

Local Development Plan - Position Paper
Population Growth and Housing



**Ards and
North Down**
Borough Council

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Executive Summary

This position paper provides members with baseline information on housing and population demographics in the Ards and North Down area. This paper will also present population and housing projections to assist in the identification of the key issues for accommodating balanced housing growth up to 2030.

It is important to stress that in compiling the Position Paper, the best information available has been used. Information shall be updated, as required, throughout the plan making process.

The paper will provide a foundation of evidence to bring forward proposals in the Preferred Options Paper (POP) and will also form a starting point for views of members generated as part of the engagement event. The POP is the earliest stage in the plan preparation process and will form the basis for consulting with the public and stakeholders on a range of options for dealing with key issues in the Borough.

The aims of the paper are:

- To build the capacity of members to make informed planning decisions, particularly within the plan making context;
- To provide baseline information which will inform Local Development Plan policy making at local level;
- To assess the land use needs of a growing population in the Ards and North Down Area and to consider the adequacy of the existing growth strategy; and
- To link with important ongoing work in relation to the development of a Community Plan and other strategic work being undertaken by the Council.

Any future decision making will need to be made within the context of a Sustainability Appraisal under the provision of Planning (Northern Ireland) Act 2011. This paper is therefore intended to generate members' ideas on how planning can best meet the needs of a growing community and the different housing needs within the community.

Introduction

- 1.1 This paper examines the population demographics for Ards and North Down Borough. Information within this paper refers to the legacy Ards District and North Down Borough Councils using, where appropriate, historic information provided by the Census and information previously provided by the Department of the Environment (DOE).
- 1.2 The paper also presents the housing profile for the Borough and considers the housing need, briefly reflects on existing housing land availability and how housing growth could be accommodated across the settlement hierarchies within Ards and North Down Borough Council Area.
- 1.3 The paper allows members to begin considering the housing need for the Borough, informed by a detailed evaluation of current population trends and the strategic direction for balanced growth as outlined in the Regional Development Strategy 2035.
- 1.4 Information has been derived from various sources, including the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the Electoral Office NI.

Population Profile in Ards and North Down

- 2.1 The following pages provide a summary of the key demographic information for the people who reside in Ards and North Down Borough. The information is presented within the following sections:
 - Age Structure
 - Gender and Life expectancy
 - Marital Status
 - Households with or without dependent children
 - Racial group & ethnicity

- Sexual orientation
- Disability and health
- Religion
- Political opinion
- Spatial deprivation

Age Structure

2.2 The age structure of a population has implications for future planning and the provision of housing. An increasingly younger population will impact on the demand for and provision of childcare facilities, nursery, primary and secondary schools. A growing population of working age would necessitate the provision of adequate housing, especially for those entering the housing market; and sufficient employment opportunities. For an aging population, the provision of adequate services and housing to meet the specific needs of this proportion of population must also be considered.

2.3 Since 2001, in Northern Ireland the number of children under the age of 16 has slightly decreased, while both the working age population and the number of pensioners have slightly increased (see Tables 1 and 2). In Ards and North Down Borough the number of children has also declined, with the overall proportion of children under the age of 16 remaining below the NI level. The working population has decreased since 2001 and is now marginally below the NI average.

quieter

2.4 The Northern Ireland trend is that of an aging population, the proportion of people over 65 is growing and this trend is expected to continue. By 2030 it is projected 21.1% of the total population will be over 65¹. Since 2001, the number of pensioners in North Down District and Ards District has been above the NI average. This trend is projected to continue and the 2030

¹ NISRA 2012 – based population projections

estimated proportion of Ards and North Down residents aged over 65 is 26.8%.

Table 1: Age Structure of Population (2001)

	0-15 years	16-64 years	65+ years
N. Ireland	398,056 (23.6%)	1,063,886 (60.9%)	223,325 (15.5%)
Ards and North Down	28,629 (19.1%)	98,122 (65.6%)	22,816 (15.3%)
North Down	14,070 (18.43%)	49,719 (65.15%)	12,534 (16.42%)
Ards	14,559 (19.88%)	48,403 (66.10%)	10,282 (14.04%)

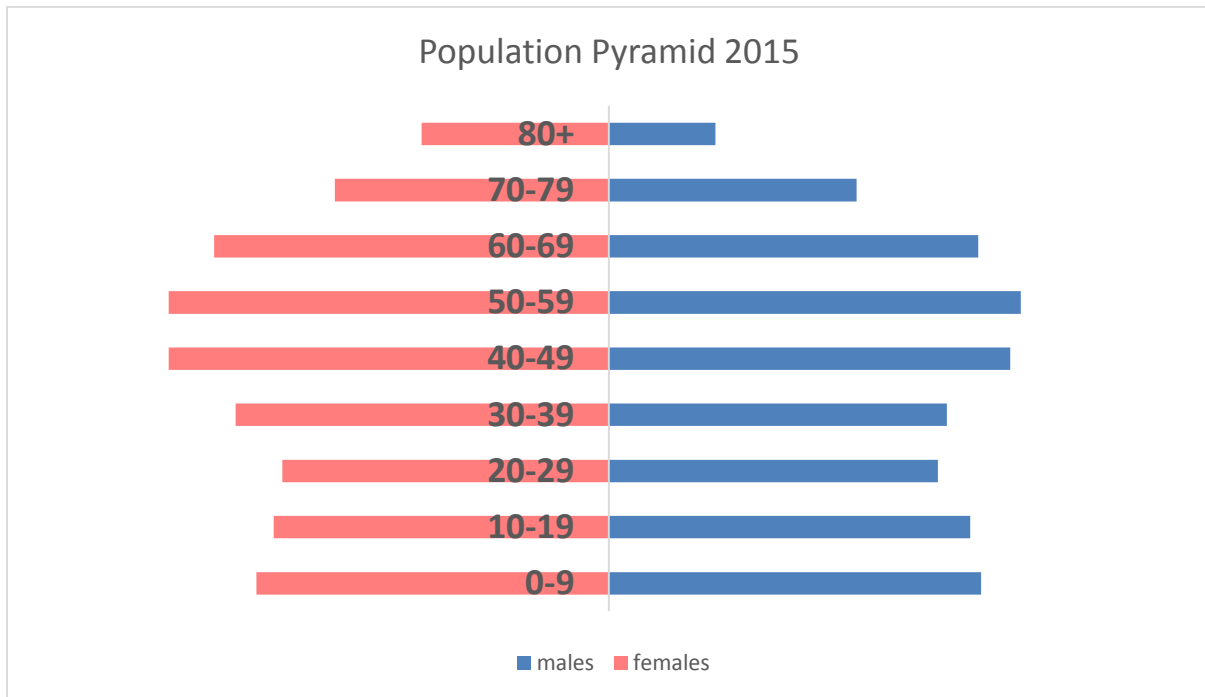
Source: NISRA Census 2001 Usually Resident Population by broad age bands

Table 2: Age Structure of Population (2011)

	0-15 years	16-64 years	65+ years
N. Ireland	379,323 (21.95%)	1,167,820 (64.49%)	263,720 (14.56%)
Ards and North Down	27,780 (19%)	99,497 (63.3%)	27,738 (17.7%)
North Down	14,515 (18.39%)	49,950 (63.27%)	14,472 (18.33%)
Ards	15,265 (19.55%)	49,547 (63.46%)	13,266 (16.99%)

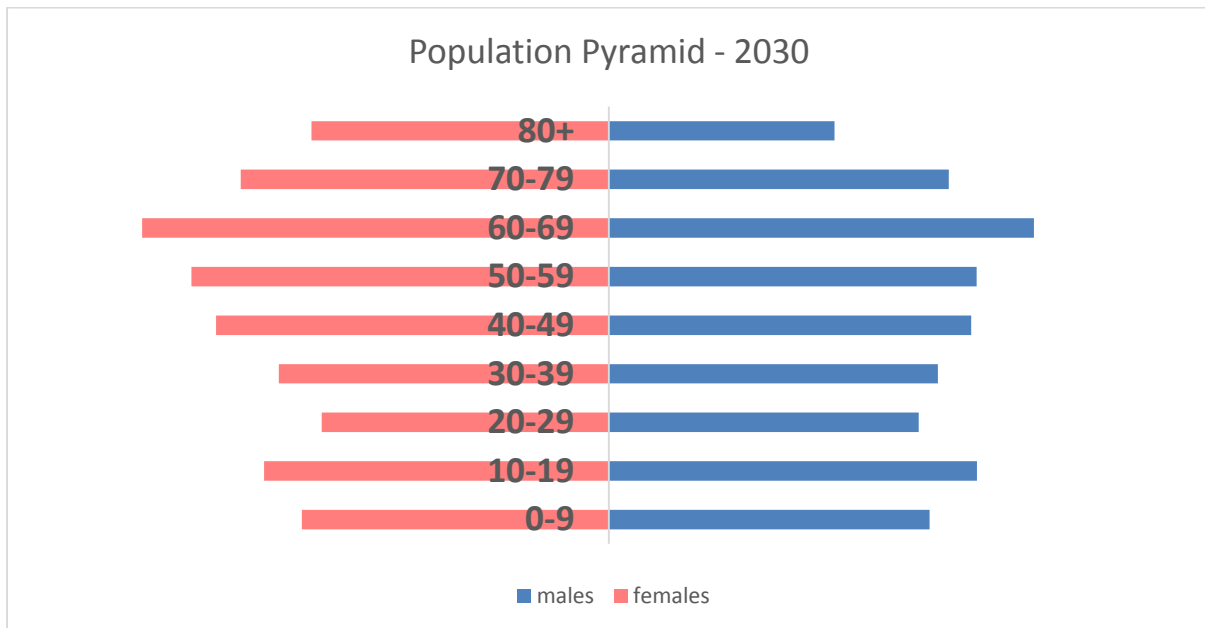
Source: NISRA Census 2011 Usually Resident Population by broad age bands

Graph 1: Ards and North Down Population Pyramid (2015)



Source NISRA

Graph 2: Ards and North Down Population Pyramid (2030 Projection)



Source: NISRA

- 2.5 A more detailed analysis of Ards and North Down Borough indicates variations between areas, with some having slightly older populations than the district average and others having much younger populations. A higher proportion of children under 16 years can be found in a number of areas.
- 2.6 In contrast, the proportion of population aged 65 and over within the Borough is significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average. Legacy North Down Borough contains 27 wards with populations significantly higher than average, whilst legacy Ards District contains 34 wards with a population higher than the NI average.
- 2.7 Variations between areas will require more targeted responses with regard to the type of services required. The Local Development Plan has a role in providing development land to facilitate housing units to meet the needs of the elderly, particularly nursing homes, sheltered accommodation and smaller sized units. The LDP also has a role in ensuring the accessibility of this type of accommodation and that it is sited within close proximity to local services, facilities and transport provision. This includes health and community facilities, as well as access to shops and areas for recreation. A rising elderly population will result in further increased demand for health and community services, the provision of which will also need to be carefully considered.
- 2.8 The 2011 census indicates approximately one fifth of the population of Northern Ireland was under the age of 16. Children are defined as being a vulnerable group and just over a fifth (22%) of children in Northern Ireland were estimated to be living in low income households (FRS, 2016/2017). Safe and easy access to health and community facilities; and open space, sport and recreation facilities; including play parks and playing fields, is a key issue not only for children but also the aging population. It is the role of the LDP to ensure access to these facilities in order to benefit the health and well-being of the population.

Gender

- 2.9 The Northern Ireland population is broadly divided on a 50/50 basis between men and women and Ards and North Down generally respects this trend, although there were slightly more females in 2011. Within the legacy Councils the trend was similar, with North Down having the highest percentage of females (see Appendix Table 1).
- 2.10 Life expectancy within the Borough continues to improve for both males and females. The historic trend indicates variations between the genders, with females enjoying a higher life expectancy. This difference in life expectancy has reduced slightly over the period 2001-2003 to 2011-2013, as the life expectancy for males improved at a slightly higher rate than for females. As such, the gender gap in life expectancy has been reduced to three years, a differential which is slightly lower than the overall Northern Ireland level. In the UK, life expectancy at birth is expected to increase by around five years between 2012 and 2037 for both men and women (Office of National Statistics, 2013). It is anticipated that life expectancy will increase similarly in Ards and North Down Borough.
- 2.11 There are some key differences between the sexes, these include the fact women tend to take on the lead role of carer within the family, whether it be for children or aging relatives (see section on dependents below). Women also tend to suffer greater inequalities in terms of wealth, employment and access to services. The gender pay gap (i.e. the difference between men's and women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings) based on median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for full-time employees increased to 10% and measured by hourly earnings for all employees was 19.7% (Office of National Statistics, 2013). In Northern Ireland the variation is most pronounced for those on low incomes. Half of those people earning less than £7 per hour were in part time employment, and women generally tend to form the greater proportion of part times workers (DETI, 2010). The gender gap is also reflected in access to a private car, with 25% of men in the UK and 40% of women lacking a car in their household or not possessing a driving license

(Poverty site, 2010). These figures are often masked by the fact that only a small percentage of couples do not have access to a car.

Marital Status

- 2.12 The marital status of the population tends to have a direct influence on the composition of households and therefore the demand for housing. Since 2001 there has been an increase in the percentage of the population that is divorced. Subsequently, there has been a decrease in the percentage of the population that is married and an increase in the proportion of single people in Northern Ireland. For Ards and North Down the percentage of single people has remained at a constant level since 2001, whilst the percentage of people married and divorced has increased. Within the Borough there are a lower proportion of single people compared to the NI average and a higher proportion of both married and divorced people assessed against the regional average.
- 2.13 There is a necessity for adequate provision of appropriate housing to meet the needs of the population. As such, given the existing and projected trends, there will need to be more units provided specifically for single people. It is a reasonable assumption that many single wage earners will not have the same purchasing power of that of a double income household. Single people also tend to have different social needs to people who are married and have families. The young and single are key to the economies of town centres. This proportion of the population provide a significant part of the market for pubs, clubs, coffee shops and restaurants and therefore contribute substantially to the night time economy. However, there is also evidence of a proportion of the population feeling socially excluded. This inclination is experienced by many single people; particularly the elderly, disabled and single parents. Evidence suggests single parents are one of the most disadvantaged groups, with over half falling within the low income bracket. Access to a car is also an issue for over half of all lone parents.

Dependent Children

- 2.14 A “dependent child” is defined as a child aged 0-15, or one aged 16-18 who is a full-time student and living in a family with his or her parent(s) or grandparent(s) (Census 2011). In both Northern Ireland and Ards and North Down Borough, the proportion of households (including lone parent households) with dependent children has continually declined since 1981.
- 2.15 Evidence also shows that since 1981 the average household size has steadily declined in Northern Ireland. This trend is also reflected within Ards and North Down. In 1981 the average household size in legacy North Down Borough was 2.88 and 3.03 in legacy Ards Borough. By comparison, in 1981 Northern Ireland had an average household size of 3.2. By 2011 the average household size in North Down and Ards Councils had decreased to 2.39, below the NI average of 2.54. This has largely been due to a decrease in the percentage of households with dependent children and a move towards more single adult and older single person households, as well as households comprising of two people. In 2011 over 50% of all households in Northern Ireland and also the legacy North Down Borough and Ards Borough were composed of one or two person households.
- 2.16 A closer examination of the evidence for the Borough reveals, as expected, that some areas have a much higher proportion of households with children compared to the district average.
- 2.17 The Local Development Plan has a role in accommodating provision of a range of house sizes and house types to meet the needs of different household sizes. The LDP will also include planning policies to enable those wishing to extend their homes to do so in order to meet their changing needs and circumstances.

Racial Group and Ethnicity

- 2.18 In 2001 9% of Northern Ireland's population were born outside the region. In both North Down and Ards Districts this was slightly higher at 10.8%. By 2011, this proportion had increased to 11.1% for Northern Ireland, similar to North Down and Ards District at approximately 11.6%. The majority of non-indigenous people were born either in the rest of the UK or in the Republic of Ireland. Almost 7% of the population of North Down and Ards District were born elsewhere within the UK compared to the Northern Ireland average of less than 5%.
- 2.19 Racial ethnicity within the Borough is predominantly white with 98.54% falling within this category. Other ethnic groups comprise very small proportions of the overall population (Census 2011). It is therefore unlikely the Local Development Plan will have a particular impact on these groups, however, it is important to monitor changes over time as this may have implications particularly in relation to equality of access to homes and jobs.

Sexual Orientation

- 2.20 The Continuous Household Survey (2013-2016) estimated 4% of the population are either gay, lesbian, bi sexual, transgender or transsexual in Ards and North Down Borough. People within these groups often feel excluded or marginalised in society. Whilst the LDP is unlikely to bring forward specific proposals and policies in relation to sexual orientation, it is anticipated that many of the measures in the LDP aimed at providing a range of house types, creating employment, accessibility to services and improving safety and security will benefit these groups.

Disability and Health

- 2.21 A person is described as having a limiting long term health problem if they have a health problem or disability which limits their daily activities and which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. This includes problems due to old age (Census 2011). In 2011/12, 6% of children in Northern Ireland were disabled compared to 14% of adults of working age and 44% of adults over State Pension age (DSD Family Resources Survey). Overall, the health of the area is improving (Appendix Tables 2 & 3) but approximately one in five people in Ards and North Down Borough suffer from some form of limiting illness.
- 2.22 Urban areas within the Borough tend to have more elderly people and people with a long term illness e.g. Central Ards and Bangor Castle. In general, where there are higher levels of long term limiting illness, there are lower levels of people who described their health as being good or very good and vice versa. An alternative way of measuring disability is to consider the number of recipients of Disability Living Allowance. In legacy North Down Borough Council 5630 persons (7.68%) were in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, whilst in legacy Ards Borough Council 6950 persons were in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (9.1%), the total for Northern Ireland was 192,630 people. In legacy North Down Borough Council 9460 persons (12.91%) and 10670 (13.98%) persons in legacy Ards Borough Council were in receipt of Multiple Disability Benefit. In Northern Ireland a total of 281,550 people were in receipt of Multiple Disability Benefit.
- 2.23 In 2011/2012, 13.13% of the population of Northern Ireland were informal carers. The majority of unpaid carers are working age adults (81%). State Pension age adults made up 16% of unpaid carers in Ards and North Down Borough and 2.8% of carers were children. Some 58% of reported carers are women. The time spent caring varies from 8% of adult carers providing care for less than 20 hours per week, to 3.13% caring for 50 hours or more per

week². There are also large areas of legacy North Down Borough & legacy Ards Borough with higher proportions of people providing unpaid care.

- 2.24 The link between health and wealth is well rehearsed, as is the relationship between mobility and health. Therefore, as with other groups, planning has a role in accommodating accessible housing, employment and services. The LDP also has a role in helping to improve the health and well-being of people by directing development to appropriate places to ensure it does not have an adverse impact in terms of air or water quality; loss of existing open space, sport and outdoor recreation; noise and nuisance etc. The LDP also has a role in recognising and facilitating development to meet the needs of carers, by facilitating dwellings for those with special circumstances or the extension of homes to include “granny annexes”.

Religion

- 2.25 The designation of settlements and provision of development opportunities needs to be carefully considered against the needs and spatial distribution of people of different religious or political opinions to prevent prejudice and meet the requirements of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.
- 2.26 The population of Ards and North Down Borough Council has a predominantly Protestant/Other Christian profile of 75%. This is considerably higher than the percentage for Northern Ireland as a whole. Care needs to be taken when examining the mix across the Council area as this can obscure the differences between neighbourhoods in the towns and villages throughout the Borough. The 2011 Census indicated that the religion of the population of the district mirrored that of religion brought up in. However, in the case of each religious group, the actual number was less, with a corresponding increase in the number of people indicating that they have no religion. Table 3 below and

² NISRA 2011 Census

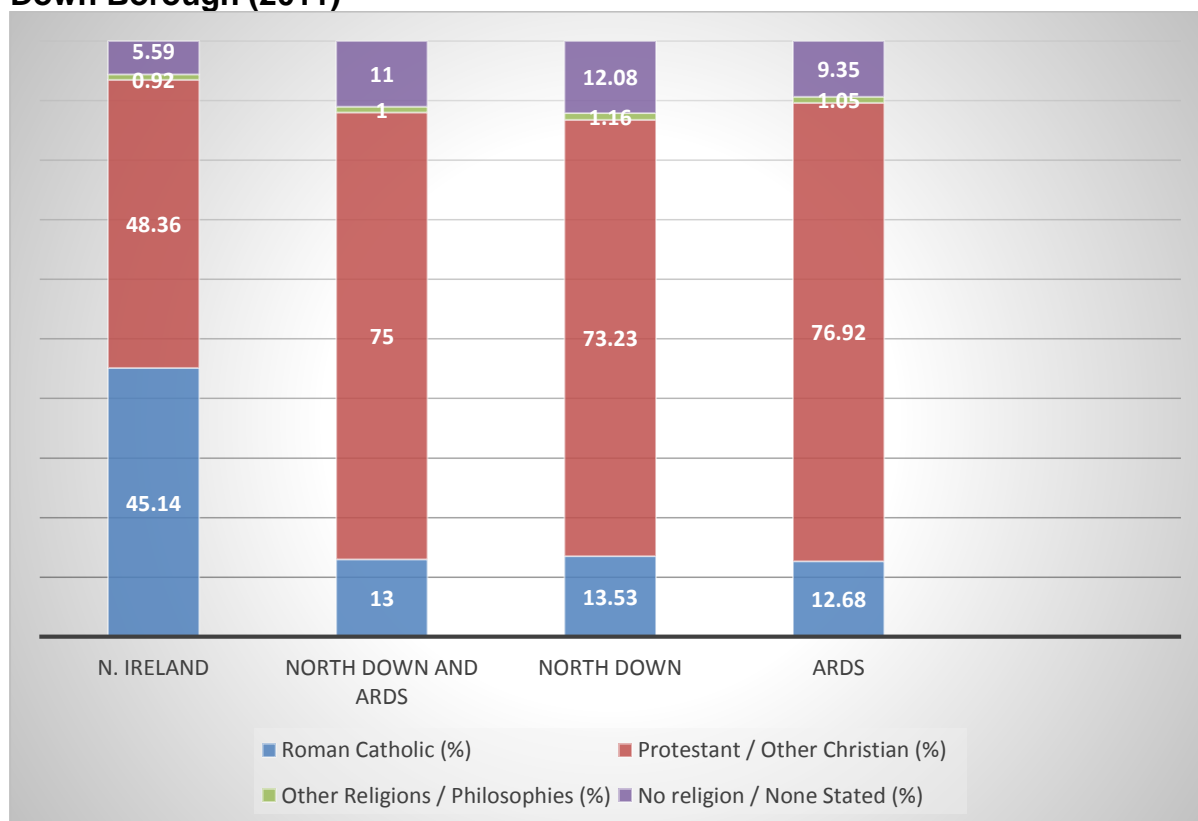
Graph 3, show the breakdown of religion within the Borough compared to Northern Ireland as a whole.

Table 3: Percentage of people & Religion belonging to or Religion in which they were brought up (2011)

	Catholic (%)	Protestant / Other Christian (%)	Other Religions / Philosophies (%)	No religion / None Stated (%)
N. Ireland	45.14	48.36	0.92	5.59
Ards and North Down	13.0	75.0	1.0	11.0
North Down	13.53	73.23	1.16	12.08
Ards	12.68	76.92	1.05	9.35

Source: NISRA Census 2011: Religion or Religion Brought Up In

Graph 3: Religion or religion brought up in for population of Ards and North Down Borough (2011)



Source: NISRA Census 2011

Political Opinion

2.27 In Northern Ireland, political opinion is viewed as being closely associated with religious belief e.g. that Catholics will generally vote for Nationalist parties and Protestants generally vote for Unionist parties. Table 4 shows that 53.6% of the votes cast in the North Down Borough and 64.9% of votes cast in Ards Borough were for Unionist parties. This high percentage is consistent with the percentage of the population in the district who are Protestant/Other Christian. Within the two legacy Councils 1.2% of North Down and 6.8% of the votes Ards respectively were for Nationalist parties.

Table 4: Political Opinion across North Down and Ards - 2011

First Preference Votes	Proportion of Votes	
	North Down	Ards
Nationalist parties	1.2	6.8
Unionist parties	53.6	64.9
Other parties/independent	52	24.9

Source: 2011 Local Government Election Results (ARK Economic and Social Research Council)

2.28 Care needs to be taken when making comparisons between communities of different religious/political persuasion as this can be divisive and can unravel the progress made in bringing the two communities together. However, there are certain facts which need to be addressed. The proportion of Catholics in low income groups in Northern Ireland is much higher than their Protestant counter parts, 26% compared with 16%³. Those areas where deprivation is greatest can be identified spatially using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010.

³ Family Resources Survey 2008/9

Spatial Deprivation

- 2.29 The LDP is required to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and to promote good relations. An important means of promoting good community relations and equal opportunity is to tackle social deprivation and inequalities in the labour market and public health.
- 2.30 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2017 identified small area concentrations of multiple deprivation and updated and replaces the NIMDM 2010 as the official measure of deprivation in Northern Ireland. It is based on the small area geography of 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs) which are ranked from 1 (most deprived) to 890 (least deprived). Many of these SOAs coincide with existing ward boundaries, particularly the rural wards. The NIMDM brings together 38 different indicators which cover specific aspects of deprivation: Income, Employment, Health & Disability, Education, Skills & Training, Access to Services, Living Environment and Crime & Disorder. These are combined to create the overall NIMDM.
- 2.31 There are 86 Super Output Areas (SOAs) within Ards and North Down, accounting for 10% of all in NI. The measures show that 3% of the top 100 most deprived SOAs in all NI were in Ards and North Down. Whilst the NIMDM 2017 cannot be used to compare absolute changes in deprivation with the NIMDM 2010, these rankings suggest a declining picture.
- 2.32 Of the 100 most deprived SOAs in NI – 3 were in Ards and North Down. (Scрабо_2-ranked 71st, Glen_1-ranked 97th and Central-ranked 99th – all within Ards). In the previous deprivation measures, there had been no SOAs from Ards and North Down within the top 100, this doesn't suggest that they have become more deprived but are ranked more deprived than other areas.
- 2.33 The deprivation measures do publish information on whether an SOA is urban or rural. Generally, the urban areas of Legacy North Down Borough and Legacy Ards District have the more deprived SOAs. Seven of the top ten most deprived SOAs in Ards and North Down are in urban areas.

- 2.34 The highest concentrations of deprivation, with respect to access to services (i.e. long distances to key services e.g. A & E hospital, GP premises, supermarket, leisure centres and includes broadband speed) occur outside towns and cities, for example Killinchy_1. However, this is relative, Ards and North Down Borough Council covers a geographical area of 228 square miles. In comparison with larger council clusters with a greater geographical extent, Ards and North Down Borough Council's population live much closer to key services than the Multiple Deprivation Measure for Access to Services Domain Rank indicates.
- 2.35 Deprivation is often also reflected in the levels of economic activity. Scrabo_2 was ranked 83rd in all NI for the proportion of working age population who were employment deprived (35.5% of the population of this SOA). Four SOAs from Ards and North Down were in the top 100 most income deprived, that is the proportion of population living in households whose equivalent income was below 60% of the NI median – Scrabo_2 (ranked 41st), Central (ranked 62nd), Glen_1 (75th) and Conlig_3 (ranked 95th).
- 2.36 Education also has an important role in promoting economic well-being. Better education generally improves access to employment opportunities. It improves the quality of people's lives and leads to broad social benefits for individuals and society. Education has linkages to raised levels of productivity and creativity; and also helps foster entrepreneurship and technological advances. In addition, it plays a crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution.
- 2.37 The 2011 Census provides information on the proportion of people aged 16 years old and over who had a degree or higher qualification and the proportion that had few or no qualifications (1-4 O Levels/CSE/GCSE or equivalent). Since 2001, the proportion of people aged 16 years old and over who had a degree or higher qualification has increased and the proportion that had no or few qualifications has decreased (see Table 5). When

compared with the Northern Ireland level, both the legacy North Down Borough and legacy Ards Borough had a lower proportion of people who had no or few qualifications. North Down has a higher proportion of those with a degree or higher qualification (31.18%), in contrast, Ards has a lower proportion of people with a degree or higher qualification than the NI average (22.3%).

- 2.38 Whilst a Local Development Plan does not deliver educational services, it can assist in making such services more accessible, either by facilitating new state of the art facilities or providing travel options, linking new housing to facilities and services for all members of the public.

Table 5: Qualifications of Population over 16 years of age in North Down and Ards (2011)

	All usual residents aged 16 and over	No or low qualification	Degree or Higher qualification
Northern Ireland	1,431,540	40.63%	23.65%
Ards and North Down	127235	35.53%	26.74%
North Down	64422	31.60%	31.18%
Ards	62813	39.46%	22.30%

Source: NISRA Census 2011 Highest Level of Qualification by Age

*No qualifications: No academic or professional qualifications or Level 1: 1-4 O Levels/CSE/GCSEs (any grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic/Essential Skill

Housing Profile in Ards and North Down

- 3.1 The attributes of the existing housing stock in Ards and North Down Borough Council have been assessed in terms of tenure, type, price, affordability and

how the population characteristics of the area impact on its housing needs. Within this section analysis of the legacy councils has been repeated.

Population and Household Distribution

- 3.2 From 1971 to 2011 legacy North Down's population increased by 26,634 (50.62%) to 79,245, whilst legacy Ards Borough Council's population increased by 31,269 (58.23%). The rate of change between 2001 and 2011 was 4.93% for both districts, this is significantly below the Northern Ireland average of 11% over the period. In 2011, Ards and North Down's proportion of children (under 16 years of age) was 19.16%, this was again lower than the NI average of 21%. Since 2001, the Borough has followed the regional trend of a declining proportion of children and an increase in the number of pensioners within the population. If this trend continues it will have implications for the type and number of dwellings needed throughout the Borough.

NISRA Population Projections

- 3.3 Tables 6, below, shows the population projections for Ards and North Down Borough up to 2030. For legacy North Down the projection is for a rise to 2020 (80,968) and a gentle and continual increase thereafter. For legacy Ards Borough the population is predicted to increase gradually to 2020 (80,968) and then continue to grow beyond 2020 to 81,760 by 2030. Overall Ards and North Down Borough is projected to have a continued increase in population to 164,004 by 2030.

Table 6 – Population Projections 2008-2030

	2008	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
North Down	78,166	79,004	80,020	80,968	81,626	81,660
Ards	77,179	77,855	79,099	80,807	81,938	82,404
Ards and North Down	155,345	156,859	159,119	161,775	163,564	164,004

Source: NISRA

**The projections for old LGDs (North Down district and Ards district) 2030 was calculated using the percentage change between 2026 and 2027 and applied year on year (0.28% for Ards and 0.39% for North Down). The figures have been rounded to nearest 100 for this reason.*

- 3.4 This continued increase in population is reflected in the household projections shown in Table 7. However legacy North Down shows a variation compared to the population trend, rather than the number of households continually increasing, the projection is for an increase to 35,268 by 2025 followed by a decrease by 2030 (34,100). This is likely to be as a result of the continual growth in the age of the population.

Table 7 – Household Projections 2008-2030

	2008	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
North Down	33,300	33,800	33,550	34,316	35,268	34,100*
Ards	32,000	32,900	32,088	32,800	33,652	36,000
Ards and North Down	65,300	66,700	65,638	67,116	68,920	70,100

Source: NISRA

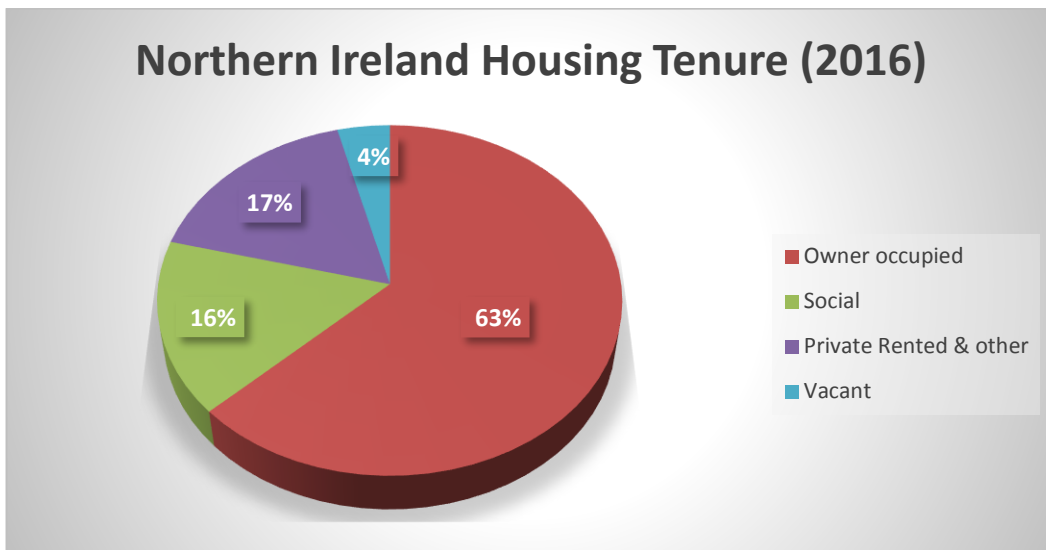
**The projections for old LGDs (North Down district and Ards district)2030 was calculated using the percentage change between 2026 and 2027 and applied year on year (0.28% for Ards and 0.39% for North Down) The figures have been rounded to nearest 100 for this reason.*

- 3.5 This increase in households is a combined result of population growth, changing age structure and continuing trends towards smaller households. However, care needs to be taken when looking at population projections because they have been based on past trends during a period of unprecedented growth. The NISRA household projections are broadly in line with, albeit slightly lower than, those set out in the RDS 2035 figures which add in an element of second homes, housing stock that is vacant, and housing stock losses due to net conversion/closures or demolitions.

Housing Tenure

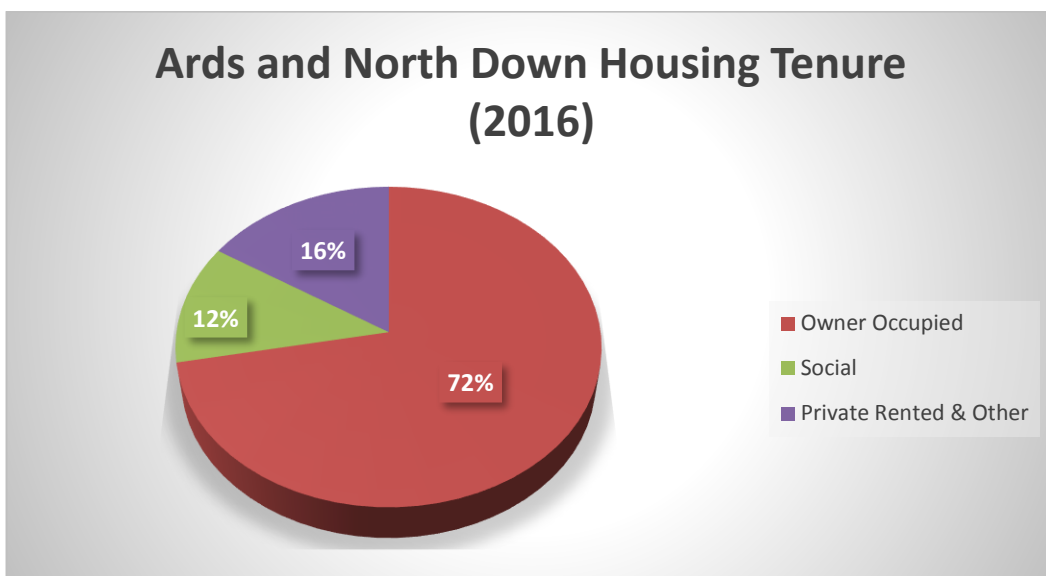
- 3.6 The 2016 House Condition Survey (HCS) indicates owner occupation remains the largest tenure group (63%) in Northern Ireland and has remained stable since 2011 but has significantly decreased since 2006 (67%). Similarly, the proportion of occupied dwellings in the private rented sector (17%) has remained steady since 2011, with the number of dwellings showing a small increase while the proportion was the same. The social housing sector (16%) is similar in size to the private rented sector. In 2016 there were approximately 28,500 (3.7%) vacant properties. This represents a statistically significant decrease since 2006 and 2011 when the comparable figures were 40,300 (5.7%) and 54,700 (7.2%) vacant properties respectively. The comparison between Ards and North Down Borough Council and Northern Ireland housing tenure for 2016 is demonstrated in Graphs 4 and 5 below.

Graph 4: Northern Ireland Housing Tenure



Source: NISRA

Graph 5: Housing tenure 2009 Ards and North Down



Source: NISRA

3.7 For Ards and North Down Borough Council 72% of dwellings were owner occupied, 16% were private rented and 12% were social housing in 2016. As such, Ards and North Down Borough Council has a higher proportion of owner occupation than Northern Ireland. Subsequently there is a slightly lower level of private rented compared to the Northern Ireland average and the proportion

of dwellings within social housing is 25% less than the Northern Ireland average.

- 3.8 There was little change in the age profile of Northern Ireland's dwelling stock between 2011 to 2016, although longer term analysis shows a gradual move towards newer housing in the decade from 2006 to 2016. The characteristics of the housing stock, in terms of dwelling type, remained similar to that shown in 2011, although between 2006 and 2016 there was a significant decrease in the proportion of terraced houses and a corresponding increase in the proportion of semi-detached and detached houses.

Housing Types

- 3.9 The types of housing provided for Northern Ireland and Ards and North Down between 2008 and 2018, are shown for comparative reasons in Tables 8, 9 and 10 below. These tables indicate that the proportion of detached houses in Northern Ireland has remained relatively stable, over the same period and the proportion of detached dwellings in Ards and North Down has reduced slightly from 36.8% to 36.3%. With regards to semi-detached dwellings, the proportion of this house type in Ards and North Down remained constant, whilst for the Northern Ireland a minor increase was seen from 24.6% in 2008 to 25% in 2018.
- 3.10 The tables also indicate a steady decline in the proportion of terraced houses in both Ards and North Down and Northern Ireland. In 2008 the proportion of terraced dwellings within Ards and North Down was 25.7%, falling to 25% in 2013 and 24.8% in 2018. Northern Ireland saw the proportion of terraced houses fall from 30% to 28.6% over the same period. In contrast to the reduction in proportion of terraced houses, the percentage of apartments increased in Ards and North Down from 9.6% to 10.9% between 2008 to 2018, Northern Ireland also saw an increase from 9.58% to 10.6%.

Table 8: House Type 2008

	Detached	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Apartments	Total
Ards and North Down	24,549 (36.8%)	18,496 (27.7%)	17,141 (25.7%)	6,426 (9.6%)	66,612
Northern Ireland	260,115 (35.7%)	179,800 (24.6%)	218,587 (30%)	69,839 (9.58%)	728,341

Source: Department of Finance

Table 9: House Type 2013

	Detached	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Apartments	Total
Ards and North Down	25,259 (36.5%)	19,041 (27.5%)	17,364 (25%)	7,396 (10.7%)	69,060
Northern Ireland	271,872 (35.6%)	187,073 (24.5%)	223,277 (29.2%)	80,123 (10.5%)	762,345

Source: Department of Finance

Table 10: House Type 2018

	Detached	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Apartments	Total
Ards and North Down	26,147 (36.3%)	20,023 (27.8%)	17,826 (24.8%)	7,839 (10.9%)	71,835
Northern Ireland	281,526 (35.6%)	197,972 (25%)	226,340 (28.6%)	84,490 (10.6%)	790,328

Source: Department of Finance

- 3.11 The tables show that overall Ards and North Down has a higher proportion of detached dwellings, however the gap with Northern Ireland is gradually reducing as the proportion in Ards and North Down has decreased slightly. Ards and North Down also has a higher proportion of semi-detached dwellings compared to Northern Ireland, but this gap is also being reduced, but at a slower rate. Northern Ireland has a significantly larger proportion of terraced dwellings compared to Ards and North Down, with a decrease in the proportion being recorded in both Ards and North Down and Northern Ireland, however the decrease is larger for Northern Ireland. Both Northern Ireland and Ards and North Down have seen increases in the proportion of

apartments, with Ards and North Down recording a slightly larger increase than Northern Ireland.

Affordability

- 3.12 The definition of “Affordable Housing” within the SPPS states that it comprises of social rented housing and intermediate housing⁴. Social Rented Housing is provided at an affordable rent by a Registered Housing Association which are registered with and regulated by the Department for Social Development as a social housing provider.
- 3.13 Intermediate Housing consists of shared ownership housing provided through a Registered Housing Association and helps households who can afford a small mortgage, but are not able to afford to buy the property outright.
- 3.14 Affordability is determined by price, average incomes and access to borrowing; and it remains an issue for first time buyers. A gap in market provision can occur if house prices rise beyond that which is affordable.
- 3.15 Table 11 and Graph 6 indicate house prices have steadily increased for all Councils across Northern Ireland, with a 6% average increase throughout the region. Ards and North Down Borough Council actually had an increase of 5.9% which is slightly below the average. Seven of the eleven Councils in Northern Ireland recorded higher increases in house prices over the period. Causeway Coast and Glens; and Derry City and Strabane Councils both had the highest increase, 9.1%. The statistics also indicate that the Councils on the eastern side of Northern Ireland generally recorded lower average increases in house prices.

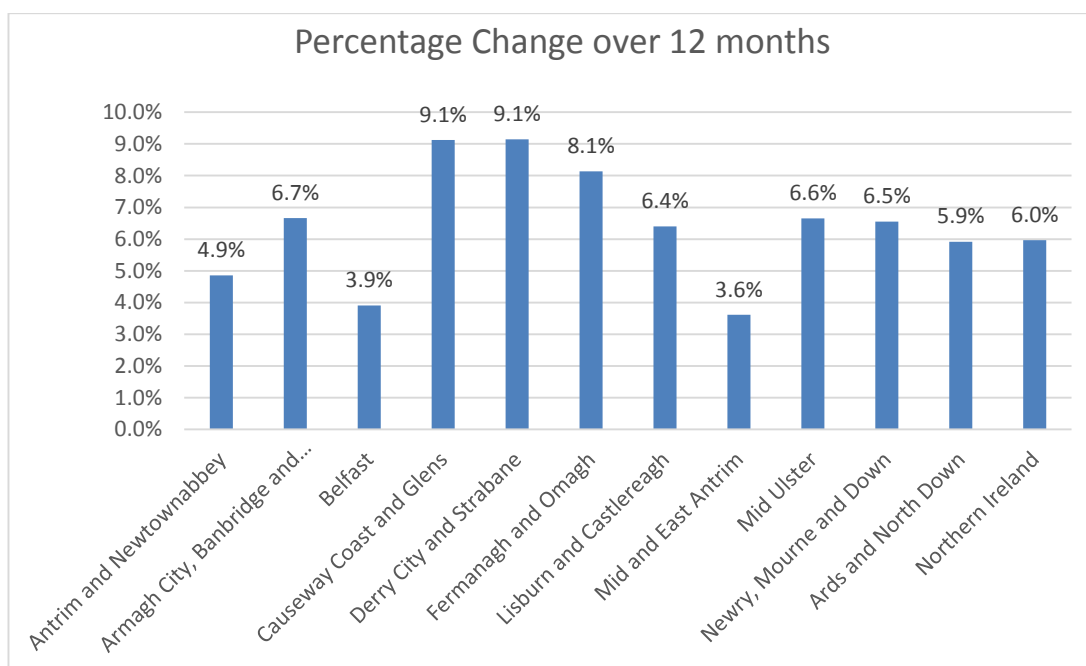
⁴ SPPS Page 114

Table 11: Northern Ireland House Price Change (%)

LGD	Percentage Change over 12 months
Antrim and Newtownabbey	4.9%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	6.7%
Belfast	3.9%
Causeway Coast and Glens	9.1%
Derry City and Strabane	9.1%
Fermanagh and Omagh	8.1%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	6.4%
Mid and East Antrim	3.6%
Mid Ulster	6.6%
Newry, Mourne and Down	6.5%
Ards and North Down	5.9%
Northern Ireland	6.0%

Source: Northern Ireland Quarterly House Price Index Q3 2017

Graph 6: Northern Ireland House Price Change (%)



Source: Northern Ireland Quarterly House Price Index Q3 2017

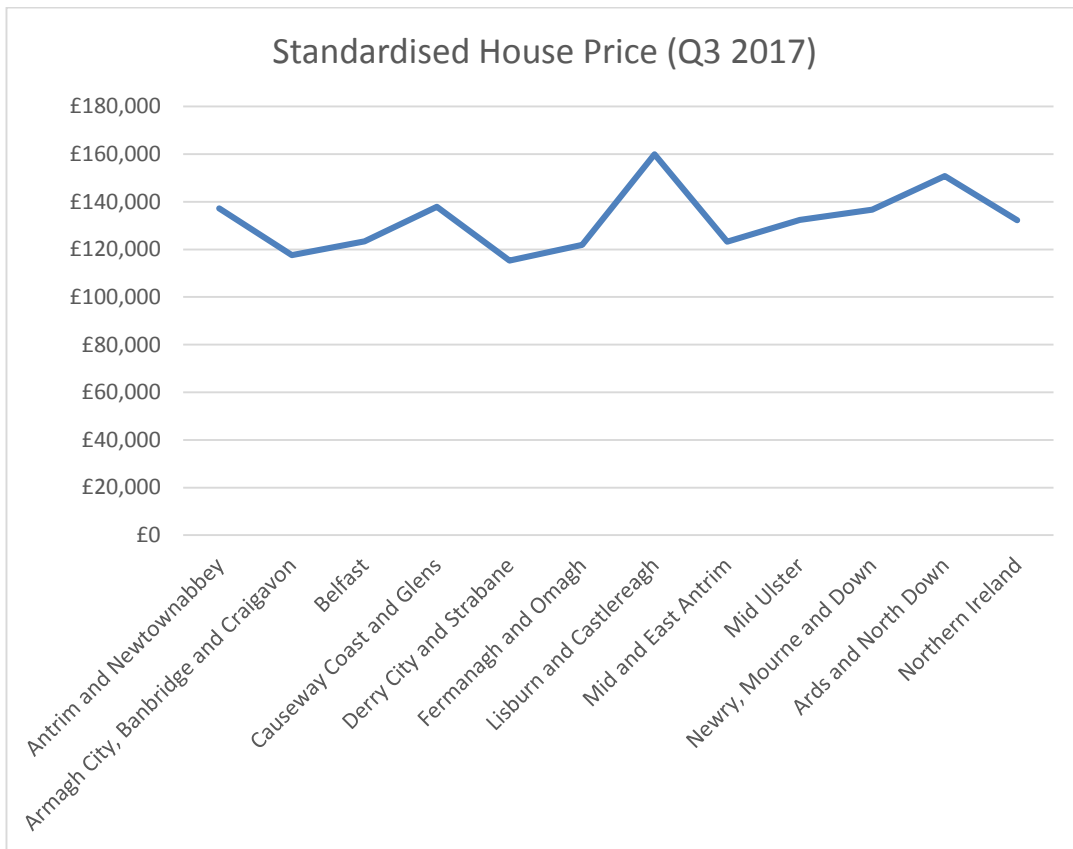
3.16 Ards and North Down Borough Council (£150,773) have the second highest house prices in Northern Ireland, only Lisburn and Castlereagh Council (£159,966) have a higher house price. House prices within Ards and North Down are approximately 14% higher than the Northern Ireland average (£132,169). This may help explain the slightly lower than average increase in house prices for Ards and North Down.

Table 12: Northern Ireland Standardised House Price

	Standardised Price (Quarter 3 2017)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	£137,242
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	£117,637
Belfast	£123,409
Causeway Coast and Glens	£137,877
Derry City and Strabane	£115,339
Fermanagh and Omagh	£121,851
Lisburn and Castlereagh	£159,966
Mid and East Antrim	£123,234
Mid Ulster	£132,366
Newry, Mourne and Down	£136,648
Ards and North Down	£150,773
Northern Ireland	£132,169

Source: Northern Ireland Quarterly House Price Index Q3 2017

Graph 7: Standardised house price across Northern Ireland



Source: Northern Ireland Quarterly House Price Index Q3 2017

- 3.17 Over recent years it has become increasingly difficult to obtain an affordable mortgage without a significant deposit. The Mortgage Market Review has also impacted on mortgage applications as providers are now required to have more cognisance regarding the affordability of mortgage repayments, taking into account not just income but also outgoings such as general cost of living and existing loans. Lenders also look at the future affordability of mortgage payments to ascertain whether a rise in interest rates would impact on your ability to meet your repayments.
- 3.18 Affordable Housing Schemes are designed to bridge the gap between the asking price for a property and the available mortgage, therefore increasing the range of people who are able to get on, or move up, the property ladder.

Co-Ownership Northern Ireland

3.19 Shared ownership schemes allow people to own a portion of a property and to rent the remainder from a housing association. For years, Co-ownership housing has been the best known scheme for people who want to buy a home but who cannot afford to purchase 100% of the property. Recently, a new shared ownership scheme called Fair Share also started operating in Northern Ireland. This scheme allows people to partner with a housing association in order to buy a property. Currently, Apex, Choice and Clanmil housing associations are participating in this scheme.

3.20 Requirements for buying a home through co-ownership include:

- over 18;
- could not afford the property without using the co-ownership scheme;
- don't own any other property and don't have any unpaid debt relating to an old mortgage or secured loan;
- the property you wish to buy is not a Housing Executive or housing association property;
- the property you want to buy is not valued at more than £175,000;

Social Housing Need

3.21 The provision of Social Housing, in both urban and rural areas, addresses some of the concerns of affordability, in particular for migrant workers, single parents and the needs of young people and the elderly. Historically NIHE's House Sales Scheme has been a valuable source of affordable housing for first time buyers. However, in recent years there has been a significant fall in the number of NIHE house sales throughout Ards and North Down Borough which is reflective of the general housing market situation.

3.22 The 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 NIHE had 6,310 dwellings in Ards and North Down Borough in 2018 and further social housing provision was offered by the Housing Associations. For the year 2017/18 the NIHE received 3,060 applications for social housing in the Borough, 2,028 of these applicants were in Housing Stress. Therefore 66% of all applicants for social housing in Ards and North Down were in housing stress. A total of 830 allocations were made over the period, this was 27% of the total applicants and 41% of those within housing stress.

Table 13: Housing Applicants and Allocations in Ards and North Down March 2018

	NIHE Housing Stock	Applicants (Total)	Applicants (Housing Stress)	Allocations
Total	6,310	3,060	2,028	830

Source: NIHE Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plans 2018 Update

3.23 The Northern Ireland Housing Executive projected social housing need is 706 units over the five-year period 2017-22. The areas of greatest need are Bangor, Newtownards, Comber, Holywood, Donaghadee and Groomsport. Generally, single people, the elderly and small families were in greatest housing need. The demand for new Intermediate Housing within Ards and North Down between 2017-2027 is 710 units.

Table 14: Social Housing Need 2017/2022 by Settlement

Settlement	Social Housing Need 2017-2022
Bangor	270
Comber	121
Newtownards	104
Holywood	100
Groomsport	40

Donaghadee	12
Ballygowan	10
Crawfordsburn	9
Kircubbin	6
Millisle	6
Helen's Bay	5
Portavogie	5
Ballywalter	4
Carrowdore	4
Killinchy	4
Ballyhalbert	3
Lisbane	3
Total	706

Source: NIHE Ards and North Down Housing Investment Plans 2018 Update

Homelessness

- 3.24 People present themselves as homeless for many reasons, the causal factors of which may include relationship breakdowns, financial issues, family/relationship disputes, unsuitability of accommodation and loss of rented accommodation. NIHE, Housing Associations and other agencies are responsible for providing temporary accommodation for homeless people and Travellers, as well as the provision and allocation of “supported housing”, which also provides rehabilitation for those who are elderly or disabled.
- 3.25 The Northern Ireland Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 was published in April 2017 by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive with a vision to end homelessness and rough sleeping across Northern Ireland by 2020. Aims to achieve this vision include preventing homelessness, support to find suitable accommodation as quickly as possible and a cross departmental approach to the problem.
- 3.26 Table 16 shows the trends of homelessness in Ards and North Down Borough between 2010-2015. The number of people presenting themselves as

homeless in North Down district decreased by 3.12% between 2009/10 and 2013/14 and in Ards District it decreased by 5.37%.

Table 15: Homeless Statistics Ards and North Down

Homeless statistics Year	No. of Homeless Presenters	No. of Homeless Acceptances	Households placed in temporary acc.
2010/11	1,530	880	149
2011/12	1,384	733	156
2012/13	1,458	831	180
2013/14	1,430	854	206
2014/15	1,566	1,056	196

Source The Northern Ireland Homelessness Strategy 2012-17

Need for Additional Housing Stock

- 3.27 The need for additional housing stock arises from a combination of several factors including changes in population and average household size, the level of vacancy and the fitness of existing housing stock for human habitation.

Vacancy Levels

- 3.25 In order to translate the increase in households into the need for new housing units, account needs to be taken of vacancy levels and unfitness rates. The housing stock of an area includes occupied, vacant and unfit dwellings, which all influence the need for additional housing stock.
- 3.26 Apart from newly built dwellings yet to be occupied, properties may be empty for a variety of reasons. Some may be unfit for habitation or are pending repair or improvement, whilst others may be second homes that are not permanently occupied. These properties are therefore currently out of use and reduce the supply of available housing. In order to address this issue,

DSD in partnership with NIHE, launched a new five year Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan in September 2013. It is estimated that there are around 32,000 empty homes across Northern Ireland. This Strategy is aimed at bringing empty homes back into use.

Unfitness

- 3.27 In 2009 the regional average of unfitness was 2.4% which was an improvement on the 2006 levels of 3.4%. However, the unfitness level in NI had increased to 4.6% in 2011, reflecting the economic climate at the time, the higher rate of vacancy, particularly in the private sector, and the reduced availability of home improvement grants (NIHE). The legacy North Down and Ards unfitness rates for 2011 were 3% and 4% respectively. In 2011, the proportion of vacant dwellings recorded as unfit was 51.2% (28,000) compared to 23.9% (10,300) in 2009, demonstrating a clear link between unfitness and occupancy levels. Generally, there are more unfit dwellings in rural areas than urban areas, particularly in more isolated rural areas.

Regional Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 The Regional Planning Policy Context is provided by the [Regional Development Strategy \(RDS\) 2035: Building a Better Future](#); and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement, along with the extant regional planning policy statements. A summary of these documents as they pertain to plan making and local housing policy is provided in the following sections.
- 4.2 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. The RDS has a statutory basis and regard should be given to it in exercising any function in relation to development. It is prepared under the Strategic

Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. Under that Order the Department for Regional Development (DRD) is responsible for formulating 'in consultation with other Northern Ireland departments, a regional development strategy for Northern Ireland, that is to say, a strategy for the long term development of Northern Ireland. Preparation of local development plans must 'take account' of the RDS.

- 4.3 The RDS is a framework which provides the strategic context for where development should happen. It seeks to ensure that plans are more sustainable, balanced and integrated. The RDS provides strategic guidance through Regional Guidance (RG) and Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG).
- 4.4 The RDS 2035 sets policy directions for the provision of housing that aim to deliver development in a more sustainable manner. This means growing the population and providing additional housing in the Hubs (SFG 12)⁵, and sustaining rural communities living in smaller settlements (i.e. smaller towns and villages), and the open countryside (SPG 13)⁶.
- 4.5 The RDS also provides Regional Guidance for housing development recognising the need to: -
- strengthen community cohesion through fostering a stronger community spirit and sense of place, developing integrated services and facilities; and encouraging mixed housing development (RG6)⁷;
 - support urban renaissance by encouraging and bringing forward under-utilised land and buildings, particularly for mixed use development; promoting regeneration in areas of social need; improving environmental quality and reducing noise pollution (RG 7)⁸; and
 - manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development by promoting more sustainable housing development within

⁵ RDS Pages 73 and 74

⁶ RDS Pages 74 and 75

⁷ RDS Page 38

⁸ RDS Pages 38 and 39

existing urban areas; ensuring an adequate and available supply of quality housing to meet the needs of everyone; and using a broad evaluation framework (Table 3.2 from RDS 2035) to assist judgement in relation to the allocation of housing growth (RG 8)⁹.

Diagram 1: Housing Evaluation Framework

Resource Test	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.
Environmental Capacity Test	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.
Transport Test	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.
Economic Development Test	The potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance and to unlock any major strategic development opportunities should be assessed and detailed.
Urban and Rural Character Test	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.
Community Services Test	The potential to underpin and, where necessary, reinforce the community service role and function of the settlement should be assessed and detailed.

Source: RDS 2035, page 42

4.6 Fundamental to achieving balanced communities, and strengthening community cohesion is the provision of good quality housing offering a variety of house types, sizes, and tenures to meet different needs; and development

⁹ RDS Pages 40 and 41

that provides opportunities for the community to share in local employment, shopping, leisure and social facilities.

- 4.7 The RDS emphasis is on managing growth to ensure there continues to be a focus on developing more high quality accessible housing within existing urban areas without causing unacceptable damage to the local character and environmental or residential amenity of these areas. A more sustainable approach to housing growth is adopted, setting of a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints of settlements greater than 5000 population (RG8).
- 4.8 Brownfield land¹⁰ may encompass vacant or derelict land, infill sites and land occupied by redundant or underused buildings. Therefore, more housing through the recycling of land and buildings within existing urban areas is promoted.
- 4.9 When identifying housing land, councils should take account of existing vacant housing identified in the Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Market Analysis. This includes land for social and intermediate housing such as shared ownership and affordable housing.

Housing Growth Indicators

- 4.10 The RDS identifies regional housing needs as Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs) across Northern Ireland. Housing Growth Indicators are intended as a guide for the preparation of development plans. These figures are an estimate of the new dwelling requirement for each of the Councils and provide a guide for allocating housing distribution across the plan area. The indicator covers both urban and rural housing.

¹⁰ RDS Page 105

4.11 The HGI for 2008-2025 was originally set at 9600 dwellings for Ards, whilst North Down is located within the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA), which had a combined HGI of 60800. The BMUA consists of Belfast City, Newtownabbey, Lisburn, Castlereagh, Carrickfergus and North Down.

4.12 The Department for Regional Development published reviewed HGIs in 2016 to reflect the new local government structures which took effect in April 2015. Table 16 shows the revised indicators, the HGIs were revised down to reflect a lower than predicted population growth and higher household sizes than previously predicted. The amended HGI for Ards and North Down Borough is 7100.

Table 16: Estimate of housing need by Local Government District 2012-2025

Council	Number of Households	Second Homes	Vacant Stock	Net Conversions Closures and Demolitions 2012-2025	Net Stock Estimate	Housing Stock	Projected New Dwelling requirement 2012-2025
Antrim & Newtownabbey	58,400	400	4,600	200	63,600	56,400	7,200
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	86,600	800	5,400	2,200	95,000	80,600	14,400
Belfast	147,900	2,200	15,300	2,300	167,700	154,000	13,700
Causeway Coast & Glens	57,300	3,700	5,600	2,100	68,700	62,000	6,700
Derry & Strabane	59,400	300	3,800	900	64,300	59,300	5,000
Fermanagh & Omagh	45,700	900	4,500	600	51,700	47,200	4,500
Lisburn & Castlereagh	60,400	500	3,500	700	65,000	55,400	9,600
Mid and East Antrim	57,800	100	4,100	800	62,800	57,400	5,400
Mid Ulster	55,200	100	3,800	1,500	60,600	51,100	9,500
Newry Mourne & Down	70,900	900	5,100	500	77,400	66,500	10,900
Ards & North Down	68,800	1,000	4,900	1,100	75,800	68,700	7,100
Northern Ireland	768,300	10,800	60,400	13,000	852,500	758,500	94,000

Source: Department for Infrastructure

4.13 Table 17 indicates the projected new dwelling requirement across Northern Ireland between 2015 and 2030. These figures are projected on a pro-rata basis to 2030 (to cover the LDP life span (2015-2030)). This table shows a projected Housing Growth Indicator of 8,190 for the plan period, which equates to 546 dwellings per annum.

Table 17: Projected HGIs by Local Government District 2012-2030

Local Government District	Projected Annual Yield	Projected HGIs 2015-2030
Antrim & Newtownabbey	553	8307
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	1107	16615
Belfast	1053	15807
Causeway Coast and Glens	515	7730
Derry and Strabane	384	5769
Fermanagh and Omagh	346	5192
Lisburn and Castlereagh	738	11076
Mid and East Antrim	415	6230
Mid Ulster	730	10961
Newry Mourne and Down	838	12576
Ards and North Down	546	8190
Northern Ireland	7230	108461

4.14 The RDS leaves the issue of how the HGI should be allocated across the settlements and the open countryside as a matter for each Council in the preparation of the LDP, taking into account its spatial framework guidance (SFG). This puts the focus on existing settlements by:

- taking into account the roles and functions of each settlement (SFG10);
- putting the hubs as the primary focus of growth both in terms of economic development opportunities and population. (SFG11 and 12); and
- recognising the need to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside, by consolidating and revitalising small towns and villages in their role as local service centres (SFG 13).

- 4.15 To aid judgement on the allocation of housing growth, the RDS provides a Housing Evaluation Framework based on a series of tests, such as, settlements resources, environmental capacity, transport links, economic development potential, character, and community services.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement

- 4.16 The RDS is complemented by the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement \(SPPS\)](#) published in September 2015. The SPPS states that the LDP process is the main vehicle for undertaking an assessment of future housing land requirements and managing housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development, as well as fulfilling other objectives set out in the SPPS.

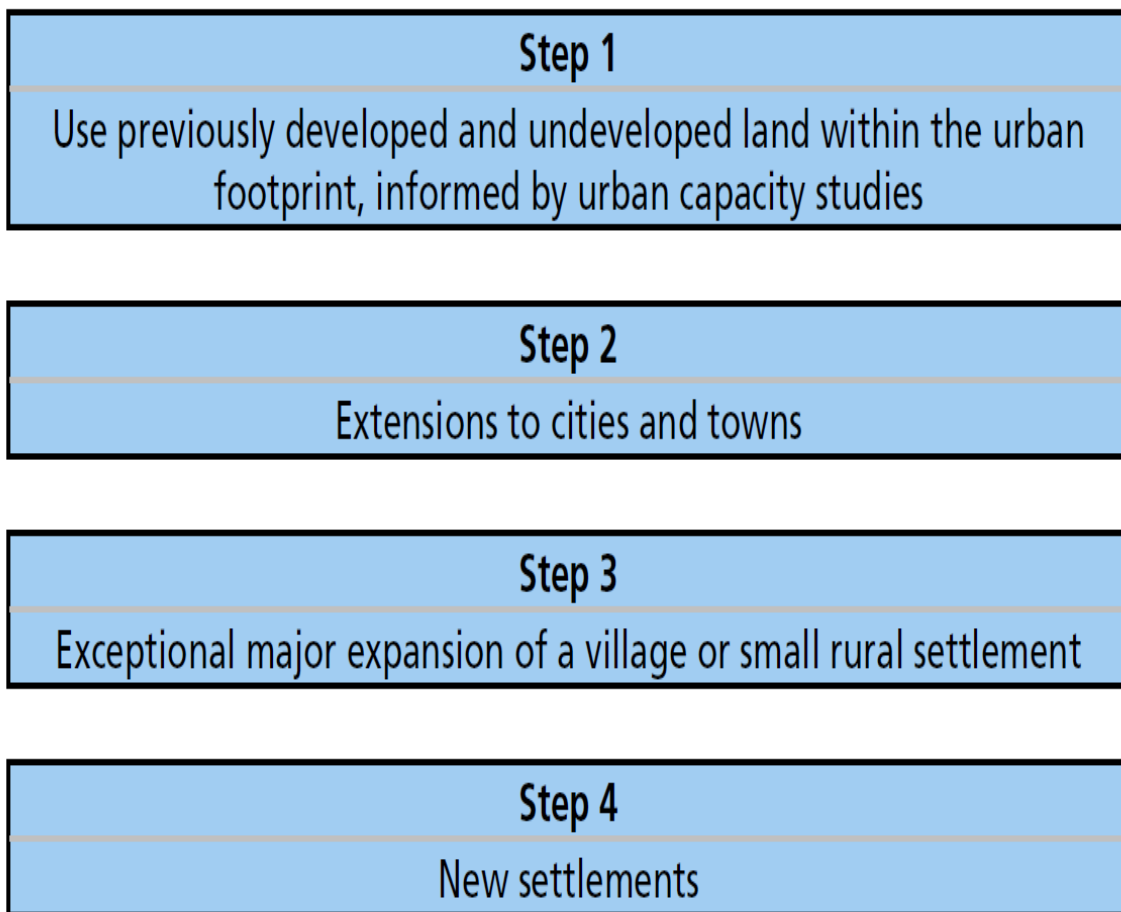
- 4.17 The SPPS states the process for allocating housing land in Local Development Plans should be informed by:

- RDS Housing Growth Indicators (HGIs);
- use of the RDS housing evaluation framework;
- allowance for existing housing commitments;
- urban capacity studies;
- allowance for windfall housing;
- application of a sequential approach and identification of suitable sites for settlements of over 5,000 population;
- Housing Needs Assessment / Housing Market Analysis; and
- Transport Assessments.

- 4.18 Diagram 2 (below) sets out the sequential approach to identifying suitable sites. The first step directs consideration to previously developed and undeveloped sites in urban footprints first. This is otherwise known as

'brownfield sites' and this consideration will be informed by urban capacity studies. The next step includes extensions to cities and towns and step three is the exceptional major expansion of a village or small rural settlement. Steps two and three are considered as greenfield development. The final option is the creation of new settlements.

Diagram 2: Sequential approach and identification of suitable sites



Source: SPPS, page 72.

Planning Policy Statements

4.19 Planning Policy Statement 12: Housing in Settlements provides strategic direction and guidance in the form of regional planning policy to assist the

implementation of the RDS. PPS 12 flows directly from the contents of the RDS and is one of the key mechanisms for implementing the RDS. PPS 12 includes processes for allocating housing land and the same sequential approach diagram as shown above. PPS 12 is a material consideration in the preparation of development plans.

- 4.20 Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments sets out planning policies for achieving quality in new residential development and advises on the consideration of this issue in development plans.
- 4.21 Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7: Residential Extensions and Alterations sets out planning policies for achieving quality in relation to proposals for residential extensions and alterations.
- 4.22 Second Addendum to Planning Policy Statement 7: Safeguarding the Character of Established Residential Areas provides additional planning policies on the protection of local character, environmental quality and residential amenity within established residential areas, villages and small settlements. It also sets out regional policy on the conversion of existing buildings to flats or apartments.
- 4.23 Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation sets out regional 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.
- 4.24 Draft Planning Policy Statement 22: Affordable Housing puts in place a mechanism for securing developer contributions for the delivery of affordable housing. However, no weight is given to draft PPS22 in the determination of individual planning applications.

Rural Housing

- 4.25 The Regional Development Strategy 2035 defines the Rural Area as those places outside the Principal Cities, the main and local hubs as constituting the rural area. The population living in the rural area is around 40% of the total population of Northern Ireland. Recently the rural community living in small towns, villages and small settlements in the countryside, has experienced the fastest rate of population growth in the country.
- 4.26 In relation to Housing in the Countryside, the SPPS adopts a similar approach to Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside setting policy objectives aimed 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;
 - facilitating development which contributes to a sustainable rural economy; and
 - promoting high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development.
- 4.27 To achieve these objectives the policy approach is to cluster, consolidate, and group new development, particularly new residential development, with existing established buildings and the re-use of previously used land and buildings.
- 4.28 The planning system, in co-ordination with the broader public sector, private sector and key housing agencies has a vital role in the delivery of good quality housing in appropriate locations. Housing is recognised in the RDS as making a vital contribution to the key policy objectives of promoting economic well-being and social progress. New housing development can also stimulate urban and rural renewal.

- 4.29 Councils are required to bring forward a Plan Strategy for sustainable development in the countryside, with appropriate policies and proposals that reflect the aims, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS, but tailored to the specific circumstances of Ards and North Down Borough Council area.
- 4.30 Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS 21) Sustainable Development in the Countryside was published in June 2010. PPS 21 sets out planning policies for development in the countryside and defines the countryside as land lying outside of settlement limits.
- 4.31 The objectives of PPS 21 are:
- To manage growth in the countryside to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development that meet the essential needs of a vibrant rural community;
 - to 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;
 - to facilitate development necessary to achieve a sustainable rural economy; including appropriate farm diversification and other economic activity; and
 - to promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development in the countryside.
- 4.32 Ards and North Down has a number of large urban settlements, however these settlements are surrounded by extensive rural areas, particularly along the Ards Peninsula.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 4.33 In addition to regional policy, Supplementary Planning Guidance for residential development is provided by ['Creating Places - Achieving Quality in](#)

[Residential Development'](#) (May, 2000). It is the principal guide for use by prospective developers in the design of all new housing in urban areas.

[DCAN 8: Housing in Existing Urban Areas](#), is also material to the determination of planning applications for small unit housing within existing urban areas.

- 4.34 ['Building on Tradition: A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside'](#) provides assistance to all those involved with sustainable development in the Northern Ireland countryside to understand the requirements of PPS21. The guide promotes quality and sustainable building design in Northern Ireland's countryside.
- 4.35 ['Living Places: An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland'](#) published September 2014 sets out the key principles behind good place making. It seeks to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing and making urban places, with a view to raising standards across Northern Ireland. Living Places and Place Making has been outlined in the Settlement LDP Position Paper.

Existing Development Plan Context

- 5.1 In Ards and North Down Borough Council area there are two recent plans. The Draft Belfast Metropolitan Plan 2015 (draft BMAP) includes proposed policies for legacy North Down and policies for Ards are contained with the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.

Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

- 5.2 The Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP) was 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.

- 5.3 The Plan was adopted on 9 September 2014, however that adoption has since been judicially challenged and subsequently quashed as a result of a judgment in the Court of Appeal delivered on 18 May 2017. As a consequence of this, the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (NDAAP), the Belfast Urban Area Plan, and Bangor Town Centre Plan 1995 are now the statutory Development Plans for the North Down area with draft BMAP 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.
- 5.4 The Joint Ministerial Statement of 31 January 2005 entitled ‘Development Plans and Implementation of the Regional Development Strategy’ contains guidance on the weight to be afforded to emerging draft plans. Following the Ministerial Statement of June 2012, accompanying the release of the Commission’s Report on the BMAP Public Inquiry, a decision on a development proposal can be based on draft plan provisions that will not be changed as a result of the Commission’s recommendations. It is likely that if BMAP were lawfully adopted those lands zoned for housing which were included within the quashed Plan would be included, and therefore material weight has been given to BMAP within the context of this paper.

Ards and Down Area Plan 2015

- 5.5 One of the main purposes of the Plan was to establish physical development policies for Ards and its surroundings up to 2015. The Plan’s District Settlement Strategy was to concentrate development within a range of settlements centred on the District town and including local villages and hamlets. The local villages and hamlets were to support the district town in its functions and to be local service centres for the dispersed rural population.

5.6 Ards District's settlement hierarchy, as set out in the Ards Down Area Plan 2015, consists of Newtownards as the main centre with two smaller towns, Comber and Donaghadee, 13 villages and 16 Small Settlements. (See Table 18 below).

Table 18: Settlement Hierarchy for North Down and Ards Districts (Draft BMAP 2015 and Ards and Down Plan 2015)

Settlement Hierarchy	North Down	Settlement Hierarchy	Ards
Towns	Bangor Holywood	Towns	Newtownards Comber Donaghadee
Villages	Crawfordsburn Groomsport Helens Bay Seahill	Villages	Balloo Ballygowan Ballyhalbert Ballywalter Carrowdore Cloughey Greyabbey Killinchy Kircubbin Millisle Portaferry Portavogie Whiterock
Small Settlements	Craigantlet Orlock Gray's Park* Six Road Ends	Small Settlements	Ardmillan Ballybarnes Ballyboley Ballycranbeg Ballydrain Ballyeasborough Ballyfrenis Ballygalget Ballystockart Cotton Glastry Kilmood Kirkistown Lisbane Loughries Rubane

* Identified as a small settlement in the PAC's draft BMAP Public Local Inquiry report

Accommodating Housing Growth

- 6.1 As stated in the RDS, the allocation of housing growth to specific locations in a district is a matter for decision through the development plan process. In the allocation process, account must be taken of the roles and functions of each settlement; the hubs should be given the primary focus for growth; the need to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside should be recognised and small towns and villages should be consolidated and revitalised in their role as local service centres.
- 6.2 The role of the Local Development Plan is to provide housing land in accordance with the RDS. This means zoning sufficient housing land in the larger settlements and providing sufficient opportunities including Housing Policy Areas (HPAs) in smaller settlements to meet the housing needs of the area. It also means ensuring that there is an adequate range of sites at suitable locations to provide a mix of house types and tenures to meet population needs.
- 6.3 Thus, how housing should be allocated across the settlement hierarchy should be based on the settlement growth strategy for Ards and North Down Borough which aims to: -
- focus major population and economic growth on the large towns of Bangor and Newtownards, consequently these towns will be the main focus for major new housing development;
 - provide balanced growth in the small towns in order to sustain, consolidate and revitalise them;
 - maintain villages as important local service centres to meet the daily needs of the rural area;

- provide opportunities for individual dwellings or small groups of houses in the open countryside, small settlements or dispersed rural communities in order to sustain rural communities.

6.4 Although it is not possible at present to consider the precise allocation for any given settlement, it is reasonable to consider how housing should be apportioned across the various types of settlements taking into account regional policy, existing household levels and the preliminary settlement growth strategy.

Rural Housing

7.1 In 2001, the population of Ards and North Down Borough Council area was predominately urban (82.4%) with over 94.2% of the population in North Down Borough and over 70.6% of Ards District living within designated settlements while the remainder lived within the countryside. North Down Borough has a greater urban bias, with only 5.8% living in the countryside compared to 29.4% in Ards District (See Table 19 below).

Table 19: Urban - Rural Population Split

	North Down	Ards
Urban Settlements Population	70,425 (89.2%)	43,224 (55.4%)
Rural Settlements Population	3,952 (5%)	11,862 (15.2%)
Countryside	4,560 (5.8%)	22,992 (29.4%)
Total District	78,937	78,078

Source: NISRA Census 2001

- 7.2 A challenge for the Local Development Plan will be to allocate an appropriate level of housing for the rural area and introducing a symbiotic planning policy to manage this allocation.
- 7.3 Analysis of house completions Between April 2013 and December 2017 show 2,481 units were built within settlements within Ards and North Down Borough and 256 units built in the Countryside (See Table 20 below).

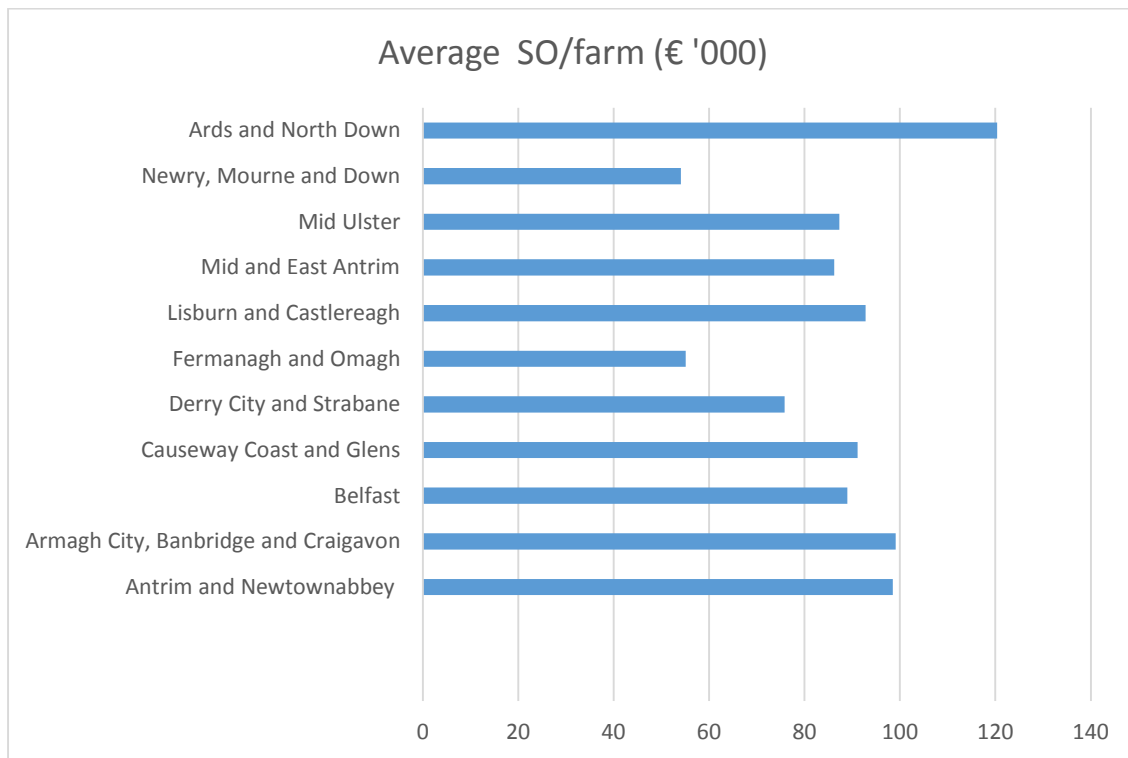
Table 20: Houses Built within Ards and North Down Borough, 2008-2017

Houses Built	2008-2012	2013-2017
Rural	437 (17%)	256 (9%)
Urban	2,221 (83%)	2481 (91%)

Source: LPS

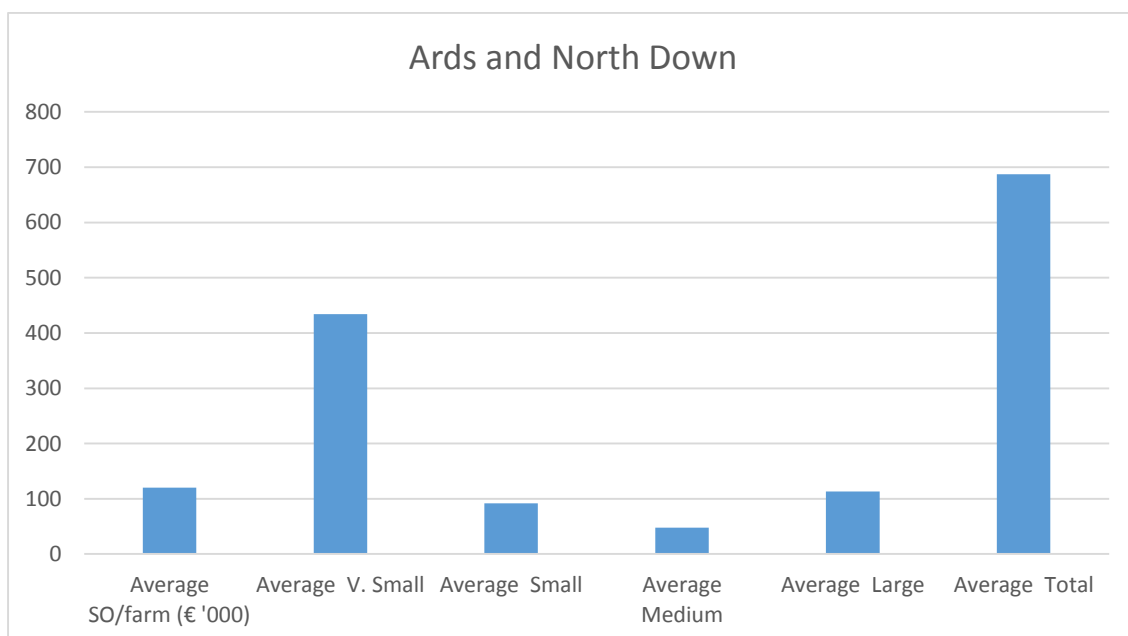
- 7.4 There are currently 687 farms in Ards and North Down Borough (DEARA 2017). Farming is important to the Borough, raising significant revenue as indicated in Graphs 8 and 9 below.
- 7.5 Consideration should be given to the policies within the SPPS and whether adjustment is needed in the Local Development Plan in order to meet the local circumstances of the Borough.

Graph 8: Farm Revenue (Northern Ireland 2017)



Source: DEARA 2017

Graph 9: Size of Farm within Ards and North Down Borough

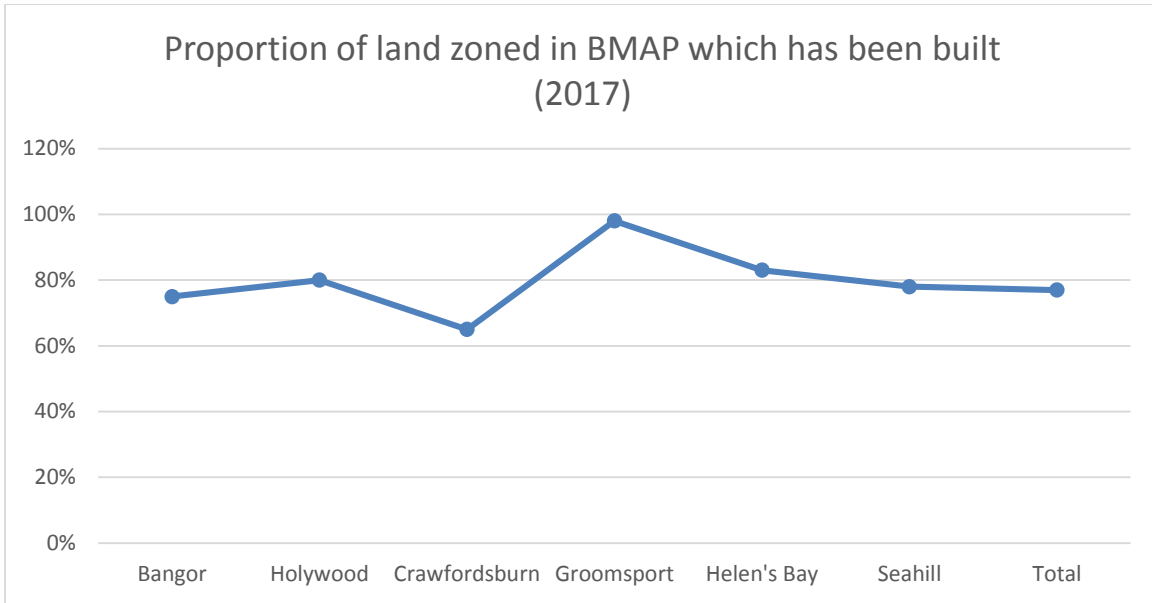


Source: DAERA 2017

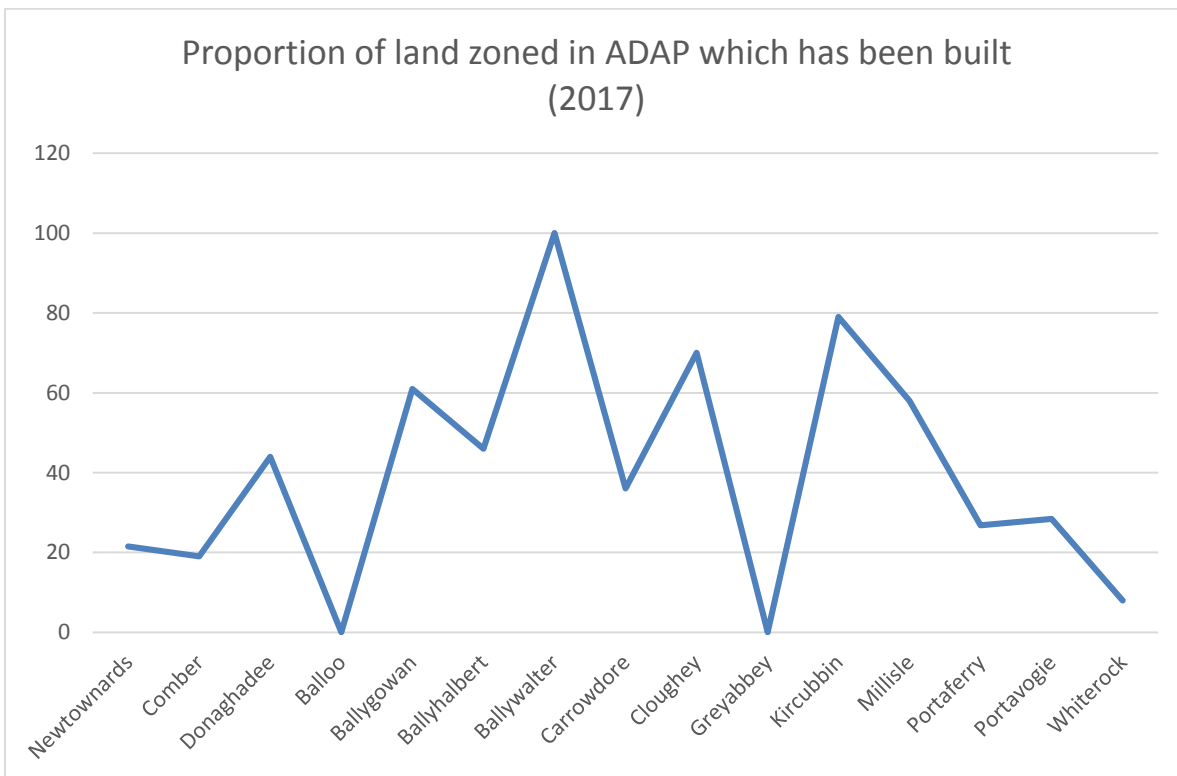
- 7.5 Consideration should be given to the policies within the SPPS and whether adjustment is needed in the Local Development Plan in order to meet the local circumstances of the Borough.

Housing Land Availability

- 8.1 The following analysis provides an overall picture of the amount of land developed on sites zoned for housing within Draft BMAP and Ards and Down Area Plan 2015.
- 8.2 The Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 indicates that for Ards District approximately 317 hectares of land was zoned for housing, 207 hectares of which was allocated in Newtownards, 68 hectares in Comber and 42 hectares in Donaghadee. Whilst, within Draft BMAP 2015 approximately 186 hectares of land were allocated for housing within North Down.
- 8.3 Within Bangor, approximately 165 hectares of land were allocated for housing of which 75% has been developed, with 48 hectares remaining. In Newtownards, only a small amount of zoned land has been developed in comparison (approximately 25%), whilst in Comber approximately 16.5% of zoned housing land has been developed. In Donaghadee, the smallest of the three small towns, just under half (41.5%) of the zoned land has been developed. This analysis is as of April 2018 and is based on the maximum gross densities set out in the Key Design Considerations (KDC) for the zonings being realised. Where only a minimum gross density is given in the KDC this is used. On a number of instances, the yields produced on the housing zonings, or areas identified for housing, were either lower or more often higher than those yields identified in the respective area plans.



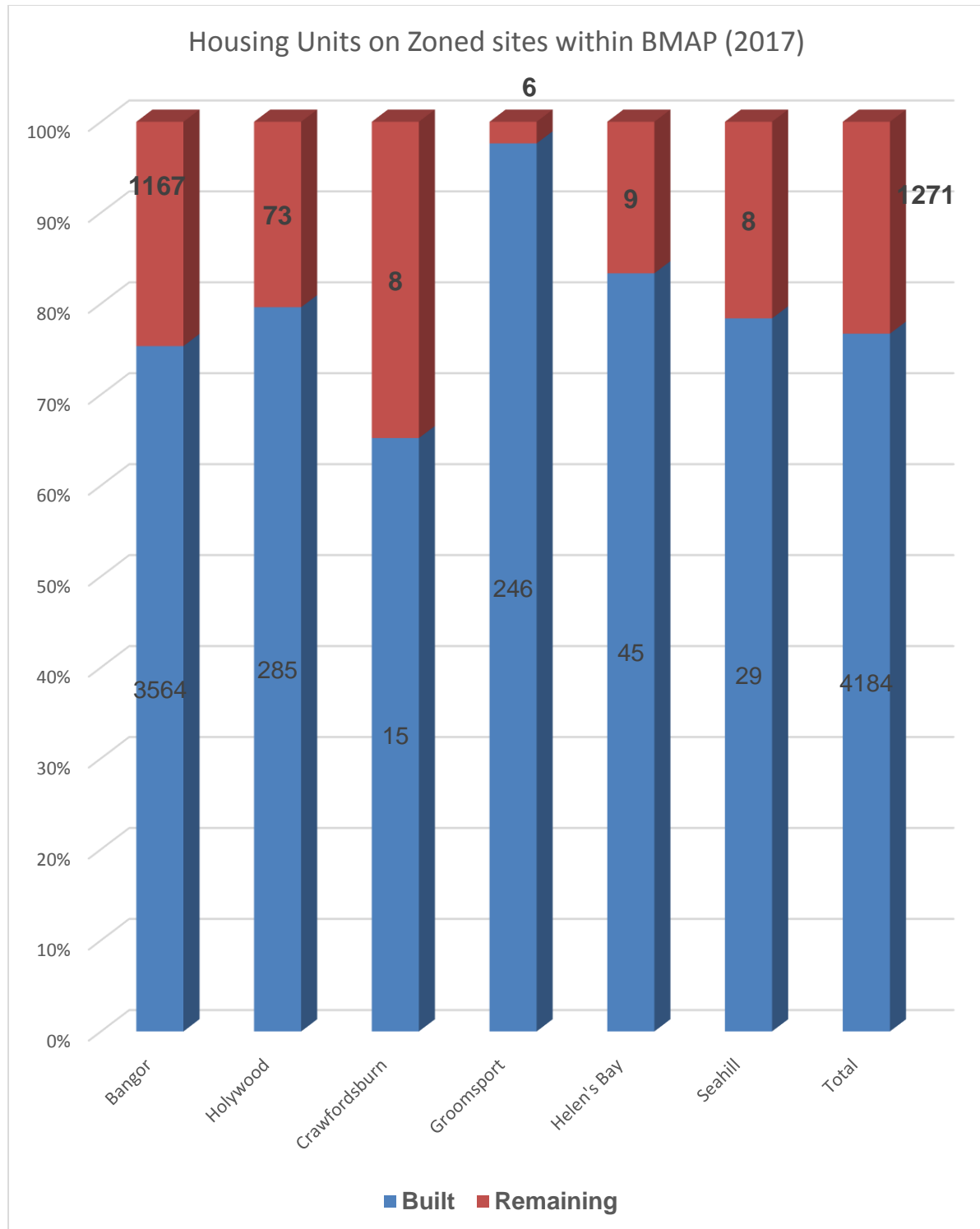
Graph 10: Proportion of Land Zoned and Identified for Housing which has been built within the BMAP Settlements.



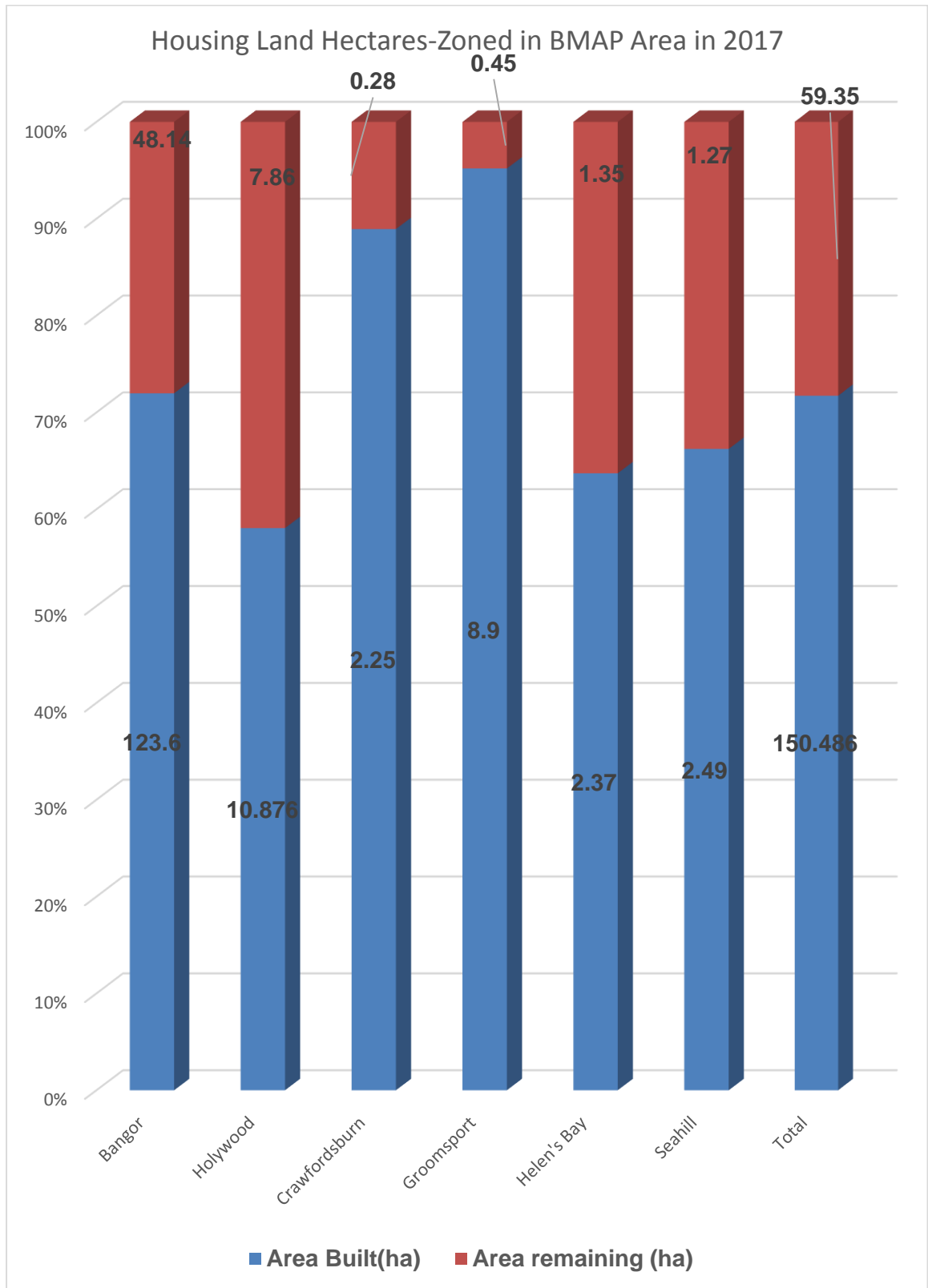
Graph 11: Proportion of Zoned and land identified for housing developed across the settlements in ADAP 2015 Area.

8.4 The following graphs show the development of land zoned for housing in selected settlements in Ards and North Down Borough.

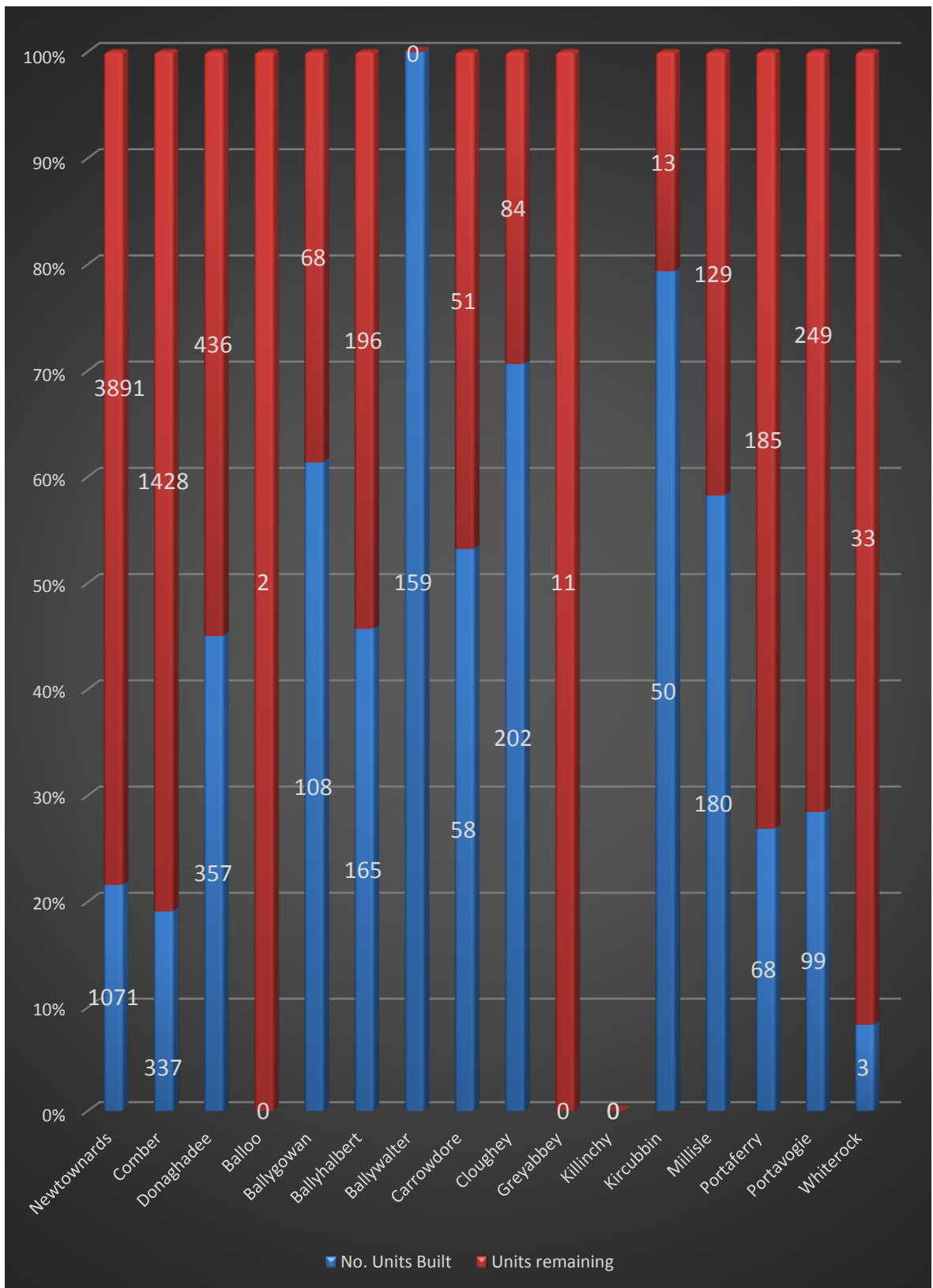
Graph 12: Units complete and remaining for sites zoned or identified for housing in BMAP (2017)



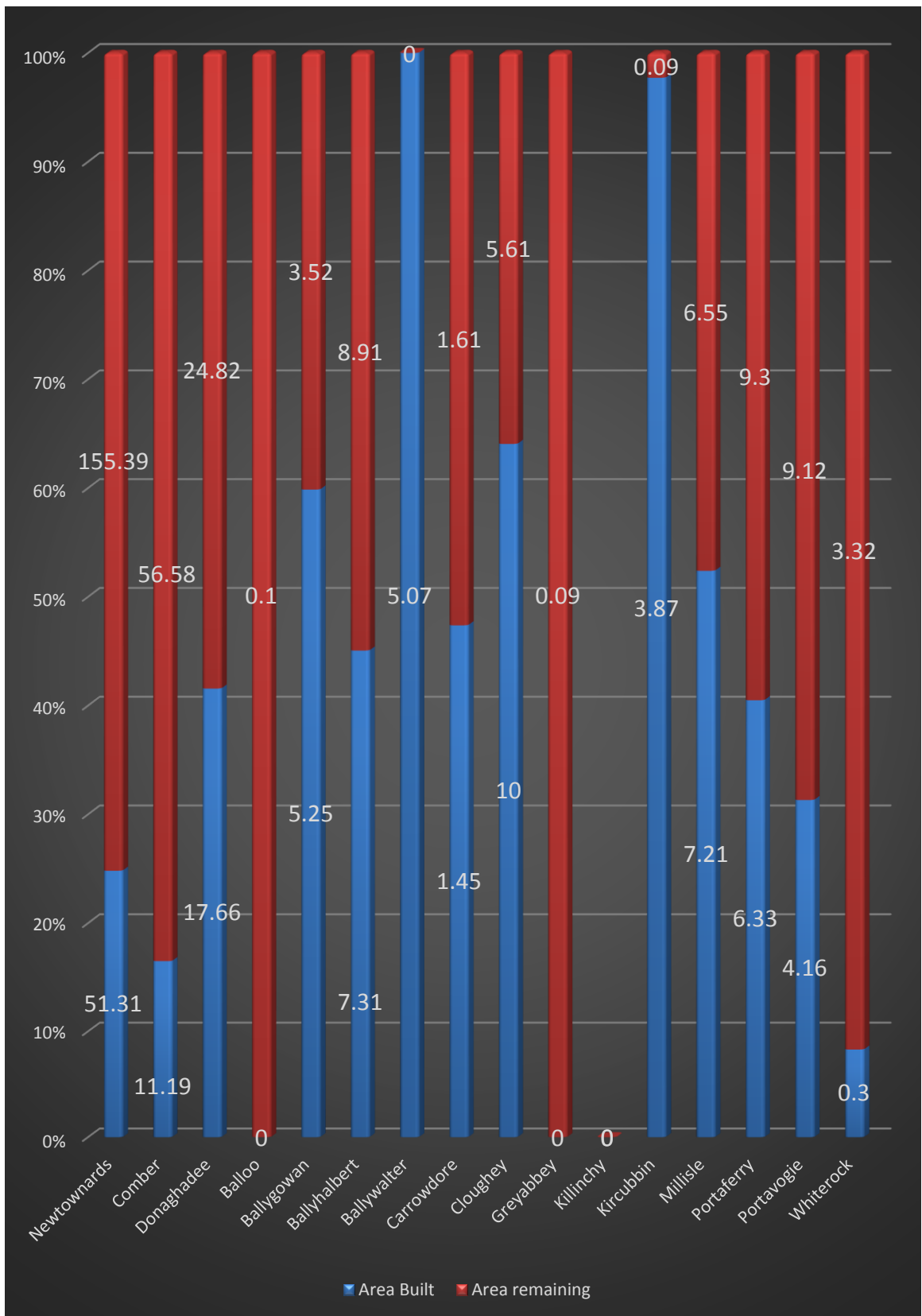
Graph 13: Area of land complete and remaining for sites zoned or identified for housing in BMAP (2017)



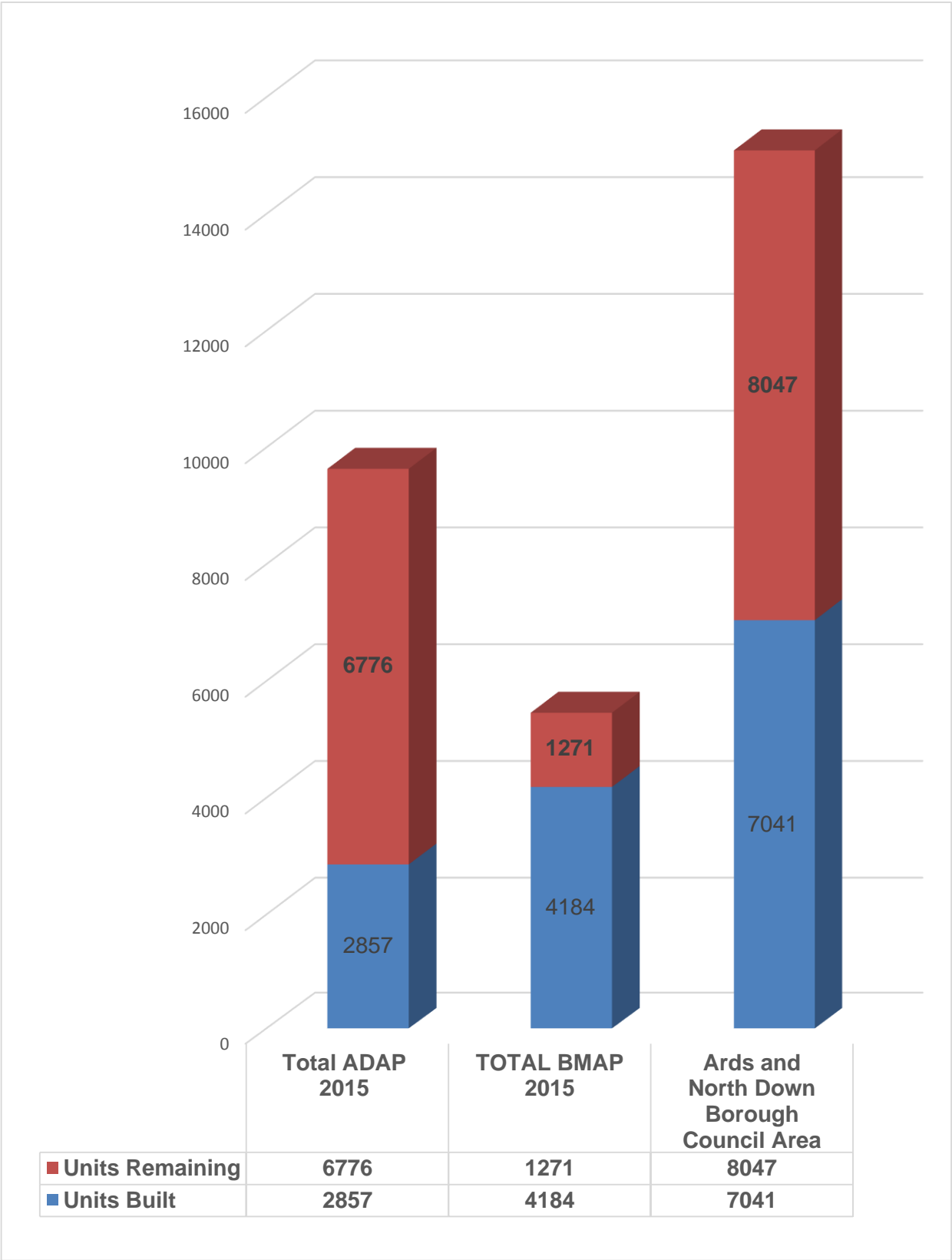
Graph 14: Units complete and remaining for sites zoned or identified for housing in ADAP (2017)



Graph 15: Area of land complete and remaining for sites zoned or identified for housing in BMAP (2017)



Graph 16: Total number of housing units complete and remaining for sites zoned or identified for housing in BMAP and ADAP (2017)



Key Findings

9.1 A summary of the key findings are as follows: -

- The Local Development Plan can help tackle social deprivation and inequalities in the labour market by providing a supply of housing land which is accessible to the majority of people; and improve local provision and access to economic, social and community facilities;
- The location and design of development can have a significant impact on equality of opportunity and community relations between different groups based on religion, political opinion, age, gender, disability and people with and without dependants. The new Local Development Plan will need to have regard to these groups and their needs and any impact upon them will be examined through an Equality Impact Assessment;
- The Local Development Plan has a role in identifying appropriate sites for housing and can specify where the development of certain house types, or a mix of house types, will be required. To address future social housing needs, the local development plan should facilitate a mix and balance of housing tenures and types including smaller house types e.g. two bedroom houses;
- There are a number of zoned residential sites within the Borough which have not yet been commenced. This may be due to a variety of factors. It is therefore necessary within the Local Development Plan process to explore why zoned residential land has been developed for housing.

CONCLUSION

- 10.1 A home is vital part of people's lives and contributes to creating a safe, healthy and prosperous society. The LDP can have a positive impact and supporting role in helping to meet the full range of housing needs of society through facilitating the sustainable development of housing in the Borough. Housing provision can aid physical, economic and social change and there are important links between the location of housing, jobs, facilities, services and infrastructure.

Appendix

Table 1: Gender balance of North Down and Ards Population- 2011

Sex	N. Ireland (%)	North Down and Ards (%)	North Down (%)	Ards (%)
Male	49	48.46	48.13	48.78
Female	51	51.54	51.87	51.22

Source: NISRA Census 2011

Table 2: Health (2001)

	Limiting Long Term Illness	Good General Health	People Providing Unpaid Care
N. Ireland	20.4%	70.0%	11.0%
North Down and Ards	18.93%	70.48%	12.48%
North Down	19.35%	69.74%	12.27%
Ards	18.52%	71.23%	12.69%

Source: NISRA Census 2001. Health and Provision of Unpaid Care

Table 3: Health (2011)

	Limiting Long Term Illness	Good General Health	People Providing Unpaid Care
N. Ireland	20.69%	79.51%	11.81%
North Down and Ards	20.08%	80.59%	13.33%
North Down	19%	81.95%	13.12%
Ards	21.15%	79.24%	13.55%

Source: NISRA Census 2011. Health & Provision of Unpaid Care