

Item/Min Ref:	Title of Report:	Officer presenting:
9	LDP Context, Population and Growth Strategy - Options for POP	Senior Planning Officer

1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this Paper is to present a summary of the salient issues, discussed at the LDP Workshops or supplied by Members in subsequent responses, that dealt with the respective LDP Topics. The Paper also seeks agreement from Members as to how best to progress these Topics towards the Preferred Options Paper (POP) stage of the LDP in Spring next year.

2 Background

- 2.1 As previously explained, the various technical aspects of Planning which comprise the LDP are each being considered systematically, each marked by the series of councillor Workshops and meetings of this Planning Committee. In accordance with the Workplan, this Committee meeting is a further stage in that Plan-making process. The meeting summarises the Discussion Papers from the above-mentioned Workshops, combines feedback from the wider body of Councillors and points towards the identification of Options. The Committee is asked to make preliminary decisions on the proposed Options, regarding these aspects, that the LDP is considering, as we proceed towards further evidence gathering, consultee / stakeholder input and then further Committee meetings (plus full Council approval) to finally decide on the LDP Preferred Options, to be published in the Spring of 2017.

3 Key Issues

LDP Context and Requirements

- 3.1 The paper at Appendix 2 advises members of the significant context of legislation, Regulations and Guidance that the Council must follow in the preparation of the LDP. There is also a significant locational context of social, economic and environmental issues and relationships that are external to our District, but which impact upon the Council's LDP. It should therefore be appreciated that the Council's members and officials are not 'unconstrained', as we prepare our LDP.
- 3.2 The Planning Act (NI) 2011 sets the statutory requirements for the Council to prepare its Local Development Plan (LDP), it defines the content, the process and procedures for the LDP, giving it a status for the Districts' future planning within the new plan-led system.

- 3.3 The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (NI) 2015 sets out the legislative definition of exactly what is to be contained within the LDP and how the preparation process is to run from start to adoption and subsequent monitoring, including an Independent Examination and approval by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).
- 3.4 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS, 2015) must be 'taken account of' in preparing the Council's LDP. The SPPS sets out the NI wide policy / guidance for the LDP and comprises 5 Core Planning Principles, guidance on the LDP production (under 8 headings) and lists the 16 key topic areas (with regional strategic objectives for each) of the broad strategic planning policy framework - for the LDP to consider. The SPPS also clarifies that the LDP Plan Strategy document will replace all of the current suite of Planning Policy Statements (PPS's) and other extant documents; this is a significant challenge in itself.
- 3.5 The Council's LDP must also take account of the NI Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), as well as the new Community Plan for the District. The LDP is expected to be the spatial expression of the Community Plan- which is due to be published in winter 2016.
- 3.6 The LDP is required to be subjected to a multi-faceted Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which incorporates a legally vital Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Additionally, the LDP needs to be subject of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Rural Proofing process throughout its preparation.
- 3.7 In terms of the locational context for the LDP, the city of Derry is expected to have primacy as the principal city of the North West, particularly as a linked Gateway with Letterkenny in Donegal. Similarly, Strabane town is identified as a main Hub, a key regional and cross border town on the key economic and transport corridor.
- 3.8 The Council's LDP must also recognise the social, economic, physical and environmental characteristics and relationships with our adjacent Council areas and key settlements, including Donegal. This includes the various overlapping catchments, complementarity / competition, connectivity and physical / environmental assets / constraints. The particularly unpredictable nature of the relationships with Donegal / ROI / EU in the upcoming post-Brexit era brings a particular challenge for the future LDP Planning of the District at this time.
- 3.9 In summary, it is critical that Members and Officials recognise the considerable regulatory and also locational context that applies in the preparation of the Council LDP.

Population and Growth Strategy

- 3.10 As the LDP is about planning for the homes, employment, services, etc. for our people, it is important to identify the key characteristics of the District's population, as well as trends and projected population levels over the LDP period. The Discussion Paper at Appendix 3 therefore examines our population, the implications for planning and hence starts to consider the broad context of our LDP 'Growth Strategy' to meet the needs of the District's people up to 2030.
- 3.11 The key characteristics of the population are summarised and categorised in terms of the 'equality' groupings, as well as deprivation and rurality. Some potential implications for the LDP have also been identified. The policy areas where a Local Development Plan is likely to have an impact on Section 75 groups is summarised in Table 11 of Appendix 3. With Members' agreement, this could serve as an initial screening for our Equality Impact Assessment.
- 3.12 Population projections for the District are currently being updated, but it appears that we need to plan for between 2, 000 and 10,000 extra people or less than 5,000 new households up to 2030. This is broadly in line with the recent Housing Growth Indicators (HGI) figure of 5,800 dwellings to 2030 (pro rata). Officials will continue to liaise closely with the NISRA and Council's statistician over the coming months so as to get firmer, agreed population / household projections. Members have recently discussed and taken issue with the new HGI figures, seeking further approaches to the officials / Minister of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).
- 3.13 There was discussion at the Workshop around the need for the LDP to indeed focus on meeting the needs of all of the District's population, with there being broad acceptance of the requirement to draw up a multi-strand growth strategy to underpin the LDP. Therefore, bearing in mind the requirements of the current / projected population, the LDP needs to begin to formulate a 'Growth Strategy' or strategic objectives for the Plan period. The Appendix 3 paper (para 4.13, p. 18-19) suggests key facets, under the sustainability headings of: Social - Accommodating People and Creating Places; Economic - Creating Jobs and Promoting Prosperity, and; Environment - Enhancing the Environment and Improving Infrastructure.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and Other Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial, equality, legal, HR, Improvement or other implications arising from this report, beyond those already outlined.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are requested to accept the contents of this Paper as part of the Council's 'evidence base' and particularly to acknowledge the regulatory and the locational contexts in which the LDP will be prepared.
- 5.2 Members are also asked to note the identified population characteristics and to agree the preliminary direction of the proposed 'growth strategy' as the basis of this 'options generation' stage, to be firmed up as part of the subsequent LDP Preferred Options stage.

Background Papers

Appendix 2 - 'LDP Context and Requirements' Discussion Paper, 4th July 2016

Appendix 3 - 'Population and Growth Strategy' Discussion Paper, 20th June 2016