



Belfast Local Development Plan

Draft Plan Strategy
2035

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Belfast
City Council

Energising
Belfast



Foreword from Party Group Leaders, Belfast City Council

Belfast Local Development Plan 2035

Draft Plan Strategy



Alderman David Browne



Councillor Billy Hutchinson



Councillor Michael Long



Councillor Ciaran Beattie



Councillor Lee Reynolds



Councillor Tim Attwood

As a capital city we want to support sustainable growth to strengthen our position as the economic driver for the region. We have set out ambitious, but realistic goals for sustainable employment and population growth for the city.

The Belfast Agenda sets out the framework to support inclusive growth and improve services for residents and businesses. Belfast City Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) will provide the planning framework for the city up to 2035.

The Local Development Plan will be delivered alongside the Belfast Agenda and will shape the physical future of the city. The Local Development Plan is vital to the delivery of the outcomes in the Belfast Agenda as it will provide a 15 year planning framework to support economic and social outcomes in the city, while providing the delivery of sustainable development.

The Plan Strategy will set out an ambitious but realistic vision for Belfast as well as the objectives and strategic policies required to deliver that vision.

The LDP vision is that:

In 2035, Belfast will be a globally successful, smart regional city that is environmentally resilient with a vibrant economic and social heart. As a centre of learning and business, the knowledge economy flourishes where collaboration and innovation attracts investment, talent and jobs. We will value and conserve our unique natural and built heritage to enhance and develop tourism.

Thriving socially inclusive well connected neighbourhoods, that encourage a healthy active lifestyle with well-designed homes where people love to live. A strong, inclusive local economy will support progressive, safe and vibrant communities. The city will provide a gateway to opportunities locally, nationally and worldwide.

As the Leaders of each of the six political party groups on Belfast City Council, we commit ourselves to the collaborative leadership needed to deliver the Local Development Plan. We would like to encourage everyone to respond to the draft Plan Strategy during the 8 week consultation period and help shape the future of our city.

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Introduction



1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Belfast Agenda is an ambitious community plan that promotes inclusive balanced economic growth to reduce social inequalities to deliver a thriving city and connected sustainable neighbourhoods. To support the Belfast Agenda, the council has prepared the Local Development Plan (LDP), draft Plan Strategy, which will guide future investment and development decisions to enable the sustainable spatial growth of the city up to 2035. The LDP draft Plan Strategy, is guided by an overall vision, which provides an overarching context for the plan to ensure that economic, social and environmental issues are holistically considered to deliver sustainable developments up to 2035.

Figure 1.1: Belfast local government district in context



1.1.2 The LDP draft Plan Strategy recognises that Belfast has a unique “sense of place” shaped by its location, environment, history, culture, and commerce, which has enabled the city to be the economic driver for the wider region. It was one of the “economic powerhouses” of the industrial revolution; propelled by the new technologies of the age. The city’s growth was due to the innovations in the textile, shipbuilding and engineering industries, which reached its pinnacle in the 20th

century. Much of the city's character is derived from the physical legacy of victorian innovation and economic wealth.

- 1.1.3 The combination of deindustrialisation, the troubles, and the massive housing redevelopment had a profound impact of weakening the city's economic and social base. Consequently, its spatial legacy is evidenced by numerous derelict sites, poor quality environment and segregated neighbourhoods disconnected by 'peace walls' and barriers. The need for affordable housing remains an enduring challenge for many citizens in Belfast and the LDP will provide a spatial land use framework to enable an adequate supply of housing to meet the identified needs.
- 1.1.4 In recent years there has been a transformation with new development in the city centre, enhanced public realm, Titanic Quarter, and Ulster University, which have added vitality, created employment opportunities and attracted new residents, visitors and tourists. However, this is contrasted with the communal territorial disputes, persistent social inequality, curtailing safe access to the benefits of the wider city and peaceful interaction with civic society. It will be critical to tackle persistent social inequality throughout the city and build community cohesion and resilience through collaborative effort to ensure inclusive growth for all.
- 1.1.5 The LDP draft Plan Strategy has been prepared as the city faces the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution, powered by the emergence of artificial intelligence internet of things, and robotic technologies, and the need to adapt to environmental change through clean growth; both have the potential to transform how we live and work. The LDP draft Plan Strategy is about preparing the city to take advantage of these extraordinary changes to enable Belfast to become an innovative, smart, socially inclusive, and environmentally resilient city for the 21st century.
- 1.1.6 The LDP draft Plan Strategy will provide a spatial land use policy framework to positively encourage investment, and guide development that facilitates spaces for knowledge sharing, creativity, innovation, environmental sustainability, and socially resilient neighbourhoods. The spatial land use policy framework will provide an important foundation to support economic transformation and inclusive growth to build a distinctive contemporary city for the 21st century.
- 1.1.7 Public consultation is an essential part of the plan making process to ensure that the LDP draft Plan Strategy passes the "soundness test" under independent examination. This LDP draft Plan Strategy is a public consultation document and is a key part of the public participation process. It provides an indication of our planning policy intentions, and is not the final spatial land use plan for Belfast's future development.
- 1.1.8 The council is fully committed to engaging with local communities and stakeholders to encourage inclusive discussions on the LDP draft Plan Strategy key planning

Introduction

policies that will guide future development to deliver the tangible social, economic and environmental benefits for the city. The public and stakeholder comments concerning the LDP draft Plan Strategy will be taken into account in finalising the LDP draft Plan Strategy for independent examination, (see section 1.3).

1.2 What is the Local Development Plan?

1.2.1 The Local Development Plan (LDP) will outline the council's local policies and site-specific proposals for new development and the use of land in Belfast. It will contain the local policies, including site specific proposals, designations and land use zonings required to deliver the council's vision for the city.

1.2.2 The LDP will comprise of two development plan documents:

- **Plan Strategy** – The strategic policy framework for the plan area as a whole across a range of topics. It will set out an ambitious but realistic vision for Belfast as well as the objectives and strategic policies required to deliver that vision. Establishing this strategic direction early in the plan process will provide a level of certainty on which to base key development decisions in the area as well as the necessary framework for the preparation of the Local Policies Plan; and
- **Local Policies Plan** – The council's local policies and site specific proposals in relation to the development and use of land in Belfast. It will contain the local policies, including site specific proposals, designations and land use zonings required to deliver the council's vision, objectives and strategic policies, as set out in the Plan Strategy.

1.2.3 In summary, the Belfast City LDP 2035 will:

- Provide a 15 year plan framework to support economic and social needs in the city, in line with regional strategies and policies, while providing the delivery of sustainable development;
- Facilitate growth by coordinating public and private investment to encourage development where it can be of most benefit to the wellbeing of the community;
- Allocate sufficient land to meet the needs of the city; and
- Provide an opportunity for all stakeholders, including the public, to have a say about where and how development within the local area should take place.

1.2.4 Once adopted, the LDP will replace the Belfast Urban Area Plan, draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015, insofar as it relates to Belfast city, and the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for the Belfast City Council Area 2015 (the 'HMOs Subject Plan').

1.3 The Local Development Plan process

- 1.3.1 There are four key stages in the LDP process. The first is the initial plan preparation stage, which comprises the preparation of the plan timetable and the council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), alongside the preparation of the topic papers, and the production of a Preferred Options Paper (POP), which provides the basis for consulting on a series of options for dealing with key issues in the plan area.
- 1.3.2 The second stage is the consideration of the POP Consultation responses and the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy. A public consultation exercise will be undertaken on the draft Plan Strategy and consideration of responses will enable the draft Plan Strategy to be finalised, prior to its submission to a soundness based independent examination. Following the examination, an advisory report of its findings will be issued to central government. A binding report is issued by central government requiring the council to formally adopt and publish the draft Plan Strategy as originally prepared, or with modifications. At this point, the Plan Strategy alongside designations in BMAP will become a principal consideration when determining future planning applications for development in the city.
- 1.3.3 The third stage is the preparation of the draft Local Policies Plan for public consultation. It will be consistent with the adopted Plan Strategy, and will provide detailed land use proposals regarding the future development of Belfast. The Local Policies Plan will be subject to a soundness based independent examination to determine its soundness. An advisory report of its findings will be issued to central government. A binding report will then be issued by central government requiring the council to formally adopt and publish the Local Policies Plan as originally prepared or with modifications. The Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan together will become the principal consideration when determining future planning applications for development in the city.
- 1.3.4 The fourth stage involves regularly monitoring and reviewing the performance of the LDP during the plan period.

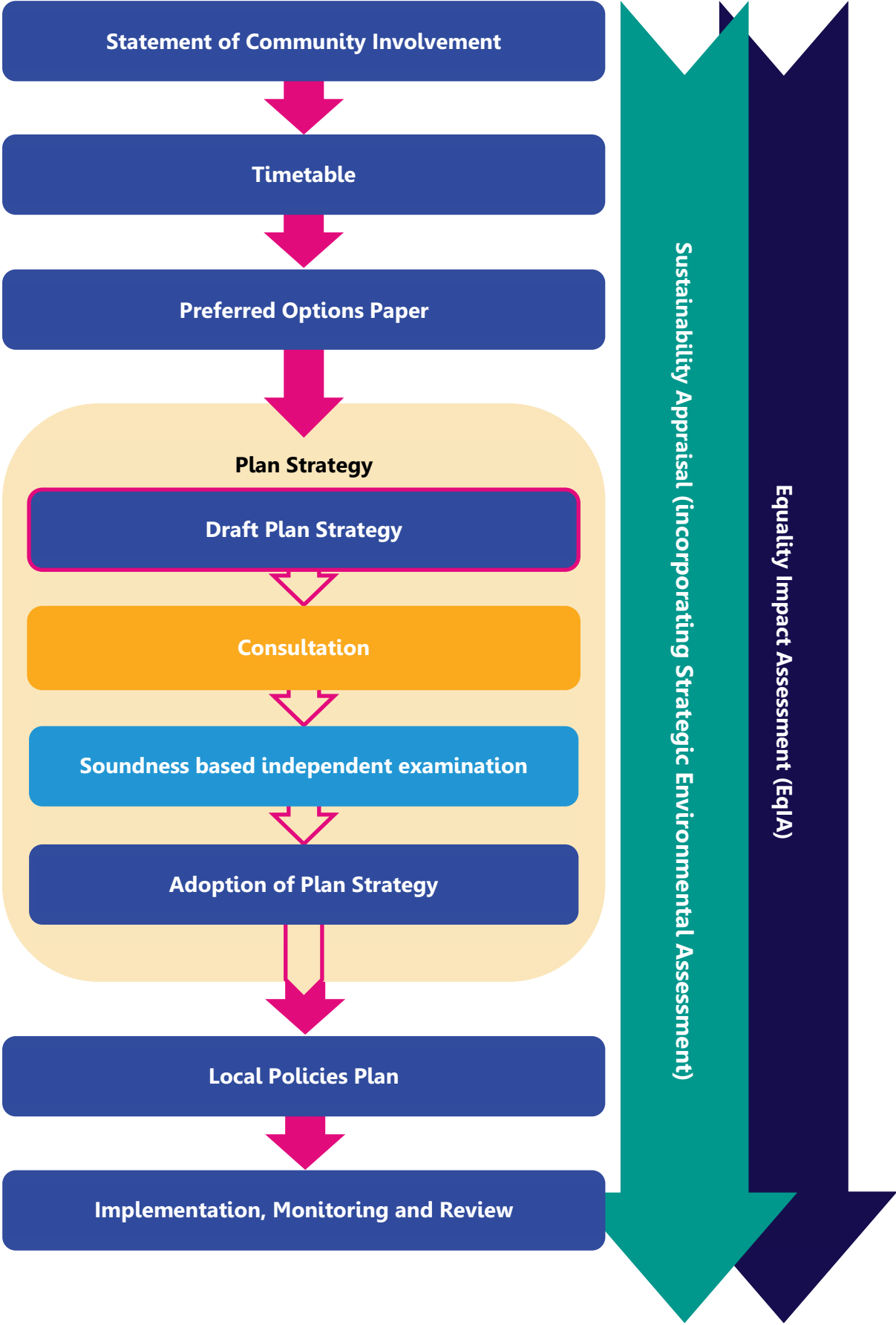
1.4 Transitional Arrangements

- 1.4.1 The need for transitional arrangements are set out in both legislation and the SPPS as a reflection of the unique circumstances presented by the transfer of the planning system to local government and the introduction of the new legislation and plan development process. This approach was intended to assist in enabling the Plan Strategy to be published in a timely manner. Agreement on the strategic direction at

Introduction

an early stage would allow the council to effectively bring forward the Plan Strategy in the context of existing planning documents.

- 1.4.2 The SPSS's transitional arrangements provide for continuity until such times as a new LDP for the whole council area is adopted to ensure continuity in planning policy for taking planning decisions.
- 1.4.3 Part of the transition is to ensure continuity until such times as the Local Policies Plan is brought forward and adopted as the final element of the new LDP. The main element of the Local Policies Plan will deal with plan designations and where appropriate zonings.



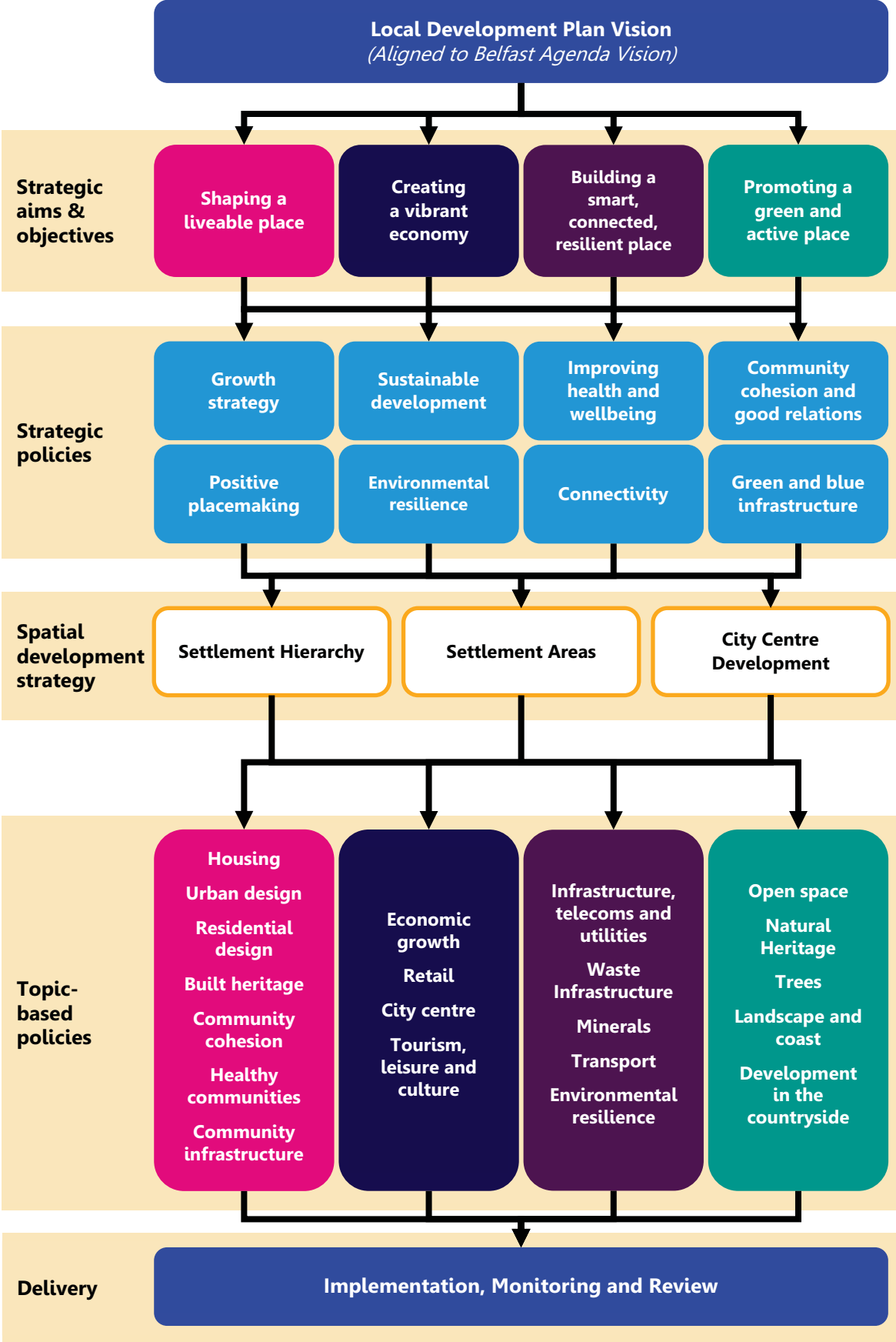
1.5 Structure of the Plan Strategy

1.5.1 The Plan Strategy consists of five parts, flowing from the overarching vision for the district:

1. **Vision, aims and objectives:** The four strategic aims of the LDP closely reflect the Belfast Agenda priorities. These aims are supported by a series of strategic objectives designed to help achieve the delivery of this vision as set out in paragraph 4.1.1
2. **Strategic policies:** Our strategic approach as set out in this plan provides a series of overarching plan policies that embodies the broad principles upon which the LDP is built. The overarching strategic policies are to be used as a guide to assist developers to deliver development proposals that are in line with the strategic objectives of the city.
3. **Spatial development strategy:** Set out how the council will manage the spatial growth for the plan area. Which includes the hierarchy of settlements across the district, as well as the way the principal settlement of Belfast City will be identified into distinct settlement areas. It also reflects the unique role the city centre plays and also the roles of other areas across the city should play in helping achieve the plan's strategic aims.
4. **Topic-based policies:** This sets out a series of topic-based operational policies which help us deal with the land use challenges which affect Belfast. These policies will form the basis for making decisions on planning applications, and unless otherwise stated, all criteria used in each policy will apply to relevant proposals and should be considered holistically. Each application will be treated on its own merits.
5. **Delivery:** The final section is concerned with the delivery of the topic based policies providing details of how specific policies will be applied and proposals will be implemented. This will be supported by a detailed monitoring framework which will assess the effectiveness of the policies in achieving the plan's aims for the future.

The LDP is also supported by a series of technical background papers and formal assessments including:

- Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment);
- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA);
- Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA); and
- Rural proofing (Rural Needs Impact Assessment).

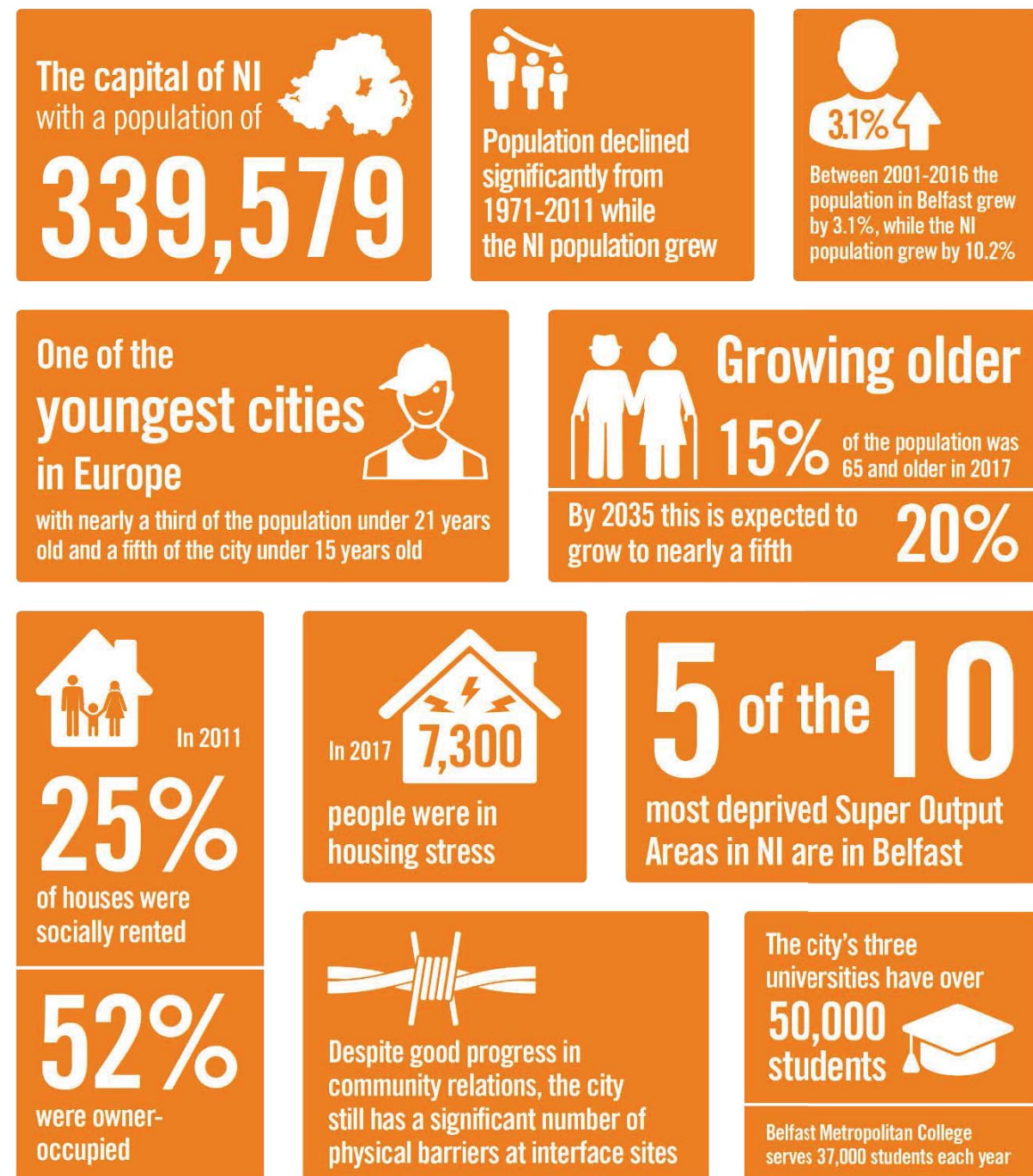


District profile



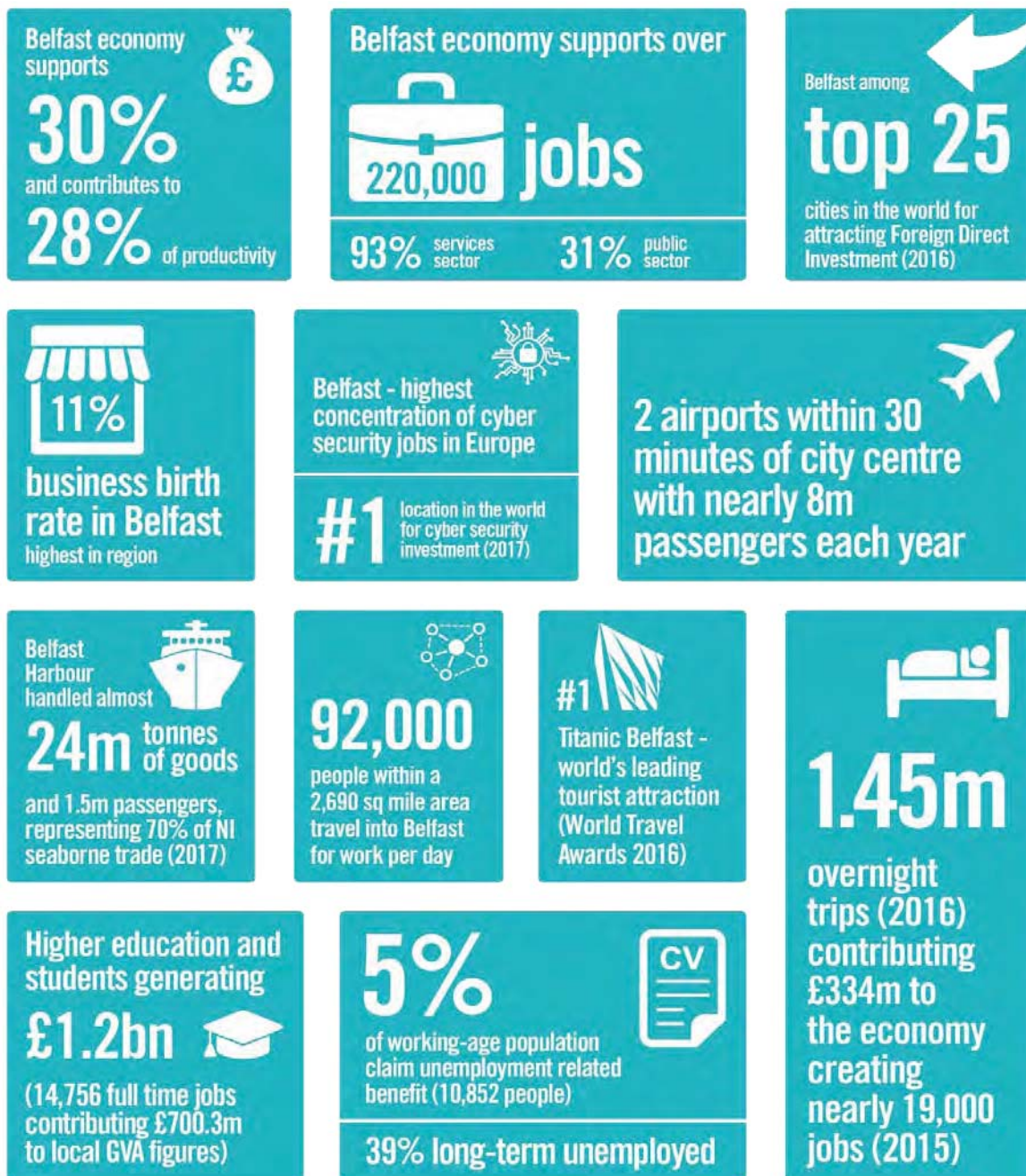
2.1 Social

The social context in Belfast can be seen as a tale of two cities. It is home to a growing and affluent population, the growth in those living in the city lags behind many other areas of NI and most other cities of a similar size across the UK. Although Belfast is home to some of the most affluent communities in NI, it is all home to some of the most deprived communities. The population is characterised by a growing number of children, young people and a rapidly ageing population. There is a high level of owner occupied housing in many areas of the city and also a strong reliance on socially rented housing. There is a need for the LDP to increase equality of opportunity and contribute to the breakdown of the physical and psychological aspects of division.



2.2 Economic















Belfast has witnessed a revival in recent years in terms of inward investment, including significant regeneration within the Titanic Quarter and waterfront areas, major growth in tourism and the Ulster University redevelopment in the city centre. There are opportunities to support and promote the continued regeneration of the city centre to attract inward investment and encourage a more diverse economy that will contribute to an enhancement in liveability and quality of place.

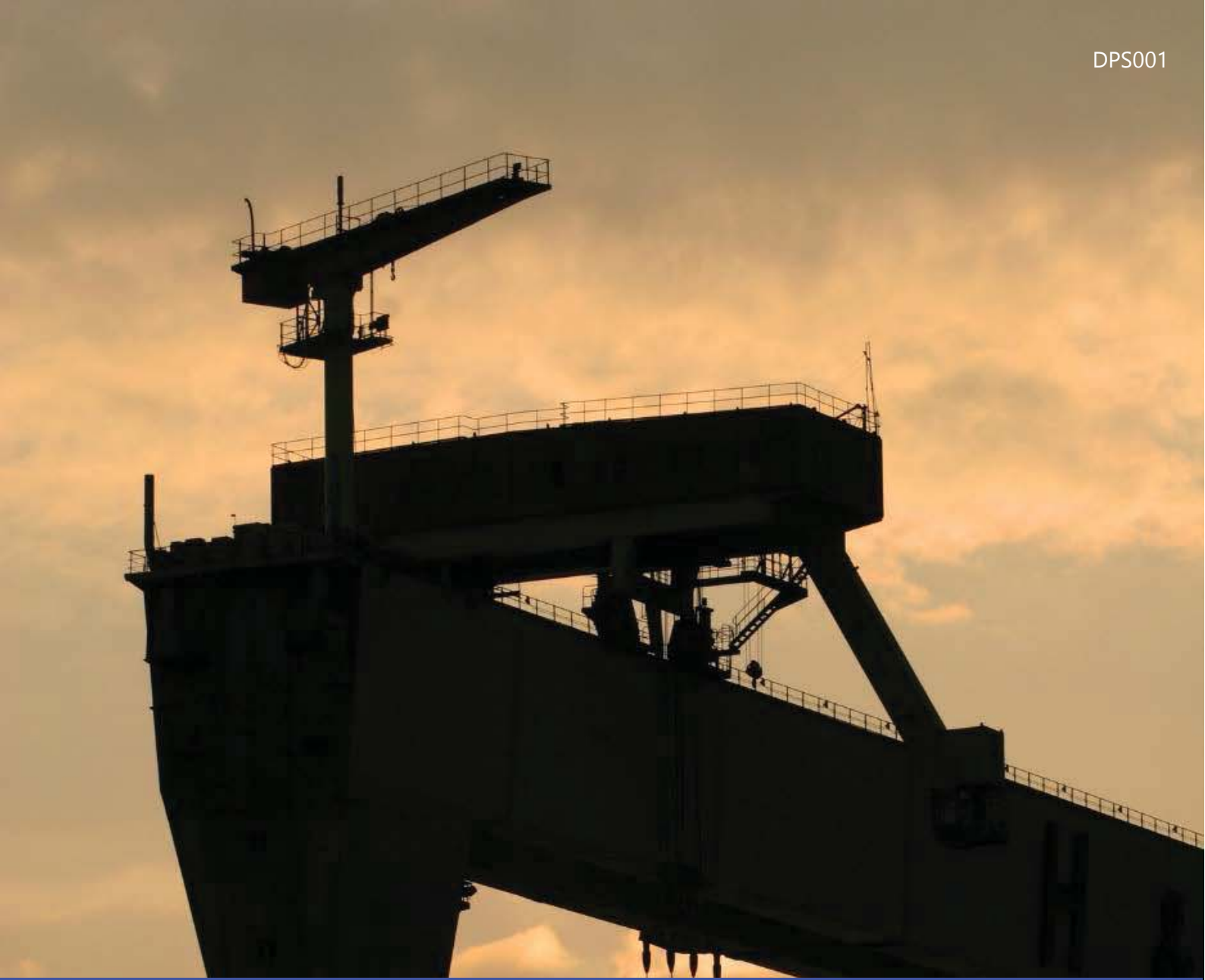


District profile

2.3 Environmental

Belfast has one of the most striking landscape settings to be found in any city in the British Isles. It lies at the head of Belfast Lough in the lower reaches of the valley of the River Lagan and is flanked to the north west by the Divis and Black mountains and on the south east by the gentler slopes of the Castlereagh and Holywood Hills. Cognisance of our natural heritage, the LDP will balance development pressures along with the restoration and conservation of our natural heritage and environment.

<p>Open spaces</p>  <p>including city parks, country parks, playing fields, playgrounds and greenways, as well as the River Lagan and the hills surrounding the city</p>	<p>14</p>  <p>public indoor leisure centres</p>	<p>70</p>  <p>public pitches</p> <hr/> <p>105</p> <p>games areas</p>	<p>40</p>  <p>More than public parks</p> <hr/> <p>15</p>  <p>with Green Flag status</p>
<p>Around 20</p>  <p>formal community gardens</p> <hr/> <p>12</p>  <p>allotments</p>	<p>14,000</p>  <p>street trees</p>	<p>2 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and 1 Ramsar site (all of international importance)</p> <p>4 areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs)</p>	
<p>Approximately 33%</p>  <p>of Belfast is countryside</p>	<p>978 ha</p>  <p>The Lagan Valley Regional Park covers approximately 978 hectares</p>	<p>760 ha</p>  <p>Belfast Hills Partnership area within the Belfast city area covers approximately 760 hectares</p>	<p>NI has 20 Significant Flood Risk Areas and Belfast is ranked the highest in terms of the potential adverse consequences of flooding. Initial assessment estimates up to 9,800 properties are potentially at significant risk of flooding from rivers</p> 
<p>The Connswater Greenway Project</p>  <p>is bringing benefits to local communities, including recreation, active travel, regeneration and flood alleviation</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)</p> <p>due to high traffic volumes on key arterial routes into the city</p>		



Policy context



- 3.0.1 In the development of the Plan Strategy, the council has taken into account the regional and local policy context, and considered the spatial issues arising from the district's first community plan – The Belfast Agenda. These key policy considerations are outlined below.

3.1 Regional policy context

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland

- 3.1.1 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), published in September 2015, sets out regional planning policies for securing the orderly and consistent development of land in Northern Ireland under the reformed two-tier planning system. The provisions of the SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of LDPs.
- 3.1.2 The SPPS sets out strategic planning policy for a wide range of planning matters, including the strategic context within which councils should bring forward detailed operational policies within LDP's. In doing so, the five core planning principles should underpin delivery, within the context of furthering sustainable development. The five core planning principles are:
- Improving health and wellbeing;
 - Creating and enhancing shared space;
 - Supporting sustainable economic growth;
 - Supporting good design and positive place making; and
 - Preserving and improving the built and natural environment.

Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

- 3.1.3 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) "Building a Better Future," (March 2012) is the regional spatial strategy and provides a strategic and long term vision on the future development of Northern Ireland up to 2035. It contains regional guidance to provide policy direction in relation to the economy, society and environment and spatial framework guidance tailored to each component of the spatial planning framework. It sets the context in which to make policy and development decisions in order to achieve sustainable development throughout the region.
- 3.1.4 The RDS recognises the important role Belfast plays in generating regional prosperity and sets strengthening Belfast as the regional economic driver as part of the 8 aims for the region. It recognises the importance of Belfast City at the heart of the wider metropolitan area and Spatial Framework Guidance (SPF) seeks to:
- Promote urban economic development at key locations throughout the Belfast metropolitan area by ensuring that sufficient land is available for jobs;
 - Grow the population of the city of Belfast;
 - Enhance the role of Belfast City Centre as the regional capital and focus of administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities;
 - Manage the movement of people within the Belfast metropolitan area; and

Policy context

- Protect and enhance the quality of the setting of the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA) and its environmental assets.

Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: A New Approach to Regional Transportation

- 3.1.5 Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future (ESTF) - A New Approach to Regional Transportation (June 2011) complements the RDS and contains high level aims and strategic objectives to support the growth of the economy, enhance the quality of life for all and reduce the environmental impact of transport. It sets out the transportation vision for the region, namely 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."

Sustainable Development Strategy 2010

- 3.1.6 The Northern Ireland Executive's, 'Everyone's Involved - Sustainable Development Strategy,' (May 2010) puts in place economic, social and environmental measures to ensure that Northern Ireland can continue to grow its economy, improve society and communities and utilise its natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- 3.1.7 The strategy is supported by six guiding principles that strengthen the regional framework to address global issues such as climate change. The principles can be summarised as follows:
- Living within environmental limits;
 - Ensuring a strong, healthy, just and equal society;
 - Achieving a sustainable economy;
 - Promoting good governance;
 - Using sound science responsibly; and
 - Promoting opportunity and innovation.

Planning Policy Statements

- 3.1.8 Much of the current operation planning policy for the Belfast district is set out in a series of region-wide Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). The PPSs set out policies on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. The SPPS notes that this remains extant policy for the district until the adoption of the Plan Strategy for the whole of the council area. Therefore, upon adoption of this Plan Strategy, these existing policies will cease to have effect in the district and shall no longer be material considerations in determining planning applications.

3.2 Local planning policy context

- 3.2.1 The current planning policy context at a local level is complex as a result of a successful legal challenge to the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

(BMAP) 2015. There are therefore five existing development plans that relate to parts of the Belfast district, alongside draft BMAP. All of these documents will be superseded at the adoption of the new Belfast LDP 2035.

Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001

- 3.2.2 The current development plan for the majority of the Belfast district is the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001, which was adopted in December 1989. The area covered by the plan included the whole of the administrative area of the former Belfast City Council area, together with the urban parts of the former district council areas of Castlereagh, Lisburn and Newtownabbey as well as Greenisland and Holywood.
- 3.2.3 The purpose of the BUAP was to establish physical development policies for this broad urban area up to 2001, clarifying the extent and location of development and providing a framework for public and private agencies in their investment decisions relating to land use. Although alterations were made in 1996, the BUAP is now largely out-of-date and was formally superseded by the BMAP in September 2014. However, BMAP was quashed as a result of a judgement in the court of appeal delivered on 18 May 2017, meaning that the BUAP 2001 remains the statutory development plan for most of the council's area.

The Lisburn Area Plan 2001

- 3.2.4 The change in council boundary as a result of the local government reform on 1 April 2015, and the subsequent quashing of BMAP, means that the Lisburn Area Plan 2001 remains the statutory development plan for a small portion of Belfast's district around Dunmurry. Adopted on 4 July 2001, the Lisburn Area Plan sought to establish physical development policies for Lisburn and its surroundings up to 2001. However, as work on the development of BMAP had commenced at the time of adoption, an element of provision had been incorporated so that the area's reasonable housing development needs could continue to be met with some certainty until such time as the successor BMAP was in place.

Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Plan 2005

- 3.2.5 The quashing of BMAP also means that the Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Plan (adopted in 1993) was re-instated as the statutory development plan for the Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP). It sets out the strategy and policies associated with the protection and enhancement of the natural and man-made heritage of the LVRP. Its main objectives are to conserve the landscape quality and features of the Lagan Valley and to enhance recreational use by the public.

Belfast Harbour Local Area Plan 1990-2005

- 3.2.6 The quashing of BMAP also means that the Belfast Harbour Area Local Plan (adopted in 1991) was also re-instated as the statutory development plan for Belfast Lough and its foreshores, encompassing land east of the Belfast to Larne railway line

Policy context

and west of the Sydenham By-Pass and the Belfast to Bangor road. It was prepared within the strategy set out in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 and underlines the importance of the harbour area to Belfast and to the Northern Ireland economy.

North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995

- 3.2.7 A small section of the Belfast District at Knocknagoney was subsumed into Belfast as part of local government reform in 2015. The quashing of BMAP means that this area reverts back to the original North Down and Ards Area Plan 1984-1995 (adopted 1989).

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015

- 3.2.8 Although formally adopted in 2014, this process of final BMAP adoption was declared unlawful as a result of a judgement in the court of appeal delivered on 18 May 2017. This means the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) 2001 and the other Development Plans provides the statutory plan context for the area. However, BUAP was published in 1990, nearly 30 years ago. The Belfast City Council Plan Area has undergone massive transformation since then, particularly in the city centre. The formal development plans which apply are dated and silent on many of the planning issues pertinent to needs of current planning decision making. In recognition of this unique circumstance and taking account of the short term transitional period in advance of the adoption of the Local Policies Plan it is important to provide clarity in relation to the application of planning policy.
- 3.2.9 Draft BMAP, in its most recent, post-examination form remains a significant material consideration in future planning decisions. It was at the most advanced stage possible prior to formal adoption. Draft BMAP referred to throughout this document therefore refers to that version. However, in preparing this document the council has also had regard to the provisions of the draft BMAP which was published in 2004, the objections which were raised as part of the plan process and the Planning Appeals Commission Inquiry report.
- 3.2.10 The SPSS's transitional arrangements provide for continuity until such times as a new LDP for the whole of their council area is adopted to ensure continuity in planning policy for taking planning decisions.
- 3.2.11 BUAP contains less zonings or designations than draft BMAP and delineates a city centre boundary which has expanded significantly since then by virtue of the application of Draft BMAP. The council therefore intends to use a number of the existing designations contained in the draft BMAP, insofar as it relates to the Belfast City Council Plan Area, to form the basis of decision making until the LDP is adopted in its entirety. A list of the existing draft boundaries and designations is contained in appendix A.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for the Belfast City Council Area 2015

- 3.2.12 The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan for the Belfast City Council Area 2015 (the 'HMOs Subject Plan') was adopted in December 2008. It informs the general public, statutory authorities, developers, and other interested bodies of the policy framework that will be used to guide planning decisions in relation to HMOs within former Belfast City Council Area. It sets out a number of area-based planning policies for HMOs, as well as policy relating directly to the provision of PBMSA. Relevant policy designations from the HMOs Subject Plan will continue to form the basis of decision-making until the LDP is adopted in its entirety. A list of such existing draft boundaries and designations is contained in appendix A.

3.3 The Belfast Agenda

- 3.3.1 Community planning is a responsibility the council took on in 2015 as a result of local government reform. It's about making sure that public services work together with communities to deliver real improvements for local people. The first Community Plan – the Belfast Agenda – was created by a partnership of key city partners, residents and community organisations. The plan sets out our joint vision and long-term ambitions for Belfast's future, as well as outlining our priorities for action over the next four years.
- 3.3.2 The vision for Belfast in 2035 set out in the Belfast Agenda is:
- "Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone. A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit."*
- 3.3.3 Delivery of this vision is based on five strategic outcomes, namely:
- Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy;
 - Belfast is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive city for all;
 - Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential;
 - Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing; and
 - Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.
- 3.3.4 To help realise this vision and improve the associated outcomes, The Belfast Agenda sets out four bold ambitions to be achieved by 2035:
- Our economy supports 46,000 additional jobs;
 - Our city is home to an additional 66,000 people;

Policy context

- There will be a 33% reduction in the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods; and
- Every young person leaving school has a destination that fulfils their potential.

3.3.5 The LDP is recognised within the Belfast Agenda as one of the key tools available to shape the physical future of Belfast in a sustainable way – including housing, roads and other infrastructure. Its development is described as one of several immediate priorities, under the theme of city development, where it explains that the LDP will be vital to the delivery of the outcomes in the Belfast Agenda.

3.3.6 Its role is highlighted in terms of providing a 15 year planning framework to support economic and social outcomes in the city, while providing the delivery of sustainable development and in facilitating growth by coordinating public and private investment, encouraging development where it can be of most benefit to the wellbeing of the community. In addition, the LDP is highlighted as a key tool in helping to build the city's position as a magnet for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), planning for housing to meet the needs of everyone, maximising the benefits of our natural and built environment and the need to strike an appropriate balance between protecting the local distinctiveness of our built heritage and allowing for high quality innovative development.

3.4 The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy

3.4.1 The Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) outlines how we aim to grow and regenerate the city core and its surrounding areas to 2030. It recognises that a thriving city centre is vital to the prosperity of the whole city and the region as around two-thirds of all jobs in Belfast are located in and around the city centre.

3.4.2 Eight policies for the city centre provide a vision for the eight areas of intervention considered most essential to Belfast's success. The policies address the universal elements of a thriving city centre as well as challenges and conditions that are unique to Belfast. The eight policies include:

- Increasing the employment population;
- Increasing the residential population;
- Managing the retail offer;
- Maximising the tourism opportunity;
- Creating a regional learning and innovation centre;
- Creating a green, walkable, cyclable centre;
- Connect to the city around; and
- Shared space and social impact.

3.4.3 To facilitate the implementation of the eight policies for the city centre the strategy identifies a series of projects for each district. The projects are intended to focus

Belfast City Council's efforts on discreet initiatives which will help to achieve the policies and create a liveable and economically thriving city. However, the projects should not be undertaken in isolation and five special action areas are identified where more intensive plans should be prepared, either to maximise the beneficial effects of major new institutional and transport developments or to initiate the comprehensive regeneration of declining retail areas. These areas include:

- Inner north;
- Inner west;
- North east quarter;
- Transport hub and south centre; and
- Oxford Street and the eastern bank.





Vision, aims and objectives

Vision, aims and objectives

4.1 The Vision

- 4.1.1 Like the community plan the LDP vision set out an ambitious but realistic spatial vision.

Our vision

In 2035, Belfast will be a globally successful, smart regional city that is environmentally resilient with a vibrant economic and social heart. As a centre of learning and business, the knowledge economy flourishes where collaboration and innovation attracts investment, talent and jobs. We will value and conserve our unique natural and built heritage to enhance and develop tourism.

Thriving socially inclusive well connected neighbourhoods, that encourage a healthy active lifestyle with well-designed homes where people love to live. A strong, inclusive local economy will support progressive, safe and vibrant communities. The city will provide a gateway to opportunities locally, nationally and worldwide.

4.2 Strategic aims and objectives

- 4.2.1 To help deliver the city envisaged in 2035, there are a series of strategic aims and related objectives that have been identified below to support the delivery of the vision.
- 4.2.2 The LDP's strategic aims and objectives align with the community plan's long-term Outcomes and shorter-term Priorities.
- 4.2.3 The strategic objectives will outline how the LDP will address the key issues and shape future development to deliver the vision for Belfast 2035. In supporting the strategic aims, the following objectives are set out below the relevant strategic aim.

Shaping a liveable place

Promoting development that enhances the health and wellbeing of communities, neighbourhoods and places.

Creating a vibrant economy

A strengthened Belfast as the regional economic driver.



Promoting a green and active place

A protected, enhanced and attractive natural setting, reinforcing uniqueness and accessibility to all who live work and enjoy the city.

Building a smart connected and resilient place

Improving connectivity and supporting the efficient movement of people, goods, energy and information to create a dynamic innovative 21st century city with the capacity for adaption to environmental challenges.

Shaping a liveable place



Aims

The LDP will seek to support the development of sustainable neighbourhoods, which are well designed and provide a sufficient supply and choice of homes that will meet the city's growing and more diverse population. The neighbourhoods will be accessible to a range of services and facilities, which will provide opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and the quality of life for everyone.

We will support good quality design to improve the quality of our urban environment and protect and manage the city's built heritage, which will enhance its distinctive character to contribute to a sense of place.

Objectives



To grow the population of Belfast and connect with other cities across the UK and Ireland in supporting a greater level of inward investment.



To address current and future residential needs through ensuring the supply of suitable land to meet future requirements for new socially inclusive residential development where there is an appropriate type, size, density, tenure and mix to suit all needs of the population.



To promote sustainable urbanism to deliver high quality design by including policies to protect and enhance the built environment that fosters local distinctiveness.



To improve community safety and reduce the potential for antisocial behaviour or crime through an approach to new development focused on design quality.



To improve safe access for all groups in society to public services through the design and location of new development.



To protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment through effective management of proposed development and ensuring high quality design.



To promote collaborative cross-community projects that utilise derelict interface sites, that contribute to the integration of neighbourhoods and the development of shared spaces to build social cohesion.

Creating a vibrant economy



Aims

Belfast City Council is committed to inclusive economic growth. We will support the RDS aims of strengthening Belfast as the regional economic driver for NI and delivering a vibrant city at the core of the region. In support of the city and city centre's role as a major employment location, the policy framework will positively encourage investment, and guide development to build the "knowledge economy" ensuring that it facilitates spaces for knowledge sharing, creativity, innovation, and environmental sustainability in mixed use city centre districts, where people work, live and socialise. There will continue to be a mix of retail, leisure, culture, businesses financial services, higher education, tourism and other supporting functions appropriate for a capital city.

Through the plan, we will seek to create the conditions to support regeneration and opportunities for attracting high quality inward investment and jobs. This will include creative cultural industries, ICT services, research, high-tech industry and other innovative sectors that will contribute to jobs, growth and secure Belfast's role as the regional economic hub whilst supporting growth of indigenous small businesses.

Objectives



To maintain a strong and growing economy by ensuring a range of suitable sites for employment uses are available and able to be developed to meet the future growth of the economy and employment.



To support local economies by promoting development of suitable land and buildings to provide sustainable access to retail, leisure, culture, office and commercial uses within the city centre and district centres, ensuring the future needs are addressed and their continued vibrancy and viability maintained.



To strengthen the potential of local tourism to appeal to a wide range of visitors, and the development of suitable tourism infrastructure, including overnight accommodation, leisure and cultural facilities for this important sector of the economy.



To support the continued regeneration of disadvantaged areas, to facilitate well linked high-quality mixed developments, designed to create diverse communities, to break down the social and sectarian divisions of existing city neighbourhoods.

Building a smart connected and resilient place



Aims

We will support an efficient integrated transport network offering travel choice that minimises congestion and pollution. The plan will encourage the expansion of green infrastructure networks for walking and cycling to encourage active travel and improve air quality and promote increased use of public transport whilst retaining suitable provision for cars. We will facilitate a Smart Belfast where we can harness the city's digital infrastructure, open data, our data analytics and research capacity to create excellent services for our citizens.

The LDP will encourage development of renewable energy networks to build capacity and security. Promote innovative building technologies to improve efficiencies to create competitive advantage for businesses. Support energy efficient housing developments to help alleviate fuel poverty and facilitate development of a circular economy to manage waste and support the creation of jobs.

We will encourage adaptation to emerging environmental challenges and mitigate flood risks through improvements to green and blue infrastructure networks. Manage development within areas of risk and ensure the design of new development reduces future risk from flooding. Encourage flood resilient design to build the city's resilience for future generations.

Objectives



To build stronger communities by protecting and improving social, economic, green, digital and physical infrastructure through supporting its development and enhancement, and through securing contributions from new development.



To ensure availability of land to facilitate sustainable patterns of development and promote travel by more sustainable modes of transport.



Address the local elements that could contribute to wider environmental challenges through ensuring new development is designed to minimise carbon emissions, use resources efficiently, and be resilient to longer term implications.



Adapt for the potential implications of environmental changes through management of development within areas of risk and designing new development to reduce future risk from flooding.



Ensure new development minimises the production of waste and supports recycling.



In relation to Minerals, to safeguard the environment by ensuring new development proposals address the potential risks in respect of environmental pollution or damage.

Promoting a green and active place



Aims

The LDP will seek to develop an integrated and multi-functional green infrastructure network of high quality open spaces, parks, and corridors; (e.g. river valleys, Lough, wetlands and woodlands) to support biodiversity, encourage physical activity and improve links between the neighbourhoods, facilities, services, employment and the city centre.

We will seek to protect and manage our natural heritage biodiversity networks, trees, hedgerows, geodiversity sites and important habitats from loss or damage. The plan will seek to protect the landscape setting of the city to make it a more attractive place to live, work and enjoy.

Objectives



To support healthy lifestyles by managing existing open spaces and ensuring sufficient land availability for the development of a blue and green infrastructure network to encourage walking, cycling, accessible play, allotments, sports and recreation opportunities.



To protect, enhance and link the natural environment and biodiversity by managing the location and design of new development.



To protect the natural ecosystem services and conserve the natural asset of Belfast's countryside, coast and hills by managing proposed development in sensitive areas.



To support the development of a blue and green infrastructure network to manage water through sustainable urban drainage and connected green spaces.





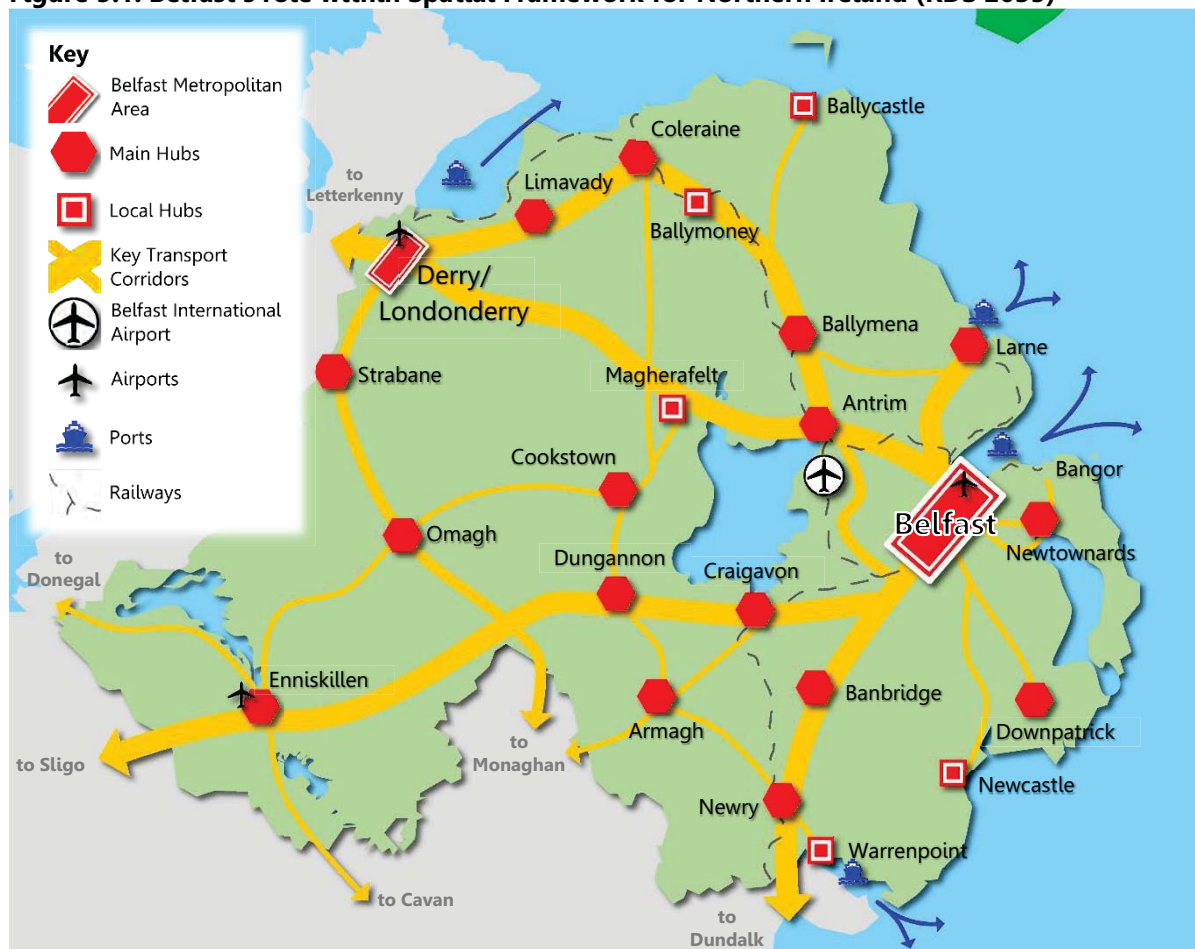
Strategic policies



Strategic policies

- 5.0.1 This section details the overarching Plan Strategy that embodies the broad principles upon which the LDP is built. The overarching strategic policies are to be used both as a guide to assist developers to deliver the key aims and objectives of the LDP and, along with the more detailed policies, in assessing development proposals to make planning decisions.
- 5.0.2 Sustainable and inclusive development is at the heart of the LDP. Our communities and the economy are completely dependent on the environment that encompasses them and are therefore bound by its limits and capabilities. In planning for sustainable development the LDP is required to strike a balance in meeting the economic, social and environmental needs of the current population, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development to improve and enhance the balance between economic, social and environmental conditions to deliver economic success, and a better quality of life for people living in Belfast.

Figure 5.1: Belfast's role within Spatial Framework for Northern Ireland (RDS 2035)



- 5.0.3 Belfast as the capital city is the engine of the regional economy, and supports the wider metropolitan area beyond the plan area boundary. Belfast's economy has

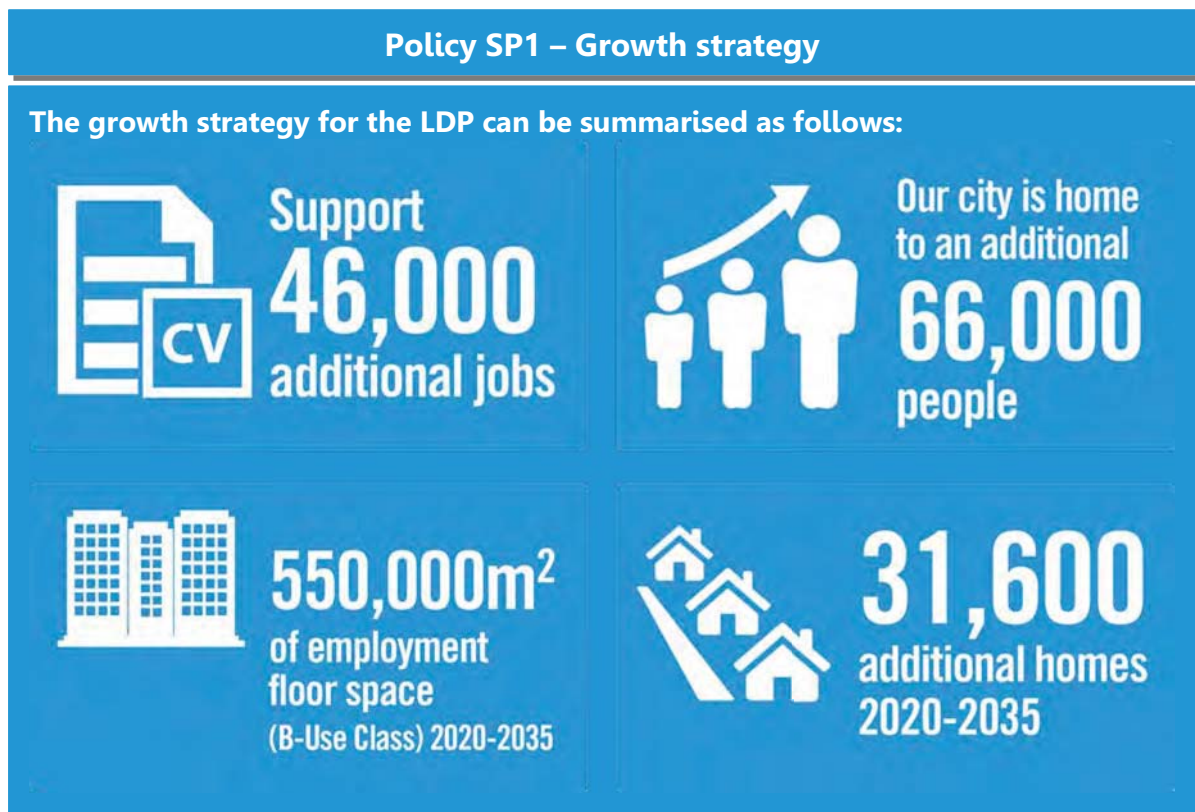
performed well, with inward investment companies providing new jobs in the city, despite a continued fall in population. However, Belfast has a wide travel to work catchment area, generating high volumes of commuters travelling by car into the city during the working week. This has created severe traffic congestion and air pollution, which is affecting community health and degrading the environmental quality of the city. The LDP will promote sustainable growth that strengthens the economy to create jobs, and encourages more people to live within the city to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

- 5.0.4 To diversify and strengthen the economy to support the level of population growth predicted for the plan area, the LDP provides the policies to ensure that there is sufficient land to accommodate a variety of new economic activity associated with the knowledge economy, advance technologies, retail, services, and tourism. Planning for a 'smarter' city, with good digital connectivity will help to attract new businesses that would help to generate wealth and employment opportunities. In supporting economic growth, the LDP will ensure that there is sufficient supply of land for good quality housing to accommodate a range of needs, to create diverse communities where everyone feels welcome. The LDP will seek to reverse unsustainable development patterns to create a compact city, by growing the residential population alongside the growth in jobs within the existing city urban settlement area. Securing an ambitious level of growth will also enable the city to compete with similar sized cities elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, to attract investment, businesses, jobs, and people.
- 5.0.5 The environment in which we live, work and socialise plays a significant role in the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The quality of the built and natural environment, accessibility to facilities, and connectivity between areas all have the potential to impact on the liveability of a place as well as a person's wellbeing. Planning has a key role in supporting development proposals that reduce air pollution, enable an active lifestyle, and improve social cohesion to enhance community wellbeing.
- 5.0.6 To plan for a city that works for everyone, the LDP will support the opportunity to tackle persistent social inequalities and will focus on areas blighted by 'Peace Walls' and barriers through shared community engagement. The provision of affordable housing, regeneration and connection of contested spaces would help to spread the benefits of a successful city, and secure a safe, fair and inclusive city for all. Place-making has an important role in shaping a distinctive sense of place through good design. Adopting a holistic approach to master planning to shape the regeneration of the city can help to develop a vibrant, attractive, connected and sustainable city, build investor confidence and attract new investment in high quality mixed use development schemes that are fully integrated into their surroundings.

Strategic policies

5.0.7 An integral part of the LDP is to tackle the issues of environmental change to support Belfast's transition to a low carbon city. This will make it more resilient to cope with increasing flood risk, and encouraging renewable energy generation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to improve energy supply security. Planning new developments connected to the green and blue infrastructure network would reduce car dependency and air pollution. The green and blue infrastructure network connecting neighbourhoods, employment areas and the city centre would encourage an active lifestyle that would help to reduce obesity and improve health.

5.1 Growth strategy



Justification and amplification

- 5.1.1 The council's policy seeks to support economic growth over the plan period, allocating sufficient land to accommodate strong job creation to meet the Belfast Agenda's target of supporting 46,000 additional jobs by 2035. This will lead to a total employment of around 287,000 in 2035. Research completed to inform the LDP identifies a need for approximately 550,000 sq m over the 15 year plan period 2020-2035.
- 5.1.2 This will enable the city to compete with similar sized cities elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, to attract investment, to grow a modern economy and create jobs. The council's policy will support the RDS aims of strengthening Belfast as the regional economic driver for NI and delivering a vibrant city at the core of the region.

- 5.1.3 The council policy supports the Belfast Agenda's ambition to grow the population of the city by 66,000 additional people over the plan period, resulting in a total population of over 400,000 by 2035. Independent research demonstrates that this level of population growth is required to support economic growth and, although ambitious, is realistic in terms of historic build rates for residential development. This same research identifies an associated need of approximately 31,600 new homes over the 15 year plan period from 2020-2035. The majority of new homes will be located within the Belfast City settlement area.
- 5.1.4 Land will be zoned for housing, employment uses and mixed-use sites within the Local Policies Plan to deliver the council's growth aspirations. The delivery of employment space and homes will be phased to align with infrastructure capacity and investment over the plan period.

5.2 Sustainable development

Policy SP2 – Sustainable development

The council will have an overarching presumption in favour of sustainable development where it accords with the LDP, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Justification and amplification

- 5.2.1 The council's planning service operates in the public interest of the long-term benefit of our existing communities, as well as protecting the interest of future generations. In accordance with the SPPS, the policy requires the integration of all three pillars of sustainable development – social, economic, and environmental factors – but recognises that a balanced approach should be adopted to ensure that none of the pillars are promoted over the others. Our communities and economies are completely dependent on the environment that encompasses them, and are therefore bound by its capabilities and finite resource limits.
- 5.2.2 The LDP is promoting inclusive economic growth to diversify and strengthen the economy, which will enable job creation for the benefit of the whole community. In proactively promoting development, the council shall protect and enhance the city's built heritage and the natural environment. It is important to secure the orderly and consistent development of land to deliver the council's social and economic priorities alongside the careful stewardship of the built heritage and natural environment.

Strategic policies

- 5.2.3 The council will support development that will help to deliver an efficient, compact city form, which is environmentally attractive, highly accessible and is not demonstrably harmful in meeting its needs now and in future. Development proposals that conflict with the LDP, where they would unacceptably affect amenities, compromise the environment and the existing use of land, and buildings that ought to be protected in the public interest, will not be permitted.

5.3 Improving health and wellbeing

Policy SP3 – Improving health and wellbeing

The council will support development that maximises opportunities to improve health and wellbeing. Development will not be permitted where it will result in significant harm to life, human health or wellbeing.

Justification and amplification

- 5.3.1 The promotion of health and wellbeing in our communities is a strategic policy in the LDP. The development of sustainable neighbourhoods, with good access to a range of local facilities and services will encourage walking and cycling. The provision of good quality green open space linked to a green and blue infrastructure network, will help to improve air quality and provide respite beneficial for enhancing mental health. Improving connectivity between residential and employment areas which are well served by a range of sustainable travel modes would encourage active lifestyles, and reduce air pollution. This will deliver significant community health benefits.
- 5.3.2 The design and layout of new development should promote health and wellbeing, to ensure that it does not result in social exclusion or health inequalities. The LDP provides opportunities to encourage better energy efficiency in new development to:
- Reduce ill health due to fuel poverty;
 - Reduce traffic congestion to improve air quality;
 - Make more provision for growing food locally to ensure better quality diets; and
 - Better integrate land uses and transportation to promote an active lifestyle.
- 5.3.3 Together, all these measures will help to deliver a liveable city that offers a better quality of life for all our communities.

5.4 Community cohesion and good relations

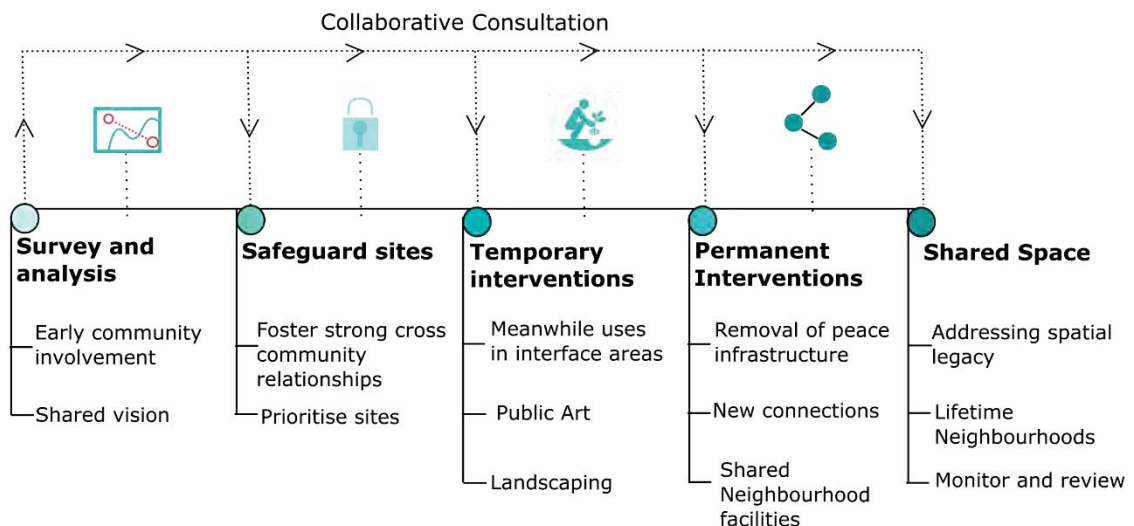
Policy SP4 – Community cohesion and good relations

The council will support development that maximises opportunities to build strong, cohesive communities and that makes a positive contribution to good relations.

Justification and amplification

- 5.4.1 The LDP has adopted the Belfast Agenda’s aim to ensure that Belfast will be a culturally rich and diverse city that is open, safe and welcoming to all. Promoting good relations is key to improving the quality of life for everyone in the city. The strategic policy adopts a core planning principle to create and enhance shared space, to promote social cohesion and good relations in the plan area. Belfast has high levels of neighbourhood segregation, which has constrained development and connectivity to all parts of the city. The Belfast Agenda is promoting inclusive growth to address social and economic inequalities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Increasing diverse neighbourhoods and access to opportunities through the spatial planning process is therefore an integral part of the LDP.
- 5.4.2 This means considering how all communities may be affected by a development and ensuring that proposals help to improve community cohesion, fostering social integration, reducing isolation and improving access to opportunities in the city. Provision of good quality shared social and community infrastructure is critical for social cohesion and contributes to the creation of lifetime neighbourhoods. These are places where diverse groups of people are able to live and work in a safe, healthy and inclusive environment, with good connectivity to the city centre, which is the economic and social hub for shared community activity.

Figure 5.2: Shared cross community initiatives



Strategic policies

- 5.4.3 The early involvement of affected communities can play a significant role in building support for new development schemes and embedding good relations into the planning process. This can help to create safe shared spaces, and build a sense of belonging for everyone, where relationships between people from different backgrounds are valued and respected.

5.5 Positive placemaking

Policy SP5 – Positive placemaking

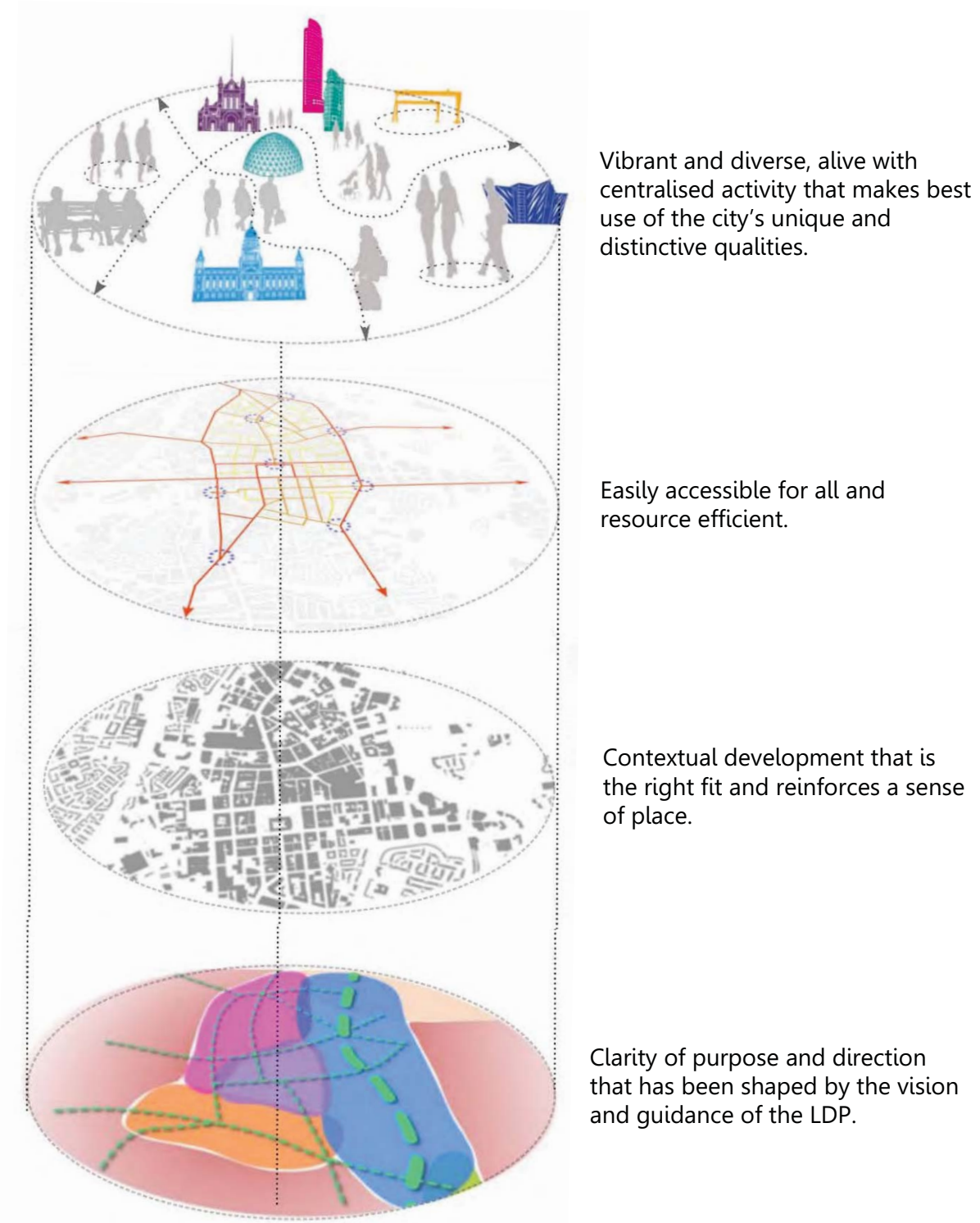
The council will support development that maximises the core principles of good design and positive placemaking in the creation of successful and sustainable places.

Justification and amplification

- 5.5.1 The aim of this policy is to promote the principles of good design in the creation of buildings and spaces that strengthen civic pride, community ownership and stewardship. The built environment and its future development will have a substantial influence on the character and quality of Belfast. The ways in which buildings and surrounding spaces are designed, the configuration of movement within and through spaces and the access to quality open space are all factors that influence people's quality of life and the choices they make, which in turn have a knock on effect on health and wellbeing.
- 5.5.2 The definition of placemaking requires the understanding of places and their context. Context is cultural, social and economic as well as physical and visual. Successful places will respond to their context and become not only functional and more attractive, but will provide meaningful contributions to a wider sense of place. Strategically the city plays a significant role in the future growth of the region and in recent years has witnessed a revival with inward investment stimulating significant regeneration with major growth in new offices, tourism and higher education facilities. However, there are areas of the city that are fractured, disjointed and contain poor quality environments, which in terms of placemaking create a number of opportunities for the city to embrace and improve upon.
- 5.5.3 Positive placemaking creates opportunities for the city to embrace good design to provide a high quality built environment that is attractive for residents, businesses, investors and visitors. There is a responsibility on all aspects of the development process to make changes, whether big or small, that create sustainable, resource efficient and liveable places.

- 5.5.4 Placemaking is not simply design-led, but a process that requires collaboration between a wide range of private, public, voluntary and community stakeholders. Meaningful consultation from the earliest design stages in planning development schemes is fundamental for the effective use of spaces, resources, the built heritage and natural landscape and the creation of successful places that everyone can utilise daily, in a way that is comfortable, valuable and enjoyable.

Figure 5.3: Belfast's placemaking process



5.6 Environmental resilience

SP6 - Environmental resilience

The council will support development where it helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and is adaptable in a changing climate to build environmental resilience.

Justification and amplification

- 5.6.1 This policy aims to build environmental resilience and support the transition to a low carbon future. It embeds the RDS Policy to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate mitigation and adaptation to climate change, whilst improving air quality and aligns with the Belfast Agenda's emphasis on addressing issues that pose the greatest risk to the city and its economy.
- 5.6.2 Environmental change is recognised as one of the most complex, multi-faceted and serious challenges the world faces. It is described as long-term changes to global climate patterns due to increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The council will have to tackle greenhouse gas emissions to be able to contribute towards the UK targets and the Paris Agreement¹ to reduce carbon emissions.
- 5.6.3 Belfast has already experienced the impacts of environmental change with severe weather events, and flooding, which has harmed people, property, infrastructure, the economy, habitats and species. To leave the city vulnerable without mitigating or adapting to future environmental changes is a high risk strategy and financially expensive. The policy promotes mitigation and adaptation to environmental change to fulfil its sustainability commitments.
- 5.6.4 The LDP is an important spatial tool to create a compact city. Designing neighbourhoods with local facilities can help to reduce the need to use the car and new development should be easily accessible by sustainable transport modes, such as public transport, safe walking and cycling routes. The council will seek to maximise the opportunity to develop local renewable energy schemes, ensure that new developments are resource and energy efficient and direct development away from areas where climate-related hazards are already present or predicted, such as flood plains.

¹ *The Paris Agreement provides a framework for governments as well as business and investors to keep global warming well below 2°C, pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. The UK Government ratified the Paris Agreement in November 2016.*

- 5.6.5 Carbon stores such as trees need to be protected and enhanced as they can help to absorb greenhouse gasses. Thematic policies will require that development proposals incorporate environmental change mitigation and adaptation measures to comply with the core planning principle of sustainable development. The potential impacts of environmental change on development and people should be considered early in the planning process to maximise benefits, promote resilience and sustain the city for existing and future generations.

5.7 Connectivity

Policy SP7 – Connectivity

The council will support connectivity to and within the city by sustainable transport modes, such as public transport, walking and cycling. Land for sustainable transport infrastructure projects will be safeguarded and opportunities to protect and enhance existing provision will be maximised.

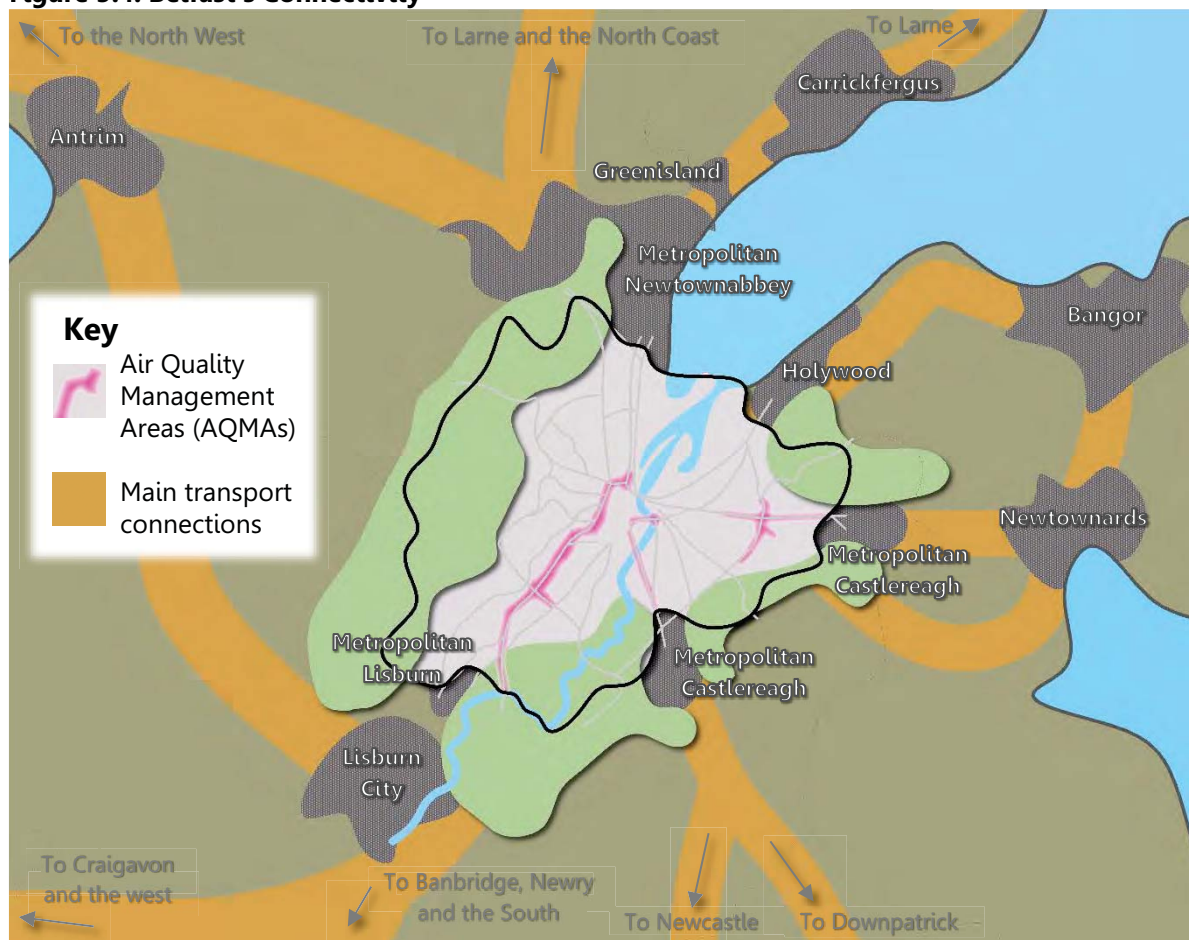
Justification and amplification

- 5.7.1 Belfast has a major transport challenge due to a large travel to work catchment area. A significant number of commuters using private vehicles cause congestion on the key city corridors, leading to increasing air pollution resulting in the designation of four air quality management areas where pollution levels exceeds EU standards. There is therefore a need to improve sustainable transport links with commuter towns and the strategic transport routes shall be protected, as important trade links that contribute to the economic health of the city.
- 5.7.2 Within the city there is poor connectivity between the city centre and neighbourhoods due to a dominant road infrastructure and poorly designed housing areas. Promoting sustainable connectivity is vital to social inclusiveness and improves the ability of local communities, in particular disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, to access employment and important services such as healthcare, education, shopping and leisure.
- 5.7.3 The council's strategy therefore seeks to promote population growth and new jobs whilst minimising traffic growth. Thematic policies support the integration of sustainable transport networks and land use to improve connectivity, reduce traffic volumes and promote sustainable patterns of mobility. This will require the intensification of mixed use development in accessible locations along existing and planned public transport corridors such as the Belfast Rapid Transit routes. This will enable the development of a compact, walkable city with mixed-use communities, connected to high quality public transport and active travel networks. A key consideration for assessing development proposals will be how the location and

Strategic policies

design of developments can change travel patterns and improve accessibility by sustainable modes of transport other than the private car.

Figure 5.4: Belfast's Connectivity



5.7.4 A connected smart city also includes digital, as well as physical, social and economic connections. The LDP will also promote and facilitate investment in broadband, WI-FI and other digital networks to deliver its aim to create a smart resilient city.

5.8 Green and blue infrastructure

Policy SP8 – Green and blue infrastructure network

The council will support the development of a green and blue infrastructure network, designating and safeguarding sites and accesses required for the green and blue infrastructure network across the plan area.

Justification and Amplification

5.8.1 This policy recognises the opportunity to plan for a green and blue infrastructure network across the plan area, to address the significant challenges of poor health

due to an inactive lifestyle, poor connectivity, air pollution and climate change. It will help to build environmental resilience to protect and enhance the city. A green and blue infrastructure network will connect open spaces and green corridors to provide a multitude of recreational, environmental, ecological, wellbeing, socio-cultural and economic benefits for Belfast.

Figure 5.5: Belfast’s Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (draft)

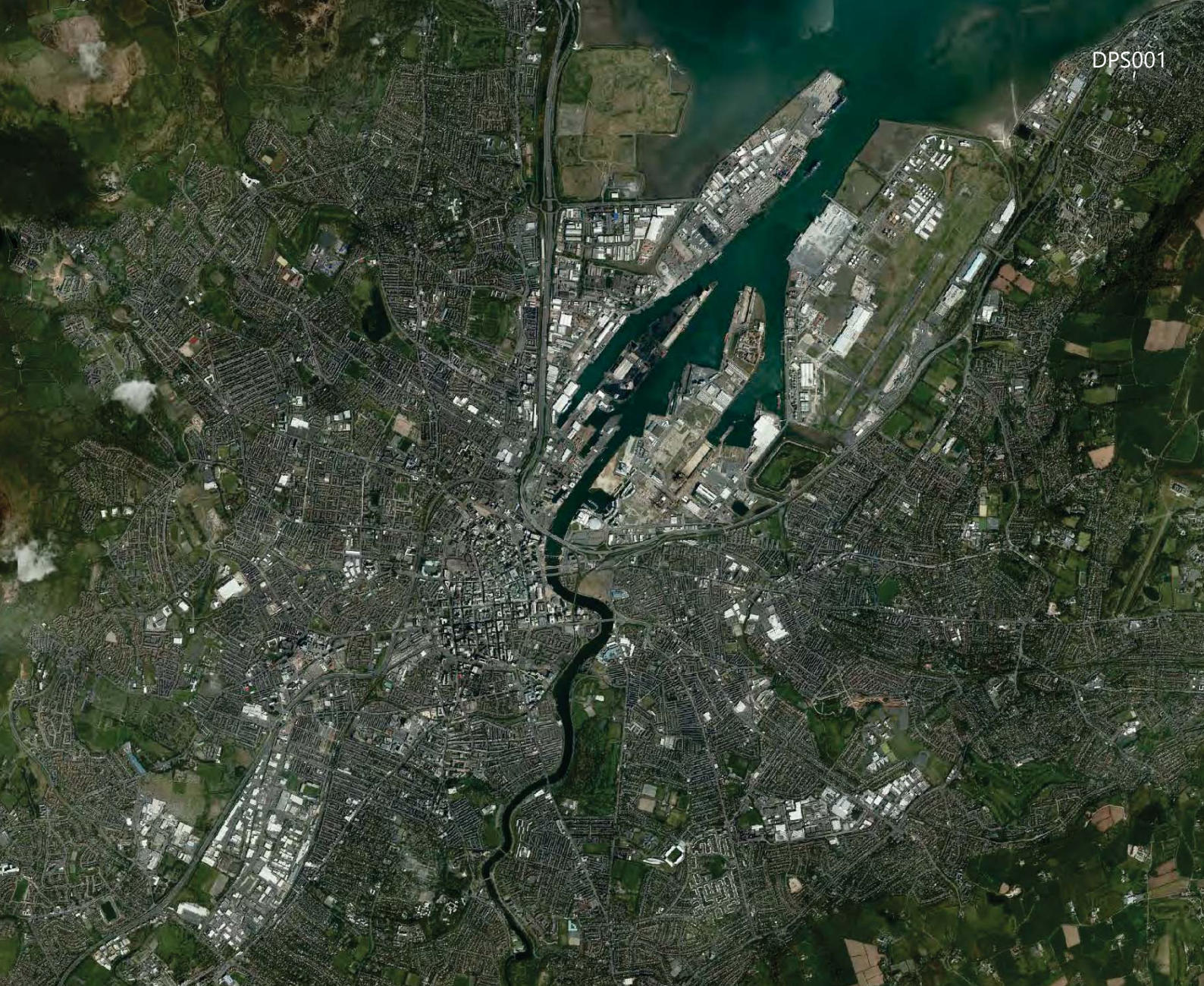


Key

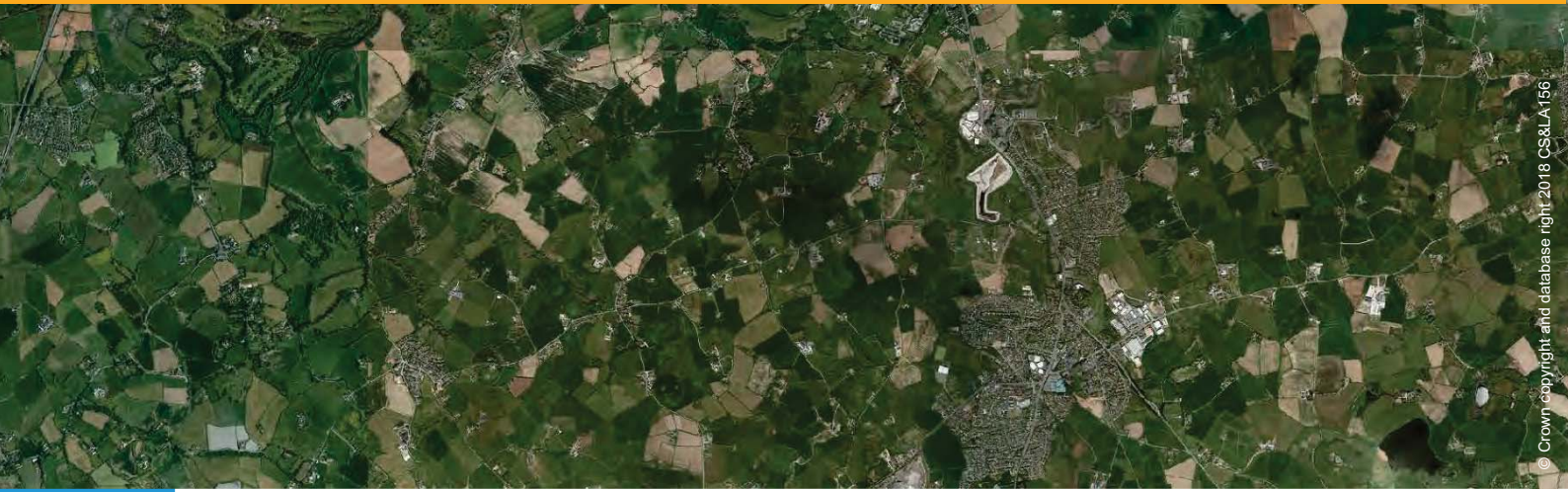
- Key Natural heritage assets
- Major parks and open space
- Primary green and blue infrastructure axis
- Secondary green and blue infrastructure axis
- Key green and blue infrastructure connectors
- Water bodies
- Urban areas
- Plan area

Strategic policies

- 5.8.2 The green and blue infrastructure network will include multi-functional spaces in and around the city, such as parks, gardens, boulevard streets, rights of way, hedges, trees, woodland, green roofs, green walls, rivers and ponds. It will include the routes and corridors such as the designated community greenways, other paths, and civic spaces. A connected city with a green and blue infrastructure network will provide high quality pedestrian, cycle routes and water ways. This can help to encourage an active lifestyle to improve health, whilst promoting the reduction in traffic congestion levels and air pollution. A green and blue infrastructure network will provide valuable wildlife corridors connecting habitats between the city and the countryside. It will help to protect and enhance the ecosystem services, to reduce greenhouse emissions, and incorporating sustainable drainage systems will help mitigate flood risk by slowing and retaining storm water.
- 5.8.3 The council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and Open Space Strategy will both assist in defining areas where intervention is required and will provide a basis for securing developer contributions towards the delivery of the green and blue infrastructure network.



Spatial development strategy



Spatial development strategy

- 6.0.1 The Spatial Development Strategy is fundamental to the delivery of the LDP as we seek to accommodate the ambitious growth aspirations for the district. It is based on a hierarchy of settlements and settlement areas within the principal city of Belfast, to manage the spatial growth of the plan area. The delivery of new homes, jobs, infrastructure, and community facilities must comply with the plan's spatial development strategy, so that development is directed to the most suitable and sustainable locations. This is consistent with the growth forecasts and the plan's sustainable growth strategy.
- 6.0.2 The strategy reinforces the city's role as the regional capital, to maintain its significant contribution to the wider NI economy. It supports the plan's strategic policies to create a compact city where new development is directed to accessible locations and brownfield sites within Belfast City. Focussing development within the city to maintain and enhance employment and housing opportunities will retain the existing population and attract others to invest and live here. This will make a significant contribution to the overall sustainability aims of the plan.
- 6.0.3 The Spatial Development Strategy is an important planning tool for managing the shape and extent of the settlements. This supports the settlement policies to ensure that developments that are proportionate in scale and form, are appropriate to the role and function of the defined settlement areas. This will allow for the development of sustainable communities, preventing the coalescence of settlements, ribbon development and fragmented development, as well as preventing inappropriate development in the countryside. Sufficient land for housing, employment and supporting land uses to meet objectively assessed needs shall be zoned at locations and in amounts compatible with delivering a compact city.
- 6.0.4 The council has considered the role and function of the settlements, their existing and planned levels of infrastructure, local need for development and open spaces within the plan area. This assessment has indicated that the majority of growth is to be met in the main settlement area of the principal city. This is in accordance with the council's vision to achieve a sustainable pattern of development without compromising the quality of the natural, built and historic environment.

6.1 Settlement hierarchy

Policy SD1 – Settlement hierarchy

The Belfast district consists of four settlements.

Classification	Role and function	Settlement
Principal City	The regional centre for administration, specialised high order services and cultural amenities. It is the regional gateway with links to other European cities, and provides the largest transport hub for NI.	Belfast City
Small Settlements	Distinct rural settlements in the countryside. They provide a focal point for the rural community, and have a number of local community facilities and services.	Edenderry Hannahstown Loughview

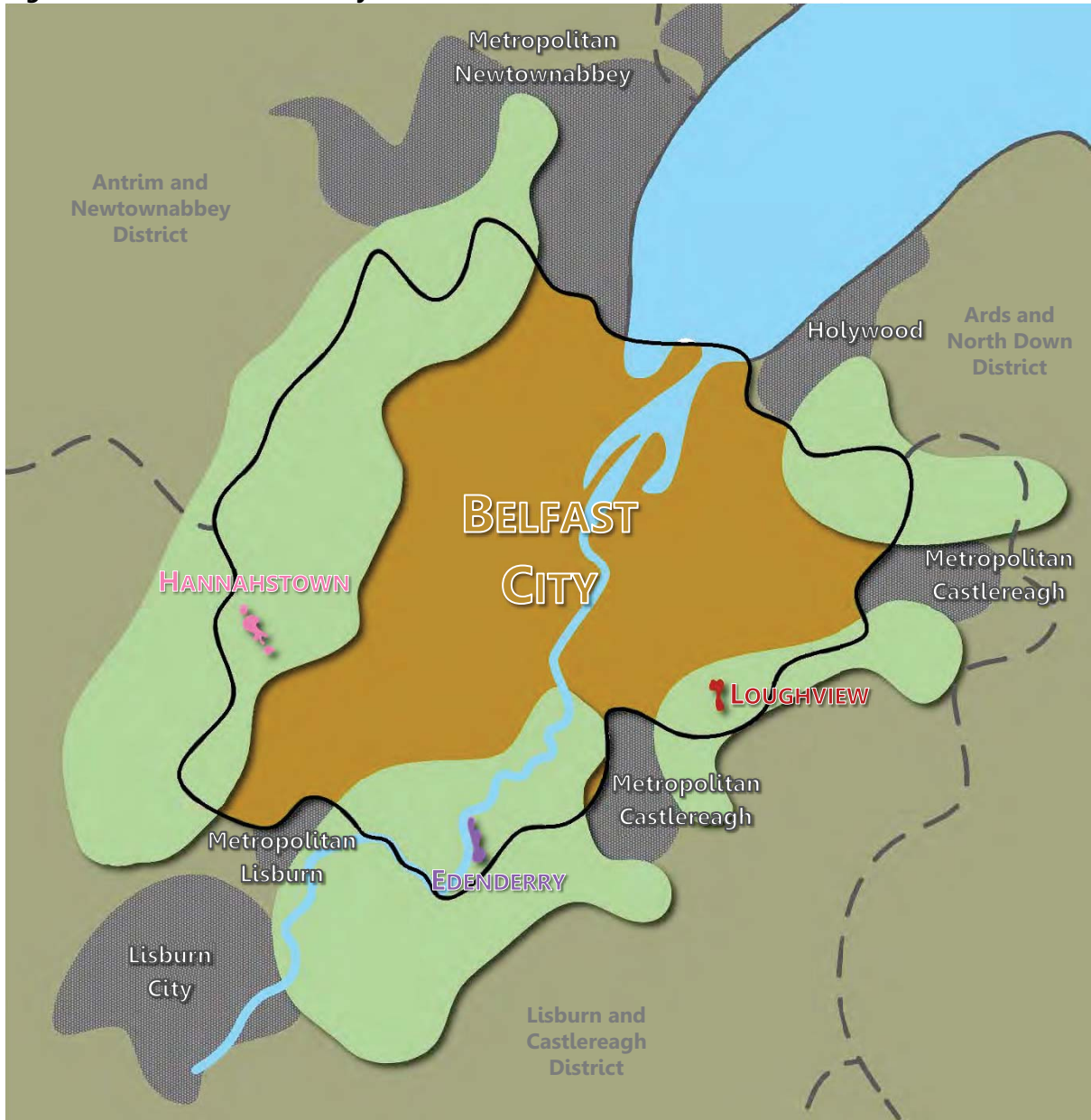
Justification and amplification

- 6.1.1 The four settlements within the plan area have been designated based on their role, services and facilities available and their potential for accommodating development in accordance with the RDS' spatial framework. The majority of the plan area consists of a single contiguous built up urban area, which continues into Lisburn and Castlereagh to the south and east and Antrim and Newtownabbey to the north. A small landscape wedge separates metropolitan Belfast from Holywood to the north east of the plan Area, whilst Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview remain distinct settlements within the plan area boundary.
- 6.1.2 Belfast City is the principal city and is the focus for population and economic growth within the district. It will accommodate the majority of new economic and residential developments within its settlement limits, with a focus on the integration of land use planning and transportation to reduce the need to travel. This will maximise the benefits from the efficient use of existing facilities, infrastructure and its strategic location on regional transport corridors.
- 6.1.3 The three small settlements – Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview – will remain as small settlements, distinct from the contiguous built up area of the Belfast City settlement area. The role and character of the small settlements will be protected

Spatial development strategy

within the wider rural setting, whilst allowing infill development of an appropriate scale to ensure the needs of local communities can be met.

Figure 6.1: Settlement hierarchy



6.2 Settlement areas

Policy SD2 – Settlement Areas

Within Belfast City, the council has designated the following settlement areas to apply the council's plan policies:

- **Belfast City Centre;**
- **Inner city Belfast;**
- **Outer Belfast;**
- **Belfast Harbour Estate;**
- **District centres;**
- **Local centres;**
- **City corridors; and**
- **Rail stations and halts.**

Justification and amplification

6.2.1 The settlement areas have distinct functions based on existing development patterns within the Belfast City settlement area. Thematic policies will be applied to the defined settlement areas to:

- Ensure that new residential development is in keeping with the character of the surrounding area and is prioritised in accordance with a sequential approach;
- Provide housing of an appropriate density to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services;
- Ensure good accessibility to local services and community facilities;
- Provide an appropriate scale of retail and office uses in accordance with a hierarchy of centres;
- Ensure good accessibility to existing and new employment opportunities; and
- Ensure better integration between land use planning and transportation, particularly sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

6.2.2 The LDP seeks to build upon and reinforce the positive aspects of each settlement area's existing functions.

Belfast City Centre

6.2.3 The city centre plays a significant role in the regional economy serving a wide catchment area beyond its plan area boundary. Development of the office, retailing and entertainment sectors and the growth in city tourism over the past decade, together with investment currently committed, have contributed much to the city centre's continued regional function. As a major retail destination, it has a good

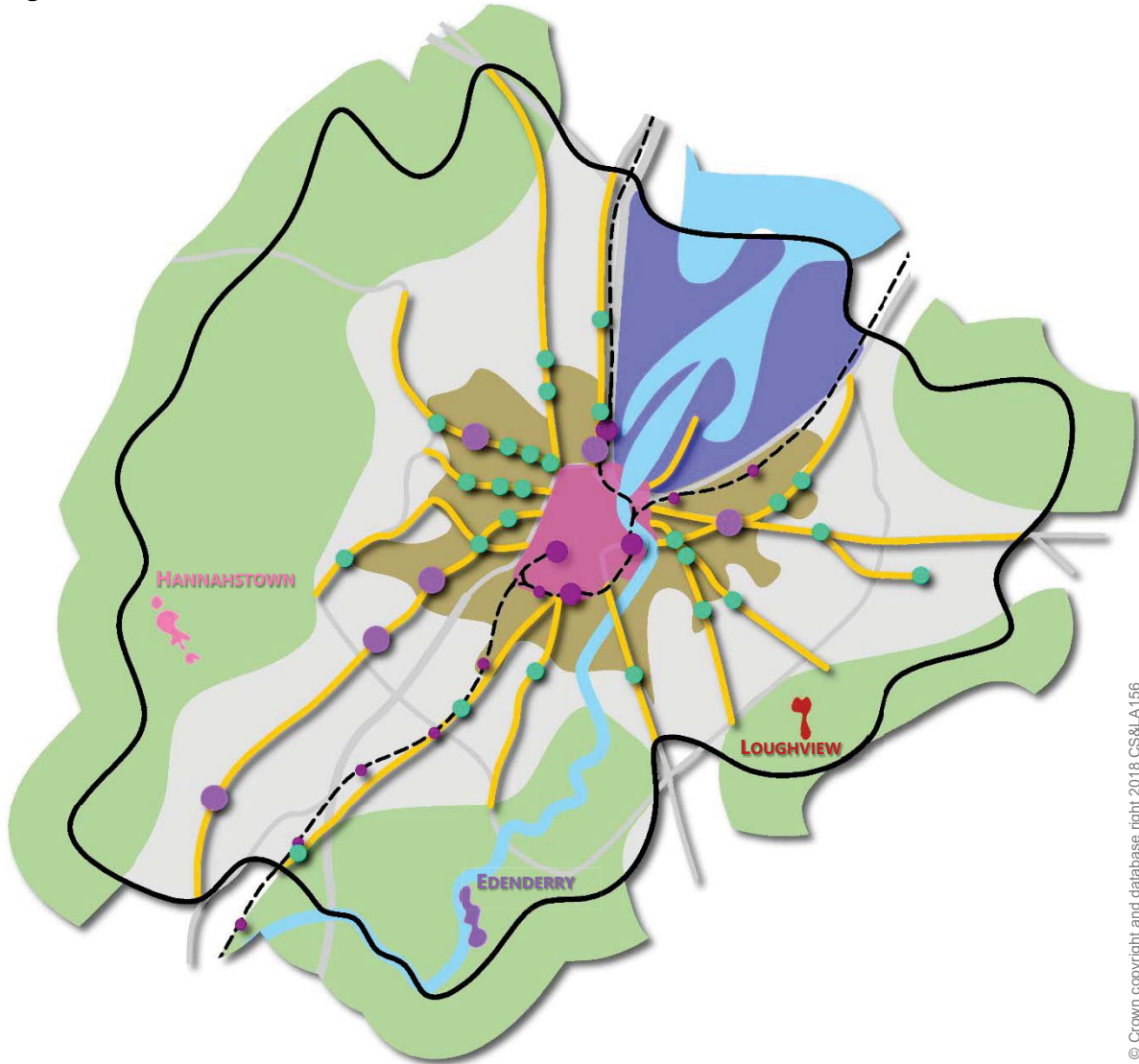
representation of independent, long established national and multi-national businesses offering convenience and comparison retailing and service uses. To remain competitive it needs to attract major higher end aspirational retail anchor stores and mixed use retail-leisure developments to serve a growing population.

- 6.2.4 The city centre is also a regional centre for administration, specialised high order services, higher education and cultural amenities. To remain competitive, a supply of good quality office accommodation is required in the city centre to support new business investment and job creation. The city centre has a vibrant culture, leisure and entertainment sector, attracting visitors and tourists who contribute greatly to the evening economy. Growth in city tourism over the past decade has contributed much to the city centre's economy and new tourism infrastructure would sustain its growth as a destination of choice for business and leisure tourists. The city centre is the showcase for the city of Belfast, and is the regional gateway for NI supported by the major transport hubs serving NI.
- 6.2.5 Unlike many cities of a similar size across the UK and Europe, the residential population of the city centre is low. However, this will change significantly over the plan period, with the re-location of Ulster University into the north of the city centre and growth in purpose built student living accommodation already leading to improved vitality and liveability. It will also be important to facilitate a sustainable mix of people living in the city centre, including families, elderly people, young professionals etc. It is important that the design quality of all new residential development is given appropriate focus and strengthened to create a high quality, city living environment. Residential development in the city centre will generally be high density.
- 6.2.6 The city centre presents development opportunities for investment in mixed use schemes to establish an innovation district that will support the transition to a low carbon economy and support the growth of the 'knowledge economy'. A high quality green and blue infrastructure network, providing open spaces, walking and cycling routes will enable people to achieve a sustainable, active urban lifestyle of living, socialising and working in the city centre. The full extent of the city centre settlement area will be defined within the council's Local Policies Plan.

Inner City

- 6.2.7 The inner city is characterised by a predominance of high density residential development, often including established residential areas of terraced housing and social housing developments interspersed with industrial uses and commercial development. The changing economic climate and decline in traditional manufacturing has left a legacy of industrial sites that have potential to be redeveloped for medium-high density residential development in close proximity to existing facilities and services.

Figure 6.2: Illustrative Settlement Areas



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Key

- Belfast City Centre
- Inner City
- Outer Belfast
- Belfast Harbour Area
- District Centre
- Local Centre
- City Corridor
- Rail stations
- Rail Halts
- Rail line
- Plan Area

6.2.8 It is also characterised by areas of disadvantage and segregated housing areas separated by peace walls and barriers. The contested spaces provide opportunities for developing shared meanwhile community projects that would help build trust and confidence to improve social cohesion. The full extent of the inner city settlement area will be defined within the Local Policies Plan.

Outer Belfast

- 6.2.9 The outer areas of Belfast typically contain a greater proportion of housing than industrial and commercial development. Dwellings tend to be larger and lower density moving into the suburbs, with the majority of properties taking the form of semi-detached and detached houses with private gardens. The full extent of the outer Belfast settlement area will be defined within the Local Policies Plan, falling between the inner city settlement area and the settlement development limit.

Belfast harbour area

- 6.2.10 The port of Belfast is a strategic marine transport hub providing access to Britain, Europe and the rest of the world. It has an important economic function facilitating the import and export of goods. Despite a decline in the traditional manufacturing industries over the past 30 years, the harbour estate continues to be a prominent centre for manufacturing and industry, with heavy manufacturing continuing through the presence of Bombardier, and industrial uses continuing to dominate in the Duncrue Industrial Estate.
- 6.2.11 The area has also begun to adapt to the changing economic climate, diversifying through the Science Park and North Foreshore developments offering employment in clean-tech and high-tech sectors. The regeneration of Titanic Quarter has also helped establish the harbour estate as a major tourist destination and has introduced a more diverse range of uses, including office accommodation, apartments, retail, and education facilities.
- 6.2.12 The harbour and George Best City Airport provide a high quality gateway by sea and air for goods, visitors and tourists. The full extent of the Belfast Harbour area will be defined within the council's Local Policies Plan.

District centres

- 6.2.13 These locations are characterised by predominantly commercial uses, acting as key service centres for surrounding communities. Ranging from large, bulky goods warehouses to small retail units clustered on key transport routes, district centres fulfil an important retail role in providing consumers with convenience and choice in locations outside of the city centre. However, these centres co-exist in a retail hierarchy with the city centre and should fulfil a complementary role. These areas often have good accessibility from neighbouring areas and are well served by public transport. As a result, higher density residential development can typically be supported in close proximity to such centres. The full extent of the district centre areas will be defined within the council's Local Policies Plan.

Local centres

- 6.2.14 In many places, clusters of small commercial units have formed along key transport routes into the city, providing local shops and services for the surrounding

residential neighbourhoods. The role of these local centres should be strengthened and, whilst the areas immediately surrounding these locations could accommodate a higher density of development due to the close proximity to local services, this must be sensitive to the existing character of long-established residential areas. The full extent of the local centre areas will be defined within the council's Local Policies Plan.

City corridors

- 6.2.15 The city corridors into and out of the city are typically characterised by a mix of uses fronting onto a busy road. Historically the city corridors were the key tram routes serving an expanding city. However increasing car ownership, and the growth in commuting, has resulted in road infrastructure that is over-sized, over-complicated and a barrier to non-motorised accessibility. A consequence has been traffic congestion and air pollution problems, which has degraded the environment of the city corridors. Four such routes have the designation of air quality management areas in the city where pollution levels exceeds EU standards.
- 6.2.16 Some city corridors pass through important local centres that function as vibrant community meeting spaces. They therefore have the potential to provide good sustainable transport connections between places where people live and work or to access local facilities and services. These routes are usually served by a high quality, high frequency bus service, some of which will be upgraded to accommodate the new Belfast Rapid Transit system over the plan period. Frontages onto city corridors can therefore benefit from higher densities of development. The city corridors will be identified within the Local Policies Plan.

Rail stations and halts

- 6.2.17 There are a number of Northern Ireland Rail (NIR) stations and halts within Belfast, which help provide more sustainable transport opportunities to access the city centre. These include both Lanyon Place Station and the Weavers Court Train/Bus interchange, which are programmed to be replaced with a modernised transport hub during the lifetime of this plan. These stations serve a regional role, providing strong connectivity to locations outside of Belfast, including Dublin and the Republic of Ireland.
- 6.2.18 The local rail halts also provide opportunities for commuting into the city centre and to key locations in the city. The areas surrounding these stations and halts can accommodate a higher density of development given the improved accessibility afforded by the presence of the rail. However, new development in such locations will need to be delivered sensitively to ensure it is in keeping with the local context, particularly for smaller rail halts within a suburban context.

6.3 City centre

SD3 - City centre

The council will support new economic and residential development to create a compact and vibrant city centre. New development will be directed towards development opportunities located within the following broad areas:

- **City Core;**
- **Innovation District;**
- **Mercantile District; and**
- **Waterfront District.**

Development proposals shall be required to demonstrate how they will address the thematic policies and the city centre regeneration investment strategy.

Justification and amplification

- 6.3.1 The city centre is the economic, social and civic hub that provides the greatest accessibility to jobs, services, shops, entertainment and public transport. However, the city centre faces particular challenges in the face of global competition, the internet and the growth of the knowledge economy. There is a need to diversify the land uses in the city centre to respond to changing customer demands, and wider economic structural changes due to the adoption of new technology. The Belfast Agenda and the BCCRIS are positioning the city centre as an appealing investment opportunity to attract people and businesses to Belfast.
- 6.3.2 The LDP provides the overarching policies to guide development in the city centre and has identified four broad areas to encourage new sustainable mixed-use development to facilitate population and economic growth:
- **City Core:** It is the primary retail core, which has an excellent range and choice of shopping facilities represented by a mix of multi-national companies and independent retailers. Castle Court and Victoria Square are the two main shopping centres within the retail core. It also has a range of restaurants, cafes and leisure opportunities that attracts visitors and tourist. The city core needs to be protected and strengthened as a community hub to build resilience to changing consumer demands and new technology.


Figure 6.3: Belfast City Centre Concept Diagram



Key

 Key connectivity to surrounding neighbourhoods

 Connections over Lagan

 Green and Blue Infrastructure Network

- Innovation District:** The city centre is increasingly the home for the clustering of new creative and innovative business sectors of the economy. There are opportunities to build on the Ulster University city campus investment to promote the development of a lively mixed-use innovation district to secure employment and residential opportunities for graduates and entrepreneurs.
- Mercantile District:** There are opportunities for the expansion and renewal of 'traditional' city centre business area associated with finance, professional services and public administration within the Mercantile District. Recently there has been a number of hotels developed within the area. This district will be

Spatial development strategy

strengthened with the development of the new integrated transport hub, Weaver's Court providing a sustainable travel option for people working and visiting the city centre.

- **Waterfront District:** provides the opportunity to extend the city centre eastwards to better activate the river Lagan. It is within walking distance of the city core and the opportunity exists to take advantage of the waterside location for comprehensive mixed-use regeneration. The creation of a new Waterside District to animate the riverfront will provide a valuable amenity for business users, residents and visitors.

6.3.3 The districts will be connected to each other, the retail core and the adjacent neighbourhoods by the green and blue infrastructure network, and high quality routes that are accessible to all sections of the community. This will help to deliver a compact city centre that is liveable, attractive to businesses, and appealing to visitors. These areas have been defined according to their existing and potential place-making roles and new development will need to respond to their individual characteristics to facilitate the creations of distinct districts where people want to live, work and enjoy leisure activities.



Shaping a liveable place





7.1 Housing

Introduction

- 7.1.1 Belfast has ambitious growth plans that will necessitate new housing provision. The RDS sets policy directions for the provision of housing that aim to manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development. The SPPS acknowledges the fundamental role that housing plays in shaping our lives and our communities and recognises that ‘the LDP process is the main vehicle for assessing future housing land requirements and managing housing growth’².
- 7.1.2 Whilst population projections are an important source of information on the level and location of future housing, the rate of household formation is a more important driver of the housing market. The LDP needs to ensure that new development offers a variety of house types, sizes and tenures to meet the different needs of the population and that they create an inclusive and accessible built environment. The delivery of homes also offers significant opportunities to help achieve balanced communities through well-linked, accessible, inclusive, mixed-tenure and tenure blind neighbourhoods.
- 7.1.3 There is significant demand for affordable forms of housing in the city. Although house prices are relatively low in Belfast by national standards, incomes are comparatively lower. Average rents are relatively high compared to other areas of NI and an acceleration in the rate of growth in house prices, increases in interest rates and inflation could lead to worsening affordability issues over the plan period. Therefore, housing provision will need to ensure a strong supply of affordable accommodation in the right locations. Land availability is one of the main constraints to developing affordable housing in areas of need – in this regard the LDP can identify suitable land, helping to rectify the supply shortage.
- 7.1.4 An appropriate housing mix not only refers to type, size and tenure, but also to a number of specialist housing types that need to be planned for. Specialist housing provides for people with specific housing needs, particularly in relation to impaired physical and mental health and old age. The need for specialist housing is likely to increase in Belfast as there is an ageing population and relatively high levels of poor health. Life expectancy continues to rise and the number of people of aged 65 or over is projected to increase by around 60% by 2035. Specialist housing also includes shared housing and student accommodation, as well as specific accommodation for travellers.

² *Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS), Sept 2015*

Policy aims

- 7.1.5 The residential accommodation policies within the LDP will seek to address current and future residential needs by ensuring sufficient land is made available to meet future housing requirements. The housing policies will therefore aim to:
- Ensure an appropriate supply of land to accommodate the new housing required to grow the population;
 - Promote sustainable housing development within the urban footprint to secure a compact urban form and more sustainable patterns of development;
 - Facilitate city centre living to grow the residential population of the city centre, through the adaption and re-use of vacant and under-utilised land and buildings, particularly as part of mixed use developments;
 - Secure higher density development whilst protecting the quality of the urban environment and established residential environments;
 - Protect the small settlements and rural area from urban development pressures;
 - Manage the supply of housing, including affordable housing, in response to changing housing need;
 - Nurture the development of balanced local communities by achieving an appropriate mix of house types, sizes and tenures;
 - Secure mixed tenure housing developments;
 - Promote regeneration and renewal in areas of social need; and
 - Build strong, inclusive and cohesive communities for people from all backgrounds.



Policy HOU1 – Accommodating new homes

There is a requirement for 31,660 new homes in Belfast over the period 2020-2035. This will be delivered in accordance with the requirements set out in the following table.

Settlement / Area		Net additional dwellings (2020-2035)
Belfast city	Belfast city centre	8,000
	Belfast Harbour estate	3,500
	Rest of Belfast city	18,100
	<i>Belfast city Total</i>	<i>29,600</i>
Small Settlements	Edenderry	40
	Hannahstown	0
	Loughview	20
	<i>Small settlements total</i>	<i>60</i>
Windfall		2,000

The housing requirement will be delivered in accordance with the following indicative average annual rates:

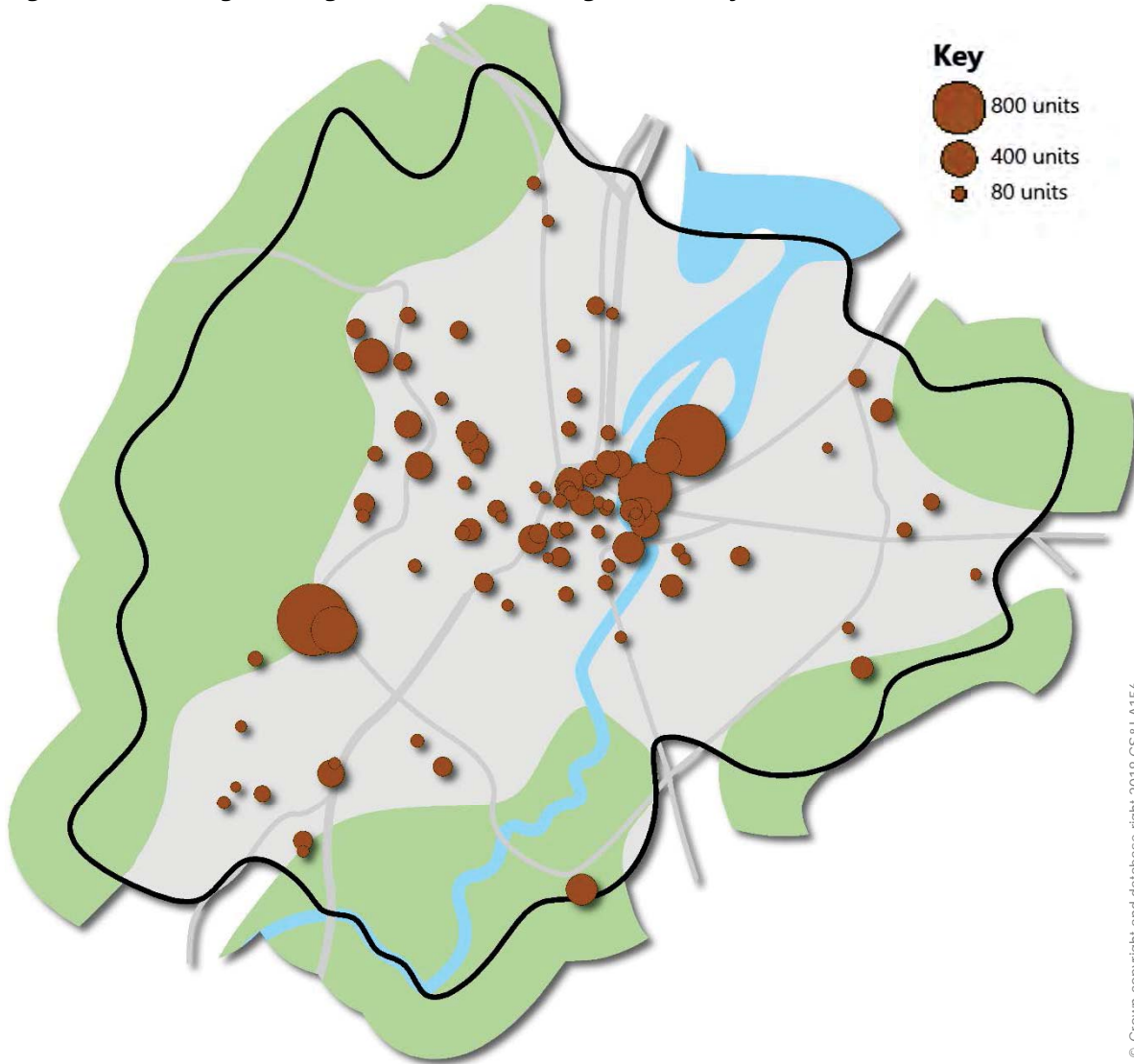
- 2020/21–2024/25 – an average of 1,100-1,300 dwellings completed per annum
- 2025/26–2029/30 – an average of 2,100-2,300 dwellings completed per annum
- 2030/31–2034/35 – an average of 2,700-2,900 dwellings completed per annum

Justification and amplification

7.1.6 The LDP is required to identify and zone a supply of housing land that is sufficient to meet the population growth projections for the Belfast district. The housing supply adopts a sequential approach to new development, where the focus of new growth will be on the principal city of Belfast, particularly Belfast city centre and the existing urban footprint. The three rural small settlements therefore have a very modest provision.

7.1.7 The council is also required to ensure an ongoing viable 5-year supply of land for housing and the indicative average annual rates will provide a basis on which this 5 years supply can be demonstrated. This recognises that the scale of delivery of new housing is likely to increase as the economic performance of the city increases and so reflects a lower rate of development at the start of the plan period, increasing towards the end.

Figure 7.1: Existing housing sites over 50 units (graduated by size)



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7.1.8 Belfast has historically seen a high proportion of land delivered outside of the plan process, with planning approvals for housing on non-zoned land leading to an unusually high proportion of housing being classified as windfall. However, the windfall allowance proposed is very modest, reflecting the preference for a planned approach in zoning sufficient housing land within the city to meet identified need. Land will be zoned for residential development in accordance with the locations identified within this policy and the SPPS’s sequential approach.

7.1.9 However, there is no automatic assumption that existing housing land will form part of the formal provision, particularly where detailed analysis identifies constraints affecting the availability and deliverability of sites. If necessary, land may be phased to ensure alignment of housing delivery with planned infrastructure investment and development lead-times.



Figure 7.2: Delivery of housing supply

Settlement / Area	2020-2025	2026-2030	2031-2035	Total
Belfast city				
Belfast city centre	1,600	2,800	3,600	8,000
Belfast Harbour estate	600	1,300	1,600	3,500
Rest of Belfast city	3,600	6,400	8,100	18,100
<i>Belfast city Total</i>	5,800	10,500	13,300	29,600
Small settlements				
Edenderry	-	20	20	40
Hannahstown	-	-	-	-
Loughview	-	10	10	20
<i>Small settlement total</i>	-	30	30	60
Windfall allowance				
Windfall housing supply	400	700	900	2,000
Total	6,200	11,230	14,230	31,660
Annual average	1,100-1,300	2,100-2,300	2,700-2,900	2,000-2,200

7.1.10 The SPPS states that the LDP should provide for a “managed release of housing land, in line with a ‘plan, monitor and manage’ approach”. Monitoring of housing delivery will therefore be critical to the implementation of the district’s growth strategy. Figure 7.2 illustrates how the housing supply within policy HOU1 can be delivered over the plan period, in accordance with the indicative annual rates of delivery.

7.1.11 Although indicative, this will enable the effective monitoring of delivery in line with the required 5-yearly plan review cycle and ensuring the minimum 5 year supply of housing land.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy HOU2 – Windfall housing

There is a presumption that all new housing development within the plan area will be delivered on previously developed land within the existing urban footprint. Land will be prioritised and zoned within the local policies plan in accordance with this principle.

Planning permission will be granted for housing development on sites within the urban footprint which are not zoned for housing or mixed use (to include an element of housing), where the following criteria are met:

- a. The site is suitable for housing development;**
- b. The location is accessible and convenient to public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure; and**
- c. Provision is made for any additional infrastructure required as a result of the development, including its cumulative impact alongside committed and planned housing development.**

Planning permission will be subject to proposals meeting all other policy requirements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.1.12 Identifying 'brownfield' land within settlements can assist in returning derelict sites into productive use, can help deliver more attractive environments, assist with economic renewal and reduce the need for 'greenfield' development (i.e. development on existing undeveloped or green space). In accordance with the sequential approach set out in the SPPS, priority will be given to the reuse of previously developed or 'brownfield' land within the existing urban footprint when identifying and zoning new land for housing.
- 7.1.13 Where proposals for housing development are brought forward on non-housing land during the plan period, there is also a clear preference for previously developed land within the existing urban footprint. Proposals on undeveloped land or sites that are located outside of the settlement limits are therefore unlikely to be appropriate.
- 7.1.14 Where suitable unzoned sites are identified, it is vital that any potential harm created by such developments, in terms of impact upon the surrounding character and infrastructure provision, is minimised and that development is still planned to contribute to sustainable development. It is essential that housing coming forward from windfall sites meets the same high level of sustainability as the sites identified and zoned in the LDP and that there is sufficient infrastructure capacity to support development. It will be essential that the level of housing delivery from windfall sites



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is carefully monitored and managed so as to reduce the risk that housing delivery between 2020 and 2035 exceeds identified targets.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy HOU3 – Protection of existing residential accommodation

There is a general presumption in favour of the retention of residential stock for permanent occupation. Within an established residential area or fronting onto a city corridor outside of a designated centre, planning permission will be granted for the redevelopment and/or change of use of existing dwellings for other uses where:

- a. It is considered complimentary to surrounding residential uses and will not result in any adverse effects on existing residential amenity; or
- b. The proposal is for community infrastructure considered necessary within the residential area.

In the case of the partial change of use of an existing dwelling, in addition to the above requirements the non-residential use should:

- c. Be subordinate to the residential use; and
- d. Provide a separate user entrance if public access is required.

This will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements. The use of permanent residential stock as short-term holiday accommodation will be treated as a change of use and will also be subject to the requirements of policy HOU13.

Justification and amplification

7.1.15 Regional policy seeks to manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development and to support urban (and rural) renaissance. It also calls for the delivery of higher densities. Policy HOU1 outlines the requirement for over 31,000 new homes in Belfast over the plan period to meet housing need and, given this significant growth target, it is necessary to also protect existing housing stock in the city.

7.1.16 This policy therefore seeks to restrict the type of non-residential proposals permitted in established residential areas and areas where higher density residential accommodation is appropriate, such as highly accessible locations fronting onto city

corridors. Where non-residential uses are permitted, they should be complimentary to the surrounding residential uses and protect established residential amenity. In such cases, all other policy requirements still apply to the proposal – this will include key issues such as open space provision, density and sustainable transportation, which are of critical importance in sustainable neighbourhoods.

- 7.1.17 There are a range of community uses that may be appropriate and necessary, in principle, within residential areas, such as community centres, health facilities, nurseries or educational facilities. In accordance with the SPPS, policy RET2 seeks to direct some such facilities to nearby service centres in the first instance. Such facilities located within established residential areas could contribute towards sustainable communities when appropriate in scale and are accessible, delivered in accordance with our community infrastructure policy CI1.
- 7.1.18 In relation to city corridors, these perform an important role in moving people and goods into and out of the city. The local and district centres along these routes provide important services and facilities to the established residential communities in these areas. However, it is important that non-residential uses along these routes are focused on these established centres only, in the interests of sustainable development, and to protect the existing retail hierarchy and the primacy of the city centre. That said, proposals for housing in such areas may still be acceptable where the commercial function is not prejudiced in accordance with policy RD3.
- 7.1.19 The focus of this policy is on ensuring a suitable supply of permanent residential accommodation for future residents of Belfast, and there is a risk that the use of permanent homes or apartments to provide short-term holiday accommodation could erode the sustainable supply of housing stock in the city. As short-term holiday accommodation falls outside of the residential use class, the change of use of a permanent residential use to short-term let accommodation is therefore considered to be a material change of use requiring planning permission. Such cases would therefore be assessed under the criteria outlined in this policy, as well as under policy HOU13 on short-term let accommodation.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy HOU4 – Density of residential development

Planning permission will be granted for residential development proposals which are brought forward in accordance with the following density bands:

Settlement / character area	Average density band (dwellings per hectare)	Locational criteria
Tall buildings within city centre	>350	Locations to be identified
Belfast city Centre	150-350	Within the defined city centre boundary
Inner city Belfast	75-150	As defined within the settlement strategy
Outer Belfast	25-125	Remainder of Belfast city between inner city Belfast and the settlement development limit
District centres	100-200	Within 200m of a district centre
Local centres	75-150	Within 100m of a local centre
City corridor	100 -175 within inner city	50m either side of a designated city corridor
Rail stations and halts	50-150 within outer Belfast	Within 100m of a rail station or halt
Small settlements	25-50	Within the settlement development limits of the small settlements

The above density bands are to be used as a guide to inform proposed developments within the relevant settlement areas and development proposals outside of these broad bands will be considered on their merits. This will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements.

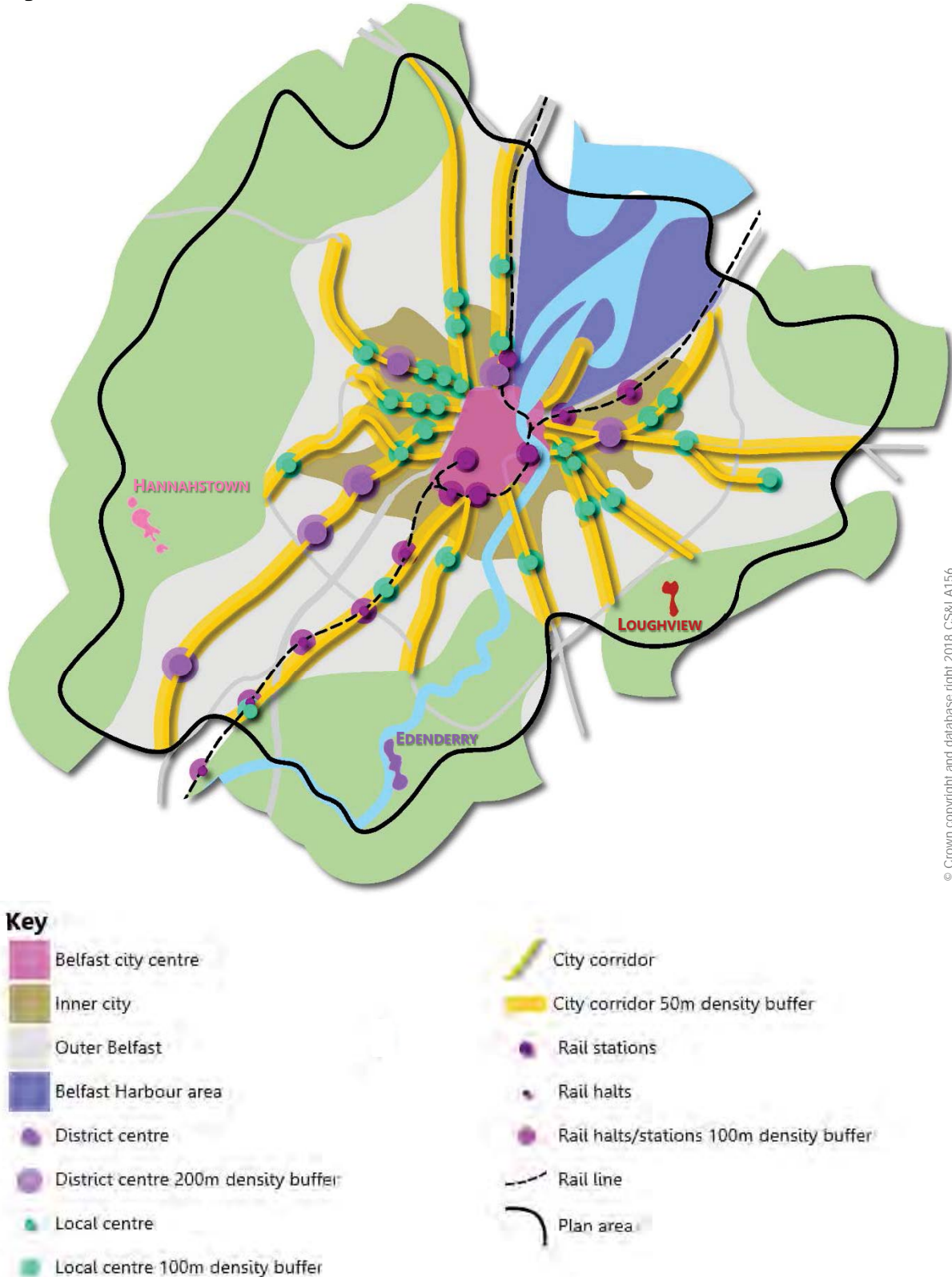
Justification and amplification

7.1.20 The SPPS requires a number of measures to be included in development plans, including the need to ‘set density levels for housing sites appropriate to the location of the site and the character of the surrounding area’. The Plan Strategy seeks to accommodate housing growth by increasing density without town cramming. In accordance with the SPPS, this will need to be delivered in a sensitive way, striking a careful balance between meeting housing needs whilst ensuring well-designed developments appropriate to their locations.

7.1.21 The SPPS recognises that higher density housing development can be accommodated in city centres and other locations that benefit from high

accessibility to help maximise the use of existing infrastructure. Within Belfast, increases in density are therefore most desirable throughout the city centre, in close proximity to centres of existing facilities and services, such as district centres and local centres, or locations with strong sustainable transport connectivity, such as city

Figure 7.3: Illustrative Character Areas



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corridors or close to rail stations/halts. Opportunities for mixed use developments that incorporate an element of residential development in close proximity to other compatible uses, such as employment or community services, are also desirable.

7.1.22 Within the wider Belfast city urban area, development or redevelopment should be designed to create or reinforce the prevailing character and identity, whether that be an urban or suburban setting, whilst avoiding the monotony of suburban sprawl. The broad density ranges for the inner city Belfast and outer Belfast allow flexibility to adapt proposals to their context. The inner city densities reflect an increase as proximity to the city centre, and consequently key services and facilities, increases. Within the outer Belfast area, lower densities should generally be seen in less accessible locations, with density increasing as access to local services or good quality public transport routes increases.

7.1.23 Great care should be taken to ensure that local character, environmental quality and amenity are not significantly eroded and that the proposed density, together with the form, scale, massing and layout of the new development will respect that of adjacent housing, safeguard the privacy of existing residents and shall support the development of sustainable balanced communities. The proposed density bands take into account variations within character areas by using higher and lower limits, allowing proposals to protect the established character and patterns of development in any particular location, whilst still meeting broader policy requirements.

7.1.24 Whilst the density bands take account of existing and approved densities, it is important to acknowledge that there will be implications over the plan period in terms of infrastructural requirements. However, these and other requirements all operate within the context of a plan led system where the primacy of the Plan Strategy is enshrined in legislation. The focus on central and accessible areas for higher densities seeks to maximise existing infrastructure, although it is recognised that in the medium to long-term infrastructural investment will be necessary to keep pace with growth targets.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓

Policy HOU5 – Affordable housing

Planning permission will be granted for residential development on sites greater than 0.1 hectares and/or containing 5 or more dwelling units where a minimum of 20% of units are provided as affordable housing.

Affordable housing should consist of social rented housing and/or intermediate housing. In determining the appropriate mix of affordable housing in terms of size, type and tenure, regard will be had to an up to date analysis of demand, including housing stress and prevailing housing need.

The affordable housing should be provided as an integral part of mixed tenure development, integrated with general needs housing and not readily distinguishable in terms of external design, materials and finishes.

Where it can be demonstrated that it is not sustainable or viable for a proposed development to meet the requirements of this policy in full, the council will consider suitable alternatives on a case-by-case basis.

Affordable housing will be secured by way of section 76 planning agreement, which should be in place in advance of planning permission being granted.

Any proposal for housing that is considered to be artificially dividing a larger site to circumvent the affordable housing requirement will not be permitted. Where a concept masterplan is provided to demonstrate the comprehensive planning of such a site and how the full affordable housing obligations will be met, partial development may be permitted if the affordable housing element can be secured by way of s76 planning agreement. This will also allow for the phased development of larger sites.

Justification and amplification

- 7.1.25 The RDS recognises that the provision of more affordable housing helps to build strong balanced communities. The SPPS acknowledges the role of the development plan as the primary vehicle for facilitating identified need by zoning land for housing and indicating where a proportion of a site may be required for affordable housing. In seeking a proportion of affordable housing alongside general market housing in all developments, the LDP will ensure the delivery of an appropriate range of house sizes, types and tenures to meet local needs, whilst minimising future disadvantage often associated with large areas of social housing.
- 7.1.26 The policy requires a minimum provision of 20% of units as affordable housing. Where it can be demonstrated that it is necessary and viable to provide a higher proportion of affordable housing, the Council will expect developments to do so.



Shaping a liveable place

This may be achieved through either key site requirements within the Local Policies Plan where land is zoned for housing or through discussions with applicants on a case-by-case basis as part of the development management process. This is particularly important in areas where up to date evidence indicates an acute level of housing need in a locality.

7.1.27 Although it is preferable for the affordable housing to be applicable in all developments, concerns around financial viability on smaller schemes have been offset through the introduction of site size thresholds. The threshold of 5 or more units will ensure that the burden is reduced on small developers and aligns with the land supply profile for Belfast.

7.1.28 Affordable Housing is defined within the SPPS as relating to social rented housing and intermediate housing. The '**social rented housing**' element should accord with the long established definition contained within the SPPS³ as follows:

"Social rented housing is housing provided at an affordable rent by a registered housing association; that is, one which is registered and regulated by the Department for Social Development as a social housing provider. Social rented accommodation should be available to households in housing need and is offered in accordance with the common selection scheme, administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), which prioritises households who are living in unsuitable or insecure accommodation."

7.1.29 In the case of '**intermediate housing**', the SPPS states that:

"Intermediate housing consists of shared ownership housing provided through a registered housing association (e.g. the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association) and helps households who can afford a small mortgage, but that are not able to afford to buy a property outright. The property is split between part ownership by the householder and part social renting from a registered housing association. The proportion of property ownership and renting can vary depending on householder circumstances and preference."

7.1.30 This definition of intermediate housing essentially reflects what was available at the time of the development of the SPPS, namely 'shared ownership' housing. That said, the SPPS also explicitly recognises that the definition of intermediate housing "may change over time to incorporate other forms of housing tenure below market rates."

³ *Department of the Environment (2015), Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland. Department of the Environment planning functions have now been subsumed within the Department for Infrastructure (DfI)*

- 7.1.31 More recently the shared ownership product range has expanded to include a 'rent to own' scheme. Under this scheme an individual is provided with the opportunity to rent a home for 3 years, receiving a proportion of this rent back to use as a deposit if they avail of the option to buy the home. This product is very much viewed as a stepping stone to shared ownership. Rent to own is at the pilot stage at present.
- 7.1.32 A number of other intermediate products are available in other jurisdictions including:
- **Equity loans:** A 'help to buy' equity loan involves a third party (often a government agency) providing a low interest loan for part of the cost of a newly built home, which could help reduce the amount needed as a deposit to access mortgage finance.
 - **Affordable rent:** Affordable rent is accommodation subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). Rents should be genuinely discounted from prevailing market rates and would not include private rentals that are subsidised by housing benefit.
 - **Discount market sale housing:** A low cost home ownership product where a new build property is purchased at a discounted price. This discount is usually around 20% and the scheme is to help low and middle earners get onto the property ladder. Housing should be genuinely discounted below prevailing market value and, to ensure that such housing remains affordable in perpetuity, a developer or government agency may retain a 'golden share' to ensure that discounts are maintained in future sales.
- 7.1.33 The NI definition of intermediate housing may be further expanded in the future to include these and other innovative products to support the SPPS aim of assisting eligible households into affordable housing. Where this is the case, such additional products will be considered suitable to help meet the affordable housing obligations of this policy in the future.
- 7.1.34 The provision of both social and intermediate housing (i.e. shared ownership and rent to own) is currently delivered by registered housing associations with the help of public sector grant and loan funding. An applicant/developer is therefore advised to liaise closely with a registered housing association and the NIHE to discuss the exact mix of affordable housing required in each case. This should ensure that affordable housing takes account of the number of applicants in housing stress in a locality according to the common housing selection scheme and that it meets recognised housing need as identified through an up to date Housing Needs Assessment (HNA).
- 7.1.35 The SPPS directs planning authorities to use their powers to "contribute to an environment that is accessible to all and enhances opportunities for shared



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communities, has a higher standard of connectivity and supports the shared use of public realm". To help achieve these outcomes, affordable housing should be delivered in mixed tenure developments. As well as helping to promote community cohesion, this approach will create a feeling of belonging and contribute to the development of sustainable neighbourhoods.

- 7.1.36 Within mixed tenure developments, affordable housing should be distributed or 'pepper potted' throughout a development, rather than concentrated in a specific part of a site. It should be 'tenure blind' – i.e. indistinguishable from the general market housing in the development – to ensure it is well integrated within housing schemes. In the case of apartment buildings, some clustering of affordable units may be considered appropriate where 'pepper-potting' would lead to less efficient management arrangements.
- 7.1.37 It is recognised that there may be occasions where a particular housing site in Belfast might not be able to meet the affordable housing demands in full, so flexibility has been built in to the policy to ensure that viability can be taken into account on a case-by-case basis. Where a developer is able to demonstrate, through evidence provided in accordance with agreed assessment approaches to viability testing, that the development is unviable if affordable housing obligations are met in full, alternative approaches will be considered. This could include varying the mix of affordable housing units, the provision of affordable housing on a suitable alternative site within the local area or, in exceptional circumstances, a reduction in the proportion of affordable housing in lieu of a financial contribution to an affordable housing development elsewhere in the district.
- 7.1.38 Given the importance of affordable housing provision for the district, this policy also ensures that applicants cannot artificially divide or phase sites to avoid affordable housing obligations. This will also help ensure that affordable housing is delivered as an integrated part of all new developments. Partial redevelopment of a site will only be considered acceptable where an overall concept masterplan demonstrating that all of the provisions of this policy can be met and future affordable housing provision can be ensured through a s76 planning agreement.
- 7.1.39 Given the complexities around determining the appropriate mix of affordable housing, supplementary planning guidance may be produced in the future to provide greater clarity. This may also need to provide advice in relation to the models available to deliver affordable housing and how viability will be considered.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓

Policy HOU6 – Housing mix

Planning permission will be granted for new residential developments on sites greater than 0.1ha and/or containing 5 or more dwelling units where the proposed development provides a suitable mix of house types and sizes to promote choice and assist in meeting community needs. Provision should particularly be made for smaller homes across all tenures to meet future household requirements.

The exact mix of house types and sizes will be negotiated with developers on a case by case basis, taking account of:

- a. Up to date analysis of prevailing housing need in the area;**
- b. The location and size of site;**
- c. Specific characteristics of the development; and**
- d. The creation of balanced and sustainable communities.**

The requirement for a mix of house types will not apply to single apartment developments. In such cases the housing mix will be considered acceptable through greater variety in the size of units, as well as an appropriate mix of tenures required under affordable housing policy.

Justification and amplification

- 7.1.40 Delivering an appropriate mix of housing across the district will help meet the regional spatial objective for housing set out in the SPPS to “manage housing growth to achieve sustainable patterns of residential development.” Furthermore, the SPPS requires LDPs to deliver sustainable forms of development and balanced communities. It explains that the “provision of good quality housing offering a variety of house types, sizes and tenures to meet different needs” is fundamental to building balanced communities.
- 7.1.41 The mixture of different types and sizes of houses, apartments and maisonettes required through this policy will therefore help to provide choice within a housing development and assist in the creation of a balanced community in the local area. Mixed communities will also help provide a greater housing choice, benefit health and wellbeing, reduce social exclusion and help tackle area based deprivation. Different house types and sizes can also help create visual variety and interest, make use of any awkwardly shaped parts of a site and assist in the promotion of greater affordability.
- 7.1.42 In line with our approach to affordable housing, a size threshold of 5 units or more, or a site size of 0.1ha or more is set in relation to providing a mix of unit size and type. This aligns with our land supply profile, where a higher threshold would exclude a large proportion of our housing land. Smaller sites will also help



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contribute to the overall housing mix in the district, although where a mix of unit types may not be viable, it may still be possible to deliver a mix of unit sizes. In the case of single apartment developments – i.e. a development where a single block of apartments occupies most of the site – an appropriate mix can be provided through greater variety in the size of units. An appropriate mix of tenures is also still required through affordable housing policy (policy HOU5).

7.1.43 Evidence of the appropriate housing mix required to meet community needs in terms of the type, size and tenure of housing is provided through up to date Housing Market Analysis (HMA) and annual HNAs. These are updated periodically by the NIHE and are published routinely on their website. In the case of affordable housing, the appropriate size and type of provision will be determined by NIHE in accordance with DfC guidance on a case by case basis. Developers therefore are encouraged to engage with a registered housing association and NIHE prior to developing proposals.

7.1.44 As a general guide to the appropriate need, analysis of the local housing market in Belfast shows an ageing population, reducing household size and a decline in the number of households with children. This emphasises the need for future accommodation to comprise accommodation “suitable for smaller household types” with “apartments and terrace house types” expected to remain the most popular⁴. Independent research commissioned by the council to inform the LDP expands upon this, suggesting that over the plan period Belfast requires:

- **Type** – 30% will require flats/apartments (including maisonettes), with the remaining 70% preferring houses (to include terraced, semi-detached and/or detached housing as appropriate); and
- **Size** – 40% would require properties with 1 or 2 bedrooms, and the residual requiring at least 3 bedrooms.

7.1.45 However, it is recognised that the appropriate mix of house types and size in each case will be influenced by the location, site characteristics and need in the surrounding area. The exact need in terms of house types and sizes varies by tenure and will need to be determined on a site-by-site basis in response to up to date evidence of need. The LDP therefore enables local adjustments to be made on a case by case basis to ensure these factors are taken into account.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓		✓	✓

⁴ *Housing Market Analysis Update, Belfast City Council Area, NIHE, September 2017*

Policy HOU7 – Adaptable and accessible accommodation

All new homes should be designed in a flexible way to ensure that housing is adaptable throughout all stages of life, maximising the ability for occupants to remain in their homes and live independent lives for as long as possible.

To help deliver adaptable and accessible homes, planning permission will be granted for new housing where the following criteria are met:

- a. Parking provision should have a firm surface and provide level or gently sloping access to the main entrance of the property;
- b. Main entrances should be sheltered from the weather;
- c. Permanent living space or dining space should be provided within or in addition to a kitchen at entrance level;
- d. Accommodation should provide entrance level WC with space to provide an accessible shower in the future if required;
- e. An accessible bathroom should be provided on the same floor as the main bedroom; and
- f. Glazing in the principal living space should be sited to enable outlook when seated.

In addition to the above requirements, for all residential developments of 10 units or more, planning permission will be granted where at least 10% of units are wheelchair accessible, designed in accordance with the following criteria:

- g. A wheelchair accessible environment is provided in accordance with the space standards for wheelchair housing set out in appendix C;
- h. In-curtilage or designated car parking meets disabled parking standards;
- i. Pathways are wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair and have a firm surface, level or gently sloping surface;
- j. Entrance hallway, kitchen, living, dining area, bathroom and a main bedroom have an unobstructed turning circle;
- k. Entrances, doorways and halls should be an appropriate width and length allow for wheelchair access;
- l. Space should be provided in the entrance area to enable storage of a second wheelchair;
- m. Space should be identified that is capable of accommodating a future lift accessed off circulation spaces on each floor;
- n. Adequate built-in storage should be provided; and
- o. Private amenity space shall be level or gently sloping and should incorporate an area of suitable hard surfacing.



Justification and amplification

- 7.1.46 The SPPS requires that the LDP makes provision to meet the full range of housing needs. This includes provision for those who are elderly, disabled or with any mobility issues. One of the key objectives of the NI housing strategy relates to the need to “support older and disabled people to live independently if they wish to do so.” The latest NI housing market research also states that as the population continues to age, support packages will play a vital role in helping older people, or people with a disability, to remain in their own homes for longer. It notes that the ageing population will “undoubtedly have a significant impact on the design of dwellings as well as the need for housing support to enable older people to live independently in their own homes.”
- 7.1.47 The local housing systems analysis of the Belfast metropolitan housing market area (NIHE, August 2011) suggests that developers should be encouraged to provide ‘mainstream’ housing that is appealing for older households, helping ensure that suitable housing is supplied that presents as few barriers to mobility as possible. Demographic realities, together with the inaccessible character of much of the existing housing stock⁵ present a clear case for all housing to meet an accessible standard.
- 7.1.48 It is noted that the existing Building Regulations (2012) focus on ensuring that dwellings are accessible for visitors; however, the intention of this policy is that homes are accessible for those who live in them. ‘Lifetime homes’ standards⁶ are a nationally recognised set of criteria to make new dwellings adaptable enough to accommodate a household’s changing lifetime needs and enable them to be lived in and visited by a wide range of people. Whilst some of the lifetime homes and ‘wheelchair accessibility’ standards are included in technical booklet part R of the Building Regulations (NI) 2012, many are not. This policy therefore seeks to address those elements of the standards that can be adequately addressed at planning stage.
- 7.1.49 Dwellings should be designed to provide accessible and adaptable accommodation for everyone, from young families to older people and people with a temporary or permanent physical impairment. Since 1998 the requirement for housing associations to build to the ‘lifetime homes’ standard has been in place in Northern Ireland and is set out in the DfC Housing Association Guide (HAG), which includes

⁵ *English Housing Survey 2012*

⁶ *The Lifetime Homes Standards have now been superseded in England and Wales by the Building Regulations (Category 2)*

both the UK-wide lifetime homes standards and a series of additional requirements⁷.

7.1.50 In addition to the ‘accessible homes’ criteria, the second part of this policy requires at least 10% of units in new schemes over 10 units to be wheelchair accessible. The SPPS requires that the LDP makes provision to meet the full range of housing needs as identified through an up to date HMA/HNA. The ongoing increase in the number and proportion of people aged 65 or more, particularly those aged 85 or more, will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the design of dwellings and the need for accommodation that is suitable for wheelchair users. Of those aged 65+ (45,945) the 2011 census found that approximately 7% of these lived in households that had been adapted for wheelchair use.

7.1.51 Whilst DfC guidance issued to housing associations stipulates that 7% of all new social housing should be built to wheelchair standard⁸, the draft NI programme for government outcomes relating to housing include an action to increase the proportion of new build social housing which is wheelchair accessible to 10% per year. Applying the 10% requirement to schemes of 10 units or more would see the delivery of sufficient wheelchair accessible units per year to meet identified need. Additional guidance on achieving wheelchair design standards is also provided within DfC’s HAG⁹.

7.1.52 It is noted that there may be some exceptional circumstances where not all of these policy requirements can be accommodated whilst still meeting other planning policy obligations. For instance the conversion or retrofitting of a historic building for apartment use may require some standards to be applied flexibly to prevent harm to the historic fabric of the building. Such cases will be considered on their merits whilst carefully balancing all policy and other material considerations.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
			✓

⁷ The Lifetime Homes standards form part of the core design standards set out in the Department for Communities’ (DfC) Housing Association Guide (HAG), which is available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/general-needs-housing>

⁸ Housing Market Analysis update, Belfast City Council Area, NIHE, September 2017

⁹ The Department for Communities’ (DfC) Housing Association Guide (HAG) design standards in relation to Wheelchair Housing are available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/wheelchair-housing>



Policy HOU8 – Specialist residential accommodation

Planning permission will be granted for specialist residential accommodation, including retirement villages and care-related facilities, where the following criteria are met:

- a. The homes and/or bed spaces to be provided meet community needs demonstrated through a statement of specialist housing need; and**
- b. The proposals will deliver convenient access to relevant local services and facilities, including local shops, public transport routes and health facilities.**

Proposals for the improvement of existing specialist accommodation, including sheltered housing, extra care housing, nursing homes and residential care homes shall also be supported where these criteria are met. This will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.1.53 The SPSS requires that the LDP makes provision to meet the full range of housing needs as identified through an up to date HMA / HNA. Specialist residential accommodation, also referred to as 'supported housing', is for individuals whose housing needs cannot be readily met through general needs housing, usually because they require specialised, accommodation-based solutions, extra housing support or an element of care in addition to a home.
- 7.1.54 The ongoing increase in the number and proportion of people aged 65 or more, particularly those aged 85 or more, will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the need for supported housing¹⁰. Within Belfast, the growing population will also continue to age over the plan period, increasing the requirement for specialised residential accommodation, particularly for older people. For example, independent research undertaken to inform the LDP suggests a need for over 820 additional bed spaces in residential care homes for older residents during the plan period. Whilst there is a general preference to enable older or disabled people to stay within their own homes and to live independently for as long as possible, cases will arise where specialist accommodation options can provide a more suitable housing solution.
- 7.1.55 The LDP seeks to facilitate such specialist residential accommodation with criterion a seeking to ensure that accommodation provided matches the most up to date evidence of housing need. Within the public sector, supported housing is generally supplied through a rigorous commissioning process by the relevant public bodies, which may include the NIHE, the health and social care board, Belfast health trust and the probation board, in response to identified need. Any speculative private

¹⁰ NI Housing Market Review and Perspectives 2015-2018, NIHE

sector developments will also need to demonstrate need associated with their proposed type of accommodation. Planning applications should be accompanied by a statement of specialist housing need to demonstrate compliance with these policy requirements.

7.1.56 Given that specialist forms of housing may differ in scale and appearance to conventional housing, it is important that the location requirements, such as access to local shops and services, are balanced with the need to protect the established character of existing residential areas. It should be noted that as specialist residential accommodation does not meet the needs of the general population, such development will be exempt from affordable housing obligations.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓



Policy HOU9 – Traveller accommodation

Planning permission will be granted for traveller facilities where:

- a. There is an identified need for the specific type of traveller accommodation proposed; and
- b. It is located on land zoned for traveller-specific accommodation.

Proposals for facilities on non-zoned land will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that there is no suitable zoned land available for development.

In all cases, planning applications for traveller facilities will be assessed against the following criteria:

- c. The proposal is compatible with the surrounding context, protecting environmental amenity and protecting residential amenity;
- d. There is suitable provision of utilities, including running water, toilet facilities and waste disposal;
- e. The layout of the site ensures adequate space for turning, servicing and parking on site;
- f. The proposals will deliver convenient access to key local services, including health services, education facilities, public transport, employment opportunities and open space for sport and recreation; and
- g. Landscaping provision shall ensure integration of the site into the landscape without harming the character of the area, avoiding any impact on important features of the natural environment.

Justification and amplification

7.1.57 In accordance with the SPPS, the LDP will identify suitable traveller site(s) within the local policies plan. In addition to the protection of existing traveller accommodation, the zoning of sufficient land will allow for the provision of new facilities to meet any need that is likely to arise during the planning period. There is therefore an assumption that new traveller accommodation should be provided on zoned land in the first instance.

7.1.58 In accordance with the SPPS need will be identified within an up to date HNA / HMA. An up to date traveller accommodation needs assessment, produced by periodically by NIHE, can also assist in ensuring proposed provision matches identified needs. At a local level, given an increasing desire within the traveller community for more conventional, settled housing solutions,¹¹ it is important that the facilities provided are appropriate to the need identified.

¹¹ *Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2014-2018, NIHE*

7.1.59 As outlined in the SPPS, traveller facilities include:

- **Group housing schemes** – conventional housing that caters for travellers’ desire to live together in extended family groups;
- **Serviced sites** – sites that provide facilities for travellers residing in static ‘mobile home’ type accommodation; and
- **Transit sites** – land with basic services for temporary use by travellers who wish to remain nomadic.

7.1.60 The criteria-based approach to the provision of traveller accommodation expands upon the SPPS requirements to ensure compatibility with neighbouring uses, adequate landscaping and the provision of supporting services (workspaces, play spaces and parking). However, the Belfast policy seeks to address a broader range of local issues including access to key facilities, provision of utilities, safe road access and avoiding the potential for noise and other disturbance. These requirements will be applicable when considering redevelopment or extension of existing traveller facilities as well as new provision.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy HOU10 – Housing management areas (HMAs)

Within designated HMAs, planning permission will only be granted for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and/or flats/apartments where the total number of HMOs and flats/apartments combined would not as a result exceed 20% of all dwelling units within an HMA.

Outside of designated HMAs planning permission will only be granted for HMOs where the number of HMOs would not as a result exceed 10% of all dwelling units on that road or street. Where such a street is in excess of 600 metres in length, the 10% threshold will be calculated on the basis of existing residential units within 300 metres of either side of the proposal on that street.

Proposals for conversion back to single dwelling units will be supported, subject to meeting all other policy requirements.

Justification and amplification

7.1.61 The SPPS notes that planning authorities should seek to facilitate sustainable housing growth in response to changing housing need, progress policies, plans and proposals that can improve the health and wellbeing of local communities and help build a strong and shared society. Carefully managing the variety of house types, sizes and tenures will help to meet the diverse needs of all the community. In some areas of Belfast, a high concentration of intensified forms of housing have already led to difficulties in maintaining balanced communities. Such intensified forms of housing include:

- HMOs as defined within the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (NI) 2016;
- Self-contained flats or apartments created through the sub-division of larger residential units; and
- Newly constructed apartment developments.

7.1.62 As well as the loss of traditional family housing, the infrastructure within such areas was not designed to cope with the increased population enabled through these types of development, leading to a decline in residential amenity and difficulties relating to car parking, waste collection and noise and other disturbances. The HMAs will ensure that the residential character in such areas is protected from further harm and that new HMOs and flat conversions are diverted away from areas that are experiencing problems associated with the over-proliferation of these intensive forms of housing.

7.1.63 This supports wider LDP aims of shaping quality and sustainable residential development, providing a mix of housing that create more balanced communities, increasing density without town cramming. Whilst it is recognised that HMOs and self-contained flats make an important contribution to the private rented sector,

providing choice and assisting with meeting a range of community needs, the location of these intensive forms of accommodation must be carefully managed.

7.1.64 The level of intensive forms of housing within an HMA will be measured by adding together:

1. The number of HMOs recorded under the HMO Licencing scheme¹²;
2. The number of planning approvals for HMOs not yet licensed; and
3. The number of units with planning approval for new build apartments and apartments created through conversion/sub-division.

The total will then be divided by the total number of dwelling units within an HMA.

7.1.65 In exceptional circumstances an HMO or sub-division in an HMA may be acceptable, providing it does not give rise to intensification including an increase in the number of bedrooms. For example, a proposal to convert an existing eight-bedroom HMO to two four-bedroom HMO flats may be acceptable, providing there is no increase in the number of bedrooms.

7.1.66 The level of HMOs outside an HMA will be measured by adding together:

1. The number of HMOs recorded under the HMO Licencing scheme¹²; and
2. The number of planning approvals for HMOs not yet licensed.

The total will then be divided by the total number of dwelling units within the street. If a street is longer than 600m, the total number of dwellings in the street will relate to the total properties within 300m either side of the property on the street.

7.1.67 New build apartment developments are excluded from the calculation outside HMAs. They are purpose built with the associated infrastructure to mitigate against issues associated with intensive forms of housing. Similarly, sub-division of existing residential units into apartments are excluded from the calculation outside HMAs. Residential design policies will ensure that such developments can only take place where the existing unit is large enough to create a quality residential environment once the sub-division takes place.

7.1.68 These types of development are likely to be most appropriate in highly accessible locations that satisfy the density policies outlined in HOU4, whilst meeting the broader residential design requirements. Please note that designated intensive housing nodes are also excluded from the 10% cap outside of HMAs (see policy HOU11).

¹² *The Houses in Multiple Occupation (NI) Act 2016 will transfer responsibility for regulating HMOs from the Housing Executive to District Councils. Prior to the introduction of HMO Licensing, references will apply to the existing HMO Registration Scheme (www.nihe.gov.uk/index/advice/renting_privately/hmo.htm)*



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- 7.1.69 In all cases, intensive forms of housing whether within or outside HMAs will still be carefully assessed against the relevant criteria set out in policies RD1, RD2 and RD3. Local character, environmental quality and residential amenity, privacy of existing residents and scale and massing will continue to be particularly important considerations. Although, sui generis, HMOs are residential in nature and will therefore be assessed in relation to residential design policies.
- 7.1.70 The HMAs will be designated within the local policies plan, based on evidence available relating to concentrations of HMOs and flat conversions. In advance of the local policies plan, these policies will be applied to the HMO policy areas outlined within designation HMO2 of the HMOs subject plan for Belfast City Council area 2015.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy HOU11 – Intensive housing nodes

Within designated intensive housing nodes, planning permission will be granted for HMOs and flats/apartments. This will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.1.71 Regional planning policy encourages increased density within existing urban areas. This approach must strike a careful balance between meeting housing needs whilst ensuring well-designed developments appropriate to their locations and avoiding town cramming.
- 7.1.72 The SPPS recognises that more sustainable housing development needs to be promoted within existing urban areas, with higher density housing developments to be promoted in city centres and other locations that benefit from high accessibility, to help maximise the use of existing infrastructure. Increases in density are most desirable in areas where there is good sustainable transport connectivity.
- 7.1.73 Shared forms of housing, which include HMOs and self-contained flats are an important component of current and future housing provision to meet the diverse housing needs of all of the community. However, a more geographically dispersed and less concentrated provision of shared housing is considered a more sustainable approach. This approach will help to ease pressures experienced within designated HMAs where there is an over-proliferation of intensive forms of housing.

7.1.74 The intensive housing nodes will be designated within the local policies plan. In advance of this, this policy will be applied to the existing HMO nodes outlined within designation HMO 4 of HMOs subject plan for Belfast City Council area 2015.

7.1.75 This policy is designed to meet the need and demand for shared forms of housing and direct it to appropriate areas where it can be accommodated and can contribute to regeneration objectives. Intensive housing nodes therefore seek to prioritise locations with good sustainable transport connectivity and strong access to employment and educational opportunity, such as appropriate locations within the city centre, local centres, close to rail stations or halts and on city corridors.

7.1.76 Proposals for HMOs and flats/apartments within intensive housing areas will still be carefully assessed against the relevant residential design requirements set out in policies RD1, RD2 and RD3. Local character, environmental quality and residential amenity, privacy of existing residents and scale and massing will continue to be particularly important considerations within intensive housing areas.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy HOU12 – Large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA)

Planning permission will be granted for large scale purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) where all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The proposal is easily accessible to higher education Institution campuses by sustainable transport modes and is not within an established residential area (see appendix B);
- b. The development consists of a minimum of 200 occupants. This will not preclude proposals for smaller incremental extensions or consolidations of existing halls of residence and phased development of larger schemes;
- c. The development provides a quality residential environment for students in accordance with the space standards for HMOs set out in appendix C;
- d. The development has appropriate management in place to create a positive and safe living environment for students whilst minimising any potential negative impacts from occupants; and
- e. The development meets an identified need for the type of accommodation proposed, demonstrated through submission of a statement of student housing need.

Planning permission will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements. S76 planning agreements are likely to be required in relation to PBMSA to provide a greater level of certainty in relation to management arrangements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.1.77 The council recognise that students studying and living within the city make a significant contribution to the local and regional economy. For Belfast, the continued growth in the number of students wishing to enter third level education in our universities and further education colleges; the re-location of the Ulster University to the north of the city centre and growth in the international student market all present significant opportunities for the city.
- 7.1.78 However, the rapid expansion of student numbers over the last two decades has also led to a range of negative side effects or 'externalities' to the presence of a large student population, in particular in relation to pressures on housing, local amenities and other environmental impacts. Taking the learning from experiences of areas such as the Holylands, student housing provision needs to be well planned and appropriately managed to ensure that there is a more positive integration with any existing communities.
- 7.1.79 PBMSA is accommodation that is built, or converted, with the specific intent of being occupied by students undertaking a full-time course of higher or further education –

either individual en-suite units or sharing facilities. The inclusion of the word 'managed' highlights the importance of such accommodation being centrally supervised by the developer/ landlord to provide welfare support for students and to ensure compliance with any code of conduct or tenancy agreements, etc.

7.1.80 Consequently, occupancy of PBMSA will usually be conditioned to limit occupation to students, particularly during term times. A management plan will be required to ensure a quality, safe and attractive place for residents. Management plans will include detailed arrangements for waste storage and collection, safety and security of residents and drop-off and pick-up arrangements. The requirement for a minimum of 200 occupants reflects the fact that full time management arrangements may not be economic for complexes of less than 200 students.

7.1.81 Some operators may seek to utilise bed spaces outside of term times to provide short-stay holiday accommodation and may often help contribute towards the viability of the overall development. Such arrangements will be assessed on their own merits on a case-by-case basis, but would only be permitted for a specified period of time using occupancy conditions, ensuring this is subservient to the main function to provide accommodation for students.

7.1.82 The policy approach supports current regional policies and guidance that aim to raise residential design standards and ensure the key principles behind good place-making are implemented in urban areas. It also recognises the wider economic, cultural and community benefits of achieving excellence in design. This policy will also help to achieve the objectives of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), which seeks to increase the residential population in the city centre, including "appropriate student housing", and argues that "student housing should be carefully directed, located and managed".

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		✓



Policy HOU13 – Short-term let accommodation

Planning permission will be granted for short-term let accommodation, whether new build or change of use, where the following criteria are met:

- a. It strengthens and diversifies the range of short-stay visitor accommodation in the city;
- b. It is accessible by public transport;
- c. It is sited within an existing tourism cluster or in close proximity to a visitor attraction;
- d. Has appropriate management arrangements in place to ensure a positive and safe living environment whilst minimising any potential negative impacts;
- e. The site is not located within a designated HMA (see policy HOU10), unless it can be demonstrated that the development is needed to meet a specific unsatisfied demand in that location; and
- f. In the case of a change from permanent residential use, part of the property must be retained as permanent residential housing.

Where all other policy requirements, such as those relating to design quality, residential density, affordable housing, transport provision and open space provision, are not met, conditions will be applied to limit occupation to short-term lets only. If appropriate, management arrangements may be secured using s76 planning agreements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.1.83 Alternative forms of tourist accommodation in the form of short-term let accommodation provide greater choice for visitors to Belfast. For the purposes of policy HOU13, short-term let accommodation includes the following accommodation types:
- **Apart-hotels:** A type of hotel providing self-catering apartments for rent, as well as other normal hotel facilities;
 - **Serviced apartments:** Fully furnished apartments available for short-term or long-term stay, providing hotel-like amenities such as room service, fitness suites, laundry room and recreation room;
 - **Self-catering apartments:** Furnished accommodation for visitors who are provided with the means to prepare and cook their own meals; and
 - **Short-term holiday lets:** Multiple short-term residential tenancies (of 1-90 days), where utilities, television and internet are included in the rent.
- 7.1.84 Short-term let accommodation must also be considered in the context of other visitor offerings in the city, such as hotels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts and youth hostels and how provision of such accommodation may affect the viability of these uses. Therefore, proposals for short-term let accommodation will be assessed

in terms of how they would strengthen and diversify the range of short-stay visitor accommodation available in the city.

- 7.1.85 As part of the tourism offer of the city, the policy also aims to ensure that short-term let accommodation is conveniently located within existing tourism clusters and in close proximity to visitor attractions. In line with wider sustainability goals, there should also be good access to public transport.
- 7.1.86 Proposals for short-term let accommodation will need to be appropriately managed to minimise the risk of adverse effects on nearby uses. Whilst all proposals must demonstrate the ability to manage accommodation satisfactorily, the requirement for formal management plans will be judged on a case-by-case basis, based on the size of scheme. It is likely, for example, that management plans will be more appropriate for larger purpose built short-term visitor accommodation (e.g. over 30 units), rather than small scale/partial change of use of existing residential dwellings. Where appropriate, s76 planning agreements may be used to secure particular management arrangements proposed.
- 7.1.87 Given the importance of appropriate management, it is acknowledged that short-term let accommodation has the potential to exacerbate some of the problems already associated with concentrations of HMO's and flats/apartments in HMAs (see policy HOU10). Accordingly, the policy seeks to avoid short-term let accommodation within existing HMA's unless it can be demonstrated that it is needed to meet a specific unmet demand for tourist accommodation in a specific locality. Other forms of tourist accommodation may still be appropriate in such locations subject to wider policies on overnight visitor accommodation.
- 7.1.88 It is vitally important that such accommodation does not compromise the supply of conventional housing and the high-level aim to grow the population of Belfast. As more and more properties are being offered for short-term let, assisted by the rise in on-line hosting sites and the lucrative returns available to property owners, the council has taken a proactive stance to actively manage the supply of this type of accommodation. Accordingly, where the proposal is to change the use of existing permanent housing, the council will require part of the property to be retained as permanent residential housing, in addition to meeting the wider requirements of policy HOU3 on protection of existing residential accommodation.
- 7.1.89 As short-term let accommodation falls outside of the residential use class, the change of use to permanent residential use is considered a material change of use requiring planning permission. Such an application would be assessed in line with the wider policy requirements for residential development. Where proposals for short-term let accommodation fail to meet minimum standards for residential accommodation, conditions will be used to limit use of the property to short-term



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lets only (i.e rentals to the same persons(s) for no longer than 90 consecutive nights).

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	

7.2 Urban design

Introduction

- 7.2.1 High quality design that takes account of the history and unique features of a place is fundamental to positive planning and placemaking. The SPPS acknowledges that high quality urban design is a powerful tool for achieving a higher quality of life, greater economic vitality and efficient use of resources. Promoting and protecting high design standards is considered intrinsic to the sustainable growth of the city and can add value to people's lives.
- 7.2.2 More recently Belfast's economy has seen a rapid change with new investment and increased market confidence focussing energy onto the form and image of the city. However future growth within Belfast needs to be managed appropriately to ensure that it occurs in the most suitable locations, enabling the city to flourish as an increasingly attractive and vibrant place in which to live, work and visit, in a way which does not compromise those unique attributes that contribute to its local distinctiveness.
- 7.2.3 It is therefore important that the policy framework continues to require high standards of design in all applications to ensure that the quality of the built environment within the city is preserved and enhanced where needed and has a focus on positive placemaking. Good urban design principles not only apply to the individual design of buildings but should be equally applicable in how they are arranged, how they relate to each other and their surrounding context and how they contribute positively to the creation of good spaces. While individual characteristics of each building, site and area of the city will need to be carefully considered where development is proposed, this policy sets out the general urban design principles upon which such development should be based.

Policy aims

- 7.2.4 The urban design policies will seek to protect and enhance the unique urban structure of Belfast and will aim to:
- Ensure new development is of high quality design that responds to its context while respecting and enhancing the distinctive character of the city;
 - Promote a masterplanning approach in the case of large scale development; and
 - Balance conservation and preservation of the built environment with new development designed to improve and be a driver for future growth of the city.
- 7.2.5 The urban design policy should not lead to a rigid and formulaic approach to decision making but instead encourage good design and responsible innovation, originality or initiative as outlined within the SPPS.



Policy DES1 – Principles of urban design

Planning permission will be granted for new development that is of a high quality, sustainable design that makes a positive contribution to placemaking by:

- a. Responding positively to local context and character through architecture and urban form that addresses matters such as height, scale, massing, proportion, plot width, building lines, rhythm, roofscape, materials and any impact on built and natural heritage;
- b. Positively reinforcing a sense of place by demonstrating that locally distinctive features have been identified, incorporated and enhanced where appropriate;
- c. Providing adequate levels of enclosure and continuity to promote clear and understandable urban form which users can orientate themselves around and move through easily;
- d. Creating adaptable and well connected public realm that supports welcoming pedestrian environments;
- e. Fostering inclusive design that promotes accessibility, supports safe communities and the natural surveillance of public spaces to reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour;
- f. Promoting a diversity of land uses that provide active frontages and ensure vibrancy throughout the day;
- g. Promoting the efficient use of land by the development of densities appropriate to site context;
- h. Promoting healthy environments and sustainable development that support and encourage walking, cycling and access to public transport that maximises connections to the city's network of green and blue infrastructure;
- i. Maximising energy efficiencies in buildings through the integration of passive design and renewable energy solutions in their layout, orientation, siting and design, provided the technology is appropriate to the location in terms of any visual, amenity or other environmental impact it may have;
- j. Ensuring no undue effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties or public spaces by minimising the impact of overshadowing and loss of daylight; and
- k. Ensuring that on-site vehicle parking provision and movement, where required, and any external bin storage areas do not have a negative impact at street level which would result in the creation of dead frontage or unnecessary clutter.

In all cases applications will be expected to adhere to supplementary planning guidance.

Justification and amplification

- 7.2.6 A knowledge and understanding of the local context and character is necessary in order to achieve high quality, sustainable design that successfully integrates new development with existing built form. This requires a thorough understanding of the city's physical form, historical development, uses, character areas, relationships between different areas of the city and patterns of activity which are already established. Getting to grips with the contextual backdrop at an early stage of the design process will help to develop a sound concept around which any design is then structured.
- 7.2.7 The council will refuse schemes where design is considered to be poor. Examples of poor quality design may include design solutions that are inappropriate to their context, layouts which are not legible and fail to respond to local patterns of development and schemes which fail to take positive opportunities to improve the appearance of an area or the way it functions. The council's policies and guidance are not to be utilised as a template for minimum standards, but are to encourage innovation in the design and layout of buildings and their immediate and wider environment. They are applicable to all new development including alterations and extensions to existing buildings.
- 7.2.8 Local distinctiveness encompasses the unique physical, social and economic characteristics of a place. It encapsulates those elements that set a place apart from others and includes those elements that contribute to its character, individual sense of place and local identity. This could include its landscape character, history, buildings, traditions and archaeology, as well as characteristics such as views, vistas, the scale and layout of buildings, materials, the form and the distribution of open space, all of which can contribute to the local distinctiveness of a place, differentiating it from anywhere else.
- 7.2.9 Shopfronts contribute significantly to the overall character and appearance of an area and therefore require careful consideration to ensure they make a positive contribution to the city's sense of place and local distinctiveness. Ever-changing commercial pressures have resulted in a rise in alterations and replacement shopfronts on our high streets and local retail cores, managing this change is essential to the vitality and character of these areas. New and replacement shopfronts should complement the design of the host building and relate to the elevational qualities of the upper floors and where appropriate characteristics and detailing of neighbouring shopfronts, particularly in the case of listed buildings and areas of built heritage.
- 7.2.10 Proposed development layouts should include a clear and legible structure which demonstrates positive relationships between the built-form, streets and public space with provisions made for private or shared amenity space. The height-to-width ratios of streets and spaces should also form part of this structure to assist in



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defining hierarchy and allow for adequate levels of enclosure and continuity. Opportunities should be taken where appropriate to reknit the urban fabric where gap sites are present or where buildings/blocks have been damaged.

- 7.2.11 High quality design should aim to create public spaces which allow for adaptable uses that connect and enhance existing spaces. The choice of materials should complement the character of surrounding buildings, particularly in areas of historic interest, while having regard to how differing functions of public and private spaces are to be defined. An integrated approach should be taken in relation to the design and siting of features within the public realm including seating, signage, bins, railings and cycle storage, to ensure that they are carefully coordinated and integrated into the design. Lighting will also be an important consideration in any streetscape improvement works.
- 7.2.12 Trees and landscape also add value to the quality of public realm and can play a key role in the integration of public space with surrounding areas. Where landscape proposals form part of a development scheme, due cognisance should be given to the retention of natural features where possible. This would include seeking the retention of existing trees in and around the site and the provision for new tree planting in cases where trees are removed as a result of development.
- 7.2.13 Safety and the perception of safety are important issues when considering the design and layout of development. Good design can minimise the opportunities for crime to occur and help to reduce the fear of crime. The informal surveillance of public space from within buildings is an important concept. Surveillance is maximised when main habitable rooms and primary entrances are located within street frontages, with the more private rooms and private gardens placed to the rear of buildings. Large areas of blank walls in street facades should be avoided, as they reduce the potential for surveillance and do not contribute to the streetscape. Where new streets or access ways pass through a site they should be overlooked by development and should not pass next to rear gardens or courtyards. Clear sight lines and good lighting should be provided and recessed areas avoided.
- 7.2.14 Proposed development layout should promote the sustainable transport hierarchy which aims to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists, followed closely by public transport, to achieve high levels of flexibility. It should maximise future travel options, limiting walking distances and maintaining active and safe flows of movement within the city. Opportunities for sustainable and active travel increases the range of transport options available to users enhancing the levels of connectivity within the city. These can include dedicated walking routes, cycle lanes as well as public transport use and can offer a cheaper alternative to car-based travel.
- 7.2.15 As part of its overall efforts to promote renewable energy and enhance energy efficiency, the council seeks to facilitate and encourage greater integration of

renewable energy technologies, both in the design of new buildings and through the appropriate retrofitting of such technologies to existing buildings. For many buildings this will mean increased consideration of the benefits of small-scale renewable energy technologies (often referred to as 'micro-generation'). Micro-generation represents the production of heat and/or electricity (generally less than 50kW capacity) from low or zero carbon energy sources. In addition to the obvious carbon benefits, this also plays an important part in diversifying our energy mix and ensuring security of energy supply. It can allow energy to be produced and consumed locally, help alleviate fuel poverty (especially in off-gas network areas) and play a part in meeting renewable energy targets.

- 7.2.16 Some types of new development may provide greater opportunity for maximising the benefits that can be derived from integrated renewable technology and/or passive solar design, such as large-scale urban development, public sector development or buildings set in extensive grounds. However, there is scope to incorporate appropriate measures into the design of many different scales of development. The council will support proposals that incorporate Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) or comparable standards, applicants are advised to embed sustainable principles from the earliest stage possible.
- 7.2.17 The council recognises that the amenity of existing buildings, spaces and streets can be impacted in a number of ways by development. This includes:
- The detrimental loss of daylight and sunlight to existing and adjacent occupiers;
 - Loss of privacy and outlook due to the proximity and design of developments;
 - Harmful noise, odour, vibration and air pollution from existing and proposed developments; and
 - Potential to impact highway safety and cause detrimental microclimate effects.
- 7.2.18 New development should therefore be compatible with the local environment and conditions, with the design and layout enabling sufficient sunlight and daylight to penetrate into and between buildings, while ensuring that adjoining land or properties are protected from unacceptable overshadowing where possible.
- 7.2.19 Careful attention must be given to the design of basement or semi-basement car parks to ensure that they are safe to use and do not have a negative impact at street level by the creation of dead frontage. Surface parking under a raised ground floor podium can also create the same effect, particularly where ground floor elevations comprise large sections of ventilation grilles and louvres. This approach can remove life from the street and contribute to the creation of a threatening and unpleasant environment. Such an approach to the provision of car parking will be considered unacceptable.



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7.2.20 In the case of design features relating to external storage, the location of bins must not intrude on the street scene and should therefore be contained within a dedicated and suitably designed structure within the boundary of the premises. Or alternatively contained within an appropriate front wall, fence or hedge.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy DES2 – Masterplanning approach for major development

Planning permission will be granted for major development where it accords with the following masterplanning principles:

- a. Adopt a holistic approach to site assembly, layout and design that is mindful of adjacent sites, where suitable for redevelopment, while avoiding prejudice to future development potential and/or quality where development is of a significant scale and prominence;
- b. Promote opportunities for urban repair and greater connectivity to neighbouring areas by minimising or mitigating physical barriers that create undue effort or separation, informed by feedback from existing communities;
- c. Maximise solutions to deliver energy efficiencies that seek to achieve BREEAM 'excellent' or comparable standard;
- d. Promote higher density residential and mixed use development along city corridors and at gateway locations;
- e. Contribute positively to the improvement of the public realm within, and in the proximity of, the development site through the use of high quality hard and soft landscape materials and street furniture;
- f. Include an appropriate landscape management and maintenance plan, early in the planning process, as an integral part of all landscape proposals;
- g. Enhance the waterside character and setting of the River Lagan, including the improvement of existing and provision of new access points and new cross river connections where appropriate;
- h. Reference unique parts of the city through the realisation of key landmarks within prominent or gateway locations;
- i. Seek to include where appropriate the provision of public art; and
- j. Retain existing trees within and around the site and make adequate provision to allow them to mature while ensuring the continuance of tree cover through new tree planting.

Justification and amplification

- 7.2.21 The LDP sets out a masterplanning approach in order to effectively manage the form, appearance and phasing of major new developments. Where major development sites form part of a larger framework/masterplan for an area or create the opportunity for compatible adjacencies to occur, a holistic and comprehensive approach should be adopted. Being mindful of the future potential of adjacent sites and synergies that could be created, will help to avoid piecemeal schemes and enable development to occur in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner.
- 7.2.22 This policy shares a number of themes with the community cohesion policy in highlighting the positive role planning can play in seeking the removal of barriers to shared space. It also encourages high quality design initiatives that aim to alleviate defensive infrastructure by encouraging community led design of shared space that takes account of the overarching policies of placemaking and community cohesion. These initial interventions should focus on areas where levels of segregation are most deeply felt.
- 7.2.23 Energy efficiency for all new development will be considered from both the macro (site design and layout) and micro (building construction) scale, as it is essential that they respect the needs and opportunities within the wider site context as well as in relation to the individual building(s). As some good practice energy saving measures may have building regulations implications, such as passive or active solar installations, advice should be sought accordingly. BREEAM sets benchmarks for standard categories of development, such as offices, retail developments, education buildings and healthcare buildings, and offers a bespoke scheme for non-standard buildings. In this regard the LDP policy seeks to promote BREEAM 'excellent' standards and similar appraisal procedures to be used, and will require them for major applications.
- 7.2.24 In relation to city corridors and gateway locations, new residential and mixed use development should be constructed up to the maximum density that is deemed appropriate in accordance with proper planning and urban design principles. Higher density levels can be appropriate in redeveloping brownfield sites, particularly in relation to increasing massing around local centres, public transport nodes, parks and riverfront locations. In these instances the basic tenants of good urban design practice would still apply.
- 7.2.25 High quality design should aim to create public spaces which allow for adaptable uses that connect and enhance existing spaces. The choice of materials should complement the character of surrounding buildings, particularly in areas of historic interest, while having due regard to how differing functions of public and private spaces are to be defined. The opportunity should be taken within new



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developments to incorporate usable green spaces in addition to hard landscape areas, particularly when addressing a shortfall experienced across the city centre.

7.2.26 Where hard landscaping is proposed it is expected that the design should pick up on paving materials found in the surrounding area in addition to the appropriate sizing of paving. An integrated approach should be taken in relation to the design and siting of features within the public realm including seating, signage, bins, railings, lighting, public art and cycle storage etc. to ensure that these elements are carefully coordinated and integrated into the design. This also applies to any drainage arrangements which should be robust, uncomplicated and easily serviceable. Where site conditions permit, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) should be designed as an integral part of the landscape design and open space provision.

7.2.27 Trees and landscape add value to the quality of public realm and can play a key role in the integration of public space with surrounding areas. In cases of hard landscape areas, trees should be carefully specified and sited to allow adequate soil volume, light, water and air for healthy growth while avoiding raised planters which may result in restricted tree growth. Where landscape proposals form part of a development scheme, due cognisance should be given to the retention of natural features where possible. This would include seeking the retention of existing trees in and around the site and the provision for new tree planting in cases where trees are removed as a result of development.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy DES3 – Tall buildings

Planning permission will be granted for tall buildings, defined as any building 35m above ordinance datum (AOD) or taller or those which are significantly higher than their surroundings, where they:

- a. Are of a height and scale that is sensitive to the context of their surroundings and are proportionate to their location;
- b. Do not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of listed buildings, designated conservation areas, areas of townscape character (ATCs) and historic monuments/gardens;
- c. Respect key public views and vistas within, across, into and out of the city, including important views of landmark buildings and landscape features;
- d. Contribute to a cluster or an interesting skyline when grouped together;
- e. Support locations of civic or visual importance including major transport nodes, civic spaces and areas of high employment;
- f. Serve to provide an accessible pedestrian friendly environment of a human scale through the provision of active frontages, high quality landscape treatment and local public realm enhancements at street level;
- g. Minimise the effects of overshadowing and overlooking especially within predominantly residential areas and avoid the effects of wind turbulence and other adverse microclimatic impact; and
- h. Comply with all necessary civil aviation requirements and not interfere, to an unacceptable degree, with telecommunications, television and radio transmission networks.

Existing tall buildings within Belfast will not set a policy precedent for similar development on adjacent sites. In all cases applications for tall buildings will be expected to adhere to supplementary planning guidance.

Justification and amplification

7.2.28 In terms of building height, Belfast is predominantly a low lying city with the majority of commercial buildings along its main streets being under the threshold of six storeys, even within the city core area. The low lying nature of Belfast means that it is relatively sensitive to the impact of tall buildings. If not managed appropriately, tall buildings can have an adverse impact on the built environment. This may include a damaging effect on the city's historic assets, including the settings of listed buildings, conservation areas, areas of townscape character (ATCs) and historic monuments/gardens or their potential to impact negatively on the skyline of the city or its key views.

7.2.29 Tall buildings may be considered acceptable within the appropriate context where it can be demonstrated they will not have an unacceptable impact on their



Figure 7.4: Tall buildings (over 35m¹³ AOD) existing and under construction in Belfast City Centre



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surroundings and where they are of high quality design in their own right while enhancing their immediate location and wider setting. They should generally be limited to areas where existing clusters of taller buildings have already been established, as well as being sited in locations within the street pattern that terminate or accentuate key vistas and where they place emphasis on areas of civic or visual importance. While the LDP seeks to increase residential and employment

¹³ 35 metre height includes plant and equipment on roof of buildings.

opportunities through higher densities, this will need careful evaluation across the city and in cases may be achieved without the need for a tall building solution.

7.2.30 In addition to the normal requirements in relation to planning applications, applications for any new building of 35m (AOD) or taller, irrespective of location, must be accompanied by a tall building design statement. The 35m height threshold will include extensions to existing buildings and the addition of plant and/or structural projections.

7.2.31 The tall building design statement should include an assessment of the proposal in relation to the local context and any impact on listed buildings, areas of special designation, the skyline, landmarks and key public views. It should also explain the design rationale for the proposal which covers issues such as sunlight and overshadowing, visualisations from key viewpoints and drawings/visualisations demonstrating the form and character of the proposed building.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy DES4 – Advertising and signage

Planning permission will be granted for advertisements and signage where it has been demonstrated that they:

- a. Are of good design quality, are located sensitively within the streetscape and do not have a negative impact on amenity;**
- b. Will not result in clutter when read in addition to existing advertising and signage in the area;**
- c. Will not adversely impact listed buildings, conservation areas or ATCs and their settings; and**
- d. Do not prejudice road safety and the convenience of road users.**

In all cases applications for advertising consent will be expected to adhere to supplementary planning guidance.

Justification and amplification

7.2.32 The display of advertisements is an ever-increasing feature of our main streets and commercial centres. The council considers it important to control the proliferation of advertisements and signs, of increasing size, illumination and digitalisation that if placed insensitively can have a damaging impact on individual buildings, streets and areas of the city.



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- 7.2.33 Advertisements and signs fixed onto buildings should respect and maintain the character, scale and architectural form and detailing of the existing property and its surroundings. A well designed and sensitively appropriate advertisement can contribute positively to the character and appearance of an area.
- 7.2.34 Under the provision of the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, the interest of “amenity” and “public safety” are the only considerations that can be assessed in the exercise of advertisement control. With regard to advertisements and signs the term amenity is usually understood to mean its effect upon the appearance of the building or structure or the immediate neighbourhood where it is displayed, or its impact over long distance views.
- 7.2.35 Advertisements by their very nature are designed to attract the attention of passers-by and therefore have the potential to have an impact on public safety. The council will expect all advertisements or signs to accord with the supplementary guidance provided with regard to its impact of public safety. Where appropriate the council will consult other relevant public bodies who have an interest in the safe display of advertisement.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
			✓

7.3 Residential design

Introduction

- 7.3.1 High quality design is a key objective of the LDP. Housing quality is an important element of wider city regeneration and will ensure that new housing integrates sympathetically with the existing character and built form of the city. This is particularly important when considering higher densities of development to achieve the regional policy aspirations for sustainable patterns of residential development.

Policy aims

- 7.3.2 The policies relating to the design of residential development are seeking to promote quality residential development that creates places that are attractive, locally distinctive and appropriate to their surroundings.

Policy RD1 – New residential developments

Planning permission will be granted for new residential development where it is in accordance with general urban design policies and where it is demonstrated that the proposal:

- a. Will not create conflict with adjacent land uses, remaining in conformity with the character of any established residential areas (see appendix B);
- b. Does not unduly affect the privacy or amenity of neighbouring residents, including overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, dominance, noise or other disturbance;
- c. Makes provision for, or is, accessible and convenient to public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure;
- d. Provides appropriate open space;
- e. Keeps hard surfacing to a minimum;
- f. Creates a quality and sustainable residential environment in accordance with the space standards set out in appendix C;
- g. Does not contain any units which are wholly in the rear of the property without direct, safe and secure access from the public street; and
- h. Ensures that living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms have access to natural light.

For new-build apartment developments over 30 units, in addition to the above criteria, planning permission will be granted where:

- i. Management arrangements are in place to ensure a positive and safe living environment for occupants;
- j. Entrance lobbys and communal spaces are appropriate in scale;
- k. Apartments contain designated internal storage space separate to areas containing boilers and other utility infrastructure;



- l. Provision is made for the storage and disposal of waste;**
- m. Appropriate provision is made for safe, convenient and secure cycle parking; and**
- n. Communal facilities, such as common rooms, gyms or laundry rooms, are provided as appropriate to serve future residents.**

S76 planning agreements may be required to secure management arrangements where these cannot be adequately addressed by the imposition of conditions alone.

Justification and amplification

- 7.3.3 Regional planning policy places an emphasis on placemaking and requires all development to be of a high design quality, respect local context and make a positive contribution to an area's character and distinctiveness. The SPPS requires robust and comprehensive policies within the LDP to set out the quality of development that will be expected.
- 7.3.4 The SPPS advises that "good design can change lives, communities and neighbourhoods, bring communities together and attract business investment. It can further sustainable development and encourage healthier living; promote accessibility and inclusivity; and contribute to how safe places are and feel". This policy therefore supports regional policy and guidance and aligns with the LDP's strategic objectives.
- 7.3.5 For residential developments it is particularly important to have significant regard to site context and be based on an overall design concept that draws upon the positive aspects of the character and appearance of the area. Context is particularly important for infill housing, backland development or redevelopment schemes in established residential areas.
- 7.3.6 Whilst policy encourages housing development within the existing urban footprint, this must not have the consequence of significantly eroding the character and amenity of existing areas, for example through inappropriate design or overdevelopment. Unacceptable harm must not be caused to local character, environmental quality or residential amenity in a residential area. Particular regard should be given to spacing between buildings, safeguarding of privacy, scale and massing of buildings, use of materials and impact on existing landscape and public amenity spaces. The cumulative impact of ancillary activities such as car parking and refuse storage can undermine established residential areas and should be given due consideration.

- 7.3.7 The SPPS promotes sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need for motorised transport, encourage active travel and facilitate travel by public transport. In addition to the requirements of transport policies, residential developments must have regard for sustainable movement patterns and seek to reduce reliance on the private car, foster movement by pedestrians and cyclists and provide convenient access to public transport. Roads must be well planned and designed to contribute to the overall quality of the development and create a permeable layout with a network of interconnected carriageways and, where appropriate, a number of access points to the development. Road layouts which meet technical requirements but which do not pay due regard to the quality of the residential development and the need to foster sustainable movement patterns will be unacceptable. In the case of large scale apartment developments, appropriate provision should be made for the communal storage of bikes to help promote active travel.
- 7.3.8 Adequate quality private open space is required within residential development to provide recreational and social value. Private open space is also vital to the overall design quality of the development and can help promote biodiversity. Well-designed space around buildings can add greatly to the attractiveness of a development especially where principles of defensible open space are applied.
- 7.3.9 Private open spaces may take the form of gardens, patios, balconies, recessed balconies or terraces, depending on the characteristics of the development proposed and the surrounding context. In the case of large scale apartment developments, it will be important that private open space should be designed to provide shelter and privacy from neighbouring properties. Adaptable balconies that can become ventilated winter gardens are particularly welcome.
- 7.3.10 The amount of public open space within residential developments, including provision of children's play spaces, is addressed in policy OS3. In the case of large scale apartment developments, if, in exceptional circumstances, it can be demonstrated that physical constraints of the site prevent these requirements from being met, additional communal open space may be considered to offset any shortfall. Applicants should consider function, orientation, maintenance, scale and qualities of proposed communal open space. In some cases it may be necessary to provide a landscape strategy considering the provision of open space and how it meets the needs of all future residents of the apartment development. Well-designed formal or informal play facilities for children will be encouraged within large scale apartment developments.
- 7.3.11 Residential developments should not comprise excessive use of hard materials. Car parking should not dominate the residential environment and in instances where car parking is proposed within the built fabric of a building, such as an apartment development, this will only be acceptable where it will not result in a negative



impact on the street scene at ground level. Careful consideration should be given to the siting and organisation of car parking within an overall design for open space so that car parking does not negatively affect the use and appearance of open spaces. Where replacement of landscaped areas with hard surfacing would be inappropriate following completion of development, permanent retention of landscaping arrangements may be secured through the use of planning conditions or s76 planning agreements as appropriate.

- 7.3.12 Policy requirements relating to space standards, internal layout and natural light within residential development are intended to promote a quality residential environment for residents. In the case of large scale new-build apartment developments, such standards become increasingly important. Therefore, whilst proposals for large scale new-build apartment developments will be carefully assessed using the usual residential design requirements, there are additional considerations to ensure a quality residential environment for large scale apartment developments, including internal layout, security, management, amenity space and communal facilities.
- 7.3.13 The entrance to apartment buildings should be designed to provide a sense of security and safety for residents and visitors, maximising opportunities for natural surveillance. Entrances should be well lit, easily identified and fitted with appropriate access control systems. Large scale apartment developments will include a number of communal areas including lobbies, corridors and car parks. To ensure a quality residential environment and provide safety and security, all communal areas must be appropriate in scale, well lit and ventilated. Communal circulation spaces must be well-designed for future maintenance with quality, durable materials. Long internal, double-loaded corridors are discouraged.
- 7.3.14 Management plans are an appropriate mechanism to ensure a quality, safe and attractive place for residents to live and will typically include detailed arrangements for management and maintenance of the building, including any landscaped and amenity space. Arrangements for waste storage and collection, including recycling will be detailed. The safety and security of the residents is an important consideration and details of CCTV, access control systems and security lighting should be detailed in the planning application. If the proposal is for build-to-rent apartment then an accredited operator plan will be particularly welcome.
- 7.3.15 Useable and readily accessible storage space is important in all residential homes. Within higher density residential developments such as apartments there can be competing priorities for space. It is important that poor storage space doesn't impact on residents' enjoyment of habitable rooms or apartment living can become undesirable. To increase the functionality and desirability of apartment living it is important that residents have adequate storage facilities free of hot water cylinders,

boilers, heat exchangers or washing machines. Additional secure communal storage is encouraged within apartment buildings at basement or ground floor for seasonal use or occasional use. It is also important that appropriate provision is made alongside this for the communal storage and disposal of waste.

- 7.3.16 Other communal facilities, such as common rooms, gyms and laundry rooms should also be considered in large apartment buildings. These facilities can help to make apartment living more attractive and provide an additional amenity space for residents. Communal facilities can act as a social hub and encourage greater interaction amongst residents; enhancing community cohesion within the apartment development.
- 7.3.17 It is recognised that apartment living will make a significant contribution to the housing supply in the city and evidence suggests that large scale build-to-rent will become an increasingly prominent element of housing delivery. It should be noted that the exclusive use of residential accommodation for short-term holiday lettings, as opposed to permanent long-term residential lets, is considered a material change of use requiring separate planning consent.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓

Policy RD2 – Residential extensions and alterations

Planning permission will be granted for extensions or alterations to an existing residential property where the scale, massing, design and external materials of the proposal are appropriate to the built form and appearance of the existing property and will not detract from the character of an established residential area. This includes support for measures that enable people to stay within their own homes, such as physical adaptations and energy efficiency enhancements. Planning permission will be subject to proposals meeting all other policy requirements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.3.18 Regional planning policy places an emphasis on placemaking and requires all development to be of a high design quality, respect local context and make a positive contribution to an area’s character and distinctiveness. This policy therefore supports regional policy and guidance and aligns with the LDP’s overarching placemaking objectives.



Shaping a liveable place

- 7.3.19 A proposal to extend or alter a residential property can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the local environment. The main causes of harm arise where an extension is poorly designed, over-sized or badly sited, or where inappropriate alterations are proposed. Even small-scale changes can, by virtue of their cumulative impact over a period of time, significantly erode the character of a locality. An extension or alteration can also affect the privacy and amenities enjoyed by neighbouring households, with issues such as dominance, privacy and loss of light often arising.
- 7.3.20 Proposals for residential extensions must not cause unacceptable harm to local character, environmental quality or residential amenity. Particular regard should be given to spacing between buildings, safeguarding of privacy, scale and massing of buildings, use of materials and impact on existing landscape and amenity spaces. The cumulative impact of ancillary activities such as car parking and refuse storage can undermine established residential areas and should be given due consideration.
- 7.3.21 Applications for residential extensions and alterations will present detailed, site specific issues and each case will be assessed on its individual merits. The acceptability of proposals will depend on the particular circumstances on the site and surroundings and decisions will be informed by all relevant policies.
- 7.3.22 The local housing systems analysis for Belfast also notes that the continued upward trend in the number of older households over the next 15 years and beyond implies that there may be an increased demand for property adaptations or services to allow older homeowners to continue to live independently. The policy therefore seeks to enable adaptations required if they are not already covered under prevailing permitted development rights.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
			✓

Policy RD3 – Conversion or sub-division of existing buildings for residential use

Planning permission will be granted for conversion or change of use of existing buildings for residential use where all the criteria in policy RD1 and all the additional criteria below are met:

- a. Any units are self-contained (i.e. having separate bathroom, w.c. and kitchen available for use only by the occupiers);**
- b. Adequate refuse storage space is provided within the curtilage of the site, large enough to allow for the separation of recyclable waste, and is designed to not be visible from the amenity space / public realm;**
- c. The original property is greater than 150 square metres gross internal floorspace in the case of sub-division of an existing dwelling; and**
- d. Conversions above commercial premises do not prejudice the commercial functions below.**

Planning permission will be subject to proposals meeting all other policy requirements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.3.23 Conversion and/or subdivision of existing dwellings and buildings will play an important part in the future supply of housing within Belfast. It is consistent with achieving more sustainable patterns of residential development that contribute to meeting the varied housing needs of the whole community, and can also support urban regeneration by recycling existing buildings.
- 7.3.24 The RDS requires that the varied housing needs of the whole community are met and emphasises that housing growth should be managed to ensure a focus remains on developing high quality accessible housing within existing urban areas. This should ensure that new housing does not cause any unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of these areas. This policy therefore seeks to balance the protection of existing residential amenity with the regional policy requirement to prioritise new housing on previously developed land within the existing urban footprint.
- 7.3.25 The SPPS requires increased housing density without town cramming whilst also ensuring that the proposed density of new housing development, together with its form, scale, massing and layout will respect the local character and safeguard residential amenity. It also requires provision to be made for the conversion of a locally important building to provide more than one dwelling where the building is of sufficient size; the conversion involves minimal intervention; and, the intensity of the use is considered appropriate to the locality. This will also help safeguard the



Shaping a liveable place

historic environment, including both buildings that are listed or unlisted but contribute to the wider townscape.

- 7.3.26 Residential intensification of existing dwellings must be carefully managed to avoid negative impacts on the local character of an area, the amount of amenity space, and on the privacy of adjoining residents. This policy therefore places an emphasis on quality, sustainability and placemaking. The usual residential design requirements such as layout, scale, massing and amenity set out in RD1 should be carefully considered to ensure a quality residential environment is achieved when converting and / or subdividing an existing building. In addition to the requirements set out in policy RD1, there are additional considerations to ensure a quality residential environment for conversions and / or subdivisions, including size limits, acoustic insulation, ventilation and adequate refuse storage.
- 7.3.27 Increasing density will require careful management of refuse provision, particularly recycling facilities, to ensure sustainability objectives are met. Communal refuse and recycling containers, communal bin enclosures and refuse stores should be accessible to all residents, and located on a hard, level surface. Refuse stores within buildings should be located to limit the nuisance caused by noise and smells and provided with means for cleaning.
- 7.3.28 As sub-divisions are considered an intensified form of housing, they can lead to difficulties in maintaining balanced communities. It is therefore important to consider if the change of use is acceptable having regard to other policies in this plan, particularly policies relating to housing management areas and intensive forms of housing. Whilst this policy allows for the sub-division of existing dwellings into flats, it seeks to prevent this where existing dwellings are too small to deliver smaller units without negative impacts on existing residential amenity. The threshold of 150 m sq will prevent intensification in areas where smaller units are prevalent, which lack the space to provide the necessary infrastructure to support the increased population.
- 7.3.29 Conversions of upper floors, sometimes referred to as 'living over the shop', can make a small but valuable contribution to the promotion of high-density development in key locations such as city centre, local and district centres and city corridors. This form of housing will not suit everyone but does provide further choice to the housing mix and can help to contribute to the supply of affordable rented housing. When considering conversion and / or subdivision over commercial businesses the residential use must not disrupt the functions of the ground floor business to protect the economic vibrancy of the area.
- 7.3.30 Adequate amenity space and appropriate parking provision are essential parts of the character and quality of the environment of residential properties. However, it is recognised that there may be circumstances where achieving prevailing standards

are not possible when according with wider policies, such as preventing harm to heritage assets. In exceptional circumstances prevailing standards may be applied flexibly to best balance competing policy requirements, such as bringing derelict historic buildings back into use. In such cases, off-site provision of amenity space, for example, may help to meet policy requirements, but would need to be secured through the use of s76 planning agreements.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		✓



7.4 Built Heritage

Introduction

- 7.4.1 The historic fabric and cohesive character of the city of central Belfast and its immediate environs, in particular, has been increasingly fragmented over the decades from the mid 20th century onwards. In a fragmented context the remaining historic environment assumes greater importance and despite this context the historic environment of the city remains rich and diverse; this is reflected in the designation of listed buildings, conservation areas and ATCs.
- 7.4.2 Belfast also contains a diversity of aesthetically pleasing suburban and residential environments, a legacy reflecting the architectural chronology and social and economic history of the city. These present its built heritage as a veritable story book to rival any city in the UK or Ireland. The council aim will be to ensure that its heritage assets are preserved for their aesthetic qualities and their contribution to the character of the city. They ascribe to the city a sense of place and unique identity – they are what gives the city a sense of itself.

Policy aims

- 7.4.3 The LDP policies for the built heritage aim to:
- Preserve, maintain and where possible enhance the city's historic environment through its ongoing preservation and control to ensure that development responds and is sympathetic to its character;
 - Manage change in such a way that preserves, maintains and where possible enhances the city's historic environment for the enjoyment of current and future generations of the city's inhabitants;
 - To improve the quality and contextual appropriateness of development affecting the city's heritage assets consistent with the overall aim of promoting local distinctiveness, whilst ensuring the ongoing productive use of these assets; and
 - Promotion of the tourism value of the city's unique heritage and historic environment.
- 7.4.4 The council will adopt the precautionary principle when considering the impacts of the proposed development on archaeological and built heritage assets, including designated archaeological sites of importance, listed buildings, conservation areas and areas of townscape character. The council will have due regard to the relative importance and levels of protection afforded to the hierarchy of designated areas. In this regard, proposals that have, or could have, a detrimental effect on a significant site will not be supported by the council. Careful design of new development will minimise potential adverse impacts on historic environment interests generally. The council will require applicants to undertake appropriate site surveys and assessment for consideration prior to planning applications being determined.

Policy BH1 – Listed buildings

Change of use of a listed building

Planning permission will be granted for the change of use of a listed building where this secures its upkeep and survival and the character and architectural or historic interest of the building would be preserved or enhanced. Proposals for a change of use should incorporate details of all intended alterations to the building and its curtilage to demonstrate their effect on its appearance, character and setting.

New development affecting the setting of listed buildings

Planning permission will be granted for new development affecting the setting of listed buildings where the following criteria are met:

- a. The development is sympathetic to the essential characteristic, scale, height, massing and alignment of the listed building by way of its scale, form, materials and detailing;
- b. The development does not result in the significant loss of key views of the listed building;
- c. The nature of the use proposed respects the character of the setting of the building;
- d. The development does not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the listed building; and
- e. The development has regard to relevant supplementary planning guidance.

Alteration and extension of a listed building

Planning permission will be granted for the alteration and extension of a listed building where all the following criteria are met:

- f. The works preserve, restore and complement the building's features of special architectural or historical importance to ensure the existing building remains intact and unimpaired;
- g. The design respects the essential character of the existing building and/or setting;
- h. The proposal makes use of quality materials and appropriate detailing sympathetic with the existing building and/or setting; and
- i. In the case of extensions, they shall be subservient to the existing building with regard to height, scale, massing, form and alignment;

Demolition of a listed building

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings.

Total demolition of listed buildings will only be permitted in highly exceptional



circumstances. Where listed building consent is granted for demolition this will be conditional on prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site and appropriate arrangements for recording the building before its demolition.

Partial demolition of parts of listed buildings will be wholly exceptional and only acceptable where an alteration or extension proposal has been agreed and that demolition is required to facilitate it.

Justification and amplification

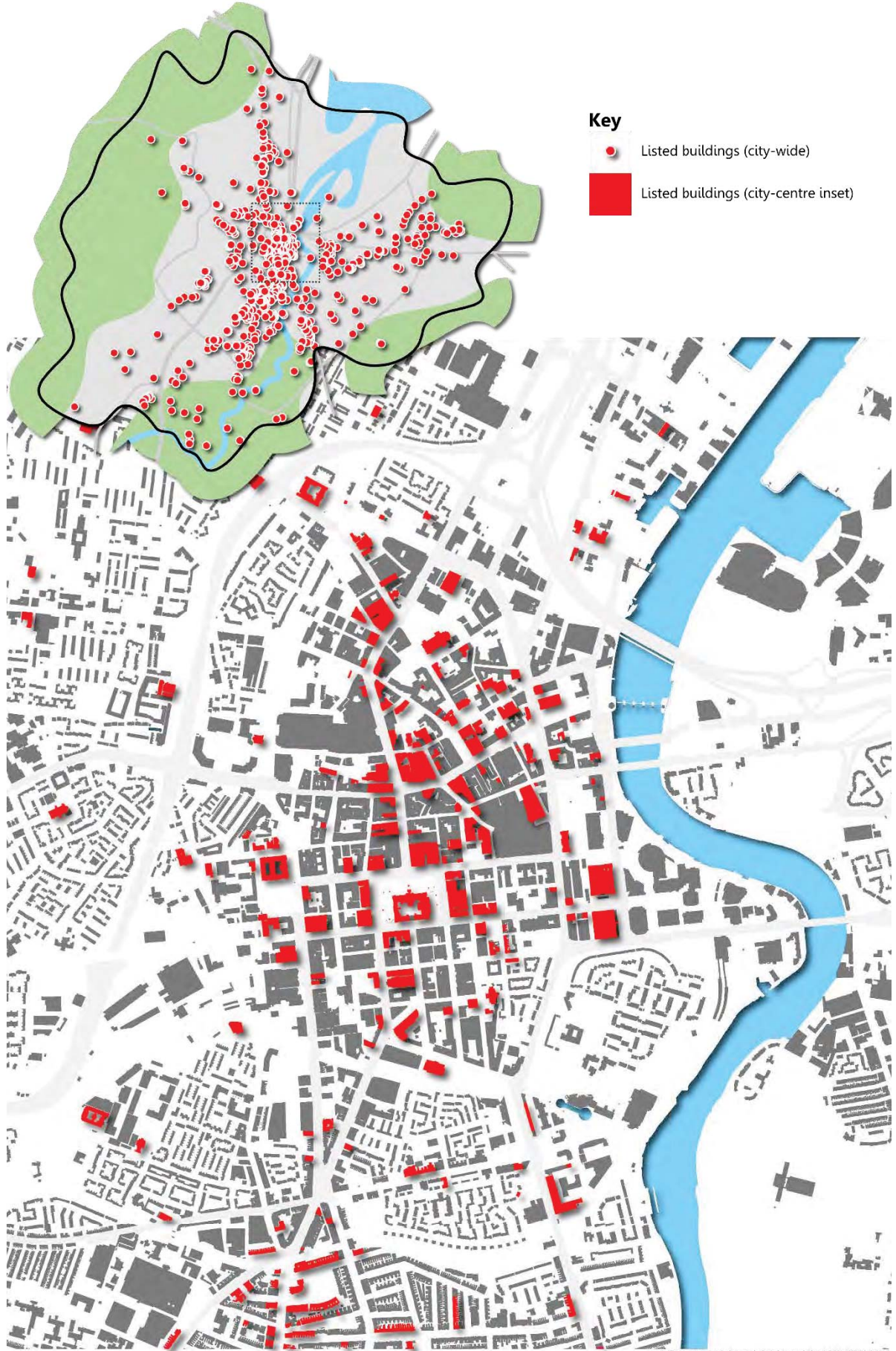
- 7.4.5 Regional policy aims to secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of built heritage and promote sustainable development of heritage assets.
- 7.4.6 In a fragmented context the remaining historic environment assumes greater importance. They may act as visual, historical, architectural and legible links – i.e. viewing together they have a narrative quality in that they allow the former scale, massing, form and materials of historic townscape to be read; they help us visually piece this story together.
- 7.4.7 Regional policy aims to deliver economic and community benefit through conservation that facilitates productive use of built heritage assets, whilst safeguarding their historic or architectural integrity. The key to the survival and upkeep of listed buildings is to keep them in active use. While the most appropriate use of an historic building will often be that for which it was designed, it may be necessary to assess new compatible uses. In most cases this will mean a use which is economically viable and may necessitate some degree of adaptation to the building. The range and acceptability of possible uses is therefore one of the most important considerations for all those involved in considering the future of a listed building. The impact of the proposed new use to the established character of the building and the surrounding area should also be assessed. In principle the aim should be to identify the best viable use that is compatible with the fabric, setting and character of the building and it should be noted that this may not necessarily be the most profitable use.
- 7.4.8 The setting of a listed building is often an essential part of the building's character. In some circumstances this may include adjacent buildings or an entire street. These buildings may not necessarily be of great individual merit but combine to produce a visual harmony which enriches the setting of the listed building. Any proposals for development which by its character or location may have an adverse affect on the setting of listed buildings will require very careful consideration. Development proposals some distance from the site of a listed building can sometimes have an adverse affect on its setting e.g. where it would affect views of an historic skyline,

while certain proposals, because of the nature of their use, can adversely affect the character of the setting of a listed building or group of buildings through noise, nuisance and general disturbance. The design of new buildings planned to stand alongside historic buildings is particularly critical. Such buildings must be designed to respect their setting, follow fundamental architectural principles of scale, height, massing and alignment and use appropriate materials.

- 7.4.9 Many listed buildings can tolerate some degree of thoughtful alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses. Indeed, cumulative changes reflecting the history of use and ownership have contributed to the special interest of some buildings. Nevertheless listed buildings do vary greatly in the extent to which they can accommodate change without loss of special interest and some may be sensitive even to slight alterations.
- 7.4.10 Alteration works including extensions to a listed building must seek to comply with fundamental conservation principles (maximum retention of historic fabric, minimum intervention and clarity) to the furthest extent possible. Extensions should be subservient in nature to the main building, of an appropriate scale and use appropriate materials. Extensions should also be sensitive to the age and style of the host building, the design intent of the original architect, the historic functional use of the building and in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. In assessing the effect on historic fabric account will be taken on the impact on internal fabric, plan form and structure.
- 7.4.11 Extension and alterations works should not dilute the legibility of the building, for example as one of a unique style / design, era, functional use, particular architect / builder. This approach is consistent with international conservation charters such as the Venice charter.
- 7.4.12 The preservation of facades alone and the gutting and reconstruction of interiors, is rarely an acceptable approach to the re-use of listed buildings and will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.4.13 There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings. Very occasionally demolition of a listed building will be unavoidable although consent will not be given simply because redevelopment is economically more attractive than repair and re-use. Structural issues will not be given substantive weight when making a case for demolition where these have arisen due to neglect of a building through lack of maintenance or failure to secure by current or previous owners. Evidence will also be required that all efforts have been made to retain the building through finding an alternative use, which may not be the preferred use of the developer.



Figure 7.5: Listed buildings in Belfast



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7.4.14 Proposals for partial demolition will involve the same rigorous assessment as building features such as rear returns, bay windows and chimneys make a contribution to the character of their host building and / or conservation area or ATC. They will often have historic detailing and in the case of chimneys they contribute to a roofscape rhythm.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		✓



Policy BH2 – Conservation areas

New or replacement buildings

Planning permission will only be granted for new or replacement buildings in conservation areas where the following criteria are met:

- a. The character and appearance of the area is preserved or enhanced;
- b. The development respects the built form of the area by way of height, scale, form, legibility, materials and detailing;
- c. Key views within, into or out of the area are not negatively impacted;
- d. Trees, archaeological or other landscape features contributing to the character or appearance of the area are protected and / or integrated in an appropriate manner; and
- e. Regard is given to relevant supplementary planning guidance.

Alterations and extensions

Planning permission will only be granted for alterations and extensions within conservation areas where the criteria in HE2a are met, and particular regard is given to the following additional criteria:

- f. Extensions shall be subservient to the existing building with regard to height, scale, massing, form and alignment;
- g. The proposal involves retention of and where possible reinstatement of traditional features;
- h. The proposal will not result in the detrimental loss of visual gaps between existing buildings and boundaries; and
- i. The proposal makes use of traditional and where appropriate reclaimed, recycled/or sympathetic building materials and techniques which match or are in keeping with those found on the building and surrounding area.

Demolition

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings and non-listed buildings in conservation areas. Total or partial demolition of a building will only be permitted where:

- j. It makes either a negative or no material contribution to the character and appearance of the area; and/or
- k. The quality of design is considered to enhance the overall character of the conservation area paying due regard to viability of retention or restoration of the existing.

Where consent is granted for demolition this will be conditional on prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site and appropriate arrangements for

recording the building before its demolition.

Setting of conservation areas

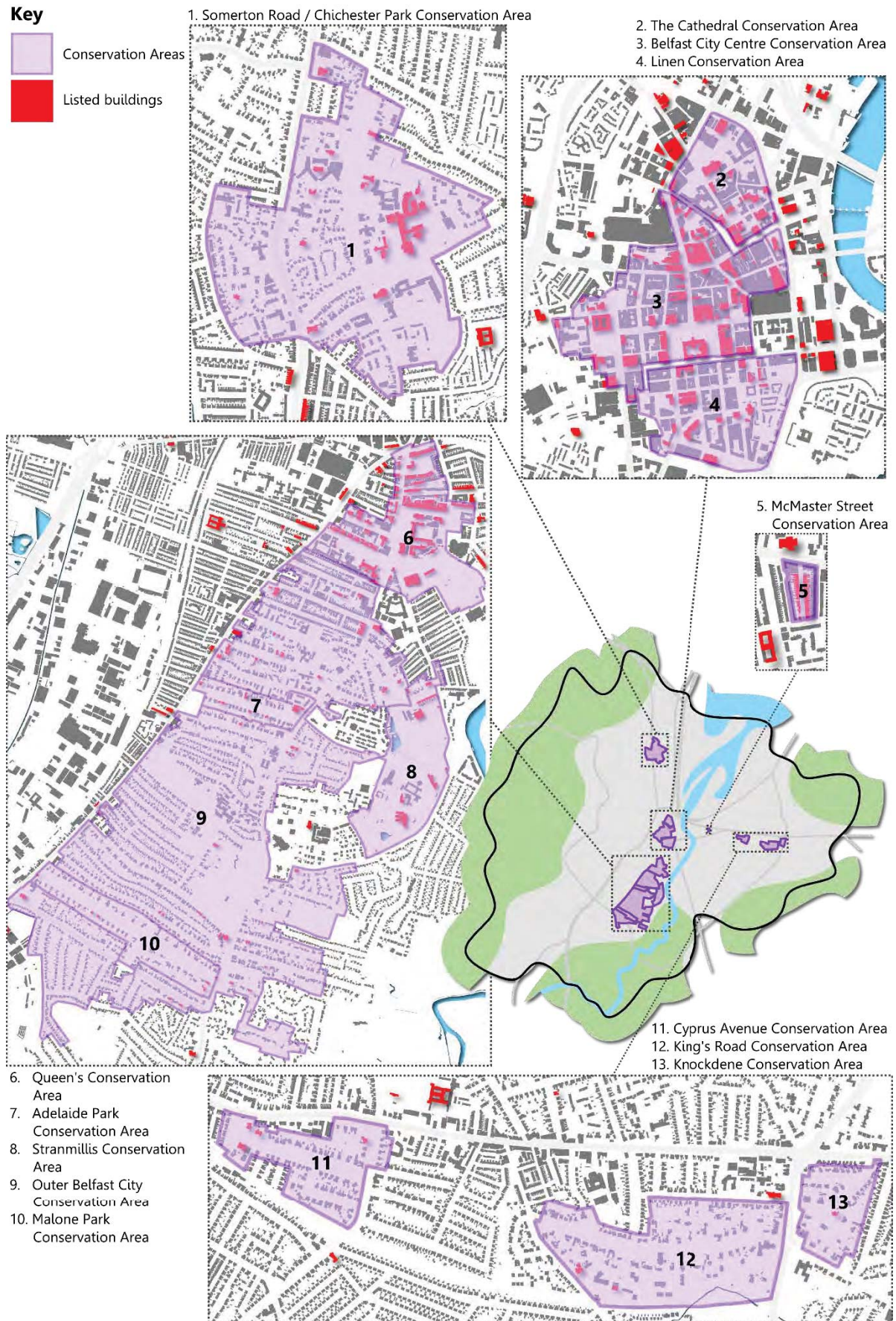
Development proposals partly located or neighbouring a conservation area will not be permitted where they are considered to impact negatively on the character or appearance with regard to views into, out of, within or across the area.

Justification and amplification

- 7.4.15 Regional policy aims to enhance the character or appearance of the area where an opportunity to do so exists, or to preserve its character or appearance where an opportunity to enhance does not arise. There is also a general presumption against demolition of unlisted buildings that should only be relaxed in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.4.16 New development in conservation areas should respect its context in terms of massing, scale, elevational appearance, materials and quality. The general objective is to be sensitive to the surrounding built heritage and characteristic built form. New development should not compromise key views within, into and out of the area built heritage asset. New development should therefore seek to reinforce character and be determined by the context of the surrounding built form to prevent erosion of character from development considered inappropriate due to scale, massing, form and/or materials.
- 7.4.17 The hierarchical status of the space is important through the scale of buildings, their degree of facade embellishment / detailing and functional importance. Buildings should respect the position of the site in the urban hierarchy of place. A building that respects the hierarchy of place will reinforce legibility within the conservation area. A contextually appropriate solution will also ensure that a new building has generally the same bulk as properties in the surrounding built environment.
- 7.4.18 In terms of form new design should have particular regard to issues such as siting (building line), massing (bulk, height silhouette, grain / plot width), height, scale (size of elements - such as windows, doors, floor to ceiling heights etc.- relative to human scale), whether there is an expression of a vertical or horizontal emphasis (in terms of bays, frame, fenestration etc.), proportion (solid to void, height to width relationship of elements), elevational form / appearance as ascribed by composition and architectural detailing of elements (doors / windows, bay rhythm, cornices, roof silhouette etc.).
- 7.4.19 Extensions in conservation areas should be sensitive to the age and style host building, the design intent of the original architect, the historic functional use of the building and in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. Extensions



Figure 7.6: Conservation Areas in Belfast



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should be generally subservient in nature to the main building and of an appropriate scale and use appropriate materials. In lower density suburban area conservation areas whose character is in part ascribed by visual gaps between dwellings there will be a presumption against side extensions. These spaces between dwellings provide many interesting micro views within these area built heritage assets allowing appreciation of the visual depth to plots, glimpses of the buildings, roofscape, backland character, landscaping elements beyond, and the articulation of side elevations. Alteration to roofs of properties in conservation areas require particularly sensitive consideration as roofscapes are generally a visually prominent feature of the townscape in that they are highly visible from the public realm.

7.4.20 There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings and any building which makes a contribution to the character and appearance of conservation areas. Where a demolition proposal is put forward in a conservation area an assessment will be carried out balancing the contribution of the existing building to the character and appearance of the area against the contribution that would be made by the proposed development. In assessing the contribution made by the existing building the council will take account of the buildings age, style and materials in relation to the majority of buildings within the area. Whether the building has a landmark quality, is by an architect of note, contributes to the setting of listed buildings or forms part of a recognisable group of buildings.

7.4.21 Facade retention will not generally be permitted in conservation areas and where a case is made for total or partial demolition in a conservation area structural issues will not be given substantive weight where these have arisen due to neglect of a building through lack of maintenance or failure to secure by current or previous owners. Evidence will also be required that all efforts have been made to retain the building through finding an alternative use, which may not be the preferred use of the developer.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓



Policy BH3 – Areas of townscape character

New or replacement buildings

Planning permission will only be granted for new or replacement buildings in an ATC where the following criteria are met:

- a. The area's overall character is maintained or enhanced and built form is respected by way of height, scale, form, materials and detailing;
- b. There is no detrimental impact on the setting of the area and there is no significant loss of key views within, into and out of the ATC;
- c. Trees and other landscape features contributing to the character or appearance of the area are safeguarded and/or integrated in an appropriate manner; and
- d. The development has regard to relevant supplementary planning guidance.

Alterations and extensions

Planning permission will be granted for alterations and extensions within an ATC where the criteria above are met, and particular regard is given to the following additional criteria:

- e. Locally distinctive features are retained or reinstated where possible; and
- f. Sympathetic materials are used that respect surrounding buildings.

Demolition

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings and non-listed buildings in ATCs. Planning permission will be granted for total or partial demolition of a building where:

- g. The building makes no material contribution to the distinctive character of the area; and
- h. The quality of design is considered to enhance the overall character of the area.

Where demolition consent is granted this will be conditional on prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site, including prohibition of demolition until contracts have been signed for the approved redevelopment of the site.

Justification and amplification

- 7.4.22 Regional policy aims to ensure new development in ATCs help maintain or enhance the overall character of the area and respect its built form. ATCs exhibit a distinct character normally based on their historic built form or layout. For the most part this derives from the cumulative impact of the area's buildings, their setting, landscape and other locally important features. It is important to protect the distinctive character and intrinsic qualities of ATCs.

- 7.4.23 New development in an ATC should seek to reinforce local identity and promote quality and sustainability in order to respect and, where possible, enhance the distinctive character and appearance of the area. In assessing the acceptability of proposals, the council will also have regard to the same broad criteria outlined for conservation areas in policy BH2.

- 7.4.24 To help secure the upkeep, vitality and appearance of ATCs the council will permit proposals for the appropriate renovation and refurbishment of existing buildings for their continued use, or for alternative uses which accord with all other relevant policies.

- 7.4.25 The demolition of a building or buildings in an ATC can significantly erode the character, appearance and integrity of such areas. Demolition can be particularly damaging in cases where it is proposed in isolation, that is, where there are no proposals for the redevelopment of the site. The capacity of historic townscapes to absorb change and maintain character is limited. Once a certain threshold has been exceeded it will start to read differently in legibility terms as a different place – it will no longer have a visual cohesiveness, identity or sense of place. Where this threshold has been exceeded or is in danger of being exceeded and the building represents a last visual vestige of a diminishing stock of historic character remaining in, for example, its immediate block or streetscape, it will assume greater importance in terms of contribution to character. In order to prevent demolition damaging the distinctive character and appearance of an ATC, the council will operate a presumption in favour of retaining any building which makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓



Policy BH4 – Works to grounds affecting built heritage assets

Built heritage assets refers to development in designated archaeological sites of importance, listed buildings, conservation areas and areas of townscape character. Planning permission will be granted for works affecting boundaries, garages and plot subdivision subject to the following criteria:

Boundaries

- a. Boundaries should be of an appropriate scale and respect the historic scale of such structures in the heritage area;
- b. Boundaries should generally not prevent visual permeability between the public and private realms; and
- c. Boundary structures should be of an appropriate style and form contextually appropriate to the host property and area.

Garages

- d. Garages should be to the rear of the building line of the main body of the property, in keeping with the age and style of the property and character of the area and of a mass similar to that of historic garage structures within the heritage area; and
- e. Garages should not have an adverse impact on views through sites.

Plot subdivision

- f. Proposals for subdividing plots will not be permitted where they would have an adverse impact on the character or legibility of a listed building, conservation area or ATC.

Justification and amplification

7.4.26 Boundaries are important structural elements in the streetscape forming a strong component element in the legible image of the street, it's proportional (enclosing) ratio etc. The character of the city's historic environment (particularly those of a residential nature) is in part ascribed by landscaping elements. Boundary structures (walls, fences, gates and other means of enclosure) are historically visually restrained and not dominating elements in the streetscene. They permitted visual permeability between the public and private realms and were not defensive structures or visual barriers. Boundary structures should therefore be human scale and contextually appropriate to the age and style of the property on the site. Tall, visually defensive structures such as timber boarded fences will not therefore generally be acceptable. These are alien in form and will generally be regarded as having a harmful impact on the character and appearance of conservation areas and ATCs.

7.4.27 Garages generally developed from the interwar period and were visually subservient, unobtrusive features within the streetscene. Creating integral garages to side elevations of Victorian, Edwardian or interwar dwellings where none existed previously is contextually inappropriate. Large, bulky garages that are contextually inappropriate in terms of mass and over bulky in terms of the historic scale of these structures, and considered to be visually obtrusive and over dominant in the street scene will not be acceptable. To aid assessment of the scale of such structures in context applications drawings should show the garage in relation to the dwelling. In general the height of the ridge of gabled garages should not exceed sill height of first floor windows.

7.4.28 Plot subdivision within a conservation area, ATC, or near a listed building introduces a number of important issues to consider, including - the impact upon the character / architectural and historic interest of the area built heritage asset created by the effect on the existing / historic plot, the plot to be created, the precedent effect that such a proposal may create, the acceptability of the proposed architectural form of the new development, the impact on landscaping elements, and the impact on any feature open space and distances to boundaries and between dwellings. A key consideration with a proposal involving plot subdivision is whether both the new and existing plots (and their footprint to open space ratios) can be created without detriment to the character and appearance of the distinctive character of the area built heritage asset. A major issue is the impact on the spatial quality of the site, i.e the relationship of the built form to the open space. A further concern is the impact on legibility and whether the existing plot contributes to the reading of an area as one of a variety of plot sizes reflecting how it developed in an adhoc manner, as parcels of land where sold off individually compared with later speculative suburban housing developments with standardised plot sizes.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
			✓



Policy BH5 – Archaeology

The council will seek to conserve and protect and where possible enhance archaeological assets and consent will normally only be granted where the following criteria are met:

- a. Archaeological remains of regional importance and their settings will be preserved in situ and development that would adversely affect sites or their setting will not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Archaeological remains of regional importance and their settings comprise monuments in state care, scheduled monuments and other important sites and monuments which would merit scheduling;
- b. Development proposals which would adversely affect archaeological sites or monuments which are of local importance or their settings will only be permitted where the council considers the importance of the proposed development or other material considerations outweigh the value of the remains in question;
- c. Where the impact of a development proposal on important archaeological remains is unclear, or the relative importance of such remains is uncertain, the council will normally require developers to provide further information in the form of an archaeological assessment or an archaeological evaluation. Where such information is requested but not made available the council will normally refuse planning permission; and
- d. Where it is decided to grant planning permission for development which will affect sites known to contain archaeological remains, the council will impose conditions to ensure that appropriate measures are taken for the identification and mitigation of the archaeological impacts of the development, including where appropriate the completion of a licensed excavation and recording of remains before development commences.

Justification and amplification

7.4.29 Regional guidance aims to conserve, protect and where possible, enhance our natural environment. It recognises the region's rich and diverse archaeological heritage, which contributes to our sense of place and history.

7.4.30 Archaeological remains are a limited, finite and non-renewable resource, in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition.

Archaeological remains of regional importance

7.4.31 State care and scheduled monuments together represent those archaeological sites and monuments which are of greatest importance. It is particularly important that they are preserved in situ and within an appropriate setting. Accordingly the council

will operate a presumption against proposals which would damage or destroy such remains, or which would have an adverse impact on their setting. While the council will take into account all material considerations in assessing development proposals affecting sites of regional importance, exceptions to this policy are likely only to apply to proposals of overriding importance in the regional context.

7.4.32 Monuments in state care are protected and managed as a public asset and in assessing proposals for development in the vicinity of these monuments the council will pay particular attention to the impact of the proposal on:

- The critical views of, and from the site or monument;
- The access and public approaches to the site or monument; and
- The understanding and enjoyment of the site or monument by visitors.

Archaeological remains of local importance

7.4.33 While the vast majority of archaeological sites and monuments are not scheduled, they are all capable of providing evidence about our past. Many are archaeologically important in the local context or valued by the community and therefore require safeguarding through the planning process. The council considers a number of factors in assessing the local significance of archaeological sites and monuments. These factors should be viewed as indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case and may include one or more of the following:

- **Appearance:** distinctive features in the landscape/townscape or local landmarks;
- **Quality:** well-preserved or extensive buried remains;
- **Folklore/historical interest:** association with a person or event in local tradition or legend;
- **Group value:** one of a number of locally important sites; and
- **Rarity:** a locally rare example.

7.4.34 In cases where development proposals affect archaeological sites and monuments or their settings which are not of regional or local importance the council will still have regard to the desirability of preserving such remains and their settings.

Archaeological assessment and evaluation

7.4.35 Development proposals must take into account archaeological considerations and should deal with them from the beginning of the development management process. The needs of archaeology and development can often be reconciled, and potential conflict avoided or much reduced, if applicants discuss their proposals with the council at an early stage. Applicants are encouraged to establish whether a site is known or likely to contain archaeological remains as part of their assessment of its development potential prior to submitting a planning application.



Archaeological mitigation

7.4.36 In some circumstances it will be possible to permit development proposals which affect archaeological remains to proceed provided appropriate archaeological mitigation measures are in place which preserve the remains in the final development or ensure excavation recording prior to destruction. Mitigation may require design techniques that avoid disturbing the remains altogether or minimise the potential damage. Excavation and recording of remains is regarded as a second best option to physical preservation. The preservation in situ of important archaeological remains is therefore always to be preferred.

7.4.37 There will however be occasions, particularly where archaeological remains of lesser importance are involved when the council may decide that the significance of the remains is not sufficient when weighed against all other material considerations, including the importance of the development, to justify their physical preservation in situ and that the development should proceed. In such cases applicants will be required to prepare and carry out a programme of archaeological works using professional archaeologists and working to a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Division.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy BH6 – Parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest

The council will seek to protect and enhance the character, principal components or setting of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest. Where planning permission is granted this will normally be conditional on the recording of any features of interest which will be lost before development commences.

In assessing proposals for development in or adjacent to parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest, particular attention will be paid to the impact of the proposal on:

- a. The archaeological, historical or botanical interest of the site;
- b. The site’s original design concept, overall quality and setting;
- c. Trees and woodland and the site’s contribution to local landscape character;
- d. Any buildings or features of character within the site including boundary walls, pathways, garden terraces or water features; and
- e. Planned historic views of or from the site or buildings within it.

Figure 7.7: Location of parks, gardens and demesnes of special historic interest



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Justification and amplification

- 7.4.38 The character and appearance of the modern landscape of Belfast owes much to planned landscape enhancement carried out since the 17th century, and has resulted in a rich legacy of gardens, parks and demesnes of archaeological, historical and botanical interest. The council considers it important therefore that these valuable features of our built heritage are protected from development which would harm their historic character.
- 7.4.39 In assessing proposals which would affect those parks, gardens and demesnes which retain only some elements of their original form i.e. those supplementary sites identified as an appendix to the proposed register, the council will consider the need to retain distinctive elements of such sites as features within the changing landscape.



Shaping a liveable place

7.4.40 Where a decision is taken to permit development which would result in the loss of any distinctive features of parks, gardens and demesnes, the council will normally require developers to carry out recording, working to a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Division, so that knowledge of this part of our landscape heritage is not entirely lost.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

7.5 Community cohesion and good relations

Introduction

- 7.5.1 Belfast is a city emerging from many years of conflict. Effective planning for its future therefore cannot ignore the spatial legacy of ‘the troubles’ nor the impact that community cohesion can have on the potential for future development and regeneration in the city. Addressing both the physical legacy and the social relationships are essential to the effective delivery of the LDP.
- 7.5.2 The “Together: Building a United Community” (TBUK) strategy is committed to addressing the barriers that prevent the creation and use of existing shared space, to ensure that everyone can live, learn, work and play wherever they choose. The Belfast Agenda seeks to secure a city that “will be a culturally rich and diverse city that is open, safe and welcoming to all. Promoting good relations is key to improving the quality of life for everyone in the city. ”
- 7.5.3 Many of our citizens continue to live segregated lives, with some of the poorest neighbourhoods located in contested interface areas, which present both physical and psychological barriers. Whilst planning can influence the physical form of the city and help minimise any barriers to accessibility, the community background of residents or a buildings users is beyond its scope. However, through the Belfast Agenda the council will work with partners to ensure Belfast will be a city that is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all. In the case of social housing, for example, the LDP can help shape the design and layout of new developments, including the requirements for mixed-tenure and tenure-blind development, but has no role in dictating how the units are allocated.
- 7.5.4 There are clearly economic and social advantages of maximising safe shared spaces, such as improving quality of life and creating good physical access to jobs, which make a huge contribution to prosperity, health and wellbeing. A diverse, healthy, resilient population is able to contribute to the growth of the city and secure the benefits of a peaceful society. Addressing community cohesion is therefore important in ensuring primarily equality of opportunity in accessing housing, as well as employment opportunities and local services.
- 7.5.5 The planning system has an important role to play in addressing the physical legacy of conflict, but is also able to make a valuable contribution to the less tangible goals of fostering community cohesion and promoting good relations. There is a recognition that the urban form and the location of services are vital in the promotion of community relations. Well-designed inclusive physical spaces where everyone feels welcome can facilitate positive social interaction, which can help to change behaviours and foster strong cross community relationships.



Shaping a liveable place

Policy aims

- 7.5.6 In relation to community cohesion and good relations, the LDP will seek to:
- Promote community cohesion and improve good relations within and between communities;
 - Encourage inclusive growth that combines economic growth and labour market inclusion, to create opportunity for all segments of society to share in the increased prosperity of the city;
 - Support the removal of physical barriers to create well-linked, mixed neighbourhoods;
 - Improve areas blighted by peace infrastructure and promote the reuse of interface locations;
 - Support the creation of shared spaces where there is a sense of belonging for everyone, where relationships between people from different backgrounds are positive and where differences are valued and respected; and
 - Provide opportunities for communities to share access to local facilities and services.

Policy CGR1 – Community cohesion and good relations

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals at interface locations, in close proximity to peace infrastructure, or which are judged to impact upon contested community space where the following key principles are addressed:

- a. Affected communities are involved from the outset and throughout the design process, with opportunities provided for cross-community conversations in a safe and inclusive environment;
- b. Initiatives working towards the removal of peace infrastructure and territoriality in the physical environment are supported;
- c. Infrastructure and other physical barriers are minimised, maximising opportunities for future connectivity across peace infrastructure, creating permeable neighbourhoods;
- d. Shared neighbourhood facilities and services are sited in areas that are safely accessible to all communities; and
- e. All public realm spaces are safe and accessible shared spaces for use by everyone.

Where relevant, planning applications should be accompanied by a statement demonstrating how these principles have been addressed. Minor planning applications are likely to be exempt from this policy's requirements.

Measures outlined in accordance with these key principles will be secured through the use of planning conditions or, if necessary, s76 planning agreements.

Justification and amplification

- 7.5.7 The council's community cohesion policy seeks to create and enhance 'shared space' as a core planning principle. Planning authorities are directed by the SPPS to utilise development planning and development management powers to contribute to the creation of an environment that is accessible to all, enhances opportunities for shared communities, has a higher standard of connectivity and supports the shared use of public realm. It highlights the Executive's TBUC policy goal for the removal of all interface barriers by 2023, which in Belfast, would have a secondary benefit of releasing stymied vacant land for development. The LDP is therefore positively supporting the development of a shared, accessible and connected urban environment, to secure a better future for the residents of Belfast.
- 7.5.8 The key principles outlined within this policy seek not only to address the physical legacy of 'the troubles' and influence the spatial form of the future city, but also to ensure that the processes used in developing proposals serve to build community cohesion and strengthen good relations. The early involvement of affected communities can play a significant role in embedding reconciliation in the development process, ensuring that all sides of the community have a shared sense of belonging in new places, as well as ensuring that community needs are adequately met. Consequently, community involvement should where possible seek to provide opportunities for affected communities to discuss proposals with each other, as well as providing feedback to a developer.
- 7.5.9 Site-specific masterplans or development briefs may be produced in relation to specific localities, and where mixed use schemes are proposed. This may involve cross-disciplinary working with a range of public sector agencies and community representatives to secure support for the removal of interface barriers, and new development proposals for contested community spaces. In such cases, a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) should demonstrate how the engagement process has helped meet the requirements of this policy. This approach is supported by the SPPS, which recognises that planning initiatives concerning peace-lines and contested spaces should be addressed in partnership with local residents to promote equality of opportunity and also to build community cohesion and strengthen good relations where differences are valued and respected.
- 7.5.10 The LDP is supporting the creation of lifetime neighbourhoods, where people are able to live in an inclusive environment, and have good sustainable connectivity to employment opportunities, key services and local facilities. The basic principles of good planning and design are therefore important to encourage the development of permeable street layouts and well-designed, safe public spaces that are easily accessible and which maximise opportunities to create future connections beyond the interface barriers. The duplication of community provision is incompatible with efficient and effective resource allocation. It reinforces the self-imposed spatial



Shaping a liveable place

segregation. New shared services and community facilities should therefore be located in safe shared spaces, which are easily accessible by all sections of our community. In many cases, it may be appropriate to address the key principles outlined within this policy as a section within a design and access statement.

7.5.11 The policy acknowledges that some smaller scale developments, such as householder extensions or shop-front improvements, may have a minimal impact and could therefore be exempt from this policy requirement. Given the complexity of the issues involved in addressing community cohesion, supplementary guidance may be produced to expand upon this policy approach. Where appropriate, specific community cohesion provisions may be secured through the use of specific planning conditions or, if required, a s76 planning agreement.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓

Policy CGR2 – Meanwhile uses in interface areas

Planning permission will be granted for shared ‘meanwhile’ uses at interface locations to encourage the normalisation of contested community spaces. This will include the re-use of vacant buildings and unused sites adjacent to the interfaces to encourage social interaction and build shared community resilience. Shared ‘meanwhile’ uses to be supported shall include:

- a. Pop up shops;
- b. Pilot business incubation projects;
- c. Public art and event space;
- d. Pop up markets; or
- e. Community environmental projects such as passive green open space, community gardens, allotments, community woodlands, energy crops, rain gardens, etc.

Shared meanwhile uses are not exempt from other policies relating to permanent uses. Planning applications to extend the period of shared meanwhile use or to make it permanent will be considered against the policies of the plan as a whole.

As residents living in areas impacted by interfaces will be part of the consultation on the removal of interface barriers, they should also be part of discussions on meanwhile uses. A community consultation statement shall be required as part of planning applications to demonstrate that shared community engagement has been undertaken.

Justification and amplification

- 7.5.12 The policy encourages shared meanwhile uses as a tool to be used alongside other local interventions to promote social integration in interface areas, and create opportunities for shared community spaces that assist in building community confidence and safety. Shared meanwhile uses will utilise contested vacant community spaces, which are often local eyesores, and can often be a catalyst for physical renewal, adding vibrancy to an area with renewed visitor interest and increased footfall. In some cases, meanwhile spaces can be a pilot scheme for shared community business start-ups that can lead to increased enterprise and economic development, which, if successful, can lead to business growth and expansion. Shared meanwhile uses will encourage a more realistic, pragmatic and incremental approach to urban regeneration of the interface areas.

- 7.5.13 Everyone should have the same opportunity for improved life expectancy and health and wellbeing no matter where they live. The key to a healthier life comes from being involved in the community, being able to make choices, to access secure employment, feel safe within inclusive public spaces, being socially connected and feeling fulfilled as a valued citizen. Strategies and proposals for shared meanwhile uses submitted as part of a planning application should be accompanied by a community consultation statement. This is required to demonstrate the robustness of the consultation process with the community and appropriate stakeholders.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓



7.6 Promoting healthy communities

Introduction

- 7.6.1 Improving health and wellbeing is one of the five core principles of the planning system. This is recognised in the SPPS, which states that councils may bring forward local policies that contribute to improving health and wellbeing. Belfast has specific local challenges around the health and wellbeing of its residents, evidenced as a persistent element of local inequalities over the last decade.
- 7.6.2 The SPPS identifies key policy areas that contribute positively to health and wellbeing. These include policies relating to open space, sport and outdoor recreation, quality housing, economic growth, urban design and better integrating land use planning and transport.

Policy aims

- 7.6.3 Planning has an important role to play in shaping the environment in which we live and work. The environment, in its widest sense, is shaped by development, which is managed through the planning process. There is an opportunity for the LDP to ensure that healthy and active lifestyles are considered and promoted in all new developments. Potential measures include, for example, ensuring the development of well-connected and walkable environments, improving accessibility to local open space and leisure facilities and improving connectivity to existing walking and cycling routes. In addition, the completion of a Health Impact Appraisal (HIA) may also assist in ensuring health and wellbeing is an integral part of the design process.
- 7.6.4 This policy aims to ensure that new development maximises opportunities to promote healthy and active lifestyles and wellbeing by giving consideration to:
- High quality built design;
 - Safe and sustainable access for all;
 - Connectivity to local communities, services and facilities;
 - Appropriate provision of open space and landscaping; and
 - Contributions to improve local amenities.

Policy HC1 – Promoting healthy communities

The council will seek to ensure that all new developments maximise opportunities to promote healthy and active lifestyles. New developments should be designed, constructed and managed in ways that improve health and promote healthy lifestyles. This will include supporting active travel options, improving accessibility to local service centres, reducing the use of private car travel, adequate provision of public open space, leisure and recreation facilities, high quality design and promoting balanced communities and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that help to sustain and improve neighbourhoods in all parts of the city.

Health and wellbeing is an important consideration during the development management process and significant development proposals will require to demonstrate how they contribute towards promoting healthy communities. The council will require the submission of a HIA¹⁴ as part of major residential, commercial and industrial developments or other proposals with potential to have a significant adverse effect on public health and wellbeing.

The council may seek to secure health and wellbeing improvement measures by way of s76 planning agreement. This may be by way of agreed works carried out by the developer or a financial contribution from the developer in lieu of such provision.

Justification and amplification

- 7.6.5 The inclusion of a policy to ensure that health and wellbeing are considered and promoted in all new developments is consistent with the core planning principle of improving health and wellbeing of our citizens. It also aligns with the Belfast Agenda, which places emphasis on healthy lifestyles, physical and emotional wellbeing, reducing health inequalities and better services for those who suffer poor health. The potential health and wellbeing impacts of development should be considered during the planning process to maximise such benefits and minimise any negative effects. This will help to promote and sustain the health and wellbeing of the city's residents and visitors.

¹⁴ A health impact assessment (HIA) helps to ensure that health and wellbeing are properly considered in planning policies and development proposals. In looking at how a proposal might affect people's health, an HIA can identify ways to amend the proposal to reduce possible harmful effects and increase possible beneficial effects. HIAs can be done at any stage in the development process but are best done at the earliest stage possible.



Shaping a liveable place

7.6.6 The planning system can play a key role in promoting health and reducing health inequalities. There are areas of high deprivation in Belfast and it is recognised that health inequalities are distributed across different population groups and are often geographically concentrated.

7.6.7 The impacts of major development proposals on the health and wellbeing of surrounding neighbourhoods and communities should be taken into account. Where a development is anticipated to have significant implications for people's health and wellbeing, an HIA should be undertaken to identify opportunities for minimising harms (including unequal impacts) and maximise potential health gains.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

7.7 Community infrastructure

Introduction

7.7.1 Community infrastructure includes facilities such as cultural and youth centres, leisure and sports grounds, community allotments, places of worship, cemeteries, surgeries and health facilities and educational facilities, such as nurseries, schools and colleges. In Belfast, many of these facilities also satisfy a regional need in view of the city's role as the regional capital. Population growth and demographic change, both locally and nationally, will require the provision of such facilities to evolve to meet changing demands.

Policy aims

- 7.7.2 The RDS recognises Belfast as the regional capital for specialised services and cultural amenities serving a trans-boundary population. In addition, community infrastructure in the city also has to meet the city's own needs. It is important to protect land for health, community and cultural facilities and to seek to safeguard against unnecessary loss of valued neighbourhood services. It is also essential that any new community infrastructure requirements arising from proposed developments are adequately addressed as part of the planning process. Where appropriate, s76 planning agreements can be used to ensure provision of new facilities and services that are needed to serve future residents.
- 7.7.3 The LDP is a mechanism through which healthy social and physical environments can be encouraged by protecting existing and identifying new sites for the leisure, health, education and social care facilities required to serve the city and cross-boundary populations and support Belfast as a 'healthy city'. Having regard to the need to plan for a growing population, adequate community infrastructure is essential as part of the planning process and new developments should contribute towards consequential new community infrastructure requirements. The LDP will also seek to ensure good accessibility to existing and new facilities for current and future residents.
- 7.7.4 This policy aims to ensure that existing community infrastructure is protected to meet the needs of the city and, where appropriate, the needs of the wider region. It also aims to ensure that adequate provision is made for new and improved community infrastructure to meet needs throughout the plan period, including through consideration of contributions from new development. This policy will give consideration to:
- The changing needs and demands facing community infrastructure;
 - Presumption in favour of protecting existing facilities and identified lands;
 - New or increased needs arising from new development;
 - Ensuring equality of access to community infrastructure facilities; and



Shaping a liveable place

- Potential for contributions from new development towards community infrastructure.

Policy CI1 – Community infrastructure

The council will seek to protect and provide development opportunities for community, health, leisure, nurseries and educational facilities based on local need in line with the projected population growth over the plan period.

Planning permission will be granted for the provision of new and improved community infrastructure at appropriate and accessible locations within the urban area, subject to consideration of the nature and location of any proposals. All proposals shall ensure that there is no unacceptable impact on residential amenity or natural/built heritage and satisfactory arrangements are provided for access for all, including for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Where proposals affect lands specifically zoned for development for particular uses, such proposals will only be considered where they do not prejudice the proper planning and sustainable development of the zoned lands.

In exceptional circumstances where there is no suitable land available in a designated village settlement boundary, favourable consideration may be given to a community use associated with the settlement which is located next to the settlement limits.

There is a presumption against the development of existing community infrastructure or lands identified for such use for alternative uses. Proposals for alternative uses will require to demonstrate that the existing facility/designated site is no longer required and that alternative arrangements are in place to ensure no significant diminution of community infrastructure provision.

Where appropriate, new developments should be required to provide or contribute towards any new community infrastructure requirements arising as a result of development and should ensure good accessibility to existing services and facilities intended to serve future residents. The council may seek to secure the provision or improvement of community facilities, or improved access to such facilities, by way of s76 planning agreement. This may be by way of agreed works carried out by the developer or a financial contribution from the developer in lieu of such works.

Justification and amplification

- 7.7.5 The health and wellbeing of the citizens of the city and, where relevant, of the region, requires the provision of adequate community infrastructure facilities to meet current and projected future needs. Such facilities should be protected and

improved/extended to satisfy community needs and they should be at locations that are highly accessible. The protection of existing facilities and designated sites/lands is required to ensure the promotion of equality of access to community infrastructure in line with current and future needs. Where proposed new development results in increased demand for community infrastructure, it is considered reasonable that a contribution is made towards the provision of new or improved facilities or improved accessibility. This will help to promote and sustain equality of access to all community infrastructure facilities and reduce health inequality.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy CI2 – Cemeteries and crematoria

The council will protect all existing burial spaces in the district from development that would prejudice the amenity of their cultural and heritage importance and their setting.

Justification and amplification

7.7.6 It is important that existing burial places within the district are protected from inappropriate development in the interests of amenity, heritage and respect. Many of these spaces are also protected as part of the district’s green network of open spaces. Whilst demand for new burial space is increasing, there is currently insufficient suitable land for new cemetery provision to meet current and future demand in the Belfast district area. Therefore, it is likely that any new burial ground facilities will be outside the LDP area and this will require joint working with adjoining councils.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓		✓	





Creating a vibrant economy





8.1 Inclusive economic growth

- 8.1.1 Belfast is an important economic gateway to Northern Ireland with an extensive port, airport, rail and road infrastructure. It provides a competitive strategic position in proximity to Europe, with the advantage of operating in the same time zone, regulatory environment and is ideally situated between mainland Europe and the U.S. The city has a strong engineering heritage with an international reputation with companies developing innovative components for the aerospace, automotive, technology and energy sectors.
- 8.1.2 The city, like many other former industrialised regions, has undergone economic restructuring, with a shift from manufacturing employment towards services and public sector employment. The city needs to restructure the economy by diversifying its economic base, reducing its dependence on the public sector and increasing the size and efficiency of its private sector. However, it is essential that the whole region continues to benefit from the impetus provided by a competitive and successful city that can attract talent and investment, generate regional employment and opportunities and drive sustained growth in key sectors, with a focus on addressing deprivation.
- 8.1.3 Economic growth in the city will have spatial implications and the planning process is a key enabler for economic growth. The RDS and the SPPS advocates that the LDP should positively and proactively encourage inclusive economic growth. The LDP aims to provide a framework that supports investment and development to achieve a successful and sustainable economy. It will take key decisions to create the conditions required to support regeneration opportunities for attracting high quality investment and employment. It will build on the objectives and priorities set out in the Belfast Agenda and the BCCRIS.
- 8.1.4 The continued revitalisation and modernisation of the city's economy is pivotal to ensuring that jobs and prosperity are generated for current and future residents and to help strengthen Belfast as the economic driver for the region. Moving forward, a strong emphasis will be placed on ensuring that sites are available to support the economic sectors important to the city's overall economic growth.
- 8.1.5 Belfast City Council has an ambitious growth strategy set out in the Belfast Agenda which mirrors the aspirations of regional planning policy. An ambitious level of economic growth is essential to enable the city to compete with similar sized cities elsewhere in the UK in terms of attracting investment, creating jobs, driving the regional economy and competing in an ever increasing globalised market. This level of growth needs to be underpinned by a buoyant economy and the LDP has an important role in ensuring that an appropriate level of land is allocated to meet these growing needs.



8.1.6 The LDP's economic strategy also recognises the important role the five Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) play in education, upskilling, generating innovation and economic activity, creating jobs and contributing to GDP. Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's), social economy, the community and voluntary sectors, and creative and cultural sectors all play varying roles in driving inclusive economic growth.

Policy aims

8.1.7 The economic growth policies within the LDP seeks to proactively drive forward the sustainable economic growth of Belfast over the plan period. The Belfast economic strategy will therefore aim to:

- Promote sustainable economic development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- Ensure an adequate supply of employment land over the plan period;
- Tackle disadvantaged areas with high deprivation by ensuring access to local jobs;
- Support the Belfast Agenda to promote economic growth, and facilitate the delivery of 46,000 jobs over the plan period;
- Strengthen the local economy by safeguarding a supply of employment land to support the growth of key industrial/business sectors and major employment-generating areas;
- Deliver a substantial contribution to the growth of Belfast and the wider region;
- Ensure flexibility to changing economic environments, to continue to attract new investment to the city in competitive global markets;
- Ensure the mix of employment land is available in the right locations throughout the city;
- Maintain the city's reputation as a leader in higher education and research;
- Support the important role of two universities as a key economic driver and anchor institutions and as centres of innovation;
- Support the Belfast Agenda to enhance and increase the skill levels of our residents and attract and retain even more skilled people; and
- Maintain and develop the unique and distinctive retail, hospitality and cultural quarters and corridors throughout the city ensuring inclusive growth.



Policy EC1 – Delivering inclusive economic growth

Development of business sectors with strong growth potential in Belfast will be supported subject to normal planning considerations. These sectors include:

- **Creative and digital industries;**
- **Financial and professional services;**
- **Advanced engineering;**
- **Clean technology;**
- **ICT and electronics;**
- **Hospitality and tourism; and**
- **Life and health sciences**

Justification and amplification

- 8.1.8 Building upon the city’s inherent employment strengths and preparing Belfast for a more economically resilient future, the council seeks to create jobs and prosperity within an economy that is fit for the 21st century.
- 8.1.9 As part of the sustainability drive advocated by the RDS and to mitigate against future environmental issues as a result of economic development, the council will aim to cluster high growth sectors to ensure maximum growth over the plan period.
- 8.1.10 Such industries outlined have already shown strong growth within the city and the council sees benefit in supporting further managed expansion. The council is therefore committed to facilitating opportunities for development and directing them to zoned employment areas that are well-located in terms of infrastructural connectivity and distribution networks.
- 8.1.11 Developments which generate substantial transport movements shall be directed to locations within zoned employment areas that are easily accessible, avoid congestion and promote sustainable transport movements.
- 8.1.12 The council acknowledges the need to meet the challenges of economic global competition within the overarching aim of a low-carbon based future and will ensure that development gains are not to the detriment of the residents or adversely impact upon the environment.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		✓



Policy EC2 – Employment land supply

A total of 550,000sq.m of gross developable land for employment uses (B Uses as set out in the Planning Use Classes Order (NI) 2015) shall be provided over the plan period to meet the needs of the city.

The overall total shall be allocated as follows:

Settlement area	Employment floorspace (sq.m) (2020-2035)
City centre	330,000
Belfast Harbour	82,000
Rest of Belfast city	138,000

The take-up of existing employment land will be monitored and its ongoing supply managed via regular review.

Justification and amplification

- 8.1.13 Belfast City Council has an ambitious growth strategy set out in the Belfast Agenda, which mirrors the aspirations of regional planning policy. The RDS aims is to “strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver”, recognising that “successful regions have strong and vibrant cities at their core” and that “Belfast drives much of the economic growth and shares its wealth across the region”.
- 8.1.14 The council must ensure that an adequate supply of land is available, on sites in a range of locations, sizes and conditions, to attract investment into the city and to support existing business sectors. This is in line with the policies and objectives of the SPPS and recognises the importance that an adequate supply of employment land plays in the economic success of the city.
- 8.1.15 To assess the city's economy and provide evidence regarding the need for, and supply of, employment sites within the city, the council commissioned the Ulster University’s Economic Policy Centre to carry out an assessment of the employment land requirements over period 2016-2035. This study has been used to inform this policy. Taking into account the demand for employment space versus the uptake of employment space and with no allowance made for existing capacity, Belfast will require a total of 550,000sq.m of employment space for B Use Class between 2020-2035.
- 8.1.16 An urban capacity study (used to gauge the quantity of vacant and underused land and buildings within the council boundary and how much of this could be suitable for employment over the next 15 years) was also commissioned by the council to ensure that the supply of employment land is both realistic and deliverable.

Creating a vibrant economy

8.1.17 A summary of the findings are supplied in figure 8.1 below. Approximately 1.16million m² gross employment floorspace is available from committed employment sites and new sites identified. This increases to an indicative capacity of approximately 1.9million m² should all those sites suitable for either employment or housing come forward for employment uses.

Figure 8.1: Number of employment sites and indicative yield

	Employment (Emp) sites (sq.m)					
	Committed sites (a)	Site in existing emp. locations (b)	New Sites		Total	
			Emp. sites (c)	Housing / emp. sites (d)	Just emp. sites (a+b+c)	All emp. sites (a+b+c+d)
City centre	203,482		146,366	595,741	349,848	945,589
Titanic Quarter	100,000				100,000	100,000
Inner city		10,946		101,393	10,946	112,339
Wider city		326,601	278,765		605,366	605,366
Arterial routes		82,301		29,705	82,301	112,006
Strategic centres		7,383	11,882	15,842	19,265	35,107
Whole city	303,482	421,819	437,013	742,681	1,162,314	1,904,995

8.1.18 This demonstrates that there is a substantial oversupply of employment space (approx. 612,000sq.m) within the council area when balancing the forecasted demand over the plan period against the overall supply.

8.1.19 Taking into account the forecasted demand which has been adjusted to reflect the actual uptake rates over the past three years there is a minimum need for approximately some 37,000sq.m/year and 550,000sq.m overall. The take-up of existing employment land will be closely monitored, and its ongoing supply managed to reflect changing circumstances.

8.1.20 The exact locations and associated boundaries will be reviewed as part of the Local Policies Plan (LPP). In the interim prior to the adoption of the LPP the existing draft BMAP boundaries will be used as follows- City Centre, Major Employment Locations and Strategic Employment Locations.



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		✓

Policy EC3 – Major employment and strategic employment locations

Light industrial, general industrial, storage or distribution and other appropriate sui generis employment uses will be directed towards Major Employment Locations (MEL) and Strategic Employment Locations (SEL).

Use class B1(a) shall only be permitted in a MEL or SEL where it cannot be accommodated in a city centre location and it would otherwise result in the loss of significant inward investment.

Use Class B1(b) call centres and B1(c) research and development will be supported in an existing employment area.

Planning permission will be granted for proposals complementary to the primary employment use, providing a small scale-ancillary service to meet the day-to-day needs of local employees, subject to compliance with other plan policies;

Zoned employment areas will be retained in employment use and will be the focus of economic regeneration and development opportunities likely to come forward during the plan period. Only in exceptional circumstances, as outlined in policy EC4: loss of zoned employment land, will the loss of employment land to alternatives uses be considered.

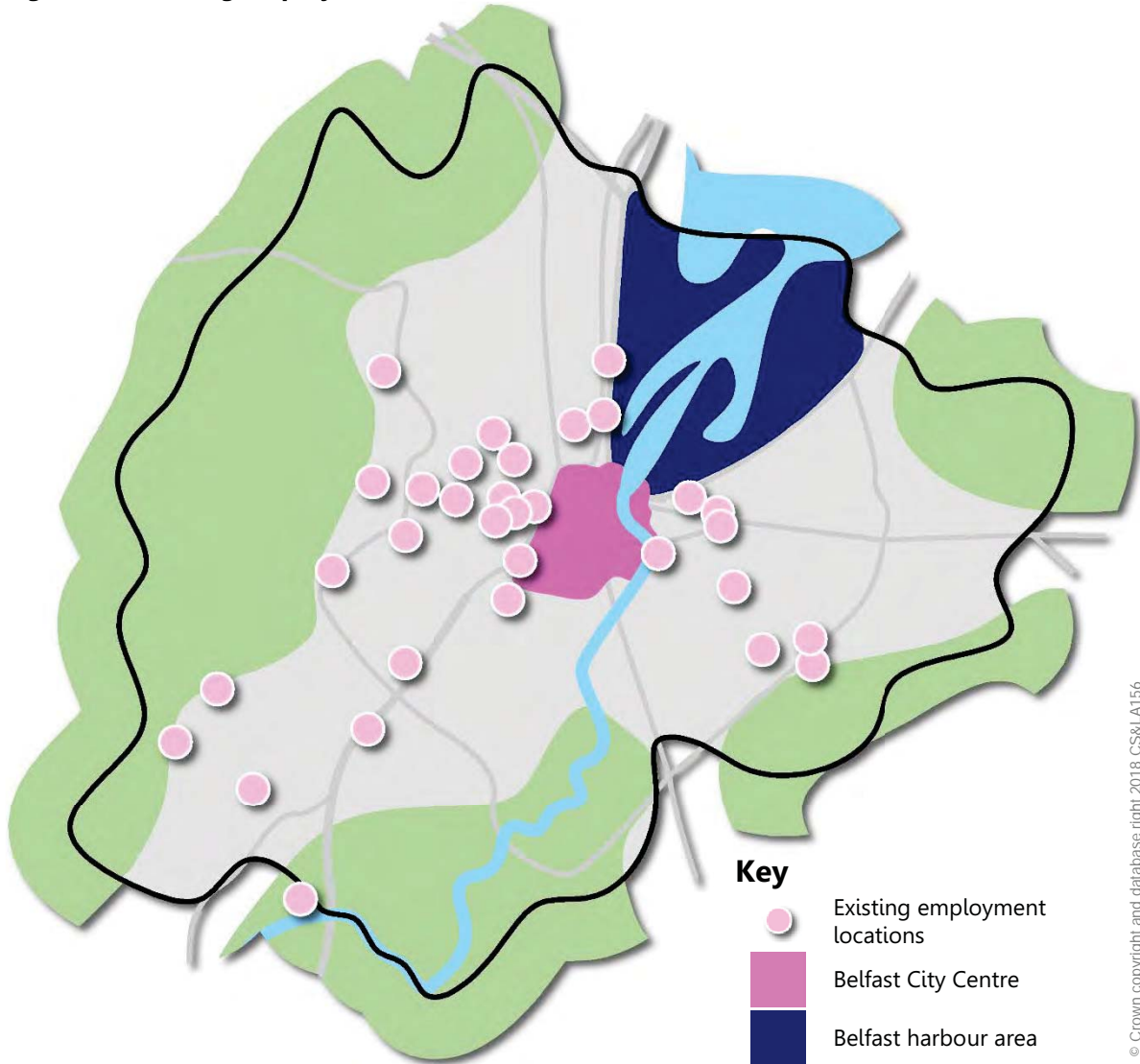
Justification and amplification

- 8.1.21 It is essential that Belfast is able to compete for investment in new employment sectors, and to provide opportunities for Belfast-based companies to expand. To achieve this will require high-quality sites to be available across the council area.

- 8.1.22 To ensure the Belfast economy continues to grow, a key priority is to focus economic development in the city's key employment areas. This policy therefore directs new employment development towards Belfast Harbour Major Employment Location and the various designated SEL's in the city. These areas have been identified as the focus of the city's industrial activity and contain some of Belfast's major employers.

- 8.1.23 These employment areas are also considered suitable for certain "sui generis" uses, that is, those with industrial characteristics which are not included within the Use Classes Order. For example, car breaking, or metal recycling which could potentially

Figure 8.2: Existing employment locations



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harm residential amenity are therefore likely to be considered most suited to an industrial estate. With modern design and operational techniques, waste management facilities can increasingly be accommodated in these employment areas. Whether or not a new sui generis use is judged to be acceptable will be considered against the extent of the employment it would create and the impact of the use on existing employment uses. A sui generis use would not be acceptable, for example, if it harmed the continuation of the employment uses which the policy protects. Similarly, new uses should not be introduced into an industrial estate or premise that would preclude industrial and warehousing type uses.

8.1.24 This policy provides a basis for rational and consistent decisions on planning applications and provides a measure of certainty about which types of development will be permitted in these areas.



8.1.25 The boundaries of the existing designations will be reviewed as part of the LPP. In the interim period prior to the adoption of the LPP, the existing draft BMAP boundaries of the employment areas will be used.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy EC4 – Loss of zoned employment land

Zoned employment areas will be retained in employment use and will be the focus of economic regeneration and development opportunities likely to come forward during the plan period. Only in exceptional circumstances as outlined below will the loss of zoned employment land be considered acceptable.

Proposals for the use of zoned employment land or buildings, for other purposes, should clearly demonstrate that:

- a. The proposed use is complementary to the primary employment use of the area, providing a small scale-ancillary service to meet the day-to-day needs of local employees, subject to compliance with other plan policies; or
- b. The proposal would not prejudice the long term development of the wider employment area primarily for industrial and business development. In such cases alternative uses should:
 1. Not adversely affect the city’s overall capacity to meet future demand for employment land;
 2. Be compatible with existing retained employment uses within their vicinity; and
 3. Demonstrate that there is no likely future demand for employment use on the site. This would require evidence that it had been actively marketed for B1(b), B1(c), B2, B3 and B4 uses for a minimum of 18 months.

In instances where the loss of employment land has been deemed acceptable further information will be necessary as per the council’s contribution framework.

Justification and amplification

8.1.26 Land zoned for economic use should be protected as it provides a valuable resource for local and external investment. Protection of such zonings should ensure that a variety of suitable sites exist across Belfast to facilitate future economic growth and help maintain a diverse broad based economy to ensure all sectors of employment are provided for.

Creating a vibrant economy

8.1.27 The policy also recognises the need to protect employment land from competing uses where appropriate. However, it allows for appropriate consideration to be given to the continued need for employment land and does not seek simply to retain land through over allocation.

8.1.28 In order to allow for a degree of flexibility there are circumstances where it will be appropriate to support alternative uses. These circumstances are outlined in the policy, and broadly aim to acknowledge and recognise situations in which it would be unproductive to protect the land for employment uses because employment is un-viable, particularly if the site has remained empty or vacant for a period of time although it has been marketed and the employment space no longer serves the needs of businesses due to its age and the conditions of the property.

8.1.29 It is also recognised that some non-B1 use development may be ancillary to the main employment use of a site, and can enhance the appeal of employment area to both prospective employers and the local workforce.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		✓

Policy EC5 – Industry and storage and distribution uses

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals in Class B2 light industrial use, Class B3 general industrial use and Class B4 storage and distribution as set out in the Planning (Use classes) Order (NI) 2015 in a zoned employment area, subject to normal planning considerations.

Planning permission will also be granted for development proposals in Class B2 light industrial use, Class B3 general industrial use and Class B4 storage or distribution within the settlement limits of designated rural settlements use provided the scale, nature and design of the proposal are appropriate to the character of the settlement and meets normal planning considerations.

Extensions to existing established industrial and storage and distribution businesses shall be permitted provided:

- a. It is subordinate in scale and size to the existing building(s); and
- b. It complies with normal planning considerations.



Justification and amplification

- 8.1.30 This policy is in line with the RDS, which aims to create conditions conducive to achieving further sustainable economic growth and to “strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver” and turn it into a leading, internationally competitive city with a dynamic and successful industrial sector.
- 8.1.31 The council will ensure through its employment land policy that an ample supply of land is available for economic development purposes in a wide range of suitable sites across Belfast to meet the future demands of industrial and storage and distribution enterprises over the plan period.
- 8.1.32 The policy aims to provide clarity and certainty around locations where industrial and storage and distribution use are considered acceptable. It accords with the RDS in that it ensures that Belfast maintains its strong focus on industrial employment fortifying its position as the urban hub of the region.
- 8.1.33 The overarching principle is to facilitate economic development in ways consistent with the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development. Outside zoned employment areas proposals for industrial use and storage and distribution use should be determined on their individual merits, having regard to points such as compatibility with adjacent and surrounding land uses, residential amenity, transportation and compliance with normal planning criteria.
- 8.1.34 It is accepted that existing established businesses may need to expand over time. In order to facilitate this and help drive the economy a degree of flexibility is required. The council will permit extensions to existing buildings which are subordinate in scale and meet normal planning criteria.
- 8.1.35 Within small rural settlements, the council will not normally zone land for economic development purposes in the interests of flexibility. Favourable consideration will be given to applications for industrial, business and storage or distribution uses on unzoned land included within the settlement limit, provided the proposal is of a scale, nature and design appropriate to the character of the settlement involved and it meets the normal planning criteria for this type of development.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓

Policy EC6 – Office development

Planning permission will be granted for new office development within the city centre.

Outside the city centre, and within district and local centres, planning permission will be granted for office development that have a gross floorspace of not more than 400 sq. m.

Use Class B1(a) shall only be permitted in a major or strategic employment location where it cannot be accommodated in a city centre location and it would otherwise result in the loss of significant inward investment.

In addition to the above, proposals for public sector administration office development will be supported by the council within the designated office node at Stormont. No other type of office use will be permitted at this location.

Planning permission will be granted for office development within the Queens Office Area provided that all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The gross floorspace does not exceed 200m²;
- b. The office use falls within Class A2 of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015; and
- c. The development is for university-related uses.

Within the designated Queen's Office Area and within the identified Queen's University Campus Area, planning permission will be granted for Queen's University office development where both of the following criteria are met:

- d. The office use falls within Class A2, Class B1(a) and B1(c); and
- e. The development is for university-related uses.

Development proposals for B1(a) general offices outside the above specified areas must comply with the sequential approach with those in excess of 1,000sq.m gross floor space accompanied with an impact assessment and an assessment of need as set out in policy RET2.

Justification and amplification

- 8.1.36 Office development is crucial for the transformation of the city's economy. Sustaining a supply of good quality office premises and providing for new floorspace is therefore necessary to support the required economic growth over the plan period.



- 8.1.37 The council’s policy, in line with the SPPS seeks to support the promotion of the role of Belfast City Centre as the primary location for office development in order to reinforce the role of Belfast as a regional city.
- 8.1.38 Outside Belfast City Centre, office development will, in general, be directed to designated centres or other specified areas in order to assist regeneration of established foci of community life and to provide opportunities for job creation in local areas.
- 8.1.39 Proposals for office development outside designated centres or other specified areas will be required to comply with the sequential and those above 1000sq.m gross floorspace with impact tests set out in policy RET 2.

Queen’s office area

- 8.1.40 In order to accommodate further small scale offices in this area, the Belfast City Council will permit offices within Class A2 of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015 up to 200m2 gross maximum floorspace for university related uses within the designated Queen’s University Office Area. This will facilitate small-scale offices which need to be located in close proximity to the university due to an inter-relationship in business activity.
- 8.1.41 The council recognises the important role that Queen’s University plays in the knowledge-based economy of the city and region, particularly its significant research and development function. The council will permit offices for Queen’s University within Class A2, Class B1(a) and Class B1(c) of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015 for university-related uses with no floorspace restriction within those university campus areas within the Queen’s University Office Area. Accommodating university-related office development within the university campus focuses the university’s activities in the same area, ensuring that they can be easily accessed by staff and students with minimum travelling.

Stormont office node

- 8.1.42 The Stormont Estate has been for many years a key location for public sector administration. Favourable consideration will be given to office development solely for public sector administration within the designated node.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓

Policy EC7 – Higher education institutions

The council will promote the growth and expansion of further and higher education institutions as drivers of improved skills by promoting these institutions as employment hubs for the innovation sector and the wider knowledge economy.

Justification and amplification

- 8.1.43 The Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are both key employers in the city and support research and development that supports wider economic growth. They are enterprises in themselves, generating economic activity, creating jobs and output in other industries and contributing to GDP. These institutions are a key enabler to deliver a talented and highly educated workforce.
- 8.1.44 The council's policy seeks the enhancement of the five higher education institutions. The plan will aim to support the city's aspirations of a 'learning city' by creating an environment that allows the city's educational institutions to reach their full potential. Links between the universities and other research and development establishments will also be promoted. It is vital that these institutions are able to develop to ensure that Belfast remains a world leader in higher education and continues to develop as a centre of excellence in higher education research and knowledge based industries
- 8.1.45 This recognises not only the important role these key institutions play in education, delivering the highly skilled workforce necessary to attract foreign direct investment and support the growth of the economy.
- 8.1.46 There are a number of examples within Belfast of HEIs contributing to the growth of the economy and the wider regeneration of the city. For example, the Belfast Metropolitan College's new Titanic Quarter campus has aided regeneration of the city waterfront area, whilst the e3 campus in west Belfast is dedicated to enterprise, employability and economic development. The Catalyst Inc. innovation hub (formerly Northern Ireland Science Park) is also located within the Titanic Quarter, providing support for innovation-led, high-growth; knowledge based businesses and provides links with the universities, colleges and research centres.
- 8.1.47 Our universities and colleges support growth and provide centres for learning, research and business, as well as links to a global knowledge network. The planned growth of our further/higher educational institutions is encouraged and supported by the council. To remain competitive, it will be essential that we utilise our research advantage, particularly to provide a catalyst for value-added enterprises focused on innovation and commercialisation. This will provide high-skilled and high-value



employment, rooted in the local economy, which is less vulnerable to economic downturn.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓



8.2 Retail

- 8.2.1 The RDS directs a city centre first approach to development complemented by a precautionary approach to out of centre developments. The SPPS replicates this centre approach for the location of future retailing and other town centre uses. The economic growth of the city centre is vitally important to ensure that Belfast remains competitive. The strategy is creative and permissive to adopt to changing trends and promote resiliency whilst maintaining the function of core areas for retailing. It will build upon complementary creative and cultural uses and enable its evening and night time economy to grow and diversify.
- 8.2.2 To maintain viability of the city centre the plan will adopt a sequential approach to growth. A network and hierarchy of centres can support communities and neighbourhoods across the district. It will seek to reinforce positive aspects of existing patterns of development whilst ensuring that centres offer local services and choice for shopping, social activity and recreation that are readily accessible by good sustainable transport from where people live and work.
- 8.2.3 The strategy seeks to manage development at retail parks where there is little synergy with other centres to promote shared shopping and leisure trips. It is the plans intention that these areas are managed to prevent sprawl of retail use and maintain the viability of the city centre as the primary retail location within the district.

Policy aims

- 8.2.4 The retail policies within the LDP will seek to address current and future retailing needs over the plan period. This retail strategy will therefore aim to:
- Provide a range of uses appropriate to the role and function of a city centre which can realise ambitions for growth;
 - Acknowledge the distinctive role of Belfast City Centre as the primary location for retailing in the region;
 - Adopt a sequential approach to the identification of retail and other town centre uses decision making;
 - Maintain and improve accessibility to and within the city centre by supporting connectivity;
 - Provide an appropriate scale of retail and town centres uses in accordance with their scale, role and function;
 - Support local economies by ensuring continued vibrancy and vitality;
 - Develop a compact urban form that maximises opportunities in the city centre; and
 - Provide a focus for economic development.



Policy RET1 – Establishing a centre hierarchy

The following network and hierarchy is to be maintained to ensure that proposals for main town centres uses, including retail, are directed to the appropriate level of centre based on size, function and catchment. Such proposals will be considered in the following order of preference:

- a. Belfast City Centre primary retail core and frontage (retail applications);
- b. Belfast City Centre;
- c. District centres; then
- d. Local centres.

The sequential approach directs development within centres before considering an edge of centre site. Preference will be given to edge of centre land before considering an out of centre site.

Other centres outside Belfast should be considered when assessing retail impacts if they fall within the intended catchment area and the sequential test will be applicable.

Justification and amplification

- 8.2.5 The four tiers within the Belfast district are designated in accordance with the RDS. Future development will be based on a network and hierarchy of centres. The centre hierarchy is fundamental to the delivery of the LDP as it seeks to support sustainable distribution of growth across the council area.
- 8.2.6 The city centre is the driver for the regional economy, playing a strategic role in the development of Northern Ireland and the primary focus of the hierarchy. This will reflect its' regional standing and the aspirations of the BCCRIS and the Belfast Agenda. The city centre will be the key location for wide-ranging service provision, large-scale shopping development, leisure and cultural activities for the region.
- 8.2.7 Preference will be given to edge of centre land before considering an out of centre site. For clarity, edge of centre means a location that is well connected to and within easy walking distance (up to 300 metres of the primary shopping area). For uses other than retailing this is likely to be within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances such as barriers, for example crossing major roads, carparks, attractiveness and safety and size of the town centre. A site would not be well connected where it is physically separated by barriers such as a railway line, busy road or lack of pedestrian access.
- 8.2.8 This policy also seeks to address social exclusion and support equitable growth by

Figure 8.3: Indicative retail hierarchy



ensuring residents have easy access to key facilities, local services and local employment opportunities and by promoting land use integration. This may have a direct impact on local economies, as they often comprise businesses owned by, and employing local people. Such local neighbourhood centres can promote sustainable development by ensuring communities are well connected through pedestrian accessibility and through public transport reducing the need to travel by car. New facilities can play a role in the economic and physical regeneration of local communities and promotion of social interaction in support of building healthy communities.

8.2.9 The exact locations and associated boundaries of the above hierarchy will be reviewed as part of the LPP. In the interim prior to the adoption of the LPP the existing draft BMAP boundaries will be used as follows: city centre, district centre, local centres.



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy RET2 – Out of centre development

Proposals for main town centre uses¹⁵, outside of existing centres must:

- a. Demonstrate that there is not a sequentially preferable site in, or on the edge of, centres having regard to criteria of suitability, availability and viability; and**
- b. Submit a retail impact assessment and assessment of need for proposals that have a floorspace of 1,000sq m gross and above.**

Justification and amplification

8.2.10 The RDS aims to “strengthen Belfast as the regional economic driver” recognising that ‘successful regions have strong and vibrant cities at their core’. Belfast therefore plays a strategic role in future economic growth of the region. It is the principal city and regional centre for administration, services and cultural amenities and serves as the hub of regional transport and gateway to Europe.

8.2.11 This policy supports Belfast as the primary location, by specifying the scale and form of development considered appropriate and by detailing criteria for the assessment of out of centre development, particularly in respect of retail impact and need within the catchment. A sequential test sets out the requirements for developments for main town centre uses. The test is intended to ensure that retail developments (and other types of development that are appropriate to be situated within town centres) will not end up in a location that would draw away trade from the town centre. This will be applicable to the evaluation of proposals for main town centre uses from the retail core along the hierarchy of centres.

8.2.12 Impact assessments, required for proposal over 1,000sq.m gross floorspace is deemed an appropriate set size threshold reflecting the primacy and growth ambitions of Belfast City Centre. It will also help ensure that any proposed use is in the best location possible to support the vitality and vibrancy of centres, and that no significant adverse impacts on existing centres arise from inappropriately located development.

8.2.13 Where it is argued that no other sequentially preferable sites are appropriate, the applicant must demonstrate why such sites are not practical alternatives in terms of their “availability, suitability and viability”.

¹⁵ *Includes cultural and community facilities, retail, leisure, entertainment and businesses*



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Suitability

8.2.14 The appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type, scale and form of development proposed. There will be a requirement to consider flexibility in the format and scale of the development proposed for the city centre and other centres.

Availability

8.2.15 The applicant will be required to submit evidence of any insurmountable legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners that render the site unavailable.

Viability

8.2.16 A viability assessment should include the land/site value as a key consideration as to whether development is economically viable. In order to determine applications a realistic understanding of the costs and the value of the development in the local area, as well as the prevailing market conditions, should be submitted. The timing of the assessment will be dependent on the nature and scale of the development proposed.

8.2.17 Where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have a significant adverse impact on designated centres in the hierarchy, it will be refused. The information required in the assessments should be commensurate with the size of the proposal and will be agreed with Belfast City Council.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		✓

Policy RET3 – District centres, local centres and city corridors

Beyond the city centre a district centre first approach will apply to proposals for major retail development and other town centres uses.

Within local centres planning permission will be granted for a proposal for retail development provided that:

- a. Any individual unit created (including by extension) does not exceed 500sqm gross external for convenience or 200sqm gross external for comparison shopping;
- b. The proposal meets a local need or deficiency;
- c. The proposal would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of centres in the catchment;



- d. It would complement and not alter the role and function of the centre or route; and
- e. It would be easily accessible by foot, creates linkages and connections to improve accessibility.

Proposals for retail development will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements, particularly those relating to traffic parking and protecting residential amenity.

Proposals for retail development in local centres in excess of these thresholds will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where a clear quantitative need is identified and where the proposal would not have a significant adverse effect on the vitality and viability of existing centres.

Local shops that are not designated as part of a local centre such as those along city corridors will be limited to performing a local convenience and service role. In this regard, proposals for the sale of comparison goods will not be permitted even if they are below 200sqm gross external in size.

Justification and amplification

- 8.2.18 This policy consolidates main services and facilities. The designations will draw on existing patterns of development to set the basis for application of policy. These locations are designated district centres and local centres situated on major transport routes to interconnect existing and planned infrastructure and housing.
- 8.2.19 Convenience and comparison shopping should be at a scale appropriate to meet local needs, appropriate to the scale of the individual centre and managed through planning conditions. The gross external floorspaces stipulated in the policy have been informed through independent research. Convenience retailing helps to anchor and elevate the role of centres and development proposals which would lead to the loss of local convenience retailing will be resisted.
- 8.2.20 The future growth of centres will be in line with the capacity to accommodate growth, the role of the centre and the catchment that it serves.
- 8.2.21 The urban capacity study commissioned by the council has identified areas of future growth based on population change over the plan period, which can be accommodated throughout the district and along major transport routes through the application of varying densities of land use. This approach is consistent with considerable investment being made on upgrading public transport links on major routes via the Belfast Rapid Transit system and resonates with other council initiatives aimed at promoting the vitality of businesses on major roads. Many undesignated local centres are located along main roads zoned as draft BMAP as

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shopping/commercial areas and nodes. The exact locations and associated boundaries of the centres and transport routes will be detailed as part of the LPP. In the interim, prior to the adoption of the LPP, the existing draft BMAP boundaries will be used, namely city centre, district centres, local centres and arterial routes (city corridors).

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy RET4 – Retail warehousing

In areas of retail warehousing planning permission will only be granted for further retail development where:

- a. The primary use of the proposed unit (70% of gross floorspace or more) is for the sale of bulky comparison goods; and**
- b. The proposed development will not have significant adverse impact on the city centre, district centres and local centres.**

Planning permission will be granted for a limited amount of convenience good shopping to meet a local quantitative need. In such cases, the floorspace allocated to convenience goods in a proposed unit shall not exceed 300sqm net.

No subdivision of bulky comparison goods floorspace will be permitted if it creates a separate unit of less than 700sq.m gross (excluding mezzanine space).

Justification and amplification

8.2.22 This policy seeks to avoid trade diversion that could have an adverse impact upon centres within the hierarchy as the focus of retailing and other town centre uses. The convenience goods size threshold of 300sqm net is based on comparable studies in the UK. It specifically relates to the net floor area and is intended to manage the size of convenience stores, should a demonstrable local quantitative need be identified. It is also intended to manage the proportion of convenience goods floorspace in units within retail parks that sell a mix of goods. The threshold of 700sqm gross floorspace is the minimum size of warehouse observed for recent park proposals. This policy seeks to allow areas of retail warehousing to fulfil their roles in a manner that will complement rather than compete with the city centre.



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	✓

Policy RET5 – Primary retail area

The primary retail area will be the focus for A1 uses. Non-retail development will be restricted in designated primary retail frontages within this area so that no more than 40% of the frontage of the shopping street to which it relates is in non-retail use and no more than 3 adjacent units are in non-retail use.

Retail use includes Class A1 shops (i.e. outlets that sell convenience goods, comparison goods or provide a retail service). Non-retail development includes financial and business service and leisure services. In respect of this policy the 40% non-retail threshold excludes proposals for restaurant and café use.

Justification and amplification

- 8.2.23 This policy provides a clear area of consolidated retail use based on where there is a high representation of A1 retail use to promote a strong and competitive retail core. The primary retailing offering around the two main shopping centres Victoria Square and Castlecourt will continue to be developed.

- 8.2.24 The designation of the primary retail area and Primary Retail Frontage (PRF) will be defined spatially within the LPP. However too extensive an area may lead to further vacancy undermining the objective of strengthening the retail focus. A strong and compact area can be supported to prevent fragmentation of active frontages, disruption to footfall and dilution of retail services. For clarity the frontage of a shopping street applies to the building length of that side of the street in question and extends along the distance of the street that bears the same name. For measurement purposes the distance excludes gaps between buildings e.g. other streets, service lanes.

- 8.2.25 Subdivision and amalgamation of commercial units will be managed through planning conditions to avoid materially diminishing character and value of the retail offering.

- 8.2.26 To support and sustain centre’s long term viability is unlikely to depend on retail use alone. This policy seeks to enhance the diversity, quality and viability of offering in the city. The retail health check has identified that retailing currently accounts for 60% of uses excluding vacancies. By managing the retail and non-retail uses so that less than 40% are in non-retail use, the policy provides flexibility for diversity of use to supplement retailing provision with leisure, hospitality and entertainment and

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support the evening and night-time economy. The opening of a bar/pub on the PRF shall be considered only in circumstances where a non-retail use exists on each side of the proposed premises, so as not to break up a continuous shopping frontage.

8.2.27 It is fundamental to plan for growing residential population commencing with the expanding university through convenience units and eateries and the council aspirations for growth of the city centre population. This policy will seek the integration of functions that will enable Belfast to adapt to changing circumstances over the plan period to promote city centre economic resiliency.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy RET6 – Temporary and meanwhile uses

Planning permission will be granted for a temporary/meanwhile use outside the PRF in defined centres within the hierarchy, with the emphasis on regenerating vacant buildings and land, in the following cases:

- a. It is for an appropriate commercial or business use such as small start-ups creating employment or of benefit to the local community;
- b. It would introduce a complementary use that would support the evening and night time economy (excluding hot food takeaways which are not considered temporary and meanwhile use); or
- c. It would accommodate a seasonal event.

In such cases proposals should demonstrate how vacancy can be addressed and conform to all the additional criteria set out below:

- d. It complements the character of the centre and will not be detrimental to its vitality and viability;
- e. It would not result in 3 or more consecutive non-retail uses located in the primary retail frontage; and
- f. It will not be permitted for more than one calendar year.

This will be subject to proposals meeting all other policy requirements, particularly those relating to residential amenity and wider environmental quality.



Justification and amplification

- 8.2.28 For the purposes of this policy a ‘temporary use’ is one which is to last for a limited time; simply as, a temporary statute, or one which is limited in its operation for a particular period of time. ‘Meanwhile use’ is defined as at or during the same time, while something else is being done.

- 8.2.29 Temporary/meanwhile uses which would undermine the retailing function will not be permitted, the proposed use should be complementary to retailing function. Favourable consideration will be given to a change of use that would lead to the maintenance and security of a vacant or redundant building that would minimise physical decay and the buildings vulnerability. In all cases temporary change of use proposals will be granted for one year with any extensions to time limited to the particular circumstance of the case. Temporary and meanwhile measures may not necessarily be sustainable or suited to every part of the city and should not be allowed to prejudice the development of land in the public interest.

- 8.2.30 Small scale business uses such as incubators, home-grown businesses and start-up companies, particularly companies that are responsive to technological and economic innovation in the marketplace could be facilitated within vacant shops, surplus public buildings and derelict land. Favourable consideration will be given to proposals that include job creation, education or proposals that have socially beneficial purposes.

- 8.2.31 Any use associated with night-time economies such as culture, hospitality and arts should be compatible to commercial business as the primary land use. The proposed temporary use should not lead to a dead frontage to the detriment of the commercial function. In addition proposals that would impact upon the quality of the public realm or front facades, such as closed shop fronts after hours or uniformity that undermine unique character will not be permitted.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



8.3 City centre

- 8.3.1 The city centre plays a major role in the civic, commercial, economic, cultural and social life of Belfast. It is the regional hub for business interaction, access to employment opportunities, and a variety of culture and leisure activities. The city centre is a social meeting place for local people, and a destination where tourists choose to visit. To support the ambitions and priorities of the Belfast Agenda, and the BCCRIS, the identification of development opportunities sites is critical to accommodate the proposed population growth and to build the economic capacity of the city centre.
- 8.3.2 The city's unique maritime heritage, stunning natural setting, and creative culture vibe plays a key role in attracting visitors to Belfast. The council's "Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020" responds to the emerging global trends for city tourism, and the industry-wide desire to grow Belfast as a destination within Europe, that has year-round appeal for leisure and business tourism. The LDP supports the development of a strong sustainable tourism, leisure and cultural sector in the city centre, and in designated tourism clusters that have appeal to a wide variety of visitors and tourists.
- 8.3.3 The city centre does not have a legacy of large areas of redundant and derelict industrial land. However, there are a number of small vacant and underused sites and buildings located within the city centre. A comprehensive regeneration approach is required to resolve issues of fragmented land ownership, contamination, small plot sizes, infrastructure and accessibility to create commercially viable mixed-use development opportunity sites.
- 8.3.4 The policy is focused on promoting the sustainable growth, and facilitating mixed use regeneration schemes within the city centre character areas to strengthen and diversify the overall offer of Belfast.

Policy aims

- 8.3.5 These policies within the LDP will seek to proactively drive forward the sustainable economic growth of the city centre over the plan period. The aims are to:-
- Promote and strengthen the city centre's role as the regional capital;
 - To facilitate sustainable growth and diversification of the city centre by identifying development opportunity areas, that support the objectives of the RDS, the Belfast Agenda, BCCRIS and the Department for Communities (DfC);
 - Direct development to previously used brownfield sites to promote the sustainable reuse of resources;
 - Facilitate comprehensive mixed use developments for employment, retail, leisure, cultural, residential and other needs appropriate to its role as a multi-functional regional centre, and adds to the vitality and viability of the city centre;



- Promote the efficient use of land in the city centre that secures a compact built form that incorporates the green infrastructure network to improve liveability and walkability;
- Integrate the development opportunity areas with good quality connections with the city centre core area and the local neighbourhoods; and
- To reinforce the distinctive character areas, strengths and qualities of the city centre to create a clear sense of place.

Policy CC1 – Development opportunity sites

The council will support mixed use development within the development opportunities areas that is consistent with the following principles:

- a. New developments shall be directed towards sites within the development opportunities areas of:**
 - 1. Greater Clarendon, City Quays, and Sailortown;**
 - 2. Inner North West;**
 - 3. North East Quarter;**
 - 4. Oxford Street and East Bank; and**
 - 5. Transport Hub and South Centre Linen Quarter.**
- b. Master plans, urban design and landscaped frameworks, and developers’ briefs, shall be prepared, and these shall be agreed by the council’s Planning Service;**
- c. Master plans, urban design and landscaped frameworks, and developers’ briefs, shall be required to demonstrate a comprehensive approach to the planning and regeneration of the development opportunity area, and shall be consistent with the LDP objectives and policies;**
- d. Development proposals shall be required to deliver the identified land uses, the design principles for quality buildings and the public realm for sites in the development opportunity areas’ masterplan agreed by the council’s Planning Service prior to planning applications being submitted for individual sites; and**
- e. Developers shall support the delivery of new infrastructure required for the regeneration of the development opportunity areas. This will be secured through the use of planning conditions and section 76 planning agreements.**

Justification and amplification

- 8.3.6 The city centre is the economic, transport, social and civic heart of our communities, and offers good accessibility to jobs, services, shops and public transport. However the city centre faces particular challenges in the face of global competition, changing customer demands, and the need to diversify the economy to attract more people and businesses throughout the day and evening.

Figure 8.4: Existing City Centre Master Plan Areas



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Key

- City core
- Belfast Harbour Estate
- Inner City Neighbourhoods
- Cathedral Quarter
- Wider University Area
- Infrastructure Projects
- Glider (Rapid Transit) Routes
- Future Gamble Street Rail Halt
- BCCRIS Special Action Areas (SSAs)
- Masterplan Areas:
 1. Greater Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan
 2. Inner North West Masterplan
 3. Belfast City Centre: North East Quarter Masterplan
 4. East Bank Development Strategy
 5. Linen Quarter: Vision and Guidance



- 8.3.7 The city centre primary retail area is thriving, however the city centre fringe area is characterised by vacant and underused sites and buildings. The area has been blighted by a lack of investment and development. This policy establishes the development opportunity areas within the city centre where growth and investment will be targeted over the lifetime of the plan.

- 8.3.8 The current focus for city centre regeneration are the BCCRIS special action areas and the DfC master plans, which have identified a number of potential areas for regeneration. The LDP provides the overarching statutory policies to guide potential development proposals for individual sites within the broad development opportunity areas. Development proposals shall be expected to have regard to place-making by adopting the design and other relevant planning policies set out in the Plan Strategy, to be able to manage growth and deliver associated infrastructure in a coordinated and timely manner.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	

8.4 Tourism, leisure and culture

8.4.1 The city's unique maritime heritage, stunning natural setting, and creative culture vibe plays a key role in attracting visitors to Belfast. The City attracted 1.456 million visitor trips and tourism expenditure contributed £334 million to the economy in 2016. (Tourism NI) Tourism supported 18,607 jobs across the Council area in 2015. It is vital that Belfast realises greater value from its unique assets, to enable the tourism and hospitality sector to compete in an increasingly global market place to make the City a destination of choice with year-round appeal.

8.4.2 The Council's "Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015-2020" outlines the priorities to double the value of tourism to £870 million per year by 2020. It builds upon the work undertaken by the sector over the past 10 years, and responds to the emerging global trends for city tourism. There is a clear industry-wide desire to grow Belfast as a city destination within Europe, for leisure and business tourism.

Policy aims

- 8.4.3 These policies within the LDP will seek to support sustainable growth in tourism, leisure and culture over the plan period. They will therefore aim to:
- Encouraging the sustainable growth of a vibrant tourism, leisure and cultural sector in the City Centre, which would become a high quality European city tourism destination of choice for business conferences, family holidays and cultural experiences;
 - To develop a critical mass of tourism, leisure and cultural uses capable of strengthening the appeal and attraction of Belfast to a wide range of visitors, as well as providing a coherent sense of place that offers sufficient things to see and do in a compact area to maintain visitor interest;
 - Promoting sustainable job creation within the tourism, leisure and cultural sector;
 - To plan positivity for tourism, leisure and cultural uses in mixed use development schemes that contributes to the wider regeneration of the city centre;
 - Promote the sustainable development of tourism, leisure and cultural clusters within the city to maintain the spatial compactness of the built environs to create a legible walkable city destination for tourist and visitors;
 - Maintain the existing tourism, leisure and cultural facilities that recognises the importance of the City's culture, built heritage and natural environment;
 - To encourage visitors to stay longer in the city centre by supporting and enhancing the evening and late night time economy; and
 - To promote a sustainable tourism travel network, ensuring good access by public transport, walking and cycling routes that are well sign posted.



TLC1: Supporting tourism leisure and cultural development

The council will support tourism leisure, and culture development that contributes to:

- a. **Extending the offer across the daytime and night time for a broad range of visitors; and**
- b. **Improving the quality, and accessibility of tourism, leisure, and culture facilities and assets to support Belfast's reputation as an attractive tourism destination.**

This will be subject to proposals meeting all other policy requirements, particularly those relating to design, protecting residential amenity, protection of open space and employment land.

Justification and amplification

- 8.4.4 Tourism is inextricably linked to the cultural life of the city and contributes to the prosperity of the local economy and the wider region. The special characteristics of clusters of visitor attractions, and the diversity of heritage, environmental and cultural infrastructure offers a wide choice of experiences for visitors, which should be conserved, and enhanced to maintain their appeal as a quality destination. The tourism industry has been successful in responding to changing markets, tastes and styles, resulting in nearly a decade of steady growth in visitor numbers, and investment in its tourism product. To remain competitive as a short city tourist destination, Belfast needs to develop unique visitor attractions and experiences to support the council's aim to grow the tourism sector in the city. A well-planned, sustainable and prosperous tourism industry is a catalyst for improving the environment of the city, the wellbeing of its citizens and boosting the local economy.
- 8.4.5 The council's integrated tourism strategy highlights the real potential for growth to build a critical mass of activity, to increase the economic value of the visitor economy. New tourism proposals shall be of the highest standard, and shall accord with the council's integrated tourism strategy vision for strengthening the city's tourism industry. New development proposals for tourism, leisure and culture schemes and associated infrastructure are to be supported to build up a critical mass of activity to attract visitors all year round. The policy shall support the sustainable mixed use regeneration of the city centre as a compact walkable place that is attractive for promoting short stay city tourism as well as being accessible to the public.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	

TLC2: Existing tourism leisure and cultural facilities and assets

The council will protect existing tourism, leisure and cultural provision and assets from being adversely affected new development.

Only in exceptional circumstances as outlined below will the loss of these facilities and assets be considered acceptable:

- a. That similar or better replacement is made elsewhere within the same catchment area, which is readily accessible by public transport, pedestrians and cyclists;**
- b. That there is no longer a viable need for the facility. A viability report that demonstrates to the council’s satisfaction that the facility or alternative tourism leisure and cultural development use is not economically viable, including evidence of active and appropriate marketing for a continuous period of 18 months, will be required;**
- c. It is unsuitable for conversion to an alternative tourism leisure and cultural use;**
- d. That the site is allocated for other development use defined in the LDP; or**
- e. Demonstrate mitigation measures to protect the asset from new development.**

Justification and amplification

8.4.6 There are a number of existing tourism, leisure and cultural facilities and assets located in the council’s plan area, which should be maintained and protected from pressure from new development. The intention is to ensure if alternative development is proposed that a replacement provision is made to maintain the choice of tourism facilities and assets available in the plan area to maximise visitor numbers and spend.

8.4.7 Where the applicant intends not to replace an existing facility or asset, a strong rationale, supported by a viability report is required to demonstrate that the tourism leisure and cultural development use is no longer economically viable, and would not have a detrimental impact on visitor numbers or spend.

8.4.8 However, where there is demand for alternative developments, which would result in the loss of the existing tourism, leisure and cultural facilities, this may compromise the council’s ability to deliver the Belfast Agenda’s priority to increase visitor numbers. There is a need to protect local jobs, to ensure that low income groups are



not adversely impacted. The requirement is to replace a similar or better tourism, leisure and cultural facilities within the same locality, which is readily accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and a regular public transport service. The policy would help to maintain the tourism, leisure and cultural facility to contribute to growing the tourism sector, maintaining a diverse tourism offer, and safeguarding jobs within the immediate locality to support the local economy.

8.4.9 Where the tourism, leisure and cultural facility is deemed to be no longer economically viable, a viability report is required if it is proposed to close the facility and develop the land or convert building for alternative uses. The applicant will have to provide clear evidence that the existing facility or alternative proposal for a tourism, leisure and cultural facility is no longer economically viable, and that every effort was made to secure a viable tourism, leisure and cultural use. It is important to ensure that the city is offering a variety of attractions and facilities that will appeal to a wide range of visitors and to sustain visitor interest to encourage longer stays in Belfast to benefit the local economy.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	

TLC3: Overnight visitor accommodation

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals for new overnight visitor accommodation¹⁶ within the city centre boundary.

Outside of the city centre boundary, proposals for overnight visitor accommodation will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated there are specific locational requirements for the accommodation to be sited either within an existing tourism cluster or adjacent to a visitor attraction.

This will be subject to proposals meeting all other policy requirements, particularly those relating to design, protecting residential amenity, protection of open space and employment land and car parking and servicing.

Proposals for holiday self-catering apartments, serviced apartments, or short term holiday lets will be considered under the short term let policy HOU13.

Justification and amplification

- 8.4.10 Improving the supply of overnight accommodation is vital for encouraging visitors to stay in Belfast to experience its visitor attractions and business offer. The council has invested in the extension of its conference facilities at the Waterfront Hall, which can accommodate up to 2,000 delegates, and is promoting the city as a major conference destination to attract business tourists. There has also been a growth in the number of leisure tourists on short city breaks throughout the year.
- 8.4.11 The city centre with its supporting infrastructure, makes it an attractive location for overnight visitor accommodation, where tourists can easily walk from their overnight accommodation to the conference venues or visitor attractions. The increased tourism footfall would strengthen the day and night time economy creating added vitality and vibrancy in the city centre. This would support the hospitality sector in the city centre as higher levels of overnight visitor expenditure contributes more to the city's economy. Overnight accommodation outside of the city centre should be appropriately located within tourism clusters to support existing visitor attractions, leisure and cultural facilities. This would ensure that overnight accommodation outside of the city centre would be easily accessible to a regular public transport service.
- 8.4.12 Proposals for overnight visitor accommodation development shall be required to address and mitigate any adverse impact associated with environmental amenity, traffic and servicing arrangements to ensure that the surrounding residential and business areas are not adversely affected, for example by noise nuisance and traffic

¹⁶ *Hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, youth hostels*



congestion. Night clubs and other facilities in overnight visitor accommodation can cause nuisance to neighbours and restrictions shall be imposed on their operation. Overnight accommodation developments should achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design to accommodate a diverse mix of tourist to the city, and demonstrate the council’s aspirations to be a welcoming place to visit.

8.4.13 While overnight visitor accommodation may create jobs and support the visitor and business economy, it is important to ensure that other planning objectives are also met, and that overnight visitor accommodation does not prejudice the achievement of other priorities; in particular ensuring that development does not result in the loss of suitable and viable housing or office accommodation or prejudice the primary business function of the city centre.

8.4.14 Alternative forms of tourist accommodation such as holiday self-catering apartments, serviced apartments, or short term holiday lets are providing greater choice for visitors to Belfast. However, it is important that holiday self-catering apartments, serviced apartments, or short term holiday lets provision does not compromise the supply of conventional housing in the council’s plan area, and impact on the council’s objective in the Belfast Agenda to grow the population of Belfast.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	

TLC4: Evening and night-time economy

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that strengthen and enhance the evening and night time economy within the city centre boundary and tourism clusters, subject to meeting normal planning considerations.

The council will also protect and support existing evening and night-time cultural venues³. The 'agent of change' principle will be applied to new development near existing evening and late night-time cultural venues.

The council may refuse development proposals that have not clearly demonstrated how noise impacts from existing evening and night time uses will be mitigated and managed.

Justification and amplification

- 8.4.15 A thriving evening and night time economy is important for building a successful regional city. It has an important economic role in contributing to the development of an exciting cultural tourism destination. Belfast has a rich cultural offer comprising a range of theatres, cinemas, concert venues, visual and performing arts, music, entertainment venues pubs, night clubs, spectator sports, a diverse and innovative food scene, which contributes to a well-established vibrant evening and night time economy. The evening and night-time economy refers to all economic activity, including eating, drinking, entertainment, shopping and spectator sports, taking place between the hours of 6pm and 6am. A vibrant safe evening and night time economy also plays a vital role in building strong communities, encouraging shared social activities, and promoting civic pride.
- 8.4.16 The council has been promoting initiatives to encourage the evening and night-time economy to diversify the range of night-time activities in the city centre; including extending the opening hours of shops, and galleries as well as promoting events such as the twilight market and cultural nights. There are significant benefits in encouraging and strengthening the evening and night-time economic activity. It would help to deliver a mix of employment opportunities, generate revenue from leisure and tourism activities, and increase in footfall would provide better passive surveillance to enhance public safety.
- 8.4.17 Making Belfast's evening and night-time culture more enjoyable and inclusive requires ensuring a wide range of evening and night-time activities are on offer to the city's diverse population and visitors. There are benefits of diversifying the evening and night-time mix of uses, particularly in areas where there are high concentrations of licensed premises with extended opening times, as it can help attract a wider range of visitors to stay longer, including those who feel excluded from alcohol-based entertainment activities. It can also help decrease crime, anti-



social behaviour and the fear of crime. The council would support the diversification of the evening night-time mix of uses, particularly in the city centre development opportunity areas and areas that are well connected to good night time transport provision.

- 8.4.18 However, evening and night time economy uses are not suitable for every part of the city. The council policy is to balance the needs of local residents with the economic benefits of promoting a vibrant evening and night-time economy. Belfast's evening and night time economy is mainly focused in the city centre and within clusters across the city. Different areas of night-time activity function at different scales and serve different catchment areas. The city centre, Cathedral Quarter and Titanic Quarter – Odyssey attract internationally-renowned culture, performers and productions that serve a wider regional catchment, and draw out of state visitors to Belfast. The district centres, such as Cityside and Kennedy Centre as well as the Queen's Quarter, provide a range of evening and night time economic activity that serve the wider city neighbourhoods. If proposals come forward for the redevelopment of part or all the clusters which involve the loss of the late night cluster, the council will assess whether their merits outweigh the benefits of the late evening cluster or alternatively if the late evening uses can be relocated or provided elsewhere or are no longer needed.
- 8.4.19 Sustaining and protecting noise generating evening and night time cultural venues requires a sensitive approach to managing change in the surrounding area. Encouraging complementary uses to group together will draw people to particular areas and encourage them to stay longer. In clearly defining areas where the "6-to-late" offer is concentrated – theatres, music and performance venues, cinemas, bars, cafes, shops, and restaurants, this shall help to consolidate the city centre and existing clusters that would be accessible to visitors and tourists. The policy has an important role in directing such uses to areas of the city centre and tourism clusters which are easily accessible, attractive to the tourism, leisure and culture industry and which create minimum noise and nuisance to neighbouring residential areas.
- 8.4.20 Noise-generating cultural venues such as theatres, concert halls, performance venues, pubs and live music venues should be protected, as they contribute to a vibrant place and are a valuable asset for cultural tourism in Belfast. This requires a sensitive approach to managing change in the surrounding area. Adjacent development and land uses should be brought forward and designed in ways which ensure established cultural venues remain viable and can continue in their present form without the prospect of licensing restrictions or the threat of closure due to noise complaints from neighbours.
- 8.4.21 The agent of change principle places the responsibility for mitigating the impact of noise firmly on the new development. Where new developments are proposed close



Creating a vibrant economy

to existing noise-generating uses, applicants will need to design the building to incorporate acoustic measures to protect the new occupiers, from noise impacts. This could also include paying for soundproofing for the existing noise-generating uses, such as an existing music venue. The agent of change principle works both ways. If a new noise-generating evening use is proposed close to existing residential development, the developer shall be required to ensure its building is acoustically designed to protect existing users or residents from noise impacts at night. This will ensure new development has effective sound insulation to mitigate and minimise potential noise impact or neighbour amenity issues.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	



Building a smart connected and resilient place



9.1 Infrastructure, telecoms and utilities

Introduction

9.1.1 Infrastructure, telecoms and utilities are integral to the day to day operation and socio-economic sustainability of our city. This section of the Plan Strategy sets out policies for telecommunications, water and sewage, electricity and gas and renewable energy.

Policy aims

- 9.1.2 Our policy aims for Infrastructure, Telecoms and Utilities (ITU) are:
- To facilitate the appropriate provision of infrastructure to meet current and future needs in a timely and co-ordinated way; and
 - To minimise visual and environmental impacts of infrastructure, telecoms and utilities in order to support sustainable economic growth.

Policy ITU 1 – Telecommunications development

Planning permission will be granted for the development of new or upgraded telecommunications infrastructure in appropriate locations where such proposals will:

- Enhance connectivity;**
- Encourage investment and support the competitiveness of the city; and**
- Not result in unacceptable damage to visual amenity or harm to environmentally sensitive features or locations, or heritage features.**

Developers will be required to demonstrate that proposals for telecommunications development have regard to technical and operational constraints and have been sited and designed to minimise visual and environmental impact.

Proposals for the development of a new telecommunications mast will only be considered acceptable by the council where the above requirements are met and where it is demonstrated that:

- The sharing of an existing mast or other structure has been investigated and is not feasible; or**
- A new mast represents a better environmental solution than other options.**

Where planning permission is required, applications for telecommunications development should include:

- Information about the purpose and need for the particular development**

including a description of how it fits into the wider network;

- g. Details of the consideration given to measures to mitigate the visual and environmental impact of the proposal; and
- h. Where proposals relate to the development of a mobile telecommunications base station, a statement:
 1. Indicating its location, the height of the antenna, the frequency and modulation characteristics and details of power output; and
 2. Confirmation that the base station when operational will meet the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Justification and amplification

- 9.1.3 Telecommunications are an essential and beneficial element of everyday life which influences how we communicate with the world around us. Digital connectivity is vital for businesses and makes the city an attractive place in which to invest, thereby contributing to the region's ability to compete with other global cities. With the advance of technology, telecommunications infrastructure in Belfast is continually evolving and changing how we exchange information.
- 9.1.4 This policy seeks to enable the telecommunications industry to operate in a way that meets the demands of modern technical connectivity whilst keeping the visual and environmental impact of telecommunications equipment to a minimum.
- 9.1.5 The council acknowledges that technical and operational constraints can determine the suitability of sites for telecommunications development. For example, masts and antennas often require a particular operating height to allow signals to clear trees and buildings. Telecommunications development may therefore need particular locations in order to work effectively. However, there is also a need for the council to control telecommunications development to protect landscapes, townscape character and skylines from harm.
- 9.1.6 When investigating proposals for telecommunications development, operators should consider the following options:
- Installing smaller antennas;
 - Disguising antennas and equipment, for example as part of a building or street furniture;
 - Designing antennas and equipment so that they appear to be an integral part of a building, structure, or landscape;
 - Sharing existing sites, masts and other infrastructure;
 - Installing antennas on a building or structure not already used; and
 - Developing a new mast only when other options are not possible or it represents a better environmental solution than other options.



Building a smart connected and resilient place

- 9.1.7 Wherever possible, telecommunications development should avoid sensitive features and locations of archaeological, built or natural heritage value. This includes archaeological remains, listed buildings and conservation areas, areas of outstanding natural beauty, sites of nature conservation importance, sites where there are protected species, local landscape policy areas and other environmental designations. All new mobile phone base stations in the UK are expected to meet the ICNIRP public exposure guidelines.
- 9.1.8 When submitting proposals for telecommunications development, applicants will be required to provide the following information:
- Demonstrate the purpose and need for the proposed development;
 - Demonstrate what alternatives have been considered and why they have/have not been pursued (new masts only);
 - Detail the measures taken to minimise and mitigate the visual and environmental impact of the proposal. In some cases more detailed information on visual impact may be required, such as photomontages to show the proposed equipment in its wider setting; and
 - A declaration that the apparatus when operational will meet ICNIRP public exposure guidelines.
- 9.1.9 In designated or other sensitive landscapes, a landscape or visual impact assessment may be needed.
- 9.1.10 When granting planning permission for telecommunications development, the council will impose a condition requiring its removal, as soon as reasonably practicable after it is no longer required for telecommunications purposes. The land or site should then be restored to its condition before the development took place or any other condition as agreed in writing between the council and the developer.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy ITU 2 – Water and sewerage infrastructure

Planning permission will be granted for the development of water and sewerage infrastructure where the visual and environmental impact are kept to a minimum. The council will encourage the use of sustainable initiatives and technologies in regard to water, wastewater management and drainage, including reducing water consumption and SuDS measures (see also policy ENV5).

Justification and amplification

- 9.1.11 Water is a precious natural resource needed to fulfil many activities of everyday life. Significant infrastructure is required to deliver fresh water to homes and businesses throughout the city and also to remove sewage and waste water and ensure that it is effectively pumped, stored, transported and treated to prevent harm to people and the environment.
- 9.1.12 Climate change has major implications on the water environment and there is a need for a more sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland. The RDS recognises the need to promote a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services in contributing to environmental protection and a reduced risk of flooding throughout the region. It highlights the need to integrate water and land-use planning, reduce water consumption by recycling waste water and encouraging greater use of SuDS. Similarly, Sustainable Water – A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040) also sets out a range of initiatives to deliver the long-term goal of a sustainable water sector in NI.
- 9.1.13 This policy seeks to support the relevant statutory authorities in meeting the demands of planned growth and addressing existing constraints in the interests of sustainable development. It aims to encourage greater efficiencies in water demand and sustainable solutions to deal with waste water and surface water.
- 9.1.14 The development and enhancement of the water and sewerage infrastructure is essential for accommodating current needs and, indeed, future growth. Adequate investment in water, sewerage and drainage and long term investment plans to encourage the delivery of sustainable initiatives are key factors in facilitating new development, promoting tourism and attracting inward investment to the region. The promotion of new technologies and delivery of sustainable initiatives in the design of future development can contribute towards a decrease in water consumption and carry additional environmental benefits in lessening energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		



Policy ITU 3 – Electricity and gas infrastructure

Planning permission will be granted for proposals to develop new or upgrade existing electricity and gas infrastructure by utility providers in an efficient and effective manner, where visual and environmental impact is kept to a minimum. In assessing proposals, consideration will be given to the incorporation of appropriate measures to mitigate against the visual and environmental impact, in addition to other planning and environmental considerations.

Justification and amplification

- 9.1.15 Sustainable and balanced energy infrastructure networks are essential for economic growth. Significant investment is essential over the plan period in terms of upgrading electricity infrastructure and developing the natural gas network. Exploring the potential to develop a renewable heat generation and distribution network is also essential for a secure infrastructure provision capable of accommodating growth.
- 9.1.16 Regional policy and guidance supports improvement of electricity and gas infrastructure in a way that makes best use of existing assets and incorporates renewable (low/zero carbon) energy sources. A balanced approach to utilities development will also ensure that due cognisance is given to potential environmental impacts. The Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland (SEF) 2010, (currently subject to review), and the RDS recognise the important role energy infrastructure has in delivering reliable and secure services to communities and businesses in NI. The strategic aim underpinning the SEF is for a more secure and sustainable energy system, driven by a competitively priced and robust supply market, increased energy from renewable resources, and improved efficiency.
- 9.1.17 This policy therefore seeks to support the relevant statutory authorities in meeting the demands of planned growth and addressing existing constraints in the interests of sustainable development.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy ITU 4 – Renewable energy development

Planning permission will be granted for renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations, providing the proposal will not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on:

- a. Public safety, human health, or residential amenity;
- b. Visual amenity and landscape character;
- c. Biodiversity, nature conservation or built heritage interests;
- d. Local natural resources, such as air quality or water quality; and
- e. Public access to the countryside.

Proposals will be expected to be located at, or as close as possible to, the source of the resource needed for that particular technology. In the case of a combined heat and power scheme or a biomass heating scheme, an exception will be made if it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the need for transportation and an end user or district energy network beneficiary is identified.

Any renewable energy development proposals, including ancillary development, in areas designated of importance for landscape quality, nature conservation or scientific interest will be required to demonstrate that the development will not have a significant detrimental impact on the local or wider environment. Careful consideration will also be given to the nature and scale of proposals, the proposed operational timeframe, ancillary development requirements and site restoration/aftercare.

Environmental reports or technical assessments may be required to support planning proposals to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects, such as air and water pollution, damage to public health, wildlife and habitat loss, water use, land use, and global warming emissions. Suitable mitigation measures may need to be agreed and implemented to ensure there are no adverse environmental effects or significant impacts on environmental quality.

Wind energy development

In addition to above, applications for wind energy development will also be required to demonstrate all of the following:

- f. That the development will not have an unacceptable impact on visual amenity or landscape character through: the number, scale, size or siting of turbines;
- g. That the development has taken into consideration the cumulative impact of existing wind turbines, those which have permissions and those that are currently the subject of valid but undetermined applications;



- h. That the development will not create a significant risk of landslide or bog burst;**
- i. That no part of the development will give rise to unacceptable electromagnetic interference to communications installations; radar or air traffic control systems; emergency services communications; or other telecommunication systems;**
- j. That no part of the development will have an unacceptable impact on roads, rail or aviation safety;**
- k. That the development will not cause significant harm to the safety or amenity of any sensitive receptors (including future occupants of committed developments) arising from noise; shadow flicker; ice throw; and reflected light; and**
- l. That above-ground redundant plant (including turbines), buildings and associated infrastructure shall be removed and the site restored to an agreed standard appropriate to its location.**

Applications should be accompanied by a statement providing evidence that the above criteria are met. For wind farm development a separation distance of 10 times rotor diameter to occupied property, with a minimum distance not less than 500m, will generally apply. The supplementary planning guidance *'Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes'* will be taken into account in assessing all wind turbine proposals.

Justification and amplification

- 9.1.18 In assessing renewable energy development proposals, the council will give particular consideration to relevant environmental and planning issues in accordance with the SPPS. A reliable and plentiful supply of renewable energy is vital if we are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To plan for the adoption of renewable energy technologies will also bring significant socio-economic and environmental benefits, including greater energy security, tackling fuel poverty and improved air quality in the city. The dependence on imported fossil fuels is at odds with delivering future prosperity and wellbeing. A secure and affordable renewable energy supply is crucial to delivering economic growth.
- 9.1.19 The council is therefore keen to promote and embrace renewable energy technology for its socio-economic and environmental benefits. It will help to provide the city with a competitive economic advantage in marketing Belfast as an attractive location for inward investment.
- 9.1.20 The council seeks to support renewable energy generating facilities at appropriate locations compatible with the built and natural environment in order to help achieve renewable energy targets. The policy also aims to encourage and support the

incorporation of renewable energy technologies, including micro-generation and passive design, into appropriate new development proposals.

- 9.1.21 The council will only support renewable energy proposals where they would not have unacceptable adverse effects which are not outweighed by the local and wider environmental, economic and social benefits of the development. We also acknowledge the opportunities for decentralised or local renewable energy generation and district heating distribution proposals at appropriate locations in the city.
- 9.1.22 Renewable energy resources can usually be developed only where they occur at a level that is viable and some degree of impact may be unavoidable. In relation to wind energy, this can only be exploited where wind speeds are sufficiently fast. By its very nature the wind resource is likely to be greatest in upland areas, which may be particularly sensitive in terms of their landscape and nature conservation value. It is also recognised that larger-scale wind energy developments are likely to be visible over distances. The significance of environmental effects may depend on the type and scale of the renewable energy development and the sensitivity of the location.
- 9.1.23 All proposals should demonstrate any environmental, economic and social benefits as well as how any environmental and social impacts have been minimised through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures. The landscape and visual effects of particular renewable energy developments will vary on a case by case basis according to the type of development, its location and the landscape setting of the proposed development. Of all renewable technologies, wind turbines are likely to have the greatest visual impact and the Plan Strategy sets out a number of detailed considerations and requirements to assist applicants.
- 9.1.24 Some of these effects may be minimised through appropriate siting, design and landscaping schemes, depending on the size and type of development proposed. To assist assessment by the council, proposals should be accompanied by objective descriptive material and analysis wherever possible. This should, where appropriate, include details of site restoration after decommissioning. In some cases, this may form part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, where required. Nevertheless, the council will still expect an assessment of the environmental effects of the development to be submitted with any application. The level of detail required should reflect the scale of the technology employed and take account of its location. For larger scale projects, developers will also be expected to outline the benefits arising from the development in terms of the energy produced in order to enable a balanced assessment of the proposal to be carried out.



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Implementation

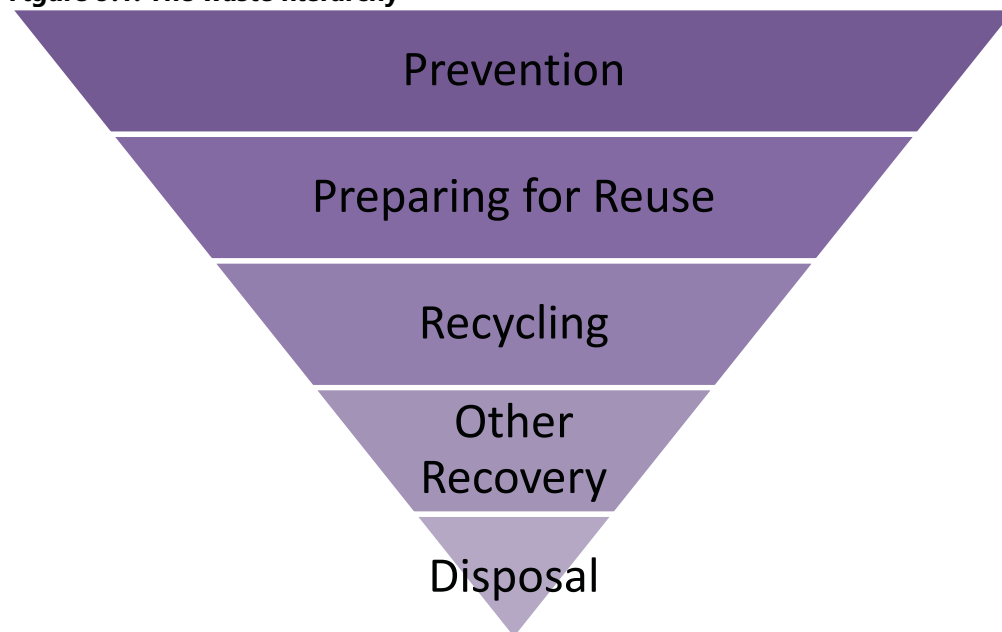
Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
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9.2 Waste infrastructure

Introduction

- 9.2.1 Moving towards more sustainable waste management is a key government objective for the future. The emphasis on waste management in NI is changing away from landfill in favour of more sustainable methods where waste is treated as a resource. The Plan Strategy will have regard to the Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland (WMS) and the council's Waste Management Plan (WMP). Both the WMS and WMP are important material considerations in assessing development proposals for waste management facilities.
- 9.2.2 The waste hierarchy (shown below) aims to decrease the volume of waste produced, with waste prevention and minimisation at the top of the hierarchy. Waste prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery are collectively defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as waste minimisation. Waste disposal should only be used when no option further up the hierarchy is possible. This is in accordance with the SPPS.

Figure 9.1: The waste hierarchy



- 9.2.3 The timely delivery of the right level and type of waste facilities is not only essential to support the development of new homes, economic growth and the creation of sustainable communities, but also provides benefits to the city's existing residents, workers and visitors. An integrated network of waste facilities is also essential if waste targets are to be met.

Policy aims

- 9.2.4 Our policy aim for waste infrastructure is to facilitate the development of new waste management infrastructure in appropriate locations or the upgrade of existing



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facilities to increase resource efficiency and enable a shift towards a circular economy, as well as having regard to the proximity principle and the need to ensure that the environment is afforded appropriate protection.

Policy W1 – Environmental impact of a waste management facility

Proposals for the development of a waste management facility will be subject to a thorough examination of environmental effects and planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that all of the following criteria are met:

- a. The proposal will not cause demonstrable harm to human health or result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment;**
- b. The proposal is designed to be compatible with the character of the surrounding area and adjacent land uses;**
- c. The visual impact of the waste management facility, including the final landform of landfilling or land raising operations, is acceptable in the landscape and the development will not have an unacceptable visual impact on any area designated for its landscape quality;**
- d. The access to the site and the nature and frequency of associated traffic movements will not prejudice the safety and convenience of road users or constitute a nuisance to neighbouring residents by virtue of noise, dirt and dust;**
- e. The public road network can satisfactorily accommodate, or can be upgraded to accommodate, the traffic generated;**
- f. Adequate arrangements shall be provided within the site for the parking, servicing and circulation of vehicles;**
- g. Wherever practicable the use of alternative transport modes, in particular, rail and water, has been considered;**
- h. The development will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on nature conservation or archaeological/built heritage interests;**
- i. The types of waste to be deposited or treated and the proposed method of disposal or treatment will be managed in such a way to limit a serious environmental risk to air, water or soil resources that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures;**
- j. The proposed site is not at risk from flooding and the proposal will not cause or exacerbate flooding elsewhere;**
- k. The proposal avoids (as far as is practicable) the permanent loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land; and**
- l. In the case of landfilling the proposal includes suitable, detailed and practical restoration and aftercare proposals for the site.**

Justification and amplification

- 9.2.5 The key aim of this policy is to achieve sustainable waste management. Consequently, there is a need to ensure that as far as possible all waste management facilities are developed to the highest standards so that waste can be dealt with in a way which minimises impacts on the environment. In addition, the development of modern facilities can help bring environmental benefits by encouraging more sustainable waste management practices. In considering proposals for new, or extensions to existing, waste management facilities the council will ensure adequate protection and conservation of the environment, whilst providing for the waste needs of the city.
- 9.2.6 Where appropriate the council will use its powers contained in the Planning (General Development) Order 1993 to request applicants to supply such additional information as is considered necessary to allow proper determination of planning applications.

Environmental impact assessment

- 9.2.7 Certain waste management projects fall within the scope of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015¹⁷. Under these regulations granting planning permission is prohibited for EIA development unless environmental information, adequate for the particular scheme, has been provided and considered. In such cases a formal environmental statement will be required. EIA is a method of ensuring that the likely effects of new development on the environment are taken into account as part of the consideration of planning applications. Waste disposal installations for the incineration, chemical treatment¹⁸, or landfill of hazardous waste¹⁹ require an environmental impact assessment in every case. Certain other waste management projects, which fall within the scope of the EIA regulations, may require an assessment where the council considers that the development will have a significant environmental effect (see DCAN 10 Environmental Impact Assessment).

Precautionary principle

- 9.2.8 Many waste management facilities by reason of their size, nature or location have the potential to cause significant damage to the environment in terms of visual intrusion, habitat or heritage destruction and pollution. In assessing all proposals for waste management facilities the council will be guided by the precautionary

¹⁷ *These regulations revoke and replace the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 and implement Directive 2011/92/EU (O.J. No. L26, 28.1.2012, p1)*

¹⁸ *As defined in Annex 11A to the Waste Framework Directive 75/442/EEC under heading D9*

¹⁹ *This refers to waste to which Directive 91/689/ECC applies*



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principle that, where there are significant risks of damage to the environment, its protection will generally be paramount, unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

9.2.9 In considering proposals for new, or extensions to existing, waste management facilities there are a number of matters which require to be considered. These include the following:

- Health considerations;
- Visual intrusion and impact on the landscape;
- Transport, traffic and access;
- Nature conservation and heritage;
- Environmental pollution – which includes the following:
 - i. Noise;
 - ii. Dust and airborne pollution;
 - iii. Litter;
 - iv. Vermin and birds;
 - v. Land instability;
 - vi. Hours of operation; and
 - vii. Duration of operations.
- Protection of surface and groundwater;
- Flooding from rivers;
- Agricultural land quality; and
- Reinstatement of the site.

9.2.10 Applicants will be required to demonstrate that they have taken account of the above issues and bring forward proposals to mitigate potential adverse effects conceivably through the use of s76 agreements.

9.2.11 Sufficient information should be submitted with a planning application to allow the council to make an assessment of the potential environmental impact of the proposal. The amount of information required will depend upon the nature, scale and location of the proposal.

9.2.12 The council will consider the acceptability of development in proximity to potential sources of pollution. Consideration will therefore need to be given to the sensitivity of development proposed in the vicinity of waste management facilities, particularly sensitive uses such as residential development or areas of public use.

Implementation

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	✓		✓

Policy W2 – Waste collection and treatment facilities

Planning permission will be granted for the development of a waste collection or treatment facility where:

- a. There is a need for the facility as established through the council's WMP or in consultation with the council in relation to projected need for a particular stream. An exception is the case of Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTWs) where the need must be demonstrated to the council's satisfaction.
- b. The proposed facility complies with one or more of the following locational criteria:
 1. It is located within an industrial or port area of a character appropriate to the development;
 2. It is suitably located within an active or worked out hard rock quarry or on the site of an existing or former waste management facility including a landfill site;
 3. It brings previously developed, derelict or contaminated land back into productive use or makes use of existing or redundant buildings;
 4. In the case of a civic amenity and similar neighbourhood facilities, the site is conveniently located in terms of access to service a neighbourhood or settlement whilst avoiding unacceptable adverse impact on the character, environmental quality and amenities of the local area; or
 5. Where the proposal is in the countryside, it involves the reuse of existing buildings or is on land within or adjacent to existing building groups.
- c. Alternatively where it is demonstrated that new buildings/plants are needed these must have an acceptable visual and environmental impact; and the following criteria also met:
 1. In the case of a regional scale waste collection or treatment facility, its location relates closely to and benefits from easy access to key transport corridors and, where practicable makes use of the alternative transport modes of rail and water;
 2. Proposals involving the sorting and processing of waste, are carried out within a purpose built or appropriately modified existing building, unless it can be demonstrated that part or all of the proposed operation can only be carried out in the open;
 3. The built development associated with the proposed methods of handling, storage, treatment and processing of waste is appropriate heat and electricity, taking account of prevailing technology, economics and characteristics of the waste stream involved; and
 4. It will not result in an unacceptable adverse environmental impact that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures (see policy W1).



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Justification and amplification

9.2.13 The targets contained within the WMS require a significant shift away from landfill to enable a move towards a circular economy. Waste treatment facilities reuse, recycle and recover waste materials and can significantly reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. They can also have benefits in relation to the co-location or provision of integrated facilities close to waste arisings, close to where waste is reused or close to other waste treatment facilities. Applicants must demonstrate that the proposal is consistent with the WMS and the relevant WMP.

9.2.14 For the purpose of this policy, waste treatment projects include:

- Waste separation;
- Recycling;
- Transfer;
- Composting;
- The treatment and transfer of special waste;
- The thermal treatment of waste including incineration and relatively new techniques such as pyrolysis, gasification, and fluidised bed combustion;
- Other energy recovery facilities such as anaerobic digestion;
- Proposals for the development of waste water treatment works, including extensions to existing facilities; and
- Planning applications for the recycling of construction and demolition waste.

9.2.15 As a consequence this policy provides criteria for the determination of planning applications for civic amenity sites, waste transfer stations, the various types of recycling facilities, scrap-yards, multi-stream separation and material recovery facilities, composting facilities, waste water treatment works, incineration and other thermal treatment and energy recovery facilities.

9.2.16 In determining applications for all waste treatment facilities, account will also be taken of policy W1 and the principles of sustainable waste management. In determining the acceptability of the impact of a proposal on residential amenity or the environment the council will seek advice from relevant expert consultees.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
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Policy W3 – Waste disposal

Planning permission will be granted for the development of landfill or land raising facilities for the disposal of waste where:

- a. **There is a need for the facility as established through the WMS and the relevant WMP; and**
- b. **The proposed facility complies with all of the following criteria:**
 1. **It will not result in an unacceptable adverse environmental impact that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures (see policy W1);**
 2. **Significant mineral reserves are not sterilised;**
 3. **It is suitably located within an active or worked out hard rock quarry or it brings land that is despoiled, derelict or contaminated back into productive use;**
 4. **In the case of a regional scale landfill or land raising site, its location closely relates to and allows for easy access to key transport corridors and, where practicable make use of the alternative transport modes of rail and water; and**
 5. **Detailed measures are included for the appropriate restoration and aftercare of sites that will help to enhance bio-diversity.**

In line with the WMS, prior to the establishment of an integrated network of waste management facilities, planning permission will be granted for the development of interim landfill or land raising facilities for the disposal of waste where the criteria under (b) are met and where the proposed facility:

- c. **Provides essential interim capacity;**
- d. **Is likely to form part of a co-ordinated regional or sub-regional network; and**
- e. **As far as possible does not lead to an increase in the number of active landfill sites.**

Justification and amplification

- 9.2.17 Landfilling is the disposal of waste into void spaces in the land often left as a result of mineral extraction. Land raising is the disposal of waste by depositing on land thereby raising its level. Landfilling and land raising of municipal waste are at the bottom of the waste management hierarchy and they are usually the least sustainable waste management option. Particular issues associated with these methods include the risk of the release of methane gas into the air and adjoining ground or leachate into the soil, groundwater and surface water. Compliance with the siting, engineering and operational requirements of the landfill directive is an



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essential pre-requisite and strict controls will be applied under waste management licensing²⁰ and IPPC²¹ permitting.

- 9.2.18 Waste disposal proposals will be expected to include a statement identifying the waste implications of the development, measures taken to minimise and manage the waste generated, a critical analysis of the alternative methods of treatment for the particular waste material and its potential for recycling, composting or energy recovery. To comply with the landfill directive, the absolute quantities of waste going to landfill must reduce. The WMS therefore envisages a progressive reduction and consolidation of landfill capacity and overall number of landfill sites.
- 9.2.19 Whilst not necessarily a sustainable waste management solution and not favoured by the waste hierarchy, the deposition of inert waste on agricultural or other land can result in an improvement in land quality or can facilitate land reclamation for necessary development. However, in all cases care needs to be taken to ensure that such schemes do not adversely affect natural heritage interests and the wider environment. The main purpose of such a proposal should clearly be to improve land quality rather than the disposal of waste. In this regard the quantity of waste to be deposited should be the minimum required to achieve the proposed improvement.
- 9.2.20 Planning permission will be refused where any proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the environment. Where appropriate, conditions will be attached to planning permissions to minimise or compensate for potential environmental impacts.

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²⁰ Referred to as Waste Disposal Licence under the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. IPPC permits introduced in 2003 following the transposition of the IPPC Directive and under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 a new licensing system referring to a Waste Management Licence implemented in 2003.

²¹ Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) – These regulations are designed to protect the environment through the prevention of or reduction in pollution of air, water and land caused by emissions from industrial installations. Specified Waste Management Activities which includes most landfill sites and certain types of hazardous waste treatment work require permits.

Policy W4 – Land improvement

Planning permission will be granted for the disposal of inert waste by its deposition on land where it is demonstrated that it will result in land improvement and all of the following criteria are met:

- a. It will not result in an unacceptable adverse environmental impact that cannot be prevented or appropriately controlled by mitigating measures (see policy W1);**
- b. It can be demonstrated that there is a local need for the development;**
- c. Only the minimum quantity of fill necessary to achieve the proposed improvement shall be deposited; and**
- d. Detailed measures are included for the appropriate restoration and aftercare of sites that will help to enhance bio-diversity.**

Justification and amplification

- 9.2.21 The disposal of inert waste by its deposition on farmland and elsewhere has in the past often been inappropriate in terms of sustainable development in that the waste involved was capable of being moved up the waste hierarchy and recycled or reused. Furthermore, the purpose behind such development has, on many occasions, been to dispose of waste in the cheapest way possible and avoid payment of landfill tax, rather than to improve agricultural land quality or facilitate other necessary development.
- 9.2.22 Nevertheless, the deposition of inert waste on agricultural or other land can result in an improvement in land quality, for example where steep gradients are reduced and the land re-graded with an adequate surface layer of topsoil. On occasion, deposition of inert waste can facilitate land reclamation for necessary development. The Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) recognises, however, that care needs to be taken to ensure that such schemes do not adversely affect nature conservation and heritage interests nor have an unacceptable impact on the landscape (see policy W1). Vacant land or land of low agricultural value often provides important habitats for flora and fauna.
- 9.2.23 Where it is demonstrated that there is a local need for the deposition of inert waste it will also be necessary to consider the environmental impacts for such a proposal (see policy W1).
- 9.2.24 Planning permission will be refused where a proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the environment. Where appropriate, conditions will be attached to planning permissions to minimise or compensate for their impact on wildlife or physical features. In some cases it will be necessary to add informatives to an approval informing the applicant of their obligations under the wildlife order.



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9.2.25 The main purpose of the proposal should clearly be to improve land quality rather than the disposal of waste. In this regard the quantity of waste to be deposited should be the minimum required to achieve the proposed improvement. Where this is not the case the council will consider the proposal under policy W3.

9.2.26 Applicants will need to demonstrate the need for their proposal taking account of current waste arisings.

Implementation

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			✓

Policy W5 – Development in the vicinity of waste management facilities

Planning permission will be granted for proposals involving the development of land in the vicinity of existing or approved waste management facilities and WWTWs, where all the following criteria are met:

- a. It will not prejudice or unduly restrict activities permitted to be carried out within the waste management facility; and**
- b. It will not give rise to unacceptable adverse impacts on people, transportation systems or the environment.**

Justification and amplification

9.2.27 Waste management facilities carry out an important function in the treatment and disposal of waste and will be approved in appropriate locations. However, such facilities often undertake complex operations that can impact adversely on the environment. While environmental standards are continually improving nevertheless there may be potential risks at individual sites, for example, in relation to odour, windblown litter or birds.

9.2.28 The potential adverse impact of existing or approved facilities upon neighbouring land uses will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development of that land. Planning control must consider the acceptability of development in proximity to potential sources of pollution. Consideration will therefore need to be given to the sensitivity of development proposed in the vicinity of waste management facilities and WWTWs, particularly sensitive uses such as residential development or areas of public use.

9.2.29 This is particularly important in relation to landfill sites as the EU Landfill Directive, when implemented, will require landfill sites or areas within landfill sites to be

dedicated specifically to the deposit of special or hazardous waste. The hazardous waste directive will extend the list of hazardous substances that should not be landfilled. As a result new waste treatment facilities will be needed to treat hazardous waste.

9.2.30 In relation to development proposed in the vicinity of WWTW’s the potential adverse impact of existing or approved infrastructure upon neighbouring land uses will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the development of that land. In particular, planning applications involving land within the vicinity of WWTWs will not be approved where there would be a loss of amenity from odour nuisance.

9.2.31 Applications will be approved or refused depending on the circumstances prevailing at particular locations. Relevant considerations will include:

- The nature and capacity of the treatment works;
- Local topography;
- Prevailing wind direction;
- Screening and disposition of existing development;
- The nature of the proposed development;
- The precise position of actual odour sources within the boundaries of the works; and
- Advice on relevant environmental health matters.

9.2.32 In all cases, specific advice will be sought from the environmental health department of the council.

Implementation

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9.3 Minerals

Introduction

- 9.3.1 Minerals are an important natural resource and their necessary and responsible exploitation is supported by the government. As acknowledged in the SPPS, the minerals industry plays an essential role in our economy and quality of life, providing primary materials for construction and development, and supporting the development industry, as well as providing employment in mineral extraction, processing and transportation.
- 9.3.2 Minerals are natural resources and they can only be exploited where they naturally occur. The proximity principle aims to minimise the need to transport minerals in the interests of more sustainable development and this means, where possible, local minerals should be incorporated into new development. In addition, new development should not prejudice the future exploitation of important minerals, for example through surface development that sterilises important underground reserves that are needed for future development. However, extraction and processing can have a significant impact on the countryside and wider environment.
- 9.3.3 The countryside in the Belfast area contains a variety of distinctive landscapes, including the hills surrounding Belfast, the coast of Belfast Lough and the Lagan Valley Regional Park, which together provide a high quality setting for the urban area. The need to protect this setting forms a central component of the LDP and is specifically set out in the countryside, landscape and coast policies of the Plan Strategy. These are very important factors in considering minerals development and it is acknowledged that such development may be inconsistent with the objectives associated with these policies, particularly within areas designated for landscape or natural heritage importance.

Policy aims

- 9.3.4 Our policy aims for minerals are:
- To secure a balanced and sustainable approach to minerals that takes account of the need for minerals to support development and the need to protect the landscape and other environmental resources;
 - To facilitate minerals development that is necessary to support the local needs, whilst ensuring that environmental considerations are given due weight in considering proposals;
 - To protect the landscape and natural heritage setting of the city, including lands designated of importance for these reasons;
 - To prevent development that could prejudice the exploitation of important mineral reserves for future needs where these are in areas that are suitable for such development; and

- Where minerals exploitation is permitted at appropriate locations, ensure that any environmental impacts are minimised and that detailed measures for aftercare and restoration are agreed and implemented.

Policy M1 – Minerals

The council will seek to ensure the efficient and appropriate use of minerals and the reuse and recycling of suitable materials will be encouraged as an alternative to primary extraction.

Planning permission will be granted where the need for development can be demonstrated and where the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on landscape quality and natural heritage, including lands and species designated or protected for landscape quality importance, natural heritage or scientific interest.

Environmental reports or technical assessments may be required to support planning proposals to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects. Where necessary and appropriate, suitable mitigation measures may require to be agreed and implemented to ensure the proposal will not have a significant impact on environmental quality.

The council will not normally permit significant mineral extraction proposals in areas designated of importance for landscape quality, nature conservation or scientific interest. Any proposals for minerals exploitation, including ancillary development, will be required to demonstrate that the development will not have a significant detrimental impact on other planning policy objectives relating to the relevant landscape, natural heritage, scientific designation or interest and to the wider environment. Planning permission will be granted where it will not have any detrimental effect on the residential and visual amenity.

Pre-application discussions should be used to identify the particular issues relating to environmental protection that are relevant to each development site.

Justification and amplification

- 9.3.5 The RDS and SPPS sets out policies for minerals development and the council will take full account of these in assessing development proposals. In particular, the council will seek to balance the need for mineral resource exploitation to support growth and development against the need to protect and preserve the environment.
- 9.3.6 It is acknowledged that the city's future development and growth will require the exploitation of mineral resources, although a key objective of the LDP is to also reduce the overall requirement for such non-renewable resources, including through more efficient use, reuse and recycling. Although some hard rock aggregates occur



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in the Belfast Hills the potential for future extraction will be limited by the need to protect this area for its landscape and environmental value. To meet development needs, the Belfast City Council area will continue to be a net consumer of construction materials sourced from outside the council area, including materials imported through the port or transported by road from elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

- 9.3.7 The city's natural setting is of vital importance to its attractiveness and to the health and wellbeing of its people. In particular, the quality of the landscape and natural heritage assets surrounding the built-up area must be protected from harmful development. Therefore, in accordance with the SPPS, there is a general presumption against significant minerals development in areas designated of importance for landscape and natural heritage. Nevertheless, there may be scope to consider smaller-scale minerals development, provided these do not unduly compromise the integrity and quality of the designated area or interest and subject to consideration of other normal planning and environmental matters.
- 9.3.8 Proposals for unconventional hydrocarbon extraction will not be permitted unless it can be fully demonstrated that there is no potential for significant environmental impacts arising from such development.
- 9.3.9 Visual intrusion and impact on natural heritage are often the most significant environmental impacts associated with mineral workings and these are key considerations in assessing any proposals. Applicants should ensure that adequate detailed reports are submitted with any development proposals to demonstrate the potential environmental impacts of the development. Where planning permission is granted, landscape quality, natural heritage, amenity and the wider environment will be protected by attaching relevant conditions, including for mitigation measures. The council will ensure the restoration of land (including phased restoration and aftercare) at the earliest opportunity.
- 9.3.10 It is important to protect economically viable mineral deposits at locations that offer potential for exploitation without undue environmental impacts. The policy is intended to protect important mineral resources from sterilisation resulting from other development.

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9.4 Transportation

Introduction

- 9.4.1 A high quality, integrated, multimodal transportation system is essential in supporting Belfast's role as the regional economic driver for Northern Ireland and the main employment and retail centre. Moving people and goods is crucial to the everyday life of the city and is vital for the growth of the local economy. The Belfast Agenda sets out ambitious targets for population and economic growth and there is a need to ensure capacity to accommodate this growth in an efficient and sustainable way. Belfast has a large 'travel to work' area with just under half of its workforce travelling from other areas. Over half of the working population of Belfast rely on the car for this journey, with only 14 percent opting for public transport.
- 9.4.2 The disproportionately high volume of travel by car to and within the city causes a number of problems. It can lead to driver frustration, road safety issues, pedestrian severance and at peak times, the network has little resilience to incidents such as road traffic collisions resulting in excessive delays. High car use also impacts greatly on our environment as increasing congestion and associated emissions can result in poor air quality.
- 9.4.3 DfI is the statutory authority with responsibility for developing strategic planning, transport policy and delivering infrastructure projects. The RDS and 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: a New Approach to Regional Transportation' sets out a vision "to have a modern, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life." The LDP takes account of the regional guidance and recognises that a coordinated approach is required between the council and the DfI as well as neighbouring authorities across the sub region to deliver the transportation vision.
- 9.4.4 A key challenge for the plan period is to provide for increased accessibility into and throughout the city area and to accommodate projected growth in travel demand, whilst also discouraging single occupancy private car use for commuting purposes. The Plan Strategy will facilitate future transport initiatives for the city including promoting walking and cycling, modal change and supporting public transport measures. A key element throughout the plan is to ensure the integration of land use and transportation planning.

Policy aims

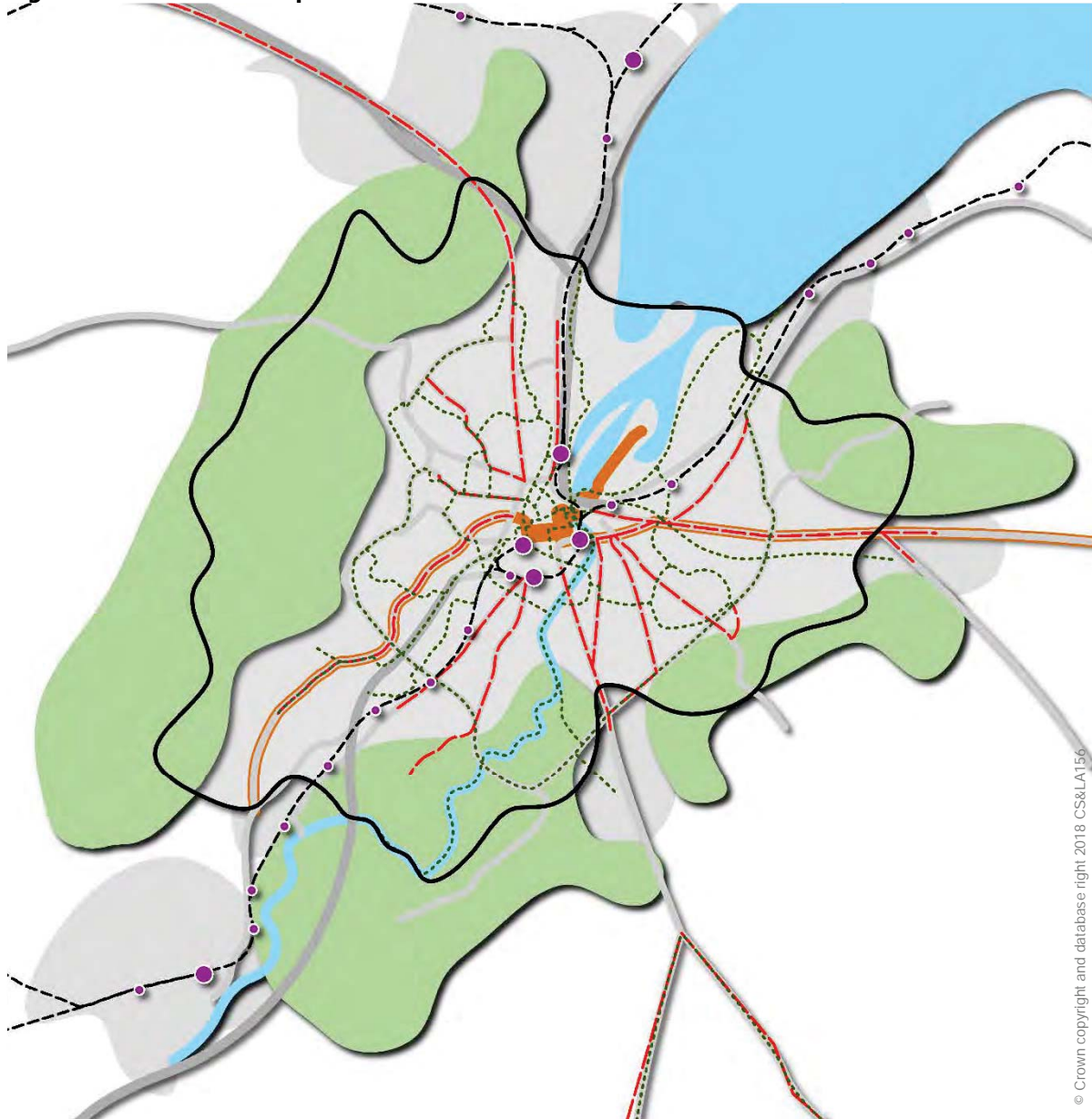
- 9.4.5 The LDP aims to:
- Deliver sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need for motorised transport and prioritise active travel and travel by public transport;



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- Protect routes and land required for enhancing the existing transport network and delivering future transport schemes; and
- Facilitate active travel and a modal change to more sustainable modes of travel throughout the city.

Figure 9.2: Belfast's transportation network



Key

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Cycle network | NI Rail stations |
| Main Metro bus routes | NI Rail halts |
| Belfast Rapid Transit (Glider) Routes | NI Rail line |
| Motorways | Water bodies |
| Main roads | Urban areas |
| Plan area | |

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Policy TRAN 1 – Active travel – walking and cycling

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals providing major residential, jobs, shopping, leisure and services including educational and community uses which takes account of the needs of walkers and cyclists. In such cases provision of the following will be required:

- a. Safe and convenient walking and cycle access;**
- b. Safe, convenient and secure cycle parking having regard to the DfI's published standards; and**
- c. Safe, accessible and convenient walking and cycle links to existing or programmed networks and public transport services where they adjoin the development site.**

In addition major employment generating development will be required to make appropriate provision for shower and changing facilities.

Justification and amplification

- 9.4.6 Walking and cycling are important sustainable modes of transport and can improve the health and wellbeing of citizens. There is a need to facilitate the provision of safe, convenient, accessible, comfortable, coherent and continuous walking and cycling environments throughout the city in order to encourage and promote active travel. This policy will support the delivery of the DfI's Belfast Bicycle Network Plan in conjunction with the council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan.
- 9.4.7 It is important that walking and cycling access, along with associated facilities are incorporated into the design of development proposals to encourage active travel. Measures should be appropriate to a particular development and will depend on its scale, location and use. Safe and convenient pedestrian access to and movement within the development would include pedestrian priority measures, lighting, security and weather protection. Convenience access and security are major considerations in determining the location of cycle parking areas, these should be provided closer to building entrances than car-parking. Additionally, they should be weather protected, well-lit and located where staff or the public can provide informal surveillance and security.
- 9.4.8 Safety concerns and the lack of quality integrated networks in the city discourage many people from walking and cycling. Opportunities to improve connections between existing neighbourhoods, the city centre and areas of employment and services will be promoted. Active travel provision should also integrate with public transport use to enable convenient, attractive sustainable modes from door to door.



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy TRAN 2 – Creating an accessible environment

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals open to the public or to be used for employment or education purposes where it is designed to provide suitable access for all. The council will also seek to ensure that access to existing buildings and their surroundings is improved as opportunities arise through alterations, extensions and changes of use.

The design of new developments must take account of the specific needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired. Where appropriate, the external layout of development will be required to incorporate all or some of the following:

- a. Facilities to aid accessibility e.g. provision of dropped kerbs and tactile paving etc, together with the removal of any unnecessary obstructions;**
- b. Convenient movement along pathways and an unhindered approach to buildings;**
- c. Pedestrian priority to facilitate pedestrian movement within and between land uses; and**
- d. Ease of access to reserved car parking, public transport facilities and taxi ranks.**

The council will require the submission of a design and access statement to accompany development proposals.

Justification and amplification

9.4.9 This policy aims to create a more accessible environment for everyone, including people with disabilities. Ease of access must be considered early in the design process and must consider both the inside and outside areas of the building. It should be designed to facilitate easy access for all users, not only to the building entrance but also from the streets and spaces around buildings and such movement should be given priority over vehicles.

9.4.10 The council will operate a presumption in favour of a level approach from the boundary of the site to the building entrance and the use of steps, ramps or mechanical aids will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that these are necessary. Policy HOU 7 is applicable in the case of accessible housing.

9.4.11 In the case of historic or listed buildings it should often be possible to plan suitable access for all without compromising the building’s special interest or character.

9.4.12 The council may require the submission of a design and access statement to accompany a development proposal. The preparation of the statements can help create buildings and places which are accessible and inclusive. Where a design and access statement is required it should identify:

- The design approach to ensure it is inclusive;
- Key issues of the particular scheme;
- The sources of advice and guidance used; and
- In the case of existing buildings, identify the constraints posed by the existing structure and its immediate environment and how they have been overcome.

9.4.13 Further information on designing for a more accessible environment is set out in the DfI’s guide ‘Access for All’.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance

Policy TRAN 3 – Transport assessment

A transport assessment will be required in order to evaluate the transport implications of the development proposal, where it is likely to have significant travel generating uses.

Justification and amplification

9.4.14 A Transport Assessment (TA) is a comprehensive review of all the potential impacts of a proposed development or redevelopment, with an agreed plan to mitigate any adverse consequences. It may be required to allow the council to fully assess the impact of development proposals on existing transport movements, infrastructure and also how it contributes to wider government policy particularly policy aimed at achieving more sustainable travel patterns and reducing adverse environmental impacts. The coverage and detail of a TA should reflect the scale of development and the extent of the transport implications of the proposal. In applications for significant traffic generating uses, a TA may need to be accompanied by a travel plan (policy TRAN 4). The DfI’s Transport Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance for Development Proposals will provide detailed information on this process and should be considered.



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9.4.15 Developers will be required to bear the costs of additional transport infrastructure and associated facilities necessitated by their proposed development. Contributions from developers will be based around securing improved accessibility to sites by all modes, with the emphasis on maximising access by public transport, walking and cycling.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy TRAN 4 – Travel plan

Planning permission for development proposals with significant travel generating uses will require a travel plan.

Justification and amplification

9.4.16 Travel plans are documents that set out a package of complementary measures for the overall delivery of more sustainable travel patterns. They should mitigate adverse impacts highlighted in a TA with the emphasis on the need to reduce reliance on the private car and promote sustainable modes of travel. They will be required for those developments which are likely to be significant travel generators such as major residential developments, transport interchanges, businesses, hospitals and schools.

9.4.17 A travel plan must set out a clear set of targets, in conjunction with measurable outputs and clearly outline arrangements for monitoring the progress of the plan, as well as arrangements for enforcement in the event that agreed objectives are not met.

9.4.18 Responsibility and the time period for monitoring must also show clear means by which the travel plan is to be enforced by attaching a condition to the planning consent or legal agreement. Monitoring should be an on-going process leading to annual review and an update of the travel plan. The developer/future occupier will be responsible for meeting the costs of monitoring.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy TRAN 5 – New transport schemes

The council will safeguard land required to implement new transport proposals or planned improvements to the transportation network as identified in the DfI’s extant transport plan. This includes new and improved walking and cycling routes, enhanced or new public transport services, park and ride proposals and road schemes. Planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the implementation of a transport scheme.

The council will also protect disused transport routes such as disused railway lines and canals. Planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the future re-use of a disused transport route for transport or recreational purposes.

Justification and amplification

9.4.19 Regional guidance within the RDS seeks to deliver a balanced approach to transportation infrastructure by improving connectivity, using road space more efficiently and improving social inclusion. The road network in Belfast facilitates the daily movement of people and goods and is fundamental to the economic vitality and social wellbeing of Belfast and NI, however, rising traffic levels is putting increasing strain on the network. As a result a number of key road capacity improvements and new road schemes may be required to facilitate and improve the sustainable, safe movement of goods and people throughout the city and to improve access.

9.4.20 Measures to make best use of the existing network and improve accessibility for all modes of travel and in particular for alternatives to the car will be promoted. Promoting accessibility by a range of modes is vital to social inclusiveness and improves the ability of local communities, in particular disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, to access employment and important services such as healthcare, education, shopping and leisure. There is a continuing need to improve public transport facilities and provide an attractive, accessible and viable alternative to private transport. In addition, walking and cycling can contribute to relieving congestion and contribute to the more efficient use of the transportation network in the city as they better utilise road space. New infrastructure works could improve cycle safety, access and parking and develop the city’s bicycle network.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy TRAN 6 – Access to public roads

Planning permission will be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification of the use of an existing access, onto a public road where:

- a. Such access will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of road users; and
- b. The proposal does not conflict with TRAN 7 access to protected routes.

The acceptability of access arrangements, including the number of access points onto the public road, will be assessed against the DfI's published guidance Development Control Advice Note (DCAN) 15: Vehicular Access Standards. Consideration will also be given to the following factors:

- c. The nature and scale of the development;
- d. The character of existing development;
- e. The established character of an area;
- f. The contribution of the proposal to the creation of a quality environment, including the potential for urban or small village regeneration and environmental improvement;
- g. The location and number of existing accesses; and
- h. The standard of the existing road network together with the speed and volume of traffic using the adjacent public road and any expected increase.

Justification and amplification

9.4.21 New developments will often require vehicular access to a public road either in the form of a new access or by use of an existing access point. The council will seek to ensure that access arrangements for development proposals are safe for all road users and will not have a detrimental impact on the movement of traffic.

9.4.22 The proximity of any proposed access to junctions, existing accesses and the total number of accesses onto any given stretch of road are relevant matters in the assessment of traffic hazards. Amalgamation of individual access points along a road will be encouraged as this can help to improve road safety. In circumstances where an existing access is available to facilitate development proposals, the council will generally expect this to be used unless there is opportunity to provide more acceptable access arrangements, having regard to both road safety and local amenity considerations.

9.4.23 Good visibility splays are also essential for the safety and convenience of all road users. The council will require applicants to have control over land required to provide visibility splays and ensure that they are retained free of any obstruction.

9.4.24 DCAN 15 'Vehicular Access Standards' sets out the current standards for sightlines, radii and gradient that will be applied to both new access and intensified use of existing vehicular access onto existing public roads. In exceptional circumstances a relaxation in standards may be acceptable however standards will not be reduced to such a level that danger is likely to be caused.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy TRAN 7 – Access to protected routes

The council will restrict the number of new accesses and control the level of use of existing accesses onto protected routes as follows:

Motorways and high standard dual carriageways – all locations

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals involving direct access. An exception may be considered in the case of motorway service areas.

Other dual carriageways, ring roads, through-passes and by-passes – all locations

Planning permission will be granted for a development proposal involving direct access or the intensification of the use of an existing access in exceptional circumstances or where the proposal is of regional significance.

Other protected routes – within settlement limits

Planning permission will be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification of the use of an existing access:

- a. Where access cannot reasonably be taken from an adjacent minor road; or
- b. In the case of proposals involving residential development, it is demonstrated to the council’s satisfaction that the nature and level of access onto the protected route will significantly assist in the creation of a quality environment without compromising standards of road safety or resulting in an unacceptable proliferation of access points.

Other protected routes – outside settlement limits

Planning permission will be granted for a development proposal involving direct access, or the intensification of the use of an existing access in the following cases:



- c. A replacement dwelling – where a building to be replaced would meet the criteria for development set out in policy DC3 and there is an existing vehicular access onto the protected route.
- d. A farm dwelling – where a farm dwelling, including a farm retirement dwelling, would meet the criteria set out in policy DC10 and access cannot reasonably be obtained from an adjacent minor road. Where this cannot be achieved, proposals will be required to make use of an existing vehicular access onto the protected route.
- e. A dwelling serving an established commercial or industrial enterprise – where a dwelling would meet the criteria for development set out in policy DC6 and access cannot reasonably be obtained from an adjacent minor road. Where this cannot be achieved proposals will be required to make use of an existing vehicular access onto the protected route.
- f. Other categories of development – approval may be justified in particular cases for other developments which would meet the criteria for development in the countryside and access cannot reasonably be obtained from an adjacent minor road. Where this cannot be achieved proposals will be required to make use of an existing vehicular access onto the protected route.

Justification and amplification

- 9.4.25 It is important that a new access or intensified use of an existing access onto a protected route does not compromise their function of facilitating safe movement of traffic or does not significantly add to congestion.
- 9.4.26 There is a long established policy of restricting access onto protected routes. These routes comprise:
- Primary routes;
 - Routes between the principal town in each district and/or cross border;
 - Routes to ports and airports; and
 - Selected routes with high traffic flows.
- 9.4.27 Figure 9.3 contains an up to date map identifying existing roads throughout Northern Ireland established as protected routes. Any future alterations will be brought forward and published by the DfI.
- 9.4.28 It is important that a new access or intensified use of an existing access onto a protected route does not compromise their function of facilitating the free and safe movement of road users or does not significantly add to congestion.
- 9.4.29 Access arrangements must be in accordance with the DfI's published guidance.

Figure 9.3: Belfast’s protected routes



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		



Policy TRAN 8 – Car parking and servicing arrangements

Development proposals will be required to provide adequate provision for car parking and appropriate servicing arrangements, however the emphasis will be to allow parking provision that will assist in reducing reliance on the private car in particular for commuting into the city, help tackle growing congestion and bring about a change in travel behaviour. The precise amount of car parking for development proposals will be determined according to the specific characteristics of the development and its location having regard to the DfI's published standards or any reduction provided for in an area of parking restraint (policy TRAN 9). Proposals should not prejudice road safety, significantly inconvenience the movement of road users or be detrimental to local environmental quality.

Beyond areas of parking restraint, a reduced level of car parking provision may be acceptable in the following circumstances:

- a. Where demonstrated through a TA, it forms part of a package of measures to promote alternative transport modes;
- b. Where the development is in a highly accessible location well served by public transport;
- c. Where the development would benefit from spare capacity available in nearby public car parks or adjacent on street car parking;
- d. Where shared car parking is a viable option; or
- e. Where the exercise of flexibility would assist in the conservation of the built or natural heritage, would aid rural regeneration, facilitate a better quality of development or the beneficial re-use of an existing building.

Proposals involving car parking in excess of the DfI's published standards will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

In assessing car parking provision the council will require that a proportion of the spaces to be provided are reserved for people with disabilities in accordance with published guidelines in DCAN 11 (draft). Where a reduced level of car parking provision is applied or accepted, this will not normally apply to the number of reserved spaces to be provided.

Consideration should also be given to parking provision for electric vehicles with access to charging points in development proposals where appropriate.

Justification and amplification

- 9.4.30 The policy recognises the role of car parking in influencing modal shift and encouraging the use of more sustainable travel. The introduction of demand

management can help improve the existing transportation network and the environment in the centre of the city whilst making better use of the highway infrastructure.

- 9.4.31 The priority is to ensure that car parking policies and provision do not incentivise the use of the car over the use of sustainable transport modes. Car parking in suitable amounts and locations is vital for the city centre to function properly, however a balance is necessary between car parking and other transport modes and between the needs of short-stay and long-stay parking users. Belfast must compete as a shopping and leisure attraction with other towns and cities, and with out-of-town retail developments. An appropriate supply of short-stay car parking spaces for shoppers in the city centre is therefore needed to assist its vitality and viability by attracting customers.
- 9.4.32 To tackle growing congestion problems and help reduce reliance on the private car the council considers that in certain instances it will no longer be appropriate or desirable for developers to fully meet demand for car parking generated by their developments. Where parking reduction is considered acceptable in principle, the council will negotiate the precise level of reduction with developers. Account will be taken of the specific characteristics of the development, its location and its accessibility to means of travel other than the private car, including the development of a travel plan (policy TRAN 4) and any measures proposed to promote alternative transport modes.
- 9.4.33 Developers will be required to reserve an appropriate proportion of parking spaces to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Such designated parking spaces should be conveniently located to facilitate ease of access to the buildings they serve in order to take account of the limited mobility range of many disabled people. Best practice on the number, size and layout of reserved parking spaces is set out in the DfI's guide 'Access for All'.
- 9.4.34 Consideration should be given by developers to the provision of 'parent and child' parking spaces. As with spaces reserved for people with disabilities these should be located in a manner, which facilitates ease of access to the buildings they serve.
- 9.4.35 Servicing arrangements are also important and can exert a major influence on the quality of the urban environment and its attractiveness to shoppers and other visitors. In city and town centre locations, developers will normally be expected to include proposals for the provision of rear servicing facilities where practicable.



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance

Policy TRAN 9 – Parking standards within areas of parking restraint

Within designated areas of parking restraint the following parking standards will be applied:

	Residential	Non-residential	
	No. of spaces per dwelling	No. of non-operational spaces per m2 of floorspace	No. of operational spaces per m2 of floorspace
Belfast City Centre (BCC) core	1.0	1/300	1/930
BCC fringe	1.0	1/100	
Areas of parking restraint outside BCC	1.0	1/100	

Justification and amplification

- 9.4.36 Within areas of parking restraint, there is a presumption against additional car parking. The objective is to reduce the need for car borne commuting and promote a shift from car use in peak periods towards other forms of transport.
- 9.4.37 The policy focuses upon controlling the amount of non-operational parking that can be provided within areas of parking restraint in the city centre and in commercial areas outside Belfast City Centre. The details of the BCC core and BCC fringe are set out in the DfI’s extant transport plan. The areas of parking restraint in commercial areas outside Belfast City Centre will be reviewed as part of the local policies plan. In the interim prior to the adoption of the local policies plan the existing draft BMAP boundaries for commercial nodes on arterial routes should be used.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy TRAN 10 – Design of car parking

The council will expect a high standard of design, layout and landscaping to accompany all proposals for car parking. Planning permission will only be granted for a proposal where all the following criteria are met:

- a. It respects the character of the local townscape / landscape;**
- b. It will not adversely affect visual and residential amenity;**
- c. Provision has been made for security, and the direct and safe access and movement of pedestrians and cyclists within the site; and**
- d. Provision has been made for accessible parking bays which facilitate safe, convenient access for people with a disability or impaired mobility.**

Justification and amplification

- 9.4.38 The amount and arrangement of car parking can have a significant impact on the quality of both the built and natural environment. All proposals for parking and associated facilities should therefore be well designed, respect local character and their wider setting. They should also provide for safe and convenient access or egress and direct, safe internal movement for cyclists and pedestrians, including people with disabilities and those whose mobility is impaired.
- 9.4.39 Security is of particular importance in the design of car parks. The council will therefore expect developers to address this matter, particularly in relation to multi-storey and basement car parking, and would encourage developers to seek advice from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Architectural Liaison Service.
- 9.4.40 The design of surface level car parks should avoid the creation of a vast expanse of dead space. This can be achieved by way of a well designed landscape scheme, which includes appropriate boundary and surface treatments. In the case of multi-storey car parks, building lines should adhere to those already established, while public facades in particular should be designed to create visual interest. The design of multi-storey car parks should reflect the character and appearance of the surrounding townscape in terms of form, scale, massing and use of materials. Blank screen walls will not be acceptable as these can have a negative impact on the street scene.
- 9.4.41 The design of basement or semi-basement car parks requires careful attention to ensure that they are safe to use and do not have a negative impact at street level by the creation of dead frontage. Surface parking underneath a raised ground floor can create the same effect to an even greater extent, particularly where ground floor elevations are entirely made up of metal grids or finished in an unimaginative way. This can effectively remove life from the street and contribute to the creation of a



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threatening and unpleasant environment. Such an approach to the provision of car parking will be unacceptable.

9.4.42 In rural areas, the design, layout and landscaping of car parks should seek to retain the open nature and visual amenity of the countryside. In addition, matters such as floodlighting will require careful design in order to minimise their impact on visual amenity.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance

Policy TRAN 11– Provision of public and private car parks

Planning permission will only be granted for the development or extension of public or private car parks, including park and ride and park and share where it is demonstrated that:

- a. They do not significantly contribute to an increase in congestion;**
- b. They are not detrimental to local environmental quality;**
- c. They meet a need identified by the DfI in the extant transport plan or accepted by the DfI following robust analysis provided by the applicant;**
- d. Within defined areas of parking restraint they are only used for short-stay parking and are appropriately managed to deter long stay commuter parking; and**
- e. They are compatible with adjoining land uses.**

Justification and amplification

9.4.43 Public car parking facilities normally comprise:

- On-street car parking controlled by the DfI;
- Public car parks operated by Belfast City Council; and
- Public car parks operated by the private sector including temporary car parks on sites awaiting redevelopment (these include long and short-stay parking and the leasing of contract spaces).

9.4.44 The overall transportation objective will be to minimise the use of the car and encourage shoppers and commuters to use public transport and park and ride initiatives. An ever-increasing supply of car parking spaces solely serving long-stay commuter demand can act as an impediment to economic growth by contributing to increased congestion and the erosion of environmental quality. However, it is important that sufficient short-stay public parking facilities are available to maintain

economic vitality and viability and to allow them to compete with new out-of-centre developments.

9.4.45 In locations where a proposal is considered acceptable, the council will require developers to enter into a s76 planning agreement to control the use of parking spaces in order to deter long-stay commuter parking. This will normally include restrictions on the leasing of contract spaces.

9.4.46 The importance of park and ride and park and share facilities is recognised in their role to reduce the number of cars entering central urban areas and promote the use of public transport. The council will promote the development of these facilities in appropriate locations. The provision of convenient, safe and secure cycle parking facilities within car parks will also be promoted.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy TRAN 12 – Temporary car parks

Planning permission will not be granted for the development of a temporary car park unless it is demonstrated that:

- a. It complies with policy TRAN 8 and the developer can show that a need exists which cannot be met in the short term by the council or the private sector; and**
- b. It is submitted in conjunction with programmed proposals to develop / redevelop the site in question.**

Planning permission if granted will be subject to a time-limited condition for a period of 1 year.

Justification and amplification

9.4.47 While planning applications for temporary car parks will be assessed in the light of all relevant factors, there will be a presumption against such development where it is considered unnecessary and is not linked to firm proposals for the development of the site. Developers should note that a time limited planning permission for temporary use of land for car parking will not normally be renewed.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance



9.5 Environmental resilience

Introduction

- 9.5.1 The quality of the physical environment is vitally important for the city, including for human health, biodiversity, ecosystem services and economic development. Exposure to pollution and environmental risks can affect people's quality of life and the attractiveness of the city. Safeguarding and, where possible, enhancing the quality of the city's environment is a key part of achieving the LDP vision for Belfast.
- 9.5.2 It is recognised that the planning system has a major role to play in minimising potential adverse impacts on sensitive receptors (such as housing, parkland and designated quiet areas²²), by means of its influence on the location, layout and design of new development. The planning system can also positively contribute to improving air and water quality and minimising any harmful impacts.
- 9.5.3 Environmental change is one of the most pressing challenges facing the city. This includes changing weather patterns as a result of global environmental change, with perhaps the greatest threats for Belfast being associated with flash flooding and sea level rise. Other threats include climate warming and more frequent and severe storms. A sustainable development approach is required to mitigate against and adapt to the environmental challenges affecting the city.
- 9.5.4 Mitigation seeks to address the root causes of environmental change, by reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHG). Adaptation seeks to lower the risks posed by the consequences of environmental change by ensuring that new development is resilient in facing new climate challenges. Both approaches are necessary, because even if emissions are dramatically decreased in the next decade, adaptation will still be needed to deal with the global changes that have already been set in motion.
- 9.5.5 Belfast has had direct experience of extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels in recent years. The impact of flooding on individual households, communities and businesses can be devastating and costly. The effects on human activity are wide ranging, with the potential to cause fatalities and injury, displacement, pollution and ill-health. Damage to buildings, can severely compromise economic and social activities. Extreme weather resulting in flooding of properties and infrastructure is expected to be a significant long term risk associated with environmental change.
- 9.5.6 In January 2014 'A Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme' was published. It recognises the need to adjust to the changes in our climate and

²² *Quiet Areas, which may be designated in accordance with the Environmental Noise (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2006, are locations within urban areas where environmental noise quality is good and should be preserved.*

prepare for the future. The RDS and SPPS recognise the commitment in the adaptation programme to identify and implement opportunities to build resilience into the built and natural environment and to develop and implement sustainable strategies to explore, address and manage significant flood risk.

Policy aims

- 9.5.7 The aim of the LDP is to enhance environmental quality, where possible, and protect communities from materially harmful development. In assessing proposed development, the LDP will consider issues of environmental quality, including those relating to ground contamination, air, water, noise and light pollution.
- 9.5.8 Environmental resilience for a growing and vibrant city is a key objective of the LDP. The LDP policies relating to environmental resilience focus on a range of mitigation and adaptation measures, including the following key aims:
- Sustainable patterns of development that reduce the need to travel and provide an efficient integrated transport network offering sustainable travel choices that reduce private car use, congestion, carbon emissions and air pollution;
 - Shaping new and existing developments in ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and positively build community resilience to problems such as extreme heat or flood risk;
 - Promote innovative building technologies and passive design to improve energy efficiency, alleviate fuel poverty, maximise reuse of materials and reduce carbon emissions;
 - Manage development within areas of flood risk and ensure the sustainable design of new development reduces future risk from flooding. Encourage flood resilient design to build the city's resilience for future generations; and
 - Working with natural environmental processes, for example through promoting the development of green infrastructure and also the use of SuDS, to reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

ENV1 – Environmental quality

Planning permission will be granted for development that will maintain and, where possible, enhance environmental quality, and protects communities from materially harmful development. Development must not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment, including the following considerations:

- **Ground contamination;**
- **Air quality;**
- **Water quality;**
- **Noise; and**
- **Light pollution.**



The council will also require development to positively address the following:

- a. Existing land contamination and ensuring development does not cause contaminated land or pollute water;**
- b. Local air quality, particularly nitrogen dioxide and particulates (including in air quality management areas);**
- c. Protection of the city's designated quiet areas and quiet times of day for businesses (daytime) and residents (night time); and**
- d. The need to limit the city's contribution to light spillage and 'sky glow'.**

Justification and amplification

9.5.9 The quality of the physical environment is vitally important for human health and biodiversity. Improving health and wellbeing is a core planning principle set out in the SPPS, which identifies a range of environmental and amenity considerations, including contaminated land, noise and light pollution and air and water quality, which should be taken into account by planning authorities when proposing policies or managing development. It is important that new development is appropriate for its location and that careful consideration is given to effects of any potential pollution on health, public safety, the natural environment and general amenity. In addition, the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations seek to prevent major accidents involving dangerous substances and limit the consequences to people and the environment of any major accidents that may occur. The council will have due regard to COMAH sites and the advice of HSENI when considering land use and new development proposals.

9.5.10 The potential risk and significance of pollution will be considered when assessing development proposals, in consultation with other relevant agencies, having regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposal, including during construction. The council will only support proposals that protect or improve the amenity of occupiers, neighbouring uses and the wider environment. Environmental reports or technical assessments may be required to support planning proposals to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects. Where necessary and appropriate, suitable mitigation measures may require to be agreed and implemented to ensure there is no significant impact on environmental quality.

9.5.11 This policy seeks to protect and improve existing environmental quality, through the aid of assessments and appropriate measures to remove or mitigate any cumulative effects on health, natural environment and general amenity. This policy has an important role in preventing development from contributing to or being put at risk from unacceptable levels of pollution, including in relation to ground contamination, water, air, noise and light. Exposure to environmental pollution and environmental risks can affect people's quality of life and it is important that new

development is appropriate for its location. The effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, the natural environment and general amenity must be taken into account, also having regard to the sensitivity of the location and nature of established uses in the area.

Figure 9.4: Belfast's Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)



9.5.12 The acceptability of adverse effects on environmental quality will depend on the nature of the development and the location, with the most sensitive sites, such as residential areas, being more vulnerable. The LDP will seek to encourage improvement in environmental quality as a result of new development. This may include measures such as:

- The remediation of contaminated land as part of redevelopment;
- Careful design to minimise nuisance to adjoining residents and occupiers; and
- Use of appropriate mitigation measures, such as replacing existing obtrusive lighting with low level installations.



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The LDP will also seek to improve environmental quality, including air and water quality, through the integration of land use planning and transport, promotion of sustainable travel modes and the provision of a network of green and blue infrastructure.

- 9.5.13 The council has prepared more detailed reports, strategies and guidance on environmental quality, including in connection with air quality, noise and contaminated land, and these should inform new development proposals. Pre-application discussions should also be used to identify the particular issues relating to environmental protection that are relevant to each development site.

Ground contamination

- 9.5.14 In relation to contaminated sites, suitable mitigation must be identified to remediate any contaminated land and prevent potential adverse impacts of the development on human and non-human receptors, land or water quality. Where development involves ground works (including the creation of open spaces), developers will be expected to carry out a detailed site investigation to establish whether the site is contaminated and to determine the potential for pollution of the water environment or harm to human health and non-human receptors.

Air quality

- 9.5.15 The presence of air pollution can lead to an adverse impact on human health. Air pollution is also known to adversely affect ecosystems such as water quality, soils, plants and animals. The RDS acknowledges that there is a need to reduce air pollution from transport by the use of more energy efficient transport. The planning system also positively contributes to improving air quality and minimising its harmful impacts. Belfast City Council has declared four air quality management areas where there is an exceedance of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. These are: the M1 / Westlink corridor; Cromac Street/Albertbridge Road; the Upper Newtownards Road; and the Ormeau Road.
- 9.5.16 Any air quality issue that relates to land use and development is a material planning consideration and factors to be considered include:
- The severity of the impacts on air quality;
 - The air quality in the area surrounding the proposed development;
 - The likely use of the development, i.e. the length of time people are likely to be exposed at that location; and
 - The positive benefits provided through other material considerations.

Water quality

- 9.5.17 The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), which has been transposed into Northern Ireland law through the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, requires monitoring and improvement of water

quality of all inland waters. This includes measures to secure good conservation status, as well as safe drinking water. All development must have regard to the potential impacts on the quality of the water environment, including rivers, lakes, reservoirs and groundwater. In addition, all development must not prejudice the protection and improvement objectives of the River Basin Management Plan.

Noise pollution

9.5.18 Developers will be required to consider the impact of proposed development on the noise environment and, where appropriate, provide a noise assessment. The layout, orientation, design and use of buildings should ensure that operational noise does not adversely affect neighbours, particularly noise-sensitive land uses. Any potential noise conflict between existing activities and new development should be minimised. Where the avoidance of noise conflicts is impractical, mitigation measures such as noise attenuation and restrictions on operating hours will be implemented through appropriate planning conditions.

9.5.19 Noise and vibration from deconstruction and construction activities must be minimised and mitigation measures put in place to limit noise disturbance in the vicinity of the development. Developers will be required to demonstrate that there will be no increase in background noise levels associated with new plant and equipment.

Light pollution

9.5.20 Internal and external lighting should be designed to reduce energy consumption, avoid spillage of light beyond where it is needed and protect the amenity of light-sensitive uses such as housing, hospitals and areas of importance for nature conservation.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓



ENV2 – Mitigating environmental change

Planning permission will be granted for development that incorporates measures to mitigate environmental change and reduce GHG by promoting sustainable patterns of development.

Development proposals should, where feasible, seek to avoid demolition and should consider how existing buildings or their main structures could be reused. Development proposals that include the demolition of existing buildings should demonstrate that reuse is not appropriate or feasible. Where demolition is proposed, measures should be included to minimise any waste through the reuse of as much building material as possible.

All new development proposals (including changes of use) will maximise opportunities to incorporate sustainable design features where feasible (such as grey water recycling, green roofs, maximising use of recycled materials, orientating buildings to optimise solar gain, energy efficiency).

Development proposals should, where appropriate, demonstrate the highest feasible and viable sustainability standards in the design, construction, operation and “end of life” phases of development in line with the ‘nearly zero carbon buildings’ strategy set out in the EU energy performance and buildings directive, where all new buildings are required to be ‘nearly zero carbon’ by 2020.

Justification and amplification

- 9.5.21 The SPPS advises that in order to support the move to a low carbon future, local planning authorities should encourage the reuse of existing resources and encourage the use of renewable energy. The city will have to tackle GHG to contribute towards the UK targets to reduce carbon emissions. This policy seeks to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by implementing measures to maximise the use of renewable and low carbon energy generating systems (see also LDP policies on energy).
- 9.5.22 Environmental change is recognised as one of the most complex, multi-faceted and serious threats the world faces. Environmental change can be described as long term changes to weather patterns as a result of industrialisation, particularly the use of fossil fuels, which has increased the amount of GHG being released into the atmosphere. The impacts of environmental change indicate increased extreme weather events, storm surges, higher temperatures, more episodes of heavy rainfall, and flooding, all presenting a risk for people, property, infrastructure, the economy, habitats and species.

9.5.23 The policy aims to address greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate environmental change and to build resilient communities. It is recognised that the LDP is an important spatial tool to create a compact city, designing neighbourhoods that have shops, workplaces, local amenities and services near homes, which increase opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport and reduces the need to use the car. It is also important that developments are designed to mitigate against environmental change and to withstand its effects. This will ultimately help to minimise the impact of development on the wider environment and ensure that buildings and spaces endure. Key design measures include:

- Shift towards zero carbon and a fabric first²³ approach;
- The development of clean technologies and sustainable design;
- Best use of passive design, renewable energy, natural light and ventilation;
- Minimise waste and promote recycling throughout construction and occupation stages; and
- Sustainable reuse of existing buildings and sustainable use of new materials.

9.5.24 Green design best practice, including making the best use of the natural attributes of a site, passive design and energy efficiency, can assist in minimising the carbon footprint of new development. The use of sustainable materials and clever reuse of buildings for alternative uses are other ways to help mitigate against environmental change. In terms of accessibility, as vehicular travel is a major component of greenhouse gas emissions, development proposals should consider the future use of electric cars, including sharing pools and charging facilities. This helps to reduce harmful emissions and ensures that development can adapt to future needs.

9.5.25 Buildings designed and constructed using the fabric first approach aim to minimise the need for energy consumption through methods such as:

- Maximising air-tightness and using super-high insulation; and
- Optimising solar gain, natural ventilation and using the thermal mass of the building fabric, including using energy derived from occupation and use.

9.5.26 A statement of sustainability may be required to demonstrate how the proposal has considered sustainable patterns of development and sustainable design. Supplementary planning guidance will be published on these matters, including best practice in the sustainable design of buildings and spaces.

²³ A 'fabric first' approach to building design involves maximising the performance of the components and materials that make up the building fabric itself, before considering the use of mechanical or electrical building services systems. Additional details at: https://www.nihe.gov.uk/energy_efficiency_good_practice_guide.pdf



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓

ENV3 – Adapting to environmental change

Planning permission will be granted for development that incorporates measures to adapt to environmental change, in order to support sustainable and enduring development.

Measures to help adapt to the potential impacts may include the following:

- a. Managing flood risk and promoting SuDS;
- b. Protecting and enhancing a green and blue infrastructure network in the city, including enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- c. Encouraging greater resilience to extreme weather conditions in the built environment and in transport, energy and other infrastructure; and
- d. Demonstrating how the design of the development minimises overheating and reduces reliance on air conditioning systems.

In order to minimise the impact of extreme weather conditions, new developments should also embed resilience to current and future climates, including:

- e. Where feasible, viable and sustainable, provide an accessible green roof to aid cooling, insulation and enhance biodiversity;
- f. Incorporate SuDS, including landscaping and tree planting;
- g. Demonstrate what measures have been included to ensure the safety of people and the protection of the development during extreme weather events;
- h. Demonstrate how the development integrates passive design and green infrastructure as part of the design process; and
- i. Demonstrate how the development is resilient to flood events.

Justification and amplification

9.5.27 Adapting to environmental change is important to protect communities, biodiversity and the built and natural environment. The city has experienced extreme weather events, which have had an impact on the communities in Belfast. Flooding arising from intense rainfall has, in particular, caused harm to people and property, as well as posing a threat to the wider environment and the economy. To leave the city vulnerable without adapting to the future changes will be a high risk strategy and financially very expensive in the long term. The LDP must address adaptation to environmental change to fulfil its sustainability commitments and to support a

resilient city. Adaptation means responding to the impact of a changing climate, i.e. seeking to lower the risks posed by the consequences of environmental change. Predictions are for warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, rising sea levels and increased extreme weather conditions.

9.5.28 Adaptation measures may include large-scale infrastructure changes – such as building defences to protect against flooding and sea-level rise and relocating key infrastructure away from areas of significant flood risk. Other adaptation measures can include the incorporation of SuDS, locating vital plant and equipment above ground level and the agreement of flood event plans in new development. Important consideration should be given to how development is located, sited and designed to withstand the long and short term impacts of environmental change, particularly the effect of rising temperatures and periods of intense rain and storms. Carefully considered building form and construction can allow for adaptation to future changes in climate.

9.5.29 The inclusion of a policy to ensure that adapting to environmental change is considered and promoted in all development is consistent with the core planning principle of sustainable development. This also aligns with the Belfast Agenda, which places emphasis on addressing those issues that pose the greatest risk to the city and its economy. The potential impacts of environmental change on development should be considered during the planning process to maximise benefits and minimise any negative effects that could threaten health, life, property or the wider environment. This will help to promote and sustain the city for existing residents and visitors and for future generations.

9.5.30 The policy for adapting to environmental change aims to ensure that the city is not unduly vulnerable to future risks, including extreme weather events. This seeks to secure the economic, social and environmental viability of the city in the context of a changing environment. The LDP will also be working with natural environmental processes, for example through promoting the development of green and blue infrastructure and also the use of SuDS, to reduce flood risk and improve water quality.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓



ENV4 – Flood risk

Planning applications in flood risk areas must be accompanied by an assessment of the flood risk in the form of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The council will have regard to guidance publications produced by other authorities and prospective developers/applicants are advised to liaise early in the formulation of their proposals with DfI Rivers to clarify flooding or flood plain issues that may affect particular sites.

In all circumstances, the council will adopt a precautionary approach in assessing development proposals in areas that may be subject to flood risk presently or in the future as a result of environmental change predictions. All planning applications will be determined with reference to the most up to date flood risk information²⁴ available and in consultation with DfI Rivers and other relevant bodies as appropriate.

The SPPS sets out the planning policies for flood risk to minimise flood risk to people, property and the environment. The council will take full account of these in assessing development proposals.

Justification and amplification

- 9.5.31 The SPPS sets out planning policies and objectives for flood risk, which are consistent with the RDS and the Long Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland. The LDP is consistent with the policy approach taken in the SPPS.
- 9.5.32 Flooding is a natural process that can happen at any time in a wide variety of locations. It constitutes a temporary covering of land by water and presents a risk only when people, their property and /or environment assets are present in the area which floods. Flooding from the sea and from rivers is probably best known but prolonged, intense and localised rainfall can also cause sewer flooding, overland flow and groundwater flooding. Different types of flooding present different forms and degrees of danger to people, property and the environment.
- 9.5.33 Flooding has significant impacts on human activities and it can threaten lives, property and the environment. Assets at risk can include housing, transport and public infrastructure, and commercial, industrial and agricultural enterprises. The health, social, economic and environmental impacts of flooding can be significant and have a wide community impact.

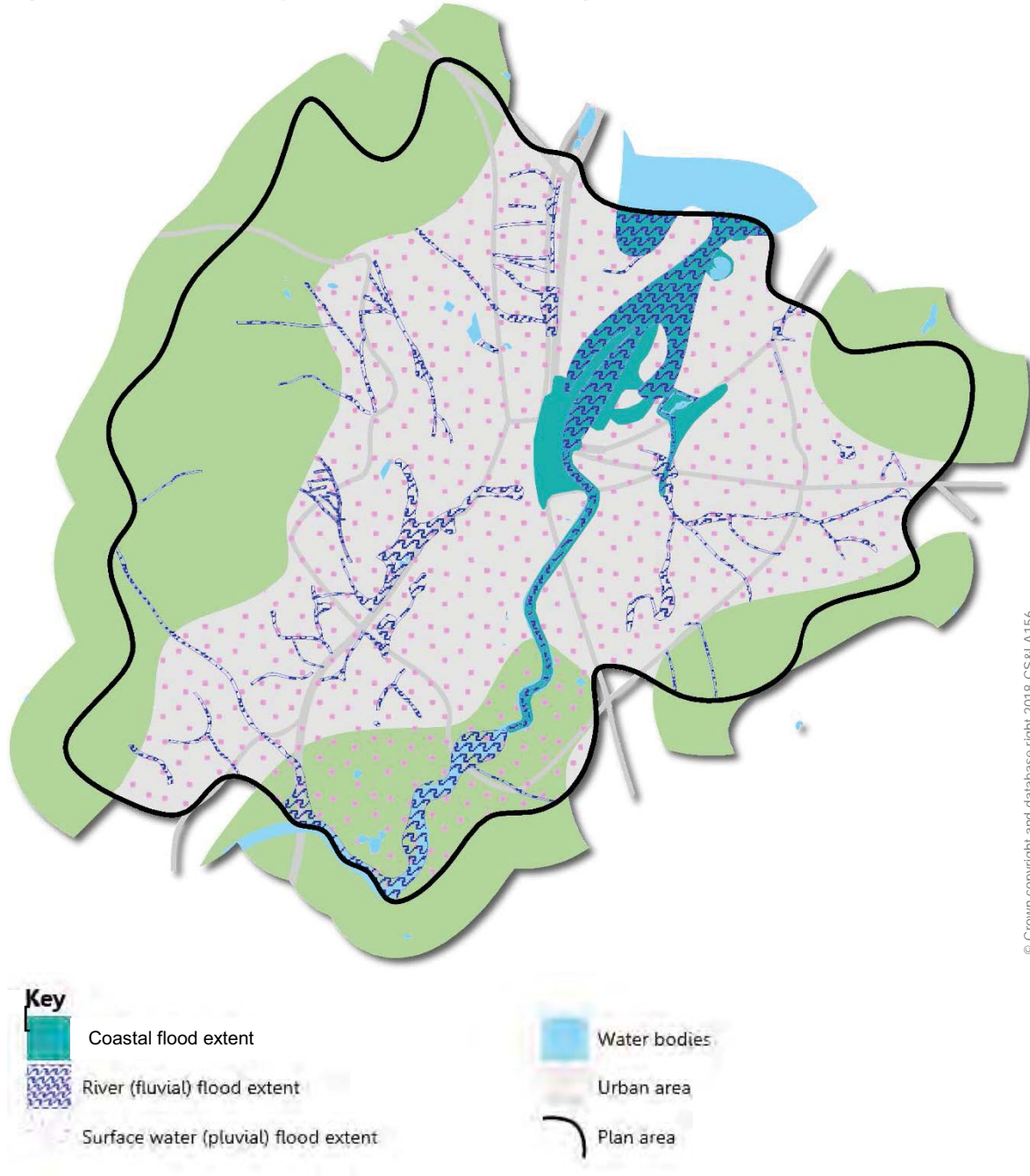
²⁴ *Flood Risk Maps - DfI Rivers Agency at: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/rivers-and-flooding/flood-maps-ni>*

- 9.5.34 The frequency, pattern and severity of flooding are expected to increase as a result of environmental change. Development can also exacerbate the problems of flooding by accelerating and increasing surface water run-off, altering watercourses and removing floodplain storage. Therefore, the planning system has an important role to manage development so as to reduce risks and impacts of flooding.
- 9.5.35 Government policy in regard to securing a sustainable water sector in Northern Ireland is currently being implemented through 'Sustainable Water – a Long Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)' (DfI, March 2016). It sets out a range of initiatives to deliver the Executive's long term goal of a sustainable water sector and identifies how planning can impact on flood risk and water quality.
- 9.5.36 The SPPS objectives for flood risk generally reflect the RDS and Sustainable Water. The SPPS also recognises and encourages the promotion of a more sustainable approach to the provision of water and sewerage services and flood risk management through the future promotion of SuDS. It recognises the need for the prevention of flood risk and for councils to balance and integrate the social, economic and environmental matters in the long term public interest to achieve sustainable development. The Belfast Agenda also recognises the need to improve health and wellbeing and support sustainable economic growth and development.
- 9.5.37 It is important to note that there are three key themes with regard to flood risk management. These themes are:
- **Prevention:** the avoidance of, where possible, new development in areas of flood risk; promoting appropriate land use, agricultural and forestry practices;
 - **Protection:** Structural and non-structural measures to reduce the likelihood and impact of floods; and
 - **Preparedness:** Flood warning; flood emergency planning; informing the public about flood risk and what to do in the event of a flood to their property; adapting existing property to the risk of flooding.
- 9.5.38 Belfast has a long history of flood events and significant damage has been caused by both fluvial and pluvial events. Given the geographical location, topography and population density of the city, the potential adverse consequences to human life and property in Belfast are predicted to represent a large proportion of the Northern Ireland total. The coastal and pluvial flood risks are also both sensitive to environmental change. There is a significant number of key services likely to be affected on an annual average basis by some type of flooding. It is therefore not surprising that Belfast accounts for a large proportion of the total geographical area in NI that is estimated to be at "significant" risk of flooding.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 9.5: Indicative map of areas at risk of flooding in Belfast²⁵



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²⁵ Map produced for indicative purposes only. For detailed map of flood risk areas, please see DfI Rivers website at: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/rivers-and-flooding/flood-maps-ni>

ENV5 – Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

All built development should include, where appropriate, SuDS measures to manage surface water effectively on site, to reduce surface water runoff and to ensure flooding is not increased elsewhere. A two stage SuDS treatment should be used, where possible, in order to improve water quality. An appropriate maintenance and management plan for all SuDS will require to be agreed with the council and a s76 planning agreement may also be sought.

Developers should consider the following SuDS measures to assist in minimising flood risk:

- a. Green roofs (intensive and/or extensive systems);**
- b. Swales;**
- c. Filter strips and filter drains;**
- d. Permeable or porous paving;**
- e. Detention basins;**
- f. Open areas, ponds and wetlands; and**
- g. Trees and landscaping.**

Justification and amplification

- 9.5.39 The council will promote the incorporation of SuDS measures in development proposals that include physical building, surfacing or groundworks, having regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposals and the potential effectiveness (individually and cumulatively) of the SuDS measures.
- 9.5.40 SuDS are defined as management practices and control systems designed to drain surface water in a more sustainable way than conventional systems. Reducing and decreasing the amount of surface water run-off helps to manage water resources more sustainably. SuDS also have a role in improving the quality of the run-off from a development and enhancing nature conservation/biodiversity, particularly in built up urban areas. SuDS measures also form part of the city's green and blue infrastructure and are supported by the council's Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan.
- 9.5.41 SuDS schemes can vary in size and composition and can be used in most developments where the flow of water would be large enough to be readily reduced. Techniques which can be incorporated in developing SuDS vary from the relatively straightforward such as soakaways and reducing areas of impervious surfaces on a site, through to green roofs, landscaping, tree planting and using swales, basins, infiltration trenches, filter drains and drainage ponds to collect and store water.



Building a smart connected and resilient place

- 9.5.42 The SPPS recognises that the planning system should help to mitigate and adapt to environmental change by working with natural environmental processes, for example through promoting the development of green infrastructure and the use of SuDS to reduce flood risk and improve water quality. The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 also provide a legal imperative to consider the introduction of measures such as SuDS and water level control to mitigate against floods.
- 9.5.43 SuDS measures can be incorporated into a wide range of development proposals, including at different scales. Most types of built development offer potential for some SuDS measures, irrespective of scale. For example, domestic applications and small commercial extensions can incorporate green roofs and permeable paving, whereas larger projects can, in addition, include swales, ponds or wetlands. Permeable paving within new residential and commercial developments can reduce the risk of flooding associated with surface water run-off. Trees and soft landscaping can also provide significant benefits in terms of water management and flood alleviation and can be incorporated into most development proposals. In this respect, it is important that SuDS measures are considered early in the design process and that the measures selected are appropriate and effective, including on a cumulative basis.
- 9.5.44 There are a number of ways in which the council will promote SuDS, including through this policy and key site requirements attached to specific zonings. The onus will be on the applicant/developer to demonstrate that SuDS have been considered and appropriate measures have been incorporated into the design of the proposals. A range of maintenance and management options for SuDS should be explored with the council. Appropriate maintenance and management arrangements are essential to ensure effective future operation of SuDS whether this be, for example, via a private management company or adoption by a public authority. In some instances planning conditions and s76 planning agreements will be required to secure effective future maintenance.
- 9.5.45 Developers should consider incorporation of SuDS as early as possible in the design process. Planning applications will be expected to be accompanied by an appropriate level of detail to ensure that proposals for SuDS are capable of practical implementation and to avoid the need for revisions to the scheme at a later date. Where no SuDS measures are proposed, the onus will be on the developer to justify their absence.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓



Promoting a green and active place





10.1 Open space

Introduction

- 10.1.1 The city's open spaces and green areas are vitally important to the function and environmental quality of the city and the amenity and wellbeing of its population, visitors and nature. Not only are open and green areas important for health, recreation, wildlife and amenity, they also help to improve the quality of the environment, including in relation to air quality, urban cooling and flood alleviation.
- 10.1.2 The SPPS recognises the cultural, social, economic, health and environmental benefits of open space and states that everyone should have easy access to open space. It also recognises open space, including sport and outdoor recreation, as key policy in improving health and wellbeing, one of the SPPS's five core planning principles. The RDS also highlights the need to provide adequate provision for **green and blue infrastructure**²⁶ in cities, neighbourhoods and new developments.
- 10.1.3 Open space forms an integral part of green and blue infrastructure. For the purposes of the LDP, 'open space' means all open space and ancillary facilities of recreational, amenity or environmental value, including land and water bodies, irrespective of ownership or access. This includes a wide range of types of open space, such as public parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities, play areas, amenity open space, greenways, community pathways and rights of way, river corridors, ponds and reservoirs, natural and semi-natural spaces, woodlands, allotments and community gardens, cemeteries, designed landscapes and civic spaces. Where there is built development that is ancillary to the use of the open space, this is also included in the LDP definition of open space. This includes, for example, access pathways, car parks, changing facilities, shelters, pavilions and other associated structures.
- 10.1.4 The city has a variety of open spaces, both public and private, many of which have the potential to be connected to form an integrated green and blue infrastructure network capable of serving many functions and delivering significant benefits for Belfast. This incorporates other green and blue infrastructure, such as paths and greenways, rivers and water bodies, nature sites, key civic spaces and woodlands and street trees in a network that would provide benefits for recreation and sports, tourism, visual amenity, biodiversity, ecosystem services, active transport network, flood prevention, health and wellbeing. It will help to build sustainable and resilient communities, in mitigating the impacts of environmental change, promoting a healthy living agenda and safeguarding biodiversity. It will extend throughout the

²⁶ *Green infrastructure such as parks, green spaces and street trees; blue infrastructure such as ponds, streams and lakes (RDS 2035, Strategic Guidance RG11 'Natural Environment').*



city's urban area and the countryside around it, with opportunities for further linkages with neighbouring districts.

Policy aims

- 10.1.5 In recognition of the multi-benefits of open space, including for health, amenity and environmental quality, the LDP policies aim to protect and enhance existing open space and secure the creation of new open space within Belfast, with particular consideration given to:
- Creation and protection of a green and blue infrastructure network across the city's urban and rural areas;
 - Appropriate protection of all existing open spaces of all types, including (but not limited to) areas specifically identified in the LDP;
 - Provision of new open space areas of high quality and in keeping with the principles of environmental sustainability;
 - Convenient and safe access to areas of open space for local communities, residents and visitors; and
 - Integration of open space within significant new developments.
- 10.1.6 The council's policy seeks the retention, enhancement and creation of open spaces, including parks, playing fields, woodlands, allotments, large tracts of countryside, landscape features and many other areas that make up the provision of green infrastructure, aligning with the SPPS and Belfast Agenda. Existing open spaces are to be generally protected and enhanced, including access to them for local residents and visitors. Opportunities to create well-designed areas of open space as part of new developments will be pursued, including on-site open space and, where appropriate, improvements to local green and blue infrastructure. Limited releases of open space for development will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the loss would not result in detriment to the overall green and blue infrastructure provision and there is scope for improving the quality of, and access to, provision elsewhere.
- 10.1.7 The SPPS requires all new residential development to provide new publicly accessible open space to enhance the quality of new developments. However the size of many development sites in the city makes it impractical to provide open space within the curtilage of the development site. In such cases it may be appropriate to have a planning agreement to collect financial contributions and use them to create and/or improve larger areas of open space, or other improvements to the green and blue infrastructure network, including enhanced accessibility.
- 10.1.8 A Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP) has been prepared to provide an integrated strategic plan that can be used to assist decision-making in development management as well as for investment decisions. This is a network of multi-functional spaces, corridors and connections that the policy aims to protect,



Promoting a green and active place

improve and augment. This includes open space and the policy aims to secure convenient access for all residents to open spaces.

- 10.1.9 A number of partners will be involved in delivering the green and blue infrastructure network. The GBIP and any associated strategies and action plans will provide a transparent and planned context that can be used to secure funding from a variety of sources, which may include s76 planning agreements. Improving access to green and blue infrastructure network will be pursued where this does not create unacceptable conflict in areas of high biodiversity value. Development that unacceptably compromises the extent and quality of green and blue infrastructure provision will not be supported.

Policy GB1 – Green and blue infrastructure network

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that protect, augment, complement and/or improve the network and connectivity of green and blue infrastructure across the district. This includes the development of a network of community paths and greenways across the district, including those designated in the LDP, as well as the provision and improvement of public access to open space and other green and blue infrastructure resources, where this does not conflict with natural heritage interests or other matters, including amenity and public safety.

New development should incorporate green infrastructure features as part of the design, including green roofs and walls, SuDS, tree and hedgerow planting, and creating safe accessible links with neighbouring open space, in addition to providing open space on site, where appropriate.

The LDP will seek to secure improvements and expansion of the green and blue infrastructure network, including those identified in the LDP and/or the council's GBIP and associated strategies/action plans, as a result of new development. This may include the carrying out of agreed works by the developer or a financial contribution from the developer in lieu, having regard to the scale, nature and location of the proposed development and to the terms of supplementary guidance on these matters as published by the council.

The LDP will seek to safeguard designated and potential sites and corridors that form part of the network of green and blue infrastructure across the district and will only permit development either within or adjacent to such sites and corridors where it does not prejudice the retention, use, enhancement or further development of the network. Such development proposals should, where appropriate, incorporate access to the green and blue infrastructure network.



Justification and amplification

- 10.1.10 Green and blue infrastructure includes multi-functional spaces in and around the city, such as parks, gardens, agricultural fields, hedges, trees, woodland, green roofs, green walls, rivers and ponds. It also includes the routes and corridors that link such sites, such as designated community greenways, other paths, street trees and civic spaces. The term ‘green and blue infrastructure’ covers all land containing these features, regardless of ownership, condition or size.

- 10.1.11 The policy recognises the opportunity to plan for a network of these spaces and corridors to provide a multitude of recreational, environmental, ecological, wellbeing, socio-cultural and economic benefits for Belfast. A connected city with green networks and linkages can help promote the health of the city whilst promoting a reduction in congestion levels. This can help play a part in protecting and enhancing ecosystem services, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and helping to mitigate against flooding. The policy seeks to protect the existing network and, where possible, secure improvements and extensions to it, including as a result of development. In recognition of the vital contribution open spaces make to the city, a target has been set for the provision of accessible open space, which proposes that no person should live more than 400 metres or a 5 minute walk from their nearest area of accessible open space. In this regard, the GBIP and associated strategies/action plans will assist decision-making in new development and investment decisions and may be used as a basis for planning agreements, including developer contributions.

- 10.1.12 However, it is acknowledged that there may be exceptional circumstances where proposals that result in the loss of an element of the network or a potential link or improvement to it may be acceptable, taking account of other benefits that it might bring. Nevertheless, in such cases, the onus is on the developer to demonstrate that this will not result in detriment to the overall green and blue infrastructure network.

- 10.1.13 The council’s GBIP and Open Spaces Strategy (and any further associated strategies and action plans) provide additional information and strategy that, in tandem with the LDP, will be used for decision-making purposes for development management and investment decisions.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓



Policy OS1 – Protection of open space

The council will support the retention and improvement of existing open space throughout the district area. There will be a general presumption in favour of retaining all such lands and uses, including protecting any character and amenity value, whether specifically identified in the LDP or not, unless the lands are identified in the LDP for an alternative use.

Development resulting in the loss of open space on lands specifically identified for these uses in the LDP and/or the council's Open Spaces Strategy and/or GBIP will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where it is clearly shown that redevelopment will bring substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh the loss of the open space.

An exception may also be permitted where it is demonstrated that the loss of open space will have no significant detrimental impact on the amenity, character or biodiversity of an area and where either of the following circumstances occur:

- a. In the case of an area of open space of 2 hectares or less, alternative provision is made by the developer which is at least as accessible to current users and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness, safety and quality; or
- b. In the case of playing fields and sports pitches within settlement limits, it is demonstrated by the developer that the retention and enhancement of the facility can only be achieved by the development of a small part of the existing space - limited to a maximum of 10% of the overall area - and this will have no adverse effect on the sporting potential of the facility. This exception will be exercised only once.

In all circumstances, the council must be satisfied that the loss of any open space would not result in detriment to the overall green infrastructure provision.

The presumption against the loss of existing open space will apply irrespective of ownership, public access, physical condition or appearance.

Justification and amplification

10.1.14 The council's policy seeks the retention and enhancement of important open spaces, including parks, playing fields, woodlands, allotments, large tracts of countryside, landscape features and many other areas that make up the provision of green and blue infrastructure. This is in line with the policies and objectives of the SPPS, as well as the Belfast Agenda. This is in recognition of the important role that open space and the wider green and blue infrastructure play in the function and



environmental quality of the city and the amenity, health and wellbeing of its population, visitors and nature.

10.1.15 There is a need to balance development pressures for competing land uses and to give adequate protection to existing open space that is of community and environmental benefit. This is also set within the context of a growing city and population, where open space should be preserved and improved to meet growing needs and demands. However, it is acknowledged that there may be exceptional circumstances where the loss of a portion of open space may be acceptable, taking account of other benefits that new development might bring, including reinvestment in the remaining facilities, the provision of alternative facilities and other mitigating measures. Nevertheless, in such cases, the onus is on the developer to demonstrate that this will not result in any detriment to the overall green infrastructure provision. In this regard, consideration must be given to the current and future open space needs of the wider locality and the current appearance or condition of existing open space will not be sufficient sole justification for their loss.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	



Policy OS2 – New open space within settlements

Planning permission will be granted for the provision of new open space, including sport and outdoor recreation facilities, at appropriate locations within the defined settlement limits, subject to consideration of the nature and location of any proposals. All proposals shall comply with the following requirements:

- a. Satisfactory arrangements are provided for an appropriate landscaping scheme;
- b. There is no unacceptable impact on visual or residential amenity;
- c. There is no adverse impact on features of importance for natural or built heritage;
- d. Ancillary buildings and structures are designed to a high standard, are of a scale appropriate to the character of the local area or townscape and are sympathetic to the surrounding environment in terms of siting, layout and landscape treatment;
- e. The extra vehicular traffic generated by the proposal has no adverse impact on road safety, traffic or congestion levels;
- f. Satisfactory arrangements are provided for permeability through the site and linkages to the pedestrian and cycle network and, where appropriate, access to the site by public transport; and
- g. Satisfactory arrangements are provided for site access for all, car parking, drainage and waste disposal.

Justification and amplification

10.1.16 The council’s policy seeks to support the provision of new and improved open space at appropriate locations throughout the district to serve the current and future needs of the city’s residents and visitors. This is in line with the policies and objectives of the SPPS and recognises the importance that adequate open space plays in the health & wellbeing and environmental quality of the city. Proposals for new open space, sport and recreation facilities, as a primary use, require to be appropriate to the location, including in terms of accessibility, adjoining land uses, landscaping & visual amenity and the wider environment. This will ensure that a balanced approach is achieved in facilitating new facilities, achieving sustainable development and protecting the environment.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓



Policy OS3 – Ancillary open space

All new development proposals should include appropriate provision for open space, including hard and soft landscaped areas and outdoor amenity areas, to serve the needs of the development.

Planning permission will only be granted for proposals for new residential development of 25 or more units, or on sites of one hectare or more, where public open space is provided as an integral part of the development. In smaller residential schemes the need to provide public open space will be considered on its individual merits.

An exception to the requirement of providing public open space will be granted in the case of apartment developments or specialised housing where a reasonable level of private communal open space is being provided. An exception will also be considered in cases where residential development is designed to integrate with and make use of adjoining public open space.

Where the provision of public open space is proposed or required under this policy, the precise amount, location, type and design of such provision will be negotiated with applicants taking account of the specific characteristics of the development, the site and its context and having regard to the following:

- a. A normal expectation will be at least 10% of the total site area;
- b. For residential development of 300 units or more, or for development sites of 15 hectares or more, a normal expectation will be at least 15% of the total site area;
- c. Provision on-site at a rate less than 10% of the total site area may be acceptable where the residential development:
 - is located within a town or city centre;
 - is close to and would benefit from ease of access to areas of existing public open space; or
 - incorporates the 'Home Zone'² concept;
- d. Complementary and ancillary equipment and facilities, including for active or passive enjoyment of residents or occupiers, should be incorporated into the design of the development; and
- e. For residential development of 100 units or more, or for development sites of 5 hectares or more, an equipped children's play area will be required as an integral part of the development. The council will consider an exception to this requirement where a sufficient equipped children's play area exists within reasonable walking distance (generally around 400 metres) of the majority of the units within the development scheme and subject to the further provisions of this policy.



Justification and amplification

- 10.1.17 The council's policy supports the provision of new and improved open space to serve the current and future needs of the city's residents and visitors. In addition to supporting new proposals for open space and sports/recreation facilities, where they are the primary use, new development should also make appropriate provision for open space to serve growing needs and preserve amenity and environmental quality. In this case, the open space is ancillary to another primary use. This is particularly the case with large commercial developments and all new residential development, where occupiers should have convenient access to good quality open space that meets likely need and demand. Therefore, the policy seeks to ensure that the provision of open space is integrated into the design for new residential and large commercial developments and is provided on-site. In this regard, it is important that any open space is safe and accessible (including consideration of opportunities for linkages to nearby facilities), whilst not resulting in any noise or nuisance for local occupiers and residents. It is also important that open space areas are robust and free from encroachment from unplanned or undesirable uses, including for parking, tipping and anti-social behaviour. It is recommended that, in preparing development proposals, early consideration is given to the likely open space needs of occupiers, including through public engagement.
- 10.1.18 In terms of residential development in particular, it is important that open spaces are located within a reasonable walking distance of where people live. The nature and scale of these facilities will largely depend on the scale and location of the new development, as well as any existing provision in the locality. In calculating the precise amount of public open space provision needed in an individual development proposal, only space of demonstrable recreational or amenity value i.e. 'useable' open space, will generally be counted. Accordingly, verges and visibility splays, which form part of the adopted highway, will not normally count towards the open space provision. Apartment developments and specialised housing will also require adequate provision of open space. In cases where private communal gardens are proposed as an integral part of the development, separate provision of public open space may not be required.
- 10.1.19 It is acknowledged that there may cases where, due to the nature, scale or location of the proposed development, on-site provision may not be necessary or desirable. In such circumstances, the provision of new or improved facilities nearby or improved access to such facilities may be of greater overall benefit. This includes improvements and extensions to the green and blue infrastructure network, which will be of benefit to occupiers of new development, as well as to the city as a whole. The policy seeks to facilitate such arrangements by way of planning agreements with developers.



10.1.20 It is also important to ensure that there are adequate management arrangements in place for any open space and recreation facilities provided in connection with new development. This will normally be the subject of a legal agreement attached to any planning permission. Arrangements acceptable to the council include: a legal agreement transferring ownership of and responsibility for the open space to the council; or a legal agreement transferring ownership of and responsibility for the open space to a charitable trust registered by the charity commission or a management company supported by such a trust; or a legal agreement transferring ownership of and responsibility for the open space to a properly constituted residents' association with associated management arrangements. In all cases developers will be responsible for the laying out and landscaping of public open space required under this policy.

10.1.21 All proposals for open space will be further assessed against the other relevant policy provisions of the LDP, including policy OS2. Guidance will be prepared in relation to new open space and recreation facilities that are ancillary to new developments, including commercial and residential uses. A guidance framework on planning agreements and developer contributions will also be published by the council.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
✓	✓	✓	✓



Policy OS4 – New open space outside settlements

Planning permission will be granted for the provision of new open space facilities, including for sport and outdoor recreation, at appropriate locations in the countryside area of the district where it is demonstrated that that it is acceptable in terms of environment and rural amenity and would not be better located within settlement limits or on previously developed land. All the following criteria must also be met:

- a. There is no significant adverse impact on features of importance to natural and built heritage;
- b. There is no permanent loss of good quality agricultural land and no unacceptable impact on nearby agricultural activities;
- c. There is no significant adverse impact on visual amenity or the character of the local landscape and the development can be readily absorbed into the landscape by taking advantage of existing vegetation and/or topography;
- d. There is no unacceptable impact on the amenities of people living nearby;
- e. Public safety is not prejudiced and the development is compatible with other countryside uses in terms of the nature, scale, extent and frequency or timing of the recreational activities proposed;
- f. Any ancillary buildings or structures are designed to a high standard, are of a scale appropriate to the local area and are sympathetic to the surrounding environment in terms of their siting, layout and landscape treatment;
- g. The proposed facility takes into account the needs of people with disabilities and is, as far as possible, accessible by means of transport other than solely the private car; and
- h. The road network can safely handle the extra vehicular traffic the proposal will generate and satisfactory arrangements are provided for access, parking, drainage and waste disposal.

Justification and amplification

10.1.22 The council seeks to support the provision of new open space, sport and outdoor recreation facilities at appropriate locations in the countryside, where such a location is necessary to accommodate the use. This could include development associated with outdoor recreation in the countryside, such as walking, cycling and angling, and recreational uses that require extensive land areas or areas away from existing settlement. It might also be related to farm diversification that assists the rural economy. However, the countryside around the city is an important asset to the district and care must be taken to ensure a balanced approach between protection, management and sustainable development. In this regard, the policy seeks to facilitate appropriate proposals at accessible locations, provided there is no significant adverse impact on rural land uses, landscape & visual amenity,



wildlife and the environment. This is in accordance with the SPPS. Particular regard will be given to the justification for new development proposals in any countryside location and the council must be satisfied that the proposal is acceptable in terms of environment and rural amenity and would not be better located within settlement limits or where there is an opportunity to make use of previously developed (brownfield) land in the countryside.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	



Policy OS5– Intensive sports facilities

Planning permission will be granted for the provision of new or extended intensive sports facilities where these are located at appropriate and accessible locations within settlement limits. Where intensive sports facilities are proposed outside settlement limits, the applicant must demonstrate specific locational need, having regard to the following criteria:

- a. There is no alternative site within the settlement that can accommodate the development;
- b. The proposed development site is located close to the edge of the settlement and can be clearly identified as being visually associated with the settlement;
- c. There is no adverse impact on the setting of the settlement; and
- d. The scale of the development is in keeping with the size of the settlement.

In all cases, the development of intensive sports facilities will be required to meet all the following criteria:

- e. There is no unacceptable impact on the amenities of people living nearby by reason of the siting, scale, extent, frequency or timing of the sporting activities proposed, including any noise or light pollution likely to be generated; and
- f. The road network can safely handle the extra vehicular traffic the proposal will generate and satisfactory arrangements are provided for site access, car parking, drainage and waste disposal.

All proposals for intensive sports facilities will be further assessed against the other relevant policy provisions of the LDP.

Justification and amplification

10.1.23 This policy seeks to ensure that new intensive sports facilities are at accessible and appropriate locations within settlement boundaries and sets out the key criteria against which proposals will be assessed. This is in accordance with the SPPS. These include developments such as leisure centres, stadia, sports halls and swimming pools, as well as intensive outdoor facilities, such as 5-a-side and synthetic pitches. These uses can attract large volumes of patrons, including in evenings and at weekends. In this regard, these are most suitably located where access is convenient by a range of modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport. This generally requires accessible locations within the settlement boundaries. However, having regard to the nature and scale of the proposal and the availability of suitable sites, there may be exceptional circumstances where an edge of settlement location is acceptable. The policy also sets out the key criteria for considering such exceptional cases.



10.1.24 Whilst they are a valuable community resource, the intensive sports use has the potential to impact on local amenity, including by traffic, noise and light disturbance. Therefore their location has to be carefully considered against the potential impacts on local amenity. In this regard, the policy seeks to facilitate appropriate proposals at accessible locations, provided there is no significant impact on established land uses, amenity, wildlife and the environment. Mitigation measures may be required and these may be secured by way of developer agreements.

10.1.25 The council will, where appropriate, seek to secure improvements to the green and blue infrastructure network as a result of new intensive sports development. This may include the carrying out of agreed works by the developer or a financial contribution from the developer in lieu, having regard to the scale, nature and location of the proposed development and to the terms of supplementary guidance on this matter published by the council.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓

Policy OS6 – Facilities ancillary to water sports

Planning permission will be granted for the development of facilities ancillary to water sports uses adjacent to ponds, lakes, reservoirs and waterways.

In terms of new built development and nature/intensity of use, all proposals ancillary to water sports will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements of the LDP.

Justification and amplification

10.1.26 The council’s policy seeks to support ancillary facilities required in connection with water sports on our rivers, reservoirs, lakes and canals. These are important recreational resources and limited ancillary development is accepted as being necessary or desirable in some circumstances. Such facilities may include slipways, jetties, boat houses, toilet and changing facilities, parking areas and access. Such facilities can also result in new or increased usage. However, a balanced approach has to be struck and the council will carefully consider the potential impact of the proposed development, including built development and usage, on the existing environment to ensure that there is no significant adverse impact, including on amenity, wildlife, water quality and over-intensification of use. This is in accordance with the SPPS. New proposals must demonstrate also that they will not damage the wider environment, including in terms of usage, noise, erosion and appropriate



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design and should seek to ensure access for all by sustainable modes of travel. Management plans, including for both the construction and operational stages of the proposal, may require to be agreed prior to development in order to protect sensitive environments.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		

Policy OS7 – Floodlighting

The council will only support the development of floodlighting associated with sports and outdoor recreational facilities where all the following criteria are met:

- a. There is no unacceptable impact on the amenities of people living nearby;**
- b. There is no adverse impact on the visual amenity or character of the locality or on natural and built heritage interests; and**
- c. Public safety is not prejudiced.**

Justification and amplification

10.1.27 The council's policy seeks to ensure a balanced approach in considering new floodlighting proposals whilst ensuring that environmental matters are given due weight. The benefits of floodlighting at sports and outdoor recreational facilities in extending operational hours is acknowledged. However, care must be taken to ensure that this will not cause unacceptable harm to amenity or prejudice public safety. Issues for consideration include the potential intensification of use of the facility, light pollution and increased traffic and noise generation. These issues will largely depend on the location of the proposal and the surrounding land uses. The most sensitive areas are likely to include residential areas, open areas & countryside and other areas sensitive in terms of character and natural & built heritage value. In this regard, bats are particularly sensitive to floodlighting and careful consideration of proposals must ensure no significant adverse impact on them and other protected species. In all cases, any floodlighting must be positioned and designed so as not to threaten public safety, for example by way of glare. Planning conditions may be used to restrict hours of use or secure other mitigation measures.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓		



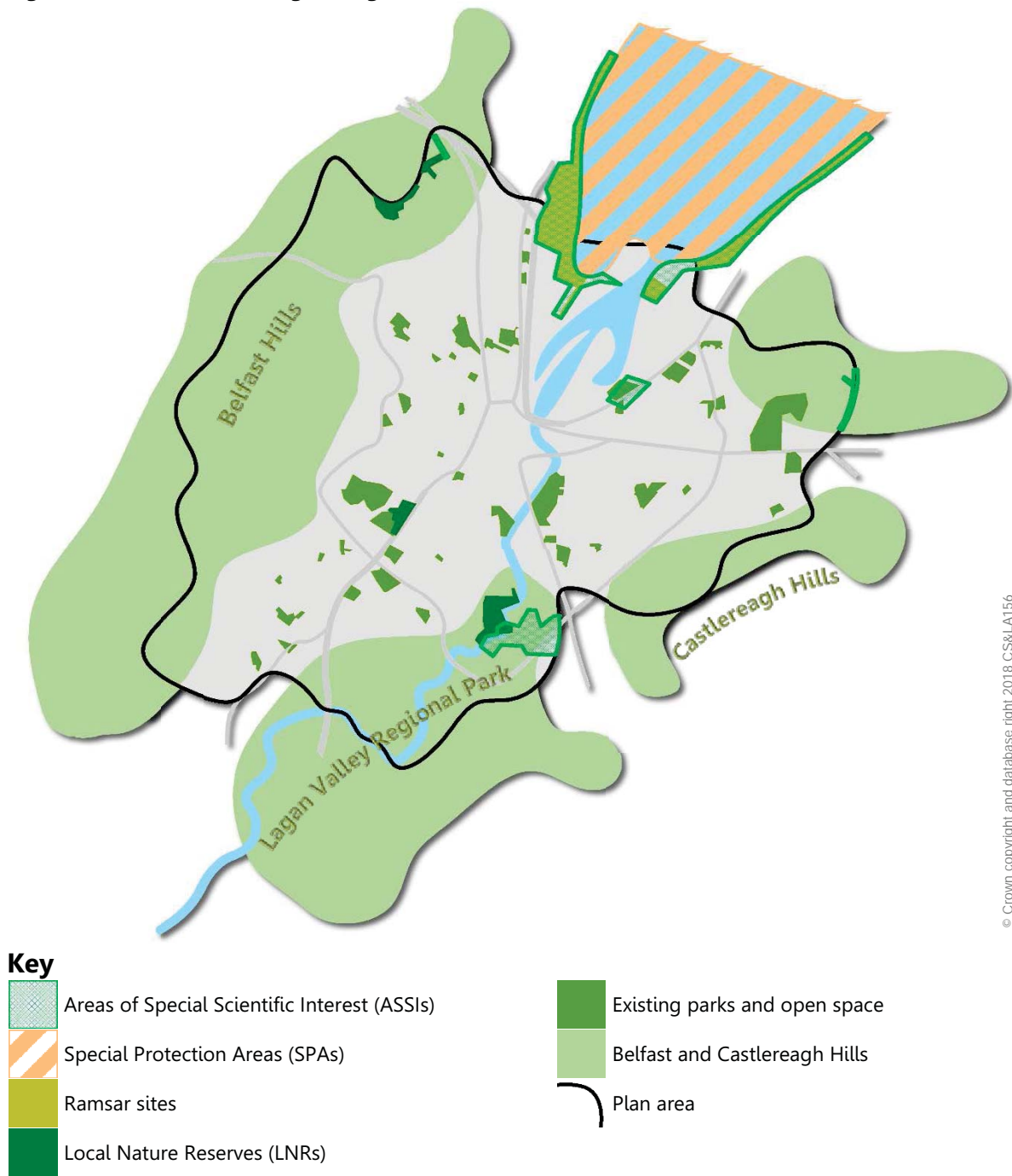
10.2 Natural heritage

Introduction

- 10.2.1 The district's diversity of landscapes, habitats, species and geology, and their relationship with the urban area, contribute enormously to the area's distinctive and attractive character. The surrounding hills, countryside, Belfast Lough and the Lagan Valley have outstanding environmental and amenity value and provide a unique and iconic setting for Belfast.
- 10.2.2 Natural heritage contributes significantly to the environment, quality of life and the economy of Belfast. It makes the city an attractive place for residents and visitors. The natural environment is a most important and valuable asset and its role is recognised in the RDS and SPPS. All reasonable steps should be taken to conserve, protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment and biodiversity, which must be balanced against the need to facilitate sustainable economic growth. In this context 'conserve and enhance' will allow for appropriate development in line with the principles of sustainability, which are to balance environmental, economic and social needs. Appropriate development will need to minimise impacts, conserve and enhance valued landscapes and significant biodiversity interests.
- 10.2.3 The SPPS sets five core principles of planning, one of which is the preservation and improvement of the natural environment. It provides planning policies in relation to international, national and local designations and protected species that apply across Northern Ireland. It also sets out policy for other natural heritage features that are of importance, including those that may not fall within a designated site, such as priority habitats & species and woodlands & trees. The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (WANE Act) further places a statutory duty on every public body to further the conservation of biodiversity.
- 10.2.4 The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has principal responsibility for the designation of nature conservation sites of international and national importance. These include Ramsar sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Marine Conservation Zones.
- 10.2.5 The council can also designate local sites, such as Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). International and national sites currently designated for nature conservation interests are included at appendix D of this plan. Some important natural heritage features and assets, including priority species and habitats, may occur outside of designated sites.



Figure 10.1: Natural heritage designations in Belfast



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Policy aims

10.2.6 The LDP policies for natural heritage aim to protect all designated sites and priority habitats and species from damaging or inappropriate development. The policies also aim to protect and enhance the other important nature conservation and biodiversity interests within the district, irrespective of specific designations. This takes account of the important role that natural heritage and biodiversity plays in the quality of life, the environment and the economy of Belfast, as well as ecosystem services. These include their roles that benefit people, such as food, recreation and amenity, as well as environmental resilience, including flood



protection and improved air & water quality. A precautionary approach will be adopted in assessing development proposals. The policies give particular consideration to the following aims:

- Protect, preserve, enhance and restore the abundance, quality, diversity and distinctiveness of the district's natural heritage;
- Give appropriate protection to natural assets, taking account of their relative importance; and
- Adopt a precautionary approach when considering the potential impacts of development on important natural resources and ecosystem services.

10.2.7 The policy also aims to secure net improvements in biodiversity whilst protecting or enhancing green and blue infrastructure provision in recognition of its wide ranging benefits.

Policy NH1 – Protection of natural heritage resources

The council will adopt the precautionary principle when considering the impacts of a proposed development on local, national or international natural heritage resources, including designated sites, protected species and the other important interests of biodiversity and geodiversity.

In assessing new development proposals, the council will seek to ensure the protection of the district's natural heritage and biodiversity. New development will not have an unacceptable effect, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively, on sites, habitats, species or ecosystems and networks that are important for their nature conservation, biodiversity or geodiversity value. This includes designated sites, habitats and species protected by law, priority habitats & species and other important nature conservation and biodiversity interests and ecological networks.

The council will have due regard to the relative importance and levels of protection afforded to the hierarchy of international, national and local designated sites and to habitats and species in considering development proposals. In this regard, proposals that have, or could have, a significant effect on an international site will not be supported by the council. Proposals that have an adverse effect on a national site or a significant adverse effect on a local site will not be supported.

The council will require developers to undertake appropriate site surveys and assessments for consideration prior to planning applications being determined.

Where potential adverse impacts cannot be avoided, and having regard to the relative importance and level of protection of the site, suitable mitigation measures must be provided. In such exceptional circumstances, and subject to the



relevant legislative provisions, the development may be considered where it is clearly shown that it will bring substantial community or other benefits that outweigh any potential nature conservation or biodiversity impacts and that adequate mitigation or alternative measures will be put in place.

Proposals adjacent to rivers and other water bodies shall give due regard to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, water quality, access and amenity, including through the adoption of sensitive design, avoidance of instream works or culverting (see also SPPS), appropriate landscaping and access arrangements (including public access and for maintenance purposes). The provision of adequate development setback, normally a minimum of 5 metres, from watercourses and waterbodies will be required and in all cases the applicant shall demonstrate that no adverse impact will be caused.

Justification and amplification

- 10.2.8 Preserving and enhancing the natural environment is a core planning principle of the SPPS and the furtherance of biodiversity conservation is a statutory legal requirement of all public authorities. The SPPS sets out the planning policies that apply to international, national and local designations, protected species and other important natural heritage assets and the council will take full account of these in assessing development proposals.
- 10.2.9 The LDP policy supports the policies set out in the SPPS and seeks to provide overall protection, conservation and, where appropriate, improvement of nature conservation and biodiversity interests. Designated sites, habitats and species are provided with protection generally according to a hierarchy of importance, from a local to an international perspective. The LDP acknowledges this and confirms that careful design of new development should ensure that there is no damage to nature conservation interests. In this regard, the application of the precautionary principle approach is necessary to ensure the protection of important natural heritage interests. Where exceptional circumstances exist that support development proposals that have potential impact on nature conservation and biodiversity, adequate mitigation and compensatory measures must be agreed and put in place, provided that this accords with any relevant legislative provisions. Any agreed mitigation or alternative measures, including management or improvement works on-site or off-site, may be carried out by the developer or by a financial contribution from the developer for such works or other appropriate works as agreed.
- 10.2.10 Nature conservation interests are not confined to designated sites and many features serve as wildlife corridors, links and stepping stones as part of a wider ecological network. For the purpose of this policy the term biodiversity includes all



statutory and non-statutory designated sites, protected species, priority habitats and species, wildlife corridors, and habitats and species outside designated sites and not identified as a conservation priority but which are considered locally important. Irrespective of any designations or specific protection, all development should consider how it can conserve and enhance nature conservation and biodiversity interests, including the inter-connectivity of sites and features in a wider green and blue infrastructure network.

10.2.11 The advice and guidance of the NIEA will be a material consideration in assessing applications for development that has the potential to effect natural heritage interests.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓



10.3 Trees

Introduction

- 10.3.1 Trees make an important contribution to the environment, creating a varied, interesting and attractive landscape. As well as helping to define the character of an area and a sense of place, they are also important for nature conservation and environmental quality reasons, including for wildlife & biodiversity, natural shade, micro-climate control and air quality. They also play an important role in public health and wellbeing. They may be individual street and garden trees, groupings of trees or larger woodlands and forests, both within the settlement boundaries and in the wider countryside area. In this regard, trees and woodland form part of our natural heritage and, in particular, woodlands are an important habitat type that will also be considered under the LDP natural heritage policy. Trees also improve the visual amenity of new developments, and help to provide habitats for wildlife in the urban area. Trees can help to create the green ecological linkages throughout the city and form a valuable element of the green and blue infrastructure network.
- 10.3.2 The importance of trees is recognised in the SPPS, which states that trees and woodland form part of our natural heritage features and are worthy of protection. Some trees may be specifically protected through Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), conservation area designations and s76 planning agreements. Other wooded areas may be more generally protected through nature conservation designations. However, the council acknowledges the multi-functional importance of all trees and woodlands.
- 10.3.3 In accordance with the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the council has a duty to ensure adequate provision for the protection of existing or planting of new trees in assessing development proposals.
- 10.3.4 The council currently owns and manages many trees, including those in public parks, playing fields and other council lands. In addition, the council manages street trees across the city on behalf of the DfI. However, much of our tree/woodland resource is on private land, including in domestic gardens and private grounds, private recreational facilities and on agricultural lands.

Policy aims

- 10.3.5 The policy seeks to protect existing trees and to encourage more trees to be planted in the city. This recognises the important role that existing trees and new tree planting play in biodiversity, as well as their role in mitigation and adaptation to environmental change, building greater city resilience. In particular, trees can help to reduce air pollution, provide shade, reduce temperatures and mitigate flash flood risk.



10.3.6 This policy aims to ensure the protection of trees as well as encouraging further provision of trees by:

- Applying a precautionary approach to the net loss of trees;
- Protecting trees from harm caused by development;
- Encouraging the incorporation of trees in the design process; and
- Requiring tree planting as part of new development proposals.

TRE1 – Trees

The council will seek to protect existing trees from new development, particularly those that are of visual, biodiversity or amenity quality and significance, and there will be a presumption in favour of retaining and safeguarding trees that make a valuable contribution to the environment and amenity. The council will adopt the precautionary principle when considering the impacts of a proposed development on trees of visual, biodiversity or amenity quality and significance.

We will also seek to secure a net gain in tree numbers as a result of built development, in the interests of natural heritage, amenity, environmental quality and resilience. All proposals for new built development should seek to provide for additional tree planting appropriate to the nature, scale and location of the development.

Where the loss of trees is unavoidable, proposals must include provision for replacement planting and other mitigation works on-site or, in exceptional circumstances, at an appropriate location in the immediate vicinity.

Justification and amplification

10.3.7 Preserving and enhancing the natural environment, of which trees form an important element, is a core planning principle of the SPPS. The council also has a duty to specifically consider tree preservation and additional planting when considering development proposals. The LDP provides the opportunity to further protect existing trees as well as requiring the provision of new trees. This is justified as trees play an important role in mitigating and adapting to environmental change and helping to build city resilience, as well as assisting in improving public health and wellbeing. Trees improve the visual amenity of new developments and help to improve biodiversity and provide habitats for wildlife in the urban area. Trees can help to create the green ecological linkages throughout the city and form a valuable element of the green and blue infrastructure network. Trees should be an early consideration at the design stage of all new development, including how existing trees can be retained and how additional trees can be incorporated. In this regard, development proposals should have regard to relevant published standards and guidance, including BS 5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction (BSI, 2012) and the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) guidelines for



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the planning, installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees. This principle can be applied to development at all levels and the design response should be appropriate to the nature, scale and location of the proposal.

10.3.8 The use of TPOs (and the protection afforded by conservation areas and planning conditions) is necessary to protect important trees and groups of trees. The council will enforce such controls and seek to secure appropriate penalties where unauthorised tree works have been carried out, in the interests of the appropriate protection of important trees.

10.3.9 The policy requires that all new development proposals will seek to incorporate existing trees as part of the design stage, having regard to the location, nature and scale of the development and the appropriate tree species. Proposals should maintain appropriate distances between trees and built development, including to allow for future tree growth, and should include detailed measures to protect existing trees, both during and after the construction stage, in accordance with best practice standards and relevant guidance. The council will also support appropriate and effective woodland management regimes that secure the health and integrity of trees and woodlands.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	✓



10.4 Landscape and coast

Introduction

- 10.4.1 The diversity of landscapes and seascapes within and surrounding the urban area contribute enormously to the city's distinctive and attractive character. The Belfast Hills, Castlereagh & Craigtantlet Hills, Belfast Lough, the Lagan Valley Regional Park and other countryside and open areas have outstanding visual amenity value, and provide a unique setting for Belfast. The coast is of great economic importance to Belfast as the port provides for strategic economic links to Britain, Europe and the rest of the world.
- 10.4.2 The overall landscape resource includes natural and cultural components, as well as scenic value. Many of the natural landscape assets within and around the city are protected, including designations relating to nature conservation and scenic beauty. There are long views over the city's urban area from the surrounding upland landscapes, including views over the docks and inner Belfast lough. Similarly, the surrounding hills provide a unique backdrop to many views within and across the city. Whilst the landscape setting of the city is generally of high visual quality, some development has occurred that has had an impact on the landscape. The slopes of the basalt to the north and west of the city are particularly sensitive to development and there may be opportunities for the enhancement or restoration of degraded landscapes, including at the urban fringe.
- 10.4.3 The protection of landscape and coastal quality accords with the SPPS, including the core principle of planning to preserve and improve the natural environment. In this regard, the SPPS includes policy on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), such as the Lagan Valley AONB. It also includes policies on coastal areas, including protection of nature conservation and amenity value and identification of urban waterfront areas where some development and regeneration may be appropriate.
- 10.4.4 The RDS also states that coastal areas need to be protected to safeguard against loss of distinctive habitats and to help adaptation to environmental/climate change. The SPPS aims to protect the undeveloped coast from inappropriate development. The NIEA published the Regional Seascape Character Assessment of Northern Ireland (NIEA, 2014) to provide a strategic understanding of different areas of regional seascape character along the entire Northern Ireland coast. The Assessment defines 'Belfast Harbour' as a seascape character area, which generally relates to the portion of Belfast Lough and adjoining lands within the city council area. The key characteristics of the seascape area are generally founded on the port, airport and associated commercial and industrial uses, as well as the important nature conservation assets. The identified forces for change in the regional seascape character assessment include further industrial, commercial and airport-



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related development, additional land reclamation, loss of habitats and risks to air and water quality.

- 10.4.5 The Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) stretches along the River Lagan from Belfast to Lisburn and much of it is also designated as an AONB. The LVRP covers approximately 978 hectares within Belfast city district area and it covers around 21% of the city's countryside area, as well as extending well into the urban area. The majority of the LVRP is also a designated AONB and the AONB designation also extends beyond the park boundary in places.
- 10.4.6 The Belfast Hills provide a striking backdrop to the north and west of the city and add to the city's unique environment. They are important for their landscape, natural and man-made heritage, visual amenity and as a resource for agriculture, recreation, biodiversity, education and tourism. Many parts of the hills are also designated for their nature conservation or scenic value. This rich historic landscape, its natural diversity and its scenic attractions, make the Belfast Hills a valuable resource for the city that is important to conserve. Nevertheless, they are also largely a working landscape encompassing farming and other commercial activities to serve the city and region.
- 10.4.7 Parts of Belfast Lough and adjacent lands are protected by international and national nature conservation designations - Special Protection Areas (SPA), RAMSAR site and an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). It is important to preserve the unique value of the undeveloped coastal area of Belfast, including inter-tidal areas, having particular regard to these designated international natural heritage sites.

Policy aims

- 10.4.8 The LDP policies for the landscape aim to protect and enhance the quality of the environment, including the scenic and amenity value, and to preserve the unique landscape setting of Belfast. In this regard, all future development should ensure that the quality of the landscape is protected and/or enhanced. Areas are designated of particular importance for landscape quality or sensitivity and development within such areas will be carefully assessed to ensure that the character and quality of the area is not prejudiced. There are other important elements of the landscape resource that, whilst not specifically designated, should also be considered for protection.
- 10.4.9 The LDP policies for the coast aim to protect and enhance the quality of the coastal environment, including its nature conservation, scenic and amenity value, whilst acknowledging the importance of the port of Belfast to the city and region.



LC1 – Landscape

New development should seek to protect and, where appropriate, restore or improve the quality and amenity of the landscape. In assessing development proposals in any designated landscape, the council will give careful consideration to the following:

- a. The protection and enhancement of the landscape and visual character of the area;
- b. The protection of built (architectural and archaeological), natural and cultural features, their views and settings;
- c. The sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity to accommodate development (including cumulatively) without adversely impacting on landscape character and visual amenity; and
- d. Mitigation measures, including the retention and protection of existing trees and other vegetation and planting of new trees and vegetation.

The council will require appropriate landscape analysis and/or visual assessments, in areas designated for landscape importance, for consideration prior to planning applications being determined. The council may also require landscape analysis and/or visual assessments for other areas.

Planning permission for new development within areas designated for landscape importance will only be granted where it is of an appropriate design and scale for the locality and all the following criteria are met:

- e. The siting of the proposal is sympathetic to the special character of the area;
- f. It respects or conserves built heritage features of importance to the character and appearance of the landscape;
- g. There is no adverse impact on natural heritage and biodiversity; and
- h. The proposal respects:
 1. Local architectural styles and patterns;
 2. Traditional boundary details, by retaining features such as hedges, walls, trees and gates; and
 3. Local materials, design and colour.

Where potential adverse impacts cannot be avoided, and subject to the level of protection offered by any designation, suitable mitigation measures must be provided. In such exceptional circumstances, the development may be considered where it is clearly shown that it will bring substantial community or other benefits that outweigh any potential landscape impacts and that adequate mitigation will be put in place. Any agreed mitigation measures, including management or



improvement works on-site or off-site, may be carried out by the developer or a financial contribution from the developer may be sought in lieu of such measures for other appropriate measures.

LC1A - AONBs

In addition to complying with the above requirements, development proposals that have an adverse impact on the character, quality and natural & built heritage value of AONBs and proposals that do not satisfactorily integrate with this sensitive landscape will not be supported by the LDP. Proposals in an AONB will also require to have regard to the policy LC2 (LVRP), where relevant.

LC1B - AHSVs

In addition to complying with the above requirements, development proposals that have a significant adverse impact on the landscape character, visual amenity and environmental quality of AHSVs will not be supported by the LDP. Proposals in the AHSVs will also require to have regard to the policy LC3 (Belfast Hills), where relevant.

LC1C - LLPAs

In addition to complying with the above requirements, development proposals that have a significant adverse impact on the amenity, character, environmental quality or natural, built & cultural heritage features (including their settings and views) of LLPAs will not be supported by the LDP.

LC1D – Landscape wedges

In addition to complying with the above requirements, within designated urban and rural landscape wedges, planning permission will only normally be granted for outdoor recreational uses and only provided all the following criteria are met:

- a. the open nature of the landscape is retained and no coalescence of urban areas results;
- b. buildings are ancillary to the open space/ recreational use and are integrated into the landscape;
- c. long and short range views are protected;
- d. the open nature of the landscape is retained and no coalescence of urban areas results; and



e. buildings are ancillary to the open space/ recreational use and are integrated into the landscape.

Justification and amplification

- 10.4.10 Protecting and enhancing the natural environment, including landscape and seascape, is a core planning principle of the SPPS, which recognises the region's distinctive and beautiful landscape. The protection and improvement of the landscape is not only important for visual amenity, as it also plays a critical role in the environmental quality and setting of the district, which helps to support the local economy, quality of life and the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors.
- 10.4.11 The LDP policy supports the policies set out in the SPPS and seeks to provide overall protection and, where appropriate, improvement of our landscape resource, including the varied landscapes throughout the city and its wider setting. Some areas are designated for particular landscape value and development proposals in these will be subject to particular scrutiny to ensure no significant detrimental impact. The LDP acknowledges this and confirms that all new development should ensure that there is no damage to our landscape resource. Where exceptional circumstances exist that supports development proposals that have potential impact on the landscape resource, adequate mitigation and compensatory measures must be agreed and put in place.
- 10.4.12 In assessing new development proposals, the council will seek to ensure the protection and enhancement of the district's landscape resource. New development should not have an unacceptable effect, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively, on the landscape resource, including landscapes that are designated for scenic, natural heritage, built heritage or cultural value.
- 10.4.13 Irrespective of any designations or specific protection, all development should consider how it can conserve and enhance landscape interests, including careful integration of built form with the landscape context. Careful design of new development should minimise potential adverse impacts on the landscape generally, in addition to areas that have particular protection. Design considerations will include:
- Location of the site within the landscape & positioning of the development proposal within the landscape;
 - Avoidance of undue prominence, particularly in more open and exposed landscapes;
 - Integration of development into the landscape including the degree of natural enclosure and relationship with surrounding buildings; and
 - Design, including form, scale and massing.



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10.4.14 All development proposals must be sensitive to the distinctive character of the area and the quality of the landscape, heritage and wildlife, and also be in accordance with other LDP policies. In assessing the potential impact of proposals on the landscape resource, including cumulative impacts, account will also be taken of the landscape character assessments and any other relevant guidance, including AONB management plans and local design guides.

10.4.15 The SPPS sets out the planning policy that applies to AONBs and the council will take full account of this in assessing development proposals. In addition, the council will consider the potential impacts of development proposals on other important landscapes, including Areas of High Scenic value (AHSVs), Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) and designated urban and rural landscape wedges, in addition to other important elements of the district's landscape resource. In this regard, these local designations, whilst generally relating to landscape protection, have a range of other functions, including the protection of cultural and built heritage and the prevention of coalescence between built-up areas.

Implementation

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	✓	✓	✓

Policy LC2 – Lagan valley regional park (LVRP)

Development proposals in the LVRP area and within defined settlement boundaries will only be granted permission where it can be demonstrated that the proposal is appropriate to, and does not have a significant adverse effect on, the character of the park, natural and built heritage, biodiversity, existing settlement, townscape character, landscape quality and visual amenity.

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals outside the settlement boundaries in the LVRP area which meet all other policy requirements of the LDP that apply to the countryside and all of the following criteria:

- a. They are for a use appropriate to the character of the park and to the locality;
- b. They conserve or enhance the landscape quality and features of the LVRP; and
- c. They are of a scale & design that integrates with the sensitive landscape of the Park.

Within designated nodes planning permission will be granted to development proposals for recreational, tourist, interpretative and educational facilities, provided they meet all of the following criteria:



- d. The proposal is sensitively located and does not have a significant adverse effect on the character of the park or the locality;
- e. There is maximum integration with the landscape in terms of siting, design, scale and use of materials;
- f. Areas of open space are protected;
- g. There is no negative effect on features of natural or built heritage value; and
- h. It is an appropriate use and in accordance with any key site requirements.

Only in exceptional cases, where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will make an important contribution to the Park's recreational function, will proposals for uses other than those listed above or uses identified in any key site requirements be approved, subject to meeting all other policy requirements of the LDP.

Where proposed development is located adjacent to the River Lagan, proposals should take into account the river and its associated features, water quality, character, amenity and biodiversity. In all cases, any potential effects on the river must be carefully assessed and a precautionary approach will be adopted.

Justification and amplification

10.4.16 The LVRP is a valuable asset for the people of Belfast, including for active and passive recreation, countryside access, culture & heritage and biodiversity. The primary aims of the LVRP designation relate to the conservation of natural heritage and landscape quality of the Lagan Valley and the enhancement of recreational use by the public. Whilst most of the LVRP area is outside designated settlement boundaries (i.e. countryside area), some sections fall within the settlement boundaries (i.e. urban area). Nevertheless, the landscape policy aims apply to the entirety of the LVRP area. Sustainable development associated with these aims may be considered acceptable, subject to normal planning and environmental consideration, and these will be encouraged to focus on existing development nodes within the LVRP area. The RDS supports the protection of the LVRP and other important landscapes around the Belfast area and states that such areas should be safeguarded, with some opportunities, where appropriate, to increase access for residents and tourists, as long as it is consistent with protecting integrity and value. In addition, the aims of the LVRP relate to landscape quality conservation and enhanced public recreational use. The LDP policy is consistent with this approach and seeks to protect the LVRP from inappropriate development, whilst providing support for development that is consistent with the LVRP aims.

10.4.17 All proposals for development or redevelopment for compatible uses will be considered against the need to protect and, where possible, enhance the natural and man-made heritage and amenity of the park and the conservation of its



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essential character. Regard will also be given to the location of proposals relative to the settlement boundaries and to other policies contained in this LDP. The policy will, in particular, generally support compatible uses at designated nodes where significant activity already occurs, in order to help preserve quieter and more sensitive areas.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	

Policy LC3 – Belfast Hills

In assessing new development proposals, the council will seek to ensure the protection and enhancement of the Belfast Hills, including their importance for landscape, visual amenity, natural & built heritage, biodiversity and recreation.

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals outside settlement boundaries that meet all other policy requirements of the LDP that apply to the countryside and all of the following criteria:

- a. They are for a use appropriate to the character of the Belfast Hills;
- b. They conserve or enhance the landscape quality and features of the Hills;
- c. They will have no adverse impact on biodiversity of the Hills; and
- d. They are of a scale and design which integrates with the sensitive landscape of the Hills.

At designated pedestrian access points, situated along the boundary of the Belfast Hills Partnership Area, and at other access and activity nodes, development of ancillary interpretative/visitor facilities will be permitted where all of the following criteria are met:

- e. The proposal only relates to facilities that improve access to the Belfast Hills e.g., car parking, environmental improvements, signage, visitor facilities and new pathways/trails;
- f. The proposal is small-scale in nature and achieves maximum integration with the landscape, with special regard being given to siting, mass, shape and design; and
- g. There is no adverse impact on the quality or character of the landscape within the Belfast Hills or biodiversity.



Justification and amplification

10.4.18 The RDS supports the protection of the Belfast Hills and states that they should be safeguarded, with some opportunities, where appropriate, to increase access for residents and tourists, as long as it is consistent with protecting integrity and value. The LDP policy is consistent with this approach and seeks to protect the Belfast Hills from inappropriate development, whilst providing support for development that is consistent with conserving and improving the landscape and recreational value of the Hills. All proposals for development or redevelopment will be considered against the need to protect and, where possible, enhance the natural heritage and recreational value of the Hills and the conservation of their unique character. Regard will also be given to the location of proposals, including in the context of existing land uses, and to other policies contained in this LDP. The policy will, in particular, generally support access improvements and small-scale ancillary visitor facilities at designated access points and activity nodes.

10.4.19 For the purposes of the LDP, the extent of the Belfast Hills corresponds with the operational area of the Belfast Hills partnership within the Belfast city district area. This covers approximately 760 hectares, which equates to around 15% of the city's countryside area. It should be noted that significant areas of the Belfast Hills are also covered by other landscape and natural heritage designations and will also be subject to these policies. Additionally, significant parts of the hills to the southeast and east of the city, whilst not covered by the Belfast Hills policy, are covered by policies for other landscape and natural heritage designations. In addition, other LDP policies may apply to this area, including the countryside and minerals policies.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	



Policy LC4 – Coastal area

In assessing new development proposals, the council will seek to ensure the protection and enhancement of the district's coastal area. New development should not have an unacceptable effect, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively, on the coastal area. Proposals must not have any significant impact on the international and national natural heritage sites. Proposals to improve public access to the coastal area will generally be supported, subject to consideration of nature conservation and other environmental interests and proposals that reduce or prejudice public access will not normally be supported.

Within the coastal area that is outside the settlement limit, planning permission will only be granted to development proposals that meet the following criteria:

- a. The proposed development is of such national or regional importance as to outweigh any detrimental impact on the coastal environment; or**
- b. It can be demonstrated that any proposal will not harm the qualities of the coastal landscape, while still protecting nature conservation value.**

In all cases, the potential impacts of environmental change will be carefully considered and the application may require to be supported by a detailed sea level/flood risk assessment.

Where potential adverse impacts cannot be avoided, and subject to the protection offered by this policy, suitable mitigation measures must be provided. Any agreed mitigation measures, including management or improvement works on-site or off-site, may be carried out by the developer or a financial contribution from the developer may be sought in lieu for other appropriate measures.

Justification and amplification

10.4.20 Protecting and enhancing the undeveloped coastal environment is a core planning principle of the SPPS and the LDP policy supports this by strictly restricting development in this area. The LDP provides adequate lands for development purposes to serve the district's needs and the policy seeks to restrict all development in the coastal protection area, including the inter-tidal area, unless it is required in the national or regional interest or is demonstrated not to result in any harm or environmental impact. This provides scope for minor development, such as access improvements and limited recreational use, provided no harm will result in respect of the coastal landscape and its nature conservation interests. Development proposals will also be assessed against the Marine Policy Statement (MPS) and any Marine Plan.



10.4.21 Development may be considered where it is demonstrated to be in the national or regional interest and there is no other suitable location. Some minor development, such as access improvements or low-intensity recreation, may also be acceptable, subject to consideration of environmental impact. In addition, all development proposals must demonstrate that the potential implications of environmental change and flood risk have been considered and addressed appropriately. Where exceptional circumstances exist that support development proposals that have potential impact on the coastal resource, adequate mitigation and compensatory measures must be agreed and put in place.

10.4.22 Irrespective of any designations, all development should consider how it can conserve and enhance the coastal resource, including in terms of nature conservation and amenity value. In addition, all proposals must consider the potential implications of environmental change, including rising sea levels and flood risk, and demonstrate appropriate measures to address these issues.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
	✓	✓	



10.5 Development in the countryside

Introduction

- 10.5.1 The countryside is one of our greatest assets, with many and varied roles, including for recreational and tourism, nature conservation and environmental protection, as well as agriculture & forestry, infrastructure and rural communities. This is recognised in the SPPS. Whilst the Belfast City Council area is predominantly urban in nature, it contains a significant portion of open countryside, including the Lagan Valley and the hills that largely surround the city. The Belfast rural area (being land outside the settlement boundaries) accounts for over 30% (approximately 41 km²) of the total Belfast City Council area.
- 10.5.2 The wider rural area of Northern Ireland is a unique resource where diverse ecosystems, biodiversity and landscape character has to be aligned and balanced with the needs of sustainable rural communities. The rural area around Belfast city and within the district boundary is particularly sensitive to development pressures, primarily due to its unique landscape character and special role in providing a quality environmental setting for the urban area. It is acknowledged that, in the main, it is a working landscape, where agriculture, existing settlement and some commercial uses occur alongside public access & recreation and nature conservation interests. In addition, the rural ecosystems, biodiversity and landscape character are an important asset for the rural environment. Nevertheless, its role as a green area around the city is of primary importance, whilst ensuring that the needs of existing communities in the rural area are met, including the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.
- 10.5.3 To sustain rural communities, limited new development and employment opportunities which respect local, social and environmental circumstances may be required. This means facilitating the development of some rural enterprises and farm diversification in appropriate locations and ensuring they are integrated appropriately within the small settlement or rural landscape. However, the proximity of the Belfast urban area must be acknowledged and improved accessibility from rural communities to the city may be more appropriate in sustaining the community in some cases. This is acknowledged in the RDS and SPPS, where they note the variation in types of rural areas across Northern Ireland and state that policy approaches should be sensitive to local needs and to environmental issues, including the ability of settlements and landscapes to absorb development. This acknowledges that some areas are less able to accommodate new development or that policies could direct development to existing settlements.
- 10.5.4 It is important to note that much of the city's countryside area is also designated for nature conservation or landscape purposes and that the relevant LDP policies will apply in addition to the LDP countryside policies. This includes policies for the



Lagan Valley Regional Park and Belfast hills, as well as policies for specific landscape and natural heritage designated sites.

Policy aims

- 10.5.5 The LDP policies for the countryside aim to protect and enhance the character and value of the countryside resource, including for landscape, recreation and nature conservation, whilst providing for the essential needs of the rural communities and the rural economy. Particular consideration will be given to:
- Facilitating appropriate rural uses and associated development where demonstrated to be necessary at a particular location or site to meet local rural needs;
 - Appropriate protection of natural heritage resources, including nature conservation and landscape designations and biodiversity; and
 - Integration of any permitted development with the landscape and environmental context.

Policy DC1 – All countryside development - general policy principles

Development proposals should be supported by a justification of rural locational need and site-specific need (unless specifically excluded by other LDP provisions) and must demonstrate that there is no significant detrimental impact on rural amenity and environmental quality. All development must also ensure there is no loss or erosion of the rural character of the area.

Planning permission will only be granted for development relying on non-mains sewerage where the applicant can demonstrate that this will not create or add to a pollution problem or otherwise threaten environmental quality. Applicants will be required to submit sufficient information on the means of sewage treatment to allow a proper assessment of such proposals to be made. In those areas identified as having a pollution risk, development relying on non-mains sewerage will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

All proposals for development in the countryside must be sited and designed to integrate sympathetically with their surroundings and to meet other planning and environmental considerations, including for environmental protection, water quality & drainage and access & road safety. Where possible and appropriate, permissible new development should seek to cluster with and consolidate existing built development.

Justification and amplification

- 10.5.6 The SPPS sets out the policy approach for countryside areas, being areas outside any settlement limits in the context of the LDP. The general approach is to protect



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and enhance the character and value of the countryside resource, including for landscape, recreation and nature conservation, whilst providing for the essential needs of rural communities. Therefore, a balance is needed in assessing rural development proposals that supports necessary rural development whilst minimising any environmental impacts.

10.5.7 The countryside is a unique resource for the city council area. However, inappropriate development in the countryside has the potential to create significant environmental, financial and social costs. The particular context of the countryside within the Belfast City Council area is acknowledged, where the distance to settlement is generally small and, therefore, the majority of the needs of the rural community can be facilitated within the designated settlement boundaries. In this regard, clear justification (such as a statement and supporting documentation) of any locational need (i.e. requirement for a countryside location) or site-specific need (i.e. requirement for a particular site) must be provided for development proposals outside settlement boundaries and where this is demonstrated and accepted, measures must be taken to ensure that there is no significant detrimental impact on rural amenity and environmental quality.

10.5.8 It is important to ensure that any necessary and permissible development is well-designed and adequately integrated into its setting, to respect and protect rural character, amenity and the wider environment, including natural heritage and water quality. All proposals need to demonstrate how such potential impacts can be avoided or mitigated in order to protect environmental quality. Similarly, new development must not compromise the distinction between the urban and countryside areas in order to maintain the quality of the natural landscape setting of the Belfast urban area.

- 10.5.9 Development will not be supported where it is:
- Unduly prominent in the landscape;
 - Mars the distinction between a settlement and the surrounding countryside or it otherwise results in urban sprawl or a suburban style development, including individually and cumulatively; or
 - It does not respect the traditional pattern of settlement exhibited in that area.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC2 – Housing in the countryside

The council will assess development proposals for houses in the countryside in accordance with the general principles set out in policy DC1. There will be a general presumption against new housing in the countryside, unless proposals are in accordance with the exceptions set out in policies DC3-DC10.

Justification and amplification

10.5.10 The general approach to protect and enhance the character and value of the countryside resource, whilst providing for the essential needs of rural communities, is acknowledged in policy DC1. There is some pressure for development in the countryside, particularly for new dwellings that may not all be required to serve the essential needs of the rural community. Whilst it is acknowledged that such pressure is not as strong in the countryside within the city council area as it is in other areas across Northern Ireland, nevertheless some pressure exists and appropriate policies require to be implemented to ensure environmental protection. This policy acknowledges that there may be exceptions to a general presumption against new houses in the countryside, as set out in the SPPS.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC3 – Replacement dwellings

Planning permission will only be granted for a replacement dwelling where the building to be replaced exhibits the essential characteristics of a dwelling and, as a minimum, all external structural walls are substantially intact. Where the house to be replaced is no longer in residential use, proposals for replacement should also be supported by a justification of locational need for the applicant.

For the purposes of this policy all references to 'dwellings' include buildings previously and most recently used as dwellings. Buildings designed and used for agricultural purposes, such as sheds or stores, and buildings of a temporary construction will not however be eligible for replacement under this policy.

In cases where a dwelling has recently been destroyed, for example, through an accident or a fire, planning permission may be granted for a replacement dwelling. Evidence about the status and previous condition of the building and the cause and extent of the damage must be provided.

Non-listed vernacular dwellings

The retention and sympathetic refurbishment, with adaptation if necessary, of non-listed vernacular dwellings in the countryside will be encouraged in preference to their replacement. Proposals involving the replacement of such dwellings will be assessed as follows:

- a. If the dwelling makes an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality planning permission will only be granted where it is demonstrated that it is not reasonably capable of being made structurally sound or otherwise improved – this will normally require a detailed structural report.
- b. If the dwelling does not make an important contribution to the heritage, appearance or character of the locality, planning permission will be granted for a new dwelling. In such cases the retention of the existing structure will be accepted where it is sympathetically incorporated into the layout of the overall development scheme, for example as ancillary accommodation (but not as a separate dwelling) or a store, to form an integrated building group.
- c. In cases where the original building is retained, it will not be eligible for replacement again. Equally, this policy will not apply to buildings where planning permission has previously been granted for a replacement dwelling and a condition has been imposed restricting the future use of the original building, or where the building is immune from enforcement action as a result of non-compliance with a condition to demolish.

All replacement cases

In addition to the above, proposals for a replacement dwelling will only be



permitted where all the following criteria are met:

- d. The proposed replacement dwelling should be sited within the established curtilage of the existing building, unless either (a) the curtilage is so restricted that it could not reasonably accommodate a modest sized dwelling, or (b) it can be shown that an alternative position nearby would result in demonstrable landscape, heritage, access or amenity benefits;
- e. The overall size of the new dwelling should allow it to integrate into the surrounding landscape and would not have a visual impact significantly greater than the existing building;
- f. The design of the replacement dwelling should be of a high quality appropriate to its rural setting and have regard to local distinctiveness;
- g. All necessary services are available or can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment or character of the locality; and
- h. Access to the public road will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

For the purpose of this policy 'curtilage' will mean the immediate, usually defined and enclosed area surrounding an existing or former dwelling house.

Justification and amplification

10.5.11 The new development of additional houses in the countryside, other than in exceptional circumstances of clear and demonstrable essential locational need, represents a threat to the environment and therefore is considered to be unsustainable. For this reason, strict control over new housing development in the countryside is considered necessary, with limited exceptions to take account of existing development or to meet the needs of the rural community. This includes provisions for replacement houses that may be required to meet modern standards, or otherwise result in enhanced environmental quality, provided the house to be replaced is identifiable as, and most recently used as, a dwelling. The replacement of existing dwellings is important to the renewal and upgrading of the rural housing stock. However, where the residential use of the house to be replaced has ceased, justification of specific locational need by the applicant will be required to ensure sustainable patterns of development. All permissions for a replacement dwelling granted under this policy will be subject to a condition requiring demolition of the existing dwelling or restricting its future use if it is to be retained as part of the overall development scheme.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC4 – The conversion and reuse of existing buildings

Planning permission will only be granted to proposals for the sympathetic conversion, with adaptation if necessary, of a locally important building for a variety of alternative uses, including use as a single dwelling, where this would secure its upkeep and retention. Such proposals will be required to be of a high design quality and to meet all of the following criteria:

- a. The building is of permanent construction;
- b. The reuse or conversion would maintain or enhance the form, character and architectural features, design and setting of the existing building and not have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the locality;
- c. Any new extensions are sympathetic to the scale, massing and architectural style and finishes of the existing building;
- d. The reuse or conversion would not unduly affect the amenities of nearby residents or adversely affect the continued agricultural use of adjoining land or buildings;
- e. The nature and scale of any proposed non-residential use is appropriate to a countryside location and meets all other policy requirements of the LDP – retail use, other than small-scale retail use ancillary to another primary use, is unlikely to be acceptable;
- f. All necessary services are available or can be provided without significant adverse impact on the environment or character of the locality; and
- g. Access to the public road will not prejudice road safety or significantly inconvenience the flow of traffic.

Buildings of a temporary construction such as those designed and used for agricultural purposes, including sheds or stores will not be eligible for conversion or re-use under this policy.

Exceptionally, consideration may be given to the sympathetic conversion of a traditional non-residential building to provide more than one dwelling where the building is of sufficient size; the scheme of conversion involves minimal intervention; and the overall scale of the proposal and intensity of use is considered appropriate to the locality.

Justification and amplification

10.5.12 Care must be taken to seek to protect rural amenity and character, including buildings of vernacular style and listed buildings. Accordingly, this policy seeks to retain locally important buildings (such as former school houses, churches and older traditional barns and outbuildings) that contribute to rural character and promote their sympathetic renovation for continued use or for their incorporation



into new development proposals. Where demolition and replacement is proposed, the applicants shall demonstrate why.

10.5.13 The reuse and sympathetic conversion of buildings, including non-residential buildings that are no longer needed for their original purpose, can represent a sustainable approach to development at appropriate locations in the countryside and can help preserve local character. There may be potential for the reuse of an existing non-residential building for residential use. There may also be scope for reuse and adaptation for non-residential uses, including appropriate economic, tourism, community and recreational uses. Retailing, unless small scale and ancillary to the main use, will not however be considered acceptable.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy DC5 – New dwellings: personal and domestic circumstances

Planning permission will only be granted for a dwelling in the countryside for the long term needs of the applicant where there are compelling and site specific reasons for this related to the applicant’s personal or domestic circumstances and provided the following criteria are met:

- a. The applicant can provide satisfactory evidence that a new dwelling is a necessary response to the particular circumstances of the case and that genuine hardship would be caused if planning permission were refused; and
- b. There are no alternative solutions to meet the particular circumstances of the case, such as: an extension or annex attached to the existing dwelling; the conversion or reuse of another building within the curtilage of the property; or the use of a temporary mobile home for a limited period to deal with immediate short term circumstances.

All permissions granted under this policy will be subject to a condition restricting the occupation of the dwelling to a named individual and their dependents.

Justification and amplification

10.5.14 The policy makes provision for exceptional cases for dwellings required to meet special personal circumstances. These will be assessed in terms of individual merit and the onus is on the applicant to provide sufficient information to clearly demonstrate genuine need. This might include personal statements, medical evidence and consideration of alternative solutions.



Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	

Policy DC6 – Dwellings for non-agricultural business enterprises

Planning permission will only be granted for a dwelling house in connection with an established non-agricultural business enterprise where a site specific need can be clearly demonstrated that makes it essential for the proprietor, manager or one of the employees to live at the site of their work. Where such a need is accepted the dwelling house will need to be located beside, or within, the boundaries of the business enterprise and integrate with the buildings on the site. Planning permission granted under this policy will be subject to a condition restricting occupation of the dwelling for the use of the business.

Justification and amplification

10.5.15 Established non-agricultural business enterprises, located in the countryside, may require residential accommodation for operational or other reasons. However, as most parts of the countryside area in Belfast are generally close and accessible to settlement, such requirements are considered to represent exceptional cases. Applicants must provide sufficient information to show that there is a site specific need which makes it essential for an owner/employee to live at the site – including why, where a business has been operating satisfactorily without residential accommodation, now needs such accommodation. It should be noted that the need to provide improved security from theft and/or vandalism is unlikely on its own to warrant planning permission for onsite residential accommodation.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC7 – Ribbon development

Planning permission will be refused for a building which creates or adds to a ribbon of development.

An exception may be granted for the development of a small gap site sufficient only to accommodate a single dwelling within an otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage and provided this respects the existing development pattern along the frontage in terms of size, scale, siting and plot size and meets other planning and environmental requirements. For the purpose of this policy the definition of a substantial and built up frontage includes a line of 3 or more buildings along a road frontage without accompanying development to the rear.

In certain circumstances the infilling of such a small gap site with an economic development proposal appropriate to the countryside area may also be acceptable where this is of a scale in keeping with adjoining development, is of a high standard of design, would not impact adversely on the amenities of neighbouring residents and meets other planning and environmental requirements.

Justification and amplification

10.5.16 Ribbon development is detrimental to the character, appearance and amenity of the countryside as it creates and reinforces a built-up appearance along roads, private laneways and footpaths. It can also result in road safety issues, sterilise back-land and make access to farmland difficult. Developed frontages in the countryside may have gaps between houses or other buildings that provide visual breaks in the developed appearance of the locality and that help maintain rural character. The infilling of these gaps will therefore not be permitted except where it comprises the development of a small gap for a single dwelling or other use appropriate to the countryside area, within an otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage. Any such proposals should take full account of the existing pattern of development and can produce a design solution to integrate the new buildings.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC8 – New dwellings in existing clusters

Planning permission will only be granted for a dwelling at an existing cluster of development provided all the following criteria are met:

- a. The cluster of development lies outside of a farm and consists of four or more buildings (excluding ancillary buildings such as garages, outbuildings and open sided structures) of which at least three are dwellings;
- b. The cluster appears as a visual entity in the local landscape;
- c. The cluster is associated with a focal point such as a social / community building/facility, or is located at a cross-roads;
- d. The identified site provides a suitable degree of enclosure and is bounded on at least two sides with other development in the cluster;
- e. Development of the site can be absorbed into the existing cluster through rounding off and consolidation and will not significantly alter its existing character, or visually intrude into the open countryside; and
- f. Development would not adversely impact on residential amenity.

Justification and amplification

10.5.17 Where there is an existing cluster of built development at a focal point in the countryside, such as a community facility or crossroads, opportunities for an additional dwelling might exist where this represents the consolidation of the cluster and maintains local environmental quality. These are considered to be limited opportunities and in all circumstances the economic and social benefits of the proposed dwelling must be carefully balanced against environmental protection and amenity.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC9 – Residential caravans and mobile homes

Planning permission will only be granted for a residential caravan or mobile home, for a temporary period only, in exceptional circumstances, including:

- a. The provision of temporary residential accommodation pending the development of a permanent dwelling; or**
- b. Where there are compelling and site-specific reasons related to personal or domestic circumstances.**

Justification and amplification

10.5.18 The design and finishes of a residential caravan or mobile home limits its potential for proper integration into the landscape and planning permission will not be granted for a permanently sited residential caravan or mobile home in the countryside. However, the policy provides for exceptional circumstances where a caravan or mobile home may be a sensible temporary solution to meeting genuine need for a house in the countryside.

10.5.19 All permissions will normally be subject to a three-year time limit. However, this may be extended having regard to the particular circumstances of the case. The siting of a residential caravan or mobile home will be subject to the same planning and environmental considerations as a permanent dwelling. Permission will depend on the ability to integrate the unit within an existing building group and screen the unit from public view. Residential caravans or mobile homes on farms will be required to be visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC10 – New dwellings on farms

Planning permission will only be granted for a dwelling house on a farm where there is a clear justification of locational need and all of the following criteria can be met:

- a. The farm business is currently active and has been established for at least 6 years;
No dwellings or development opportunities outside settlement limits have been sold off from the farm holding within 10 years of the date of the application; and
- b. The new building is visually linked or sited to cluster with an established group of buildings on the farm and where practicable, access to the dwelling should be obtained from an existing lane. Exceptionally, consideration may be given to an alternative site elsewhere on the farm, provided there are no other sites available at another group of buildings on the farm or out-farm, and where there are either:
 1. Demonstrable health and safety reasons; or
 2. Verifiable plans to expand the farm business at the existing building group(s).

Planning permission granted under this policy will only be forthcoming once every 10 years, unless there are exceptional circumstances that demonstrate clear operational need. A proposal for a dwelling by those involved in the keeping and breeding of horses for commercial purposes will also be assessed under the criteria set out in this policy.

Justification and amplification

10.5.20 The policy makes provision for circumstances where there is a demonstrable locational need for new dwellings on farms to support the agricultural activities on the farm. Such houses will only be acceptable where the farm business is both established and active, supported by clear relevant evidence from the applicant, including business registration number and other relevant documentation. For the purposes of this policy, 'agricultural activity' refers to the production, rearing or growing of agricultural products including harvesting, milking, breeding animals and keeping animals for farming purposes, or maintaining the land in good agricultural and environmental condition. Planning permission will not be granted for a dwelling under this policy where a rural business is artificially divided solely for the purpose of obtaining planning permission or has recently sold-off a development opportunity from the farm such as a replacement dwelling or other building capable of conversion. For the purposes of this policy, 'sold-off' will mean any development opportunity disposed of from the farm holding to any other person including a member of the family.



10.5.21 Any permissible house must be carefully designed and sited so as to minimise impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and should be physically grouped with existing buildings on the subject farm. Where physical grouping is not possible or practical, careful design should seek to visually link the house with existing structures, unless such linkage is not possible as a result of existing screening. Where an alternative site is proposed which is removed from existing buildings on the farm, the applicant will be required to submit demonstrable evidence from a competent and independent authority to justify the siting. Evidence relating to the future expansion of the farm business may include valid planning permissions, building control approvals or contractual obligations to supply farm produce.

10.5.22 Under this policy an equine business is to be afforded the same benefits as an established and active farm. Such businesses will include horse breeding and training and the operating of livery yards, trekking centres and riding schools. Applicants will have to provide sufficient information to demonstrate a level of involvement commensurate with commercial activity over the requisite period of 6 years. Those keeping horses and / or ponies for hobby purposes will not satisfy the requirements of this policy.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC11 – Agriculture

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals on an active and established agricultural or forestry holding where it is demonstrated that it is necessary for the efficient use of the agricultural holding or forestry enterprise.

In cases where a new building is proposed applicants need to demonstrate that there are no suitable existing buildings on the holding or enterprise. Any new buildings should be sited beside existing farm or forestry buildings.

Exceptionally, consideration may be given to an alternative site away from existing buildings, provided there are no other sites available at another group of buildings on the holding, and where it is essential for the efficient functioning of the business or there are demonstrable health and safety reasons.

Justification and amplification

10.5.23 Agriculture and forestry are important to our rural economy and the countryside environment and the planning process seeks to support their operational needs. The policy seeks to give favourable consideration to proposals for agricultural and forestry development (where planning permission is required), subject to a number of environmental considerations. This is intended to secure a balance between development proposals for the rural economy and environmental protection. Where permission is sought for a new building, the applicant will be required to satisfactorily demonstrate that renovation, alteration or redevelopment opportunities do not exist and that any new building is adequately integrated with the countryside environment. All permissions granted under this policy will be subject to a condition limiting the use of the building to either agricultural or forestry use as appropriate.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC12 – Farm diversification

Planning permission will be granted for proposals for farm diversification to other uses that are compatible with a countryside location and do not have any significant impact on rural character and environmental protection, subject to the provisions of policy DC1 and following additional criteria:

- a. The farm or forestry business is currently active and established and it is demonstrated that the proposed use/development will be run in conjunction with the agricultural operations on the farm.

Proposals will normally only be acceptable where they involve the re-use or adaptation of existing farm buildings. Exceptionally, a new building may be permitted where there is no existing building available to accommodate the proposed use, either because they are essential for the maintenance of the existing farm enterprise, are clearly unsuitable for adaptation and re-use or cannot be adapted to meeting the requirements of other statutory agencies. Where a new building is justified it should be satisfactorily integrated with an existing group of buildings.

Justification and amplification

10.5.24 This policy aims to promote forms of diversification that are sustainable and appropriate in the countryside and support the rural economy and communities. The policy seeks to ensure a balance between such proposals and other environmental considerations. It is important that such proposals are of a scale and nature appropriate for the location and are capable of satisfactory integration into the rural landscape. Applications for large-scale proposals more suitable to the urban area or existing urban-based enterprises seeking relocation will not be acceptable. Where a new building is proposed, the applicant will be required to provide sufficient information to satisfactorily demonstrate why existing buildings cannot be used.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Policy DC13 – Other proposed development in the countryside

The council will consider proposals for other proposed development and uses in the countryside area in terms of individual merit and in accordance with policy DC1, including justification of specific locational need, and will be subject to meeting all other policy requirements of the LDP. In all cases such proposals should be compatible with a countryside location and not have any significant impact on rural character and environmental protection. These include developments associated with outdoor recreation & tourism, rural economic development, public/community infrastructure, minerals and energy.

Justification and amplification

10.5.25 This policy facilitates consideration of other proposals that are sustainable and appropriate in the countryside and support the rural economy and communities. The policy seeks to ensure a balance between such proposals and other environmental considerations. It is important that such proposals are of a scale and nature appropriate for the location and are capable of satisfactory integration into the rural landscape.

Implementation

Public Sector Intervention	S76 Planning Agreements	Local Policies Plan Designations	Supplementary Planning Guidance
		✓	



Delivery



11.1 Implementation

- 11.1.1 This Plan Strategy sets out how the Belfast district will develop over the period to 2035, identifying where the homes, jobs, services and infrastructure will be delivered and the type of places and environment that will be created. Having set out a clear direction for how Belfast will develop and the strategic planning policy framework that will help achieve this, it is also important that there are tools in place to ensure the successful delivery of the overall vision.
- 11.1.2 Whilst much of the Plan Strategy will be delivered through the determination of planning applications, it is important to recognise that the council cannot deliver the objectives of the LDP alone. This is particularly true in the Belfast context where many of the key functions required to deliver physical development, such as regeneration powers, housing strategy, transport and infrastructure planning and encouraging inward investment, are outside the remit of the council. It will therefore be necessary for a number of external partners to play a part in the implementation of the Plan Strategy, including government departments and agencies, other public sector bodies, developers, landowners, investors and some local voluntary groups.
- 11.1.3 In its community planning role, the council will work with key partners to ensure that the LDP is effectively implemented and able to contribute to the overarching vision for the city. As set out in the Belfast Agenda, this will require new thinking in terms of collaborative planning, financing, data collection, performance management and project delivery. We will look for complementary opportunities to work with our partners, not only in terms of resourcing and project delivery, but also in relation to measurement and shared learning.
- 11.1.4 Each policy within this Plan Strategy is accompanied by a table providing a summary of the key mechanisms that will be used to support their implementation. These key implementation mechanisms can be summarised as follows:
- **Local Policies Plan (LPP) Designations:**
Many of the policies within the Plan Strategy will be implemented directly through the application of specific land designations within the Local Policies Plan. This may include boundaries for specific areas of the city, such as the city centre, or through the specific designation of land for certain uses, such as housing or employment. In some cases, key site requirements may be supplied to provide requirements that are more detailed as part of a Local Policies Plan designation. Prior to the adoption of the Local Policies Plan, the boundaries and land use zonings contained in the draft BMAP 2015, insofar as it relates to the Belfast City Plan Area, and the HMOs Subject Plan 2015 will be retained and continue to form the basis of decision making until the Local Policies Plan is

adopted. A list of such existing draft boundaries and designations is contained in appendix A.

- **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):**

In many cases, it may be necessary for the council to prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to support, clarify and/or illustrate by example policies included within the LDP. The SPG currently envisaged to support this Plan Strategy are set out in appendix E, although this list is not exhaustive and other SPG may need to be brought forward during the plan period to help address unforeseen issues arising through implementation of the plan. Where relevant to a particular development proposal, SPG can be taken into account as a material consideration when determining planning applications. In addition to local SPG produced by the council, the DfI may produce regional SPG in relation to regional planning policies.

- **Public Sector Implementation:**

There are a number of policy areas where effective implementation can only be achieved through targeted public sector intervention. Such intervention may include:

- Production of non-planning related delivery plans, strategies and policies to identify future need and direct public sector spending;
- Working in partnership with local developers/landowners to secure deliverable development proposals and investment;
- Preparation of detailed development briefs or non-statutory regeneration masterplans to help direct future development and investment;
- Public sector grant funding to support project delivery;
- Pro-active use of public sector land resources to assist delivery; and
- Direct public sector delivery of regeneration projects.

- **Developer Agreements:**

A number of policies within the LDP may require formal legal agreements between the council and a developer to ensure the plan objectives are achieved. Section 76 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 allows the council to use such developer agreements to overcome obstacles to the grant of planning permission where these cannot be addressed through the use of conditions. An agreement may also require a sum or sums to be paid where the council requires a developer to bear the costs of work required to facilitate their development proposals. Such agreements will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis and are enforceable by way of court injunction.

11.1.5 The LDP system consisting of a Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan is designed to provide more flexibility and to enable councils to adapt policies to changing local circumstances. It is therefore crucial that the implementation of the LDP is

effectively monitored on an on-going basis and that the regular reviews are carried out as and when required.

11.2 Monitoring

- 11.2.1 The SPPS requires that "councils must keep under review the implementation of their plans and report annually to the Department on whether the objectives in the Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan are being achieved." The council will therefore measure the performance of the LDP by assessing how effective its policies are in delivering the vision and objectives.
- 11.2.2 The main mechanism for reporting on the performance of the plan will be the council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). This will provide a summary of information collated each financial year (1st April – 31st March) in relation to a number of indicators to ensure:
- Policies are achieving their objectives;
 - Policies are not having un-intended consequences;
 - The assumptions and objectives behind policies are still relevant; and
 - Any associated targets are being achieved.
- 11.2.3 The indicators that will be used in monitoring the plan are listed in the table at appendix F. Not all policies within the plan require clear targets or do not easily translate into measurable indicators, so not all policies have an associated indicator set within the monitoring framework.
- 11.2.4 The council has ensured that this monitoring framework is SMART – meaning Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and, where appropriate, Time-bound – in order to ensure that the Plan Strategy will meet the regional 'soundness' tests. To help achieve this, each indicator has a related target and an associated 'trigger', which represents the circumstances in which action may be required to ensure that the relevant policies continue to meet their target. Where a trigger is activated, an assessment will be undertaken of the underlying causes for the deviation from the intended targets and the need for corrective action will be considered.
- 11.2.5 The LDP's monitoring framework focusses on indicators associated with the implementation of specific planning policies within the LDP, such as the number of residential units completed or the amount of retail floor-space supplied. These indicators may provide a direct reflection of the performance of specific policies, although other non-planning factors may also contribute. The extent to which such external factors impact upon the achievement of LDP objectives will be a matter of judgement and may or may not necessitate corrective actions.

- 11.2.6 Alongside the LDP's monitoring framework, the council also monitors a range of broader context indicators or general statistics for the district as part of its community planning function that the LDP may have an impact on. Whilst such indicators may not be directly attributable to specific policies within the LDP they will help the council better understand the extent to which the LDP is helping deliver the desired outcomes for the district.
- 11.2.7 In addition to these indicators the council will also monitor indicators in relation to the LDP's Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) (SEA) and the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

11.3 Review

- 11.3.1 The Plan Strategy is intended to be a robust document, suitable for setting the direction of development locally for the next 15 years. Nevertheless, changing conditions may be so significant so as to require a review or partial review of the document or policies within. As noted above, there is a statutory duty for the council to monitor the LDP on an annual basis. However, should no changes be necessary as a result of annual monitoring, a five yearly review must also be carried out to ensure that the LDP is kept up to date and reflects and responds to emerging issues.
- 11.3.2 Where evidence suggests or trends show that policies are ineffective or not satisfactorily achieving the desired outcome, relevant steps will be put in place to ensure that this is corrected. As the identified triggers for review will vary depending on the indicator in question, so too will the course of action taken depending on the specific issues to be addressed. Corrective steps could include:
- Undertaking enhanced monitoring or research to better inform decisions on future planning applications;
 - Discussing issues with statutory partners, such as the NI Housing Executive, Department for Communities (DfC) or Department for Infrastructure (DfI), to assess the need and scope for public sector intervention;
 - Strengthening policies or ensuring greater consistency in the application of specific policies through the production or review of SPG; or
 - Producing site-specific masterplans or development frameworks.
- 11.3.3 However, it may ultimately become necessary to formally review or revise the LDP or policies therein. The SPPS notes that a council may revise its Plan Strategy or Local Policies Plan at any time (after adoption) and, depending on the size and scale of the revision, it may result in a replacement of the full LDP. However, where a more minor change is required, a formal revision to the LDP can also be made in accordance with the appropriate statutory process for the preparation of the LDP.



Glossary

Affordable housing	Affordable housing is defined within the SPPS as relating to social rented housing and intermediate housing (see definitions of 'social housing' and 'intermediate housing' in glossary).
Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)	Designated areas of poorer air quality where there is an exceedance of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter.
Areas of High Scenic Value (AHSV)	Areas designated through the development plan for protection of the landscape setting of city and other areas of particular landscape merit.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	An area that has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value of national importance (by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency).
Areas of Scientific Interest (ASI)	Declared under the Amenity and Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1985 where consideration must be given to maintaining the feature of scientific interest.
Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)	Protected sites that are of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features designated under the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (as amended). Sites are protected to conserve biodiversity and geodiversity.
Areas of Townscape Character (ATC)	Areas of townscape character exhibit a distinct character normally based on their historic built form or layout. For the most part, this derives from the cumulative impact of the area's buildings, their setting and other locally important features.
Brownfield (previously developed land)	Land that has previously been developed. May include vacant or derelict land, infill land, land occupied by redundant or unused buildings and developed land.
Built Heritage Assets (BHA)	Generic term to describe designated archaeological sites of importance, listed buildings, conservation areas and areas of townscape character
Bulky goods	This is a subset of comparison goods retailing. It describes those comparison goods which are difficult to accommodate in town centres because of their space requirements for large showrooms, parking and servicing. They typically include large items such as furniture, carpets, electrical/white goods and DIY goods, and are typically sold from retail warehouses.

Glossary

Centres	For the purpose of this strategy centres refers to Belfast city centre, district centres and local centres which provide a broad range of facilities and services and which fulfil a function as a focus both for the community and for public transport.
City Centre	Belfast City Centre provides a broad range of facilities and services and which fulfil a function as a focus both for the community and for public transport.
City Corridors	Key routes into and out of the city, typically characterised by a mix of uses fronting onto a busy road, some passing through important Local Centres.
Commercial unit	Normally distinctly separated vertically from other units within a building or can be standalone. A unit of goods that is regarded by trade or <i>commercial</i> usage to be a single whole that cannot be divided without materially diminishing or harming its character, market value, or use.
Community infrastructure	The health, leisure, educational and welfare facilities and services that serve and help to sustain a community. These include cultural and youth centres, leisure and sports grounds, community allotments, places of worship, cemeteries, surgeries and health facilities and educational facilities, such as nurseries, schools and colleges.
Comparison goods	Durable items for which customers are prepared to travel some distance in order to compare prices and quality. They include clothes, footwear, household durables, textiles, fashion accessories, toys, hardware and leisure goods.
Conservation Area	Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest designated by the council under Article 104 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 within its district where the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Convenience goods	Mainly groceries and other consumable commodities that are purchased regularly and usually locally. They include food, drinks, tobacco, newspapers, magazines, cleaning materials and toiletries.
Developer contribution	A contribution, either financial or in kind, which allows the provision of infrastructure that is necessary for a development to go ahead.
District centre	Large grouping of shops separate from and subordinate to the town centre. They are generally located on routes that are convenient and easily accessible to the local community by all modes of travel. They usually contain at least one food supermarket or superstore, a degree of comparison goods shopping, retail services, leisure services and business services.

Edge of centre	For shopping purposes, a location within easy walking distance (i.e. 300 metres) of the City Centre, District Centre or Local Centre.
Greenfield	Land on existing undeveloped or green space.
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	Assessment required under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects on a Natura 2000 site – these are sites of EU importance under the Habitats Directive (Special Areas of Conservation) or the Birds Directive (Special Protection Areas).
House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	A house in multiple occupation is a property rented out by at least 3 people who are not from 1 'household' (e.g. a family) but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen.
Housing Association	A housing association is a society, body of trustees or company that provides social rented accommodation and specializes in accommodation for special needs groups. They are regulated by the Department for Communities and public funding is made available to help them build new homes, renovate existing stock/homes and allocate them to people in housing need.
Housing Management Area (HMA)	Areas designated under Policy HOU10 in which certain types and sizes of housing, including HMOs and conversions to self-contained flats through the sub-division of larger residential units, will be carefully managed to help to meet the diverse needs of all the community.
Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)	An important planning tool which enables an understanding of current housing market trends and identifies potential future imbalances in the Housing Market.
Intermediate housing	Intermediate housing helps households who can afford a small mortgage, but are not able to buy a property outright, to become homeowners. At present this includes 'shared ownership' housing and 'rent to own' housing, although the exact definition of intermediate housing may change over time to incorporate other forms of housing tenure below market rates aimed at helping assist households into affordable housing.
Landfill site	The controlled deposit of waste to land generally involving the infilling of voids following mineral extraction.
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)	LCA's are a tool in identifying the landscape features that give a locality its 'sense of place', including local patterns of geology, landform, land use, cultural and ecological features. LCA describes the key characteristics and analyses landscape condition and sensitivity to change. There is a Regional LCA for Northern Ireland that outlines 26 different landscape character areas.

Glossary

Leisure services	Largely refers to the following uses: Restaurant/cafe/fast food takeaway (eating out); Public houses/bars/clubs (socialising with a drink); cinema, theatres and concert halls (entertainment); betting offices, gaming centres, bingo (partaking in a game of chance); gyms, leisure centres, swimming venues (recreation) and hotels & guesthouses – availing of accommodation.
Listed building	Listed Building is building and any man-made features attached to the building or within the curtilage the building that are listed under Article 80 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 for its special architectural and historic interest. It brings it under the consideration of the planning system, so that it can be protected for future generations.
Local Centre	Location typically comprising a general grocery store, a sub-post office, hairdressing/beauty salon, café, hotfood takeaway, pharmacy and other small shops of a local nature. The primary purpose of a local centre is the provision of conveniently accessible shopping and services for local communities.
Local Landscape Policy Area (LLPA)	Area designated in development plans warranting additional protection from undesirable or damaging development because of their particular amenity value, landscape quality or local historical or natural significance.
Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and Wildlife Refuges	Sites declared by councils and managed for nature conservation purposes and also providing opportunities for research and education.
Local Policies Plan (LPP)	The Local Policies Plan is prepared following adoption of the Plan Strategy. It outlines the detailed land use proposals, including zonings and key site requirements, for the local development plan. Together with the Plan Strategy, it will be the principle consideration when determining future planning applications for development in the city.
Local shops	These refer to individual retail outlets or small groupings of local businesses that are generally located on roads and in residential areas that connect with City Corridors.
Masterplan	A masterplan is a plan that outlines an overall development concept for an area. It provides a structured approach and creates a clear framework for the future development of an area.
Mixed retailing	A shop or a group of shops selling convenience and comparison goods.
Mixed use development	A development comprising a number of land uses, such as residential, retail, office and leisure. Where the development has a predominant use, for e.g. retailing it can be described as retail-led.

Out of centre	A location outside a town centre boundary but within defined development limits.
Out of town	A location outside the defined development limits of settlements.
Passive design	Design that takes advantage of natural elements (usually sunlight) to heat, cool, or light a building and, therefore, reduces or eliminates the need for auxiliary heating, lighting or cooling.
Pepper-potting	The interspersing of affordable housing units amongst housing of another type (i.e. privately-owned housing) to provide sustainable mixed tenure developments
Placemaking	Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and wellbeing.
Public sector interventions	Denotes situations where a policy can only be effectively implemented with the support of a public sector body, which would include organisations or agencies controlled or supported financially by the government. In NI this could include central government departments (e.g. Department for Communities, Department for infrastructure, etc.), government agencies (e.g. NI Housing Executive) or the local council. A list of potential actions of such public sector bodies is outlined within section 11 of this Plan Strategy.
Ramsar site	A site of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention, which is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
'Rent to own' housing	A form of intermediate (affordable) housing where an individual is provided with the opportunity to rent a home for 3 years, receiving a proportion of this rent back to use as a deposit if they then avail of a later option to buy the home. This product is very much viewed as a stepping stone to shared ownership.
Retail Core	Designation of the largest concentration of shopping within a centre and may encompass areas which afford opportunities for retail-led regeneration.
Retail services	Businesses whose primary trade is the retailing of a service and/or hiring of goods. This category includes hairdressing and personal grooming, dry cleaners, travel agents, repair shops, post offices, opticians, fancy dress shops and tv/video outlets.

Glossary

Retail warehouse	Large single-level individual store, with car parking, for the sale of bulky comparison items such as DIY goods, furniture, electrical goods, carpets and gardening goods.
Rural proofing	The process, normally through a Rural Needs Impact Assessment, where any major policy and strategy are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas, and where appropriate, make adjustments to take account of particular rural circumstances.
s76 Planning Agreements	A legally binding agreement between relevant parties, normally an applicant, landowner and the council. Planning Agreements are used to secure a planning obligation, such as developer contributions, where it is not possible to do so by a planning condition. The Planning Agreement must be signed and completed before the planning permission can be issued (Section 76 of the Planning Act NI 2011).
Sequential approach	Sets out the requirements for developments for main town centre uses. It states that these should be located within the town centre, or if this isn't possible, edge of centre locations. Only in cases where there is a distinct lack of suitable sites will lands outside of the town centre be considered. The test is intended to ensure that retail developments will not end up in a location that would draw away trade from the town centre.
Settlement Limit	A continuous outer boundary designated for the settlement of Belfast, demarcating its development limit.
'Shared ownership' housing	A form of intermediate (affordable) housing consisting of shared ownership housing provided through a Registered Housing Association and helps households who can afford a small mortgage, but that are not able to afford to buy a property outright. The property is split between part ownership by the householder and part social renting from a Registered Housing Association. The proportion of property ownership and renting can vary depending on householder circumstances and preference.
Short-term let accommodation	Short-term let accommodation is where a property is rented to the same person(s) for not longer than 90 consecutive nights.
Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs)	SLNCIs are sites of local nature conservation importance on the basis of their flora, fauna or earth science conservation importance. They are designated through the development plan process.
Small shop	A shop with a gross floorspace of 80sqm or less.

Social housing	Housing provided at an affordable rent by a registered Housing Association; that is, one which is registered and regulated by the DfC (Department for Communities) as a social housing provider. Social rented accommodation should be available to households in housing need and is offered in accordance with the Common Selection Scheme, administered by the NIHE, which prioritises households who are living in unsuitable or insecure accommodation.
Special Protection Areas (SPA)	SPAs are sites established under the European Commission Directive of Wild Birds (2009/147/EC), commonly known as the 'Birds Directive'. SPAs are important areas for breeding, over-wintering and migrating birds.
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	A procedure that contributes to the integration of environmental considerations in the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes.
Supermarket	Self-service store selling mainly food, with a gross retail floorspace of less than 2500 square metres, often with its own car parking.
Superstore	Self-service store selling mainly food, or food and non-food goods, usually with more than 2500 square metres gross retail floorspace with car parking.
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	Additional guidance which illustrates by example, supports, or clarifies planning policies. It also includes Development Control Advice Notes (DCANs) that explain criteria and technical standards to be considered when dealing with specific categories or particular aspects of development. Where relevant to a particular development proposal, supplementary guidance will be taken into account as a material consideration in making decisions.
Supported housing	Supported housing enables vulnerable people to live more independently, both in their own home and in the community, through the provision of housing related support services.
Sustainable development	Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	SuDS are a sequence of water management practices that seek to alleviate the problems associated with hard and paved surfaces in urban environments, by storing or re-using surface water at source, thereby decreasing flow rates to watercourses and improving water quality.
Temporary use/meanwhile use	A use that which is to last for a limited time; as, a temporary statute, or one which is limited in its operation for a particular period of time. Meanwhile is defined as at or during the same time, while something else is being done.

Glossary

Town centre type uses	Retail, office, leisure, entertainment, more intensive sports and recreation uses including cinemas, restaurants, casinos, health and fitness places, bowling centres, bars and pubs, culture and arts and tourism developments.
Travellers	A generic group as defined by the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 i.e. "having a shared history, culture and traditions, including a nomadic way of life."
Tree Preservation Order (TPO)	Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are designated under Section 122 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to protect trees (either singularly or in a group) which are of high amenity or historic value or, for its rarity.
Urban footprint	The continuous built-up area of a settlement. The boundary is represented by an uninterrupted line, often lying inside the planned settlement limit. It contains land that has a formal urban use and, for example, gardens on the edge of the settlement will be included within the urban area as they form part of a curtilage of a building. Undeveloped zoned land at the edge of the settlement is excluded.
Urban Landscape Wedge	Open areas that are designated to separate localities within the Metropolitan Urban Area. They have a significant role in helping to define and retain the identities and character of the component parts of the urban area and preventing the merging of different city communities.
Windfall housing	Housing sites that were not allocated as such nor anticipated during the preparation of the development plan, but which become available during the lifetime of the Plan.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Table A1: Draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
SD2 HOU4	Settlement Development Limits for Belfast City	Designation BT 001, draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP)	<p>The Settlement Development Limits outlined within draft BMAP for the Belfast Metropolitan Area (insofar as they relate to the Belfast district) are similar to the limit set within the extant Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP), as amended by Alteration Number 2 to include additional lands for housing at Lagmore. Within draft BMAP, however, the Settlement Development Limits have been updated in a number of locations to reflect new development and wider environmental designations since the adoption of the BUAP.</p> <p>If considering any planning applications for development that falls outside of the BUAP development limit but within the draft BMAP development limit, or which fall within the BUAP development limit but outside of the BMAP development limit, both boundaries and any wider designations or proposed draft BMAP designations should all be referenced as relevant material considerations.</p>

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
SD2 HOU4	Settlement Development Limits for Edenderry	Designation EY 01, draft BMAP	Approximately half of the small settlement of Edenderry was designated within the Lagan Valley Regional Park Local Plan (LVRPLP). The draft BMAP boundary was drawn to take account of the opportunity for development on a former factory site, which has since seen the completion of 30 housing units. The BMAP designation therefore provides coverage for the larger area, which better reflects development that has taken place since the BUAP was adopted.
SD2 HOU4	Settlement Development Limits for Hannahstown	Designation HN 01, draft BMAP	Hannahstown was not designated as a small settlement within BUAP, so Settlement Limits only exist within draft BMAP. This reflects growth in the settlement since the BUAP was adopted. The settlement limits were deliberately drawn tightly to safeguard the Belfast Hills and the landscape quality of the area and the limit saw no change from the pre-consultation draft to the final pre-adoption draft.
SD2 HOU4	Settlement Development Limits for Loughview	Designation LW 01, draft BMAP	Loughview was not designated as a small settlement within BUAP, so Settlement Limits only exist within draft BMAP. Although this was not originally designated in draft BMAP, it was added following the public inquiry to reflect the concentration of development at the junction of Manse Road with Church Road, which has taken place since the adoption of the BUAP.
SD2 HOU4	Belfast City Centre	Designation CC 001, draft BMAP	See Policy RET1

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
SD2 HOU4	Belfast Harbour Area	Zoning BHA 01, draft BMAP	See Policy EC3
SD2 HOU4	District Centres	Designation BT 010, draft BMAP	See Policy RET1
SD2 HOU4	Local Centres	Local Centres - Designations MCH 17, ML 17, draft BMAP Commercial Nodes on Arterial Routes - Designation AR 02, draft BMAP Shopping/Commercial Areas on Arterial Routes – Designation AR 04, draft BMAP	See Policy RET1
SD2 HOU4	City Corridors	Designation AR 01 and MCH 18, draft BMAP	Arterial Routes serve a similar function within draft BMAP to that intended for the City Corridors within draft Plan Strategy. The BUAP does not include any relevant designations.
HOU10 HOU13	Housing Management Areas	HMO Policy Areas, Policy HMO 2, HMOs Subject Plan	HMOs Subject Plan is an adopted development plan within the Belfast City Council district and such designation do not exist in any other extant plan.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
HOU11	Intensive Housing Nodes	HMO Nodes, Policy HMO 4, HMOs Subject Plan	HMOs Subject Plan is an adopted development plan within the Belfast City Council district and such designation do not exist in any other extant plan.
NH1	SLNCI	dBMAP	Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) were identified as part of the BMAP process on the basis of their flora, fauna or earth science conservation importance. Such sites were not previously designated under BUAP. Consequently, the SLNCI boundaries as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.
LC1B	AHSV	dBMAP	Areas of High Scenic Value (AHSVs) were identified as part of the BMAP process to protect the setting of the city and other areas of landscape merit. Similar areas were also designated in BUAP. However, the detailed mapping associated with dBMAP is significantly more up to date and provides a more appropriate and relevant interim baseline. Consequently, the AHSV boundaries as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
LC1C	LLPA	dBMAP	<p>Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) were identified as part of the BMAP process to help protect those areas considered to be of greatest amenity and local landscape value. Some areas were designated in BUAP, as part of a general 'landscape, amenity and recreation' designation, although these did not specifically reference LLPAs. The designation mapping associated with dBMAP is specific to LLPAs provides a more appropriate and relevant interim baseline. Consequently, the LLPA boundaries as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.</p>
LC1D	Landscape Wedges	dBMAP	<p>Rural and Urban Landscape Wedges were identified as part of the BMAP process to help separate urban and rural localities and retain the identities and character of different areas. Similar areas were also designated in BUAP, as part of a general 'landscape, amenity and recreation use' designation. However, the detailed designation mapping associated with dBMAP is significantly more up to date. It is also specific to rural and urban wedges and provides a more appropriate and relevant interim baseline. Consequently, the AHSV boundaries as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.</p>

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
LC2	LVRP area	dBMAP	The LVRP area boundary was delineated in BUAP as a special area of scenic character and recreation potential to be protected and enhanced and this formed the basis of the LVRP Local Plan 2005. The boundary was subject to some review and minor modification as part of the BMAP process and this is more up to date and corresponds with the LVRP operational area. Consequently, the LVRP boundary as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until this is reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.
LC2	LVRP Nodes	dBMAP	Lagan Valley Regional Park nodes were identified as part of the BMAP process to focus the provision of facilities at key locations to manage access and protect overall landscape quality and local character. Such sites were not previously designated under BUAP or the LVRP Local Plan. Consequently, the node locations as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.
LC3	BHP area	BHP area	The Belfast Hills area in the DPS relates to the Belfast Hills Partnership area (within the Belfast City Council area). This area is not identified in either BUAP, although the dBMAP Countryside Assessment included a map of the BHP area. The current BHP area will apply to the LDP.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
LC3	BHP Access Points	dBMAP	The Belfast hills access points were identified as part of the BMAP process to promote access to the Hills and appropriate ancillary facilities. Such areas were not previously designated under BUAP. Consequently, the designated access points as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.
LC4	Coastal area	dBMAP	The designated coastal areas were identified as part of the BMAP process to provide protection for their unique landscape value and nature conservation interest. Such areas were not previously designated under BUAP. Consequently, the designated coastal area boundaries as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.
GB1	Community Greenways	dBMAP	The community greenways were identified as part of the dBMAP process to provide corridor links between the countryside and urban areas and to create a network of urban open spaces. Such corridors were not previously designated under BUAP. Consequently, the community greenway corridors as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until these are reviewed in the Local Policies Plan.
NH1	LNR	Designated separately from dBMAP	Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) established by district councils under Article 22 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (NI) Order 1985.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
LC1	AONB (for info only)	Designated separately from dBMAP	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designated by NIEA under Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order (NI) 1985. Shown in dBMAP for information only.
RET 1	City Centre Boundary	Designation CC 001, Draft BMAP	<p>The adopted BUAP and dBMAP both contain a city centre boundary designation. Within dBMAP, however, the city centre boundary has been updated to reflect new development such as at City Quays since the adoption of the BUAP in 2001. As it is more up-to-date and has been used to make decisions in determining planning applications it should therefore be considered as the defined boundary.</p> <p>If considering any planning applications for development that falls outside of the BUAP City Centre boundary but within the draft BMAP boundary and any wider designations or proposed draft BMAP designations should all be referenced as relevant material considerations.</p>

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
RET 1	Primary Retail Core	Designation CC 005 Draft BMAP	Whilst BUAP contains a main shopping area designation, dBMAP contains a comparable defined primary retail core designation. dBMAP aimed to reflect the retail composition of the City Centre at that time to help ensure the continuance of a compact and attractive shopping environment, offering choice and convenience. It is considered appropriate to reflect the designation of dBMAP as the plan with the most updated evidence base given the evolution of the retail environment and the City since publication of the BUAP.
RET 1 RET 5	Primary Retail frontage	Designation CC 006 Draft BMAP	A primary retail frontage was only designated in dBMAP. It was designated as this is where the greatest concentration of retail uses are found and to manage the pressure on retail for change of use to non-retail uses. It was also designated to reflect the existing circumstances on the ground especially in regards to pressure for non-retail uses. It is considered appropriate to reflect the designation of dBMAP as the plan with the most updated evidence base given the evolution of the retail environment and the City.
RET 1 RET 3	District Centres	Designation BT 017 Draft BMAP	The five district centre were designated in dBMAP. As it was not designated in the BUAP the boundaries should be that as set out in dBMAP as they reflect the current overarching policy direction set out in the SPPS

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
RET 1 RET 3	Local Centres	Local Centres - Designations MCH 17, ML 17, draft BMAP	Local centres were designated in dBMAP only. As these serve a local need to support the broader role of the City Centre and reflect the broader approach of the SPPS the boundaries of those district and local centres should be those as defined in dBMAP.
RET 3	Arterial Routes	Commercial Nodes on Arterial Routes - Designation AR 02, draft BMAP Shopping/Commercial Areas on Arterial Routes – Designation AR 04, draft BMAP	dBMAP designated a number of arterial routes. These have been used to inform planning decisions and are more reflective of current policy as the focus for local community and commercial life providing a range of land uses required to meet local needs. It is therefore considered that the designation of the arterial routes should be those identified in dBMAP.
EC 3	Harbour Area	Zoning BHA 01, draft BMAP	The harbour area as defined in the Belfast Harbour Local Plan 1995-2005 shows a larger zoning than that identified in dBMAP. It encompasses part of the City Centre as defined in dBMAP (City Quays and the Odyssey Complex). The boundary of the harbour area should be that of dBMAP. It is considered appropriate to reflect the designation of dBMAP as the plan with the most updated evidence base given the evolution of the harbour and the City since publication of the BUAP.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
EC 3	Employment locations	Zonings BT007, BT008, BT010, BT011Draft BMAP	dBMAP is the more detailed and up-to-date plan used to make decisions over the past number of years. It is more reflective of the circumstances on the ground. It is therefore considered that the boundaries of the employment locations should be those as defined in dBMAP.
EC 6	Queens Office Area	Designation BT 011 Draft BMAP	<p>dBMAP designated an overall Queen Office area, with a smaller Queens Campus Area located within the overall designation.</p> <p>The adopted BUAP 2001 contains an Office pressure area in an attempt to address adverse impact on residential amenity and the historic character.</p> <p>dBMAP acknowledges the circumstances on the ground and the link between office use and the university as key economic driver for the city and wider region. It should therefore be taken as the boundary designations.</p>
EC 6	Stormont Office Node	Designation BT 018 Draft BMAP	The Stormont Office Node is designated in dBMAP. As it was not designated in the BUAP the boundary should be that as set out in dBMAP.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Plan Strategy Policy	Designation	Interim designation	Justification
TRAN 9 (BCC Core)	Area of Parking Restraint - Belfast City Centre Core	Designation CC 025	Areas of parking restraint were identified in the BMTP and dBMAP as part of demand management policy to reduce the number of car journeys made during peak periods. The Area of Parking Restraint for the Belfast City Core as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until it is reviewed in the new Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan and the Belfast Local Policies Plan.
TRAN 9 (outside BCC Core & Fringe)	Commercial Nodes and Areas of Parking Restraint on Arterial Routes	Designation AR 02	Areas of parking restraint were identified in the BMTP and dBMAP as part of demand management policy to reduce the number of car journeys made during peak periods. The Areas of Parking Restraint for the Commercial nodes as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until they are reviewed in the new Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan and the Belfast Local Policies Plan.
TRAN 9	Area of Parking Restraint - Belfast City Centre Fringe Area	Designation BT 009	Areas of parking restraint were identified in the BMTP and dBMAP as part of demand management policy to reduce the number of car journeys made during peak periods. The Area of Parking Restraint for the Belfast City Fringe area as indicated in dBMAP will be used on an interim basis until it is reviewed in the new Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan and the Belfast Local Policies Plan.

Appendix A: Existing/draft Policy Designations

Table A2: Existing Policy Designations

Plan Strategy	Existing policy document	Policy Designation
Outer limit of 'Outer Belfast'	Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan	Metropolitan Development Limit (BT 001)
Local Centres	Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan	Local Centres (MCH 17, ML 17) Commercial Nodes on Arterial Routes (AR 02) Shopping/Commercial Areas on Arterial Routes (AR 04)
City Corridors	Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan	Arterial Routes (AR 01, MCH 18)
Housing Sites (for purposes of HOU5)	Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan	Social Housing designations (NB04/17-20, NB02/29, NB02/40, NB02/47-50, NB02/52-58, NB02/60, NB03/03, NB03/10, NB03/12-14, NB04/15, WB04/12-14, WB02/38-39, WB02/45, WB02/52-54, WB02/57-60, WB02/62-73, WB03/05, WB03/11-14, WB04/11, BT002, SB04/12-13, SB02/1, SB02/39, SB03/01, SB03/07, EB04/11-13, EB02/14, EB02/51, EB02/55-58, EB03/14, MCH02/08-09, ML04/07-09, ML02/16-17, ML02/19, ML02/21, ML02/23)
Housing Manangement Areas	Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan	HMO Policy Areas designated in Policy HMO 2
Intensive Housing Nodes	Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan	HMO Nodes designated in Policy HMO 4

Note: This table sets out the designations which are required to be clarified, e.g. due to their inclusion in the DPS under a different name, or where a proposed change in policy will result in changes to zoned sites, e.g. the social housing zonings in BMAP.

Appendix B: Definition of an Established Residential Area

An established residential area is normally taken to mean residential neighbourhoods dominated by single family housing with associated private amenity space or gardens. These areas may include buildings in commercial, retail or leisure services use, usually clustered together and proportionate in scale to the size of the neighbourhood being served.

Within Belfast City, established residential areas often display a clear spatial structure. Building forms, plot sizes and shapes are sometimes similar with a well defined pattern of local development. Properties may exhibit comparable design styles including common architectural detailing and treatments. Areas of public amenity space together with the private gardens of properties are frequently defined with mature trees, shrubs and hedgerow planting. The overall spatial structure is often delineated by a clear network of streets and roads. However, it is recognised that there are also settled housing areas where there is a greater range and mix of dwelling styles and where the overall pattern of development is less uniform. These areas too have an established residential character worthy of protection against redevelopment or infill at a significantly higher density than that found in the locality.

In our other Small Settlements, established residential areas generally display a more intimate character and spatial scale. There is often more local variety in architectural styles and treatments, with building lines, property sizes, plot ratios, and road layouts being much more changeable. Residential developments in these locations may have a close spatial relationship with land used for other purposes such as for employment, local schools, and other local services.

In accordance with Policy HOU3, it is recognised that future residential development in established residential areas may differ from existing densities, where this can be achieved whilst remaining in keeping with the established residential character of an area in accordance with urban design and residential design policies.

Appendix C: Space standards

Table C1: Residential space standards²⁷

House Type	Single Storey / Flat (square metres)	Two Storey (square metres)	Three Storey (square metres)
1-Person / 1-Bedroom	35 ^a	-	-
2-Person / 1-Bedroom	50	-	-
3-Person / 2-Bedroom	60	70	-
4-Person / 2-Bedroom	70	75 ^a	-
4-Person / 3-Bedroom	75	80	-
5-Person / 3-Bedroom	80	90	95
6-Person / 3-Bedroom	85	95	100
6-Person / 4-Bedroom	90	100	105
7-Person / 4-Bedroom	105	115	115
Shared Dwellings ^b	Up to 25 (per person)		
Note			
^a Restricted use as dwelling type is not flexible and unpopular with tenants			
^b Account must be taken of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) space standards (see Table A2 overleaf)			

Table C2: Wheelchair housing space standards²⁸

House Type	Single Storey / Flat (square metres)	Two Storey (square metres)
1-Person/1-Bedroom	50	-
2 Person/1-Bedroom	60	-
2-Person/2-Bedroom	65	-
3-Person/2-Bedroom	80	105
4-Person/2-Bedroom	85	105
4-Person/3-Bedroom	90	115
5-Person/3-Bedroom	105	125
6-Person/3-Bedroom	110	125
5-Person/4-Bedroom	110	130
6-Person/4-Bedroom	115	135
7-Person/4-Bedroom	125	140

²⁷ The Department for Communities' (DfC) Housing Association Guide (HAG) design standards are available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/general-needs-housing>

²⁸ The Department for Communities' (DfC) Housing Association Guide (HAG) design standards, for wheelchair housing are available at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/wheelchair-housing>

Table C3: Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) space standards²⁹

Room / Unit Layout	Number of Occupants	Minimum Size (square metres)
Bedroom	1	6.5
	2	11
	3	15
	4	19.5
	More than 4	An additional 4.5 per person
Combined Bedroom / Living Room	1	10
	2	15
	3	19.5
	More than 3	An additional 4.5 per person
Combined Bedroom / Living Room / Kitchen	1	13
	2	20.5
	More than 2	An additional 4.5 per person
Kitchen	1-2	5
	3-5	7
	6-10	10
Combined Kitchen / Dining Room	1-2	9
	3-5	11.5
	6-10	19.5
Combined Kitchen / Living Room	1-2	9
	3-5	11.5
	6-10	19.5

²⁹ Adapted from Section 43 of Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and NIHE Houses in Multiple Occupation Standards available from: http://www.nihe.gov.uk/hmo_standards.pdf

Appendix D: Natural Heritage Designations

International

Ramsar Sites (Convention of Wetlands)

- Belfast Lough Ramsar site

Special Protection Areas (SPA)

- Belfast Lough SPA
- Belfast Lough Open Water SPA

Note: International sites also include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Marine Conservation Zones. There are currently (April 2018) none of these sites within the Belfast LDP area.

National

Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

- Inner Belfast Lough (part of)
- Craigantlet Woods (part of)
- Belvoir Estate
- Bellevue

Areas of Scientific Interest (ASI)

- Hazelwood

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

- Lagan Valley

Note: There are also natural heritage sites of local importance that can be designated as part of the Development Plan process. These include Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), as well as landscape and other designations that also have natural heritage interests. The designations contained in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015, insofar as it relates to the Belfast City LDP area, will be retained and will continue to form the basis of decision making until the LDP is adopted in its entirety. It is the council's intention to review the existing settlement boundaries and land use zonings contained in the draft BMAP as part of the preparation of the draft Local Policies Plan.

Appendix E: List of Supplementary Planning Guidance

Theme for SPG	Proposed action	Relevant Plan Policy
Active Travel Walking and Cycling	See Urban Design	TRAN1
Adaptable & Accessible Accommodation	New SPG proposed (which will take account of DCAN 11)	HOU7
Adapting to environmental change	New SPG proposed	ENV3
Affordable Housing	New SPG proposed	HOU5
Ancillary open space	New SPG proposed	OS3
Areas of Townscape Character	New SPG proposed	HE3
Assessing the impact of new retail and leisure development	New SPG proposed	RET1, RET2, RET3, CC2, CC4, EC3, EC6
Community Cohesion	New SPG proposed	CGR1
Community Infrastructure	New SPG proposed	CI1
Conservation Areas	New SPG proposed	HE2
Creating an accessible environment	New SPG proposed	TRAN2
Density	New SPG proposed	HOU4
Environmental Quality	New SPG proposed	ENV1
Flood Risk	New SPG proposed – Reference to Dfl SPG to be prepared	ENV4
Green and Blue Infrastructure Network	New SPG proposed	GB1
Hot food bars and takeaways	Current DCAN 4 to be revised in line with new LDP	RET4
Housing Mix	New SPG proposed	HOU6
Intensive Sports Facilities	New SPG proposed	OS5
Landscape	New SPG proposed	LC1
Listed Buildings	New SPG proposed	HE1
Loss of industrial land	New SPG proposed	EC4
Meanwhile Uses in Interface Areas	New SPG proposed	CGR2
Mitigating Environmental Change	New SPG proposed	ENV2
New open space within settlements	New SPG proposed	OS2
PBMSA	Current adopted SPG to be revised in line with new LDP	HOU12
Promoting Healthy Communities	New SPG proposed	HC1

Appendix E: List of Supplementary Planning Guidance

Theme for SPG	Proposed action	Relevant Plan Policy
Protection of natural heritage resources	New SPG proposed	NH1
Residential Design	New SPG proposed	RD1, RD2, RD3
Specialist Residential Accommodation	New SPG proposed	HOU8
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)	New SPG proposed	ENV5
Trees	New SPG proposed	TRE1
Urban Design	New SPG proposed	DES1 – DES4, TRAN1
Waste Infrastructure	New SPG proposed	W1, W2, W4

Note: This table sets out the Planning Guidance which the council intends to prepare over the plan period to supplement the relevant policies set out therein. The list is not exhaustive and is subject to review taking account of business needs and any new regional policy or guidance published in due course.

Appendix F: Monitoring Indicators

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
1	Population Change	Census, Mid-year population estimates (NISRA)	SP1	Over 400,000 people by 2035	Population growth more than 10% above/below projections
2	Net additional employee jobs	Job statistics (NISRA)	SP1	46,000 additional jobs by 2035	Additional jobs more than 10% above/below projections
3	Net additional employment floorspace	Employment land monitor (BCC)	SP1 EC2	550,000 sq m net additional B Use Class floorspace by 2035: 330,000sqm in City Centre 83,000sqm in Belfast Harbour Major Employment Area 138,000sqm in rest of city	Provision falls to level below 5 year supply
4	Net additional dwellings	Housing Monitor (BCC)	SP1 HOU1	31,660 by 2035 2020-25 – 1,100-1,300 dwellings per annum 2025-30 – 2,100-2,300 dwellings per annum 2030-35 – 2,700-2,900 dwellings per annum	Provision falls to level below 5 year supply

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
5	Number of windfall units	Housing Monitor (BCC)	HOU1 HOU2	2,000 by 2035 2020-25 Total 400 – 80 per year 2026-30 Total 700 – 140 per year 2031-35 Total 900 – 180 per year	Windfall figures more than 10% above/below targets
6	% net additional units on previously developed land	Housing Monitor (BCC)	HOU2	100% of new units on previously developed land	Delivery falls below 60% 2020-35 (RDS target)
7	Average density of approved residential developments	Housing Monitor (BCC)	HOU4	All new residential developments in the character areas are within the relevant average density band	Average densities within a Character Area fall outside of broad density bands
8	Number of affordable homes approved / commenced / completed	Housing monitor (BCC) and NI Housing Statistics (DfC)	HOU5	Affordable housing at least 20% of all new housing built	Average affordable housing in the District more than 10% above/below target
9	Number of dwellings by type in Belfast	NI Housing Statistics (DfC)	HOU6	30% no. of apartments/flats 70% no. of houses	Number of apartments/flats more less than 20% or more than 40%

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
10	Number of dwellings approved by size (number of bedrooms)	Monitoring planning applications (BCC)	HOU6	40% of all dwellings 1 or 2-bed 60% of all new dwellings with 3 or more bedrooms	No of 1 or 2 bed dwellings less than 30% or more than 50%
11	Number of HMOs in Policy Areas	HMO Register (NIHE)	HOU10 HOU11	Less than 20% HMOs, approved HMOs and conversions / sub-divisions within each Policy Area Less than 10% HMOs, approved HMOs and conversions / sub-divisions within a 600m stretch	No of HMOs, approved HMOs and conversions / sub-divisions within exceeds 20% within a Policy Area No of HMOs, approved HMOs and conversions / sub-divisions within exceeds 10% within a 600m stretch of street
12	Number of planning approvals for HMOs	HMO Monitoring (BCC)			
13	Number of units with planning approval for apartments created through conversion/sub-division	Planning approvals (BCC)			
14	Number of Buildings at Risk	Built Heritage at Risk Northern Ireland (UAH/HED)	BH1 BH2 BH3 BH4	Less than 10 % of listed buildings at risk removed from BHARNI Register due to demolition over 5 year period	More than 10 % of listed buildings at risk demolished over 5 year period

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
15	Quality of Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs)	Periodic review of Conservation Areas / ATCs (BCC)	BH2 BH3 BH4	Protection of the designated Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character	Loss of geographic area designated recommended by a boundary review of these designation from the date of plan adoption
16	Number of demolitions in Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs)	Planning and appeal decisions (BCC)	BH2 BH3 BH4	Less than 30% of refused demolition applications in Conservation Areas and Areas or Townscape Character allowed at appeal	No of appeals for demolition applications in Conservation Areas or Areas of Town Character allowed at appeal exceeding 30%
17	Number of trees felled in Conservation Areas	Enforcement action (BCC)	BH2 TRE1	Reduction in enforcement cases against unauthorised tree removal in Conservation Areas	More than 10% rise in unauthorised tree felling in Conservation Area
18	Number of sites of archaeological interest recorded in new developments	Planning approvals (BCC)	BH5	Less than 10% of sites of archaeological interest unrecorded in new developments	More than 10% of sites of archaeological interest unrecorded in new developments
19	Location of light industrial, industrial, storage and distribution uses	Planning decisions (BCC)	EC3	Light industrial, industrial, storage and distribution uses shall be directed towards Major Employment Locations and Strategic Employment Locations	Planning applications outside of the designated areas
20	Quantity and location of light industrial, industrial storage and distribution uses	Monitor floorspace of planning approvals	EC3	No light industrial, industrial storage and distribution uses outside of MEL and SEL.	Planning permission granted for light industrial, industrial storage and distribution uses outside of MEL and SEL.

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
21	Quantity of zoned employment land	Employment Land Monitor (BCC)	EC4	No zoned employment land lost to non-employment uses.	Approval for non-employment related use on zoned employment land
22	Amount of approved and completed office floorspace	Planning decisions (BCC)	EC6	None over 1000sqm outside City Centre	Office approvals exceeding 1000sqm outside of the City Centre.
				Within Queens Office Area, proposals for Use Class B1 (a) and A2 will not exceed 400sqm.	Any proposed planning application over 400sqm
				Within district and local centres, proposals for Use Class B1 (a) and A2 will not exceed 400sqm.	Any proposed planning application over 400sqm
23	Number of retail/main town centre planning applications approved	Planning decisions (BCC)	RET2	None over 1000sqm outside City Centre	Retail/town centre approvals exceeding 1000sqm outside the City Centre
			RET3	None over 500sqm (convenience) local centres	Convenience retailing approvals exceeding 500sqm in local centres
				None over 200sqm (comparison) local centres	Comparison retailing approvals exceeding 200sqm in local centres
				None over 300sqm (convenience) in areas of retail warehousing	Convenience retailing approvals exceeding 300sqm in areas of retail warehousing
				No bulky comparison floorspace under 700sqm in areas of retail warehousing	Planning approvals for bulky goods under 700sqm in areas of retail warehousing

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
			RET4	Less than 30% floorspace to the sale of non-bulky comparison goods in areas of retail warehousing	Planning approvals for development of less than 70% floorspace of bulky goods
24	No. of non-retail planning applications approved in Primary Retail Frontage	Planning decisions (BCC)	RET5	No more than 40% non-retail No more than 3 adjacent units non-retail along the Primary Retail Frontage	Number of non-retail planning approvals exceeds 40% in the Primary Retail Frontage Number of planning approvals results in 3 or more adjacent non-retail uses
25	Quantity of development permitted in undeveloped areas of flood risk	Planning decisions (BCC) and DfI Rivers consultations	ENV 4	No permissions granted for non-compatible development in undeveloped flood risk areas and contrary to DfI Rivers advice.	1 application permitted in any year for non-compatible development in undeveloped flood risk area contrary to DfI Rivers advice.
26	Quantity of development permitted on all Natural Heritage Sites	Planning decisions (BCC) and liaising with NIEA	NH1	No permissions granted for non-compatible development in designated natural heritage areas and contrary to NIEA advice.	1 or more permission in any year for non-compatible development on designated natural heritage areas contrary to DfI Rivers advice.

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
27	Number of planning permissions granted on zoned Open Space	Planning decisions (BCC) and liaising with CNS	OS1	To limit the net loss of zoned open space for uses other than those ancillary or compatible with open space use.	Net loss of significant area of zoned open space to non-compatible/ancillary uses.
28	Number of planning permissions that secure Green and Blue Infrastructure improvements, including through Developer Agreements.	Major planning decisions (BCC) and S76 Agreements	SP8 GB1	75% major permissions contributing to G&B Infrastructure improvements.	Less than 50% of major planning permissions providing for G&B Infrastructure improvements
29	The number of planning permissions granted to incorporate SuDs measures in development proposals.	Major planning decisions (BCC)	ENV 5	75% major permissions contributing to providing SuDs measures.	Less than 50% of major planning permissions providing for SuDs measures
30	The number of applications granted for renewable energy development.	Monitoring major planning decisions with Development Management	ITU 4	An increase in the number of renewable energy schemes	No increase in renewable energy facilities

Ref.	Indicator	Source	Relevant Policy	Target	Trigger
31	Amount of municipal waste reduced and recycled	NI waste management statistics (DAERA)	WM1 WM2 WM3	Meet targets outlined in the council's waste management plan	Targets in Councils Waste management plan not met
32	Number of people traveling by sustainable modes – active travel, bus, rail & BRT	Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) (DfI)	TRAN1 TRAN3 TRAN4 TRAN5 TRAN9	An increase in the number of people traveling by sustainable modes	Reduction in numbers of people traveling by sustainable modes
33	Number of new dwellings permitted annually outside settlement limits	Housing Monitor & planning decisions (BCC)	DC policies	To sustainably manage the number of new dwellings in the countryside	Permission for 5 or more new (additional) dwellings outside the settlement limits.
34	Number of non-residential proposals permitted annually outside settlement limits	Planning decisions (BCC)	DC policies	To sustainably manage the amount of new non-residential development in the countryside	Permission for 5 or more new development proposals (non-residential) outside the settlement limits.





Belfast Planning Service

Belfast City Council
Cecil Ward Building
4-10 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BP

-  www.belfastcity.gov.uk/LDP
-  planning@belfastcity.gov.uk
-  028 9050 0510
-  @belfastcc
-  @belfastcitycouncil
-  Belfast City Council



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