



30 August 2025

Re: Proposal to Declassify Derryboye from a Small Settlement to Open Countryside., Newry Mourne and Down District Council Local Development Plan 2035.

I am writing to you as a concerned resident regarding Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Draft Plan Strategy, which proposes to remove Derryboye's designation as a "small settlement" and instead reclassify it as "open countryside."

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS 2035) and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) both encourage the sustainable growth of rural settlements, recognising their role in sustaining local communities, services, and rural schools.

Removing small settlement status from Derryboye undermines these policies and reduces opportunities for managed growth in line with regional planning objectives. The proposed designation as open countryside fails to reflect the existing character, cohesiveness, and identity of Derryboye.

This proposal is deeply worrying, and I would respectfully ask for your support in opposing it for the following reasons:

1. **Community Sustainability** – Derryboye may be small, but it provides a focal point for the surrounding rural area. Declassification will restrict opportunities for new homes for young families, leading to depopulation and making it harder to sustain local schools, churches, and community groups.
2. **Loss of Identity** – Derryboye has an established built form and clear settlement character. The settlement originates around a road junction (5 road ends), which naturally serves as a focal point and organising feature for the surrounding development. The frontage plots create a line of development, forming a coherent settlement edge rather than sporadic or isolated dwellings. Therefore, reinforcing the identity of Derryboye as a place rather than a stretch of countryside. While individual plots vary in scale, they are positioned closely enough to establish a cohesive built form. This reflects the characteristics of a rural settlement, not dispersed farmsteads or isolated countryside dwellings. Removing its designation ignores the reality on the ground and undermines the identity of the community.

3. **Inconsistency**– The council has not provided sufficient justification or evidence that Derryboye fails to meet the criteria for settlement designation. The technical supplements to accompany the Draft Plan strategy do not appear to contain a settlement analysis for Derryboye. Declassification of the small settlement was not proposed at the Preferred options stage of the plan process. Para 6.7 of tech supplement 1 states, ‘ *As a result of changing circumstances in some rural areas, including the closure of local schools or businesses, some settlements which previously met the criteria for designation as small settlements can no longer justify this designation. Following a full review of existing settlements, Carrickinab, Derryboye, Drumaghlis and Tullyherron have been declassified from small settlements to open countryside. Following an evaluation, it was not considered that these settlements exhibited a sufficient level of service provision or population to justify carrying them forward as small settlements. Upon the adoption of the Plan Strategy these clusters will be considered as open countryside.*’

There have been no such changes in Derryboye, the Primary school on Manse Road (although not within the settlement limit) is thriving and has actually opened a preschool since the development of the current Area Plan.

The evaluation does not appear to be available within the background papers. Technical supplement 7B – Strategic settlement appraisals do not include an appraisal of Derryboye or any of the proposed declassified small settlements.

4. **Future Growth and Local Economy** – Small settlements like Derryboye provide a controlled and sustainable way for rural communities to grow. If the settlement limit is removed, any future development risks being piecemeal and unsustainable, which could harm both the landscape and the local economy.

Derryboye displays the development pattern of a small rural settlement, with a defined boundary, a coherent cluster of buildings, and a recognisable character. It is clearly distinct from open countryside and therefore should retain its status as a designated small settlement in the Local Development Plan.

For all of these reasons, I believe the proposed de- designation is unfair, unnecessary, and harmful to the long-term future of the community.

I would therefore be grateful if you could support residents in ensuring that Derryboye retains its status as a designated small settlement.

Thank you for your time and support on this important issue. Please feel free to contact me to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

