



Draft Plan Strategy Representation Form

Please complete this representation form online and email to ldp@nmandd.org or alternatively print and post a hardcopy to: -

Local Development Plan Team
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

ALL REPRESENTATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN 5PM ON MONDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2025

Section A | Your Details

Q1 Are you responding as individual, as an organisation or as an agent acting on behalf of individual, group or organisation? *Please only tick one:*

- ☐ **Individual** *(Please fill in the remaining questions in this section, then proceed to Section B)*
- ☐ **Organisation** *(Please fill in the remaining questions in this section, then proceed to Section C)*
- ☒ **Agent** *(Please fill in the remaining questions in this section, then proceed to Section D)*

Q2 What is your name?

Title			
First Name	Seamus	Last Name	Fay
Address	11 Loughinisland Road		
	Loughinisland		
	Downpatrick		
Email			

Q3 Did you respond to the previous Preferred Options Paper?

- ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Unsure

Section B | Individuals *(if different to Q2 above)*

Address			
Town		Postcode	

Section C | Organisation

If you have selected that you are responding as an organisation, there are a number of details that we are legally required to obtain from you.

If you are responding on behalf of a group or organisation, please complete this section.

Organisation / Group Name			
Your Job Title / Position			
Organisation / Group Address (if different to above)			
Address			
Town		Postcode	

Section D | Agents

If you have selected that you are responding on behalf of another individual, organisation or group there are a number of details that we are legally required to obtain from you.

Please provide details of the individual, organisation or group that you are representing.

Client Contact Details

Title			
First Name		Last Name	
Address			
Town		Postcode	

Q4

Would you like us to contact you, your client or both in relation to this response or future consultations on the LDP? (please select one item only)

☒ Agent ☐ Client ☐ Both

Section E | Soundness

The draft Plan Strategy will be examined at Independent Examination in regard to its soundness. Accordingly, your responses should be based on soundness and directed at specific strategic policies or proposals that you consider to be unsound, along with your reasons. The tests of soundness are set out below in Section I.

Those wishing to make representations seeking to change the draft Plan Strategy should clearly state why they consider the document to be unsound having regard to the soundness tests in Section I. It is important that when you are submitting your representation that your response reflects the most appropriate soundness test(s) which you believe the draft Plan Strategy fails to meet. There will be no further opportunity to submit information once the consultation period has closed unless the Independent Examiner requests it.

Those who make a representation seeking to change the draft Plan Strategy should also state whether they wish to be heard orally at the Independent Examination.

Section F | Type of Procedure

Q5 Please indicate if you would like your representation to be dealt with by (*please select one item only*):

- ☐ **Written** (Choose this procedure to have your representation considered in written form only)
- ☒ **Oral Hearing** (Choose this procedure to present your representation orally at the public hearing)

Unless you specially request a hearing, the Independent Examiner will proceed on the basis that you are content to have your representation considered in written form only. Please note that the Independent Examiner will be expected to give the same careful consideration to written representations as to those dealt with by oral hearing.

Section G | Is the draft Plan Strategy Sound?

Your comments should be set out in full. This will assist the Independent Examiner in understanding the issues you raise. You will only be able to submit further additional information if the Independent Examiner invites you to do so.

Sound

If you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be Sound and wish to support the draft Plan Strategy, please set out your comments below.

No - see supporting submission

Section H | **Unsound**

In this section we will be asking you to specify which part(s) of the draft Plan Strategy you consider to be unsound.

Q6 If you consider that the draft Plan Strategy is unsound and does not meet one or more of the tests of soundness below, you must indicate which test(s) you consider it does not meet, having regard to Development Plan Practice Note 6 available at:

Development Plan Practice Note 6 Soundness (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

Please note if you do not identify a test(s) your comments may not be considered by the Independent Examiner.

Note:

If you wish to inform us that more than one part of the draft Plan Strategy is unsound each part should be listed separately. Complete this page in relation to one part of the draft Plan Strategy only.

Section I | Tests of Soundness

Procedural tests

- P1** Has the plan been prepared in accordance with the Council's Timetable and the Statement of Community Involvement?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- P2** Has the Council prepared its Preferred Options Paper and taken into account any representations made?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- P3** Has the plan been subject to Sustainability Appraisal including Strategic Environmental Assessment?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- P4** Did the Council comply with the regulations on the form and content of its plan and on the procedure for preparing the plan?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Consistency test

- C1** Did the Council take account of the Regional Development Strategy?
☐ Yes ☒ No
- C2** Did the Council take account of its Community Plan?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- C3** Did the Council take account of policy and guidance issued by the Department?
☐ Yes ☒ No
- C4** Has the Plan had regard to other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the Council's district or to any adjoining council's district?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Coherence and Effectiveness tests

- CE1** The plan sets out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations logically flow and where cross boundary issues are relevant is it in conflict with the plans of neighbouring Councils.
☐ Yes ☐ No
- CE2** The strategy, policies and allocations are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and are founded on a robust evidence base.
☐ Yes ☒ No
- CE3** There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.
☐ Yes ☐ No
- CE4** The plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.
☐ Yes ☐ No

Section J | Which part(s) of the draft Plan Strategy are you commenting on?

Your response should clearly relate to the relevant section, paragraph or policy of the draft Plan Strategy. If you consider more than one part of the draft Plan Strategy is unsound, please number your issues clearly and provide this information in the same running order following your original comment (i.e. relevant Policy, Section or Proposals Map).

Relevant Policy number(s)

SETT1

(and/or)

Relevant Section/Page Number

(and/or)

Proposals Map

Section J | Which part(s) of the draft Plan Strategy are you commenting on?

Please give full details of why you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be unsound having regard to the test(s) you have identified above. Please be as clear and concise as possible.

See attached submission

If you consider the draft Plan Strategy to be unsound, please provide details of what change(s) you consider necessary to make the draft Plan Strategy sound.

See attached submission

Section K | Monitoring

Do you consider there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring of the draft Plan Strategy?

☐ Yes☐ No

Do you have any comments?

Section L | Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Do you have any comments on the SA?

Section M | Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

Do you have any comments on the HRA?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have indicated Yes, please set out your comments on the HRA below:

Section N | Equality Impact Screening Report (EQIA)

Do you have any comments on the EQIA?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have indicated Yes, please set out your comments on the EQIA below:

Section O | Rural Needs Impact Assessments (RNIA)

Do you have any comments on the RNIA?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have indicated Yes, please set out your comments on the RNIA below:

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2035

Representations to Draft Plan Strategy
Lands at Bishop's Court Road, Kilclief



Kilclief
LDP Reps
Final
September 2025



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This representation has been prepared by Fay Planning Consultancy on behalf of our client, in response to the consultation in respect of the Newry Mourne & Down District Council (*'the Council'*) Local Development Plan 2035 Draft Plan Strategy (*'DPS'*) issued on 27th June 2025.
- 1.2 This representation relates to the growth strategy, the proposed settlement hierarchy, and the distribution of housing land within that hierarchy.
- 1.3 It relates to land that is not currently zoned under the Ards & Down Area Plan 2015 and responds to the relevant strategy and policy considerations set out in the DPS with particular regard to the site-specific interests.
- 1.4 The consideration of the Council proposals and the preparation of this response to that proposal has taken account of relevant background documents that are material to the consideration of this matter.
- 1.5 The Council need to reconsider the designation of Kilclief as a small settlement and to allocate appropriate growth to the settlement. A failure to do so would render the DPS unsound in respect of:
 - Consistency Test C1 – it fails to take proper account of the Regional Development Strategy
 - Consistency Test C3 – it fails to take proper account of policy and guidance issued by the Department, namely the SPPS
 - Coherence & Effectiveness Test CE2 - it fails to develop strategies, policies and allocations that are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and in particular, it has not followed the Councils own evidence base.
- 1.6 We respectfully request that the Council re-consider this proposal, taking account of the concerns raised in this submission. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with the Council.
- 1.7 Our clients wish to be represented in any inquiry process to discuss these matters further.

2.0 KILCLIEF IN THE SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

Strategic Designation SETT1 Settlement Hierarchy

- 2.1 The DPS proposal under SETT1 is to retain Kilclief as a small settlement (Table 5: SETT1 Settlement Hierarchy). This proposal is supported by the analysis in the Strategic Settlement Appraisal (DPS, Appendix 7B) which maintains the position from the current development plan – the Ards and Down Area Plan 2015. The appraisal states that within the RDS Infrastructure wheel, Kilclief meets a few criteria within tier 1 (presumably this should read tier 3?) including access to clean water and sewage disposal, street lighting and bus service. The Preferred Options Paper states that, in order to merit designation as a new small settlement, a candidate will need to display a sense of cohesion and place and offer one or more community facility. However, after further consideration of what qualifies as a small settlement, these criteria have been further expanded so that candidate settlements should contain at least 3 of the following criteria:
- i. A significant number of dwellings
 - ii. Social facilities and services
 - iii. Commercial facilities
 - iv. The focus of an active community.
- 2.2 The Settlement Appraisal goes on to state that: *“Kilclief has a significant number of dwellings, a community garden, a Church and a community defibrillator. There is evidence of an active community, and the community garden provides a focus for this community. There is also a GAC 0.96km to the North of the settlement.”*
- 2.3 Our analysis of the settlement of Kilclief is that it meets a number of the criteria in the RDS Infrastructure Wheel that would merit consideration of the settlement being classified as a village in the settlement hierarchy. In addition to the infrastructure and social facilities referenced in the Council settlement appraisal, the local primary school, St Malachy’s Kilclief is situated c.700m from the defined settlement limit and clearly serves the settlement as well as the surrounding rural hinterland. The same applies to St. Malachy’s Church Kilclief and cemetery, located beside school. Glebe House, a residential and activity centre is located less than 300m west of the settlement limit.
- 2.4 It is our considered view that the settlement merits consideration as a village rather than a small settlement.
- 2.5 The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 confirms that, for the purpose of its spatial framework those places outside the Principal Cities, the Main and Local Hubs are identified as constituting the rural area. It acknowledges that the recent growth in the rural community living in small towns, villages, and small settlements in the countryside, reverses a long-term trend of population decline. At paragraph 3.94 the RDS stresses that: *‘we must also strive to keep our rural areas sustainable and ensure that people who live there, either through choice or birth, have access to services and are offered opportunities in terms of accessing education, jobs, healthcare and leisure.’*
- 2.8 One of the 8 stated aims of the RDS is to support our towns and villages and rural communities to maximise their potential: *“Our rural areas including our towns and villages have a key role in supporting economic growth. They offer opportunities in terms of their potential for growth in new sectors, the provision of rural recreation and tourism, their attractiveness as places to*

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invest, live and work, and their role as a reservoir of natural resources and highly valued landscapes.” Therefore, in that context, while acknowledging the need to grow the population of hubs and clusters (SFG12), the RDS also emphasises (SFG13) the importance of sustaining rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside as the distinctive settlement pattern of main and small towns, villages and dwellings in the open countryside is unique within these islands. “The rural community is the custodian of our exceptional natural and built environment. In rural areas, the aim is to sustain the overall strength of the rural community living in small towns, villages, small rural settlements and the open countryside.”

- 2.9 The RDS also recognises that there are wide variations across Northern Ireland in terms of economic, social and environmental characteristics of rural areas. The DPS must recognise these differences and reflect the RDS identified need to be sensitive to local needs and environmental issues including the ability of settlements and landscapes to absorb development. Key considerations will be the role and function of rural settlements and accessibility to services.
- 2.10 Further, Kilclief, as the local settlement, plays a critical role in supporting local services and amenities. These include the local sports clubs and particularly Kilclief Ben Dearg GAA Club located less than 800m, north of the settlement as well as the local churches and the primary school.
- 2.11 St Malachy’s Primary School, Kilclief is struggling to maintain enrolment at a level that will ensure its longer-term sustainability.

School Year	Year 1 Intake	Year 7 Departures	Total Enrolment
2020/2021	6	11	53
2021/2022	1	9	44
2022/2023	6	7	40
2023/2024	5	10	36
2024/2025	7	5	34

Table 1: St. Malachy’s PS Enrolment Numbers 2020-2025

- 2.12 The Department of Education’s Sustainable Schools policy states that primary schools should have at least 140 pupils in urban areas and 105 in rural areas to be sustainable. St Malachy’s Primary School, on current trends would appear to be a rural school at risk of closure unless those trends change reasonably soon. That would have a devastating effect on the Kilclief parish and community and is contrary to the objectives of the RDS and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). (See attached Letter from St. Malachy’s PS, Appendix 2)

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- 2.13 A Queen's University Study¹ on the relationships between small rural primary schools and their communities in Northern Ireland drew the following conclusions:
- Small rural schools are also perceived to have similar strengths, most common being their strong relationship with the community, the low pupil-to-teacher ratio (ideal to meet children's individual needs), and the family-like environment where everybody knows and supports each other.
 - Small rural schools are a big part of their rural communities. Some are perceived to be 'at the heart of the community'. This can mean different things depending on the school, but they often are a 'meeting point' where people come together. Schools organise community events, share resources with different groups, and contribute to the economy of the area, among many other things.
 - The relationship between the school and the community was found to be a powerful, mutual, dynamic relationship, the intricacies of which depended on the historic, social and geographic context of the school itself. Bringing children to, working in, and attending the school were perceived as reinforcing a sense of belonging and pride to be part of that community.
 - Interviewees in the case study schools were dismayed at the prospect of losing the school, arguing that it would be the break-up/end of the community if that happened.
- 2.14 Kilclief as a settlement has a critical role to play in the future viability of the community's primary school and the DPS should make provision to allow appropriate growth of the settlement to ensure that there is modest provision for new housing in the locality, of a scale that does not diminish the overall objective of the RDS settlement hierarchy and thereby sustain rural communities and critical services, including education, in line with the RDS strategic objectives.
- 2.15 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) directs that, in preparing LDPs councils must take account of the RDS 2035, the Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, the SPPS and any other policies or advice in guidance issued by the Department such as landscape character assessments.
- 2.16 The SPPS states that, in order to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the countryside as a place to invest, live and work, the countryside requires a sustainable approach to new development, consistent with the RDS. The RDS recognises that to sustain rural communities, new development and employment opportunities are required which respect local, social and environmental circumstances. Facilitating development in appropriate locations is considered necessary to ensure proposals are integrated appropriately within rural settlements or in the case of countryside locations, within the rural landscape.
- 2.17 The SPPS stresses that Government policy recognises the wide variations in the economic, social and environmental characteristics of rural areas and requires that policy should be tailored to reflect these differences, be sensitive to local needs and sensitive to environmental issues, including the ability of settlements and landscapes to absorb development. The regional strategic objectives of the SPPS are to:

¹ Bagley, C., & Fargas, M. (2025). Hollowing out communities: small rural schools in Northern Ireland and the threat of closure. In J. D. Johnson, & H. L. Harmon (Eds.), *Handbook on Rural and Remote Education* (pp. 461–474). Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035307722.00040>

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- manage growth to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development which supports a vibrant rural community;
 - conserve the landscape and natural resources of the rural area and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from the actual or potential effects of pollution;
 - facilitate development which contributes to a sustainable rural economy; and
 - promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development.
- 2.18 Our client supports the overall vision of the DPS and welcomes the social objectives to deliver the vision. In particular, the overall social objective of: ‘Accommodating People, Creating Quality Places and Improving Health and Wellbeing’ and the specific objectives of:
- *To provide for vital and vibrant rural communities in our villages and small settlements which meet the daily needs of their rural hinterland whilst protecting the countryside by accommodating sustainable growth.*
 - *To recognise the need of growing families, elderly and disabled by accommodating development which allows people to remain within their communities.*
- 2.19 However, the DPS needs to provide an appropriate response to the challenges facing Kilclief and its rural hinterland. The settlement meets many of the required criteria to qualify as a designated village and the allocation of growth potential to the settlement should reflect that position and the needs of the local community to retain and provide sustainable support to their local primary school.
- 2.20 Our clients land (See Appendix 1) would provide for modest and appropriate growth of the settlement. It is land was previously deemed worthy of inclusion within the settlement limit for the Ards & Down Area Plan 2015 and was only removed as a trade-off between that land and another option that was deemed to provide more consolidation. That preferred option has now been developed, and our client’s land does remain the next best option to provide the growth that Kilclief needs to fulfil its role as the local settlement for its associated rural hinterland in that it would consolidate the development limit along the Bishop’s Court Road.
- 2.21 The Council need to reconsider the designation of Kilclief as a small settlement and to allocate appropriate growth to the settlement. A failure to do so would render the DPS unsound in respect of:
- Consistency Test C1 – it fails to take proper account of the Regional Development Strategy
 - Consistency Test C3 – it fails to take proper account of policy and guidance issued by the Department, namely the SPPS
 - Coherence & Effectiveness Test CE2 - it fails to develop strategies, policies and allocations that are realistic and appropriate having considered the relevant alternatives and in particular, it has not followed the Councils own evidence base.

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3.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The Council proposal to retain Kilclief as a small settlement rather than as a village in the settlement hierarchy is not based on robust evidence.
- 3.2 There is a demonstrable interdependency between local schools, churches and their community. If pupil numbers fall the local primary school will be under threat of closure and those critical community connections will be lost. That outcome is at odds with the objectives of the RDS, SPPS and the DPS vision and strategic objectives.
- 3.3 Designating Kilclief as a village and making provision for an appropriate level of growth can assist in reducing that risk.
- 3.4 Our clients' lands offer an appropriate option to accommodate that appropriate growth.
- 3.5 We respectfully request that the Council re-consider this proposal, taking account of the concerns raised in this submission. We would welcome any opportunity to discuss these matter further with the Council.
- 3.6 Our clients wish to be represented in any inquiry process to discuss these matters further.



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APPENDIX 1: SUBJECT LANDS

ACEmap®
Single

Customer Ref:

Printed: Customer Ref:
Centre Point (Easting, Northing): 358963, 345383
BISHOPSCOURT ROAD, KILCLIEF, DOWNPATRI

Scale: 1:2,500
Order no. ORD
Plan No. 22508SW



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Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this map at the time of publication. Land & Property Services cannot, however, accept responsibility for errors or omissions and when such are brought to our attention, the amendment of any future publication as appropriate shall be entirely at our discretion. Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland and ACDmap® are registered Trademarks of Department of Finance and Personnel.



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APPENDIX 2: LETTER FROM St. MALACHY'S PS

Saint Malachy's Primary School, Kilclief.

8 Kilclief Road, Kilclief, Downpatrick, BT30 7PA

Tel: 02844 881477 www.stmalachysps.com

E-Mail: info@stmalachyspskilclief.downpatrick.ni.sch.uk

Principal: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Friday 19th September 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Support for Planning Proposal – Kilclief Settlement Designation and Sustainable Growth

On behalf of St. Malachy's Primary School, Kilclief, I am writing to express our full support for the planning proposal submitted by Fay Planning Consultancy regarding the reclassification of Kilclief from a small settlement to a village within the Newry, Mourne & Down Local Development Plan 2035.

As a vital part of the Kilclief community, our school plays a central role in the educational, social, and cultural life of the area. However, as highlighted in the proposal, our enrolment numbers have been steadily declining over recent years, placing the long-term sustainability of the school at risk. This trend, if not addressed, could have devastating consequences for the local community, including the loss of a key educational and social hub.

We strongly agree with the proposal's assertion that modest and appropriate growth within Kilclief is essential to support the viability of local services, including our school. The proposed development would help attract and retain families in the area, thereby supporting pupil numbers and ensuring that St. Malachy's can continue to serve future generations. We believe this is a necessary and positive step toward securing the future of our school and the wider Kilclief community.

We respectfully urge the Council to reconsider the current designation and support the proposed growth strategy for Kilclief.

Yours sincerely,
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

St. Malachy's Primary School, Kilclief