



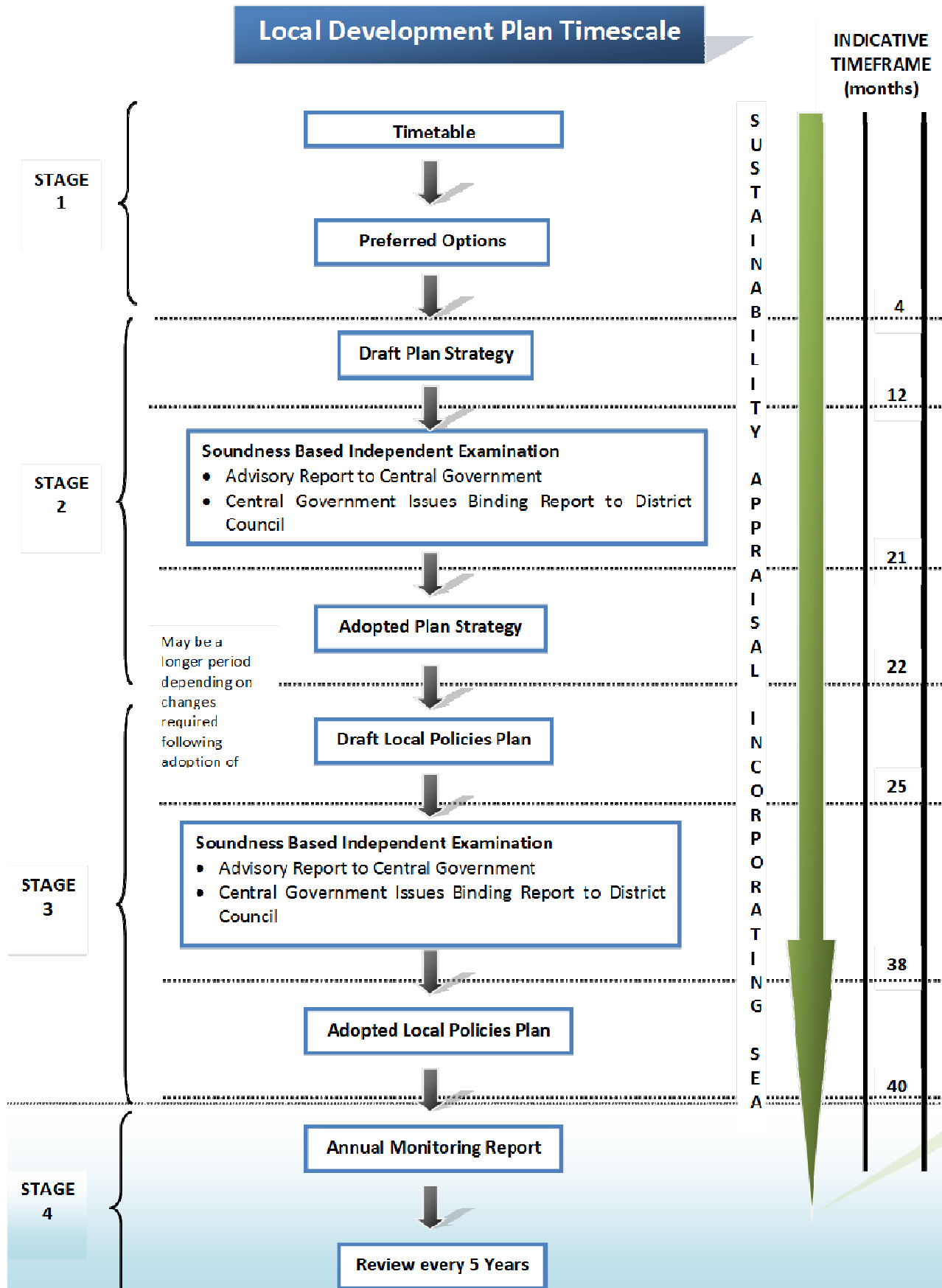
Subject:	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan - Update
Date:	16 th April 2015
Reporting Officer:	Jim Mackinnon
Contact Officer:	Keith Sutherland

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report provides an update on the current status with regard to the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and the ongoing challenge to the adoption in September 2014.
2.0	Recommendations
	The committee is asked to note this report. Further reports will be brought to the Committee in relation to the result of the challenge and for the consideration of proposed processes for the development of a new for the city.
3.0	Main report
3.1	The previous report to the Shadow Committee outlined the basis for the adoption by the Minister for the Environment, Mark H Durkan in September 2014. This adoption meant that BMAP replaced all pre-existing local policies and would serve as the local development plan for Belfast until such time as the new Council puts in place a new plan.
3.2	The Enterprise Minister, Arlene Foster, claimed in December 2014 that Minister Durkan in proceeding to adopt BMAP had breached the ministerial code by publishing the plan without bringing it before the Executive for full approval.
3.3	Minister Foster was granted leave to seek a judicial review of Mark H Durkan's decision to adopt the BMAP in January 2015. At the hearing the judge was informed the Environment Minister was not opposed to the case proceeding to a full hearing which was scheduled for the 27th May 2015.

<p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p>	<p>Until the result of the challenge is formalised the BMAP will remain as the adopted Development Plan for Belfast and the surrounding 5 Districts. The BMAP sets out the land use proposals for Belfast and the surrounding Districts for the period until it is replaced. It identifies zones for retail, residential or commercial development and affects almost 40% of the Northern Ireland population. This includes areas such as Carrickfergus, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and North Down that are (and will be) outside of the Belfast City Council boundary.</p> <p>It was previously indicated that Minister Foster would also be seeking an order to suspend any implementation of BMAP until the case is decided. Following the court consideration in January it was confirmed that the suspension of BMAP was no longer being pursued.</p> <p>The decision arising from the hearing scheduled for the 27th May 2015 could have implications for the future status of all or part of the BMAP and will be reported back to the Committee along with any recommendations as to the way forward.</p> <p>With regard to the development of the new plan the Committee may wish to note the illustrative timeline provided guidance issued by the Department. This work under new statutory requirements will need to be aligned with the Community Plan as detailed in the emerging Belfast Agenda.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p><i>Appendix 1- Illustrative Development Plan Process diagram from DoE Guidance</i></p>
<p>4.2</p>	<p><i>Appendix 2 - Announcement by Minister of the Environment at adoption (September 14)</i></p>

Appendix 1- Illustrative Development Plan Process diagram from DoE Guidance



Appendix 2 - Announcement by Minister of the Environment at adoption (September 14)

Oral statement to the assembly by Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment on Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Published on Mon, 8 Sep 2014 by ecomms@doeni.gov.uk

As the House is aware I have authorised my Department to adopt the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP/the Plan), which will become operative on 9 September 2014. The adoption order was signed and sealed on 3 September 2014.

Since I took over as Minister of the Environment with responsibility for planning one of my key priorities has been to ensure that my Department concludes work on BMAP and other development plans. BMAP is necessary to provide the essential planning framework to guide development decisions in the Belfast Metropolitan Area and provide certainty and confidence for those wishing to invest in the development of the area. Finalising BMAP is of crucial importance not only for the six district council areas concerned, but also for the economy of the North.

I authorised the adoption, last September, of the Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan and work is also continuing on the Northern Area Plan. The completion of the three area plans provide an up-to-date, fit for purpose planning regime and the stability required before next April when Councils will become responsible for the future preparation of their own Local Development Plans.

Adoption of this Plan represents a sound foundation for decision making affecting a significant percentage of the population and land area of the North.

BMAP covers the Council areas of Belfast, Lisburn, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey and North Down. The Plan Area of approximately 960 square kilometres has a population of 671,559 (Northern Ireland Census 2011 representing approximately 37% of the total population of the North and is key to securing the economic growth of the region. It also covers areas of social deprivation with vulnerable communities some of whom feel they have been left behind.

Statutory Framework

A Development Plan drawn up for a designated geographical area provides a framework for the determination of planning applications by the designated statutory planning authority (currently the DOE and in future also the new councils). The planning authority must have regard to the Development Plan in determining a planning application (insofar as it is material to the application) as well as all other material considerations.

The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan is a Development Plan prepared under the provisions of Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by the Department of the Environment (DOE). The process that must be followed by the DOE in preparing a Development Plan is specified in statute.

Plan preparation and consultation

The preparation of and consultation on BMAP has followed a protracted process over the past decade spanning periods of both devolution and direct rule. Preparation of the Plan was formally initiated in January 2001.

During the initial preparation period for the Plan, the DOE engaged in the most extensive consultation exercise ever undertaken for a development plan in Northern Ireland. This recognised

both the extent of the geographical area covered by the Plan area and its inherent significance to the economic and social development of the region as a whole.

Throughout this initial preparation process councils informed and helped shape the draft Plan through a Plan Political Group chaired by the then Environment Minister and which comprised representatives of the six councils making up the plan area. There was ongoing consultation with individual councils at all stages of the Plan preparation process.

In December 2001 the “Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan – Issues Paper was published. This sought to stimulate a wide-ranging debate on issues likely to influence the shape of future development within the Plan Area, and to encourage feedback from a wide range of interests.

During this initial consultation period, a series of 10 information meetings and 27 consultation meetings were held throughout the Plan area. Voluntary and community groups were engaged and over 1500 people attended the public meetings and focus groups. Overall, this consultation process reflected a broad cross section of the people living in the Plan area. A report presenting a collation of the views expressed during the consultation process was published in April 2003.

Draft Plan

The Department published the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan on 30 November 2004 and the statutory period for objections to the Draft Plan expired on 25 January 2005. In order to reflect changes in the planning context and to address a number of issues that had been identified in the Draft Plan, the Department published a Plan Amendment in February 2006. The statutory period for objections to the Plan Amendment expired on 11 April 2006.

Public Inquiry

Following receipt of a substantial number of representations, the Department requested the Planning Appeals Commission to hold a Public Inquiry into the objections received and to report to the Department on the Inquiry. The Public Inquiry opened on 16 April 2007 and was formally closed by the PAC on 1 May 2008. The PAC submitted its report to the Department in stages between January 2009 and January 2012. The PAC recommendations have been fully considered by the Department. In order to ensure full transparency of process the Department published all the PAC reports on the Draft Plan in June 2012. Full details of my Department’s response to the Commission’s recommendations are set out in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan Adoption Statement and its appendices.

Conformity with Regional Development Strategy

Article 28(6) of the Planning (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 requires the Department to send a copy of the Draft Plan to the Department for Regional Development to consider whether the Plan is in conformity with the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) – the spatial strategy of the Executive. DRD completed its assessment of the draft Plan in October 2013 and issued a certificate confirming that the Plan is in general conformity with the RDS 2035.

This alongside completion of a Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment marked the completion of all necessary legislative and procedural requirements in advance of adoption.

Plan Format

The Plan itself is a substantial publication comprising seven volumes of material and runs to some 900 A4 pages, plus 30 larger maps. It comprises a Written Statement and accompanying maps as well as detailed site designations. The Written Statement is divided into four parts:

Part 1 sets out the background to the preparation of the Plan;

Part 2 sets out the Plan's Guiding Principles and Strategy

Part 3 sets out the Plan Framework comprising allocations, designations, policies and proposals relating to the Plan Area as a whole,

Part 4 translates the broad policies and proposals of Part 3 for each of the individual Council areas specifically addressed in Volumes 2 -7

In assessing the totality of the Plan for each Council area, it is therefore necessary to refer to Volume 1 and the relevant District Proposals (Volumes 2-7) for the particular Council area.

Plan Content

The key components of the Plan include:

Supporting Economic Development

Protecting the Natural Environment

Promoting Urban Renewal

Promoting Equality of Opportunity

Enhancing Quality of Life

Sustaining a Living Working Countryside

Developing an Integrated Inclusive Transport System

The Plan's central aim is to strengthen the regional role of the Metropolitan Area so it can compete successfully at the European and International level. Securing the prosperity of this area is vital to the economic, environmental and social well being of the region. In line with the RDS, the Plan seeks to promote the City of Belfast as the regional capital and the major focus for regional administration, commerce and employment. It also provides a framework to strengthen the complimentary roles of Lisburn city and the adjoining boroughs of Castlereagh, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey and North Down.

Retailing

In line with its key theme, the Plan promotes Belfast City Centre as the leading shopping centre and Lisburn city centre and the town centres of Bangor, Carrickfergus, Ballyclare, Carryduff and Holywood as the focus for additional retail capacity. This is consistent with the RDS approach which urges precaution in relation to major retailing proposals due to the adverse impact of out of town retailing on existing centres.

The Plan retains the Draft Plan policy to restrict the future expansion of retailing at Sprucefield to the sale of Bulky goods. I acknowledge that certain concerns exist about this issue but both my predecessor and I have previously explained in considerable detail the rationale for our approach on this matter which again is consistent with the regional policy context to strengthen Belfast as the key economic driver for Northern Ireland with Sprucefield playing a complementary role rather than competing with Belfast City Centre. It also seeks to avoid the impact on other town and city centres in the BMAP area and beyond.

In the absence of any evidence to sway me from this precautionary approach which aligns with the both the Executives endorsed approach in the RDS and the more recently published draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement I considered it appropriate to retain this policy.

Housing

The Plan also secures an adequate supply of housing lands with provision for an estimated 92,000 dwellings. This exceeds a 6 year supply post adoption. Of the 1950 hectares of land zoned for housing – 103 hectares is specifically zoned for social housing. DOE has worked very closely with colleagues in DSD and the Housing Executive to address social housing needs within BMAP and also to develop regional policy for the delivery of social housing with the joint draft policy PPS 22 on Affordable Housing and the associated DSD Housing Policy.

Employment

The employment strategy seeks to sustain balanced economic growth and job creation by promoting City and Town centres as the main focus for retail and office functions along with providing a generous and continuous supply of land with a balanced portfolio of sites throughout the plan area. Over 2,000 hectares of land is allocated for employment use with 4 major employment locations at Global Point, Newtownabbey, Titanic Quarter, Belfast, Purdysburn, Castlereagh and Blaris, West Lisburn.

Environment

The Plan provides proposals to safeguard those areas that may be vulnerable to development pressure or that are visually or environmentally sensitive. The Plan's environmental designations acknowledge and protect the rich natural and built heritage of the area. The Urban Environment Strategy promotes new development of the highest quality, protects areas of architectural and townscape importance and promotes healthier living environments. The Plan identifies 21 Conservation Areas and designates 99 Townscape/ Village Character along with a number of Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes.

In terms of the natural environment the Plan includes additional designations to afford special protection to BMA landscapes which are particularly sensitive because of their quality, or which need particular protection because of their location and development pressure. These areas include the Belfast Metropolitan Coastal Areas, the Lagan Valley Regional Park, Belfast Hills, and areas of Areas of High Scenic Value. The Plan area contains 33 National/International Nature Conservation Designations and 240 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance and 288 Local Landscape Policy Areas

Very briefly I'd like to take the opportunity to highlight a number of key proposals for each of the council areas covered by the Plan;

Belfast

The aim for Belfast as previously referred is to strengthen the role as the regional capital and economic driver for the North. However it's not only about Belfast City Centre. The Plan provides for a major redevelopment zoning in Titanic Quarter of c87ha providing a unique opportunity to create a new quarter for the city on a scale unequalled in the past and unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future

A major site at the North Foreshore is zoned for mixed use comprising Employment and Open Space of around 127hectares. Other key employment sites include Monagh Bypass and a mixed-use site on the Crumlin Road. In the outer Belfast area, approximately 610 hectares of land are zoned for housing, including social housing. An Office Area is designated at Queens University to facilitate university related office use and a further office Node is designated at Stormont to facilitate public sector administration.

The Plan facilitates the integration between transportation and land use and identifies the elements of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan which require protection through the planning process,

for example, park and ride schemes, new railway stations or the widening of the A5 Outer Ring Road.

Lisburn

The Plan recognises the development potential of Lisburn City Council area and aims to facilitate expansion and economic growth with a focus on Lisburn's favourable location along key transport routes. Key designations include the Primary Retail Core, Promoting city centre living and creating 24 hour vitality through Protected City Centre Housing Areas. As previously referred to the Plan sets out the complimentary role of Sprucefield Shopping centre and also designates a District Centre at Dairy Farm and a Local Centre at Dunmurry.

Carrickfergus

The Plan proposals for Carrickfergus aim to improve the general environment in order to strengthen the town centre and also promote the marine complex and Urban Waterfront. Key designations include 181ha of land zoned for housing including land for the provision of social housing and 151ha of additional land zoned for employment/industry.

Castlereagh

The Plan proposals for Castlereagh include the promotion of major recreational facilities. Key designations include 254hectares of land zoned for housing and 93 hectares of additional land zoned for employment/industry with a Major Employment Location at Purdysburn/Newtownbreda. Carryduff town is also promoted as a focus for retailing and offices through the identification of a town centre boundary and a District Centre is identified at Forestside and a Local Centre at Dundonald to complement the existing retail facilities.

Newtownabbey

The Plan proposals for Newtownabbey enhance recreation and maritime pursuits and promote the major employment, retail, education and residential centres within the borough. Ballyclare Town Centre is promoted as a focus for retailing and offices and District Centres are identified at Northcott and the Abbey Centre. Major transport proposals include the Ballyclare Relief Road.

North Down

The Plan proposals for North Down aim to enhance the status of North Down as an important tourism destination and facilitate the rapid economic and suburban growth that the area has been experiencing whilst protecting and enhancing the natural heritage aspects. The coastline is protected through the designation of a Coastal Policy Area and is complemented by the designation of an Urban Waterfront in Bangor to promote the marina complex and its surroundings encouraging a vibrant and attractive waterfront.

Plan Adoption.

Since taking up office I have received many letters from various organisations expressing concern over the continued delay in the adoption of BMAP. Many in the construction sector see the adoption of BMAP as critical to recovery in their sector and their workforce can only be sustained by a continuous supply of planning approvals.

Landowners have been frustrated by the uncertainty experienced in the absence of an adopted Plan. Many house builders who have been supported by their banks through the most severe

recession are now under considerable pressure to deliver on sites and recover significant sums invested in the BMAP process. Local communities are also frustrated by the lack of certainty regarding development proposals in their area.

Since October 2013, when the Department received from DRD the Certificate of general conformity with the RDS all statutory and procedural requirements necessary to allow for the adoption of the Plan were complete.

Since then I have engaged fully with the Executive on the matter. I circulated Executive papers and associated comprehensive documentation on 13 December, 17 December 2013 and 6 March 2014. I had requested that successive versions of the Executive paper be tabled at meetings on 16 January, 13 February and 27 February 2014. I then invoked the three meeting protocol so that the paper would be tabled for decision at the Executive meeting on 6 March 2014.

At the Executive meeting on 6 March it was agreed I chair a subgroup to examine the issues in relation to BMAP and this sub group met on 6 May. Following that I circulated a further version of the Executive paper dated 1 July requesting it be tabled on 8 July this year.

It was clear that the only issue raised about a Plan covering a very substantial part of the area and population of Northern Ireland related to the bulky goods restriction on the further expansion of the Sprucefield site near Lisburn. I have repeatedly explained my rationale in relation to this matter and given it the fullest consideration. I remain of the view that this approach is the right one for the plan area as a whole which is the perspective I must adopt in making judgements on such matters. I do not believe it is reasonable that differing views on this one issue should continue to delay the adoption of a plan which is necessary to attract investment, create jobs and secure economic growth and support local communities in this significant part of the North.

I have a clear Ministerial responsibility to provide the certainty for communities and businesses that can only be achieved by the final adoption of the Plan. This Plan is the primary mechanism to reconcile any potential conflict between the need for development and the need to protect local communities and our environment. In advance of the transfer of planning powers to local government it would be remiss of me not to provide that level of certainty for everyone who will be involved in and affected by the future economic and social development of this significant part of the region.

I have therefore authorised and directed my Department to adopt the Plan which will become operative tomorrow morning. The Plan and Adoption Statement will be available for viewing on the Department's website and copies will be available for inspection in local Council offices within the Plan area.