

Belfast

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2020-2035

Vision and Objectives

Summary Document



Belfast
City Council

Context

The Council is required to prepare a new Local Development Plan for Belfast to guide the development of the City up to 2035. As part of the Plan making process the Council has prepared a draft Preferred Options Paper (POP). The draft POP outlines the vision, objectives, key planning issues affecting the City, possible approaches to new development and planned growth, and the justification for the Council's Preferred Option for Belfast. These preferred options have been developed to support the aspirations and vision set out in the emerging Community Plan for the City.

The draft POP will provide the Council the opportunity to consult with the public and stakeholders (note linking to SCI), to encourage inclusive engagement that will stimulate discussion on key planning issues in a more meaningful way at this early stage of the Local Development Plan preparation. The public and stakeholder comments concerning the draft POP will be taken into account in formulating the draft Plan Strategy, the first phase of the Local Development Plan.

In the last fifteen years Belfast has been successful in attracting national and international business that has encouraged economic growth to help rebalance the economy. This investment has made a positive impact on the quality of life for our residents and communities. There has been major expenditure in upgrading some of its infrastructure provision, and improving the public realm, which has supported substantial private sector investment that has created new employment opportunities within the City. This success has strengthened Belfast's role as the Capital City and economic driver for the region. However significant challenges remain as Belfast is still not performing as well as other cities of a similar size and role. Belfast still needs significant public and private sector investment to support continued development including the provision of modern infrastructure, tourist facilities / attractions alongside increased residential and commercial spaces.

Areas of the city have not benefited from this recent growth and some of our more deprived neighbourhoods remain marginalised and disconnected from the wider city. The Council through the Community Plan is focused on inclusive growth and its priorities are for balancing economic growth with improved social outcomes and reduced inequalities. Considerable regeneration needs to continue to connect parts of the city centre and integrate this important economic space with surrounding neighbourhoods.

To support and influence future investment and development decisions, the Local Development Plan is required to provide a spatial framework and policies to shape future growth in a manner that will contribute to a smart and resilient city for the 21 Century.

For the city to be in a position to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges, the Local Development Plan will be guided by an overall Vision, which outlines where the city wants to be in 2035. The vision provides an over-arching context for the Plan that shows how economic, social and environmental considerations can be balanced to deliver sustainable development up to 2035. An integral part of this Vision and development of the plan is that local communities / stakeholders will be fully engaged in the process to bring about the sustainable growth of the City and to help the Council to manage investment in a way that delivers tangible social, economic and environmental benefits.

The Local Development Plan is guided by the following Regional and Local or Council strategies that set out their visions and policy objectives that are relevant for guiding the future development of Belfast:-

- the emerging **Community Plan** informed by the Belfast Conversation public consultation for the Belfast Agenda
- draft **Programme for Government Framework 2016 – 2021** “to build a shared and better future for all”.
- **Regional Development Strategy 2035** – Overarching Spatial Plan for NI
“An outward-looking, dynamic and liveable Region with a strong sense of its place in the wider world; a Region of opportunity where people enjoy living and working in a healthy environment which enhances the quality of their lives and where diversity is a source of strength rather than division.”
- **Sustainable Development Strategy**
- **Belfast City Council Corporate Plan 2016-2017**
- **Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy 2015**
- **Belfast Investment Programme 2015**
- **Belfast Future City** Making it happen 2015
- **Belfast Master Plan 2014**

The Belfast Agenda, our Community Plan, is the city’s overarching strategy for improving wellbeing and quality of life for everyone in Belfast, and identifies Belfast’s ambition for inclusive growth and success. In developing the Community Plan and building a shared vision and outcomes for Belfast, views were sought from residents, communities, city stakeholders, businesses and partner organisations through the Belfast Conversation and through the Residents’ Survey.

The emerging draft vision for the Community Plan is:

‘By 2030 Belfast will be a successful and competitive city, at the heart of a thriving region with a fantastic quality of life; a shared city; a city where ambitions can be achieved; and a city where the world wants to be.’

The Community Plan sets out five shared city outcomes which all other strategies and plans in Belfast should seek support as set out in the Diagram below. This provides a framework for partners, stakeholders and communities to align their efforts, assets and resources towards achieving the city vision. The delivery of priorities and actions within the Community Plan will be the responsibility of the Community Planning Partners.



The Community Plan outcomes and appropriate elements of these Strategies have helped to inform the Local Development Plan Preferred Options paper Vision and objectives set out below:-

LDP VISION:

Belfast will be a globally successful dynamic smart 21st Century Regional City, with a vibrant economic heart, bustling with sustainable mixed use businesses that attracts investment, talent and visitors; and is surrounded by thriving well connected neighbourhoods where people love to live.

The City will be a gateway to opportunities locally, nationally and worldwide with a strong local economy supporting progressive, healthy, safe and vibrant communities

Approach to achieving the vision by 2035

To help deliver the city envisaged in 2035 there are a series of strategic aims and related objectives which have been identified below to support the vision realisation.

Strategic Aims

- Vibrant Economy – a strengthened Belfast as the regional economic driver.
- Sustainable Place – promoting development which enhances the health and well-being of communities, neighbourhoods and places.
- A Smart Connected and Resilient Place – improving connectivity supporting the efficient movement of people, goods, energy and information to create a dynamic innovative 21st century city attractive to investors, businesses, residents and visitors.
- A Green Place – a protected, enhanced and attractive natural setting comprising the surrounding hills, coastline, Belfast Lough and the Lagan Valley Regional Park by reinforcing their uniqueness and accessibility to all who live, work and enjoy the City.
- Low Carbon Future City – support the capacity for adaption to environmental challenges and the transition to a low carbon City.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives will outline how the Local Development Plan 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:

1. 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.
2. To support the local economies by promoting development of suitable land and buildings for retail, leisure, office and commercial uses within the City Centre and district centres ensuring the future needs are addressed and their continued vibrancy and viability maintained.

3. To strengthen the potential of local tourism and the development of suitable tourism infrastructure, cultural facilities, and accommodation for this important sector of the economy.
4. To support the connectivity and the continued regeneration of disadvantaged and deprived areas.
5. To grow the population of Belfast and connect with other cities across the UK and Ireland in supporting a greater level of inward investment.
6. To address current and future residential needs through ensuring sufficient suitable land is available to meet future requirements, and that new residential development is of an appropriate type, size, tenure and mix.
7. To promote and deliver high quality design by including policies to protect and enhance the built environment that fosters local distinctiveness.
8. To improve community safety and reduce the potential for antisocial behaviour or crime through an approach to new development focused on design quality.
9. To improve access for all groups in society to public services through the design and location of new development.
10. To protect and enhance the historic environment through effective management of proposed development and ensuring high quality design.
11. 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.
12. To ensure availability of land to facilitate sustainable patterns of development and promote travel by more sustainable modes of transport.
13. To support healthy lifestyles through ensuring sufficient land availability for accessible play, sport and recreation opportunities.
14. To protect, enhance and link the natural environment and biodiversity by managing the location and design of new development.
15. To protect and conserve the natural asset of Belfast's countryside, coast and hills by managing proposed development in sensitive areas.
16. To safeguard the environment by ensuring new development proposals address the potential risks in respect of environmental pollution or damage.
17. 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.
18. 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.
19. Ensure new development minimises the production of waste and supports recycling.

Strategic Aim - Vibrant Economy

-strengthened Belfast as the regional economic driver

Belfast is an important economic gateway for Northern Ireland with a thriving port, and its role as the administrative capital city. In support of the City and City Centre's role major employment location, there will continue to be a mix of retail, leisure, businesses, financial services, higher education, tourism, and other supporting functions appropriate for a Regional City.

Through the plan we will seek to create the conditions and support regeneration opportunities for attracting high quality inward investment and jobs. This will include creative 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 business.

The objectives linked to the Strategic Aims have been set out alongside the preferred options necessary to achieve the goal of a vibrant economy for Belfast:

1. 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.
2. To support the local economies by promoting development of suitable land and buildings for retail, leisure, office and commercial uses within the City Centre and district centres ensuring the future needs are addressed and their continued vibrancy and viability maintained.
3. To strengthen the potential of local tourism and the development of suitable tourism infrastructure, cultural facilities, and accommodation for this important sector of the economy.
4. To support the connectivity and the continued regeneration of disadvantaged and deprived areas.

Strategic Aim: Sustainable Place

- promoting development which enhances the health and well-being of communities, neighbourhoods and places.

Support the development of sustainable inclusive Neighbourhoods, which are well designed; and to provide a sufficient supply and choice of homes that will provide for the City's growing and diverse population. The Neighbourhoods will be accessible to a range of services and facilities, which will provide opportunities to improve health, well being and quality of life for everyone.

Protect and manage Belfast's built heritage, whilst also supporting innovative new uses and ensure that new developments enhances their distinctive character and features to contribute to the identity of local places.

The following objectives have been set along with the preferred options to achieve Belfast, a sustainable place:

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

6. To address current and future residential needs through ensuring sufficient suitable land is available to meet future requirements, and that new residential development is of an appropriate type, size, tenure and mix.
7. To promote and deliver high quality design by including policies to protect and enhance the built environment that fosters local distinctiveness.
8. To improve community safety and reduce the potential for antisocial behaviour or crime through an approach to new development focused on design quality.
9. To improve access for all groups in society to public services through the design and location of new development.
10. To protect and enhance the historic environment through effective management of proposed development and ensuring high quality design.

Strategic Aim: A Smart Connected and Resilient Place

- improving connectivity supporting the efficient movement of people, goods, energy and information to create a dynamic innovative 21st century city attractive to investors, businesses, residents and visitors.

Support an efficient integrated transport network to provide travel choices, which minimises congestion and pollution. Encourage improvements in air quality by expanding the green infrastructure network for walking, and cycling to encourage more active travel and increase the use of public transport whilst retaining appropriate provision for cars.

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 following objectives have been set along with the preferred options to achieve a smart connected and resilient place for Belfast:

11. 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.
12. To ensure availability of land to facilitate sustainable patterns of development and promote travel by more sustainable modes of transport.

Strategic Aim: A Green Place

- a protected, enhanced and attractive natural setting comprising the surrounding hills, coastline, Belfast Lough and the Lagan Valley Regional Park by reinforcing their uniqueness and accessibility to all who live, work and enjoy the City.

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. Protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity networks, trees, hedgerows, geodiversity sites and important habitats from loss or damage.

The following objectives have been set along with the preferred options to achieve Belfast, as a green place:

13. To support healthy lifestyles through ensuring sufficient land availability for accessible play, sport and recreation opportunities.
14. To protect, enhance and link the natural environment and biodiversity by managing the location and design of new development.
15. To protect and conserve the natural asset of Belfast's countryside, coast and hills by managing proposed development in sensitive areas.

In relation to **Minerals**:

16. To safeguard the environment by ensuring new development proposals address the potential risks in respect of environmental pollution or damage.

Strategic Aim: Low Carbon Future City

- support the capacity for adaption to environmental challenges and the transition to a low carbon City

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

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

The following objectives have been set along with the preferred options to achieve Belfast, as a low carbon, future city:

17. 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.
18. 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
19. Ensure new development minimises the production of waste and supports recycling