

Plean Forbartha Áitiúla 2035 **Dréacht-Straitéis an Phlean** **Local Development Plan** **Draft Plan Strategy 2035**

**Forlíonadh Teicniúla 1 – An Chéimiúlacht
Lonnaíochta agus Measúnú Straitéiseach ar
Lonnaíochtaí**

Meitheamh 2025

**Technical Supplement 1 – Settlement
Hierarchy and Strategic Settlement
Evaluation**

June 2025

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1.0 Introduction

Purpose of this document

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to bring together the evidence base that has been used to inform the preparation of the settlement hierarchy of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) draft Plan Strategy. It forms one of the subject based technical supplements that should be read alongside the draft Plan Strategy, to provide justification for the policies proposed therein.
- 1.2 This technical supplement builds upon and updates LDP Paper 1 (2nd Revision): Population and Growth - Settlement Hierarchy¹ (October 2015) and LDP Paper 15: Strategic Settlement Evaluation² (December 2017) which provides an overview on the existing settlement hierarchy in the Council area and considers formulating a settlement strategy for accommodating future growth across the district.
- 1.3 This technical supplement provides an overview of the regional and local policy context and how this has influenced the proposed settlement hierarchy for Newry, Mourne and Down. This paper also outlines how other elements of the evidence base, including both public responses and statutory body responses to the POP, and councillor engagement, have been considered in the formulation of policies.

Planning and the Settlement Hierarchy

- 1.4 The objective of the planning system, consistent with the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (The 2011 Act), is to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving wellbeing. This means the planning system should positively and proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland.
- 1.5 The Settlement Hierarchy provides the framework by which the Spatial Growth Strategy is delivered in the most sustainable way, by guiding development to the most suitable locations and ensuring that the scale of development is appropriate to the capacity of the settlement.
- 1.6 At the top of the hierarchy, this means places which integrate housing, employment and essential services such as schools, shops, community and recreational facilities and public transport are close together and readily accessible by local communities. In the lower tiers of the hierarchy, sustainable development means places which meet the daily needs of rural communities without the need to travel excessive distances. In these smaller

¹ [LDP Paper 1 \(2nd Revision\) - Population and Growth-Settlement Hierarchy 2015](#)

² [LDP Paper 15 - Strategic Settlement Evaluation 2017](#)

settlements, growth needs to be carefully managed to avoid damaging rural character and environmental quality of the surrounding countryside and also to avoid the unnecessary diversion of growth from the larger centres.

- 1.7 The settlement hierarchy is therefore used as a spatial framework for the location of future development within the district.

2.0 Policy Context

Regional Policy Context

Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'

- 2.1 The NI Executive has set out its priorities in the Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027. The programme lists the immediate priorities which the government will work to throughout the duration of the mandate. A series of associated high level actions are identified and this includes improving transport connectivity through building on urban connectivity.

Regional Development Strategy (RDS)

- 2.2 The Regional Development Strategy 2025 introduced a framework for the future physical development of the Region by providing an overarching strategic framework aimed at achieving balanced and sustainable development across the region through the implementation of a spatial development strategy which is designed to reinforce and strengthen the hubs, corridors and gateways of Northern Ireland. The main themes of this strategy centre around protecting and enhancing the environment while promoting a strong spatially based economy, promoting a healthy living environment and creating and maintaining an inclusive society. The strategy has been reviewed and these themes have been developed in the Regional Development Strategy 2035 – Building a Better Future (RDS).
- 2.3 The RDS spatial framework identifies a settlement hierarchy based on main hubs, local hubs and a strong rural community living either in small towns, villages, small settlements or in the open countryside to guide and facilitate the future managed growth of Northern Ireland. In doing so, the Spatial Framework Guidance aims to achieve sustainable development by promoting economic development opportunities and population growth in the hubs and clusters while sustaining the strong rural hinterland.
- 2.4 Within the RDS, the 'Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel' (Figure 2.1) outlines the patterns of service provision that are thought to be appropriate at different spatial levels including villages, smaller towns, regional towns and cities, and in doing so also recognises the relationship between settlement size and the levels of service that can be supported.

2.5 The RDS spatial framework is to be implemented at a local level by the individual development plans for each District, with current legislation requiring that development plans must 'take account' of this document.

Figure 1: RDS Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel



Source: RDS 2035

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

2.6 The SPPS, published in 2015, sets out the core planning principles required to support the reformed two-tier planning system along with setting out clear direction to bring forward detailed policies within future local development plans.

2.7 The SPPS notes that the 'overarching purpose of the Plan Strategy is to provide the strategic policy framework for the plan area as a whole and to bring forward a local growth strategy' (para 5.23). The document expresses the importance of maintaining a sustainable approach to development which promotes economic prosperity, social cohesion with protection of the environment.

Planning Policy Statement 12: Housing in Settlements (PPS 12)

2.8 PPS 12 recognises that the development plan process is the main vehicle for assessing future housing land requirements. The development plan will also identify the settlement hierarchy in the plan area and define the level in the hierarchy that each settlement falls into.

Local Policy Context

2.9 The existing Development Plans that apply to NM&DDC are:

- Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 (adopted 2013)
- Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (adopted 2009)

2.10 Each extant area plan for the district established a settlement hierarchy upon which future development or growth was to be based. Both plans have incorporated similar terminologies when describing the different tiers of development and the 88 settlements located within the district:

Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015

2.11 A four-tier system was adopted within the Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 to accommodate Newry City.

2.12 Newry was identified as a city, Crossmaglen, Kilkeel, Newtownhamilton and Warrenpoint/Burren were designated as towns while a further 14 villages and 30 small settlements were designated equating to a total of 49 settlements.

Ards and Down Area Plan 2015

2.13 The Ards and Down Area Plan settlement hierarchy consisted of a three-tier system.

2.14 In the ADAP, 3 towns were designated, Ballynahinch, Newcastle and Downpatrick, along with 14 villages and 22 small settlements equating to a total of 39 settlements.

NMDDC Corporate Plan 2024-2027

2.15 NMDDC Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision, mission and values. In preparing for the Corporate Plan 2024-2027, NMDDC has sought to contribute to achieving the outcomes set out within the Community Plan.

2.16 The corporate priorities include:

- Invest in and support new and growing business, job creation and employment skills
- Continue to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in the district and reduce health inequalities
- Enhance, protect and promote our environment

- Support sustainable forms of tourism which value our environment and cultural heritage
- Enable and support people to engage in inclusive and diverse activities in their communities
- Promote the revitalisation of our city, towns, villages and rural communities
- Provide accessible, high quality and integrated services through continuous improvement
- Advocate with others for the benefit of all people of the district

2.17 Whilst the Corporate Plan may have had no direct influence on the formation of the settlement hierarchy, the settlement hierarchy, spatial growth strategy and supporting strategic proposals and policies will together contribute to meeting some of the Corporate Plan objectives.

NMDDC Community Plan 2030 'Living Well Together'

2.18 The Community Plan is the overarching strategic plan for integrated planning and delivering of services in Newry Mourne and Down. It provides a framework for the strategies and plans the Council will put in place to contribute towards the outcomes in the community plan and it is based on a detailed analysis of future risks and opportunities for Newry, Mourne & Down.

2.19 The vision of NMDDC's Community Plan is "*Newry, Mourne and Down is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs*".

2.20 One of the guiding principles of the Community Plan is to support a sustainable approach to development. This can be supported by a settlement hierarchy which helps inform the future distribution of development across the district.

Cross Boundary Policy Context

2.20 In considering the local policy context, it is important to take account of the district's neighbouring councils - three in Northern Ireland and two in the Republic of Ireland.

2.21 The below table offers a short summary of each Council's position with regards to their proposed settlement hierarchy.

Table 1: Cross Boundary Policy Context

Neighbouring Council	Position
<p>Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council</p>	<p>Published its Preferred Options Paper in March 2018. Key Issue SGS 1 – Settlement Hierarchy.</p> <p>Council’s preferred option: <i>‘Bring forward a new settlement hierarchy through re-classification of existing settlements where appropriate, and to include new settlements/new settlement nodes.’</i></p> <p>This preferred option includes a 4-tier Settlement Hierarchy which would provide consistency across the Borough in terms of the classification of settlements in relation to size, form, function and capacity in line with RDS direction. The proposed hierarchy contains a total of 106 settlements. The 4 tiers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main City/Town/Urban Area • Local Towns • Villages • Small Settlements <p>This option is considered to provide a more consistent approach across the Borough, which would ensure a more equitable and sustainable approach to future growth and development.</p>
<p>Ards and North Down Borough Council</p>	<p>Published its Preferred Options Paper in March 2019. Key Issue 2 – Settlement Hierarchy.</p> <p>Council’s preferred option: <i>‘Define a new settlement hierarchy allowing for the re-classification of existing settlements and potential introduction of new settlements.’</i></p> <p>The preferred option allows for a more consistent approach within the LDP to settlement designation based on the Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel which recognise the strong relationship between settlement size and service provision. The RDS and Infrastructure Wheel also accept that settlements can provide either a greater or lesser range of services and facilities than the core population may dictate.</p> <p>The proposed hierarchy contains 4 tiers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Town

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Town • Village • Small Settlement
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	<p>Published the Plan Strategy of the Local Development Plan in September 2023.</p> <p>The designated settlement hierarchy for Lisburn and Castlereagh provides the basis for the framework upon which the Local Development Plan is devised. It is consistent with the RDS Spatial Framework recognising the relationship between people and places with an appreciation of where people live, work and access services.</p> <p>The hierarchy contains 5 tiers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City • Greater Urban Areas • Towns • Villages • Small Settlements <p>In determining where each settlement sits in the hierarchy, account has been taken of a wide range of factors, including the population of individual settlements and an assessment of their role or function, employment opportunities, level of community services (educational, recreational) and existing physical infrastructure including spare capacity and public transport provision.</p>
Monaghan County Council	<p>Prepared Draft Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031.</p> <p>Local, regional and national policy promotes development to locate in the population centres of existing towns and villages where the basic social and infrastructural services are available and where such services may be provided or expanded on if required. Monaghan County Council is committed to furthering the development of the County in a hierarchal manner.</p> <p>The settlement hierarchy for County Monaghan proposes 5 tiers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle/Key Town • Strategic Towns • Service Towns • Villages • Rural Community Settlements

Louth County Council	<p>Louth County Development Plan was adopted by members in September 2021.</p> <p>The National Planning Framework and RSES set policy parameters for the Region, to manage the growth of Dublin as a city of international scale, supported by the growth of the designated Regional Growth Centres and further supported by the development and regeneration of selected Key Towns.</p> <p>Louth’s framework for growth is therefore guided and directed by the NPF and RSES.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Growth Centres • Self-Sustaining Growth Towns • Self-Sustaining Towns • Small Towns and Villages • Rural nodes
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- 2.22 The Council has engaged and responded to neighbouring Councils POP’s and draft Plan Strategies for as they have been published. The Council is also represented on a number of working groups to discuss cross-boundary issues, including the Development Plan Working Group.
- 2.23 In consideration of neighbouring Council’s development plan documents and discussions held with their officials, it is the opinion of this Council that no conflict is apparent with our draft Plan Strategy, insofar as it related to the settlement hierarchy and strategic settlement evaluation.

3.0 Pre-POP Assessment

- 3.1 Paper 1 (2nd Revision): Population and Growth – Settlement Hierarchy was presented to Council in October 2015³. This paper discussed the need to re-examine the settlement hierarchy for the district and to identify if any settlements need to be reclassified based on their function, services and population.
- 3.2 In order to assist this LDP preparatory process, Member Workshops were held in October 2017. Workshop 1 addressed the Spatial Growth Strategy, Settlement Hierarchy and Land Allocation. In consideration of the settlement hierarchy and the associated options, Members unanimously agreed `re-examine the existing settlement hierarchy in order to consider if any settlement

³ [Microsoft Word - LDP Paper 1c \(2nd Revision\) - Pop and Growth-Settlement Hierarchy \(newrymournedown.org\)](https://www.newrymournedown.org/)

should be reclassified or declassified while also considering the potential for identifying a number of new small settlements'. This feedback from the Members Workshop informed Preparatory Paper 15.

- 3.3 The Council published Preparatory Paper 15: Strategic Settlement Evaluation in December 2017⁴. The purpose of this paper was to introduce members to the Council's strategic evaluation of the 88 settlements designated within the two plans - Ards & Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP) and the Banbridge/Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 (BNMAP). This evaluation examined the role and position of each settlement within the existing settlement hierarchies, and in reviewing their classification, informed how they should be classified in the proposed new settlement hierarchy for the LDP. The exercise also identified other locations for consideration as potential new small settlements. The full findings can be found within Preparatory Paper 15.
- 3.4 The proposed settlement hierarchy recommended the retention of the majority of the existing settlement classifications, with a small number being identified for possible reclassification. This paper outlined that the implementation of this hierarchy would unify the existing hierarchies while bringing about cohesion to the district.
- 3.5 Settlement Appraisal Reports were produced for each settlement as part of this evaluation. Each of these reports incorporated the following information:
- A brief overview of the settlement, including location, urban form, historical context, population level and number of households;
 - A consideration of the six tests in the RDS evaluation framework (see table 2 below); and
 - A summary of potential constraints affecting settlement expansion capacity.

Table 2: Housing Evaluation Framework

1. Resource Test	Studies should be carried out to assess and detail the existence of community assets and physical infrastructure such as water, waste and sewage, including spare capacity.
2. Environmental Capacity Test	An assessment of the environmental assets of the settlement, the potential of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off and its potential to accommodate future outward growth without significant environmental degradation should be made.
3. Transport Test	Studies should be carried out to assess the potential for integrating land use and public transport and walking and cycling routes to help reduce reliance on the car.
4. Economic Development Test	The potential to facilitate an appropriate housing and jobs balance and to unlock any major strategic development opportunities should be assessed and detailed.
5. Urban & Rural Character Test	Assessment should be made of the potential to maintain a sense of place, and to integrate new development in a way that does not detract from the character and identity of the settlement.

⁴ [Microsoft Word - LDP Paper 15 - Strategic Settlement Evaluation \(newrymournedown.org\)](https://www.newrymournedown.org/)

6. Community Services Test	The potential to underpin and, where necessary, reinforce the community service role and function of the settlement should be assessed and detailed.
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- 3.6 Of the 88 settlements within the hierarchy, the majority of settlements remained within their existing classification. The evaluation confirmed Newry City and Downpatrick as the main hubs within the district, taking into account their level of service provision, potential for growth and population size. Other recommendations proposed within the settlement hierarchy were:
- Crossmaglen and Newtownhamilton to be reclassified from Tier 2 to Tier 3
 - Saintfield, Killyleagh, Castlewellan, Bessbrook to be reclassified from Tier 3 to Tier 2,
 - Ballyholland, The Spa, Shrigley, and Attical to be reclassified from Tier 3 to Tier 4
 - Warrenpoint/Burren to be considered as separate settlements within the settlement hierarchy, with Warrenpoint retained in Tier 2, and Burren included in Tier 3.
- 3.7 Paper 15 was reported to the Council’s Strategy Policy and Resources Committee on 14 December 2017. In consideration of this paper, the committee agreed that two of the settlements identified for reclassification be retained within their existing classification, i.e. Crossmaglen to be retained as a Tier 2: ‘Local and Small Town settlement’, and Ballyholland to be retained as a Tier 3: ‘Village settlement’.
- 3.8 The proposed ‘Settlement Hierarchy’ to inform the preparation of the Council’s Local Development Plan, as amended by the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee, was agreed by the Council at its meeting on 8 January 2018.

4.0 Preferred Options Paper

- 4.1 Publication of the Preferred Options Paper (POP) in June 2018 represented the Council’s formal commencement of work on the preparation of a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the district. The purpose of the POP was to stimulate debate and encourage feedback to inform the development of the LDP. The POP set out the proposed vision and strategic objectives for the LDP along with 24 key strategic issues. For each key strategic issue, a range of options were set out and the Council’s preferred option identified.
- 4.2 The POP identified one key issue (Key Issue 1) with three alternative options:

Key Issue 1: Settlement Hierarchy

- 4.3 The POP outlined that a successful growth strategy must be based on the foundation of a settlement hierarchy which supports and sustains local

communities and is in line with the RDS Regional Spatial Framework. In guiding future development of the region, the RDS identifies a hierarchy of settlements based on main and local hubs coupled with a strong rural community living in either small towns, villages, small settlements or the open countryside. At a district level the RDS recognises Newry and Downpatrick as hubs while also acknowledging that these settlements have the potential to cluster with Warrenpoint and Newcastle respectively. Newry is also identified as a gateway due to its strategic location along the Belfast-Dublin corridor.

Options for Settlement Hierarchy

- 4.4 Option 1 To retain the settlement hierarchy as set out within the existing Area Plans with no adjustments or amendments proposed.
- 4.5 Option 2 To re-examine the existing settlement hierarchy in order to identify if any settlement should be reclassified based on their function and range of services.
- 4.6 Option 3 To re-examine the existing settlement hierarchy in order to identify if any settlement should be reclassified whilst also considering the potential or identifying a number of new small settlements.

Preferred Option for Settlement Hierarchy

- 4.7 The Council's Preferred Option was Option 3:
- 4.8 In addition to a re-examination of the existing settlement hierarchy this option would also consider declassifying small settlements where it was considered that they had no discernible service function or focal point for the rural community.
- 4.9 Justification for this choice, as outlined in the POP was as follows: 'This option is considered the Council's preferred option as it enables a full review of all settlements across the four settlement tiers. It also considers the potential for identifying a number of new small settlements and thus offers the greatest scope to underpin the Council's growth strategy.'
- 4.10 A number of statutory consultees (4 submissions (29%)) supported the Council's preferred option while the remainder (10 submissions (71%)) had no comment to make on the options provided. The Department for Infrastructure suggested the Council carefully consider the implications of identifying a number of candidate small settlements.
- 4.11 DfI Strategic Planning Division welcomed the proposed review of the hierarchy and raised a number of points for further consideration:
 - They supported the Planning Appeals Commission view, outlined under the Councils Preferred Option 3, that a collection of houses in the countryside without accompanying services was not a sustainable basis for settlement

status and suggested that criteria should be used to designate any additional settlement.

- They suggested that the Council should consider the implications for the spatial growth strategy of the number of candidate small settlements identified for further consideration.
- They highlighted that whilst the RDS refers to the importance of vibrant rural communities, the emphasis at a strategic level is on focusing on development larger settlements and hubs.

- 4.12 The NIHE supported the Council's preferred option and proposed settlement tiers. They welcomed the opportunity of identifying new small settlements to reduce rural sprawl and one-off housing however expressed concern that removal of settlement limits could hinder future community uses and services.
- 4.13 DfC Historic Environment Division accepted the Council's preferred option and suggested that their Gazetteer of Nucleated Historic Urban Settlements could aid the review of the settlement hierarchy.
- 4.14 The majority of public responses on key issue 1 (49 submissions (59%)) supported the revised hierarchy as set out in the POP (see appendix C) and the Council's preferred option to re-examine the settlement hierarchy to consider reclassification and the potential identification of new small settlements. A number of representations suggested that the city/main town should be a new fifth tier within the hierarchy whilst others proposed uplifting a number of villages to town status.
- 4.15 Full details of the responses to the Preferred Options Paper can be found in the Council's POP Consultation Report.

5.0 Consultee and Councillor Engagement

- 5.1 In order to meet the requirements set out in the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 relating to the need for the Plan Strategy to take account of the RDS, other policy and guidance issued by the Department and other relevant government strategies and plans, the Council has engaged with key consultees representing relevant central government departments and agencies. This engagement was undertaken in three parts over the period June 2022 – June 2023. Stakeholders were provided with LDP Plan Strategy strategies and policies and afforded the opportunity to review and provide written comment.
- 5.2 Elected Members have been engaged in the LDP Plan Strategy from the POP stage. An initial preparatory studies paper on Strategic Settlement Evaluation was presented to Council in December 2017. This paper's purpose was to introduce members to the strategic evaluation of the 88 settlements currently designated within the district. The evaluation exercise examined the role and position of each settlement within the

existing settlement hierarchies, and in reviewing their classification, informed how they should be classified in the proposed new settlement hierarchy.

- 5.3 The LDP Spatial Growth Strategy incorporating a draft settlement hierarchy was presented to Members at the Development Plan Working Group on 7 December 2023. Following on from this the discussion the settlement hierarchy was reviewed and finalised.
- 5.4 The draft Plan Strategy including the settlement hierarchy was brought back to Members at a Special Committee on the 31st March 2025, these were approved and the decision ratified by full Council on the 6th May 2025.

6.0 Draft Plan Strategy Approach Spatial Growth Strategy

- 6.1 As noted above, the Council’s POP included a preferred option in regards re-examining the existing settlement hierarchy to consider if any settlement should be reclassified, whilst also considering the potential for identifying a number of new settlements. The POP proposed a new four-tier settlement hierarchy (see Appendix C).
- 6.2 Appendix D outlines the draft plan strategy Settlement Hierarchy. The proposed Settlement Hierarchy identifies 84 settlements and classifies each within one of the following classifications:
- City/Main Town
 - Local and Small Town
 - Villages
 - Small Settlements
- 6.3 The settlement hierarchy proposal has evolved through the outworking of the LDP process to date, including Sustainability Appraisal. The approach in the draft Plan Strategy is to bring forward the POP preferred option, with some minor amendments, as noted below:

Table 3: Amendments to the POP Settlement Hierarchy Preferred Option

Tier	Changes from POP Preferred Option
City/Main Town	No changes from POP
Local and Small Town	Warrenpoint and Burren to be retained within the one settlement development limit and classified in tier 2. Bessbrook to be re-classified as tier 3
Villages	Retention of Warrenpoint and Burren as one Reclassification of Bessbrook to tier 3.
Small Settlements	Carrickinab, Derryboye, Drumaghliis and Tullyherron declassified from small settlements to the open countryside

- 6.4 Saintfield, Killyleagh and Castlewellan have been uplifted from villages to local and small towns. These settlements have larger populations than most of the legacy villages and also serve a wider hinterland with a strong level of service provision including employment, retail, and community facilities. Whilst Bessbrook was previously considered for reclassification as a small town within the Preferred Options Paper, after further assessment of the level of resources and service provision available and its proximity to, and reliance upon, Newry City, it was determined that it should remain within tier 3 (village).
- 6.5 Newtownhamilton has been reclassified from a small town to a village following an evaluation of its service provision and population. Whilst historically Newtownhamilton had a strong service provision serving a relatively small population along with its wider hinterland, this is no longer the case. The service provision is comparable to many of the smaller villages and residents are reliant upon neighbouring larger settlements for the majority of their goods and service provision. Town centre health checks are set out in the Plan Strategy retail studies, see Technical Supplement 4 Appendix 4a and 4b.
- 6.6 Following an evaluation of the settlements, The Spa, Shrigley and Attical have been reclassified from villages to small settlements. This reclassification has been made following an evaluation of service provision and population size, which found on balance these settlements were better suited in tier 4, small settlements.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 At the next stage of the LDP, the Local Policies Plan, Council will set development limits for all of the settlements identified within the Settlement Hierarchy. The main objectives of these development limits will be to promote and accommodate new development, and also to contain development within the limits to maintain a clear distinction between the built-up area and the surrounding countryside.

7.0 Soundness

- 7.1 The draft Plan Strategy has been prepared to take due regard to meeting the tests of soundness as set out in the DfI Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017). The draft Plan Strategy, in relation to the designation of the settlement hierarchy is regarded as sound, as it is considered they have met the tests of soundness as summarised below:

Procedural Tests	
P2	The settlement hierarchy as proposed in appendix D has evolved from the POP, as described in section 4 of this document and has taken account of the responses to it.
P3	The settlement hierarchy has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal. Further detail is included in the Sustainability Appraisal Report.
Consistency Test	
C1	The settlement hierarchy has taken account of the RDS including the Hierarchy of Settlement and Spatial Framework Guidance.
C2	Not directly relevant.
C3	The settlement hierarchy has taken account of the SPPS and existing regional planning policies.
C4	The settlement hierarchy has had regard to the existing development plans in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and the emerging proposals of neighbouring councils (both in NI and RoI).
Coherence and the effectiveness tests	
CE1	The settlement hierarchy has taken account of the emerging LDP's of our neighbouring councils and it is not considered to be in conflict with them. It will provide a coherent spatial framework for the LDP Spatial Growth Strategy and the strategic proposals and policies that support it.
CE2	The settlement hierarchy is founded on a robust evidence base including a detailed settlement evaluation and has taken account of comments from the POP consultation.
CE3	There is the potential to review the settlement hierarchy at LPP stage.
CE4	The settlement hierarchy can be reviewed at Plan Review Stage with potential for settlements to be re-classified to take account of changing circumstances (for example population and levels of service provision).

8.0 Evolution of Policies

Table 4: Evolution of Policies

Existing Policy	Regional Planning Policy	POP Preferred Option	Comments received to POP	Draft Plan Strategy Policy
<p>The existing Settlement Hierarchy is set out in the two existing area plans for the district (ADAP 2015 and BNMAP 2015) and includes the following tiers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City (BNMAP 2015) • Towns • Villages • Small Settlements 		<p>Key Issue 1: Settlement Hierarchy Council's Preferred Option was Option 3: <i>To re-examine the existing settlement hierarchy in order to consider if any settlement should be reclassified while also considering the potential for identifying a number of new small settlements.</i></p>	<p>49 respondents to the POP did address Key Issue 1 (24% of all public responses). Within this group, 29 respondents (59%) agreed with the Council's preferred option, 7 respondents (14%) disagreed, and 13 respondents (27%) held mixed views. A number of Statutory consultees (4) supported the Council's preferred option, whilst the remainder (10) had no comment to make on the options provided. DfI Strategic Planning Division welcomed the proposed review of the hierarchy and raised a number of points for further consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the PAC view under Preferred Option 3 that a collection of houses in the countryside without accompanying services was not a sustainable basis for settlement status and suggested that criteria should be used to designate any additional settlement • Suggested that the Council should consider the implications for the spatial growth strategy of the number of candidate small settlements identified for further consideration • Highlighted that whilst the RDS refers to the importance of vibrant rural communities, the emphasis at a strategic level is on focusing on development of larger settlements and hubs. 	<p>SETT 1 Settlement Hierarchy The Council welcomed the general support for its proposed settlement tiers and settlement hierarchy review following publication of the POP. The Council considers that draft Plan Strategy classification on the basis of the census data, the RDS wheel and Housing Evaluation Framework represents a robust approach to assessment of the settlement hierarchy.</p>

9.0 Appendices

Appendix A: RDS Settlement Hierarchy Classification

Infrastructure	Principal City	Regional Town	Smaller Towns	Villages
Skills	University	Further Education Special Schools	Library Post Primary	Nursery Primary School
Health	Acute Hospital A&E Maternity	A&E Hospital Children's Home Minor Injuries Outpatients	Pharmacy Health Centres Social Services Day Care Centres	Doctor Ambulance Outreach Services
Social	Museums/Galleries Conference/Concert Arena	Leisure Centre (pool) Visitors Centre Advice Centres Arts and Culture Centre	Community Centre Sports Facility Welfare Services	Local Hall Play areas
Environment	Power Generation AONB/ASSI	Water and Sewage Treatment Plants Waste – landfill Waste - recycling	Recycling Renewables Water and Sewers Supply	Access to clean water Sewage disposal
Commercial	Department Stores Specialist Shops Arts and Cultural Facilities	Shopping Centres Retail Warehousing Range of restaurants	Supermarket Restaurants Mix of Retail Facilities	Shop Pub Post Office Petrol Station
Justice	Police HQ High Court Prison Forensic Science	Police District County Court Probation Service	Police Station	Neighbourhood Watch
Productive	Tourism Signature Projects Science Centre Major Industrial Parks Strategic Development Zones	Industrial Park Tourism Office	Enterprise Centre Information Office	Workshop/ Business Unit
Networks	Ports and Airports Key Transport Nodes Energy Generation Interconnector	Major Roads Bus/Rail Park & Ride Cycle Network	Link Corridors/Trunk Roads Bus/Rail to larger centres	Local Roads Broadband Urban Street Lighting Local Bus Cycle

Extracted from RDS 2035 Diagram No. 2.2: The Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure Wheel, page 24:

Appendix B: RDS Hierarchy of Settlement and Spatial Framework Guidance

RDS Hierarchy	Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG)	SFG detailed comments relevant to Newry, Mourne and Down
<u>Hubs and Clusters of Hubs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newry • Downpatrick 	<p>SFG10: Identify and consolidate the roles and functions of settlements within the clusters.</p> <p>SFG11: Promote economic development opportunities at Hubs.</p> <p>SFG12: Grow the population in the Hubs.</p>	<p>Newry City is a significant employment centre with a strong retail offering and an acute hospital. It is the South Eastern City Gateway due to its proximity to the land border and the major port of Warrenpoint. It has the potential to cluster with Dundalk. They are both strategically located on the Belfast-Dublin corridor which has the potential to become a significant axis of development within the wider European context.</p> <p>Downpatrick is the main location for second level education and retail provision for the surrounding area. It is of regional significance for its historical and archaeological interest, largely connected with Saint Patrick and is a key tourism centre.</p>
<u>The Rural Area</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small towns • Villages • Small settlements • Open countryside in Newry Mourne and Down 	<p>SFG13: Sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside.</p> <p>SFG14: Improve accessibility for rural communities</p>	<p>Establish the role of multi-functional town centres as the prime location for business, housing, administration, leisure and cultural facilities for both urban and rural communities.</p> <p>Revitalise small towns and villages.</p> <p>Facilitate the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations.</p> <p>Encourage sustainable and sensitive development</p>
<u>Gateways and Corridors</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newry and Warrenpoint 	<p>SFG15: Strengthen the Gateways for regional competitiveness.</p>	<p>Newry and Warrenpoint form the South Eastern City Gateway with a Harbour and strategic links to Dundalk and on to Dublin.</p>

Appendix C: POP Settlement Hierarchy

Tier	Settlement		
Tier 1: City and Main Town	Newry (26,893) Downpatrick (10,874)		
Tier 2: Local and Small Towns	Newcastle (7,743) Warrenpoint (7,475) Kilkeel (6,521) Ballynahinch (5,715) Saintfield (3,406) Killyleagh (2,928) Castlewellan (2,792) Bessbrook (2,739) Crossmaglen (1,608)		
Tier 3: Villages	Rostrevor (2,788) Crossgar (1,892) Annalong (1,796) Hilltown (1,698) Ardglass (1,643) Dundrum (1,551) Drumaness (1,344) Burren (1,246) Camlough (1,081) Mayobridge (1,068)	Killough (843) Newtownhamilton (800) Meigh (770) Annsborough (767) Ballyholland (664) Mullaghbane (596) Ballymartin (506) Forkhill (498) Strangford (495) Jonesborough (465)	Ballykinler (447) Cullyhanna (326) Clough (279)
Tier 4: Small Settlements	The Spa (583) Darragh Cross (490) Newtowncloghoge (457) Shrigley (437) Ballyhornan (369) Belleek (375) Whitecross (352) Drumintee (337) Kilcoo (335) Sheeptown (333) Annacloy (318) Raholp (315) Kilmore (310) Bryansford (306) Lurganare (294) Seaforde (263) Cullaville (232) Killowen (230) Creggan (227)	Loughinisland (218) Maghera (211) Burrenbridge (199) Kilclief (191) Clonvaraghan (186) Drumaroad (183) Lislea (180) Attical (171) Ballynoe (169) Glassdrumman, Co. Armagh (165) Dunnaval/Ballyardle (161) Glen (147) Longstone (147) Barnmeen (136) Ballyalton (132) Mullaghglass (125) Leitrim (121) Silverbridge (112) Glassdrumman/Mullartown (110)	Killeen (108) Saul (97) Ballymaderfy (69) Coney Island (57) Altnamacken*** Ballymoyer*** Ballyward*** Carricknab*** Chapelstown*** Dechomet*** Derryboye*** Derryboye*** Dorsey*** Drumaghliis*** Finnis*** Greencastle*** Jerretspass* Tullyherron***

Reclassification of settlement to higher

Reclassification of settlement to lower tier

Separation of settlement from Warrenpoint

*** Output has been confined to those settlements exceeding the thresholds of 20 or more households and 50 or more usual residents.

Appendix D: Draft Plan Strategy Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Hierarchy				
Settlement Hierarchy		Newry, Mourne & Down Settlement Populations		
Tier 1 –City & Main Town	Main hubs will be the focus of development for housing, employment, retail, leisure and community facilities.	Newry (28,026)		
		Downpatrick (11,541)		
Tier 2 – Local & Small Towns	Smaller towns providing a range of retail, services, leisure and community facilities.	Warrenpoint/Burren (8,821)	Saintfield (3,578)	
		Newcastle (8,293)	Killyleagh (2,785)	
		Kilkeel (6,632)	Castlewellan (2,822)	
		Ballynahinch (6,335)	Crossmaglen (1,683)	
Tier 3 - Villages	Local service centres providing goods, services and facilities to meet the daily needs of the rural area.	Rostrevor (2,617)	Newtownhamilton(845)	Clough (313)
		Bessbrook (3,004)	Meigh (948)	
		Crossgar (2,010)	Annsborough (793)	
		Annalong (2,037)	Ballyholland (669)	
		Hilltown (1,755)	Mullaghbane (642)	
		Ardglass (1,761)	Ballymartin (579)	
		Dundrum (1,538)	Forkhill (551)	
		Drumaness (1,309)	Strangford (561)	
		Camlough (1,038)	Jonesborough (438)	
		Mayobridge (1,162)	Ballykinler (451)	
		Killough (959)	Cullyhanna (345)	
Tier 4 – Small Settlements	A focal point for the rural community which usually contain a limited level of goods, services, or community resources.	The Spa (590)	Loughinisland (217)	Killeen (107)
		Darragh Cross (524)	Maghera (222)	Saul (107)
		Newtowncloghoge (511)	Burrenbridge (182)	Ballymadeerfy (65)
		Shrigley (455)	Kilclief (204)	Coney Island ***
		Ballyhornan (455)	Clonvaraghan (193)	Altnamacken ***
		Belleek (391)	Drumaroad (183)	Ballymoyer ***
		Whitecross (331)	Lislea (205)	Ballyward***
		Drumintee (328)	Attical (168)	Carricknab***
		Kilcoo (496)	Ballynoe (177)	Chapeltown (68)
		Sheeptown (309)	Glassdrumman, Co Armagh (165)	Dechomet***
		Annacloy (391)	Dunnaval/Ballyardle (211)	Derryboye***
		Raholp (324)	Glen (190)	Dorsey (66)
		Kilmore (273)	Longstone (170)	Drumaghlis***
		Bryansford (269)	Barnmeen (156)	Finnis***
		Lurganare (459)	Ballyalton (242)	Greencastle ***
		Seaforde (374)	Mullaghglass (110)	Jerrettspass ***
		Cullaville (240)	Leitrim (190)	Tullyherron ***
		Killowen (225)	Silverbridge (122)	
		Creggan (123)	Glassdrumman / Mullartown (100)	

Source: NISRA Census 2021 Table CT0046

*** Data is not available for settlements with less than 20 households or a population of less than 50.

	Reclassification of Settlement to Higher Tier
	Reclassification of Settlement to Lower Tier
	De-designated to Open Countryside

Appendix E Settlement Hierarchy Map



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