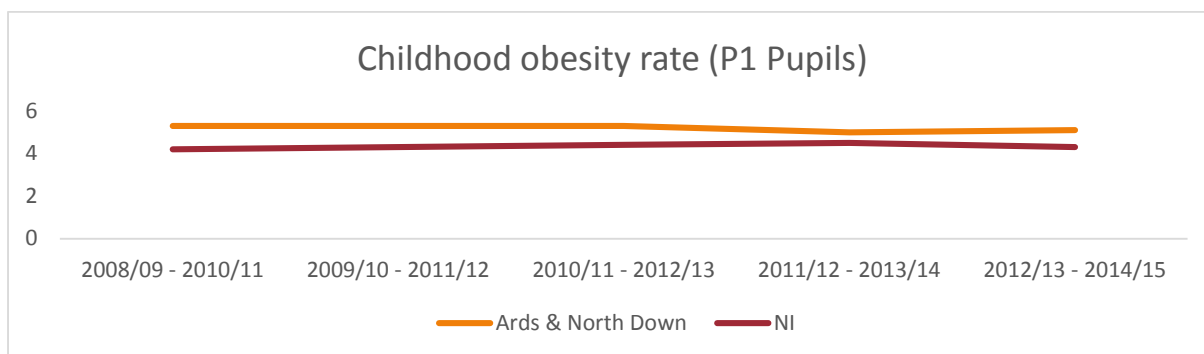
Medical and health care are mainly provided by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, in addition to a growing private sector. Education, youth and public library services are mainly the responsibility of the Education Authority, with Further Education governed by the Department for Economy. The Council has a key role in promoting health and wellbeing and providing community and leisure facilities.

Within the dBMAP, two sites have been identified for Health Use in North Down as follows. In Ballyholme a site previously occupied by Clifton Special School, measuring 0.45 hectares currently houses Bayview Centre Adult Day-care Centre. A further 4.5 hectares of land at Newtownards Road is currently occupied by Lakewood Regional Secure Care Centre.

The Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP) does not identify land specifically for education, community or cultural uses; however a major housing zoning (NS 20 in ADAP) includes a number of key design considerations requiring: reservation of an area of 2 hectares for provision of a primary school; and a local neighbourhood centre on approximately 1.5 hectares to include local retail outlets and community facilities offering for example, a multipurpose hall and a “Healthy Living Centre” to accommodate medical and fitness facilities.

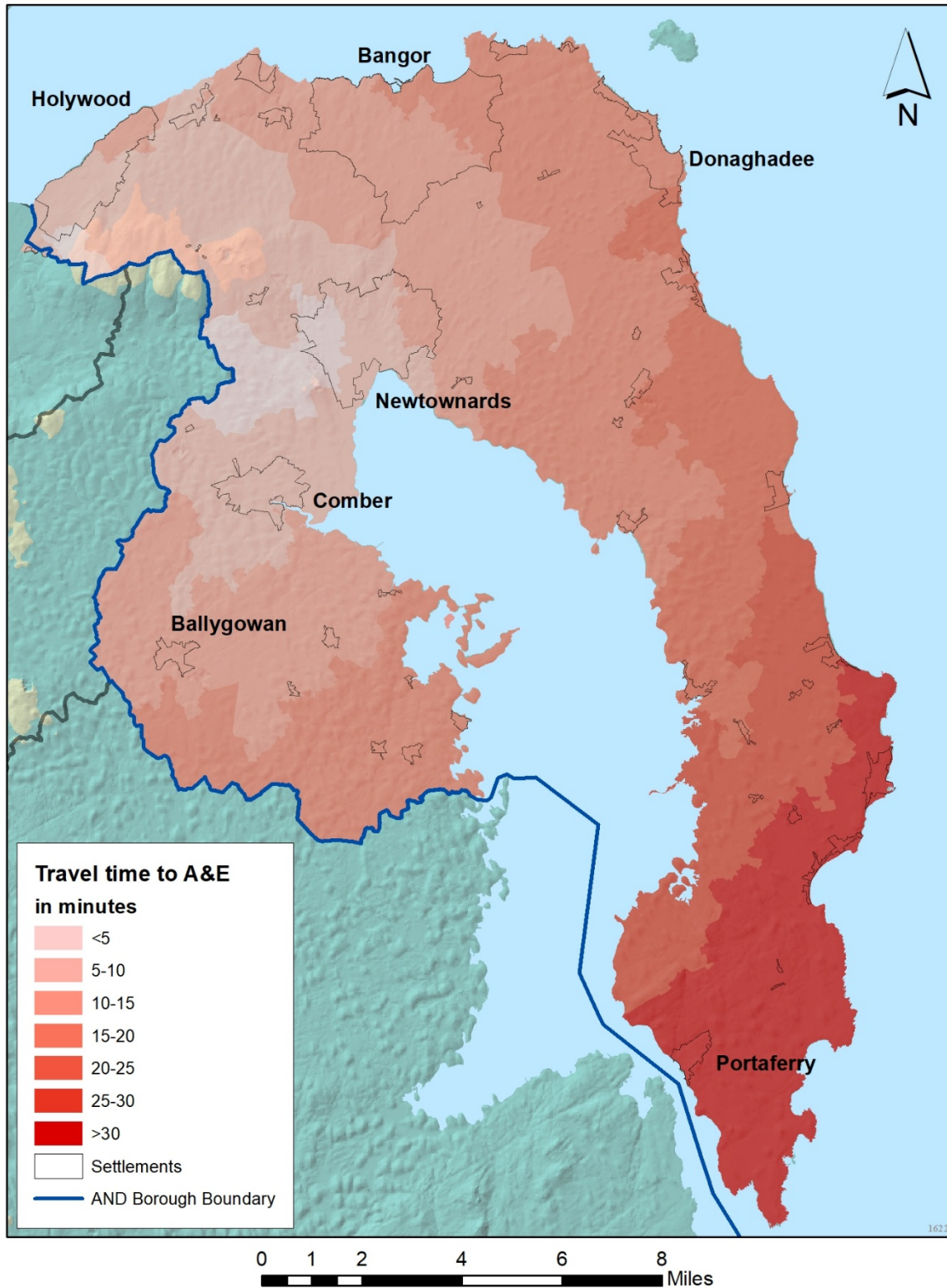
A total of 12,379 patients were on the Obesity Register within Ards and North Down in 2015. The graph below shows the childhood obesity rate amongst P1 pupils within Ards and North Down is higher than comparable figures for Northern Ireland as a whole calculated as a three year rolling average.

**Fig 18: Childhood obesity rate of P1 pupils (Three-year rolling average)**



Source: The Big Plan

Map 6: Drive Time to Accident and Emergency Hospitals from the Borough



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# Regional Policy Context

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## **The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035**

Sustainable development is at the heart of the RDS which aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. One of the aims is to promote development which improves health and wellbeing of communities. The RDS identifies Newtownards as a main hub to be developed as a major location providing employment services, and a range of cultural and leisure amenities. Decisions on the future location of new public sector development for a variety of functions, including health and education, will take into account its strategic role. Para 3.94 of the RDS states that we must strive to keep our rural areas sustainable and ensure that people who live there either through choice or birth have access to services and are offered opportunities in terms of accessing education, jobs, healthcare and leisure.

## **Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021**

The purpose of the Programme for Government is outlined as 'Improving wellbeing for all by tackling disadvantage, and driving economic growth'

Some of the key indicators for Government relating to education, health and community (PfG) are to:

- Reduce health inequality
- Increase healthy life expectancy
- Reduce preventable deaths
- Improve the quality of the healthcare experience
- Improve mental health
- Improve health in pregnancy
- Improve support for adults with care needs
- Improve educational outcomes
- Reduce educational inequality
- Improve the quality of education
- Improve the skills profile of the population

## **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

The SPPS states that the Local Development Plan should allocate sufficient land to meet the anticipated needs of the community in terms of health, education and other public services. The SPPS also states that the planning system has an active role to play in helping to better the lives of people and communities and in supporting the Executive's key priority of improving health and wellbeing. The SPPS therefore includes 'Improving Health and Wellbeing' as a core planning principle.

# Local Policy Context

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## Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Under the **PEOPLE** objective the Corporate Plan states, 'Improve Health, wellbeing and promote active lifestyles - we will provide opportunities for residents to enjoy an active lifestyle and work to reduce social deprivation and inequality.'

## The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

Outcome 1: 'All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential'.

Actions under consideration for delivery of the Big Plan: Volunteering programmes, achieving borough-wide Age Friendly Status, family support initiatives, early years support, raising educational attainment, community resilience activities, caring communities, safe and well programme to reduce isolation, expanding on libraries as community hubs.

Outcome 2: 'All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing'.

Actions under consideration for delivery of the Big Plan: Green prescriptions for people with physical and mental health issues, active ageing programme, caring communities safe and well programmes, outdoor gyms and fit trails, increasing walking routes and cycle paths, mapping of mental health provision.

# Key Issue 11

Facilitate the needs of the Borough in respect of health, education and other public services and facilities

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Option 11a: Identify and safeguard lands to meet the anticipated needs of the community, in terms of health, education and other public services and facilities

Option 11b: Adopt a policy based approach to determine proposals for health, education and other public services and facilities on an ad hoc basis

Option 11c: Identify and safeguard lands to meet the anticipated needs of the community, in terms of health, education and other public services and facilities. Complementary policy in relation to proposals on un-zoned sites and in relation to developer contributions will also be introduced

## **Preferred Option: Option 11c**

Option 11a will zone sites to meet the anticipated needs as identified by the service providers. It does not provide flexibility but does provide certainty for the safeguarding of land throughout the Plan period.

Option 11b will rely on the formulation of planning policy and the policy to be applied on an ad hoc basis. This option is service provider driven meaning the sites proposed may not be most favourable in terms of planning therefore a strict criteria based planning policy is required.

The preferred option will zone sites to meet the needs as identified by the service providers whilst developing policy to address proposals for public facilities which are not on zoned sites to ensure that a suitable response is followed. This will direct service providers to consider the best use of existing facilities and capacity of previously developed land within settlements in the first instance. The type, location, siting and design of the development should ensure that proposals for public facilities and the capacity of previously developed land.

The Council will engage with the relevant bodies and service providers to determine the need for additional facilities such as health, education and other public facilities. Such lands will be identified and protected against alternative development in the LDP. Site allocation will consider the most sustainable location in terms of accessibility to all sections of the community – particularly those with disabilities, mobility issues and the elderly - and connectivity to existing housing, employment and sustainable transport. This approach will also allow the Council to include key site requirements on zoned sites to require developers to provide new public facilities as part of a new development.

It is crucial that some flexibility is retained to allow for changing circumstances in respect of the needs of the Borough, therefore where the service provider or other consultee provides evidence that the need has changed, the LDP may permit an alternative use or relax a key site requirement in response. Similarly, the changing nature of service provision may require a flexible approach to shared uses of an existing site or facility – the LDP may bring forward policy to facilitate such an approach where it would ensure the long term sustainability of existing facilities.

The LDP will also develop policy to address proposals for public facilities which are not on zoned sites to ensure that a sustainable response is followed. This will direct service providers to consider the best use of existing facilities and the capacity of previously developed land within settlements in the first instance. The type, location, siting and design of the development should ensure that proposals for public facilities are accessible to all with a high standard of connectivity and that opportunities for shared communities are considered and enhanced.

As outlined previously under Key Issue 1, the Council intends to bring forward a strategic policy on Developer Contributions and explore its potential to fund a wide range of infrastructure, including transport, flood defences, schools, hospitals, and other health and social care facilities.

The preferred option scored as the most sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.



Do you agree with the Council's approach to identify and safeguard lands to meet the anticipated needs of the community, in terms of health, education and other public services and facilities?

## Key Issue 12

### Improving health and wellbeing in the Borough

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**Option 12a: Introduce policy to address a proliferation of hot food takeaway uses within centres and to prohibit hot food takeaways within 400 metres of school boundaries**

**Option 12b: Do not introduce suggested policy response as above – rather, proposals to be assessed on case by case basis**

#### **Preferred Option: Option 12a**

The Council seeks to develop policy to manage a proliferation of hot food takeaways as a method of combating their impact on the health and wellbeing of the community and, in particular, children. The 400 metre distance is generally accepted as being within a 10-minute walk and one which would allow school children to leave school premises to visit the hot food takeaway and return to school during their lunch break.

A World Health Organisation commission has described childhood obesity as a 'growing epidemic' globally, and stated that it is 'under-recognised as a public health issue'. Obesity can be defined as a 'condition of excessive body fat or adiposity that exceeds healthy limits.' Obesity can contribute to a number of health concerns in both adults and children; for example, these include an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, elevated blood pressure, some cancers, chronic illness, disability and reduced life expectancy.

Food choices made by children, and often parents, are not always healthy. Unhealthy foods are generally more accessible and healthy foods can be a more expensive option and may not always be affordable for low income families.

Limiting access to hot food takeaways within walking distance of schools is seen as supporting residents' ability to make healthy food choices and to encourage good health and wellbeing – particularly in children.

In addition, the Council has concerns about the impact of hot food takeaways on the main role and function of centres. The nature of the use and their opening hours often results in a dead frontage during normal business hours and can impact on the vitality of our centres. The Council therefore proposes to limit additional hot food takeaways to 5% of the units within designated centres and to address their clustering and distribution.

These measures will be complemented by cross cutting policy to address a range of amenity issues including noise, odour, litter and traffic impacts.

Option 12b does not afford protection around schools or protection against the proliferation of hot food takeaways within town centre locations, and as such, it does not demonstrate any significant health and wellbeing benefits, nor will it actively help to protect the vitality or viability of town centres.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you consider the preferred Option is appropriate?**

**Are there any other ways the LDP can help contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of our residents?**

# Public Utilities

**Aim: To facilitate development of utility infrastructure whilst minimising impact on visual amenity and the environment**

Public utilities and their associated infrastructure are an essential element of everyday life for people of the Borough and are inextricably linked with social and economic wellbeing.



The Local Development Plan will be led by utility providers in respect of identifying new locations for essential infrastructure and improvements. The main utilities are waste disposal, electricity and telecommunications.

Plan preparation provides the Council with an opportunity to increase the economic and social wellbeing of the Borough through the formulation of appropriate land designations and planning policy, having regard to the Core Planning Principles within the SPPS and the Council's own Corporate Plan and Community Plan.

## The Evidence Base



**Fig 19: Public Utilities Provision in Ards and North Down**

The table below shows that 2% of premises in Ards and North Down are unable to get 10Mbit/s download and 1Mbit/s upload speeds. The lack of reliable and fast Broadband in parts of the Borough has a knock-on effect on small rural businesses as they lack the telecommunication resources to remain competitive in today's market.

**Table 8: The percentage of premises unable to get 10Mbit/s download, 1Mbit/s upload by Local Authority**

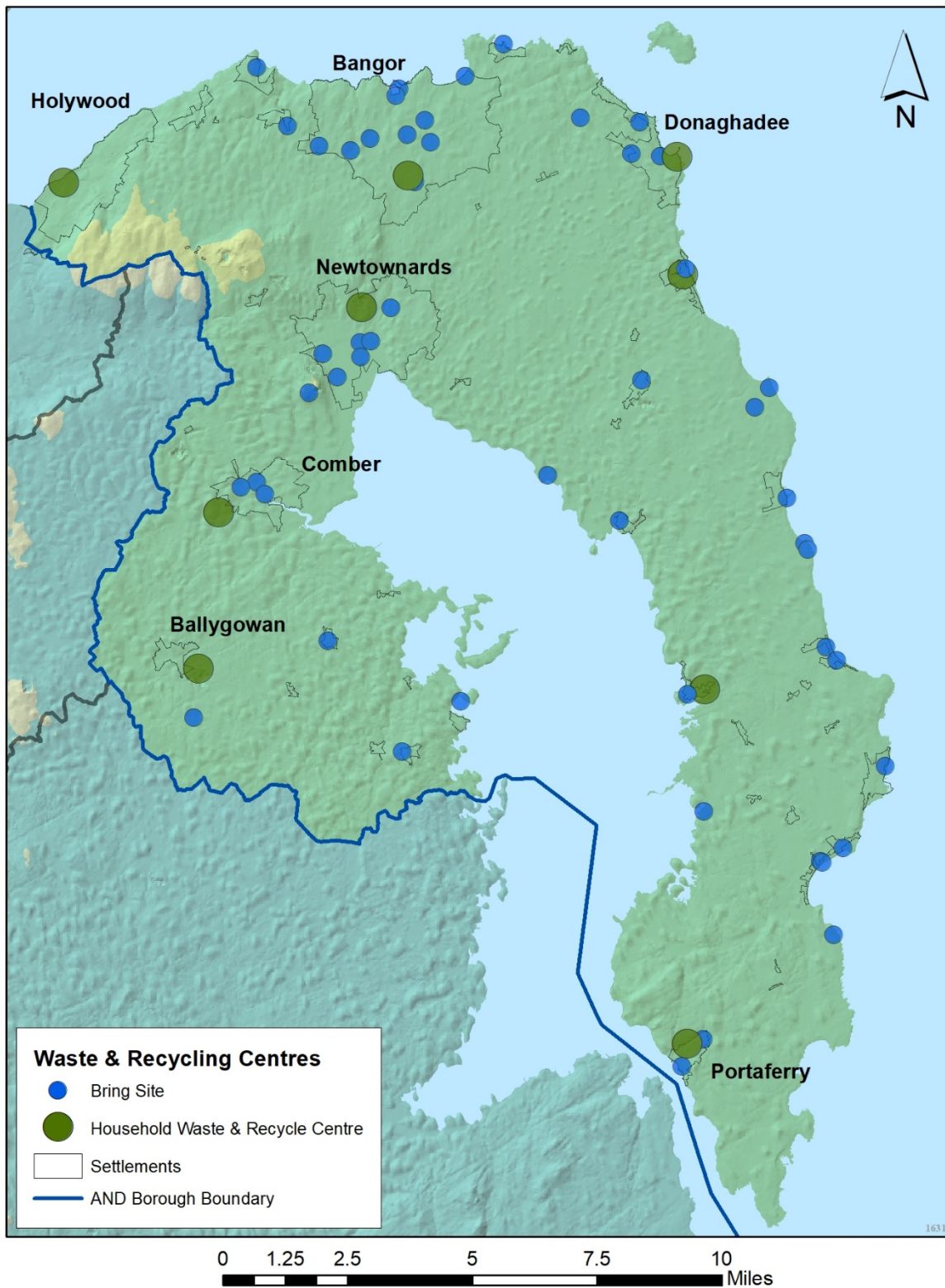
Local Authority	% of premises unable to get 10Mbit/s download, 1Mbit/s upload speed
Fermanagh and Omagh	19%
Mid Ulster	11%
Newry, Mourne and Down	8%
Causeway Coast and Glens	7%
Mid and East Antrim	5%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	5%
Derry City and Strabane	5%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	4%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	3%
Ards and North Down	2%
Belfast	1%
NI	5%

Source: Ofcom analysis of operator data – Ofcom Connected Nations NI Report December 2018

OFCOM publishes regular infrastructure reports for mobile coverage and the latest coverage map indicates that although there appears to be strong signal coverage around the towns, there are large areas e.g. travelling between Donaghadee and Millisle and around Lisbane with weak signal strength. Businesses and residents in these areas will be less likely to rely on the mobile network to conduct their business.

There are nine Council operated recycling centres within the Borough. In addition to the facilities at Waste Recycling Centres, Ards and North Down also has 'bring sites' consisting of glass bottle banks, with some sites having additional banks for textiles.

Map 7: Waste and recycling centres and bring sites in Ards and North Down



**Table 9: Capacity of cemeteries within the Borough as of 2014**

	Remaining Graves	Approx. number of graves sold per year	Life expectancy
Movilla	720	*50	14 years
Comber	231	40	5 years
Loughview	2800	Just opened	30+ years
Ballyvester	377	*35	10 years
Whitechurch	820	30	27 years
Kircubbin	460	10	30+ years
Kirkistown	1267	10	30+ years
Greyabbey	160	20	8 years

Source: Ards and North Down Borough Council

## Regional Policy Context

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### The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 recognises the core telecommunications network in Northern Ireland is as being “world class” with five fully-fibre networks. However, given the fast pace of the market, the importance of continued investment in infrastructure is highlighted if a competitive advantage is to be maintained. Other measures include: improving services in smaller rural areas to minimise the urban/rural divide; increasing the usage of broadband; and capitalising on direct international connectivity.

The RDS highlights that decision makers will have to balance potential adverse environmental effects against the benefits of a secure renewable energy stream and the potential for cleaner air and energy for industry and transportation. Measures include: increasing the contribution that renewable energy makes to the overall energy mix; strengthening the grid to accommodate increasing numbers of renewable electricity and heat installations; provision of new gas infrastructure; working with neighbouring jurisdictions; and developing “Smart Grid” initiatives. Regional guidance RG10 is to manage our waste sustainably.

The revised Waste Framework Directive introduces a 5-step waste hierarchy which aims to encourage the management of waste materials in order to reduce the amount of waste materials produced, and to recover maximum value from the wastes that are produced.

## Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The aim of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) in relation to telecommunications and other utilities is to facilitate the development of such infrastructure in an efficient and effective manner whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum.

The SPPS states that in plan-making councils should assess the likely extent of future waste management facilities for the Plan area. Specific sites for the development of waste management facilities should be identified together with key site requirements including locational criteria.

The aim of the SPPS in relation to renewable energy is to facilitate the siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment in order to achieve Northern Ireland's renewable energy targets and to realise the benefits of renewable energy without compromising other environmental assets of acknowledged importance.

## Local Policy Context

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### Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Under the Objective of **PROSPERITY**, the Corporate Plan aspires to develop a thriving rural economy through effective lobbying for improved digital infrastructure in rural areas. Under the **PLACE** objective, the Corporate Plan aspires to promote a clean, green, healthy, safe and sustainable environment. Success measure will include success in environmental award schemes; waste and recycling levels; the number of residents perceiving the Borough to be clean and attractive.

### The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

The Big Plan contains five outcomes, these are ambitious statements that the Council aspire to accurately reflect the situation of the people who live in Ards and North Down by the year 2032.

The two most relevant outcomes linked to Public Services are Outcomes 4 and 5:

**Outcome 4:** 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy'.

This outcome includes actions which will support the local economy through enhanced digital infrastructure and telecommunications

**Outcome 5:** 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment'. This outcome includes actions around the quality of the physical environment and infrastructure such as waste and water.

### The Integrated Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2018-2030

The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development takes its cues from the Borough's Community Plan and identifies thematic priorities with accompanying integrated actions. The actions relevant to public utilities and energy include:

Digital Network – work to improve the coverage and speeds of digital connections across the Borough, especially in more remote rural locations and positioning Ards and North Down to receive the latest advances in communications technologies; and

Carbon Reduction Strategy – pursuit of an ambitious Programme to reduce carbon emissions including switching to renewable energy sources and taking further steps to conserve energy.

## Key Issue 13

To facilitate development of utilities and telecommunications without compromising the natural environment of the Borough

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**Option 13: Adopt approach to utilities and telecommunication development in line with regional policy - ensuring the applicant provides detailed information on mitigation measures to ensure the visual and environmental impact of development are minimised**

Better connectivity within the Borough not only aids businesses and the economic prosperity of the area but also contributes to the health and wellbeing of the Borough residents. Public utilities and related infrastructure, although considered a necessity can be associated with an array of negative impacts.

In order for the Local Development Plan to assist in the provision of adequate public utilities to meet the needs of the Borough it will be necessary to mitigate against some of the associated negative impacts. In order to do this a policy based approach may be necessary.

Policy referring to design, siting, screening and landscaping issues will help to alleviate concerns regarding the proposed utilities and related infrastructure. Policy has the ability to ask for Developer Contributions to help with additional financial implications of implementing the required mitigating measures. No additional designations such as ‘areas of constraint’ on utility and telecommunication development are proposed.

This approach will help to ensure that the Borough will benefit from improved connectivity and performance whilst keeping the impact of the related infrastructure to a minimum. Applicants should provide details of mitigation measures relating to the design and siting of all proposals. Mast and site sharing should be encouraged to help to limit the visual intrusion, also the provision for telecommunications systems in the design of other forms of development will be required. In order to reduce any potential negative effects within sensitive areas the use of sympathetic design and colour will be encouraged.

As utilities and telecommunications development are an essential element of everyday life and inextricably linked with social and economic wellbeing, no alternative option is suggested.

The preferred option was the only option considered in the Sustainability Appraisal.



Do you agree with our proposed approach to encourage mitigation measures to be included with any Public utility planning applications?

## Key Issue 14

### Cemetery Provision

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**Option 14a:** Identify and safeguard specific locations in the Borough for new or extended cemetery and other end of life development based on projected need and capacity over the Plan period with a complementary policy in relation to proposals on un-zoned sites

**Option 14b:** Adopt a policy based approach to determine proposals for cemetery and other end of life development on an ad hoc basis

#### **Preferred Option: Option 14a**

The proportion of population aged 65 and over within the Borough is significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average. Ards and North Down Borough contains 27 wards with populations significantly higher than average. Legacy Ards Borough contains 34 wards with a population higher than the NI average.

Although the majority of cemeteries within the Borough are provided and maintained by churches, the Council has a responsibility to provide sufficient public cemetery space and to ensure that burial needs of the Borough can be met in the future.

Cemeteries are located at: Ballyvester Cemetery (Donaghadee); Comber Cemetery; Greyabbey New Cemetery; Loughview Cemetery (Comber); Kircubbin Cemetery; Kirkistown Cemetery; Movilla Cemetery (Newtownards); Whitechurch Cemetery (Ballywalter); Clandeboye Cemetery; Bangor New Cemetery; Redburn Cemetery (Holywood); and Priory Cemetery (Holywood).

Council data shows there appears to be adequate provision for the Plan period (with the exception of Ballyvester, Movilla and Greyabbey).

Given the aging population that reside in the Borough and to ensure the Council can fulfil its duty to provide sufficient cemetery space, it is considered that measures to identify and safeguard land for cemeteries are required in areas likely to reach capacity within the lifetime of the LDP. The Council will consider the outcome of an independent consultation regarding the capacity of

existing cemeteries within the Borough when formulating its policies. Additional provision for cemeteries, crematoria etc. may also be proposed in other areas. Burial type will have an impact on the amount of space required; for example, less space will be required for the interment of ashes.

It is therefore considered prudent to develop complementary policy to address proposals coming forward on sites which have not been formally designated through the LDP process.

In relation to Option 14b, cemeteries can retain green spaces due to landscaping and grass sown over established graves, and scattering of ashes can also have positive impacts on the biodiversity of a location. An 'ad hoc' policy approach may encourage end of life development proposals on sites that may not be the most sustainable, particularly in relation to connectivity to other places. A robust planning policy is necessary to ensure that development of this nature is not located in unsuitable areas within the Borough.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with our proposed approach to safeguard specific locations for end of life development within the Borough?**

## Key Issue 15

### Facilitating sustainable waste management

**Option 15a: Identify and safeguard appropriate lands to meet the anticipated needs of the Borough in relation to waste management facilities (including recycling and WWTWs). Complementary policy in relation to waste management proposals on un-zoned sites will be introduced.**

**Option 15b: Adopt a policy based approach to determine proposals for waste management facilities on an ad hoc basis**

#### **Preferred Option: Option 15a**

Option 15a aligns with the regional strategic objectives outlined in the SPPS. This approach will encourage the reuse of and refurbishment of goods, then value recovery through recycling and composting. It also takes into account the proximity principle. The treatment or disposal of waste in reasonable proximity to their point of generation aims to minimise the environmental impact and cost of waste transport, thus a move towards more sustainable development.

This option allows the Council to identify and safeguard lands to facilitate waste management facilities where evidenced. It also allows for complementary policy in respect of proposals coming forward that are not identified in the Plan – e.g. infilling of land with inert material etc.

This approach will remove reference to BPEO – ‘Best Practicable Environmental Option’ as following the publication of the revised Waste Management Strategy this is no longer a material consideration in the planning process.

Option 15b is not in line with prevailing policy whereby there is no provision to safeguard land within this Option.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with our proposed approach in line with the Waste Management Strategy?**

# PLACE

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Under the theme of 'Place,' the Corporate Plan aims to encourage a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, with enhanced towns, villages and coastlines. It also highlights the need to invest in and promote the Borough's cultural heritage and environment.

The LDP can assist in the identification and protection of the rich natural and historical landscapes which give our Borough a unique sense of place, whilst securing additional benefits for tourism, biodiversity, health and wellbeing and education. Whilst valued for their beauty, there is also a need to manage our coastal and fluvial landscapes in order to safeguard against different types of flooding and erosion and land instability. These issues are of particular significance to our Borough given its coastal location and the recent trend for increased extreme weather events.

Four topics and 10 Key Issues have been identified for consideration:

1. Coastal Management
2. Flooding and Drainage
3. Historic Environment
4. Natural Environment

# Coastal Management

**Aim: To protect the undeveloped coast and to support the sensitive enhancement of the developed coast**

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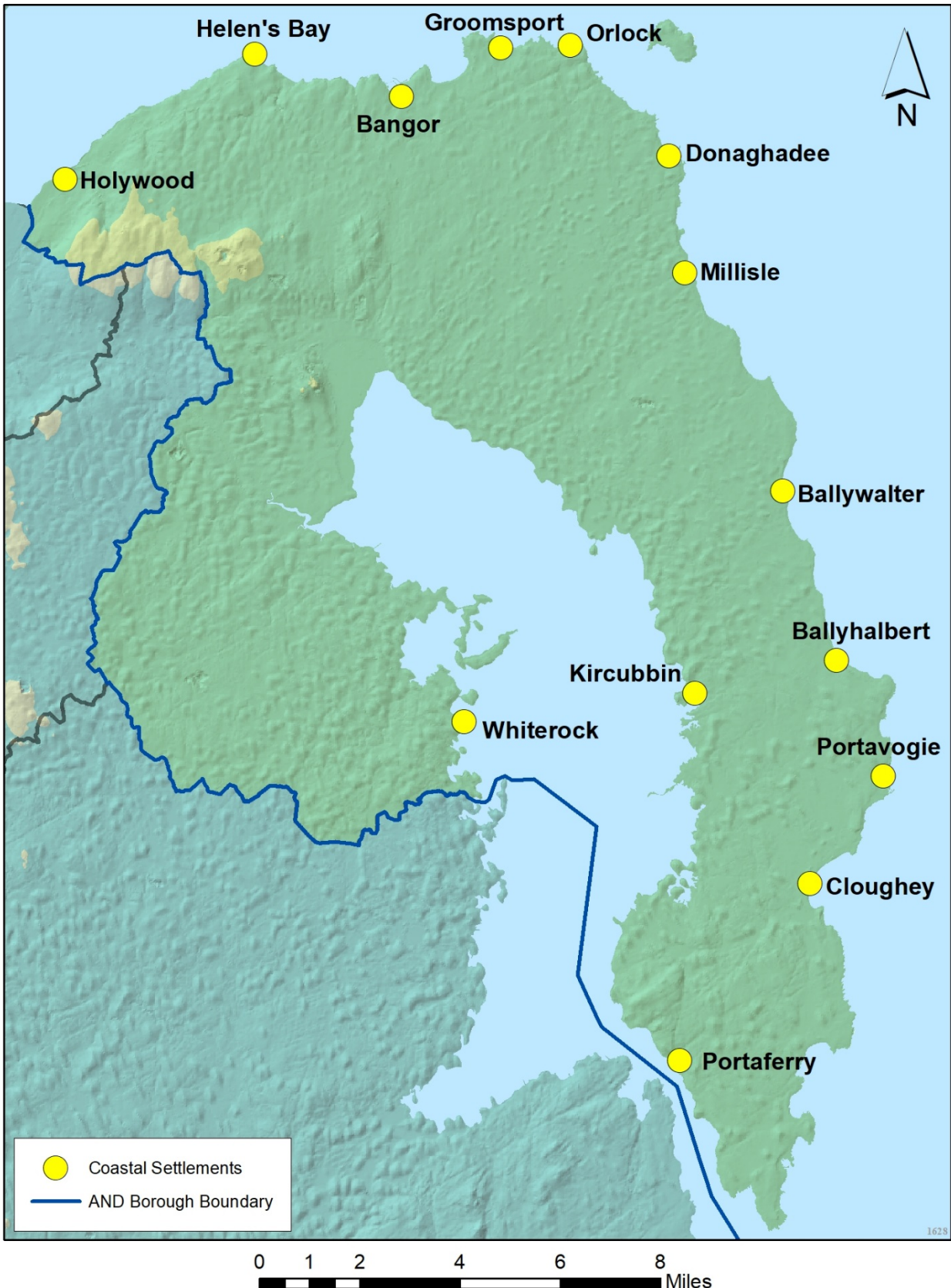
Northern Ireland is renowned for its beautiful coastline which forms a unique part of our natural environment. It includes a wide variety of landscapes and is of great importance in terms of its scientific interest and nature conservation value. The coast is also of great economic significance as many local communities, seaports and fishing ports are located there.

The LDP should seek to identify what opportunities exist for appropriate development along the coastline while also protecting those areas of the coast that are unsuitable for development due to their amenity, nature conservation or landscape value. The LDP should also be mindful of the pressures that face our coast including residential development, shoreline change (particularly erosion and land instability), recreation, tourism and coastal industry.

## The Evidence Base

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At a length of 115 miles, the coastline of Ards and North Down is one of the longest in Northern Ireland, consisting of Belfast Lough to the north, the Irish Sea to the east and Strangford Lough with its associated islands forming the internal coastline of the Ards Peninsula. These areas provide nationally and internationally significant coastal habitats for birds and wildlife, including mudflats, sandy beaches, coastal saltmarsh and rocky shore and are protected by number of nature conservation designations. A significant proportion of the Borough population is located in 14 coastal settlements and the coast also represents a valuable recreational and tourism resource for activities such as walking, sailing, water sports and fishing.



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**Map 8: Coastal settlements of Ards and North Down**



Fig 20: The Value of our Coast

Further information on The Coast can be found in LDP Position Paper on the Council’s website.

## Regional Policy Context

### The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 emphasises that our environment is one of Northern Ireland’s greatest assets. It specifically refers to the need to protect, enhance and manage the coast.

The RDS makes the following recommendations with respect to the coast:

- ▶ Coastal areas need to be protected from coastal squeeze and loss of distinctive habitats and can be utilised in our adaptation to climate change;
- ▶ Detailed policy and spatial guidance within the UK Marine Policy Statement (2011) and the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland should assist in achieving these aims;
- ▶ Bangor has future development potential, centring on its modern marina and creating activities around the promenade area.

## Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The SPPS reiterates the importance of the coastline in terms of landscape value, nature conservation importance and associated national and European designations. It identifies the following objectives in relation to coastal development:

- ▶ Conserve the natural character and landscape of the undeveloped coast and protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development; and
- ▶ Facilitate appropriate development in coastal settlements and other parts of the developed coastline (subject to other planning policies) that contribute to a sustainable economy and which is sensitive to its coastal location

There is no Planning Policy Statement that relates to the coast. A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland does contain some policies relating to the coast.

## Local Policy Context

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### Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan

Under the strategic priority heading **PLACE**, the Council's Corporate Plan aims to 'invest in and promote the borough's rich cultural heritage and environment,' and to 'enhance our towns villages and coastlines.' These themes have direct relevance to our coastal environment.



### The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

The promotion and protection of our coastline also supports the Community Plan aspiration of 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment' (Outcome 5).

### The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development

This document represents the council's coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough and centres on key aims to create jobs, increase economic activity and increase visitor overnight trips and expenditure. The Strategy highlights the coastline of the Borough as one of its strengths, whilst coastal erosion and environment change are noted as significant threats. Coastal and marine tourism is identified as an opportunity to capitalise on the quality of the natural environment, including the establishment of a 'continuous coastal route.'



# Key Issue 16

## The Undeveloped Coast

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**Option 16a: Designate an Ards and North Down Coastal Area within which development will be restricted**

**Option 16b: Do not designate an Ards and North Down Coastal Area**

### **Preferred Option: Option 16a**

The undeveloped coast refers to those areas directly related to the coastline and includes the shores of Strangford Lough. The draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan designated a Coastal Area along the fringe of Belfast Lough, at the northern end of the Borough. Within this area, planning permission is only permitted for development proposals that are of regional or national significance and where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will improve the quality of or enhance access to the coastal landscape. Developers will also be required to show that their proposals will not adversely affect the nature conservation value of areas within this zone.

**Map 9: BMA Coastal Area**



Option 16a as preferred option would build upon the BMA coastal area designation but extend it to include the remainder of the Ards and North Down coast, both the eastern section that adjoins the Irish Sea and also the interior coast of Strangford Lough. The retention and extension of the BMA coastal area will provide appropriate protection for the coastal landscape, important views and vistas, built and natural heritage assets and the marine ecosystem. This ties in well with the nature conservation designations that already protect the coastline of our Borough as these cover the offshore region but the BMA coastal area zoning would protect the adjacent inland strip of the Borough.

In addition, the policy would provide scope for regionally significant proposals that, due to operational requirements, have to be located in the coastal zone, such as any future expansion proposals for Portavogie Harbour, the second largest commercial fishing port in Northern Ireland.

Option 16b would mean that the coastal area would remain as whiteland and not recognised by any specific Plan designation. Whilst the international and national designations would remain in place and afford protection to these areas, there would less scope to sift out proposals that would not enhance the landscape and promote accessibility.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

## Key Issue 17

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### The Developed Coast



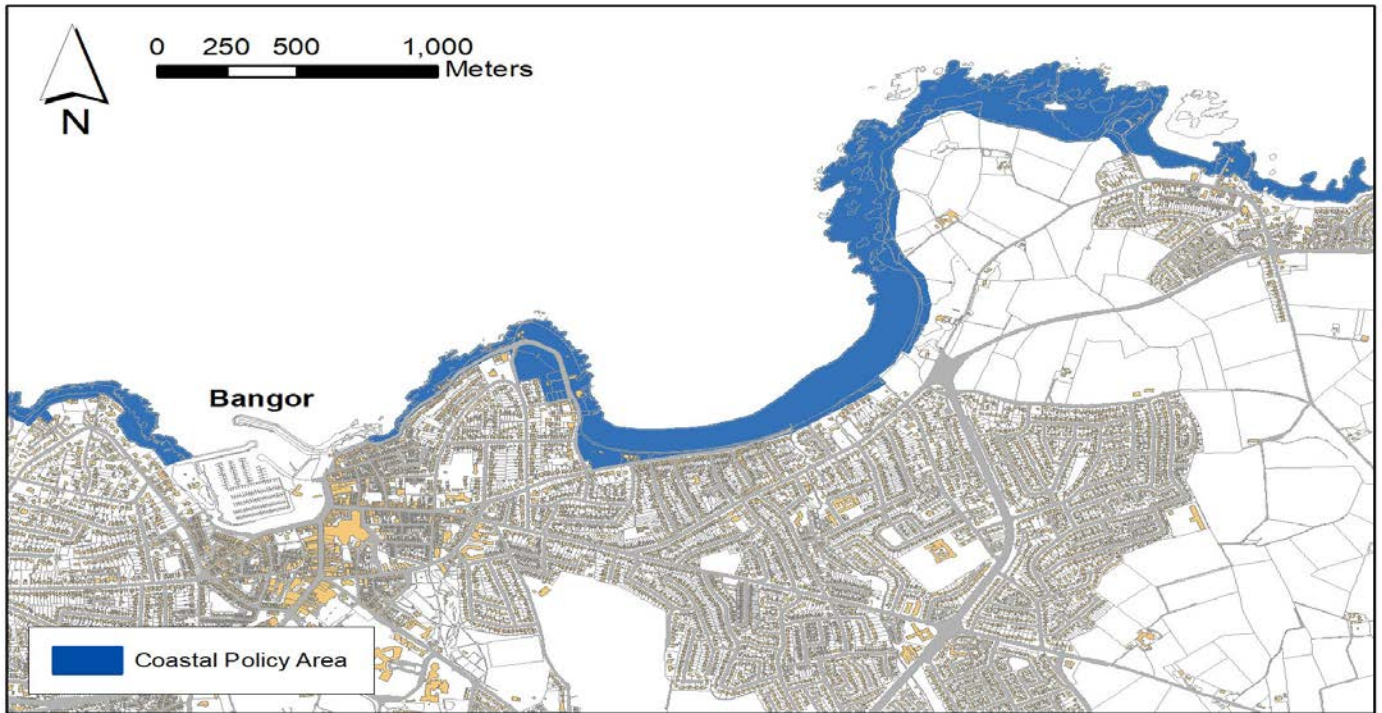
Pickie Park in Bangor, part of Bangor Urban Waterfront

The developed coast refers to settlements that have a coastal location. In the case of Ards and North Down this means 14 towns and villages, including Bangor which is our largest settlement in terms of population.

It has long been recognised that the waterfront areas of the developed coast can provide opportunities for regeneration and enhancement. dBMAP 2015 recognises Bangor seafront area as an 'Urban Waterfront.' This designation seeks to encourage uses that will help promote a vibrant and attractive waterfront, with a focus on tourism and recreation. Any development proposals that are submitted for this area must demonstrate that

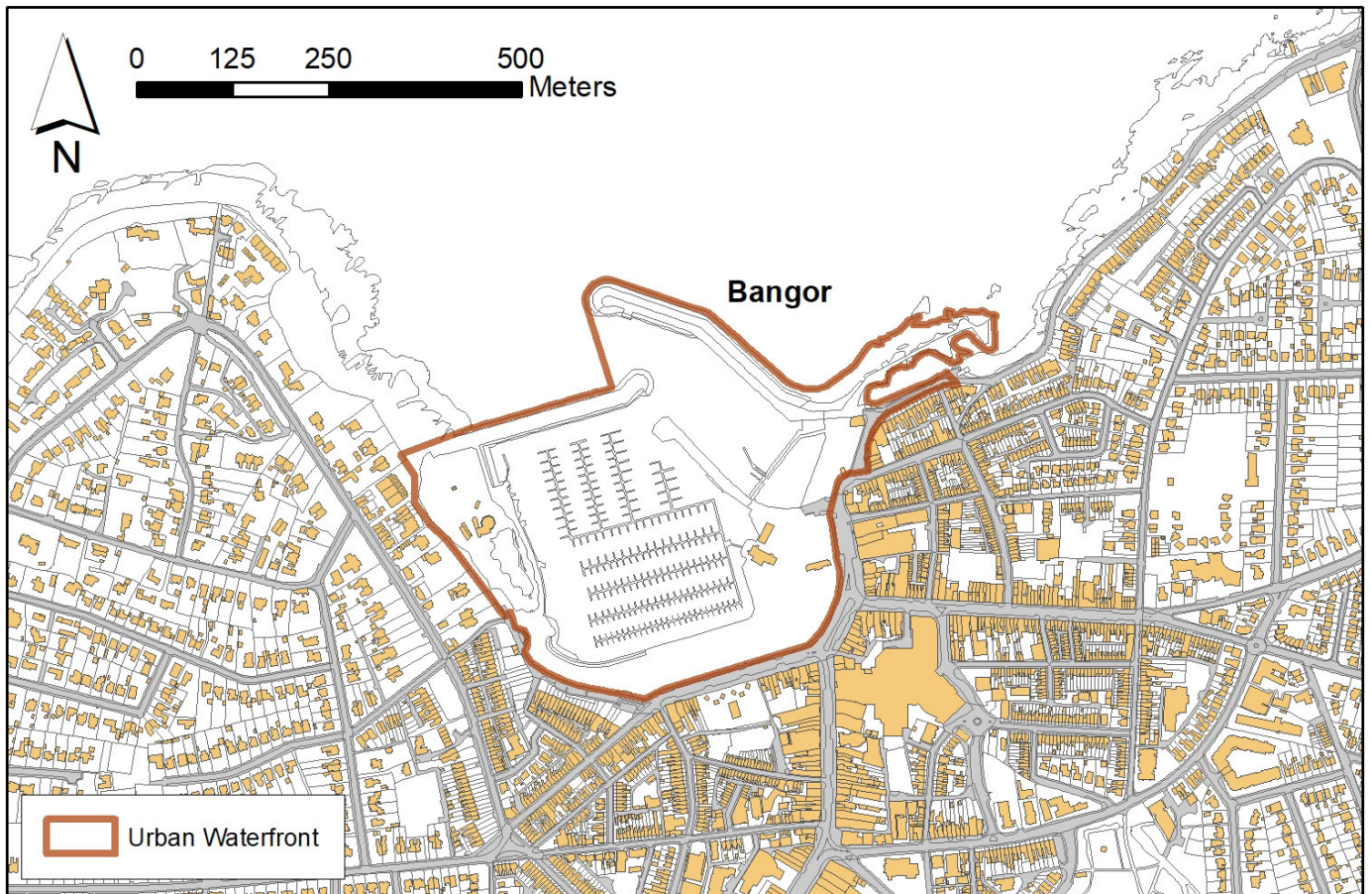
they will enhance environmental quality of the area, retain and enhance access to the coast, protect coastal open space and enhance tourism potential.

**Map 10: BMA Coastal Area at Bangor**



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**Map 11: The Urban Waterfront at Bangor**



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**Option 17a: Designate urban waterfronts throughout key coastal settlements in the Borough in order to promote their regeneration and enhancement for tourism and recreation purposes**

**Option 17b: Do not designate urban waterfronts throughout the Borough and continue to rely upon regional policy to assess proposals in these areas**

**Preferred Option: Option 17a**

This option would allow the urban waterfront designation to include settlements in the legacy Ards borough such as Donaghadee, Portaferry and Kircubbin. It would use the assets of the coastal location as development opportunities by encouraging suitable tourist and recreational proposals and strengthen the existing tourist role of these settlements.

Obviously the design of any proposals would have to be appropriate to the location and be of a high visual quality when viewed from adjacent public areas and the shoreline itself.

If Option 17b were to be adopted, the waterfront areas of coastal settlements would remain as whiteland and subject to normal considerations contained within regional planning policy. However, this would remove the sharp focus on regeneration and environmental improvements and may be detrimental to the tourism economy in the long term.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Are there any settlements in AND in addition to Bangor which should have a designated Urban Waterfront? If so, which settlements?**

# Key Issue 18

## Coastal Change

Coastal change is an organic process whereby beaches adjust their shape in response to changing wave and tide conditions. It enables beaches to survive and fulfil their role as natural buffers. However, coastal change is transformed from a normal process to a 'problem' when infrastructure or property are affected by shoreline movement.

Given that Ards and North Down is bounded by 115 miles of coastline, it is likely that coastal change – in particular erosion and inundation from extreme weather events will become an increasing problem in future.



Failure of Whitechurch Road, Ballywalter due to coastal erosion (source DfI Roads)

**Option 18a:** Maintain the status quo and identify no areas of potential erosion and land instability. Continue to assess proposals for coastal development on a case by case basis in line with the SPPS

**Option 18b:** Identify areas of existing and potential coastal erosion and land instability (subject to data being available) where there will be no new development permitted

**Option 18c:** Identify areas of existing and potential coastal erosion and land instability (subject to data being available) where there will be a presumption against development except in exceptional circumstances

### Preferred Option: Option 18c

Option 18a maintains the status quo, however does not identify areas where there is potential for coastal erosion and land instability within the Borough and therefore may lead to the approval of developments that exacerbate the risks.

Paragraph 6.46 of the SPPS states that LDPs should identify areas of the coast known to be at risk from flooding, coastal erosion, or land instability where new development should not be permitted. Option 18b fulfils this aspect of the policy although is dependent upon the relevant data

coming forward in order to identify those high risk areas. This option may be overly restrictive and does not allow for varying circumstances

The preferred Option, Option 18c is similar to Option 18b, in that it operates a presumption against development on sites that are likely to exacerbate a known erosion or land instability risk. However, in recognition of the unique nature of our coastline, exceptions will be permitted – for example, for developments that can demonstrate a need for a coastal location or where there is existing coastal defence infrastructure in place. In these cases, the onus would be upon the developer to demonstrate how the proposal constitutes an exceptional case and what mitigation measures will be implemented to protect the development and surrounding property for inundation, erosion or landslip.

This option represents a compromise by applying restrictions to coastal development in a measured manner and allowing the LDP to respond to unique circumstances.

The preferred option scored as the most sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

# Flooding and Drainage

## Aim: To manage flood risk and sustainable drainage

Flooding is a natural phenomenon which cannot be entirely prevented. It can happen at any time and there is consequent risk to people, property, infrastructure and the natural environment. Flooding can originate from rivers (fluvial), rainfall overland (pluvial), reservoirs and the sea (coastal).

It is generally accepted that we are more likely to experience more regular flooding in the future. In urban areas, surface water flooding may increase due to the development of green spaces and paving of gardens and driveways. Tree removal, agricultural drainage and changing land management practices increase flows in watercourses and climate change predictions also suggest a rise in sea level, increase in winter precipitation and an increase in the intensity of extreme rainfall events.

The LDP has a key role to play in balancing the pressure for development within settlements against flood risk and to prevent future development that may be at risk from flooding or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

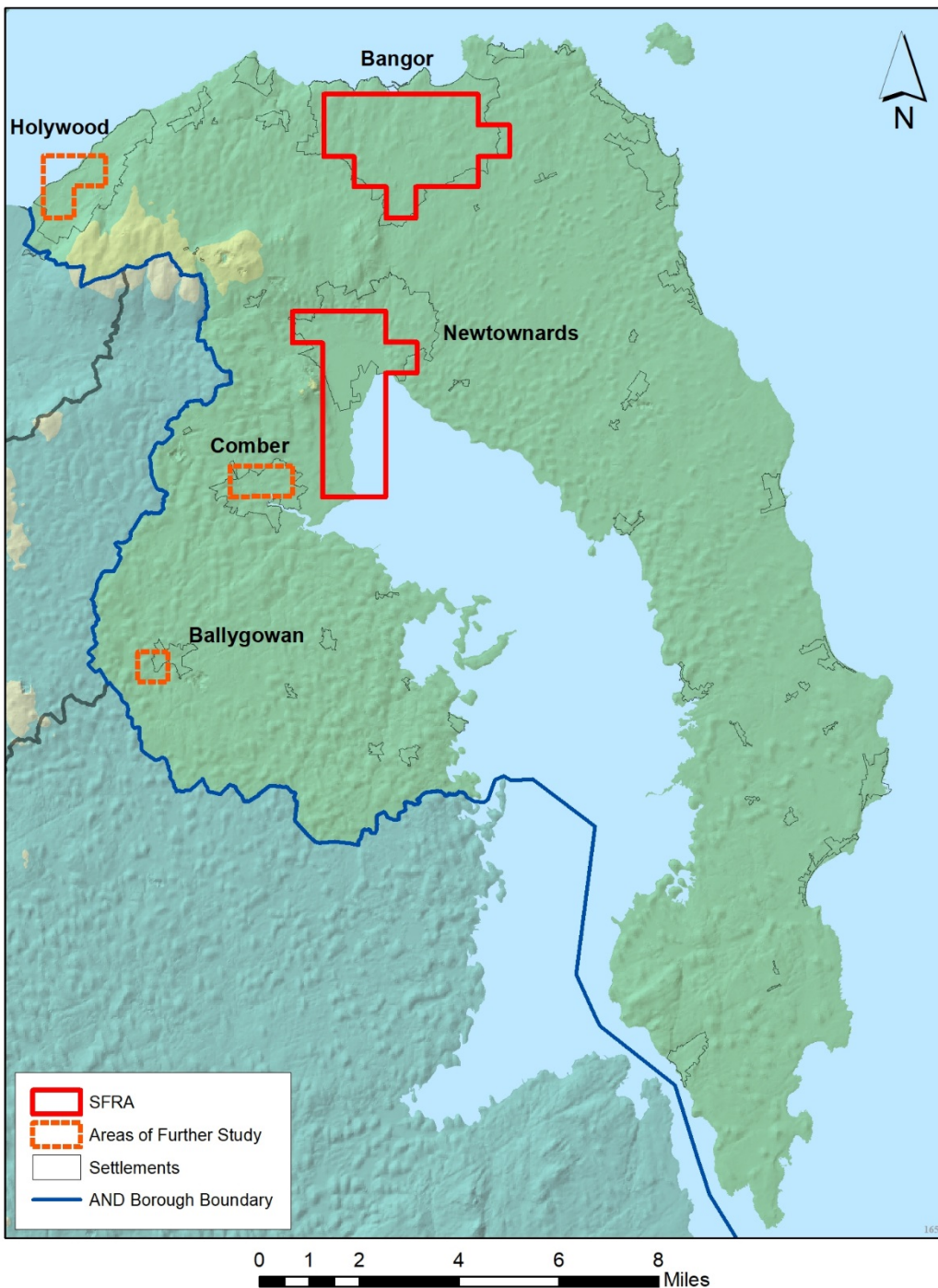


## The Evidence Base

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The Department for Infrastructure has identified Newtownards and Bangor as two of the 20 'Significant Flood Risk Areas' (SFRAs) in Northern Ireland and Holywood, Comber and Ballygowan are classified as areas for future investigation.





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**Map 12: Significant Flood Risk Areas and Areas of Further Study in Ards and North Down as defined by DFI – Rivers Agency**

Bangor is considered to be primarily at risk from fluvial flooding from six watercourses within the urban footprint. The coastal fringe is well elevated above sea level meaning that tidal inundation is unlikely.

Newtownards has a history of sea defences dating back to the 1800s. Historical breaching of defences on the Portaferry Road prompted an extensive defence project consisting of replacement of the existing earth embankments with rock armour protected steel core embankments and rock armour in 2001. Despite the relative success of these works, the town is still considered to be at significant risk from both tidal and fluvial flooding.

Inundation from reservoirs is also a concern (particularly in Newtownards due to the proximity of Kiltonga Dams and Strangford Lough Wildfowlers Pond) and although the likelihood of this type of flooding is low, the potential impact upon communities is high due to the sudden and rapid release of water. There are 19 controlled reservoirs in total throughout the Borough.

The most effective way of managing flood risk is to locate developments outside of the identified flood risk areas. Our LDP will use the most up to date information available on flood risk to identify the hazards over the Plan period. We can then make informed decisions on the appropriate zoning of land for various uses, taking those risks into account.

Further information on Flooding and Drainage can be found in the LDP Position Paper on the Council's website.

## Regional Policy Context

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### **The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035**

The RDS recognises the need to avoid, where possible, the selection of flood-prone land for employment and housing growth. It urges the planning system to adopt a precautionary approach to development in areas of flood risk and the use of the latest flood risk information that is available in order to properly manage development.

The regional guidance outlines the following with respect to flooding and drainage:

- ▶ Employment land and the redevelopment of land for urban and rural renaissance, including the necessary infrastructure should avoid, where possible, areas at risk from flooding;
- ▶ Housing growth should be managed so that it mitigates the risk of flooding by avoiding those areas known to be at risk;
- ▶ A more sustainable approach to flood risk management should be promoted, including the greater use of sustainable drainage systems.

The aim of the SPPS in relation to flood risk is to prevent future development that may be at risk from flooding or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The SPPS regional objectives generally reflect the thrust of the RDS.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 15: Planning and Flood Risk (revised)**

This is the relevant regional policy with respect to issues of flooding and drainage. The policy approach is to prevent development within fluvial and coastal floodplains, protect existing flood

defences, protect developments from overland flooding and prevent unnecessary culverting or closing of existing river channels. Development is not permitted in flood plains unless it satisfies one of a number of exception criteria, such as being classed as strategic infrastructure. The policy also requires the submission of a drainage assessment for all new residential schemes of 10 units or more or on sites in excess of 1 hectare in order to address the issue of pluvial flooding.

Policy LC3 of the **addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7: Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas (PPS7)** states that 'favourable consideration will be given to the use of permeable paving within new residential developments as a means of reducing the risk of flooding associated with surface water run-off. Where appropriate, private driveways, patios, paths and shared hard landscaped areas should be built using permeable paving materials.

## Local Policy Context

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### **Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

The Council's Corporate Plan does not specifically refer to flood risk, however the principles of flood management are in keeping with 'promoting a clean, healthy, safe and sustainable environment,' under the **PLACE** strategic priority heading, as having an effective and informed policy approach to flood risk management will contributing positively to the environment that we live and work in.

### **The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032**

Building resilience against flooding and developing appropriate drainage solutions also support the Community Plan aspirations of 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.' (Outcome 5)

# Key Issue 19

## Developing within areas of flood risk

**Option 19a:** Adopt a precautionary approach to development – only permit certain suitable types of development in flood prone areas, in line with the SPPS/PPS and with appropriate mitigation

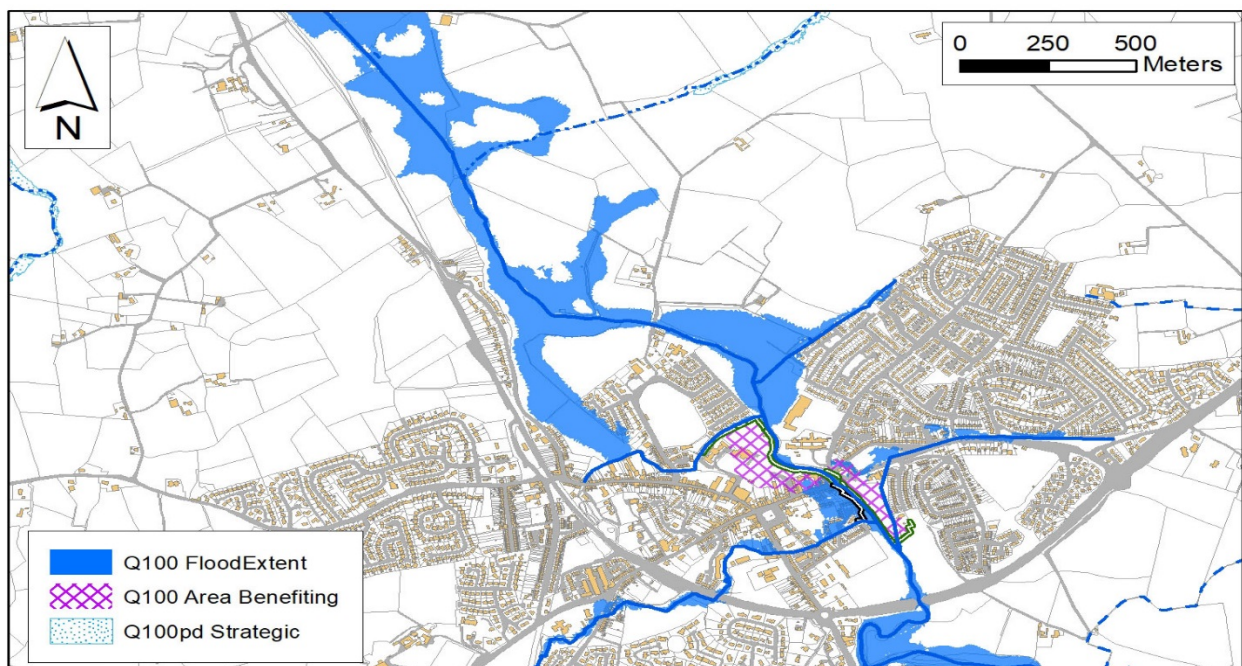
**Option 19b:** No development to be permitted in areas of flood risk

### Preferred Option: Option 19a

This preferred approach is in line with the existing policy FLD1 (New Development in Fluvial and Coastal Flood Plains) contained within PPS15 and the regional direction provided by the SPPS. This approach would continue to adopt a presumption against development in flood risk areas unless it constitutes one of a list of exceptions. Examples of exceptions include replacement dwellings in the countryside, development for agricultural use, transport and utilities that have to be located within the flood plain for operational uses, the extraction of mineral deposits and sport or nature conservation purposes.

The Flood Maps (NI) online map viewer (developed by DfI Rivers Agency) will continue to provide a vital source of information on the location of flood risk areas within the Borough.

**Map 13: Flood Plain of Enler River**



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The rejected approach, Option 19b, would prohibit all forms of development, including proposals of regional and sub-regional importance within current and future flood prone areas. This may have an adverse impact upon existing infrastructure and economic investment where there is a site-specific need for development to be located within a flood plain, such as facilities required for water-based recreation.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

## Key Issue 20

### Sustainable Drainage Systems

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**Option 20a: Bring forward policy to require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments**

**Option 20b: Do not require the use of SuDS for each new development application**

SuDS is an approach to managing rainwater falling on roads, paving and other hard surfaces through a sequence of actions that mimic natural drainage processes. The key objectives are to manage the flow rate and volume of surface runoff to reduce the risk of flooding and water pollution. In addition to protecting against flood risk and pollution, SuDS can also bring social, economic and environmental benefits such as providing valuable habitat for wildlife and creating green spaces within urban areas. Examples of SuDS techniques may include green roofs, purpose built ponds and wetlands or the use of permeable surfaces.

#### **Preferred Option: Option 20a**

This preferred option would promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments and would make it clear that SuDS is the preferred method of managing surface water drainage within new urban development. Furthermore, this option would be in keeping with guidance contained within the SPPS and RDS where a sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management is encouraged.

Policy FLD3 of PPS15 (Development and Surface Water Flood Risk Outside Flood Plains) requires the submission of a drainage assessment for certain proposals, depending upon their scale and flooding history. This approach would update and go further than the current policy

provisions contained within FLD3 as it would encourage the integration of SuDS schemes irrespective of whether there is a history of pluvial flooding or not. Greater onus would be placed upon the developer to demonstrate why SuDS would not be suitable.

The alternative option, Option 20b, does not place an emphasis upon the introduction of SuDS and does not encourage its integration into new development. Taking this alternative approach would limit the opportunity to establish SuDS as a more natural approach to drainage management within the Borough.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

# Historic Environment

**Aim: to conserve, protect and enhance the historic environment of the Borough**



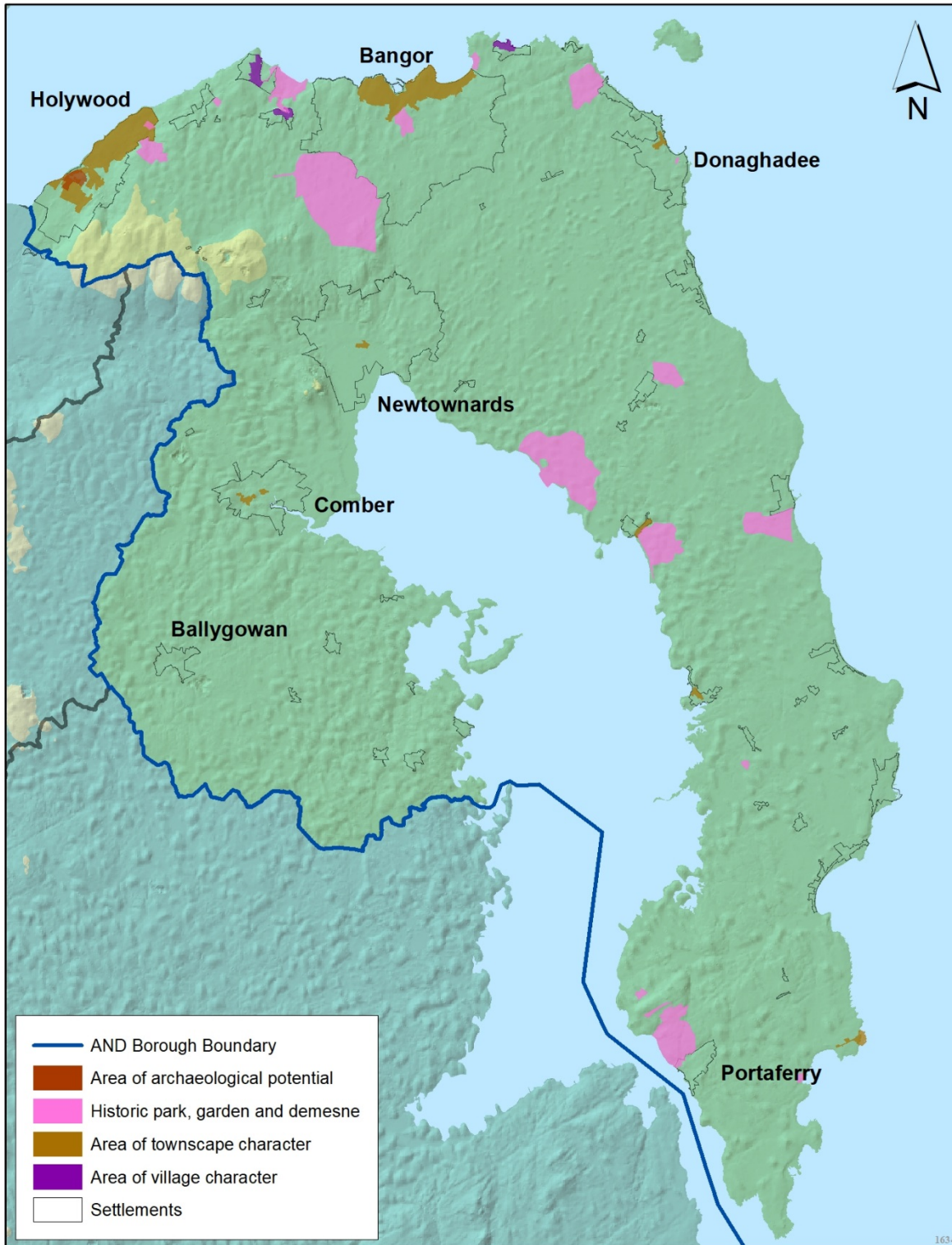
The LDP has a key role in the stewardship of our archaeological and built heritage. This includes assets such as vernacular buildings, planned parklands, tombs, industrial and defence heritage features and monuments. They are all important sources of information about our past and are often significant landmarks in the present townscape and countryside. Archaeological and built heritage constitutes an irreplaceable record which contributes to our understanding of both the present and the past and is an important economic resource.

## The Evidence Base



Fig 21: The Historic Environment of Ards and North Down

**Map 14: Historic Environment Overview of Ards and North Down**



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In addition to the above, The Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Historic Environment Division has submitted a Statement of Significance in support of the designation of an Area of Special Archaeological Interest (ASAI) at Nendrum Monastic Site on Mahee Island. Work is also underway to expand the 12 Areas of Archaeological Potential to include a further 15 settlements in the Borough.



The Round Tower at Nendrum

Further information on the wealth of built heritage assets in the Borough can be found in LDP Position Paper - Historic Environment which can be found on the Council's website.

## Regional Policy Context

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### **The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035**

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 recognises that Northern Ireland has a rich and diverse built heritage which contributes to our sense of place and history. It is a key tourism and recreational asset and sustainable management of the built heritage makes a valuable contribution to the environment, economy and society. The regional guidance outlines the following with respect to the built environment:

- ▶ Identify, protect and conserve the built heritage, including archaeological sites and monuments and historic buildings and also the character of built heritage assets within cities, towns and villages;
- ▶ Placing an emphasis upon our built heritage as a key marketing, tourism and recreational asset that can make a valuable contribution to the environment, economy and society.

### **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

The aim of the SPPS is to 'manage change in a positive way to safeguard those heritage assets whilst facilitating appropriate development that will contribute to the ongoing preservation, conservation and enhancement of these assets.' The SPPS states that in preparing LDPs, councils should take account of the implications of local policies and proposals on all features of the archaeological and built heritage and their settings. LDPs should therefore identify the range of assets within the Plan area and bring forward policies or proposals for their protection, conservation and enhancement.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage**

This is the principal operational policy statement relating to the historic environment. It sets out the various policies for the protection and conservation of archaeological remains and features of the built heritage, including listed buildings, conservation areas and historic parks. Each policy outlines the main criteria that will be used to assess proposals affecting the historic environment

with an aim to resolve any conflict between conservation and development to secure mutual benefit as well as to prevent development that is detrimental to our heritage.

## Local Policy Context

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### Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Under the strategic priority heading **PLACE**, the Council's Corporate Plan sets aims to 'invest in and promote the borough's rich cultural heritage and environment,' and to 'enhance our towns villages and coastlines.' These themes have direct relevance to archaeology and built heritage. Elsewhere in the Corporate Plan, the significant potential of the appropriate management and promotion of the built environment is recognised in a more indirect way for example 'Increasing pride in the borough' under the topic heading **PEOPLE** and 'attract and promote economic investment' and 'enhance visitor experience and spend' in the **PROSPERITY** section.

### The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

The conservation and protection of our heritage assets also supports the Community Plan aspirations of 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy' (Outcome 4) and 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment' (Outcome 5).

### The Integrated Arts and Heritage Development Strategy 2018-2023

Ards and North Down Borough Council has produced a new Integrated Strategy for the future development and delivery of Arts and Heritage services in the Borough. This has resulted in a 5-year Strategy and 3-year Action Plan and its outcomes will be relevant to this LDP topic area.



Temple of the Winds,  
Mount Stewart



Crawfordsburn Viaduct



Grey Point Fort,  
Crawfordsburn

# Key Issue 21

## Protecting and enhancing the historic environment of our Borough

**Option 21a: Maintain the existing approach for protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough, whilst reviewing existing designations and identifying new areas for designation as appropriate**

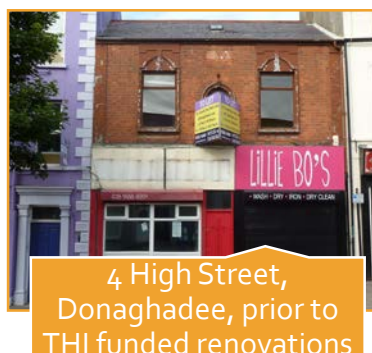
**Option 21b: Maintain the existing approach for protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough**

### **Preferred Option: Option 21a**

The preferred approach, Option 21a, would ensure that all existing built heritage and archaeological assets, both those designated through the existing development plans (e.g. Areas of Townscape Character and Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest) and also those designated outside of the LDP process (e.g. Conservation Areas and Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes) are afforded appropriate protection through the policies and proposals within the LDP.

This option allows for a comprehensive review of all of the existing built and archaeological environment assets within the Borough, whilst also affording the opportunity to identify new areas or designations that may be worthy of protection through the LDP, for example the emerging Nendrum Area of Special Archaeological Interest designation. It would provide scope for the update and review of design guides and supplementary planning guidance for our existing conservation areas, particularly Portaferry which was produced in 1983.

This option recognises that the regeneration of built heritage assets can promote economic growth and vitality particularly in the tourism sector. The Townscape Heritage Initiative schemes that are underway in Portaferry and Donaghadee are testament to the contribution that the enhancement and renovation of historic townscapes can make to the economic viability of our town centres.



This approach should also help ensure that new development will be of a high quality in terms of design and positive place-making which are core principles of the SPSS. It should further ensure

that a balanced approach will be taken in terms of achieving economic growth and enhancement of the tourism industry whilst also protecting those environmental assets to which economic success is inextricably linked.

Whilst Option 21b would ensure that all existing built heritage and archaeological features identified in the existing development plans are retained and afforded appropriate protection, conservation and enhancement in the new LDP, there would be no opportunity to review existing designations or introduce new ones.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with this approach to the preservation of our historic environment?**

## Key Issue 22

### Safeguarding Non-Designated Heritage Assets

This issue stems from the growing concern regarding the loss of non-listed traditional buildings which have a local significance for the community.

The SPPS refers to 'non-designated heritage assets (Para. 6.24) and suggests that the Council bring forward bespoke local policies for such buildings. These could include below ground features, individual buildings, townscape and landscape features, which, although not protected by a formal listing, may be important due to their age, design, quality, innovation and social/cultural significance.



The Old Inn, Crawfordsburn, a building for possible inclusion in a local list

**Option 22a: Bring forward specific measures to safeguard against the potential loss of non-designated heritage assets**

**Option 22b: Do not bring forward specific measures to safeguard against the potential loss of non-designated heritage assets**

## **Preferred option: Option 22a**

Assets may be included on the basis of certain criteria such as quality works of a well-known local architect or craftsman, assets that illustrate important aspects of social, agricultural, industrial, cultural or military history and assets that act as landmarks or focal points in the street scene.

Encouraging the formulation and use of local heritage lists means that more weight will be attached to local heritage as a material consideration in the planning process and more clarity will be provided in terms of what kinds of developments would be acceptable in certain areas. It offers the possibility to provide a strategic framework to enable the designation and retention of locally significant heritage assets through the LDP.

A key example of a case where the creation of Local Heritage Lists would be useful is in the interpretation of policy CTY4 of Planning Policy 21 – ‘The Conversion and Reuse of Existing Buildings.’ Further amplification of this policy is found in the SPSS which states that in order to qualify for approval for a conversion proposal, the building in question must be ‘locally important.’ Inclusion on a Local List would provide more clarity as the kinds of buildings that would be eligible for conversion under this policy.

The second Option, 22b, would mean that non-listed heritage assets would fail to be identified or protected via the LDP process. This could lead to unsympathetic development or even the complete loss of these cultural assets.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Are there any local buildings or landscape features that you think should be recognised in a Local Heritage List?**

**If so what are they and why should they be included?**

# Natural Environment

**Aim:** To conserve, enhance and protect the natural environment of the Borough

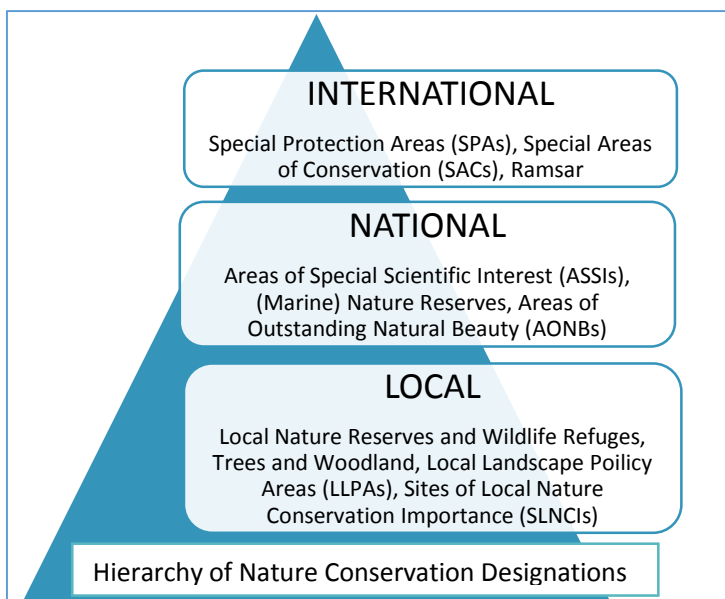


The Local Development Plan is obligated to manage and plan for future development in a sustainable manner, whilst taking account of natural heritage assets. These can include habitats, species, landscapes and earth science features which are afforded protection at an international, national or local level. It is widely accepted that our unique natural environment can be used for cultural, educational and leisure purposes, supporting our tourism industry and enhancing the life of our citizens. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that development is achieved in as sustainable way, which does not cause harm to designated areas.

## The Evidence Base

Ards and North Down Borough is rich in varied landscapes, wildlife habitats and heritage features, which together make a positive contribution to its special character and identity. The district is dominated by Strangford Lough, an enclosed tranquil stretch of marine water with an indented coastline of islands and half drowned drumlins and a smoother eastern coast, both backed by wooded estates. Other highlights include Crawfordsburn Country Park, Craigantlet Escarpment, the Copeland Islands and the North Down Coastal Path. The value and importance of many of these areas are recognised and afforded protection through international, national and local environmental designations.

The outstanding value of Strangford Lough as a marine habitat is recognised and the conservation

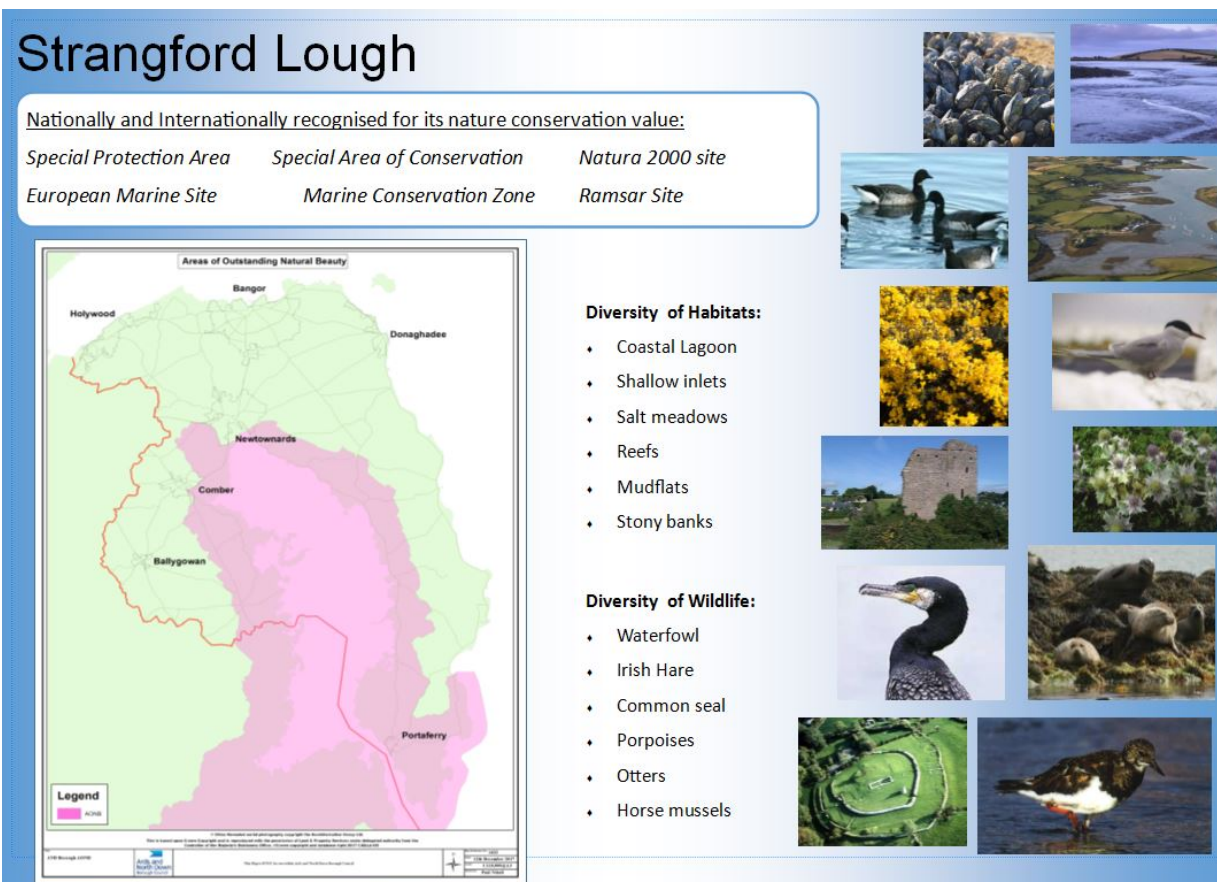
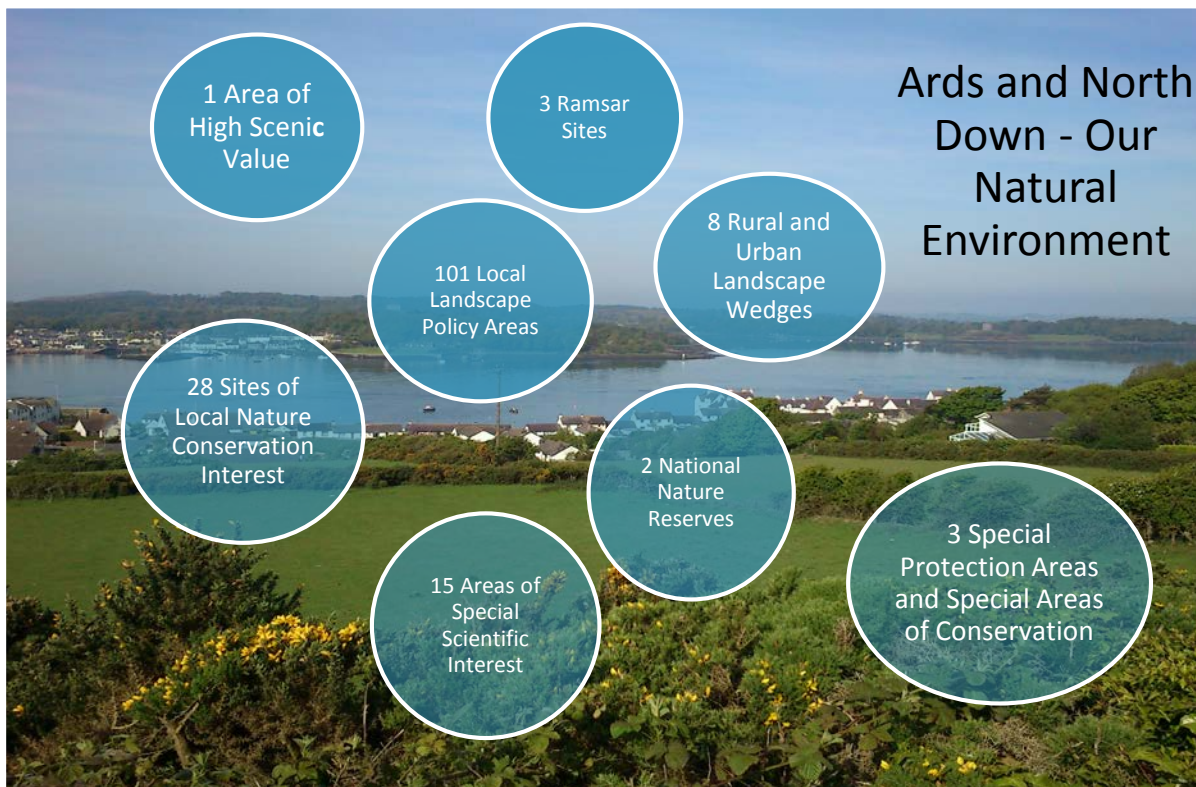


of its natural environment is secured by a variety of statutory designations made under European Directives and regional legislation. Similarly, the Outer Ards and Belfast Lough coastlines to the east and north of the Borough are also designated as SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites.

In addition to the above, 15 Areas of Special Scientific Interest are designated throughout the Borough in recognition of their flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features. Over half of the Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty falls within the administrative boundaries of the Borough.

**Fig 22: The Hierarchy of Nature Conservation Designations**

**Fig 23: Ards and North Down – Our Natural Environment**



**Fig 24: Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Further information on the natural environment of the Borough can be found in LDP Position Paper on the Natural Environment which can be found on the Council's website.

## Regional Policy Context

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### The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

RDS emphasises that the diverse range of habitats, species, landscapes and earth science features in Northern Ireland are highly valued assets which should be conserved, protected and enhanced for their own intrinsic value.

In relation to the natural environment, the following aims are set under policy RG11:

- ▶ Sustain and enhance biodiversity;
- ▶ Identify, establish, protect and manage ecological networks;
- ▶ Protect and manage important geological and geomorphological features;
- ▶ Protect enhance and restore the quality of inland water bodies;
- ▶ Conserve and protect areas recognised for their landscape quality;
- ▶ Protect designated areas of open countryside from inappropriate development;
- ▶ Consider the establishment of one or more national parks.



Scrabo Tower and surrounding countryside

### Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The SPPS states that when drawing up new LDPs, councils should take full account of the implications of proposed land use zonings, locations for development and settlement limits on built and natural heritage features and landscape character within or adjoining the Plan area. Natural heritage features and designated sites should be identified in the LDP making process.

### Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 2: Natural Heritage

This sets out the relevant operational planning policies relating to the natural environment. The overarching objective is to 'further the conservation, enhancement and restoration of the abundance, quality, diversity and distinctiveness of the region's natural heritage.' PPS2 highlights that the planning authority should 'ensure that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance, priority and protected species and to biodiversity and geological interests, when taking planning decisions.'



# Local Policy Context

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## Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Under the strategic priority heading **PLACE**, the Council's Corporate Plan sets aims to 'invest in and promote the borough's rich cultural heritage and environment,' and to 'enhance our towns villages and coastlines.' These themes have direct relevance to the natural environment. Elsewhere in the Corporate Plan, the significant potential of the appropriate management and promotion of the natural environment is recognised in a more indirect way for example 'Increasing pride in the borough' under the topic heading **PEOPLE** and 'attract and promote economic investment' and 'enhance visitor experience and spend' in the **PROSPERITY** section.

## The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

The conservation and protection of our natural environment assets also supports the Community Plan (The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032) aspirations of 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy' (Outcome 4) and 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment.' (Outcome 5)

## The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030

The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development represents the Council's coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough and centres on key aims to create jobs, increase economic activity and increase visitor overnight trips and expenditure. The Strategy highlights the natural landscape of the sea, loughs and land as one of three particular strengths of the Borough, which contribute to our distinctiveness.

# Key Issue 23

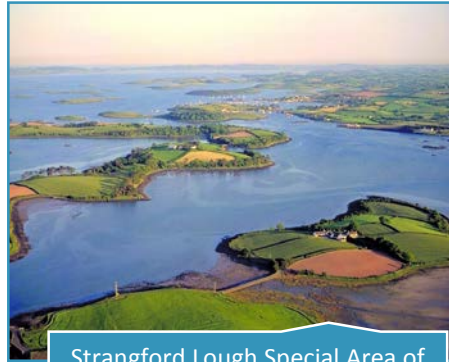
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Protecting international and national nature conservation interests (designated outside of LDP process)

**Option 23: Adopt an approach in line with existing regional policy with regards to protecting and enhancing international and national conservation sites that are not LDP designations**



Belfast Lough Ramsar site



Strangford Lough Special Area of Conservation



Copeland Islands Area of Special Scientific Interest

Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves, Marine Conservation Zones and Areas of Special Scientific Interest are statutory designations, afforded protection under EU or National Legislation and outside of the LDP process. At present, these sites are identified on the appropriate Development Plan maps and are subject to the policy provisions of NH1 and NH3 within PPS 2 (Natural Heritage) for any development proposals that would have the potential to cause harm to them. The retention of this only preferred approach will enable continued safeguarding of the Borough's natural heritage assets and will ensure that the habitats, species and features protected by law are not harmed or adversely impacted by development proposals.

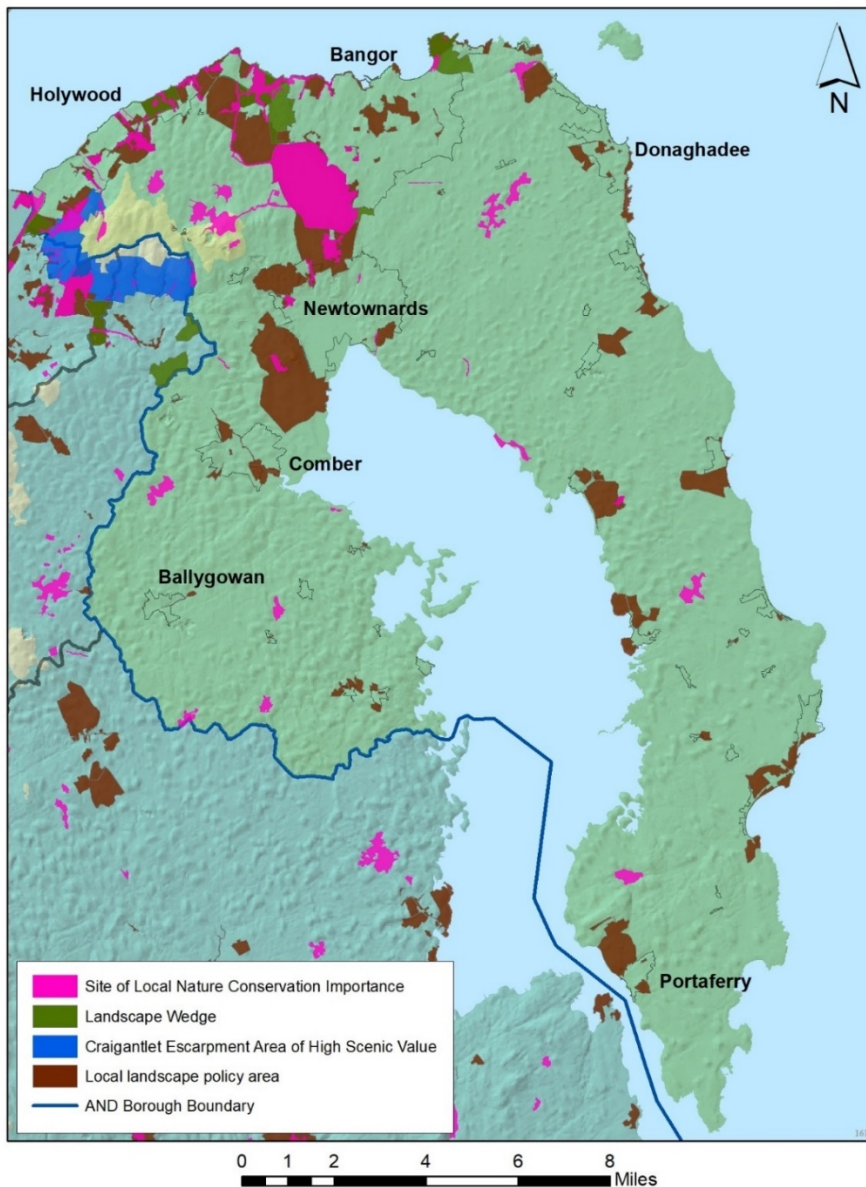
The regional direction set out in the SPPS is clear with respect to international and national designations in that they should be afforded the highest level of statutory protection from inappropriate development proposals. Only those developments that are proven to not have a significant effect upon the natural heritage asset(s) in question will be permitted. The option is the only way forward in terms of acknowledging the essential role that the natural environment has in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

No alternatives are being put forward for this issue as they are outside the LDP process.

The preferred option was the only option considered in the Sustainability Appraisal.

# Key Issue 24

## Protecting and enhancing local nature conservation sites and scenic landscapes



**Map 15: LDP environmental designations within the Plan area**

Outside the EU and Internationally designated areas, the existing Development Plans afford further protection to features of nature conservation importance.

**Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs)** are designated to protect those areas within or adjoining settlements that are considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and are therefore worthy of protection from undesirable development.

**Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs)** are designated on the basis of their flora, fauna or earth science interest.

An **Area of High Scenic Value** is designated at the unique landform of Craigantlet Escarpment as recognised for its high scenic value. Its proximity to the urban area makes it an importance recreational resource but it is under pressure from encroachment from residential development on its lower slopes.

**Landscape Wedges** are designated to distinguish between and maintain the separate identities of the various settlements within the Borough.

**Option 24a: Review local nature conservation sites and scenic landscapes and formulate appropriate accompanying policy for their protection and enhancement**

**Option 24b: Retain the current policy approach to existing local nature conservation sites and scenic landscapes**

### **Preferred Option: Option 24a**

This preferred option allows for the review of existing LDP designations and also for new designations as appropriate. The existing designations could then be updated and amended as necessary. This option would also address any inconsistencies in approach across the existing Development Plans in terms of the level of protection afforded to these areas.



Groomsport Shoreline LLPA



Kiltonga and surrounding vegetation LLPA



Crawfordsburn LLPA

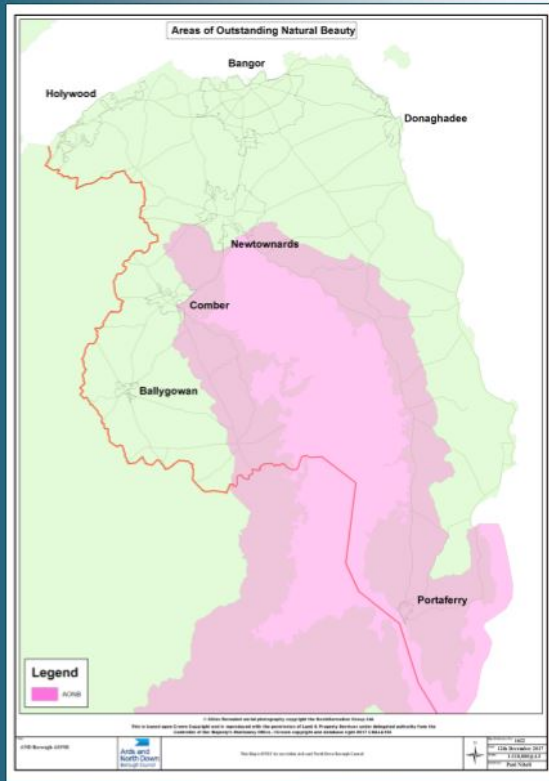
With Option 24b there would be no opportunity to review designated sites under existing area plans and therefore the extent of the protection afforded to scenic landscapes and sites of nature conservation importance cannot be assessed or amended where appropriate.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

# Key Issue 25

## Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)

### Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



An AONB is an outstanding landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is safeguarded in the national interest.

'Natural Beauty' includes flora, fauna and geological and physiographic features.

The natural beauty of AONBs is partly due to nature and partly the product of many centuries of human modification of 'natural features'



- A coastal AONB that was designated in 2010 and tells the story of our glacial past
- Strangford Lough is an almost landlocked sea inlet set within diverse low-land topography
- Within the lough, tips of drowned drumlins create a myriad of islands, whilst on shore the hills form a pleasant rolling landscape
- Rocky bays, sweeping sandy strands and soft low cliffs on Irish Sea fringe
- Scabo Hill, capped by its tower forms a prominent northern landmark

Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated in the late 1960s. Its re-designation in 2010 allowed voluntary management plans for this sensitive landscape to be drawn up for the first time.

The unique landscape of the AONB is under pressure from intensive arable agriculture, renewable energy development and the erection of single dwellings along arterial roads.

At present, the planning policy relating to development in AONBs is contained within Planning Policy Statement 2, Policy NH6. Given that this is regional policy, drawn up for the whole of Northern Ireland, it is relatively general and strategic in its focus with little consideration given to the local distinctiveness of individual AONBs.

**Option 25a: Bring forward bespoke policies to guide future development and protection of Strangford and Lecale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

**Option 25b: Retain the current policy approach with respect to Strangford and Lecale AONB**

**Preferred Option: Option 25a**

The preferred option would permit the Council to recognise the unique characteristics of the AONB that falls within our district and tailor bespoke policies to address the unique challenges it faces. It also provides the opportunity for cross-council co-operation as part of the AONB falls within Newry, Mourne and Down District council area.

Option 25b would not permit the council to bring forward bespoke policies for Strangford and Lecale AONB and would rely on the existing policy framework contained within PPS2.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Are there certain areas within the AONB that are particularly sensitive to certain types of development?

How should the LDP respond?

# PROSPERITY

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Under the theme of 'Prosperity,' the Corporate Plan aims to attract and promote economic investment, support business start-up and development, enhance and visitor experience and increase visitor spend and develop a thriving rural economy. The LDP has a key role to play in allocating sufficient land for business and industrial uses as well as strengthening the role of our town and village centres as a focus for retail and other complementary uses. Our mineral reserves provide a significant source of revenue and employment for the Borough meaning they also need to be considered by the LDP. Tourism has been identified as a key driver of the Northern Ireland economy, highlighting the need for appropriate provision for tourism accommodation and amenities whilst also protecting the tourism assets that attract the visitors in the first place. The provision of sustainable transport links provides the connectivity upon which our businesses, industries and tourism market depends.

Five topics and 17 Key Issues have been identified for consideration.

1. Employment and Industry
2. Minerals
3. Tourism
4. Town Centres and Retailing
5. Transportation

# Employment & Industry

**Aim: To facilitate sustainable development that supports a vibrant economy**

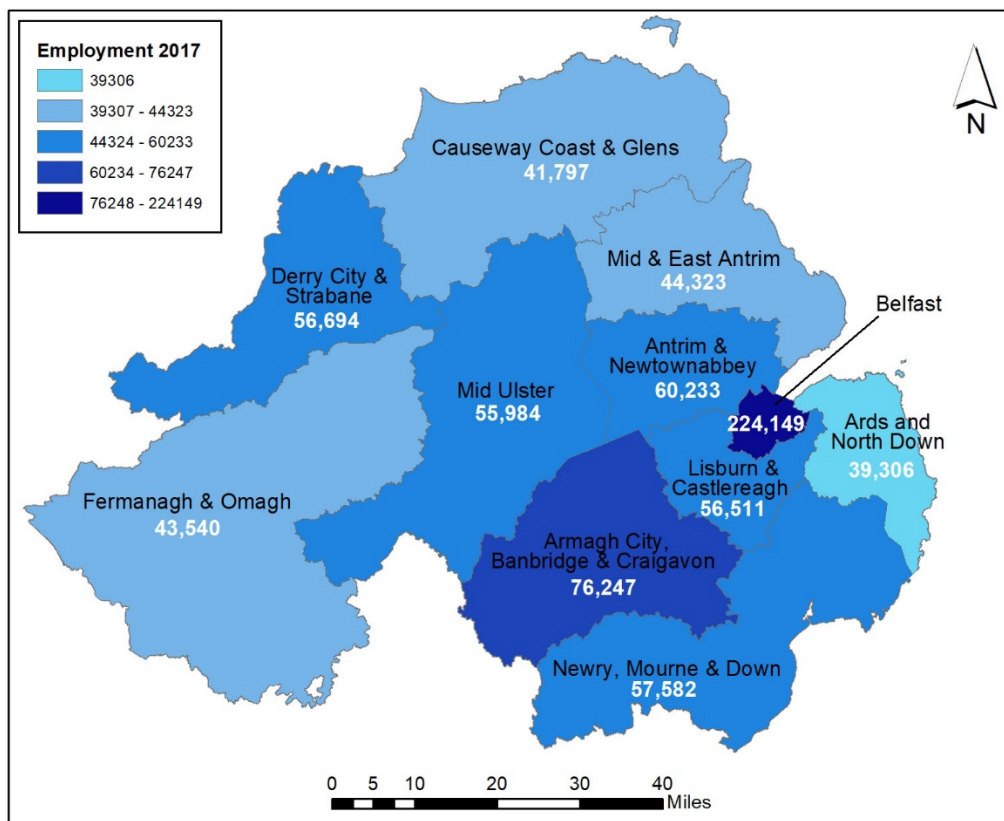


The LDP has a key role to play in achieving a vibrant economy and facilitating employment through the zoning of land and the development of appropriate local planning policy to support business development and job growth within Ards and North Down. The Plan also has an important role in supporting the vision and aims of the Council's Integrated Strategy by ensuring that sufficient and suitable land is provided in the appropriate places to retain existing businesses and attract new investment to our Borough.

## The Evidence Base

In 2016, the working age (ages 16-64) employment rate in Ards and North Down was 77.5% and the economic activity rate was 74.1% which is higher than the Northern Ireland rate of 69.3%. (Source: Labour Force Survey, NISRA September 2017)

**Figure 25: Employee jobs by District Council Area, Sept 2017 (Source: NI BRES 2017)**





The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) estimates that at September 2017, the total number of employee jobs in Ards and North Down was 39,306.

The total number of employee jobs in Northern Ireland was 756,365 (Source: BRES, NISRA 2017).

### Number of Registered Businesses



**Figure 26: Info-graphic showing Vat registered businesses in Ards and North Down 2018 (Source: Invest NI)**

There were 4,670 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in Ards and North Down in 2018. The largest sector in the Ards and North Down Borough is that of the tertiary/service sector – comprising 67% of total registered business stock. Agriculture accounts for 13%, construction 13% and production including manufacturing, accounts for 7% of the business stock.

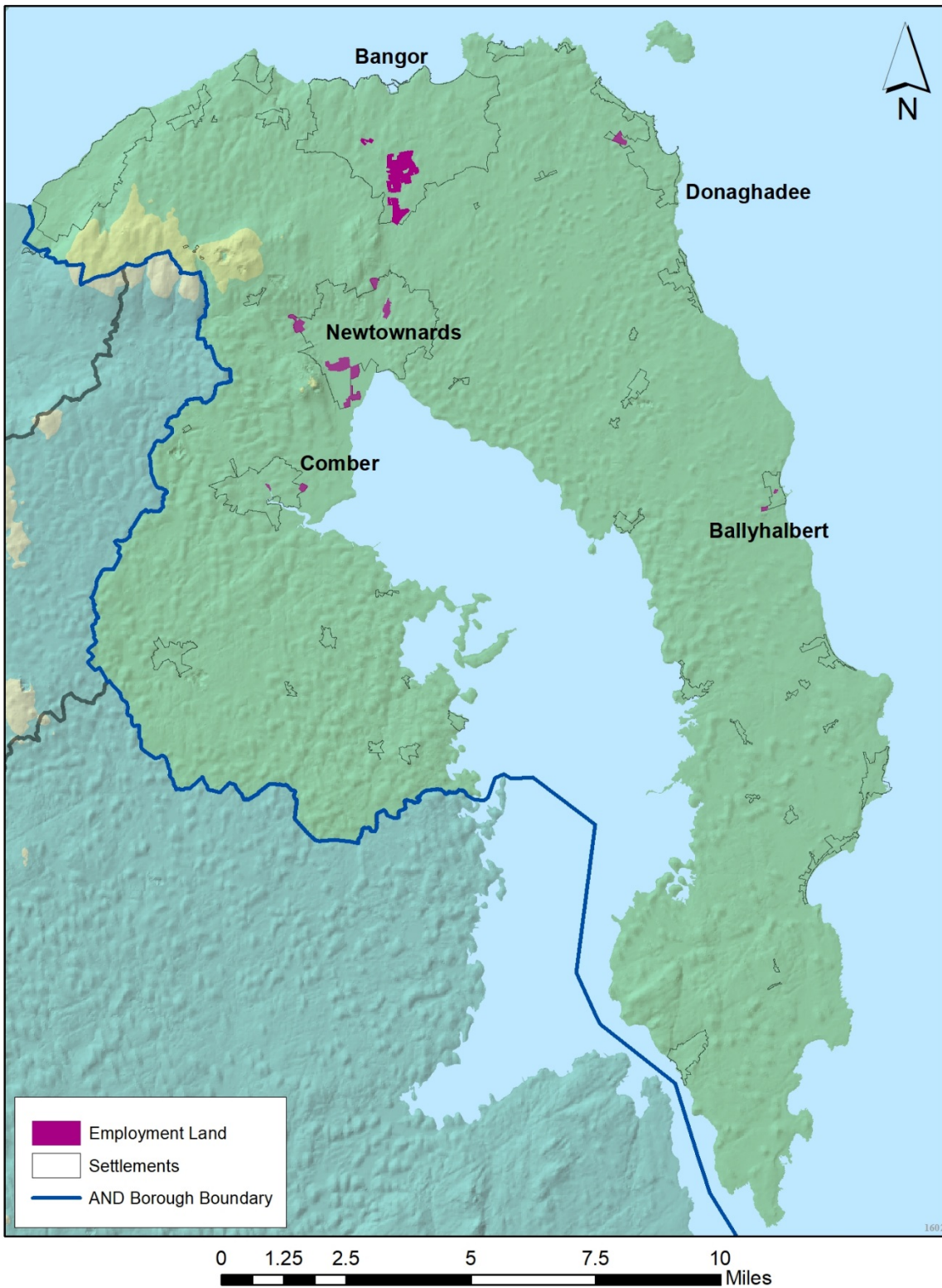
Tourism is an important element of the local service economy and has been identified as a growth area for the Borough.

The top performing businesses within the Borough include:

- Pritchitts
- Munster Simms Engineering ('Whale pumps');
- Denroy Plastics;
- Magellan Aerospace;
- Mash Direct; and
- TG Eakin Ltd.

Traditionally, fishing has been a major industry in the area with local communities - such as Portavogie, which is the second largest fishing port in Northern Ireland after Kilkeel - remaining at the centre of the trade today.

**Map 16: Extant employment/industrial zonings in Ards and North Down Borough**



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The extant plans ADAP 2015 and dBMAP 2015 designated over 200 hectares of land for employment/industrial use within the Borough. Bangor and Newtownards are the Borough's strategic locations for economic development land and are the focus of Invest NI's serviced sites in the Borough.

In Newtownards, approximately 38% of employment/industrial land remains undeveloped from the extant plan, while in Bangor 30% of zoned employment/industrial land remains undeveloped. In Bangor, two sites with a specific industry/employment zoning have not been developed in any capacity – BR05 (Lands at Newtownards Road) and BR10 (Clandeboyne Road). The zoned land in Donaghadee is committed for housing development and the zoned land within Comber has Outline permission for mixed use development, and permission for social housing.

Within ADAP 2015, Ballywalter has a designated Industrial Policy Area (designation IPA1) that relates to and recognises a local builder's merchants' yard, as such this has not been included in the total area zoned for employment/industrial land within the Borough as it is developed industrial land.

Of the total 203.23ha zoned in dBMAP 2015 and ADAP 2015, 62.68ha remains undeveloped. The remaining undeveloped land is split between the two legacy Boroughs as follows:

- 34.05ha in North Down
- 28.63ha in Newtownards

**Table 10: Uptake of Economic/Employment Land across the Borough**

Settlement	Total area zoned (hectares)	Area developed (hectares)	Area remaining (hectares)
Bangor	112.29	78.24	34.05
Newtownards	75.63	47	28.63
Comber	5.98	5.98	0
Donaghadee	9.33	9.33	0
<b>Borough Total</b>	<b>203.23</b>	<b>140.55</b>	<b>62.68</b>

## Regional Policy Context

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The implications of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for economic development are largely set out in our Spatial Growth Strategy.

## Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The SPPS includes as a core planning principle: 'to support sustainable economic growth'. The Regional Strategic objectives for facilitating economic development through the planning system are to:

- promote sustainable economic development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation by ensuring the provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development and a choice and range in terms of quality;
- sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale;
- support the re-use of previously developed economic development sites and buildings where they meet the needs of particular economic sectors;
- promote mixed-use development and improve integration between transport, economic development and other land uses, including housing; and
- ensure a high standard of quality and design for new economic development.

The SPPS sets out a hierarchy for economic development, that is, within larger settlements such as cities and towns, planning decisions must, to a large extent, be informed by the provisions made for economic development through the LDP process. Furthermore, the SPPS indicates that in these larger settlements appropriate proposals for Class B1 business uses (such as offices and call centres) should be permitted if located within city or town centres, and in other locations that may be specified for such use in a LDP, such as a district or local centre.

Elsewhere, such proposals should be determined on their individual merits, taking account of the potential impacts and the likely economic benefits, both local and regional.

Within villages and small settlements, the LDP will not normally zone land for economic development purposes, as this could inhibit flexibility. However, favourable consideration should be given to an economic development proposal where it is of a scale, nature and design appropriate to the character of the particular settlement and subject to meeting normal planning criteria such as compatibility with nearby residential use.

In acknowledging that not all economic development is restricted to urban areas, the SPPS aims to sustain vibrant rural communities through the provision of support for rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale.

## Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 4: Planning and Economic Development

The aim of PPS 4 is to facilitate economic development in ways which are consistent with the environment and the principles of sustainable development.

Safeguarding of the environment and the fostering of a clean green image can provide economic advantages and employment. It recognises that changing patterns of employment in NI require a more flexible approach when determining the types of economic development that are acceptable in particular locations. For instance, high technology, knowledge-driven enterprises and light industry and Class B1 high technology office uses may be compatible within an area allocated for general industrial development or modern low impact industries within residential areas without causing unacceptable disturbance and adverse impact upon amenity.

PPS4 may also be applicable to assessing proposals for other 'sui generis' employment uses which are land uses which do not fall into any particular use class in the Use Classes Order.

Under the provisions of PPS4, industrial zonings can comprise of proposed and existing industrial lands and consideration should be given to identifying these as economic zonings to protect the land for economic purposes.

## Local Policy Context

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### Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

The objective of **PROSPERITY** is of most relevance to the topic of economic development. Under this objective, the Corporate Plan aspires to: attract and promote investment; support business start-up, development and growth; enhance the visitor experience to increase visitor spend; and develop a thriving rural economy.

### The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

The most appropriate outcome linked to economic development is Outcome 4 - '*All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy*'. The Plan states that 'we will work towards this outcome by addressing deprivation and ensuring people have the financial resources to meet their everyday needs by growing a sustainable economy with a skilled workforce, access to employment and effective economic investment'. This aspiration is clearly compatible with the objective of the LDP to facilitate sustainable development that supports a vibrant economy.

### The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030

All six thematic priorities of the Integrated Strategy are relevant to economic development as they focus on a partnership-based approach to achieve job creation, increase economic productivity, and visitor overnight trips and expenditure. These thematic priorities provide a framework within which specific actions are identified as being of strategic importance to the Borough.

## Key Issue 26

### Provision of a generous supply of land for economic development within settlements

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**Option 26a: Evaluate existing zonings for economic/employment land and identify new sites to meet local employment and economic development needs**

**Option 26b: Retain existing zonings for economic/employment land and identify new sites to meet local employment and economic development needs if appropriate**

## Option 26c: Retain existing zonings for economic/employment land as identified in the extant plans

### Preferred Option: Option 26a

Ards and North Down Borough has approximately 62.68ha of zoned employment land remaining. The current development plans for the Borough – ADAP and dBMAP - were originally published some 10 years or more ago and many of the employment zonings have not yet come forward (see Table 10 showing Uptake of Economic/Employment Land across the Borough).

The preferred option will allow the evaluation of the existing economic/employment land zonings to assess their continued suitability for economic development. It will also allow assessment of the varied uptake of land and the potential constraints which have prevented implementation to date, such as location or flood risk. A thorough evaluation of existing economic/ employment zonings and an assessment of all potential development constraints will allow the Council to consider whether these sites should be retained as economic/employment zonings or de-zoned in favour of more realistic and deliverable alternatives.

The preferred option will also allow new sites to be identified in areas where economic/ employment land is needed the most and ensure a generous supply of land suitable for economic development is zoned to meet the local needs of the Borough.

The selection of all economic/employment sites will be based upon an analysis of future demand in respect of the scale, location and type of demand within the Borough until 2030 and will offer a range and choice of sites to promote flexibility and provide for the varying needs of different types of economic activity from traditional manufacturing to high-tech business, research and development. Account will be taken of key factors including accessibility for all members of the community, connectivity, availability of infrastructure, specialised needs of specific economic activities, potential environmental impacts and compatibility with nearby uses.

Option 26b would allow some flexibility to identify new sites to meet local economic/employment needs but it would not allow existing zonings to be reviewed. This would not address the constraints met by the existing zonings and the varied uptake of economic/employment land within the Borough. It is considered that Option 26b would not contribute to the aim of sustainable economic development.

Option 26c would retain existing economic/employment land zonings which may be no longer suitable due to the data being out of date from the extant plans and constraints on the land such as infrastructure and flood risk. This option would not allow the identification of new sites to meet local needs throughout the Borough and would not promote sustainable economic development.

The preferred option scored as the most sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with the approach to evaluate existing zonings for economic/employment land and identify new sites?**

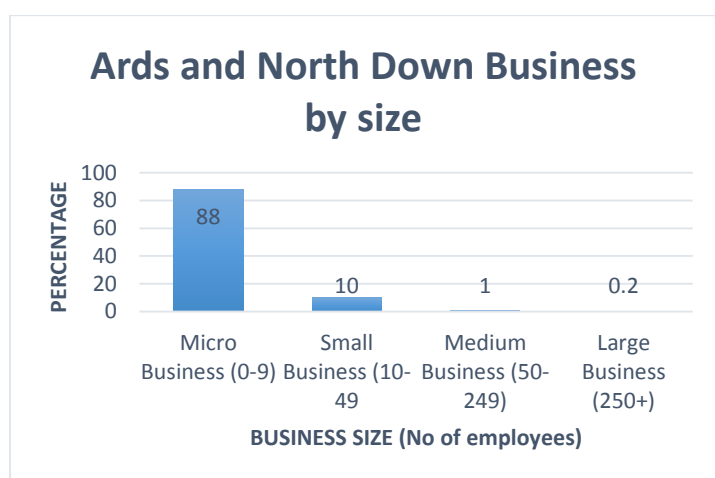
## Where should new sites be located?

# Key Issue 27

## Identification of land to accommodate business start-ups and flexible co-working spaces

**Figure 27: Ards and North Down Businesses by Size**

(Source: NISRA 2018)



The vast majority of the existing businesses within Ards and North Down are classified as 'micro' businesses with 88% having less than 10 employees (NISRA Interdepartmental Business Register). This may be attributable to the dominance of the service industry within the Borough<sup>6</sup> (BRES, NISRA 2018).

However, it may also indicate the changing nature of business within the Borough incorporating small businesses and entrepreneurs (note the figure does not account for the self-employed.)

Much of the remaining zoned employment land within the Borough is located on large undeveloped sites, often these have key site requirements or design considerations which require infrastructure and transport improvements or the submission of a master-plan for the whole site. Others are on Invest NI lands with particular specifications to meet prior to agreement of leases. Such requirements may be off-putting for smaller entrepreneurs and business start-ups.

<sup>6</sup> BRES counts the number of **jobs** rather than the number of persons with a job. As a result, a person holding both a full-time job and a part-time job, or someone with two part-time jobs, will be counted twice. (NB figures do not include agriculture employee jobs and Non PAYE workers- i.e. the self-employed.)

Start-ups are generally young, innovative firms with growth ambition, often operating under uncertain conditions such as an unproven technology or a new business model. Their requirements for business purposes may be limited to a physical working space with digital connectivity or may extend to training, mentoring, networking opportunities and specialist equipment.

**Option 27a: Identify specific sites within economic/ employment zonings suitable for business start-ups and flexible co-working spaces**

**Option 27b: Do not identify specific sites – consider business start-ups and flexible co-working spaces on a case by case basis**

### **Preferred Option: Option 27a**

This preferred option will allow identification of a variety of sites within economic/employment zonings to encourage and meet the specific needs of business start-ups which will support economic growth and encourage entrepreneurship within the Borough. It will also help achieve the prosperity objective of the Council to support business start-up, development and growth and the thematic priority of the Council's Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development to promote and attract investment which highlights greater levels of business start-up activity as key to growing the economy of Ards and North Down.

The LDP has a key role to play in facilitating sustainable growth by co-ordinating public and private investment to encourage development where it can be of most benefit to the wellbeing of the community. Identifying suitable sites for flexible co-working and/or business start-ups will provide certainty for investors wishing to support start-up companies through providing funded places, providing access to facilities and resources and collaborating on events and initiatives with other business incubators. Business start-ups and flexible co-working spaces may provide the solution to those seeking suitable premises without having to invest significant capital.

Town centres and edge of centre locations are likely to be the preferred location within towns but there may also be potential within some of the larger villages – particularly where these either serve a large catchment or are well connected to transportation networks.

Option 27b will allow business start-ups and flexible co-working spaces to be considered and acknowledges their importance for economic development. However, it does not direct them to economic/employment zonings as guided by regional policy and may lead to zoned economic/employment land remaining undeveloped.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree that the LDP should identify sites particularly suitable for business start-ups and flexible co-working spaces?**

**Where should these be located?**



# Key Issue 28

## Sustaining a vibrant rural economy

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Ards and North Down is a unique mix of urban and rural. As referenced in our Growth Strategy, the RDS promotes growth in Bangor and Holywood as part of the BMA, and in Newtownards as a hub, to capitalise on the opportunity for the concentration of people, goods, and existing infrastructure. However, the importance of a diversified and competitive rural economy in sustaining rural communities is also recognised. Many of the Borough's top performing businesses are located in the rural area, such as Willowbrook Foods and Magellan Aerospace, however all of the extant employment designations are located within settlements and those with remaining potential are split between Bangor and Newtownards.

**Option 28a: Support and facilitate rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale which contributes to a sustainable rural economy and supports rural communities**

**Option 28b: Retain existing policy approach to facilitation of rural economic development in certain instances**

### **Preferred Option: Option 28a**

This preferred option will respect regional strategic policy by ensuring that economic development in the countryside will benefit the rural economy and support rural communities while protecting and enhancing the environment and rural character.

Existing policy on economic development in the countryside largely restricts opportunity to agriculture, farm diversification, the expansion of an established economic development use, the redevelopment of an established economic development use, major industrial development that demonstrates a significant contribution to the regional economy, and small rural projects.

The preferred option will control rural economic development but will support development of an appropriate nature and scale where it will sustain vibrant rural communities.

It is clear that there is a balance to be struck between encouraging appropriate economic development that will support thriving rural communities and protecting or enhancing the environmental quality of our rural spaces. Responsiveness to local conditions is required to support and facilitate appropriate economic development that is accessible to all in our communities – urban and rural. It is important that any such development proposals are firm rather than speculative and make use of previously used buildings – particularly non-listed vernacular buildings which are now redundant. In line with the SPPS new building for economic development within rural areas will be restricted.

Option 28b would retain the existing policy approach to economic development within the

countryside which is considered restrictive and would not allow economic development of an appropriate nature and scale where it will contribute to sustainability and support rural communities.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Do you agree that there should be greater flexibility in relation to appropriate economic development in the countryside that supports a sustainable rural economy?

## Key Issue 29

### Location of Class B1 business uses<sup>7</sup>

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**Option 29a: Permit B1 business uses in town centres and other suitable locations that may be specified in the LDP such as certain district centres and economic/employment zonings**

**Option 29c: No locational restrictions on B1 business uses if compatible with adjoining land uses**

**Option 29b: Restrict B1 business uses to town centre locations**

#### **Preferred Option: Option 29a**

The Borough is keen to promote indigenous business and increase the number of local employee jobs. These must be located appropriately to take advantage of existing infrastructure, digital connectivity and transportation network. By doing so, accessibility and opportunities are increased for all members of the community. Town centres are therefore the logical preferred location for B1 business uses to support and enhance the diversity and vitality of town centres. Proposals for B1 business use will, therefore, be required to demonstrate that a sequentially preferable site in the town centre is not available.

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<sup>7</sup> Class B1: Business includes use

(a) as an office other than a use within Class A2 (Financial, professional and other services);

(b) as a call centre; or

(c) for research and development which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

There may, however be more appropriate locations for B1 business uses in district centres and economic/employment zonings. This option would allow flexibility to consider B1 business uses outside of town centres and within economic/employment zonings on the basis of evidenced need.

In relation to Option 29b, restricting the location of B1 business uses solely to town centres will prevent employment opportunities for such uses within land zoned for economic development and beyond town centres which may deter investors from locating in the Borough as town centre locations may be too restrictive and not offer the specific needs of the business.

Option 29c would have no control over the location of B1 business uses and may have a negative effect on the vitality and viability of existing town centres within the Borough and result in zoned economic/employment land remaining undeveloped.

Options 29a and 29b scored similarly against the sustainability objectives but Option 29a had slightly more positive outcomes and is the preferred Option.

Do you agree with a more flexible approach to allow B1 Business uses within certain district centres and economic/employment zonings?

## Key Issue 30

### Safeguarding existing employment land

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The Council recognises the importance of safeguarding existing and proposed employment land to ensure there is a generous supply of land for economic development for the duration of the Plan period. Traditionally, there has been pressure on existing employment land for other uses including housing, retail, and commercial leisure. Due to there being over 62 ha of undeveloped employment land within the Borough, proposals for alternative uses have often proved hard to resist.

The Council acknowledges that there is a range of employment activity that may not be fully captured by Part B of the Use Classes Order. This includes sui generis uses such as scrapyards, builders' yards, yards for the breaking of motor vehicles which may find difficulty in finding a suitable location due to their nature and likely impact, but would likely be compatible with most industrial and business uses as per Part B of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015.

**Option 30a: Safeguard against the loss of economic/ employment land but permit alternative employment uses which fall outside Part B of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015 within economic/employment zonings where these are compatible with existing uses in the area**

**Option 30b: Safeguard against the loss of economic/employment land to non-employment uses (e.g. those falling outside Part B of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015)**

**Option 30c: Presumption against the loss of economic/employment land to other uses unless an overriding case for mixed use development is demonstrated**

### **Preferred Option: Option 30a**

The preferred option will allow flexibility to consider alternative employment uses outside Part B of the Planning (Use Classes) Order NI provided compatibility of the proposed use with existing uses in the area is satisfactorily evidenced by the applicant.

Retail and commercial leisure proposals are considered to be main town centre uses and will be resisted in areas zoned for employment.

The Council has commissioned an Employment Land Review Report which will provide the evidential context required to make robust decisions going forward and will allow the Council to consider whether the extant employment zonings should be retained or potentially de-zoned in favour of more realistic and deliverable alternatives.

Option 30b would allow no flexibility to consider alternate employment uses within economic/employment zonings. Although this will protect economic land, it does not recognise that employment uses go beyond those traditionally set out in Use Class B and may lead to designated land remaining vacant which will impact on the economic growth of the Borough.

Option 30c would allow mixed use development on economic/employment land, which may include residential, provided the uses proposed are compatible with the surrounding area and an overriding case for the alternative use is demonstrated. The overriding case would need to present robust evidence to demonstrate, for example, that the site is no longer suitable for employment use or the loss of the employment land would not affect the regional objective of ensuring an ample supply of land to meet the future economic needs of the Borough. This would comply with the regional direction in the SPPS to identify opportunities for mixed use development within the LDP but may negatively impact the supply of land available for the economic development needs of the Borough and in turn inhibit economic growth.

Options 30a and 30b scored similarly against the sustainability objectives but Option 30a scored slightly more positively and is the preferred Option.

**Do you agree with the proposed approach to safeguard against the loss of economic/ employment land but permit alternative**

employment uses where these are compatible with existing uses within the area?

# Minerals

**Aim: Balance the need for Minerals Development proposals against the need to safeguard Landscape and Environmental Assets**

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Minerals provide an important natural resource and economic asset within the Borough. They are essential for many forms of development and provide fuel for domestic and industrial purposes. The minerals industry, through exploitation and processing, makes a significant contribution to the local and wider economy and is a valued provider of jobs and employment, particularly in rural areas.

Minerals development by its nature and location, can present a number of significant challenges relating to environmental impact and amenity of those living in close proximity to the mineral extraction and processing operations. The scale of extraction can also result in significant visual intrusion and degradation of the landscape.

The LDP therefore has an important role in facilitating sustainable minerals development to meet the needs of society, balanced with the need to protect the natural environment and safeguard the amenity of those living close to mineral extraction sites.

## The Evidence Base

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Ards and North Down Borough has an extensive history of minerals extraction, with slate, limestone, lead, shale, clay, sand and gravel all being mined in the past. Presently sandstone is the predominant rock exploited, with all six of the Borough's operating quarries currently extracting sandstone (see Map 17).

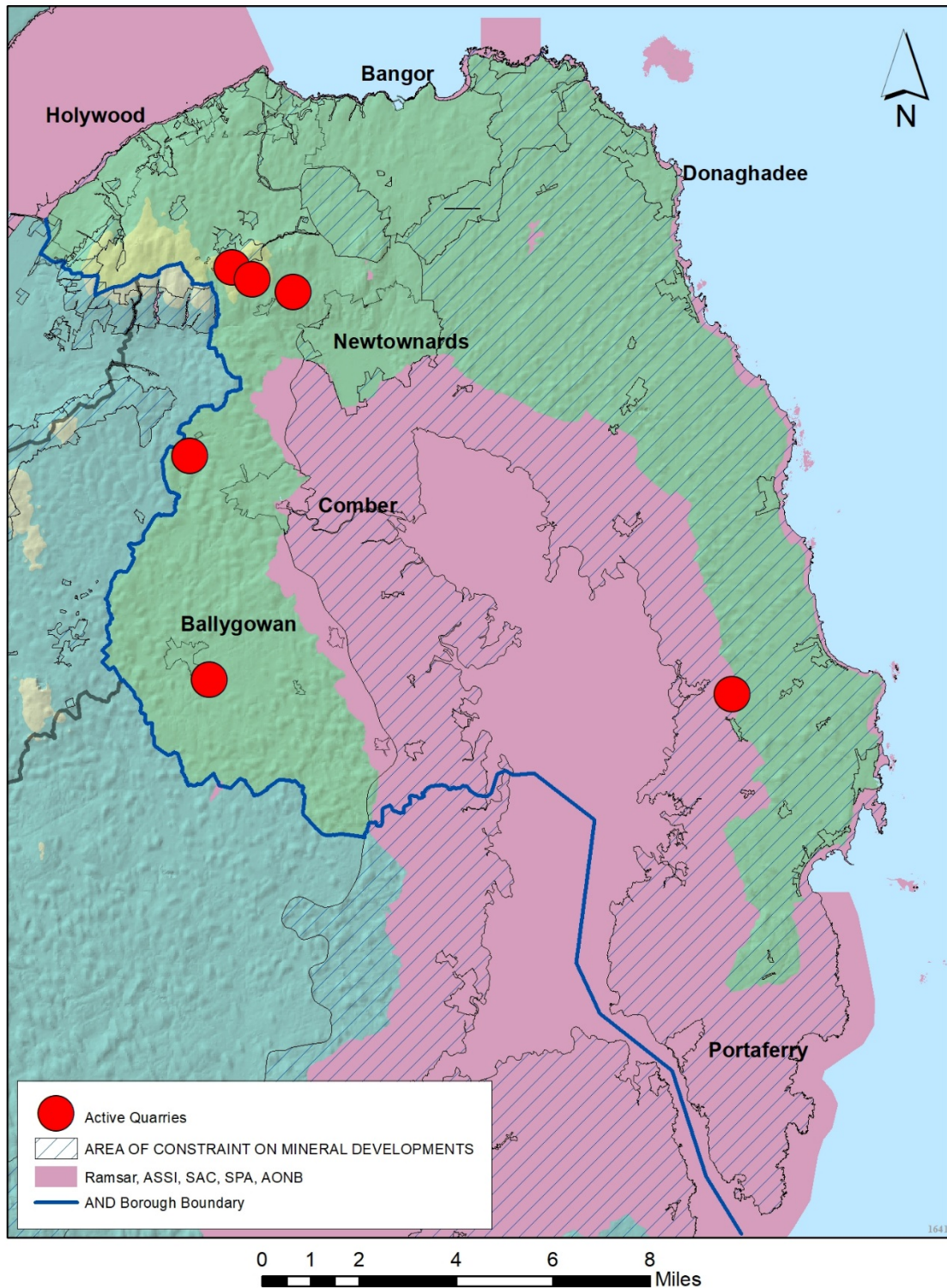
Ards and North Down Borough is the largest producer of sandstone in Northern Ireland. In 2016 the Borough produced approximately 1,933,748 tonnes of sandstone, this equates to 38% of the sandstone produced in Northern Ireland. The sandstone produced in the Borough had a selling value of £6.69 million (see Table 11).

**Table 11: Sandstone production and sales within Ards and North Down Borough 2016**

<b>Sandstone 2016</b>	<b>Quantity produced (tonnes)</b>	<b>Selling Value (£)</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	5,042,617.83	19,187,972.39
<b>Ards and North Down</b>	1,933,748.00	6,691,242.15

Source: Annual Mineral Statement 2016 (Department for Economy)

There are also a number of quarries in the Borough with existing planning permission for extraction which are no longer operating. Some of these, such as the quarry in Carrowdore, have postponed operating relatively recently.



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**Map 17: Active Quarries in Ards and North Down**

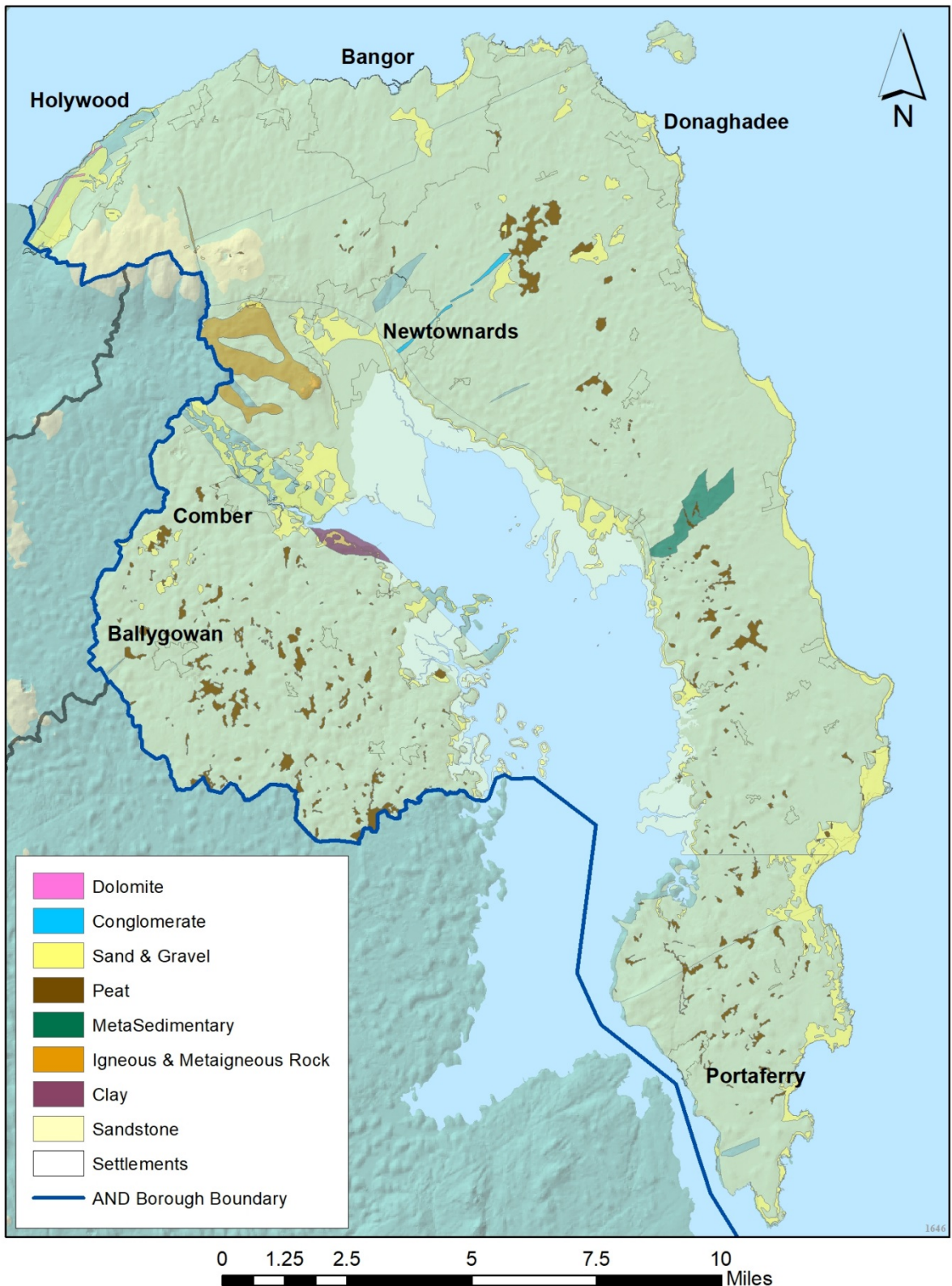
According to the Mineral Products Association NI over 100 people are employed in quarrying in the Borough, with the production of aggregates generating over £10m in revenue. Quarrying can also result in opportunities through appropriate restoration and aftercare following the cessation of extraction.

The Borough has an overall area of 45,747ha, environmental designations cover approximately 13,748ha (30%) of this total area, the majority of which is formed by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) along the coastal area of the Peninsula.

Map 18 below shows the distribution of underlying bedrock mineral types within the Borough. This indicates sand and gravel deposits are predominantly located around the coastline of the Peninsula and also shows an area of metasedimentary rock located south of Greyabbey and spanning east towards Ballywalter. The variation in Geology across Northern Ireland dictates the minerals extracted.







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**Map 18: Mineral Resources in Ards and North Down**

# Regional Policy Context

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## The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The RDS does not include any specific policy aims or objectives regarding mineral development, however, Strategic Guidance associated to minerals is contained in RG11. This expresses the need to conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and the natural environment. This includes landscapes of distinctive character and designated areas of countryside.

Northern Ireland's diverse range of rocks and geomorphological features are recognised and identification is made for the need to protect and manage these natural features. It is acknowledged sensible management of topographical and geological features can have an active role in economic development.

The unique natural setting of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA), surrounded by hills, is recognised and SFG5 sets out the need to protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the BMUA and its environmental assets. The importance of industry in providing employment for rural communities is noted in SFG13, however these should be appropriately integrated into the rural landscape and the impact on the environment and important landscapes kept to a minimum.

## Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)

The SPPS recognises that whilst mineral development can make an essential contribution to the economy, there are a number of challenges arising from this type of development. The economic benefits must be balanced with the importance of protecting the environment and the amenity and wellbeing of those living within close proximity to the site.

The SPPS has three regional strategic objectives for minerals development:

- facilitate sustainable minerals development through balancing the need for specific minerals development proposals against the need to safeguard the environment;
- minimise the impacts of minerals development on local communities, landscape quality, built and natural heritage, and the water environment; and
- secure the sustainable and safe restoration, including the appropriate re-use of mineral sites, at the earliest opportunity.

In order to meet these objectives, the SPPS specifies that in preparing the LDP the Council should bring forward appropriate policies and proposals that must reflect the policy approach of the SPPS, tailored to the specific circumstances of the Plan area. In particular, LDPs should:

- Ensure that sufficient local supplies of construction aggregates can be made available for use within the local, and where appropriate, the regional market area and beyond, to meet likely future needs over the plan period;
- Safeguard mineral resources which are of economic or conservation value, and seek to ensure that workable mineral resources are not sterilised by other surface development which would prejudice future exploitation;
- Identify areas (normally referred to as Areas of Constraint on Minerals Development) which should be protected from minerals development because of their intrinsic landscape, amenity, scientific or heritage value (including natural, built and archaeological heritage). There should be a general presumption against minerals development in such areas.

However, where a designated area such as an AONB covers expansive tracts of land, the LDP should carefully consider the scope for some mineral development that avoids key sites and that would not unduly compromise the integrity of the area as a whole or threaten to undermine the rationale for the designation.

The Council may also identify those areas most suitable for minerals development within the Plan area. This is likely to include areas of mineral reserves where exploitation is likely to have the least environmental and amenity impacts.

### **A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)**

Current operational planning policies for the control of minerals development are contained within A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland. The PSRNI recognises the need to facilitate minerals development, however, it also identifies the competing needs of protecting the environment and other interests. The policies relating to control of minerals development within the PSRNI include Environmental Protection (MIN 1); Visual Implications (MIN 2); Areas of Constraint (MIN 3); Valuable Minerals (MIN 4); Mineral Reserves (MIN 5); Safety and Amenity (MIN 6); Traffic (MIN 7); and Restoration (MIN 8).

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 2: Natural Heritage**

PPS 2 states that in the preparation of development plans full account should be taken of the implications of proposed land use zonings and locations for development on natural heritage features. This PPS also sets out the policy considerations for areas designated for their natural heritage interest and for certain species and habitats which benefit from legal protection.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage**

PPS 6 sets out the policy considerations for the protection and conservation of archaeological remains and features of the built heritage.

## **Local Policy Context**

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### **Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

A number of themes within the Council's Corporate Plan have direct relevance to minerals. Under the strategic priority heading **PEOPLE**, the Council's Corporate Plan sets aims to 'increase pride in the borough'. Whilst under the heading **PLACE** the aim is 'Ensuring we make the very best of the natural, cultural and environmental assets in our borough'. Finally, the **PROSPERITY** section includes the aims to 'develop a thriving rural economy' and 'attract and promote economic investment'.

### **The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017 – 2032**

The development of minerals within the Borough is related to a number of the aspirations included within the Community Plan. There are direct relationships between mineral exploration and Outcome 2 'All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing'; Outcome 4 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy'; and Outcome 5 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment'.

## **The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030**

The Council's Integrated Strategy states Ards and North Down has three particular strengths, these are the natural landscape of the sea, loughs and land, otherwise referred to as its blue green space. It recognises the importance of sustaining the natural environment through careful stewardship, the minimisation of harm and the development of economic opportunities associated with the landscape.

The Integrated Strategy identifies a number of Key Sustainable Planning and Design principles for the Borough which include contributing positively to local ecosystems; and harnessing existing assets, including natural and built heritage. It also acknowledges the need to carefully balance economic investment and growth in rural locations with the importance of the development being appropriate to its context.

### **Ards and Down Area Plan 2015**

The Ards and Down Area Plan designates Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments (ACMDs) in order to safeguard the most valuable and vulnerable areas within the Borough from the detrimental effects of mineral extraction. The designation of ACMDs was based on the nature conservation interests, the archaeological and built heritage, landscape character and quality, visual prominence, amenity value, geological interest and beaches in the coastal zone.

### **Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015**

A number of ACMDs throughout the Borough were designated by dBMAP, which also contains a policy restricting mineral development apart from in exceptional circumstances. This was in order to protect the environment and as a result of the adverse effects mineral development can have visually and on the amenity of those living nearby. However, the Planning Appeals Commission's Report on the Public Inquiry into objections to the draft BMAP recommended the Policy and Designation for Areas of Constraint on Mineral Development (COU 8 and COU 9) should be deleted.

## **Key Issue 31**

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### **Safeguarding Minerals**

The Geological Survey of Northern Ireland is currently in the process of preparing data to enable a safeguarding approach to be developed in Northern Ireland. This will build on information included in the Minerals Resource Map of Northern Ireland which was produced by the British Geological Survey Minerals UK Centre for Sustainable Minerals Development and published in 2012. A brief summary of the mineral resource potential for each council, indicating the mineral wealth of the council, will be included.

Ards and North Down Borough has a considerable mineral resource which generates substantial revenue. The SPPS requires the protection of mineral resources which are of economic or conservation value and it should be ensured that workable resources are not sterilised by other surface development which would prejudice future exploitation. Similarly, the Borough has many areas of significant landscape and environmental quality which should be protected for their inherent value and their value to the economy as tourism assets. The key for the LDP is to find

the balance between protecting the Borough's landscape and environmental assets and allowing sustainable mineral exploitation.

**Option 31a:** Designate Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments which will be protected from minerals development; and  
Designate Mineral Extraction Areas which are most suitable for exploitation, with accompanying policy for each, in addition to policy to deal with ad hoc applications based on their merits

**Option 31b:** Designate Areas of Constraint on Mineral Developments with accompanying policy to also deal with applications to exploit minerals based on their merits; and  
Identify protection areas for existing quarries to allow appropriate expansion

**Option 31c:** Adopt a policy led approach to deal with applications for Minerals Development based on their merits, with the identification of protection areas for existing quarries to allow appropriate expansion

**Preferred Option: Option 31c**

The approach in Option 31a, by designating Mineral Extraction Areas, would seek to protect known mineral resources from sterilisation as a result of surface development. In addition, the designation of Areas of Constraint on Minerals Developments would protect the Borough's precious landscapes; however, the legacy North Down area of the Borough currently has no designated ACMDs and the Council has no evidence to suggest the absence of this layer of protection has resulted in any significant adverse impact on the landscape.

Option 31a attempts to balance the two competing needs of mineral exploitation and protecting the landscape through designations; however, it may sterilise potential areas of mineral extraction due to the considerable spatial restrictions and could also fail to deliver on the best use of location. There may also be new areas of resource discovered which would not be protected at the time of Plan adoption, and therefore difficult to ensure facilitation as appropriate.

Using evidence from the data currently being prepared by the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland, mineral resources of economic or conservation value could possibly be identified and protected. The extraction of workable mineral resources could be protected from being prejudiced by future surface development.

Option 31b provides the opportunity to designate protection areas based on our sensitive landscape features, alongside identification of expansion buffers for those existing facilities within our Borough to ensure that their future expansion is not prejudiced by inappropriate development. It also allows protection of the existing quarries for future expansion.

The preferred option, Option 31c, would involve a policy led approach, with proposals for mineral development assessed against a criteria based policy.

The policy would take account of a number of factors such as landscape character, residential amenity, safety and impact on the built and natural environment. This approach would therefore allow for protection of the landscape assets of the Borough whilst ensuring valuable economic mineral resources are available for future extraction, by identification of appropriate buffers around existing quarries to avoid prejudicing their future expansion.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with the preferred option?**

# Town Centres and Retailing

**Aim: To support and sustain vibrant town centres as the first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions**



Town centres operate not only as the commercial heart of a town, but also as the focus for service, entertainment, leisure, cultural and civic activities. These other main town centre uses are playing an increasingly important complementary role to traditional retail uses as they enable activity levels to be sustained at different times of the day and throughout the week. The most successful urban centres are vibrant, diverse and alive with activity.

In recent years town centres have faced the ongoing challenges of increasing online competition, reduced consumer spending and competition from out of town shopping centres and retail parks which have influenced vacancy rates within town centres. In order to remain vibrant and economically competitive, it is essential that town centres offer a diversity of uses to enhance visitor experience beyond that of a standard shopping trip.

The LDP has a key role to play in supporting these centres by promoting a town centre first approach for retail and enhancing diversity of use to ensure town centres are attractive, viable and sustainable.

## The Evidence Base

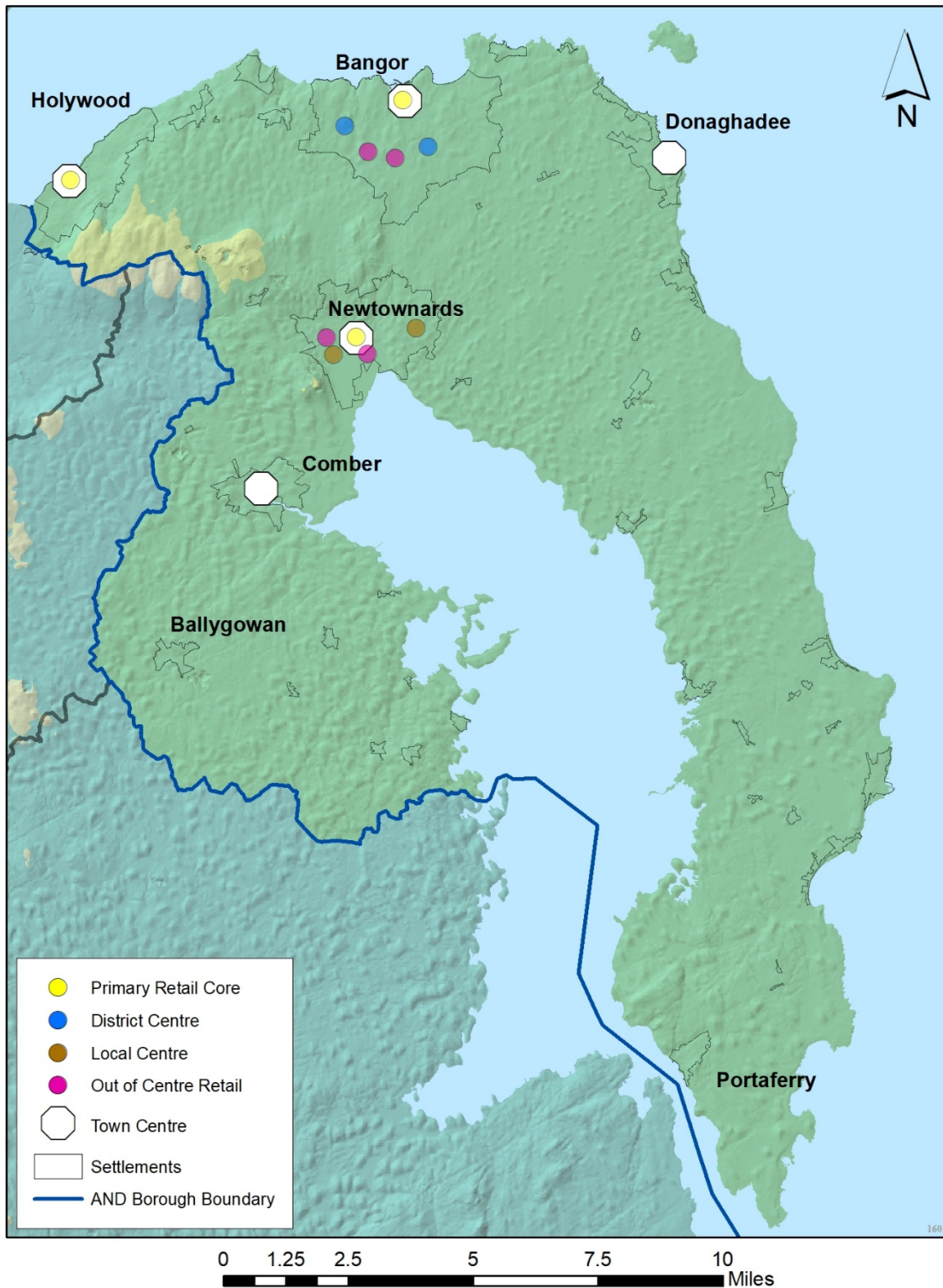
The Borough contains a range of different centres as designated in the dBMAP and ADAP. These include: town centres, district centres and local centres (see Table 12 below). Primary retail cores were also designated in Bangor, Newtownards and Holywood. Additionally, Bangor has a designated primary retail frontage.

Notable ‘Out of Centre’ retailing is located at Bloomfield, Clondeboye and Balloo Retail Parks in Bangor and at Ards Shopping Centre and Castlebawn Retail Park in Newtownards. Ards Shopping Centre, although not formally designated as a District Centre, performs the functions of a District Centre.

Classification	Location	Extant Plan
<b>Town Centres</b>	Bangor Town Centre	BMAP (draft)
	Newtownards Town Centre	ADAP
	Holywood Town Centre	BMAP (draft)
	Donaghadee Town Centre	ADAP
	Comber Town Centre	ADAP
<b>District Centres</b>	Bloomfield, Bangor	BMAP (draft)
	Springhill, Bangor	BMAP (draft)
<b>Local Centres</b>	Scrabo Estate, Newtownards	ADAP
	Stratheden Heights, Newtownards	ADAP

**Table 12:**  
**Existing hierarchy of centres**

**Map 19: The Network of the Existing Hierarchy of Centres**



The Council carried out survey work in each of the designated town and district centres in May and June 2017. Portaferry and Ballygowan were also surveyed as they are the largest



settlements by population size within the Borough without a designated town centre (population size 2,514 and 2,957 respectively, NI Census 2011, NISRA).

The survey work involved the identification and recording of: a range of uses in terms of the Use Classes Order; convenience and comparison retail provision; retail service provision; and vacancy levels. The results of these surveys demonstrate that each of the Borough's town centres is locally distinctive in terms of its existing offering, performance and potential.

**Table 13: Non-residential Land Uses within Town Centres in Ards and North Down (Source: Council Surveys May 2017)**

		SETTLEMENT				
		Bangor	Newtownards	Holywood	Comber	Donaghadee
USE CLASS (AS % OF TOTAL NON-RESIDENTIAL UNITS)	A1: Shops	37%	53%	33%	41%	44%
	A2: Financial, professional & other services	10%	11%	17%	10%	4%
	B1: Other Offices	4%	5%	6%	3%	1%
	D1: Community & Cultural Uses	8%	9%	14%	7%	10%
	D2: Assembly & Leisure	0.33%	0.28%	0%	0%	0%
	Leisure and hospitality services <sup>8</sup>	16%	14%	16%	20%	22%
	Other Sui Generis uses	2%	5%	4%	4%	6%

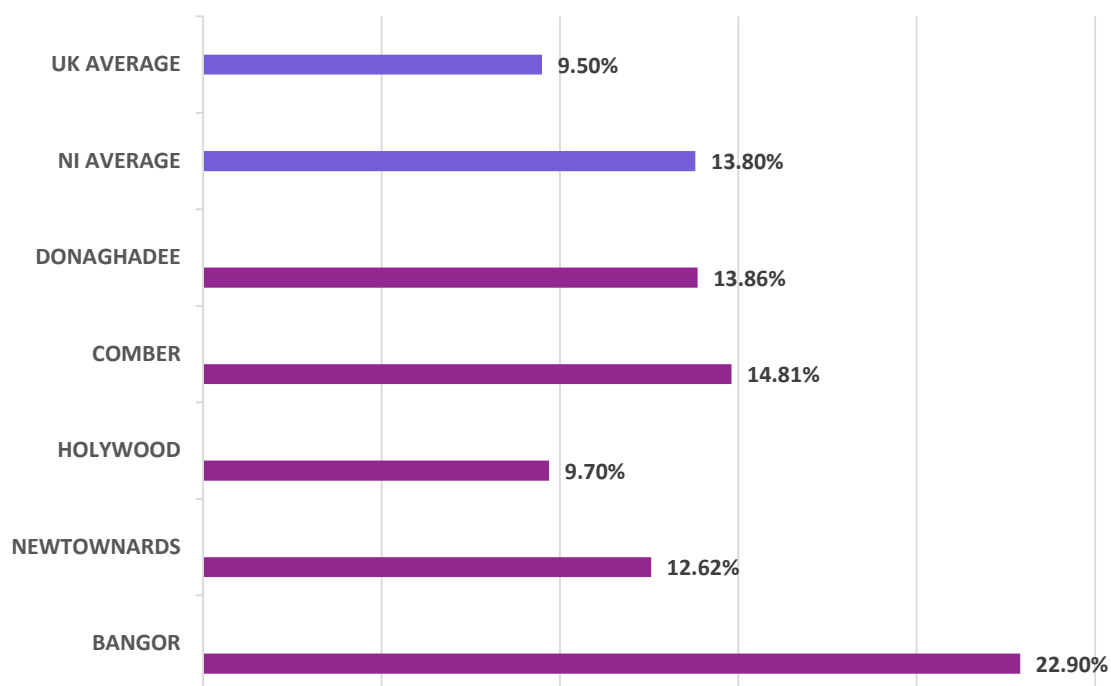
As Table 13 shows, Newtownards has the highest percentage of Class A1 shops at 53%. Holywood has the highest percentage of both Class A2 offices and B1 offices. Bangor does not have a strong showing in any particular use class which is partly reflective of a diverse offering and may also be due to the high vacancy rate.

<sup>8</sup> This includes sui generis hospitality and commercial leisure type uses (i.e. those that do not fall within any particular use class) such as cafes, restaurants, bars, hotels, leisure centres, gaming and amusement arcades.

Comber and Donaghadee both have over 40% of Class A1 shops and over 20% of sui generis leisure and hospitality services. These may be skewed by the relatively small size of these centres.

Of the existing town centres in the Borough, Bangor has the highest percentage of vacancy (22.9%) and Holywood the lowest (9.7%). Holywood excepting, these figures do not contrast favourably with the Northern Ireland average vacancy rate of 13.8% and the UK average vacancy rate of 9.5% (Source: Quarter Four 2016 & 2017 Outlook, Lisney) (See Figure 29 below).

**Figure 28: Town Centre Vacancy Rates within Ards and North Down Borough compared to the NI and UK averages**



As neither Portaferry nor Ballygowan have a designated centre, it is not possible to calculate the percentage of non-residential units or vacancy rates in the same way.

Further information on the survey results can be found in the LDP Position Paper ‘Town Centres and Retailing’ on the Council’s website.

## Regional Policy Context

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### The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 acknowledges that our places have unique identities and that these should be recognised and built upon and enhanced.

Its Regional Guidance supports urban and rural renaissance and states that regeneration is necessary to create more accessible, vibrant town centres which offer people more local choice for shopping, social activity and recreation<sup>9</sup>.

Through its Spatial Framework Guidance, the RDS specifically advocates:

- promotion of the regeneration of Bangor;
- expanding the employment and retail base to serve the catchment; and
- widening Bangor's economic base as a means to reduce its role as a dormitory town<sup>10</sup>.

The RDS also recognises the long established reputation of Newtownards as a prime retail destination, with a vibrant mix of high street and independent shops<sup>11</sup>.

### **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

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

The SPPS Regional Strategic objectives for town centres and retailing are to:

- secure a town centres first approach for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses such as cultural and community facilities, leisure, entertainment, housing and offices;
- adopt a sequential approach to the identification of retail and main town centre uses in Local Development Plans (LDPs) and when decision-taking;
- ensure LDPs and decisions are informed by robust and up to date evidence in relation to need and capacity;
- protect and enhance diversity in the range of town centre uses appropriate to their role and function, such as leisure, cultural and community facilities, housing and business;
- promote high quality design to ensure that town centres provide sustainable, attractive, accessible and safe environments; and
- maintain and improve accessibility to and within the town centre.

To realise these objectives, the SPPS sets out that Local Development Plans should:

- define a network and hierarchy of centres - town, district and local centres, acknowledging the role and function of rural centres;
- define the spatial extent of town centres and the primary retail core;
- 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 for decision taking;
- provide for a diverse offer and mix of uses, which reflect local circumstances; and
- allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and form of retail, and other town centre uses.

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<sup>9</sup> RDS 2035 – RG7, page 40.

<sup>10</sup> RDS 2035 – SFG 1, page 56.

<sup>11</sup> RDS 2035 – para. 3.86, page 72.

# Local Policy Context

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## Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019

The objective of **PROSPERITY** is most relevant to Town Centres and Retailing. Under this objective, the Corporate Plan aspires to: attract and promote investment; supporting business start-up, development and growth; enhance the visitor experience to increase visitor spend; and develop a thriving rural economy. Indirectly linked are the aspirations to increase pride in the Borough under the objective of **PEOPLE** and to enhance our towns, villages and coastlines under the **PLACE** objective.

## The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

The most appropriate outcome linked to Town Centres and Retailing is Outcome 4 which states that, 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy'. There are also indirect linkages to Outcome 2, 'All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing', and Outcome 5, 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment'.

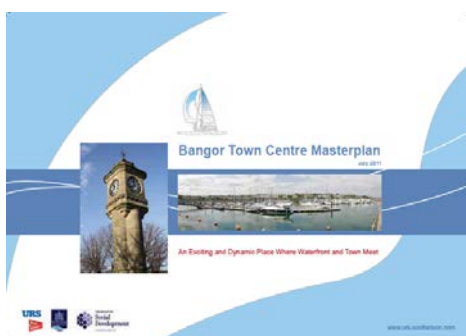
## The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030

The thematic priorities of most relevance to Town Centres and Retailing within the Integrated Strategy are:

- promote to attract investment;
- equip with skills and spaces;
- excel in quality and value; and
- nurture our assets.

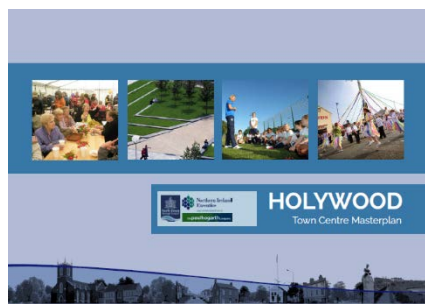
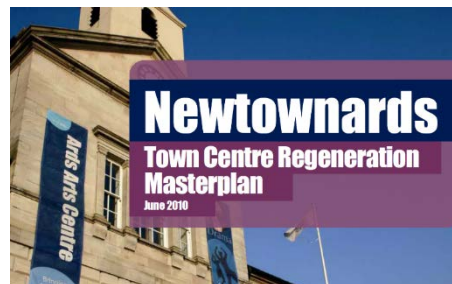
These thematic priorities provide a framework within which specific actions are identified as being of strategic importance to the Borough.

## Town Masterplans



The [Bangor Masterplan](#) established a strategic vision for the town centre to be “re-established as a high quality, vibrant competitive town with a distinctive and historic maritime character... The town will be renowned as a welcoming place geared to families, youth and the elderly. The town centre will be a location where people want to visit, live and work in and where businesses are attracted to locate in and grow”.

The [Newtownards Masterplan](#) aims to ensure that the viability and vitality of the retail component of the town centre core is enhanced and that the Town Centre remains a highly accessible, vibrant destination that is a pleasant space for people to spend time.



The [Holywood Masterplan](#) aims for the town centre to be a prosperous and attractive destination for all by:

- linking communities;
- supporting business; and
- harnessing heritage.



The Comber and Donaghadee Masterplans both aim to create town centres that are visually attractive to residents, businesses and visitors, whilst also improving the overall accessibility to everyone.



## Town Centres First

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Town centres play a vitally important role within the community as the focus for retail, service, entertainment, leisure, cultural and civic activities. To support and sustain the town centres within the Borough, the Council will promote them as the first choice location for retailing and other complementary functions.

Out of centre locations remain attractive to retailers because of lower rents, convenient and/or free car parking, and larger store footprints which may be perceived as being more easily re-configured than town centre locations. Indeed, within the Borough, there are very few vacancies at the out of centre facilities suggesting a level of demand for these modern larger space units. Edge of centre and out of centre retail developments often lead to a dilution of retail functions in town centres and, therefore, a loss of vitality.

The Council will adopt a sequential approach to main town centre uses as directed by the SPPS.

**Fig 29: The Sequential Approach to Town Centre Uses**



## Key Issue 32

### Hierarchy of Centres

**Option 32a: Define a hierarchy of centres based on the preferred settlement hierarchy and the relevant roles and functions of our centres**

**Option 32b: Retain the existing hierarchy of centres as established in the extant plans**

**Preferred Option: Option 32a**

The SPPS directs Councils to define a hierarchy of centres for the Plan area to include town, district and local centres whilst acknowledging the role of rural centres. The preferred option will align the hierarchy of centres with the settlement hierarchy contained within the Growth Strategy which classifies settlements according to their roles and functions and will allow district centres and local centres to be included.

It will also allow a review of the existing hierarchy of centres, and identify new centres where appropriate, or make adjustments to existing centres classification to accurately reflect their roles and functions (as per the Classification of Centres Table 14 below).

Using the evidence base, defining a hierarchy of centres will allow, for example:

- the designation of new small town centres e.g. Portaferry and Ballygowan;
- the designation of a new District Centre at Ards Shopping Centre which has been acknowledged by the Planning Appeals Commission as a de facto District Centre; and
- the designation of new Local Centres where appropriate.

The hierarchy of centres will acknowledge the role and function of each of the centres whilst promoting town centres first for retail and other main town centre uses in accordance with the SPPS. Such developments will have to demonstrate that there is no suitable site within the preferred town centre before it will be acceptable to locate to edge of centre or out of centre sites. It will also permit District and Local Centres to be a focus for local everyday shopping and ensure that their role is complementary to the role and function of the town centre in line with the SPPS.

**Table 14: Classification of Centres**

Classification	Role
Town Centres	Centrally located. Incorporates the existing concentration of main town centre uses – retailing, professional services, cultural, community, leisure and office uses.
District Centres	Separate from the town centre. Offer a range of shops, services and leisure facilities – usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail service uses such as banks, building societies and restaurants. Provides shoppers with convenience and choice in locations outside designated town centres
Local Centres	Accessible convenience and small scale comparison retailing (e.g. general grocery store, sub-post office, small pharmacy etc.). Focus for local everyday shopping, complements roles of town centres and district centres
Village/Rural Centres	Accessible and small scale – helps meet the daily shopping needs of local residents. Adds to vitality of villages and small settlements. Should be of a scale, nature and design appropriate to the character of the settlement.
Countryside	Centres should be the first choice for retail and other main town centre uses but some retail may be appropriate outside settlement limits – e.g. farm shops, craft shops and those serving tourist and recreational facilities. Rural shops will be required to be located within existing buildings.

Option 32b to retain the existing hierarchy of centres does not account for the present role and function that the settlements and centres currently perform and there would be no opportunity to review the existing hierarchy or identify new centres.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Do you agree with the proposed approach to define a hierarchy of centres?

Are there any retail areas serving local need which should be designated as local centres?

## Key Issue 33

### Spatial extent of town centres and retail cores

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**Option 33a: Define the spatial extent of Town Centre boundaries and Primary Retail Cores to accommodate the projected need for retail and other main town centre uses**

**Option 33b: Retain the existing spatial extent of Town Centre boundaries and Primary Retail Cores from extant Development Plans**

#### **Preferred Option: Option 33a**

This preferred approach will allow the existing spatial extent of Town Centre boundaries and Primary Retail Cores to be reviewed and altered, where appropriate, to reflect the locally distinct character of the Borough's Town Centres and Primary Retail Cores.

Within the Primary Retail Core of Bangor there is a designated Primary Retail Frontage. Bangor is the only Primary Retail Core to contain one, therefore this option will also allow the need for Primary Retail Frontages to be reviewed.

The LDP has a key role within town centres to secure a balance between the promotion of retail development and enhancing diversity in the range of other town centre uses such as entertainment, leisure, cultural and civic activities. Extension of the Town Centre boundaries



and/or the Primary Retail Cores would allow for the accommodation of additional main town centre uses or the expansion of existing premises if this is evidenced. On the other hand, it may result in the dilution of the core shopping area and lead to centres losing their 'critical mass'. In certain instances, it may be more beneficial to contract the size of the boundaries to result in a more compact, concentrated core rather than potentially create conditions for further vacancies.

The Council will, therefore, undertake an assessment of the need or capacity for retail and other main town centre uses across the Plan area. The findings of such a study will enable the Council to adopt a robust approach in relation to designating town centre boundaries and primary retail cores to accommodate the projected need for retail and other main town centre uses over the Plan period.

Retention of the existing spatial extent of the town centre boundaries and primary retail cores, as detailed in the second option, would allow for the application of the sequential test and their protection and promotion as the first choice for the location of retailing and other main town centre uses such as cultural and community facilities, leisure, entertainment, housing and offices.

However, the retail capacity data, which informed the existing designations in extant ADAP and dBMAP, was collated some time ago – in 2001 and 2006 respectively - and is significantly outdated. This option would not allow any alterations to the existing boundaries to reflect the locally distinct character of the Borough's Town Centres and Primary Retail Cores.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Do you agree with the proposed approach to define the spatial extent of Town Centre boundaries and Primary Retail Cores?

Should the LDP reduce or increase the extent of any town centre or primary retail core boundaries?

## Key Issue 34

### Protecting and enhancing diversity of use – Designated Primary Retail Cores

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**Option 34a:** Designated Primary Retail Cores to be accompanied by policy to restrict non-retail uses at ground floor level within this area

**Option 34b:** Designated Primary Retail Cores for the location of retail and main town centre uses by applying the sequential approach with no accompanying policy

**Option 34c: Designated Primary Retail Cores to be accompanied by policy to allow differing provision of retail and town centre uses based upon locally distinct character**

**Preferred Option: Option 34c**

Policy restrictions on non-retail uses within the Primary Retail Core are traditionally intended to protect and strengthen core retail areas within our towns and to ensure that sites are not lost to non-retail uses but are available to meet future retail demand.

As the map of Bangor Primary Retail Core shows, Option 34a may be unsustainable and too inflexible for certain locations – particularly those with high levels of vacancy. Implementing such a policy may result in further vacancy which in turn impacts upon vitality and viability.

The regional strategic direction set out in the SPPS is to promote town centres as the appropriate first choice locations for retailing and other complementary town centre uses such as cultural and community facilities, leisure, entertainment, housing and offices.

Option 34b would allow the sequential approach for retail and main town centre uses to consider the Primary Retail Core first but would not restrict this to solely retail and would create more diversity in the range of town centre uses within Primary Retail Cores.

The preferred option, Option 34c, would allow a more tailored approach to town centre uses within Primary Retail Cores and allow consideration of proposals based upon the locally distinct character of each of the Borough's towns as detailed in the evidence base.

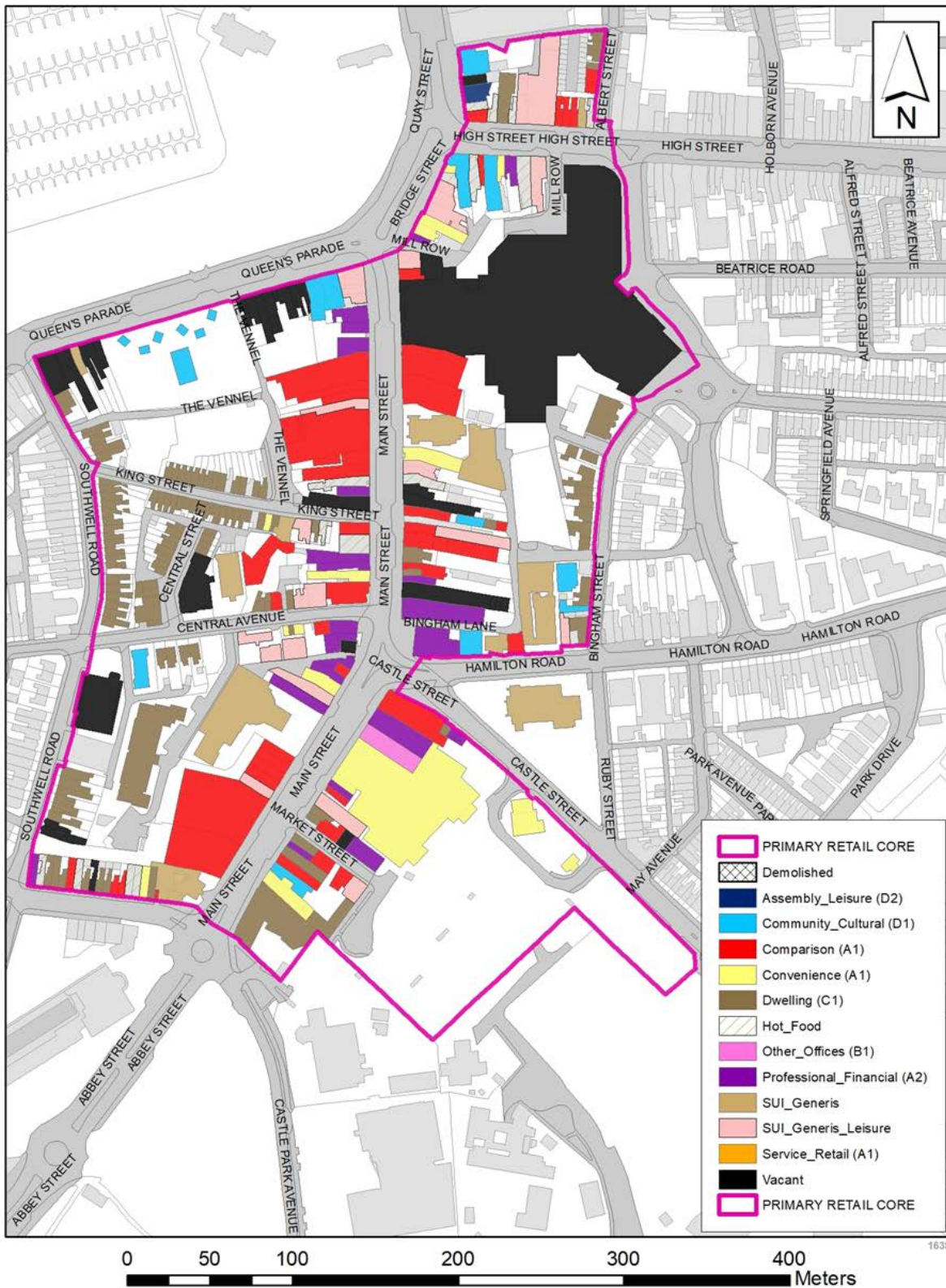
Of particular note in Bangor is the ongoing issue of high vacancy within the Flagship Centre which suggests that a more flexible and creative response may be required. In contrast, Newtownards displays a healthy Primary Retail Core with relatively low vacancy rates of 12.62% (see maps 20 and 21 below). Therefore, it may benefit from a restrictive policy to further strengthen the core shopping area and encourage a compact form.

The evidence base therefore suggests that a tailored, town specific approach to policy concerning town centres may be warranted to help establish the unique draw of each centre.

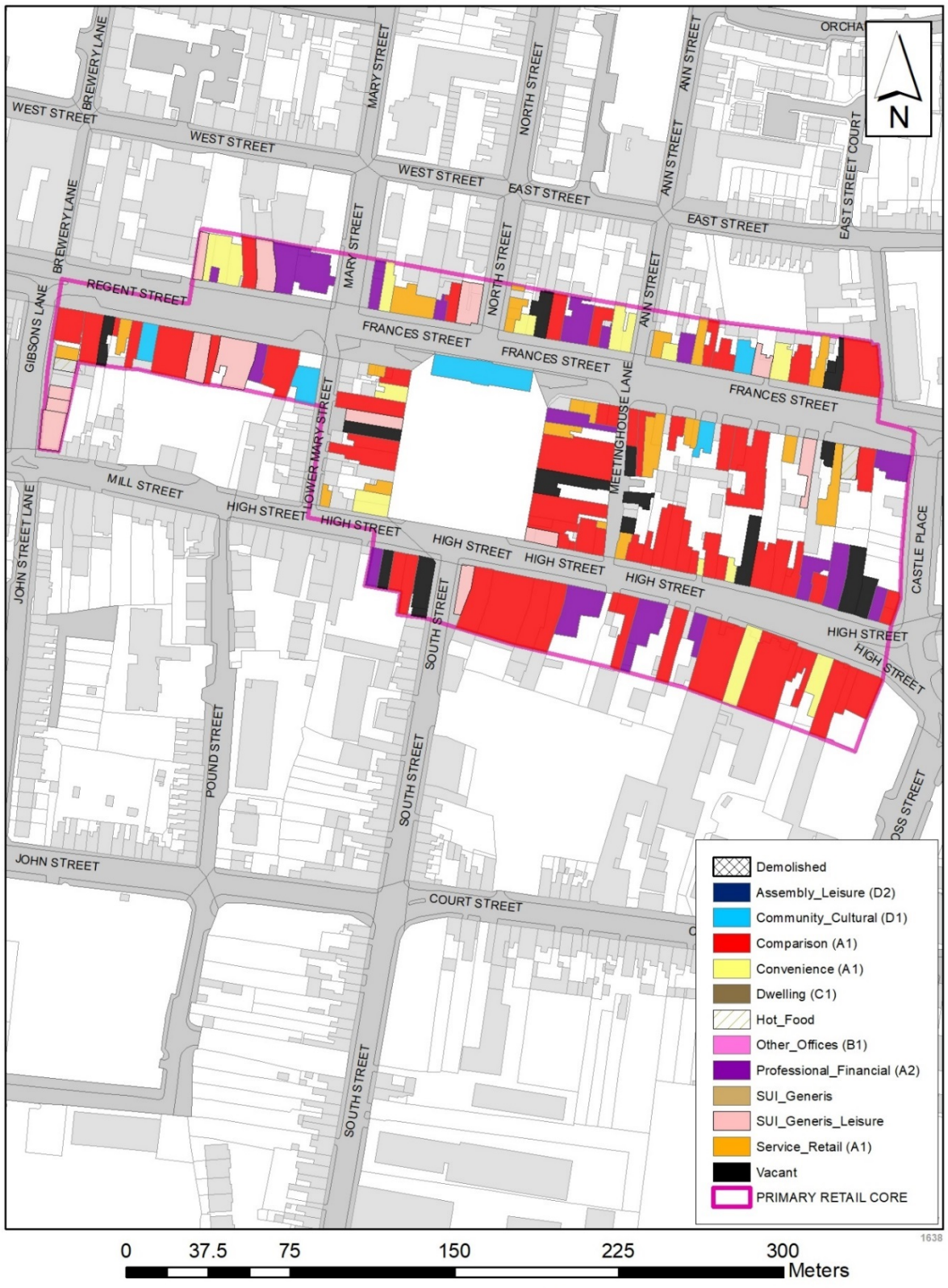
The preferred option scored as the most sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with the proposed town specific approach to policy within Primary Retail Cores to reflect the locally distinct character of each town within the Borough?**

**Map 20: Bangor Primary Retail Core (dBMAP 2015) – Ground floor retail use and vacancy**



# Map 21: Newtownards Primary Retail Core (ADAP 2015) – Ground floor retail use and vacancy



# Key Issue 35

## Protecting and enhancing diversity of use – Protection of existing areas of housing within town centres

The Council supports a town centres first approach for the location of future retailing and other main town centre uses such as cultural and community facilities, leisure, entertainment and businesses. However, residential development also plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of town centres as they remain populated outside business hours and may in turn increase economic activity.



**Option 35a: Identify areas of existing housing to be protected and promote new housing development, if appropriate to the character of the area, within town centres**

**Option 35b: Housing within town centres is neither protected nor promoted - retailing and other main town centre uses given priority**

### **Preferred Option: Option 35a**

The preferred option will allow the promotion of housing development and the retention of existing housing stock in central areas to take advantage of proximity to existing facilities, services, infrastructure, and public transport provision and reduce dependence on private vehicles. This in turn has social and environmental benefits.

As walkability and active travel increase, so too do health and wellbeing through both exercise and increased social interaction. Additionally, many areas of existing housing within town centres comprise older housing stock and their protection may assist in preserving non-listed buildings of architectural or historical interest.

Within the dBMAP 2015, there are 12 Protected Housing areas in Bangor town centre and one in Holywood town centre.

Within the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015, there are seven Protected Housing areas in Newtownards town centre, four in Donaghadee and two in Comber town centres respectively.

This option will allow the existing Protected Housing designations to be reviewed and amended, if appropriate, to protect valuable housing stock and established communities which contribute to the variety and vitality of life in the Town Centre.

Option 35b would not protect areas of existing housing within town centres and may result in the loss of housing to retailing and other main town centre uses. This would have an adverse impact on the diversity, vitality and viability of the Borough's town centres.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Do you agree with the proposed approach to protect existing areas of housing within town centres?

## Key Issue 36

### Protecting and enhancing diversity of use – Development Opportunity Sites (DOSs)

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The purpose of designating Development Opportunity Sites is to identify where lands are under-utilised or vacant and where development, which might provide a mix of new uses, could promote the vitality and viability of the town centre.

The impact of vacancy and dereliction within town centres may include: loss of choice for consumers; reduced consumer and investor confidence; negative visual impact; reduced footfall; reduced feelings of safety and increased risk of anti-social behaviour and/or crime; and reduced business rates.

Within Bangor town centre four sites were identified as Development Opportunity Sites in dBMAP 2015 and three were identified in Holywood town centre. There are extant designations for Development Opportunity Sites within ADAP 2015 comprising five within Newtownards town centre, and three apiece within Comber and Donaghadee town centres. Some of these have been developed and others have not yet come forward.

**Option 36a: Define Development Opportunity Sites for mixed use and encourage 'meanwhile' uses until development is commenced**

**Option 36b: Retain existing designated Development Opportunity Sites**

#### **Preferred Option: Option 36a**

This preferred option will allow a review of existing DOSs and allow the Council to consider the varied uptake of the designated sites. It will also be in accordance with the SPPS which states

that the LDP should 'allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and form of retailing and other town centre uses.'

Defining new sites, particularly in Bangor and Holywood for which there are no current designations, would allow the Council to promote the regeneration of vacant and/or under-utilised sites in a consistent manner across the Borough, based on the best available information. The designations should be accompanied, where appropriate with detailed development briefs and master planning to guide their regeneration.

'Meanwhile' uses, such as Project 24 at Queens Parade in Bangor fulfil a useful temporary function by occupying a space until that space is ready for development and can be brought back into commercial/ mixed use. They also serve to improve the appearance of an area and increase footfall and vitality in a centre and serve start-up businesses or those in creative industries which then go on to occupy permanent premises in a town centre.

Option 36b would provide no opportunity to review the existing designated Development Opportunity Sites or define new sites to promote regeneration within the Borough.

The preferred option scored as the most sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with our proposed approach to Development Opportunity Sites?**

# Tourism

## **Aim: To support sustainable tourism development in the Borough**

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The significance of the tourism industry to the Northern Ireland economy is recognised at the highest level. The draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-2021 describes it as a key service sector and economic pillar for the region, which offers one of the best opportunities for Northern Ireland to strengthen the economy. Strategic Outcome 12 of the PfG aims to ‘create a place where people want to live, work, invest in and visit,’ and a key element of this is encouraging others to come visit, explore and be inspired by what we have to offer and want to return.

In 2017 there were an estimated 4.9 million overnight trips in Northern Ireland, generating an expenditure of £926 million. This represented a 7% increase on the previous year and therefore demonstrates the huge growth potential of the tourism sector.

Sustainable tourism development is brought about by balancing the needs of the tourists and the tourism industry with those of the destination. This requires management and the LDP has a key role in managing tourism development through the identification of appropriate development opportunities, safeguarding tourism assets from harmful development, securing high quality design and integrating service provision with necessary infrastructure.

## **The Evidence Base**

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Located only a 20-minute drive from Belfast, and in very close proximity to the George Best Belfast City Airport, Ards and North Down is ideally placed to benefit from both domestic tourism and visitors from further afield. With over 100 miles of coastline, much of the Borough’s tourism assets derive from its unique and varied natural landscapes such as the North Down Coastal Path, Peninsula coast road and Strangford Lough, all of which provide opportunities for outdoor activities such as sailing, walking, cycling and fishing.



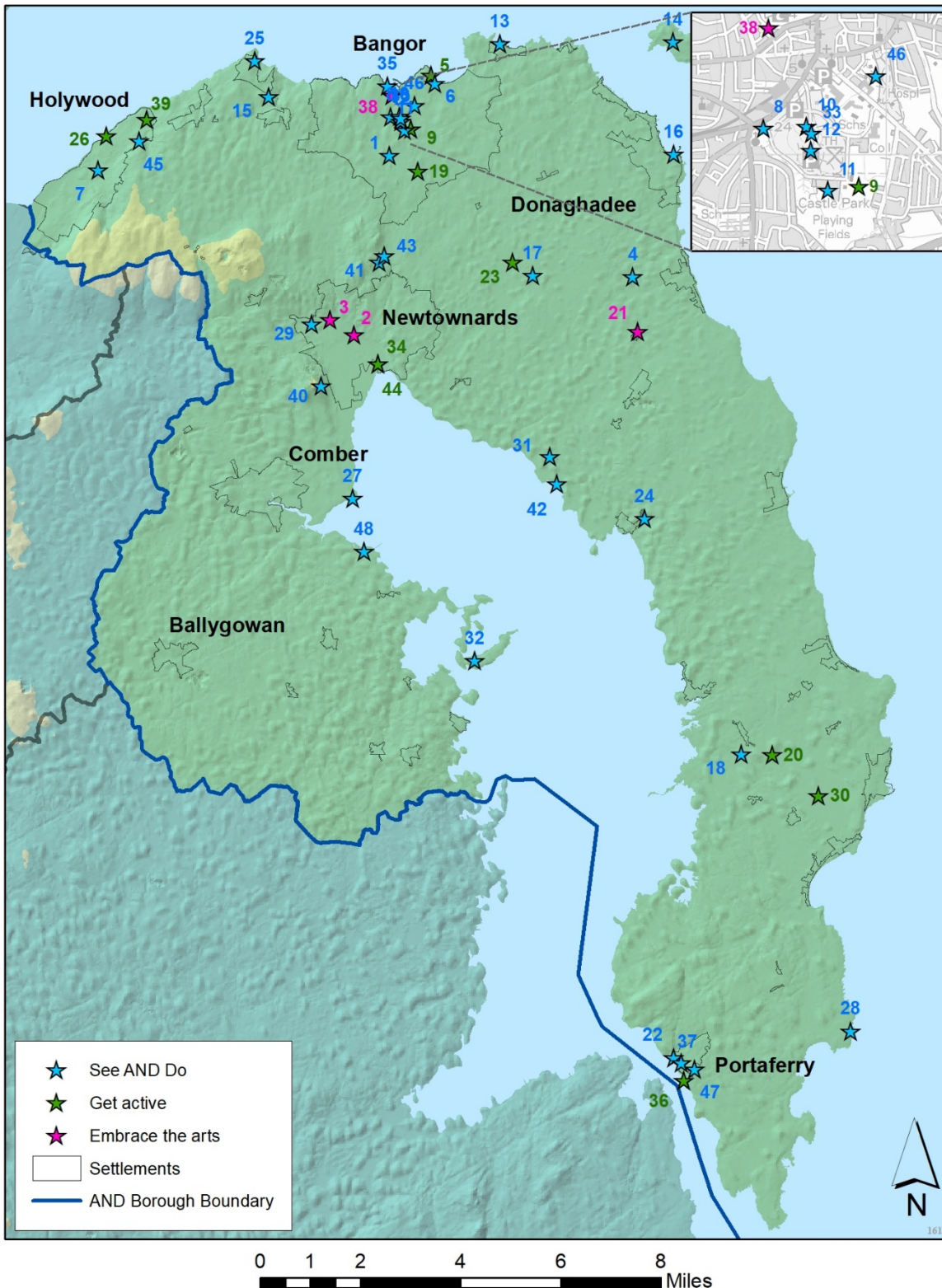
Family entertainment is also catered for through outdoor attractions such as Castle Espie, Pickie Funpark and Ark Open Farm and also indoor activities including soft play areas, go-karting and Exploris Aquarium. There are also numerous sites of historical interest such as the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra and Mount Stewart House and gardens.

**Fig 30: Overview of Tourism in Ards and North Down**



Further information on tourism can be found in the LDP Tourism Position Paper on the Council's website.

**Map 22: Tourism Attractions in Ards and North Down**



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Legend	
★ See AND Do	
1 Air-tastic Trampoline Park	42 Strangford Lough Lookout
4 Ballycopeland Windmill	43 The Ark Open Farm
6 Ballyholme Beach & Park	45 Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
7 Ballymenoch Park	46 Ward Park
8 Bangor Abbey	47 Windmill Hill
10 Bangor Castle (Town Hall)	48 WWT Castle Espie Wetland Centre
11 Bangor Castle Walled Garden	----- Coastal Path
12 Castle Park	
13 Cockle Row Cottages	★ Get Active
14 Copeland Islands	5 Ballyholme Yacht Club
15 Crawfordsburn Country Park	9 Bangor Aurora Aquatic Centre
16 Donaghadee Harbour	19 Eddie Irvine Sports
17 Drumawhey Junction Railway	20 Eddie Irvine's Race School Ireland
18 Echlinville Distillery	23 Field of Dreams
22 Exploris Aquarium	26 Holywood Yacht club
24 Grey Abbey	30 Kirkistown Motor Racing Circuit
25 Grey Point Fort	34 Northern Ireland Microlight Flying
27 Island Hill Nature Reserve	36 Portaferry Sailing Club
28 Kearney Village	39 Royal Belfast Golf Club
29 Kiltonga Nature Reserve	44 Ulster Flying Club
31 Mount Stewart House & Gardens	★ Embrace the Arts
32 Nendrum Monastery	2 Ards Arts Centre and Town Hall
33 North Down Museum	3 Avalon Guitar Factory
35 Pickle Funpark	21 Eden Pottery
37 Portico Arts & Heritage Centre	38 Project 24
40 Scrabo Country Park & Tower	
41 Somme Museum	

Fig 31: A proposed Tourism Classification in Ards and North Down

## Regional Policy Context

### The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 recognises 'Promoting a sustainable approach to the provision of infrastructure,' as one of five elements of regional guidance that underpin sustainable growth in Northern Ireland.

The guidance seeks to apply this sustainable approach to tourism in the following ways:

- ▶ Promote a balanced approach that safeguards tourism infrastructure while benefitting society and the economy;
- ▶ Improve facilities for tourists in support of the Tourist Signature destinations; and
- ▶ Encourage environmentally sustainable tourism development.

### Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

The SPPS reiterates that in plan making, councils should consider how best to facilitate the sustainable growth of tourism in their areas by bringing forward a tourism strategy, together with appropriate policies and proposals.

The SPPS further states that councils should consider how best to facilitate the growth of sustainable tourism. The LDP tourism strategy should address the following:

- ▶ How future tourism is best accommodated;
- ▶ Safeguarding of key tourism assets;
- ▶ Identification of potential tourism growth areas;
- ▶ Environmental Considerations; and
- ▶ Contribution of tourism to economic development, conservation and urban regeneration.

### Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 16: Tourism

PPS 16 sets out the regional planning policy for tourism development, including the main forms of tourist accommodation and amenities. In addition, the policy provides guidance for the safeguarding of tourism assets from development likely to adversely impact upon the tourism value of the environmental asset.

## Local Policy Context

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### The Ards and North Down Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Under the strategic priority heading **PLACE**, the Council's Corporate Plan aims to 'invest in and promote the borough's rich cultural heritage and environment,' and to 'enhance our towns villages and coastlines.' These themes have direct relevance to the promotion of the Borough as a tourist destination. Furthermore, 'enhancing the visitor experience to increase visitor spend' is highlighted as a priority in the **PROSPERITY** section.



Castle Espie Wetland Park, outside Comber

### The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032

The promotion and protection of our tourism assets also supports the Community Plan aspirations of 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy' (Outcome 4).

### The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030

This represents the Council's coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough and centres around three key aims to create jobs, increase economic productivity and increase visitor overnight trips and expenditure. The Strategy identifies a number of tourism opportunities in the Borough such as the promotion of themed routes and trails along the coast, developing a diverse range of visitor accommodation, investing in the public realms of towns and villages and bringing heritage buildings back into sustainable use. These actions are to be achieved via an integrated approach involving the Council, external partners and private individuals.

# Key Issue 37

## Tourism

The SPPS requires Councils to produce a Tourism Strategy as part of the LDP process. The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 Tourism Strategy (part 3, Volume 1) set out a Tourism Classification in order to analyse the potential of the Plan area for tourism development. This takes account of the quality and character of the townscape and landscape and the natural and built environment. Ards and North Down may be classified as follows:

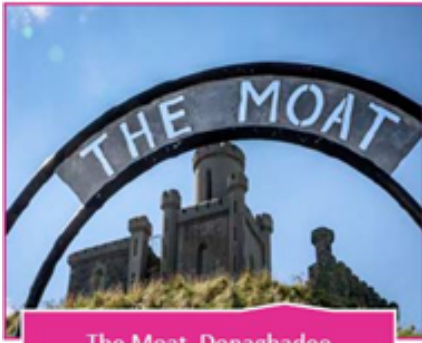
**Vulnerable Areas:** Areas where tourism development should not be approved to protect the tourism asset

**Sensitive Areas:** Areas where tourism should be strictly controlled to respect the local environment and particular characteristics of area

**Priority Areas:** Largely urban based areas where the majority of development for tourism uses will be expected to locate

Vulnerable Areas	Sensitive Areas	Priority Areas
The Coastal Zone	Countryside	Edge of Settlement
Conservation Areas	Areas of Townscape Character/ Areas of Village Character	
Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes	Strangford and Lecale AONB	
Internationally and Nationally designated landscapes	Locally designated landscape sites	
Craigantlet Area of High Scenic Value		
Nendrum Area of Special Archaeological Interest		

Do you agree with the proposed tourism classification?



The Moat, Donaghadee



Cockle Row Cottages, Groomsport



Pickie Fun Park, Bangor

**Option 37a:** Promote appropriate sustainable tourism developments in identified priority tourism areas (primarily at the edge of settlements)

**Option 37b:** Promote appropriate sustainable tourism developments throughout the Borough

**Preferred Option: Option 37b**

Option 37a – in advocating the creation of tourism ‘hubs’ in key locations in the Borough would allow the consolidation and further expansion of existing tourism assets and provide the opportunity for improvements to accessibility and infrastructure. Concentrating the tourism developments in key areas would hopefully lead to extended length of stay and greater levels of economic return for the Borough. However, limiting tourism to these certain key areas may mean that the full potential of the tourism sector would not be fully realised.



Pickie Park Swans, Bangor

Option 37b explores the opportunity to tailor tourism policy to meet an identified local need. This includes the potential for tourism development beyond the periphery of a settlement limit or a specifically identified zone, in exceptional circumstances, where a unique niche attraction has been identified. Such proposals would be required to demonstrate what exceptional benefits they would bring to the tourism industry and that they would result in a sustainable and appropriate form of tourism development which does not have a detrimental impact upon the natural or historic environment. ‘Appropriate’ is defined in the SPPS as being acceptable in terms of ‘nature, scale and location.’

The preferred option would allow for tourism development which requires a countryside or coastal location due to its unique site specific requirements. Given that the majority of the tourism potential in our Borough exists along our coastline and in other rural areas, this option would allow these areas to respond to tourist demand, whilst checks remain in place to safeguard the integrity of the assets upon which the tourism draw depends.

Option 37a and 37b scored similarly across several sustainability objectives but Option 37b scored more significant positives in the longer term and is the preferred option.

# Transportation

**Aim: To improve accessibility and promote more sustainable patterns of transport and travel**

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Transportation is important for multiple reasons that include the effective movement of people, goods and services, facilitating inward investment and supporting a vibrant economy.

It also has the potential to improve health and wellbeing whilst tackling climate change.

The LDP has an essential role in improving accessibility within the Borough and promoting more sustainable patterns of transport and travel.

In the allocation of land in the LDP, a key aim is to integrate transportation and land use in ways which enable people to carry out their everyday activities with less need to travel and with the maximum modal choice. This will require the consideration of ways to reduce the physical separation between housing and services such as shopping, jobs, health, and education facilities.

## The Evidence Base

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### Transportation Routes

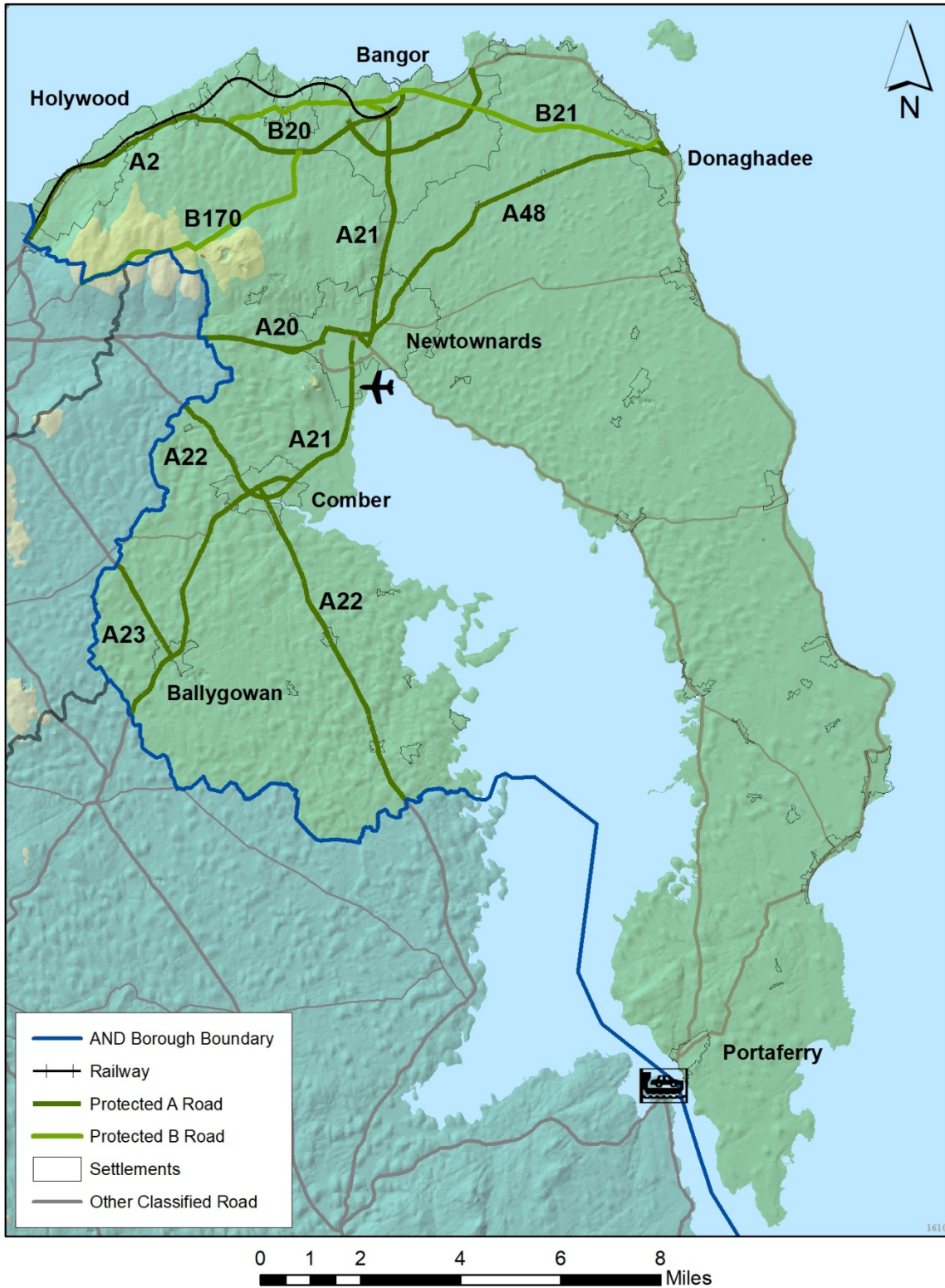
Ards and North Down Borough is well served by transportation routes. There are no motorways located within the Borough, however there are eight Protected Routes (see Map 23). The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN TP 2015) has identified the A20 road between Newtownards and the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) as a link corridor. It also identifies two trunk roads within the Borough - the A21 which links Bangor, Newtownards and Comber and the A22 which links Comber and other settlements to the BMA.

The Borough is served by the Northern Ireland Railways (NIR) network with a train station in Bangor which links directly to Belfast and connects to the Dublin rail line and all other NIR lines.

There is also an airport in Newtownards which is one of only five licensed airports in Northern Ireland, and the Strangford Lough Ferry at Portaferry provides a link between the Borough and Newry, Mourne and Down District. The Borough is also directly linked to the George Best Belfast City Airport via the A2 Bangor to Belfast road.



Map 23: Key transportation infrastructure within Ards and North Down



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## Public Transport

The main towns of Newtownards, Bangor, Holywood and Comber in the Borough are easily accessible to Belfast. Ulsterbus operates throughout the Council area and a small area of Holywood is covered by Belfast Metro Services. There are bus stations located in Bangor and Newtownards.

Bus services cover most of the towns, villages and small settlements within the Borough, and connect to either Bangor or Newtownards. Whilst the Council area benefits from many public transport services to and from Belfast, these primarily serve commuters and other linkages between settlements across the Borough are constrained.

## Private Car

There is a high reliance on the private car within the Borough. Table 15 below shows that the percentage of households owning one or more private vehicles is higher within Ards and North Down than within Northern Ireland as a whole. This may reflect the relative affluence of the Borough where the average salary exceeds the NI average. It may also reflect the rural nature of much of the southern portion of the Borough as rural locations typically are not well served by public transport services and hence have greater reliance on private vehicles. The private car is likely to remain the dominant mode of transportation over the Plan period in rural areas.

**Table 15: Percentage of Households Owning One or More Private Vehicles Car Ownership**

	<b>Ards and North Down District</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Percentage</b>
<b>No Car/Van</b>	17.08	22.7
<b>1 Car/Van</b>	42.16	41.38
<b>2 Car/Van</b>	31.51	27.04
<b>3 Car/Van</b>	6.97	6.29
<b>4+ Car/Van</b>	2.28	2.58

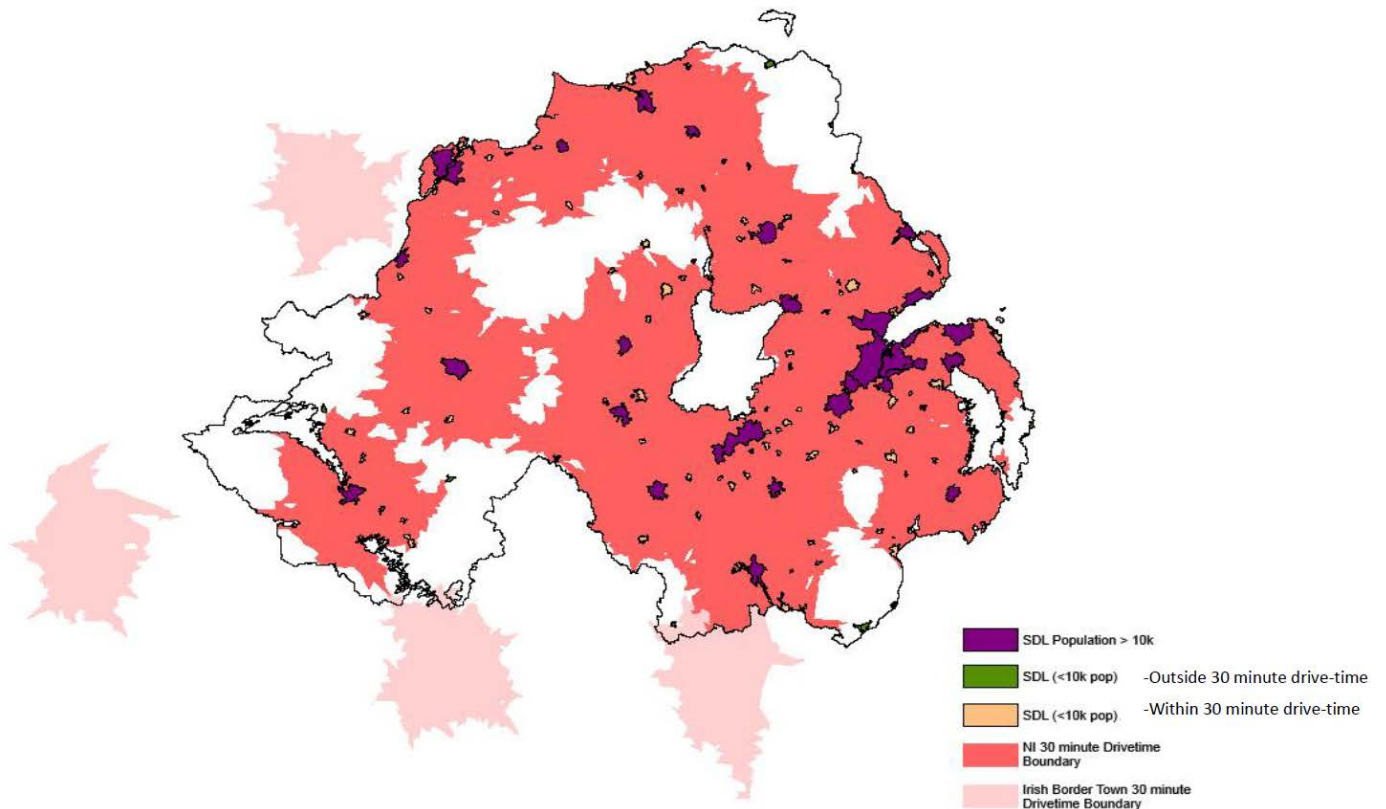
Source: NINIS 2011 Census

The 2011 Census shows that of the residents in employment in Ards and North Down, 61.28% travelled to work by car or van, and 14.08% as a passenger or as part of a car pool. This gives a total of 75.36% travelling to work in cars.

## Accessibility

Rural areas within the Borough experience accessibility issues. Map 24 below shows the 30-minute drive time boundary from main settlements. It clearly demonstrates an issue around accessibility in the southern half of the Ards Peninsula. Map 23 above showing the key transportation infrastructure within Ards and North Down also demonstrates the poor accessibility of the Ards Peninsula. The map highlights there are only two main roads serving the Ards Peninsula. The main Portaferry Road between Newtownards and Portaferry is sometimes closed due to bad weather in the winter – further exacerbating accessibility issues and increasing journey times. The rural areas within the Borough also suffer from less regular public transport services.

**Map 24: 30-minute drive-time boundary from settlements with population of 10,000 or more**



Source: Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements. NISRA March 2015

As part of the preliminary LDP preparatory work, the Department for Infrastructure prepared Accessibility Maps for the five towns in the Borough. These maps illustrate travel times within and to the main towns by different modes of transport - walking, cycling, drive time and public transport - to a defined town centre location. These maps can help to inform the LDP process by emphasising appropriate locations for future development in relation to sustainable travel distances. They will be used as one consideration in the assessment of the potential locations of future development where such a need is identified.

### **Active Travel**

There are low levels of active travel e.g. walking and cycling within the Borough, due in part to the rural nature of the Borough with particular areas experiencing accessibility issues. Currently there are several cycle routes within the Borough including the Comber Greenway linking Comber to East Belfast along the former Belfast-Comber railway line.

The Council has recently been awarded £25,000 of funding from the Department for Infrastructure to develop a 12km extension of the existing greenway between Comber and Newtownards.

The Ulster Way incorporates most of the towns and villages in the Borough and provides a walking path from Holywood, via Bangor and Groomsport to Portaferry.

## Car Parking

Off-street parking became the responsibility of the Council from 1 April 2015 whilst on-street parking has remained the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure. At present the Council has 23 free to use and 22 charged car parks offering a total of 3,062 spaces. The Council has employed consultants to prepare a Strategy Document regarding car park provision, development and control across the Borough.

All of the towns within the Borough have undergone major town centre public realm schemes. These schemes have had success in improving pedestrian accessibility as well as the overall pedestrian environment; however, many of our town centres are dominated by the existing road network to the detriment of pedestrian priority and the overall sense of place.

Further information on Transportation can be found in the LDP Position Paper on the Council's website.

## Regional Policy Context

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### Regional Development Strategy 2035

The continuing vision of the RDS 2035 for transportation is:

*'to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life'<sup>12</sup>.*

Through regional guidance the RDS seeks to deliver a balanced approach to transport infrastructure<sup>13</sup> and to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality<sup>14</sup>.

The spatial framework guidance seeks to manage the movement of people and goods within the BMUA through: managing travel demand within the BMUA; improving the public transport service; integration of land use and transportation; introduction of a rapid transit system; managing the efficient movement of freight; and improving facilities for walking and cycling which is co-ordinated with infrastructure investment<sup>15</sup>.

In relation to the rural area, the spatial framework guidance aims to improve accessibility for communities. It highlights the need to improve the overall connectivity of rural communities in relation to services and to promote integrated rural transport initiatives which meet the needs of those living in isolated areas - particularly elderly and disabled people<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> RDS 2035 Para. 2.8 page 20

<sup>13</sup> RDS 2035 RG2 page 33

<sup>14</sup> RDS 2035 RG9 page 43

<sup>15</sup> RDS 2035 SPG4 page 59-60

<sup>16</sup> RDS 2035 SFG14 page 75

## **Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS)**

An integral part of the original RDS was the preparation of a Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) 2002-2012. It supported the RDS and its vision for transportation and set out a strategic framework for the future planning, funding and delivery of transportation and is implemented through three transport plans:

- Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTNTP);
- Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP); and
- Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP).

The RTS was replaced in 2012 by 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future', but the three Transport Plans will remain material considerations until they are replaced by a new suite of transport plans produced by the Department for Infrastructure in association with the Council.

## **Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future - A New Approach to Regional Transportation (2011)**

This publication supersedes the Regional Transport Strategy and sets out how central government will develop regional transportation beyond 2015. It is the most up to date document on regional transportation.

The emphasis of approach for this document marks a move away from specific road building schemes identified in the RTS. It sets out three high level aims for the economy, society and the environment along with supporting objectives:

1. Support the Growth of the Economy
2. Enhance the quality of life for all
3. Reduce the Environmental Impact of Transport

## **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)**

The aims of the SPPS with regard to transportation are to secure improved integration with land-use planning and to facilitate safe and efficient access, movement and parking.

The Regional Strategic Objectives in the SPPS for transportation and land-use planning are to:

- promote sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need for motorised transport, encourages active travel, and facilitate travel by public transport in preference to the private car;
- ensure accessibility for all, with the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired given particular consideration;
- promote the provision of adequate facilities for cyclists in new development;
- promote parking policies that will assist in reducing reliance on the private car and help tackle growing congestion;
- protect routes required for new transport schemes including disused transport routes with potential for future reuse;
- restrict the number of new accesses and control the level of use of existing accesses onto Protected Routes; and
- promote road safety, in particular for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

The SPPS also states that LDPs should be informed by a local transport study and should address the following transportation issues:

- land use allocations and associated transport infrastructure;
- key site requirements for zoned sites;
- efficient movement of freight and storage;
- new transport schemes, walking and cycling;
- disused transport routes;
- car parking; and
- protected routes.

### **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3 – Access, Movement and Parking**

This PPS sets out planning policies for vehicular and pedestrian access, transport assessment, the protection of transport routes and parking. It forms an important element in the integration of transport and land use planning. The policy objectives include the promotion of road safety, restriction of the number of new accesses and control of existing accesses onto Protected Routes, promotion of greater accessibility for people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired, promotion of a modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport, promotion of parking policies that will assist in reducing reliance on the private car and protection of routes required for new transport schemes.

## **Local Policy Context**

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### **The Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019**

Transportation links with the key objectives of **PROSPERITY**, **PEOPLE** and **PLACE** within the Corporate Plan. Under 'Prosperity' the Borough aspires to attract and promote economic investment and develop a thriving rural economy. A good transportation network is essential to assisting economic growth. Under the objective of 'People', transportation can contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of citizens and promoting active lifestyles. Transportation can also contribute to the objective of 'Place' by promoting a clean, green, healthy, safe and sustainable environment.

### **The Big Plan for Ards and North Down 2017-2032**

Transportation is linked to Outcomes 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the Big Plan.

Outcome 1 - 'All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential' – A good transportation system is essential for easy accessibility to all the services people need.

Outcome 2 – 'All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing' – Promotion of active transport will contribute to the aim of increasing the opportunities for people to take part in exercise so they are more active and healthy.

Outcome 4 – 'All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy' – Transportation assists in economic growth and attracting investment.

Outcome 5 – 'All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment' – Transportation is essential to connect people together via good roads and provide access to the environment and good houses, which are located close to transport facilities.

## Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development 2018-2030

The thematic priorities of most relevance to transportation are:

- promote to attract investment; and
- connect places and people.

The Integrated Strategy highlights that for the economy to grow and the Borough to flourish, people, places and assets must be as well connected as possible. It highlights the development of a network of blueways and greenways to facilitate sustainable access for all residents and visitors and that this will also serve to attract investment, new residents and visitors.

## Integrated Arts and Heritage Development Strategy Ards and North Down 2018–2023

This strategy sets out six thematic priorities, with Priority F - participatory approach to arts and heritage ensuring equity of geographic access, being of most relevance to transportation. Within this priority it states that improved public transport and increased provision of accessible and affordable public transport to arts and heritage will be promoted.

# Key Issue 38

## Promotion of sustainable transport and active travel

**Option 38a:** Introduce a policy requiring applicants to demonstrate how the promotion of sustainable transport and active travel has been considered in all new development proposals.

Where appropriate, specific measures will be detailed for zoned sites in key site requirements.

**Option 38b:** Retain existing policy which relates only to residential development above a certain threshold

### Preferred Option: Option 38a

A key aim of the LDP will be to integrate transportation and land use in ways which enable people to carry out their everyday activities with less need to travel and with the maximum modal choice. The Preferred Option above will place the onus on developers to demonstrate how they have positioned sustainable transport and active travel at the heart of new developments. This option is in line with the Regional Strategic Objectives to promote sustainable patterns of development, encourage active travel and facilitate travel by public transport in preference to the private car.

Within new development proposals consideration of sustainable travel and active travel may include layout designs which give priority to pedestrians and cyclists, increased permeability and connections to existing cycling and walking links such as the greenways, connectivity with public transport, and complementary measures such as travel cards and park and ride/park and share facilities.

If appropriate, reduced parking provision may be included in the sustainable transport measures. Developer contributions may also be required to bring about necessary infrastructure upgrades, secure appropriate public transport provision or offset costs. Any measures put forward will need to be carefully considered to ensure they make a positive, long term contribution to sustainable transport and have the desired effect of reducing reliance on the private car and encouraging active travel.

Promotion of sustainable transport and active travel in all new development proposals will also bring about benefits in health and wellbeing – both for physical and mental health – while reducing isolation and increasing accessibility for all. Sustainable transport and active travel also bring benefits in respect of reduced congestion and pollution and reduced impacts upon climate change.

Option 38b would not require sustainable transport and active travel to be considered as an integral part of any new development proposals and would not promote sustainable patterns of development as directed by the SPPS.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Do you agree with the proposed approach to place the onus on applicants to demonstrate that sustainable transport and active travel has been considered in all new development proposals?

## Key Issue 39

### Promotion of sustainable transport

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**Option 39a: Identify sites suitable for Park and Ride / Park and Share facilities**

**Option 39b: Retain existing and proposed Park and Ride sites as designated in extant plans**

#### **Preferred Option: Option 39a**

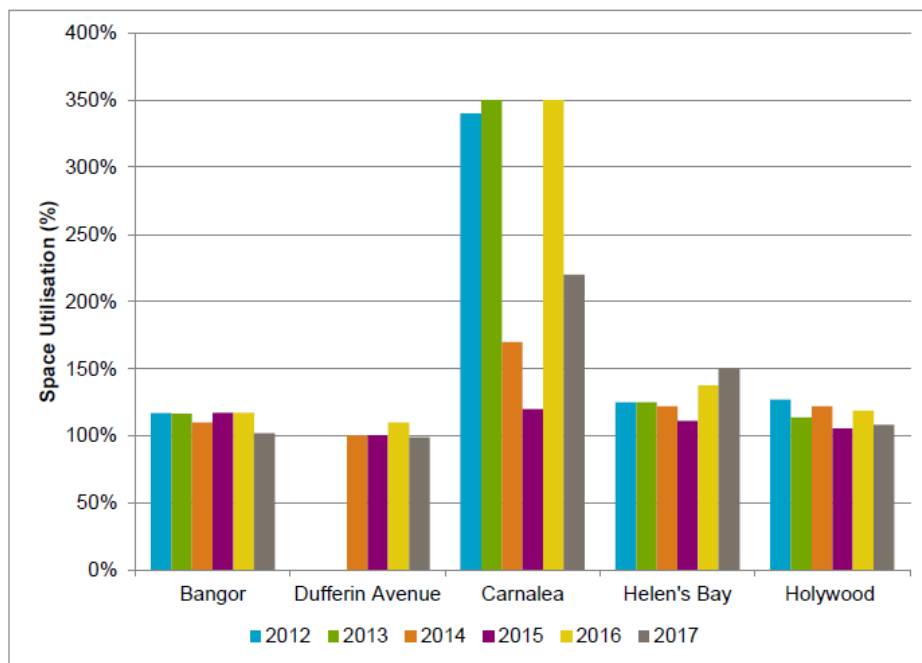
The preferred option, Option 39a, will provide the opportunity to identify sites for Park and Ride / Park and Share facilities in suitable sites across the Borough in order to promote more sustainable patterns of development and to encourage a modal shift from private cars to public transport. This



option will also allow existing and proposed sites within the extant area plans to be reviewed to determine if they are still suitable for protection as Park and Ride sites.

There are five existing operational Park and Ride sites located within the Borough: in Bangor at Abbey Street and Dufferin Avenue; Carnalea; Helen’s Bay; and Hollywood. As Figure 34 shows, all sites are currently operating at full capacity.

**Figure 32: Translink Historical Park and Ride Data (Source: AECOM)**



The Department for Infrastructure Roads has identified a number of sites, within the Borough, which are being considered for Park and Ride Schemes.

Park and Ride sites are a simple but effective way to reduce traffic congestion. They are situated convenient to a public transport link connection, such as a train station or a bus stop and make it possible for at least part of a trip to be made without using a car. Park and Ride facilities also have the benefit of reducing costs, pollution and stress.

The extant ADAP 2015 designated land for potential Park and Ride/ Park and Share sites at:

- Former Scrabo High School site in Newtownards, and
- Bus depot, Saintfield Road, Ballygowan.

Given the introduction of the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme between Belfast and Dundonald, it seems prudent that the LDP continues to reserve land on the former Scrabo High School site for a Park and Ride facility to serve as an inter-modal transfer site between car, local bus and express bus services which can connect with the BRT and improve the connectivity and accessibility of the Borough.

The identified site in Ballygowan is on a key commuter route into Belfast along which Ulsterbus services operate. Its retention for potential development for Park and Ride / Park and Share purposes would be beneficial given the role of Ballygowan as a commuter village with an identified issue with parking.

The preferred option will also allow consideration of suitable sites for Park and Share purposes. Park and Share sites act as meeting points for people to car share and are usually located at key road junctions. Park and Share sites can serve a dual purpose where motorists can Park and Share with other motorists or can Park and Ride on public transport. This will contribute to the regional strategic objectives of reducing the need for the private car and facilitating travel by public transport.

The second option would comply with the regional strategic objectives for transportation and land-use planning by promoting more sustainable transport but it would not offer the opportunity to identify any new Park and Ride / Park and Share sites or review the existing sites set out in the extant plans.

The preferred option scored as the most sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Do you agree with the proposed approach to identify sites suitable for Park and Ride / Park and Share facilities?

## Key Issue 40

### Reducing reliance on the private car

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Areas of parking restraint are designated areas within which a reduction from published car parking standards will be applied. The aim of introducing areas of parking restraint is to reduce reliance on the private car, promote a shift from car use towards other forms of transport and tackle congestion in our towns which is in line with the regional strategic objectives for transportation and land-use planning. The availability of car parking is also a key factor in terms of influencing a modal shift away from the private car towards public transport and/or active travel such as walking or cycling.

Areas of parking restraint are a particularly suitable approach in town centres where there is a concentration of services, and connectivity with the public transport system is greatest. A reduction in the availability of car parking may be complemented by measures such as an appropriate policy on public car parking and charging aimed at reducing long stay car parking opportunities.

The Council, who has responsibility for off-street parking, is currently preparing a Strategy Document regarding car park provision, the findings of which will inform the LDP process.

Within the current development plans, dBMAP 2015 and ADAP 2015, only Bangor town centre has a designated area of parking restraint. The policy for this applies a standard of one space per dwelling for residential parking and, for non-residential parking one space per 50 m<sup>2</sup> of non-operational space, and one space per 930 m<sup>2</sup> of operational space.

There are no areas of parking restraint within the other town centres of the Borough.

**Option 40a: Introduce areas of parking restraint in our town centres and other areas, where appropriate to local circumstances**

**Option 40b: Do not introduce areas of parking restraint**

**Preferred Option: Option 40a**

The preferred option will allow the area of parking restraint within Bangor town centre to be reviewed and retained if appropriate. It will also allow the consideration and introduction of new areas of parking restraint within the other town centres of the Borough, where appropriate to local circumstances.

Each town centre in our Borough has a distinct character. Newtownards, Bangor and Holywood benefit from good public transport links both within the Borough and to and from Belfast. They also have the greatest critical mass in terms of resident population and services and therefore are more likely to be able to successfully promote public transport and active travel with the aim of reducing reliance on the private car. Whilst a degree of parking is necessary to meet the need of businesses, residents, and visitors, the most successful town centres in terms of place-making are those which are experienced from a human level where priority is given to pedestrians rather than vehicles.

Other town centres such as Comber and Donaghadee struggle to provide the same accessibility to services and connectivity to public transport. This is even truer of rural areas within the Borough – many of which experience issues of poor accessibility and isolation.

Within Planning Policy Statement 3, Access, Movement and Parking, it states that it is unlikely in the short term that areas of parking restraint will be brought forward in settlements with a population of less than 10,000. Based on the 2011 Census, Comber has a population of 9,078 and Donaghadee a population of 6,869 and, therefore, may not be suitable for areas of parking restraint. This preferred option, however will allow areas of parking restraint in all town centres to be considered.

The second option would not introduce any areas of parking restraint and car parking provision would be guided by the current published car parking standards. This would not promote a reduction in the amount of car parking or congestion within our town centres or encourage a modal shift away from reliance on the private car towards more travel by public transport or active travel.

The preferred option scored as the more sustainable overall in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree that areas of parking restraint should be introduced within town centres and, if not, why?**

# Key Issue 41

## Protection of proposed routes for transport schemes

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**Option 41: Continue to protect proposed routes for future transport schemes as identified within the extant area plans**

The preferred option will align with the SPPS which directs the Council to address the protection of proposed routes for future transport schemes and safeguard the lands identified to protect them from development which may jeopardise their delivery.

The extant ADAP 2015 contains several routes for future transport schemes in the Ards area that are protected over the Plan period. Some of the identified routes have been completed and some are still awaiting funding, such as:

- Ballygowan Road link in Comber.
- Bowtown Road – Portaferry Road link in Newtownards
- 

The route of the Ballygowan Road link in Comber has been protected for at least 45 years without implementation as it first appeared in the 1972 North Down and Ards Area Plan. It does not appear in the most recent Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan or Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015 (SRTP), therefore the LDP proposes to clarify with DfI Roads on its current commitment to the scheme. Protection of this route has had the effect of sterilising the lands required to facilitate the scheme as they cannot be brought forward for an alternative land use. However, this road scheme is the last opportunity to connect this main route in Comber into the strategic road network and reduce congestion in the town centre and, therefore, its retention is considered important.

The road proposal identified at Bowtown Road – Portaferry Road link in Newtownards is protected to facilitate the movement of west and south bound traffic via the Southern Link Road. This road link connects with developer funded distributor roads which will be provided as part of housing zonings (zoning NS 19) linking through to the Donaghadee Road and Bangor Road. As these are directly linked to the development of housing, the key design considerations for each zoning will be reviewed through the LDP process and it is considered reasonable to retain this proposed distributor road to be provided at the expense of the developers, should the housing zonings come forward.

No alternative option is proposed as it is a regional strategic objective to protect routes required for new transport schemes. The LDP should identify new or planned improvements to transport schemes and protect the land required to facilitate such infrastructure provision from development likely to jeopardise its delivery. The proposed routes for future transport schemes have not come forward within the lifetime of the current development plan or even previous development plans,

therefore, it is considered important to continue to protect these proposed routes for future transport schemes to improve accessibility within the Borough.

The preferred option was the only option considered in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree with continuing to protect proposed routes for future transport schemes that are identified in extant Development Plans?**

## Key Issue 42

### Disused transport routes

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**Option 42: Identify and safeguard disused former transport routes for future use for transport or recreational, nature conservation or tourism related uses**

The preferred option will provide the opportunity to identify and safeguard disused transport routes from development that would prejudice their future re-use for transportation purposes or for recreation, nature conservation or tourism related uses.

This will be in line with the regional strategic objectives of the SPPS with regards to the protection of disused transport routes and promotion of active travel as in cases where there is no reasonable prospect of disused transport routes being re-used for future transport purposes, consideration will be given to alternative purposes such as recreational, nature conservation or tourism related use.

Northern Ireland historically had an extensive transport network comprising roads, railway lines and stations, canals and associated towpaths etc. Consideration should be given to the potential opportunity for the redevelopment of these disused transport routes within the Borough for recreational or tourism purposes such as greenways.

A Greenway is defined as a traffic-free route designed for non-motorised use to connect people and communities to all kinds of destinations for commuting, everyday journeys or leisure and recreation (A Strategic Plan for Greenways 2016 published by DFI).

The redevelopment of disused transport routes within the Borough as greenways has a wide range of potential benefits from promoting health and wellbeing through active travel, to supporting the economy and tourism, enhancing the environment and bio-diversity, improving air quality, reducing flood risk and reducing congestion and reliance on the private car.

Within the Borough, the Comber Greenway is a seven-mile green corridor from Comber to East Belfast, which largely follows the path of the former Belfast-Comber railway line. As part of the Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development, the Council is keen to identify and develop a network of green and blue infrastructure which affords opportunities for connectivity, active travel, recreation and tourism with the associated benefits to health and wellbeing and biodiversity through the connections between areas of the natural environment.

This option links to Key Issue 10 within the Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation section and the preferred option to identify and facilitate the development of Community Greenways.

No alternative option is proposed as it is set out in the SPPS that disused transport routes should be identified and safeguarded where there is a reasonable prospect of re-use for future transport purposes or where this is not the case, consideration should be given to alternative purposes such as recreation, nature conservation or tourism.

The preferred option was the only option considered in the Sustainability Appraisal.

**Do you agree that disused transport routes should be identified and safeguarded for future use for transport or recreational, nature conservation or tourism related uses?**

# Glossary

## A

**Active travel** An approach to travel and transport by physically active, human powered modes, as opposed to motorised ones.

**Affordable Housing** Relates to social rented housing and intermediate housing. These are defined as follows: Social Rented Housing, i.e. housing provided at an affordable rent by a Registered Housing Association; and Intermediate Housing, i.e. shared ownership housing provided through a Registered Housing Association (e.g. the Co Ownership Housing Association) and helps households who can afford a small mortgage, but that are not able to afford to buy a property outright.

**A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)** A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland sets out planning policy for Northern Ireland across a range of topics. Most of the topics within the Strategy have been superseded by the various PPSs or SPPS.

**Area of Archaeological Potential** Areas where, based on current knowledge, it is likely that archaeological remains will be encountered in the course of continuing development and change.

**Area of Constraint on Minerals Development (ACMD)** A designation which aims to protect the most valuable and vulnerable features of the natural environment and man-made heritage including areas of high scenic value from the adverse effects caused by the development of mineral resources.

**Area of High Scenic Value (AHSV)** Areas of High Scenic Value are designated by some Development Plans in recognition of their special landscape quality.

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** A designation in recognition of areas of national importance as their landscapes possess a distinctive character and landscape features of high scenic value.

**Area of Parking Restraint** Areas of Parking Restraint allow for a reduction from the Department's published car parking standards being applied within designated areas outside of the town centre, such as around train and bus stations. Currently new development within town centres can avail of a reduction from the Department's published car parking standards that apply elsewhere in the urban area.

<b>Area of Significant Archaeological Interest (ASAI)</b>	Areas designated in order to protect not just the individual sites and monuments but the overall landscape setting within which they are located.
<b>Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)</b>	Protected sites that are of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features designated under the Environmental (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (as amended). Sites are protected to conserve biodiversity and geodiversity.
<b>Area of Townscape Character (ATC)/ Area of Village Character (AVC)</b>	An Area of Townscape Character / Area of Village Character is a designated area within a town /village which exhibits distinctive character or intrinsic qualities, often based on its historic built form or layout.

## B

<b>Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP)</b>	The draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 is a development plan prepared under the provisions of Part 3 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by the Department of the Environment (DOE). The Plan covers the City Council areas of Belfast and Lisburn and the Borough Council areas of Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey and North Down.
<b>Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA)</b>	The dBMAP identifies the BMUA as the continuous built up area centred on Belfast with an arc from Jordanstown to Knocknagoney and includes the city of Lisburn and towns of Bangor, Carrickfergus and Holywood.
<b>Brownfield Sites</b>	Sites that have been previously developed. May include vacant or derelict land, land occupied by redundant or underused buildings and developed land.
<b>Built Heritage</b>	This relates to manmade features of the historic environment and can include archaeological sites and monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks, gardens and demesnes and sites of industrial heritage.
<b>Bulky Goods</b>	This is a subset of comparison goods retailing. It describes those comparison goods which are difficult to accommodate in town centres because of their space requirements for large showrooms, parking and servicing. They typically include large items such as furniture, carpets, electrical/white goods and DIY goods, and are typically sold from retail warehouses.



## C

### **Class B1: Business Use**

Use –  
(a) As an office other than a use within Class A2 (Financial, Professional and other services);  
(b) As a call centre; or  
(c) For research and development which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

### **Clusters**

Defined in the RDS as cities and towns which can work together to create a critical mass to attract economic development and deliver services.

### **Coastal Erosion**

Coastal erosion is the wearing away of materials from the coast by wave action, tidal currents, and/or the activities of humans, typically resulting in a landward retreat of the coastline.

### **Committed Sites**

A committed site is a site on which planning permission has been granted and the approval is extant.

### **Community Cohesion**

Community cohesion refers to the sense of togetherness and bonding exhibited by a community, which helps to hold that community together. It may include feelings of belonging together, shared purpose or identity, or a sense of place.

### **Community Greenways**

Greenways are an active network of traffic free routes which are aimed at connecting people to facilities and services, as well as offering a sustainable transport alternative.

### **Community Infrastructure**

The community, health, leisure, educational facilities and other services that serve and help to sustain a community.

### **Comparison Goods/ Shopping**

Goods for sale in retail outlets not classified as convenience goods. Comparison shopping refers to shops selling comparison goods e.g. clothing, but excludes retail warehouses.

### **Compatible Economic Uses**

Businesses falling outside Part B 'Industrial and Business Uses' which would not usually impact adversely on industrial enterprise. Such uses could include the sale or display of motor vehicles; scrapyards; or a yard for the storage or distribution of minerals; or the breaking of motor vehicles.

### **Conservation Area**

Conservation Areas (CAs) are designated areas of special architectural or historic interest. The SPSS notes that in managing development within a CA the guiding

principle is to afford special regard to the desirability of enhancing its character or appearance where an opportunity to do so exists, or to preserve its character or appearance where an opportunity to enhance does not arise.

**Convenience Goods** Broadly defined as food, drinks, tobacco, newspapers, magazines, cleaning materials, toiletries.

## D

**Density** Measure of the number of dwellings per hectare.

**Development Contribution (Section 76)** A contribution, either financial or in kind, which allows the provision of infrastructure that is necessary for a development to go ahead. Usually tied in with a planning agreement with the developer/landowner and the planning authority.

**Development Management** The process of receiving, assessing and determining planning applications and providing related information and advice to customers, the general public and other stakeholders.

**District Centre** Groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore and non-retail service such as banks, building societies and restaurants.

## E

**Employment Land Evaluation Framework (ELEF)** The Employment Land Evaluation Framework is a methodology set out in the RDS for identifying economic development sites to meet anticipated future requirements.

**Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF)** Sets out the Department's 3 high level aims for transportation along with 12 supporting strategic objectives, covering the economy, society and the environment. It shows how strategic transportation intervention can be assessed against these to allow informed decisions to be made on future transportation investment.

**Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)** An Equality Impact Assessment examines the likely effects of policies and proposals on the promotion of equality of opportunity between different groups in society and on promoting good relations.

## Evidence Base

The information and data gathered by the Council to justify the soundness of the policy approach set out in the Local Development Plan. Documents include the physical, economic and social characteristics of the Plan area.

## F

### Fields in Trust (FiT) standard

Fields in Trust (FiT) standard recommends of a minimum of 2.4 hectares of outdoor playing space per 1000 population. This is commonly referred to as the 'Six Acre Standard', comprising of 4 acres (1.6 hectares per 1000 population) for outdoor sport provision and 2 acres (0.8 hectares per 1000 population) for children's play. The 4 acres for outdoor sport is further refined to 3 acres for pitch sports and 1 acre to be provided through other outdoor recreational facilities such as tennis courts, bowling greens, athletic tracks etc. Fields in Trust (FiT) developed the 'Six Acre Standard' in order to promote the protection and future development of 'green' and 'open' space throughout the United Kingdom. FiT has not attempted to put a value on synthetic pitches in comparison to natural turf pitches. Sport NI considers the value of a synthetic pitch to be 6 times that of a natural turf surface.

### Fluvial Flooding

Flooding from a river or other watercourse.

### Footfall

Footfall is the number of people entering a shop or a shopping area at a given time.

## G

### Gateways

Defined in the RDS as strategically important transport interchange points which connect ports and airports to the internal transport network.

### Green Corridor

A strip of land that provides sufficient habitat to support wildlife, often within an urban environment, thus allowing the movement of wildlife along it. Can act as a vital linkage for wildlife movement between urban areas and the countryside. Green corridors include railway embankments, river banks and roadside grass verges. Green corridors can also incorporate paths and cycle routes, which can link housing areas to the town centre, places of employment and community facilities. They help to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas.

## **Green and blue infrastructure**

Green and Blue Infrastructure is a phrase used to describe all green and blue spaces in and around our towns and cities. The term enables the consideration of the collective value of all of these spaces together. Constituent elements of green and blue infrastructure include parks, private gardens, agricultural fields, hedges, trees, woodland, green roofs, green walls, rivers and ponds. The term covers all land containing these features, regardless of its ownership, condition or size. It is all green and blue spaces in and around our towns and cities.

Appendices

## **Greenfield**

Undeveloped land or green space.

## **H**

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

Section 102 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to be undertaken during the preparation of a LDP, if necessary. This will evaluate the impact of the Plan on sites designated and protected for their international importance for nature conservation.

### **Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes of Special Historic Interest**

Important designated features contributing to the landscape's appearance. Many are distinguished by their carefully composed design of trees, meadows and water features, perhaps as a setting for a house. Some have valuable tree plantations, shrubs or plants, while others may provide a significant historical record, of a particular era or show how the design of a parkland or garden has changed over the centuries.

### **Housing Association**

A society, body of trustees or company that provides rented accommodation and may specialise in accommodation for special needs groups. Housing Associations are the main developers of new social housing for rent in Northern Ireland.

### **Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs)**

The RDS identifies regional housing needs from 2012 to 2025 as Housing Growth Indicators across Northern Ireland. These are used as a guide for estimating future housing need in each of the Council areas.

### **Housing Monitor**

The main purpose of a housing monitor is primarily to inform Local Development Plan preparation by assessing the extent of housing land available within settlements and the estimated number of units that this could accommodate. It will also help the Council to identify settlements where there is a potential shortfall in land supply and serve to inform house builders on the availability of land that may be suitable for housing.

**Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)**

Housing Needs Assessment is an assessment by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive of local housing needs primarily in relation to general needs social housing, supported housing, travellers and affordable housing.

**Hubs**

The Regional Development Strategy spatial framework guidance defines a number of large towns in Northern Ireland as either main hubs or local hubs.

**Independent Examination (IE)**

The Department will appoint the Planning Appeals Commission or other independent examiners to hold an Independent Examination. The IE will examine the Draft Plan Strategy and Draft Local Policies Plan against soundness tests which will relate to how the documents have been produced, and how they have taken account of central government's plans, policy and guidance, and also their coherence, consistency and effectiveness.

**Infrastructure**

The basic services and facilities needed for society to function. Sometimes grouped under 'hard' infrastructure (roads, energy supply, and water) and 'soft' infrastructure (schools, libraries and community centres etc.).

**Integrated Tourism Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy**

The Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development presents a coherent vision for the pursuit of prosperity in the Borough of Ards and North Down. It responds to the vision and outcomes of the Community Plan for the area and is to be used as the common point of reference for all those contributing to the growth of the economy, the welcoming of visitors and the improvement of places. The strategy presents a confident and ambitious plan for the future.

**Interim Report – Sustainability Appraisal**

The interim Report is part 2 of the first stage (Stage A) of the SA process. Stage A (2) requires the preparation of the environmental report which involves;

- Identifying, describing and evaluating the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan;
- Reasonable alternatives taking into account the geographic scope of the plan and reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
- Description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information.

**International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)**

The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection provides scientific advice and guidance on the health and environmental effects of non-ionizing radiation (NIR) to protect people and the environment from detrimental NIR exposure. NIR refers to electromagnetic radiation such as ultraviolet, light, infrared, and radio waves, and mechanical waves such as infra- and ultrasound.

**Inward Investment**

Investment in a country made by investors outside that country.

**K**

**Key Site Requirements / Considerations**

Key Site Requirements/ Considerations are stipulated within a Development Plan and provide the detail of what would be required to be provided as part of the development of a zoned site.

**L**

**Lifetime homes**

A set of 16 design criteria that provide a model for building accessible and adaptable homes to meet the needs of the occupier over their lifetime.

**Listed Building**

Listed Buildings are buildings of special architectural or historic interest that are afforded statutory protection. Listed Buildings are a key element of our built heritage and are often important for their intrinsic value and for their contribution to the character and quality of settlements and the countryside. Lists are subject to ongoing review.

**Local Centre**

Small grouping of shops, typically comprising a general grocery store, a sub-post office, occasionally a pharmacy and other small shops of a local nature.

**Local Development Plan (LDP)**

The Local Development Plan provides a broad land use policy framework for the physical development of the Borough. When adopted, the Ards and North Down Local Development Plan will become the statutory land use planning document for the Borough and will be the planning consideration in decision making on planning applications.

**Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs)**

Local Landscape Policy Areas consist of those features and areas within and adjoining settlements considered to be of greatest amenity value, landscape quality or local significance and therefore worthy of protection from undesirable or damaging development.

**Local Lists**

Non-Designated heritage assets – buildings and monuments, identified by local planning authorities as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated.

**Local Nature Reserves**

Local Nature Reserves are areas of land, designated by a council under Article 22 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, to conserve its nature conservation, earth science and recreational value, with the primary land use being for conservation purposes.

**Local Policies Plan (LPP)**

The Local Policies Plan is prepared following adoption of the Plan Strategy. It will outline the detailed land use proposals, including zonings and key site requirements, for the local development plan. Together with the Plan Strategy, it will be the principle consideration when determining future planning applications for development within the Borough.

**Local Transport Plan**

A plan containing the specific transport schemes and services to be provided consistent with the Local Transport Strategy and the proposals contained in the LDP Local Policies Plan.

**Local Transport Strategy**

A statement of the transport aims and objectives for the Council area and the balance of transport measures to be provided.

**M**

**Mineral Safeguarding Zones**

Designated in some Development Plans to protect mineral deposits of economic or conservation value. They can also be used to ensure that workable mineral resources are not sterilised by surface development.

**Mixed Use Development**

Mixed-use development contains several different land uses on a site. This could include residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or economic development or other uses.

## N

<b>Natural Heritage</b>	Incorporates biodiversity, including flora and fauna and ecosystem types, together with associated geological structures and formations (geodiversity).
<b>Natura 2000</b>	Natura 2000 is a network of nature protection areas within the EU. It is made up of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated respectively under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive. The network includes both terrestrial and marine sites.
<b>Non-Strategic Road Scheme</b>	Road schemes which are protected in Development Plans, but are not classified by DFI under its strategic programme of works.
<b>Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)</b>	The Northern Ireland Housing Executive was established in 1971 as Northern Ireland's strategic housing authority. It offers a range of services to people living in socially rented, privately rented and owner occupied accommodation as well as supporting and working with a number of other public bodies, and with registered Housing Associations to facilitate the delivery of social housing in areas of identified need.
<b>Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NILCA)</b>	The Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment subdivided the countryside into 130 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), each based upon local patterns of geology, landform, land use, cultural and ecological features. For each LCA, the key characteristics were described and an analysis of landscape condition and its sensitivity to change was made.
<b>Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM)</b>	The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010 is the official measure of spatial deprivation in Northern Ireland.

## O

<b>Open Space</b>	Open Space as defined in Planning Policy Statement 8 is taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also be important for visual amenity.
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## P

### Passive Solar Design

Passive solar design in buildings is intended to collect, store, and distribute solar energy in the form of heat in the winter and reject solar heat in the summer. This means less reliance on fossil fuels and hence lower carbon emissions which can help to mitigate against climate change.

### Placemaking

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing.

### Plan Strategy

The Plan Strategy outlines the strategic aims and objectives of the Local Development Plan. It is prepared following consultation on the Preferred Options Paper. Together with the Local Policies Plan, it will be the principle consideration when determining future planning applications for development in the Ards and North Down Borough.

### Planning Appeals Commission (PAC)

The PAC is an independent appellate body which deals with a wide range of land use planning issues and related matters. The PAC's functions generally fall into two broad categories, deciding on appeals arising from individual planning applications and Hearing and Reporting on Public Inquiries, Hearings and Examinations. The PAC may be appointed to conduct the independent examination of LDPs.

### Planning Policy Statement (PPS)

PPSs set out the operational planning policies of central government on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

### Pluvial Flooding

Pluvial (surface water) flooding occurs when an extremely heavy downpour of rain saturates drainage systems and the excess water cannot be absorbed.

### Position Paper

A paper produced to establish the main social, economic and environmental characteristics, key issues and needs of the Plan area by particular topic.

### Preferred Option Paper (POP)

The Preferred Option Paper is a consultation document, intended to promote focused debate on strategic issues that will need to be addressed when preparing the draft Plan Strategy.

**Primary Retail Core (PRC)**

Areas within town centres where the aim is to protect existing retail use and to promote retail growth.

**Programme for Government (PFG)**

The NI Programme for Government is the highest level strategic document of the Executive – setting out the priorities that it will pursue in the current Assembly mandate, and the most significant actions it will take to address them.

**Protected Route**

A Protected Route is a Development Plan designation which gives additional control over the number of new accesses and the level of use of existing accesses onto the protected route.

**R**

**Ramsar**

A Ramsar site is an internationally designated site of wetland habitat (Ramsar Convention 1971), with particular value to wetland birds. The designation aims to halt the loss of wetlands by promoting conservation and ‘wise use’ of wetland habitats, with Habitats Regulations applying in respect of the sites.

**Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS, 2035)**

The Regional Development Strategy sets the context for the sustainable development of Northern Ireland to 2035. The RDS acts as the spatial strategy of the Northern Ireland Executive’s Programme for Government. The RDS was revised in 2010 to reflect the changing development of Northern Ireland and continues to set the overarching planning framework for the region.

**Renewable Energy**

Any naturally occurring source of energy such as solar, wind, tidal wave, biomass and hydroelectric power that is not derived from fossil or nuclear fuel.

**Rural Landscape Wedges**

Rural Landscape Wedges consist of buffer landscapes and open areas that can fulfil a number of purposes, but are primarily intended to prevent neighbouring settlements from merging.

**Rural Proofing**

Rural proofing is the process where any major policy or strategy is assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas, and where appropriate, make adjustments within their plans to take account of particular rural circumstances.

## S

### **Scheduled Monuments**

Archaeological sites and monuments are scheduled for protection under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995 and the work of scheduling is ongoing.

### **Scoping Report**

The Scoping Report is part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and sets out the methodology that will be used in the SA.

### **Section 75 Groups**

Key groups listed in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 that traditionally have been under represented or disadvantaged. Section 75 requires all government departments, agencies and councils to consider these groups when creating policy.

### **Sequential Approach**

An approach used to identify suitable sites for development. For example, in the instance of identifying sites for housing a sequential approach would require the focus to be on the re-use of previously developed land and buildings, underdeveloped and undeveloped land within the urban footprint, then extensions to cities and towns, next consideration would be given to a major expansion of a village or small rural settlement in exceptional circumstances before finally considering the development of a new settlement on greenfield land.

### **Settlement Hierarchy**

A Settlement Hierarchy is a classification of settlements based upon different variables such as size, population and other criteria and is an important consideration in allocating housing growth and land for economic development through the LDP. The Settlement Hierarchy includes the following tiers: large towns, small towns, villages and small settlements.

### **Settlement Development Limit**

A continuous outer boundary designated for a settlement, demarcating a limit within which there is presumption in favour of development.

### **Shared Environmental Service (SES)**

Shared Environmental Service – Provides expert advice to councils on their legal obligations regarding their enhanced environmental responsibilities following the transfer of planning powers to local government. The primary role of the service is to carry out Habitats Regulations Assessments on planning applications and local development plans to assess their impact on European sites, mainly special areas of conservation and protection. SES also assist some councils with Sustainability Appraisals of the LDP.

<b>Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCI)</b>	Formally designated sites of local nature conservation importance in development plans, based on their flora, fauna or earth science conservation importance.
<b>Social Housing</b>	Housing provided by registered social landlords for rent. Such housing is allocated by reference to an approved (Department for Communities) Common Waiting List and allocation system.
<b>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</b>	A site established under the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and designated to protect important habitats and species listed within the Directive.
<b>Special Protection Area (SPA)</b>	A site established under the European Commission Directive of Wild Birds (2009/147/EC), commonly known as the 'Birds Directive'. SPAs are important areas for breeding, overwintering and migrating birds.
<b>State Care Monuments</b>	Archaeological sites and monuments taken into the care of the Department for Communities under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (NI) Order 1995.
<b>Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)</b>	A Statement of Community Involvement sets out how a Council proposes to engage the community and stakeholders in exercising its planning functions. The document informs everyone about how to fully participate in the planning process (including development planning, management and enforcement).
<b>Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)</b>	The Department of the Environment's (now Department for Infrastructure) Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) published in 2015, sets out strategic planning policy for a wide range of planning matters. It also provides the core planning principles to underpin delivery of the two-tier planning system with the aim of furthering sustainable development. It sets the strategic direction for the new councils to bring forward detailed operational policies within future local development plans.
<b>Strategic Road Improvement (SRI)</b>	Strategic Road Improvement, within the Department for Infrastructure, manage the major works road programme, funding for capital schemes/programmes and monitor scheme reports and economic appraisals.
<b>Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)</b>	Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) supports and clarifies planning policy statements and plans. This can take the form of design guidance. It also includes a set of Development Control Advice Notes that explain the criteria and technical standards to be considered when dealing with specific categories or particular aspects of development. Where relevant to a particular development

proposal supplementary guidance will be taken into account as a material consideration in making decisions.

**Supported Housing** Supported Housing enables vulnerable people to live more independently both in their own home and in the community, through the provision of housing related support services.

**Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report** Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report consists of SA Scoping Report and an assessment of reasonable alternatives against an agreed SA framework. It is subject to public consultation along with the POP.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of local development plans. It incorporates the more environmentally focused considerations of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and is used to assess the POP against a set of objectives and criteria, to evaluate if it is likely to have significant impacts on the environment.

**Sustainable Development** Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Sustainable Development Strategy (2010)** The NI Executive launched its new Sustainable Development Strategy, 'Everyone's Involved' in May, 2010. The Strategy is intended to provide a framework that can support and inform the decisions and actions taken by individuals, groups and organisations in progressing the sustainability agenda.

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)** SuDS are a sequence of water management practices that seek to alleviate the problems associated with hard and paved surfaces in urban environments, by storing or re-using surface water at source, thereby decreasing flow rates to watercourses and improving water quality.

## T

**Town Cramming** Can also be known as urban crowding and is linked to increased housing densities and the loss of open spaces within settlements. It can result in poor environments, noise, congestion and lack of recreational and open space.

**Transport Assessment** A Transport Assessment is a comprehensive and systematic process that sets out and

evaluates transport issues relating to a proposed development.

## U

### Urban Capacity Study

An Urban Capacity Study assesses the supply of land and buildings that may be available to accommodate new housing development. It is a valuable tool in facilitating sustainable development by identifying land and buildings within an area that might be reused for housing purposes and to form the basis for choosing new housing sites and the management of their release through the Local Development Plan.

### Urban Footprint

The urban footprint of a settlement is the continuously built up area. The boundary will be represented by an uninterrupted line, often lying inside the planned settlement limit. The urban footprint contains land which has a formal urban use including land on the edge of the settlement where it forms part of the curtilage of a building. Undeveloped zoned land at the edge of the settlement is excluded.

### Urban Regeneration

Urban Regeneration, also known as urban renewal or renaissance, is a programme directed to stimulate physical development and economic growth in urban areas that have fallen into decline. It includes a focus on significant physical, economic, community and social interventions within a designated area. The development of masterplans and other strategies within an urban area is an important part of the process in establishing a clear framework for the improvement and revitalisation of these areas.

### Use Classes Order

The Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 itemises certain similar uses of land and buildings into categories known as 'Use Classes'. The main categories are Part A (Shopping and Professional Services), Part B (Industrial and Business uses), Part C (Residential uses) and Part D (Community, Recreation and Culture).

## V

### Vacancy Rates

Vacancy rates are the percentage of all available units in an area, that are vacant or unoccupied at a particular time. It is the opposite of the occupancy rate, which is the

percentage of units in an area that are occupied.

**Viability**

A measure of a centre's capacity to attract ongoing investment for maintenance, importance and adaption to changing needs.

**Vitality**

A measure of how busy a centre is.

**W**

**Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW)**

WWTWs remove waste from sewage that could harm the environment, so that the water can be returned to a river or the sea.

**Wellbeing**

A good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state influenced by health, happiness and prosperity. For a larger group of people, it could be described as the welfare of that group.

**Windfall sites**

Housing sites that are neither zoned nor anticipated during the formulation of the Development Plan but which become available during the lifetime of the Plan. It can arise as a result, for example, of plot sub-division or property conversion and can normally make a significant contribution to the housing land supply over any Plan period.

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**Edition Note:**

This version of the Preferred Options Paper is released in preliminary edition format to allow the 12 week period of consultation to commence. The document has been published on the Council's website and notification has also been made by way of local advertisement. A professional print edition shall also issue which will be available upon request using the contact details set out in this document.



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