



Subject:	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council - Consultation on Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper
Date:	14 March 2017
Reporting Officer:	Keith Sutherland, Development Plans and Policy Manager
Contact Officer:	Mark Whittaker, Senior Planning Officer

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To present for consideration and comment the Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper (POP). A copy of the POP Summary Document is attached at Appendix 2 of this report.
1.2	The submissions closing date is 12 th April 2017. The proposed draft response from Belfast City Council is attached at Appendix 1 below, for the consideration of elected members.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	It is recommended that the Committee notes the public consultation of ANBC's POP. It is further recommended that the Committee considers the draft written response to the POP (see Appendix 1 below) and, if appropriate, approve it for submission to ANBC.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC) recently published its POP and has written to the City Council seeking our views. It has also written separately to the Council expressing a wish to continue to work together in preparing both LDPs and it has identified a number of general cross-boundary issues (See Appendix 3).
3.2	The ANBC POP sets out a vision and a number of key objectives for the new LDP. Further details on the vision and key objectives can be seen on page 4 of the summary POP. The main issues of particular interest and relevance to Belfast are summarised below.
3.3	The Spatial Growth Strategy seeks to focus growth in accordance with a settlement hierarchy, with Metropolitan Newtownabbey and Antrim town at the top of the hierarchy. Housing growth allocations are based on this hierarchy and ANBC's preferred option is for 13,000 new dwellings (650 per annum) up to 2035. A separate hierarchy of retail centres also places Antrim town centre and Abbey Centre at the top tier. This hierarchical approach to growth is considered to be appropriate and is supported.
3.3	Strategic Employment Locations (SEL) are identified across the Borough These are unlikely to impact on the regional economic role of Belfast City, being more focused on

	<p>large scale industrial development, as opposed to professional services/offices.</p>
3.5	<p>The significance of Belfast International Airport as a strategic asset for the Borough is noted. It is also clearly of regional significance and is of strategic importance to Belfast City. The status of the airport is considered appropriate. However, there appears to be little emphasis given to the airport's connectivity and, in particular, to improved public transport to Belfast City and other major centres of population and commerce. The potential of the nearby disused railway is not recognised in the POP. This is an issue that is considered worthy of raising in our consultation response.</p>
3.6	<p>In addition to airport accessibility, the wider issue of sustainable travel should be given additional consideration, in particular the high volumes of car-borne commuting into Belfast City. This is an important cross-boundary issue and measures should be explored to alleviate the problems associated with commuting by private car.</p>
3.7	<p>It is acknowledged that there are a number of other cross-boundary issues that need co-operation between both councils. These include housing growth, retail development and environmental protection issues, such as the Belfast Hills, nature conservation sites and the wider green and blue network. In addition, provision for cemeteries and crematoria is important and the City Council is continuing to explore options for addressing the medium and long term requirements to serve the city's needs, which might include facilities in adjoining areas. Continued joint discussion is required throughout all stages of the LDP process to ensure a joined-up and mutually beneficial approach.</p>
3.8	<p>The ANBC POP identifies a range of preferred options for the Borough and these are considered to be appropriate for the area. Many of the preferred options are unlikely to have any significant impact on Belfast City. The attached draft response highlights areas of support and mutual interest. Particular attention is drawn to the strategic role of Belfast International Airport and the need for improved connectivity by public transport. More generally, there is a need to promote and facilitate more sustainable forms of travel.</p>
3.9	<p>The ANBC POP generally represents a positive and proactive approach to future growth and sustainable development. There does not appear to be any conflict with our own growth and development aspirations. It forms a basis for continued partnership working with ANBC and we should welcome the POP and the opportunity to comment on it.</p> <p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u> There are no resource implications associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None noted.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> There are no relevant equality or good relations implications attached to this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices
	<p>Appendix 1 – Draft Council Response to ANBC's POP Public Consultation Appendix 2 – ANBC POP Summary Document Appendix 3 – ANBC Letter re: Cross-boundary issues</p>

Appendix 1: Draft Council Response to Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper

Planning & Place

Your reference P/FP/LDP/52

Our reference 245189

Date

Principal Planning Officer
Forward Planning Team
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
Mossley Mill
Carnmoney Road North
Newtownabbey
BT36 5QA

Dear Ms Mossman,

ANTRIM & NEWTOWNABBEY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2030 CONSULTATION ON PREFERRED OPTIONS PAPER

I refer to your recent consultation on your new Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper and thank you for affording the City Council the opportunity to comment on the documents. I can confirm that the City Council has considered the consultation documents and wishes to make the following comments at this time.

As you will be aware, Belfast City Council is currently engaging with the public on the Local Development Plan (LDP) and we published our Preferred Options Paper (POP) at the end of January for public consultation. We also acknowledge that you have written separately to the Council expressing a wish to continue to work together with the City Council in preparing both LDPs and you have identified a number of general cross-boundary issues.

The POP sets out your Council's vision for the Borough and a number of key objectives for the new LDP. These cover a range of issues, including economic development, high quality sustainable design, lands for housing, infrastructure & community requirements, connectivity and environmental protection. These are generally supported.

Spatial Growth Strategy

A key component of the POP is the Spatial Growth Strategy. This seeks to focus growth in accordance with a 6-tier settlement hierarchy, with the Metropolitan Newtownabbey and Antrim town areas, being the largest centres in the Borough, at Tiers 1 and 2 respectively. The POP proposes to classify Ballyclare as a "large town" (Tier 3), with Crumlin and Randalstown as "towns" (Tier 4). The POP also classifies villages and hamlets throughout the area (Tiers 5 & 6 respectively). The housing growth allocations are based on the settlement hierarchy and ANBC has set its preferred option to deliver 13,000 new dwellings (650 per annum) up to 2035. This build rate is higher than the revised DfI housing growth indicator but lower than the pre-crash building rate. This position is noted.

The Spatial Growth Strategy sets out a hierarchy of retail centres in the Borough, with Antrim town centre and Abbey Centre designated as Tier 1. The retail catchment Abbey Centre extends well into the Belfast City Council area. In this regard, whilst this is a long-established retail centre, any additional retail floor area should be carefully assessed to ensure no detrimental impact on Belfast

City Centre or other retail centres in the City. Smaller town centres (Tier 2), village/local centres (Tier 3) and neighbourhood centres (Tier 4) are also identified, with a proposal to designate a new district centre at Mossley West.

Strategic Employment Locations (SEL) are identified across the Borough, including existing large employment sites in Newtownabbey, Antrim and Ballyclare. The POP states that additional strategic locations will be considered, including in the smaller towns of Randalstown and Crumlin. The existing and new SELs are noted and these are unlikely to impact on the regional economic role of Belfast City, being more focused on large scale industrial development, as opposed to professional services/office-focused development.

Belfast International Airport

Particular note is made of the significance of Belfast International Airport as a strategic asset for the Council area. It is also clearly of regional significance and, in particular, its future development is of strategic importance to Belfast City. The preferred option is to allow the growth of the airport to be facilitated through planning policy to be included in the Draft Plan Strategy, with the airport and its environs to be designated as an SEL, the boundaries and details of which will be included in the Local Policies Plan.

The status and designation of the airport in the POP is considered appropriate and is supported by Belfast City Council. However, there appears to be little emphasis given to the airport's connectivity and, in particular, the potential to improve public transport to Belfast City and other major centres of population and commerce.

The airport is clearly a regional resource and opportunities to improve accessibility should be explored. This could include consideration of the potential for the reopening of the Knockmore link railway line (Lisburn to Antrim) to serve the airport and support broader sustainable growth. Improved airport accessibility by public transport and other sustainable travel modes will benefit those travelling through, working in or visiting the area and help to reduce the use of the private car. This is considered critical given the regional and strategic importance of the airport and could improve sustainable accessibility to other towns or villages close to the railway line, including Crumlin.

Other Comments

The POP includes a review of the suite of existing planning policy statements. This covers a wide range of planning issues, including natural heritage, open space, land use & transportation, waste management and renewable energy. The POP states that the broad thrust and direction of current operational planning policy is generally acceptable. This indicates that the planning policies to be contained in the new LDP are likely to be generally consistent with existing policy context and this approach is considered appropriate.

The POP identifies a range of preferred options for the Borough and these are considered to be appropriate for the area. Many of the preferred options are unlikely to have any significant impact on the Belfast City Council area. The proposed approach to Belfast International Airport is of particular interest to Belfast City Council. As referred to earlier in this response, the preferred option for the airport is generally supported. However, it is considered that the issue of sustainable transport to the airport area, in particular by public transport, should be given greater emphasis in the new LDP. The potential to reopen the nearby railway line and to provide a new station to serve the airport and surrounding area should be identified and supported in the new plan. Indeed, there are wider cross-boundary benefits of promoting and facilitating more sustainable forms of travel and the new plan should seek to identify policies and measures to achieve this. This could also include additional cycleways, greenways, bus priority routes and other measures to reduce car-borne travel into the City, in particular, the daily commute to work.

Cross-boundary issues, such as sustainable travel, environmental protection, retail growth and waste management, will require continued partnership working. In addition, additional provision for cemeteries and crematoria is also of cross-boundary significance. The City Council is continuing to explore options for addressing the medium and longer term requirements to serve the needs of the city's residents and it may be that any new capacity is outside of the Council's boundary in adjoining authorities.

Our position as the regional capital means that there are many linkages and synergies between our new LDP and those of adjoining authorities. This essentially reflects the growth and future planning of the city region area and ties into our bid for a city growth deal. There is a need for continued liaison and co-operation between both councils in developing and implementing each new LDP. Continued joint discussion is required throughout all stages of the LDP process to support a coordinated and mutually beneficial approach to strategic and cross boundary issues.

The POP generally represents a positive and proactive approach to future growth and sustainable development. The strategic approach and options identified do not conflict with our own growth and development aspirations. The published document and supporting information provides a basis for our continued joint working with ANBC and we welcome the POP and the opportunity to comment on it.

I trust that the above comments are helpful and will be considered when preparing the LDP documents. The current consultation stage is welcomed and I look forward continue working with you on our respective LDPs as they progress.

Should you require any further clarification, please contact Mark Whittaker, Development Planning & Policy Team, Planning & Place, Tel: 02890 320202 ext. 2321.

Yours sincerely

PHIL WILLIAMS
Director of Planning and Place