



<b>Subject:</b>	Development of Draft Plan Strategy
<b>Date:</b>	13 March 2018
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Keith Sutherland – Development Planning & Policy Manager
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Dermot O’Kane, Principal Planning Officer

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To provide an update on engagement with Members on the working version of the draft Plan Strategy prior to consideration by Committee and if appropriate commencement to the formal public consultation.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The Development Plan and Policy team is preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP) which will provide the planning framework for the City until the year 2035. The LDP will set out a clear vision for how the council area should evolve by outlining what type and scale of development should be encouraged and where it could be located. It will provide residents, statutory authorities, developers and other interested bodies with a combined policy framework and land use proposals that will deliver the strategic objectives of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and other regional planning policies.
2.2	The LDP will comprise of two development plan documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Plan Strategy - the strategic policy framework for the plan area encompasses a range of topics. It will set out the ambitious vision for Belfast as well as the proposed strategic policies required to deliver that vision.</li><li>• The Local Policies Plan - the next stage which will set our detailed policies and site specific proposals concerning the development and use of land in Belfast. It will consist of the local policies, including the site specific proposals, designations and land use zonings essential to deliver the councils vision, objectives and strategic policies, as set out in the wider Plan Strategy.</li></ul>
2.3	Once adopted, the complete LDP will supersede the current development plan and Planning Policy Statements produced by the Department.

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Issues</b>
3.1	We are currently in the process of producing the draft Plan Strategy. The draft Plan Strategy is a public consultation document and is not the final plan. It provides an outline of our aims regarding the future development of the city and this is an important part of the public involvement process. The new draft Plan Strategy includes a number of key strategies and overarching policies around sustainability, health and wellbeing and social cohesion, as well as new and amended policies which it's hoped will help to achieve the city's ambitions. The draft Plan Strategy policies are summarised in Appendix 1 of this report.
3.2	<b>Elected member engagement</b> As part of the ongoing engagement with Members, a workshop was held with the Planning Committee on the 12 <sup>th</sup> January 2018, to present a summary of the working version of the draft Plan Strategy policies for consideration. A further workshop open to all Elected Members was held on the 15 <sup>th</sup> February and in addition it was the intention to carry out Party Briefings in February. However, it was not possible to schedule the draft Plan Strategy discussion on the February agenda so it is the intention to carry out the party briefing in March.
3.3	The proposed next step will be to present the draft Plan Strategy to Committee for consideration and approval in April 2018. This timeline would be in accordance with the revised programme for the draft Plan Strategy development. If approved by SP&R and Council the next stage would be the publication of the Plan Strategy for public consultation (12 week public consultation, followed by 8 week consultation on representations). The timeline is very challenging and delay to any of the next steps could require further changes to the timetable which will be brought back to the Committee for consideration.
3.4	<b><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></b> There are no resource implications associated with this report.
3.5	<b><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></b> None noted.
3.6	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></b> There are no relevant equality or good relations implications attached to this report.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	<b>Appendix 1 – draft Plan Strategy policy summary</b>

## **Appendix 1**

### **Main Issues**

The draft Strategy includes a number of key strategies and overarching policies around sustainability, health and wellbeing and social cohesion, as well as new and amended policies. The policies are summarised under the ten headings below:

### **Growth and Settlement**

The LDP aligns with the Belfast Agenda aspirations to grow the population by 66,000 people, supporting an additional 46,000 jobs by 2035. This represents a significant departure from the suggested growth levels for the city. This results in a need for 32,860 new homes and 570,000 sq m of employment floorspace over the 15 year plan period. Almost all of this growth will be focussed on the City of Belfast, with central and locations that are highly accessible by sustainable transport modes.

As Belfast is principally one continuous built-up area, the Settlement Strategy seeks to divide the City into defined Settlement Areas to assist in the targeting of growth. The areas include Belfast City Centre, Harbour Estate and City Corridors (formerly referred to as Arterial Routes), but has been supplemented through the division of the remainder of Belfast into an Inner City and Outer Area.

This approach results in a number of policies which apply differentiated standards depending on the location within the Settlement. For example, the draft Plan Strategy proposes the introduction of residential density bands for different Settlement Areas, which will help to drive increases of density in locations that benefit from high accessibility.

### **Health & Wellbeing**

An overarching policy is included in the Draft LDP to ensure new development maximises opportunities to improve health and wellbeing for all residents and visitors, including through the creation of safe, attractive and connected neighbourhoods with the objectives of reducing the need to travel, promoting quality sustainable design and creating and improving a network of green and blue infrastructure.

This new approach places health and wellbeing as key considerations in assessing development proposals. This should assist in promoting healthy lifestyles and active travel, thereby helping to create inclusive and sustainable communities. Policies will also ensure that community infrastructure is given adequate protection and that new development contributes to appropriate new or improved facilities.

### **Community Cohesion**

In response to feedback, community cohesion and good relations has been elevated within the draft Plan Strategy as over-arching policy. This is the first time any LDP has attempted to address the unique good relation issues arising from Belfast's history, with key principles to be considered in the case of all development.

These include:

- The involvement of local communities;
- Supporting initiatives which remove physical infrastructure; and
- Design principles to encourage connectivity, permeability, safety and support shared spaces and services.

### **Housing**

The Housing Strategy accommodates the majority of the 32,690 homes required over the plan period within Belfast City, and indicates a three stage approach to delivery,

which will see the rate of delivery increasing over the course of the Plan Period as the economic outlook improves.

In terms of other policy requirements associated with the delivery of housing, there are a number of new policy requirements introduced, including:

- Requirement for a minimum of 20% of new homes to be affordable (social or intermediate), rather than allocating land specifically for social housing;
- Specification of an appropriate mix of houses sizes, types and tenures housing;
- Requirement for all new homes to be built to Lifetime Home standards;
- Target of 10% of larger housing developments to be wheelchair accessible;
- Enhanced requirements for the design quality of new residential development, including new build residential developments, extensions and alteration to existing houses, large scale apartment developments and the conversion or sub division of existing buildings for residential use; and
- Measures to manage scale of change from larger homes being sub-divided into flats, as well as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in key areas of the City, such as the Holyland.

### **Economy**

The policies within the Economy Section fall under three sub categories, namely employment, retail and City Centre. They build upon and compliment the Regional Development Strategy and the SPSS and seek to ensure the sustainable economic growth of Belfast, reinforcing its role as the economic driver for the region. The Draft Plan ensures an adequate supply of employment land over the plan period and critically, operates a sequential approach to controlling main town centre uses, including that of retail and office development.

The Draft Plan goes further than the current BMAP in respect to addressing wider societal and localised issues. This includes the control of hot food takeaways (as a mechanism of tackling childhood obesity), the management of the unrestricted retailing in the Boucher Road area (to protect the role and function of both the City Centre and District Centres), and the promotion of temporary and meanwhile uses to limit vacancy levels and reflect the changing dynamics on the high street.

Within the City Centre section, the policies seeks to ensure sustainable growth in development over the plan period and address concerns regarding overnight visitor accommodation and the associated night time and evening economy. The Draft Plan seeks to build on recent success and strengthen Belfast's competitiveness as a city destination that is enjoyed by both tourists and locals alike.

### **Environmental Quality & Resilience**

The draft LDP will ensure that all development maintains our environments and will seek to protect communities from pollution or contamination. In response to the threat arising from environmental change, including increased flood risk, the LDP policies will seek to mitigate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and make the city more resilient by incorporating measures to adapt to change.

These are important issues for Belfast and a key aim is to reduce carbon emissions through more sustainable travel patterns; promotion of renewable energy measures; reuse of existing built development and more energy efficient design.

The ability to adapt to change is critical to keep our city functioning and growing. The draft policies support measures to enhance green infrastructure measures; safeguard ecosystem services and ensure new development includes appropriate measures to

secure the safety of people and the protection of the development during extreme weather events.

The management of surface water and flood risk will be improved through a requirement for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments, including measures such as green roofs, ponds & swales, permeable surfaces and appropriate tree planting. The LDP will require developers to consider the incorporation of practical and appropriate SuDS measures as early as possible in the design process.

### **Green & Active**

The draft LDP policies covering the 'Green & Active' theme seek to protect our natural heritage and important landscapes, promote biodiversity and control development in the countryside areas around the city. The draft LDP also incorporates policies to protect and improve all types of open space, including parks, sports facilities, playgrounds, community/civic spaces, greenways and amenity areas. In addition, much greater emphasis is proposed to be given to the importance of trees. The draft LDP seeks to ensure trees are incorporated into development, including existing trees and new trees to secure an increase in tree cover to help enhance our natural heritage, amenity, environmental quality and resilience.

Linked to the above is a new policy that seeks to create, protect and improve a network of green and blue infrastructure across the entire district, which includes existing and potential connectivity corridors between individual sites and natural features, (such as parks, woodlands, rivers, the hills and nature conservation interests). This infrastructure has a number of different functions, including improving the quality and accessibility of open space, furthering biodiversity, assisting community cohesion, providing opportunities for active travel and enhancing ecosystem services – such as water/air quality and surface water management.

The primary rationale for this approach recognises the inter-related multiple functions of individual assets and the significant added benefits that derive from a joined-up approach, including in terms of accessibility, environmental quality and socio-economic wellbeing. The policy will be complemented by the Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan, which will assist in identifying the existing network and opportunities for additional connectivity and enhancement. These can be delivered through targeted investment, including by way of planning agreements and contributions from relevant development proposals.

### **Design and Heritage**

The Plan Strategy bring forward a number of new policies which focus on improving the overall quality of the built environment. Urban design policies within the LDP seek to provide strategic design guidance for the city that will promote high quality design and the protection of the city's locally distinctive features including the city's built heritage. This supports the SPPS objectives for LDPs to develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Policies will cover all development and will seek to ensure all development contributes to the character of an area but also help to positively define places, influence people's behaviour, encourage movement and create legible permeable environments.

A new Tall Buildings policy is proposed within this section of the LDP and seeks to manage and provide guidance for the development and siting of tall buildings within the city where there may be opportunities and/or demand for such development. The rationale behind this approach is to integrate the policy with the broader design policy objectives for the creation of a more coherent urban form, contributing to public spaces and appropriate enclosure patterns for key streets, whilst considering the potential impact

on heritage assets such as listed buildings, conservation areas and key city views as well as impact on amenity. The policy will be supported by spatial local policies and supplementary planning guidance.

### **Infrastructure, telecoms and utilities**

This section outlines policies for telecommunications, water & sewerage, electricity & gas and renewable energy. The SPPS objectives are to support sustainable economic growth as one of the five core planning principles. The draft policies seek to enable the development of infrastructure to support our sustainable growth aspirations whilst keeping the visual and environmental impact to a minimum. The policy approach recognises that the infrastructure needs should be met in a timely and co-ordinated way, with minimal visual and environmental impact.

A new approach is outlined for water and sewerage infrastructure, to encourage the use of sustainable initiatives and technologies in regard to water, wastewater management and drainage, including reducing water consumption and SuDS measures.

The policy includes support for renewable energy generating facilities at appropriate locations compatible with the built and natural environment in order to help achieve renewable energy targets. The new approach aims to encourage and support the incorporation of renewable energy technologies, including micro-generation and passive design, into appropriate new development proposals.

In relation to waste, the LDP aims to facilitate the development of new waste management infrastructure in appropriate locations or the upgrade of existing facilities to increase resource efficiency. The new approach promotes the 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.

### **Transportation**

The draft LDP policies relating to transportation aim to support sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need for motorised transport and prioritise active travel and travel by public transport. The policies will continue to promote an accessible environment for all which considers the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired and protect routes and land required for enhancing the existing transport network and delivering future transport schemes.

The new approach will promote and facilitate active travel and a modal change to more sustainable travel options throughout the city. The promotion of 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. In addition active travel contributes towards reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality and it can assist with the promotion of healthier lifestyles.