

Local Development Plan - Position Paper

Transportation



Ards and
North Down
Borough Council

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Executive Summary

This Position Paper provides Members with an overview of the policy context and baseline information in relation to Transportation in Ards and North Down.

This paper and subsequently the views of Members generated from the upcoming workshop will provide a foundation on which work can commence on a Preferred Options Paper (POP). The POP is the earliest stage of plan preparation 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.

It is important to stress that in compiling this paper the best information available has been used and will be revised as necessary in light of the release of any new data.

Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this paper is to provide baseline evidence to inform Members and enable meaningful participation in the upcoming Local Development Plan (LDP) Workshop on Transportation.
- 1.2 People need to travel: to work; to school; to shop; to health and community facilities and to leisure activities. Effective transportation facilitates inward investment and supports a vibrant economy. It has the potential to improve health and wellbeing whilst tackling climate change. Transportation shapes places - for good or ill.

Regional Policy Context

[Regional Development Strategy \(RDS\) 2035](#)

- 2.1 The RDS provides an overarching strategic framework for Northern Ireland comprising of Regional Guidance and a Spatial Framework Guidance. Its Spatial Framework identifies Bangor and Holywood as forming part of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) and identifies Newtownards as a Hub and a key commuter town to Belfast.
- 2.2 The continuing vision of the RDS 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'¹.

¹ RDS 2035 Para. 2.8 page 20

- 2.3 Through regional guidance the RDS seeks to deliver a balanced approach to transport infrastructure² and to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change whilst improving air quality³.
- 2.4 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 investment⁴.
- 2.5 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 people⁵.

[Regional Transportation Strategy \(RTS\)](#)

- 2.6 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. The RTS sets 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).
- 2.7 The RTS was replaced in 2012 by 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future',

² RDS 2035 RG2 page 33

³ RDS 2035 RG9 page 43

⁴ RDS 2035 SPG4 page 59-60

⁵ RDS 2035 SFG14 page 75

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 \(2011\)](#)

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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

- Improve connectivity within the region;
- Use road space and railways more efficiently;
- Better maintain transport infrastructure;
- Improve access in our towns and cities;
- Improve access in rural areas;
- Improve connections to key tourism sites.

2. Enhance the quality of life for all

- Improve Safety;
- Enhance Social Inclusion;
- Develop transport programmes focussed on the user;

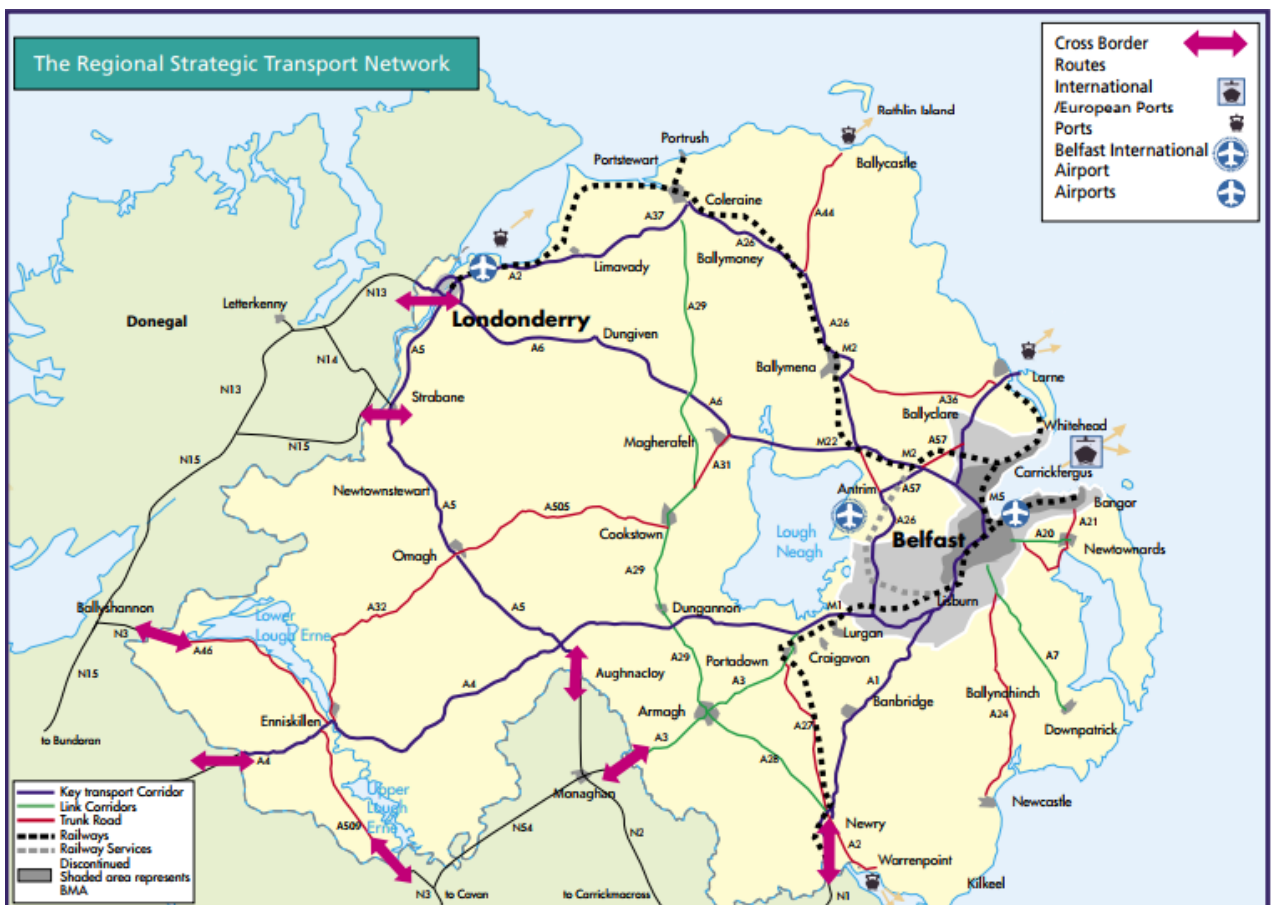
3. Reduce the Environmental Impact of Transport

- Reduce Greenhouse gas emissions from transport;
- Protect biodiversity;

- Reduce water, noise and air pollution;

[Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan \(RSTN TP 2015\)](#)

2.10 The RSTNTP will remain a material consideration until replaced by the new suite of transport plans. It covers the complete rail network, five Key Transport Corridors, four link corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network. The elements of the RSTN within Ards and North Down include: the rail network; the A20 link corridor between Newtownards and the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA); and two trunk roads - the A21 which links Bangor, Newtownards and Comber and the A22 linking Comber and other settlements to the BMA (see Map 1 below).



Map 1: Regional Strategic Transport Network (Source: RSTN TP 2015)

2.11 The RSTNTP also identified Strategic Road Improvements (SRIs). Completed SRIs in Ards and North Down include the Comber bypass and the Frederick

Street link in Newtownards. Park and Share locations were also identified – including the former Scrabo High School site in Newtownards.

[Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan \(BMTP\)](#)

2.12 The BMTP was published in 2004 and covered the Belfast Metropolitan Area for the time period until 2015. The BMTP developed alongside and integrated with the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP). Joint working arrangements ensured that the plans were mutually supportive and that land use and transportation proposals and strategies were co-ordinated and integrated.

2.13 The components of the 2015 Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan are described according to four modal themes:

1. **Provision for Walking and Cycling** – such as walking corridors and cycle routes;
2. **Public Transport measures** – such as bus and rail schemes;
3. **Highway measures** – such as road schemes; and
4. **Management measures** such as parking controls or traffic management used to control traffic and influence travel demands and patterns.

2.14 A number of the BMTP proposals specifically benefit Bangor/North Down (see Fig. A1 in Appendix) and include measures to:

- **Improve accessibility to Belfast and the rest of the BMA;** e.g. through improving rail services, development of Quality Bus Corridors, provision or enhancement of park-and-ride facilities, improved safety and efficiency on the A2, widening the A2, improvements to the A55 Outer Ring Road, introduction of Intelligent Transport Systems and Variable Message Signs, and improvements to junction capacity.
- **Encourage greater use of public transport and more walking and cycling and reduce the use of the car for local journeys in the Bangor area;**

e.g. through the development of an integrated network of Quality Walking Routes and cycle routes including the provision of improved links to the bus/rail stations at Bangor and Holywood; improvements to local bus services, the expansion of park-and-ride facilities at the bus/rail station; and the promotion of improved public transport services that link retail outlets on the Bangor ring road and Bangor town centre.

- **Maintain and enhance the urban environment and economic vitality of Bangor, recognising its special characteristics as a tourist destination.**

e.g. traffic management measures that aim to reduce the overall impact of traffic while maintaining accessibility for all modes of transport; together with more effective management of town centre car parking.

[Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015 \(SRTP\)](#)

2.15 The SRTP was launched on 11th June 2007 and is based upon the guidance provided by the RDS and RTS. It covers the area outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA), and deals with the main transportation issues in rural and other urban areas, including the former Ards Council area.

2.16 The SRTP looked at public transport improvements to be made generally at a Northern Ireland wide level. This included: improved pedestrian links to public transport, refurbishment of stations, additional local bus services, bus stop improvements, additional car parking at stations; bus priority schemes; taxis; and an extension of door to door transport services for mobility impaired people.

2.17 The SRTP also included Local Transport Studies at local Council level For Ards Borough Council this included Newtownards and Comber. The Local Transport Study gathered data from a range of sources including traffic surveys to identify problems. A range of measures were then proposed encompassing walking routes, cycling routes and highway schemes.

2.18 The rural areas of Northern Ireland are also considered within the SRTP. A range of measures were proposed including providing footways within settlements, providing at least one accessible bus stop within settlements and continued levels of investment in roads maintenance – particularly for those roads that link into the strategic road network.

[Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland \(SPPS\)](#)

2.19 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) was published by the Department of the Environment (DOE) in September 2015. 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.

2.20 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.

2.21 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.

Relevant Operational Planning Policy

2.22 Operational policy in relation to transportation is currently contained within [Planning Policy Statement 3 Access, Movement and Parking](#) (PPS 3) and [Planning Policy Statement 13 Transportation and Land Use](#) (PPS 13). Until such time as a new Plan Strategy is adopted by the Council, the policy provisions contained within both documents will be retained together with the SPPS.

2.23 [PPS 3 Access, Movement and Parking](#) sets out the planning policies for vehicular and pedestrian access, transport assessment, the protection of transport routes, and parking. It is also a material consideration in dealing with individual planning applications and appeals.

2.24 [PPS 13 Transportation and Land Use](#) was prepared to assist in the implementation of the RDS. It guides the integration of transportation and land use, particularly through the preparation of development plans and transport plans. The primary objective of this PPS is to integrate land use planning and

transport by: promoting sustainable transport choices; promoting accessibility for all; and reducing the need to travel, especially by private car.

- 2.25 General Principle 5 as set out in PPS 13 requires developers to bear the costs of transport infrastructure necessitated by their development. Key site requirements will set out the main transport infrastructure which developers will be expected to provide for land allocations and specific zoned sites identified in development plans.
- 2.26 [Development Control Advice Note 15 \(DCAN 15\)](#) provides supplementary planning guidance and explains those standards contained in PPS 3 and is a material consideration for planning applications and appeals.
- 2.27 [Creating Places](#) is a design guide intended to help developers achieve high quality and greater sustainability in the design of new residential developments in Northern Ireland, and incorporates guidance on car/pedestrian/cycle/bus routes, footways/ verges/footpaths/cycle tracks, carriageways, visibility, speed restraints, shared surfaces and parking.

Existing Local Development Plan Context

[North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 \(NDAAP\), Belfast Urban Area Plan, draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 \(dBMAP\) and Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 \(BMAP\)](#)

- 3.1 The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 was prepared under the provisions of Part 3 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by DOE. The Plan was adopted on 9 September 2014, however that adoption has since been quashed as a result of a judgment in the Court of Appeal delivered on 18 May 2017.
- 3.2 As a consequence of this, the North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995, 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.

- 3.3 Draft BMAP was complemented by the measures contained within the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) for the Plan Area (see 2.12 above) and integrates land use allocations with existing and proposed transportation infrastructure (e.g. housing and employment zonings). Many of the zoned sites have key site requirements in relation to the provision of transport infrastructure
- 3.4 Draft BMAP contains strategic policy which defines parking standards in proposed areas of parking restraint. One such area is proposed for Bangor Town Centre. Controlling the amount of non-operational parking that can be provided within these areas is intended to restrain the availability of long-stay commuter parking.
- 3.5 Draft BMAP also contains strategic policy in relation to publicly owned off-street car parking in town centres. The policy required the replacement of car parking spaces lost as a result of the redevelopment of existing off-street car parks.
- 3.6 A number of Community Greenways are proposed in draft BMAP for the North Down area. These include two in Bangor at Ballycrochan Walkway and Bangor Parks Walkway, and one in Holywood. Community Greenways seek to re-establish corridor links between parks and natural areas to create networks of urban open space. They provide places for both recreation and exercise alongside opportunities for pedestrian and cycle routes.

[Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 \(ADAP\)](#)

- 3.7 The Ards and Down Area Plan seeks to address strategic guidance on transportation and land use integration by including the reduction of demand for peak time travel among those factors which determine the spatial allocation

of growth. It does so for example, by focusing a high proportion of growth into towns in the Plan area, and particularly into the main towns which have the greatest potential for investment in employment. The Plan also gives high priority to maintaining compact urban areas and it proposes the safeguarding of routes which could be important in the continual development of transport infrastructure.

- 3.8 The plan indicates that implementation of the variety of transportation facilities proposed and the encouragement and promotion given to the greater use of public transport, walking and cycling, for example through the Key Design Considerations listed as site development requirements, are intended to contribute to a change in travel culture.
- 3.9 ADAP 2015 contains 2 strategic policies in relation to transportation. These are TRAN 1 which affords planning protection for identified road schemes, and TRAN 2 which sets out that development reliant on the provision of road schemes (for access or to mitigate its potential impact upon the traffic network) shall not be permitted in advance of the road scheme being completed to an appropriate stage.
- 3.10 Several of the protected road links have now been completed including the Frederick Street link road in Newtownards. The proposed Bowtown Road-Portaferry Road Link (NS 36) has not been constructed. It links to developer funded distributor roads in housing zonings that have not yet been developed and to the Southern Link Road between the Portaferry Road, Comber Road and Belfast Road.
- 3.11 Protection is also afforded in the Plan for the proposed Ballygowan Road Link in Comber. It has been protected for a considerable number of years and previous development has been designed to accommodate it.

- 3.12 In Donaghadee a distributor road scheme is identified under the proposed housing zoning DE 11 to the south of the Newtownards Road. Neither the housing proposal nor the distributor road has yet been developed.
- 3.13 The plan also reserved land on the edge of Newtownards on the former Scrabo high School site for an informal Park and Ride facility to serve as an inter-modal transfer site between car, local “busy-bus”, express bus services and rapid transit vehicles. This site has not been developed to date. Nor has the proposed informal Park and Ride/Park and Share site in Ballygowan (BN 03).
- 3.14 The Ards and Down Area Plan indicates that disused transport tracks (primarily rail track beds) offer potential for transportation purposes or for recreation, leisure or tourism. The Plan cites the Comber greenway as an example of re-use.

Council Plans and Strategies

[Ards and North Down Borough Council Corporate Plan 2015-2019](#)

- 4.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the overall strategic direction for the Council in the 2015-19 period. The vision outlined in the Corporate Plan 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. Transportation links with the key objectives of ‘Prosperity’, ‘People’ and ‘Place’ within the corporate plan.
- 4.2 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 – Creating Positive Outcomes for Everyone 2017-2032](#)

4.3 The Big Plan for Ards and North Down (the Community 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. It contains five outcomes which are ambitious statements that the Council aspires to accurately reflect the situation of the people who live in Ards and North Down by the year 2032. The most relevant outcomes linked to transportation are outcomes one, two, four and five.

4.4 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.

4.5 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.

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

Transportation assists in economic growth and attracting investment.

4.7 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](#)

4.8 The Integrated Strategy is the Council's Borough wide strategy centred around three key themes: place, visitor and investment. It has a vision of "Blue: Green Creatively Connected" and identifies six thematic priorities with accompanying integrated actions. The thematic priorities of most relevance to transportation are:

- promote to attract investment; and
- connect places and people

4.9 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.

Transportation Profile in Ards and North Down

[Public transport](#)

5.1 The Department for Infrastructure has overall responsibility for public transport policy and transport in Northern Ireland, as well as responsibility for the safety and operating standards of road passenger transport providers and licensing of bus routes. The majority of public transport services in Northern Ireland are provided by subsidiary companies of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) such as Ulsterbus, Metro and Northern Ireland Railways under the umbrella brand name of Translink.

5.2 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. There are also town services in Bangor, Donaghadee, Newtownards and Comber. Bangor has specific services linking it with Stormont, and with the Ulster Hospital.

5.3 Rail services are operated by Northern Ireland Railways (NIR). Within the Borough there is a railway station in Bangor which links directly with Belfast and connects to the Dublin rail line and all other NIR lines. There is also a number of rail halts including:

- Bangor West;
- Carnalea;
- Helen's Bay;
- Seahill;
- Cultra;
- Marino; and
- Holywood.

Highways

5.4 The Department for Infrastructure maintains, manages and develops Northern Ireland's transportation network. There are no motorways located within the Borough. There is an extensive road network throughout the Council area, with strong linkages to Belfast from both Bangor and Newtownards. The remainder of the road network comprises both 'B' class and minor roads – both classified and unclassified (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Lengths of Roads in Ards and North Down and Northern Ireland.

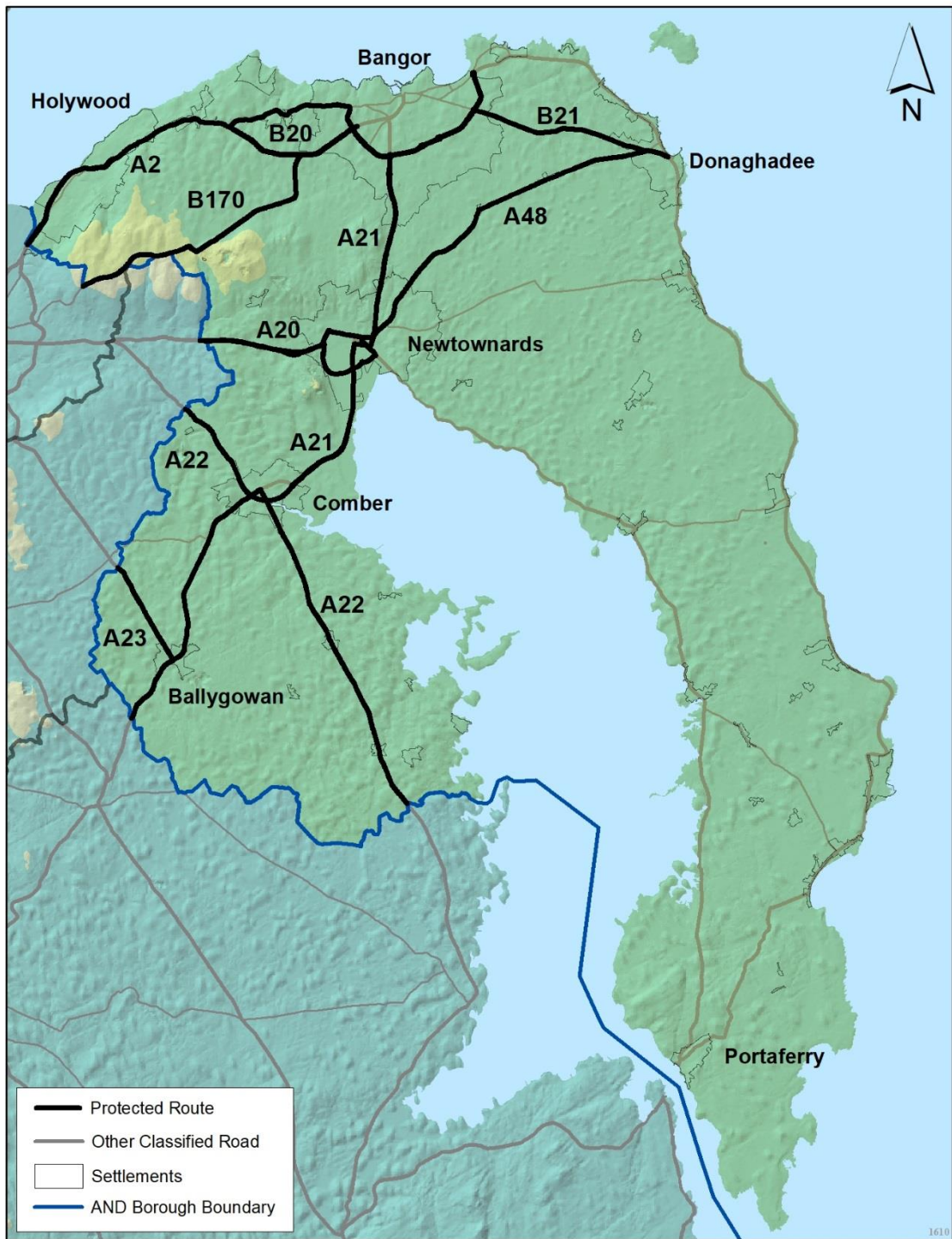
	Road Length (km)	Motorway Road Length (km)	A Roads: Dual Carriageway Road Length (km)	A Roads: Single Carriageway Road Length (km)	B Roads: Road Length (km)	C Roads : Road Length (km)	Unclassified Road Length (km)
Northern Ireland	25,714.3	114.9	228.22	2,090.72	2902.4	4733.16	15645.29
Ards & North Down	1161.0	0	26.4	136.3	57.8	165.2	775.4

(Source: NINIS - NISRA, 2018)

Protected Routes

5.5 The Ards and North Down Borough Council area contains a number of Protected Routes. The number of new accesses and the level of use of existing accesses onto Protected Routes is controlled through planning policy. Designation of protected routes is not within the remit of the Local Development Plan.

Map 2: Protected Routes



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Private Car Ownership

- 5.6 Table 2 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 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 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 2: Percentage of Households Owning One or More Private Vehicles Car Ownership

	Ards and North Down District	Northern Ireland Percentage
No Car/Van	17.08	22.7
1 Car/Van	42.16	41.38
2 Car/Van	31.51	27.04
3 Car/Van	6.97	6.29
4+ Car/Van	2.28	2.58

Source: NINIS 2011 Census

- 5.7 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.

Ferry

Figure 1: Strangford Ferry



Source: Ards and North Down Borough Council

- 5.8 The Strangford Ferry provides an important transport link within the Borough. To travel the distance between Portaferry and Strangford by road is approximately 75 kilometres and takes approximately 90 minutes. By contrast, the ferry has a typical crossing time of about eight minutes. The Department for Infrastructure operates the ferry service across Strangford Lough between the villages of Portaferry to Strangford in the neighbouring Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. A new £5.7m ferry 'Strangford II' commenced service in February 2017. It has capacity for 27 cars and 260 passengers. The ferry runs a regular service throughout the day for 364 days a year. A total of 617,309 passengers used the ferry in 2016-2017.

[Airport](#)

- 5.9 Newtownards Airport is one of only 5 licensed airports in Northern Ireland. It offers landing facilities for light aircraft and helicopters. The airfield is managed by the Ulster Flying Club which is one of the largest, non-commercial training, flying organisations in Northern Ireland.

Cycling

5.10 The [National Cycle Network](#) is a series of safe, traffic-free paths and quiet on-road cycling and walking routes that connect to every major town and city in the UK. Northern Ireland has a total proposed length of over 1,400 kilometres of which more than 848 kilometres have been constructed to date.

The main cycle routes in the Borough are:

- The Strangford Lough Trail - an 82 mile circular route in and around Strangford Lough and part of national Cycle Route 99;
- The Comber Greenway - a 7 mile traffic free section of the National Cycle Network along the old Belfast to Comber railway line;
- National Cycle Network Route 93 North Down, from Bangor to Newtownards; and
- Regional Route 20 between Comber and Downpatrick.

5.11 In August 2015 the '[Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)' was launched, with its vision as "A community where people have the freedom and confidence to travel by bicycle for every day journeys". The strategy promotes the development of a three pillar approach for the development of cycling which includes building a comprehensive cycle network, supporting those who wish to cycle, and promoting the bike as a mode of everyday transport.

Walking

5.12 Walking is primarily facilitated throughout the urban areas of the Borough by the footways along the road network. Some of these are designated as 'Highways to Health' schemes established by the Department of Health across Northern Ireland.

- 5.13 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.
- 5.14 The Comber Greenway is a 7-mile green corridor from 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.
- 5.15 The Ulster Way incorporates most of the towns and villages in the Borough.
- 5.16 The Council is currently developing Community Trails in the Ards Peninsula in conjunction with Peninsula Healthy Living Partnership and Outdoor Recreation NI. Community Trails connect communities to outdoor spaces or connect different communities together (i.e. connect two villages together). They provide opportunities for walking and cycling and can be used for commuting, shopping, exercise or enjoying leisure time.

[Taxi Services](#)

- 5.17 Taxi services provide an important and expanding transport service throughout most areas of the Borough particularly in the main towns.

[Community Transport](#)

- 5.18 Community Transport is a term covering a wide range of solutions usually developed to cover a specifically identified transport need, typically run by the local community for local neighbourhoods on a not-for-profit

basis. Community transport provides the connectivity needed to get otherwise isolated or excluded groups of people to a range of destinations, and helps to develop sustainable communities. It is often provided through minibuses and volunteer car schemes.

- 5.19 [Down Community Transport](#) offers a Dial a Lift and Group Transport throughout the Borough. The Dial a Lift Service offers a door-to-door service between 8am - 6pm, Monday to Friday. The service can be used to access employment, training, health services, other local services and recreational facilities. The Group Transport Scheme offers minibus hire for member groups such as older people, youth groups, community associations, sporting groups, church groups, local charities.
- 5.20 [Disability Action](#) operates a local urban transport service for people with disabilities or for those who find it difficult using mainstream public transport. Membership is free but a fare is charged for each trip taken. The towns of Bangor, Newtownards, Holywood, Donaghadee, and Comber and a small area of their hinterland are covered by the scheme.
- 5.21 The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service runs a Patient Transport Service. The service is a non-emergency patient transport service which operates across the province. This enables patients with a medical to get to routine appointments at hospitals and treatment centres throughout Northern Ireland.

[Car Parking](#)

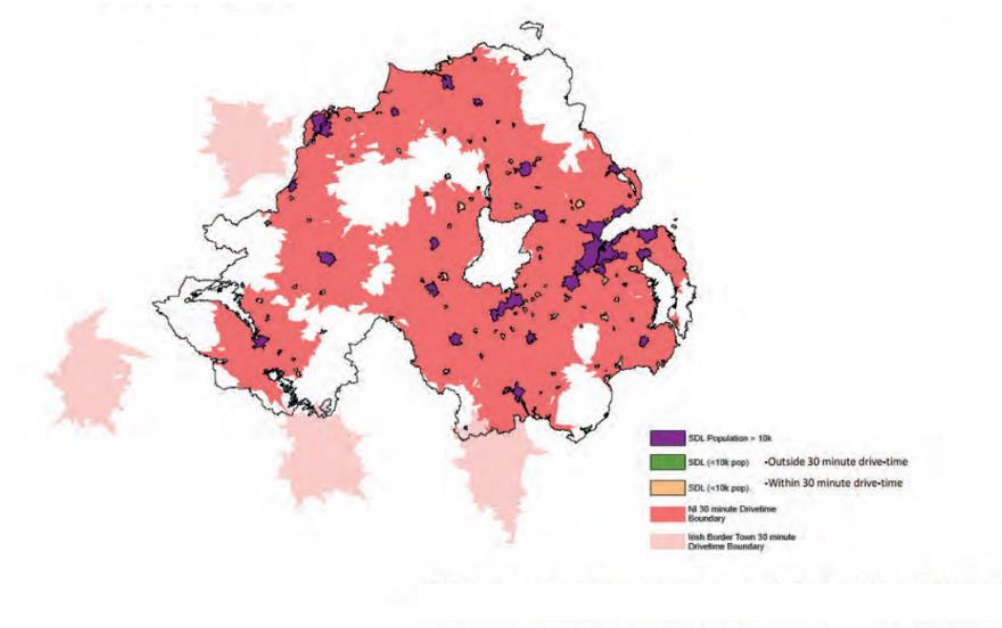
- 5.22 Off-street parking became the responsibility of the Council from 1 April 2015 whilst on-street parking has remained the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure. At present the Council has 21 free to use and 22 charged car parks offering a total of 3,062 spaces.

- 5.23 The Council has appointed a consultant to develop a Car Park Strategy for the Borough. The Car Park Strategy will deal with parking issues across the whole Council area with particular focus on the use and management of the Council owned public car parks within the main commercial villages and towns.

Accessibility

- 5.24 As part of the preliminary LDP preparatory work, DfI has prepared Accessibility Maps (see Fig. B1 Appendix B - page 28 for an example) 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. The accessibility maps can help to inform the LDP plan making 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.

Map 3: 30-minute drive-time boundary from settlements with population of over 10,000



(Source: Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements. NISRA March 2015)

- 5.25 Rural areas within the Borough experience accessibility issues. Map 3 above 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. 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.
- 5.26 The rural areas within the Borough also suffer from less regular public transport services.

[Emerging trends - ultra-low emission vehicles](#)

- 5.27 The UK government is working towards the reduction of vehicle emissions by promoting public transport choices, supporting the market for innovative forms of transport and encouraging a move to cleaner and lower carbon vehicles. There are a relatively small number of public charging points for electric vehicles located within the Borough. (Viewable link -

<https://www.ecarni.com/charge-point-map>).

Key Findings

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 For the rural dweller, particularly in the more remote parts of the district, the private car will remain the primary form of transport throughout the Plan period. As such, appropriate complementary measures could be introduced in the plan which are aimed at reducing the need to travel long distances in order to access shops, recreation facilities and public services within the rural area in particular the Ards Peninsula.
- 6.3 Developer contributions have long been recognised as filling an important gap in terms of infrastructure provision in relation to access and highway improvements. However, there has been a lack of certain employment and housing sites coming forward which may in part be due to the financial burden of necessary infrastructure requirements. The LDP will need to find an innovative way to address this issue.
- 6.4 A modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport should be promoted, including walking, cycling and public transport in keeping with the thrust of regional policy. Further consideration should be given to promoting these and the requirement for additional Park and Ride sites. However, given the urban/rural split within the Borough, successes are likely to be achieved primarily in the main towns.

- 6.5 The development of the Rapid Transit route from the city centre along Albertbridge Road and Upper Newtownards Road and terminating at a park and ride site in Dundonald also presents opportunity in relation to connectivity and accessibility of the Borough.
- 6.6 Consideration should be given to the potential opportunity for the redevelopment of the disused railways and the benefits this could provide the Council area not only for encouraging active forms of transport through walking and cycling but also as a tourism asset.
- 6.7 It should also be noted that in the current financial climate with budget reviews and potential budget cuts, these factors are likely to have significant implications for public transport, particularly community transport and the impact this will have on the more economically disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society.

Conclusion

- 7.1 The purpose of this paper has been to provide base line information on transportation across Ards and North Down. The LDP team will discuss this information and seek input from Members at the Transportation Workshop scheduled for 18 October to inform work on the Council's preferred options in relation to the topic.
- 7.2 It is important to acknowledge that there may be cross boundary implications for neighbouring Councils in terms of infrastructure provision and accessibility.
- 7.3 The evidence base on this topic will be kept under review and will be further informed by the development of a local transport study by the Department of Infrastructure. This will assist in preparing the sound evidence base required to underpin the Local Development Plan as per the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- 7.4 Any future decision making will need to be made in the context of a Sustainability Appraisal under the provisions of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Act 2011.

Appendix A

Figure A1: BMTP Extract: NORTH DOWN

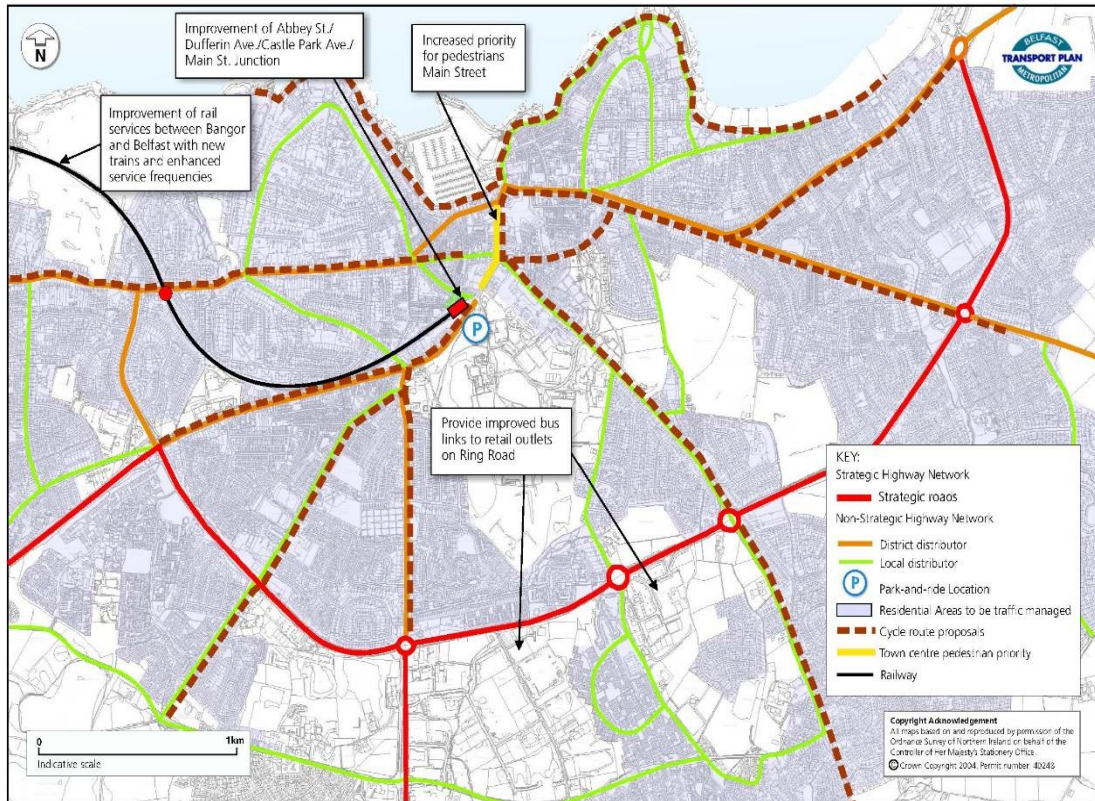


Figure 8.7 - Proposals for Bangor

Appendix C

Figure C1: Free Council Car Parks within Borough

Car park name / location	Town	Spaces
Newtownards Road/Church Street	Bangor	32
Springwell Drive	Groomsport	39
Harbour Road	Ballyhalbert	15
Portavogie Road	Ballyhalbert	70
Springvale Road	Ballywalter	43
Main Road	Cloughey	170
Castle / Bridge Street	Comber	235
Glen Link	Comber	19
Killinchy Street	Comber	29
Newtownards Road (Comber Road)	Comber	49
Railway Street	Donaghadee	36
Templepatrick car park (231 Millisle Road)	Donaghadee	112
Shore Road	Kircubbin	32
The Green (25 Main Street)	Kircubbin	45
Ballywalter Road	Millisle	300
Ballywhiskin (179 Ballywalter Road)	Millisle	120
Moss Road	Millisle	92
Mill St Gas Works South	Newtownards	93
Talbot Street	Newtownards	37
Meeting House Street	Portaferry	40
The Square	Portaferry	19
TOTAL		1627

Figure C2: Paid Council Car Parks within Borough

Car Park Name / Location	Town	Spaces
Abbey Street East	Bangor	70
Bingham Lane	Bangor	59
Castle Street	Bangor	85
Clifton Road	Bangor	30
Holborn Avenue	Bangor	76
Mills Road	Bangor	76
The Vennel	Bangor	37
Abbey Street West	Bangor	38
Central Avenue	Bangor	29
Church Road	Hollywood	81
Hibernia Street North	Hollywood	120
Hibernia Street South	Hollywood	27
Ann Street	Newtownards	76
Kennel Lane	Newtownards	106
Mill Street	Newtownards	64
Mill Street Gas Works	Newtownards	75
Old Cross Street East	Newtownards	18
Old Cross Street West	Newtownards	80
South Street/Court Street	Newtownards	155
4 South Street (7 Court Street)	Newtownards	42
West Street	Newtownards	60
Upper Court Street	Newtownards	31
TOTAL		1435

