

Title of Report:	Local Development Plan: Quarterly Update
Committee Report Submitted To:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	23rd September 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Noting
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2026-31)	
Strategic Priority No.4	Sustainability and Managing Our Natural and Built Environment
Outcome	A Local Development Plan that balances growth, environmental protection, and community needs.
Lead Officer	Principal Planning Officer

Budgetary Considerations	Not applicable in this case
Cost of Proposal	
Included in Current Year Estimates	
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	Not applicable in this case		
Input of Legal Services Required			
Legal Opinion Obtained			
Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals. Not applicable in this case.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) preparation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 the Council has a statutory duty to prepare an LDP for its Borough, that will, when adopted, replace the current Northern Area Plan (NAP) 2016.
- 2.2 Members will be aware, through the series of quarterly LDP and 6-month work programme updates to the LDP Steering Group (Planning Committee) and a series of meetings, workshops etc, of the work of the Council's Development Plan team that brought us to the current stage of draft Plan Strategy (dPS) preparation (see key events log at Appendix 1).

3.0 Studies to inform the LDP Preparation

Housing Study

- 3.1 At the request of Members, Council engaged Ulster University (UU) to carry out independent housing research on the new dwelling requirements in the Borough. The Study is currently informing the dPS preparation.
- 3.2 In response to the housing study recommendations and UU presentations a member workshop was held on 11th March 2026 to discuss the LDP housing allocation, housing distribution and sustainable development in the countryside policies. Following further discussion on this matter, at the 24th June 2026 Planning Committee Meeting, and at the request of members, a meeting between the LDP Team and Planning Committee Members is scheduled for 15th September 2026 to discuss outstanding matters.

Retail & Leisure Capacity Study

- 3.3 The Council engaged Nexus Planning to undertake a Retail & Commercial Leisure Capacity Study for the Borough. The Study was made available to view on the Council's website on 4th February 2026. The LDP Policy Briefing Note that accompanied the Study is currently informing the dPS preparation.

4.0 LDP Timetable

- 4.1 Members will be aware that, following a request for further information on the necessity for a timetable revision, DfI (who has the legislative power to call in an LDP) agreed to Revision 4 on the basis of a requirement for a housing study to inform key elements of the Plan. The Council published the revised timetable in January 2025, setting out an indicative dPS publication date of autumn/winter 2026.

- 4.2 Revision 4 included the procurement of consultants to carry out the housing study. However, a protracted procurement process, resulting from a nil-return to the initial advertisement, a longer than expected project timeline (arising from additional meetings and presentations) and lack of agreement, to date, on key issues affecting the Borough (mainly relating to housing allocation, housing distribution and sustainable development in the countryside policies) has impacted on the ability to meet the indicative dates set out in the Revised LDP timetable i.e. autumn/winter 2026.
- 4.3 This matter will also be discussed at the upcoming Steering Group (Planning Committee) meeting on 15th September.
- 4.4 In the meantime, officials will continue to update the robust evidence base required to inform the LDP preparation and, where necessary, further statutory consultations and LDP workshops will be scheduled. In addition to this, any further revision to the published timetable will be presented to members, prior to informing the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) and seeking formal agreement with DfI.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the Planning Committee note the content of this Report.

Appendix 1: LDP Preparation: Key Events log since August 2022.

Date	Event
24th August 2022	dPS publication document presented at Planning Committee. Members resolved to proceed to Full Council for dPS ratification prior to publication and public consultation.
1st November 2022	dPS publication presented at Full Council Meeting. Council resolved to defer for further consideration and discussion with Party Groups.
November - December 2022	Series of Party Group Meetings held. This resulted in further evidence gathering and consequential updates to the Council's evidence base were also carried out.
August -September 2023	Further series of Party Group Meetings held following Local Government Elections. This resulted in further evidence gathering and consequential updates to the Council's evidence base were also carried out.
7th December 2023	All-Member Workshop held. Agreed to set up a LDP Working Group. Requested a paper on this to be brought before the Planning Committee for agreement.
24 th January 2024	Paper presented to Planning Committee seeking agreement to set up the LDP Working Group. Members resolved to proceed.
19 th March 2024	LDP Working Group Meeting held. Members agreed to officers preparing a paper for CP&R Committee to procure independent research to inform the LDP preparation.
24 th March 2024	Paper presented to Planning Committee seeking agreement on revised LDP Timetable. Members resolved to agree.
4 th April 2024	Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) consulted on revised LDP timetable.
10 th April 2024	Response received from PAC on revised LDP Timetable.
11 th April 2024	Member comment sought on the procurement Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1) prior to presentation of the proposal at the 23 rd April 2024 Corporate Policy and Resources (CP&R) Committee.
23 rd April 2024	Paper presented at CP&R Committee seeking agreement on the procurement of consultant/s. Members resolved to agree.
24 th May 2024	Tender advert issued.
2 nd July 2024	Revised LDP Timetable sent to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for agreement.
10 th July 2024	Tender process closed. The Council received no submissions in response to the advert.
28 th August 2024	Paper outlining the outcome of the procurement exercise presented to Planning Committee. Members resolved that planning officials make contact with Ulster University (UU) to discuss housing research to inform the Plan preparation.
3 rd September 2024	Planning Officials initiated contact and discussions with UU.
8 th October 2024	Planning Officials held a scoping meeting with UU.

9 th October 2024	LDP Working Group Meeting held. Agreed to officers preparing a paper for CP&R Committee seeking agreement for a Direct Award Contract (DAC) to UU to undertake independent research to inform the LDP preparation.
24 th October 2024	Planning Officials met with UU to discuss detail of research to be undertaken.
11 th November 2024	SLT approval of award of DAC to UU.
26 th November 2024	CP&R Committee Agreement on award of DAC to UU.
3 rd December 2024	Full Council ratification of award of DAC to UU.
4 th December 2024	Agreement reached with DfI on Revised LDP Timetable (4).
10 th December 2024	Award of DAC to UU.
17 th December 2024	Progress Meeting with UU.
8 th January 2025	Revised LDP Timetable (4) Published.
24 th February 2025	Progress Meeting with UU.
24 th March 2025	Revised Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (SCI) published. Progress meeting with UU.
3 rd April 2025	Progress Meeting with UU.
29 th April 2025	Progress Meeting with UU.
12 th May 2025	Progress Meeting with UU.
11 th June 2025	Progress Meeting with UU.
12 th June 2025	Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study – initiation meeting with Nexus.
23 rd July 2025	Progress Meeting with UU.
24 th July 2025	Progress Meeting with Nexus.
6 th August 2025	Meeting with Mark Graham, Chief Executive Co-Ownership Housing.
28 th August 2025	LDP Steering Group Workshop: UU Presentation – Housing Study: Interim Findings.
17 th November 2025	LDP Steering Group Workshop: UU Presentation – Housing Study: Final Findings.
6 th January 2026	Notice of Motion requesting that UU present the Housing Report to Full Council was accepted. Deputation Workshop scheduled for 3 rd February 2026.
3 rd February 2026	UU presented Housing Study at Deputation Workshop.
4 th February 2026	Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study published.
25 th February 2026	Planning Committee agrees to the use of the Housing Study to inform the LDP preparation.
2 nd March 2026	Plan Manager and Planning Committee Chair (Cllr Kane) attended British Irish Parliamentary Assembly Meeting.

11 th March 2026	All-Member LDP Workshop held: Housing Allocation, Housing Distribution and draft Sustainable Development in the Countryside policies.
15 th April 2026	Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study update to be presented at RSUA/RTPI meeting.
15 th April 2026	Staff training session on Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study to be provided by Nexus.
21 st April 2026	Nexus presented the Retail and Commercial Leisure Capacity Study at a Land & Property Committee pre-meeting/workshop.
24th June 2026	Members requested a meeting (after summer recess) with the LDP team to discuss the Housing Study and dPS preparation.
15 th September 2026	LDP Team & Steering Group (Planning Committee) meeting scheduled.