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

Forlíonadh Teicniúla 3 – Forbairt Eacnamaíoch
Meitheamh 2025
Technical Supplement 3 – Economic Development
June 2025

Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down and South Armagh

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Appendix C UUEPC 'Newry, Mourne and Down District Council: Employment Space Demand 2018- 2030' (October 2020)

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Note: All the above Appendices, with the exception of Appendix F, are separate documents and can be viewed on the Council's website.

The following Economic Land Monitor reports are available on the Council's website:

- NMD Economic Land Monitor 2020
- NMD Economic Land Monitor 2023 Update

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1.0 Introduction

Purpose of this document

1.1 The purpose of this technical supplement is to bring together the evidence base that has been used to inform the preparation of the Newry, Mourne and Down District's Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035 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 builds upon LDP Paper 3: Employment and Economic Development (October 2015) which provides baseline information for employment and economic development and formed part of the evidence base for the Preferred Options Paper (POP).

1.3 This technical supplement provides an overview of the regional and local policy context (and legislative background) to economic development and the district profile of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in respect of economic development and details the evidence base underpinning and informing the Economic Development Strategy.

Planning and Economic Development

1.4 Planning can play a key role in achieving a vibrant economy by promoting sustainable economic development through supportive planning policies, zoning land for development, identifying and protecting development opportunities and integrating employment generation with essential supporting provision in terms of housing and infrastructure.

1.5 For the purposes of planning policy economic development relates to those uses defined under Part B Industrial and Business Uses of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 which include:

PART B INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS USES

Class B1: Business

Use-

(a)as an office other than a use within Class A2 (Financial, professional and other services);
(b) as a call centre; or
(c) for research and development which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

Class B2: Light Industrial

Use for any industrial process which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, ash, dust or grit.

Class B3: General Industrial

Use for the carrying on of any industrial process other than one falling within Class B2.

Class B4: Storage or distribution

Use for storage or as a distribution centre.

2.0 Legislative and Policy Context

Legislative Context

Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006

2.1 Section 25 required all Northern Ireland Departments and District Councils in exercising their functions, to act in a way they consider to be best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

2.2 Section 5 requires those who exercise any function in relation to local development plans to do so with the objective of furthering sustainable development and in doing so must take account of policies and guidance issued by the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Department of Regional Development (DRD) and any matter which appear to that person to be relevant.

The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (COMAH Regulations)

2.3 Regulation 14(1) of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 sets out other matters that the Council must take into account in preparing a LDP. This includes (a) the objectives of preventing major accidents and limiting the consequences of such accidents; and (b) the need:
(i) in the long term to maintain appropriate distances between establishments covered by the directive[1] and residential areas, buildings and areas of public use, major transport routes as far as possible, recreational areas and areas of particular natural sensitivity or interest, and
(ii) in the case of existing establishments, for additional technical measures in accordance with Article 5 of the Directive so as not to increase the risks to people. There are currently no COMAH sites located within the district[2].

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.4 It should be noted that all planning policies contained with the LDP Plan Strategy will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires an appraisal of sustainability to be carried out for the Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan respectively. Strategic Environmental Assessment is a systematic approach for assessing potential effects of proposed plans and programmes to ensure significant environmental impacts are considered from the earliest opportunity and addressed in decision making. Introduced by European Directive 2001/42/EC the SEA requirements are taken forward in Northern Ireland through the Environmental

[1] In this regulation the Directive means Council Directive 96/82/EC on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances which was subsequently repealed by directive 2018/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012.

[2] Source: DAERA website- https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/comah-public-information-northern- ireland

Assessment of Plans and Programmes (EAPP) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

2.5 A key objective for sustainable development is to enable sustainable economic growth.

2.6 Economic development is a cross-cutting issue when considered in the context of sustainability appraisal objectives[3]. With regard to enabling sustainable economic growth it can:

- Support innovation and competitiveness;
- Support the creation of a range of job types that are in accessible locations; and
- Support the enhancement of the skills base;

2.7 It also has potential to improve health and wellbeing, strengthen society and encourage active and sustainable travel by supporting the creation of a range of job types in accessible locations.

2.8 The Sustainability Appraisal for the NMDDC LDP draft Plan Strategy is being produced by Shared Environment Service (SES) within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council in conjunction with the LDP team within the Council. The Economic Policies contained within the draft Plan Strategy have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal as outlined in that document.

Regional Policy Context

Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Doing What Matters Most[4]

2.9 The Programme for Government (PfG) was agreed by the Executive on February 27th 2025. It identifies nine immediate priorities for change, the first is to "Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy." Under this priority is states that "to create an economy that works for everyone, we will address four key challenges: productivity, good jobs, decarbonisation and regional balance". The changes suggested to address these "will mean everyone feels the benefit of our growing economy, regardless of where they live".

Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy 'Everyone Involved' 2010 (SDS)

2.10 Published in May 2010 the Sustainable Development Strategy recognises the aim to bring viability, stability and opportunity to Northern Ireland's economic activities and programmes. It identifies 'achieving a sustainable economy' and 'promoting opportunity and innovation' as two of its six guiding principles. While 'building a dynamic, innovative economy' is identified as a priority area for action and it commits to the integration of sustainable development into the policy process, to reflect the objectives expressed throughout the Strategy.

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[3] As identified in the LDP POP Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report.

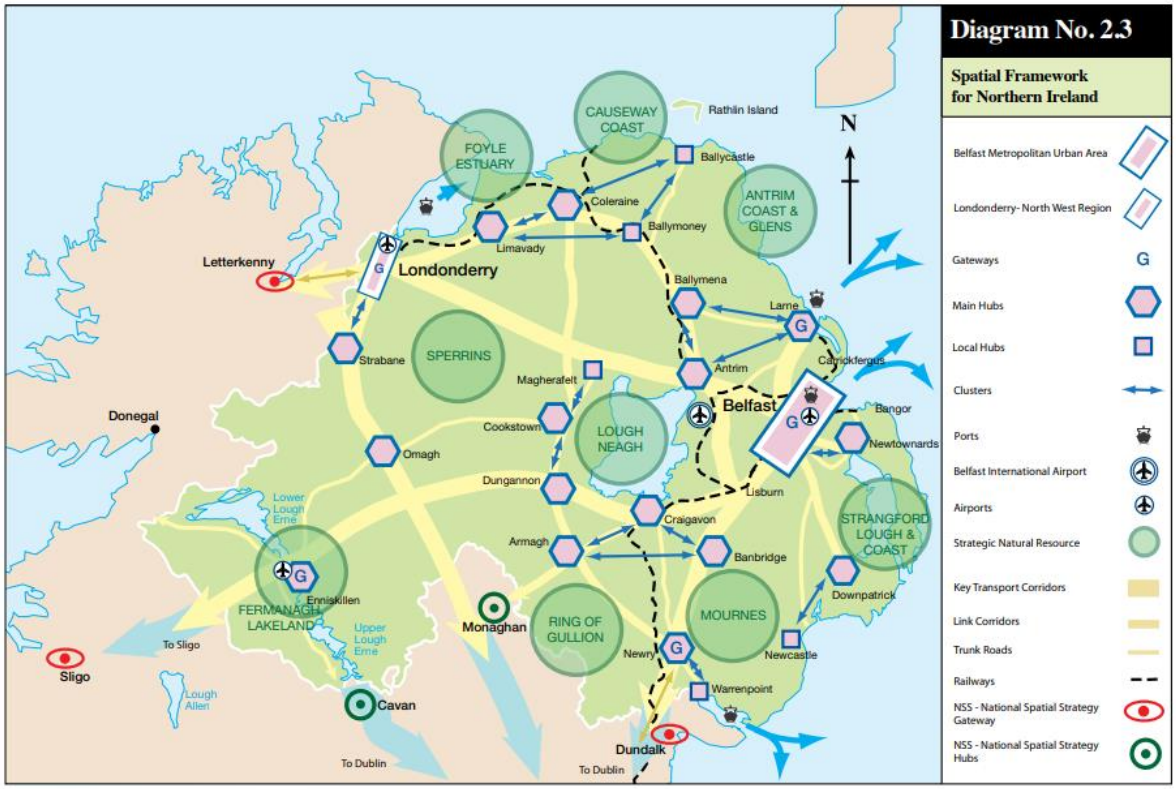
[4] Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most (northernireland.gov.uk)

Regional Development strategy 2035 (RDS)[5]

2.11 The RDS 2035 is the spatial strategy for Northern Ireland. It aims to provide long-term policy direction with a strategic spatial perspective. It is a long-term plan that recognises the important role of Belfast as the major driver for regional economic growth as well as the significant role Derry/Londonderry has to play expanding the North West Region. To ensure that all places benefit from economic growth it reflects the PfG approach of balanced sub- regional growth and recognises the importance of key settlements as centres for growth and investment and defines these as Main Hubs and Clusters.

2.12 Its spatial framework consists of five components, three of which directly relate to the district; Hubs and Clusters of Hubs, Gateways and Corridors and the Rural Area. In line with its spatial framework it identifies Newry and Downpatrick as the two 'main hubs' in the district while Newcastle and Warrenpoint are identified as 'local hubs'. In the delivery of services and functions it states that Newry has the potential to cluster with Warrenpoint in the North and Dundalk in the South while Downpatrick has the potential to cluster with Newcastle (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: RDS 2035 Spatial Framework for NI



Source: Regional Development Strategy 2035

2.13 It recognises Newry as a significant employment centre with a strong retail offering and acute hospital while its setting close to the Mourne mountains makes it an attractive tourist destination.

[5] Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS) 2012

2.14 It identifies Newry as the South-Eastern City Gateway due to its proximity to the border with the Republic of Ireland and the major Port of Warrenpoint and acknowledges that Newry [and Dundalk] are strategically located along the key Belfast to Dublin corridor which it considers to have potential to become a significant axis of development within the wider European context.

2.15 The RDS 2035 provides Strategic Guidance- Regional Guidance (RG) which applies regionally across NI and Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG) which is additional to the RG and is tailored to each of the five components of the Spatial Framework. Some of this guidance is particularly relevant to economic development.

2.16 RG1 seeks to 'ensure adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth'. It states that to ensure NI is well placed to accommodate growth in jobs and businesses there should be adequate and available supply of employment land. This should be accessible and located to make best use of available services, for example water and sewerage infrastructure, whilst avoiding, where possible, areas at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea or surface water run-off. It notes the focus will be on larger urban centres and regional gateways taking advantage of their locations on the regional transport network.

2.17 This requires:

- An assessment of the quality and viability of sites zoned for economic development uses in the area plans. It provides an 'Employment Land Evaluation Framework' (see Table 1) that will enable planning authorities to identify robust and defensible portfolios of both strategic and locally important employment sites in their development plans. This will safeguard both new and existing employment areas for employment rather than other uses;
- The protection of zoned land for economic use in development plans as it provides a valuable resource for local and external investment;
- The promotion of economic development opportunities across the Region focused on the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area BMUA), Londonderry and Hubs as the main centres for employment and services by capitalising on the development opportunities provided by the concentration of people and goods combined with available infrastructure and clustering of a range of business services essential to economic development; and
- Provision of a network of economic development opportunities through the provision of adequate and continuous supply of land for employment purposes in development plans.

Table 1: RDS 2035 Employment Land Evaluation Framework

Stage 1 Taking Stock of the Existing Situation	An initial assessment of the 'fitness for purpose' including the environmental implications of the existing employment land portfolio. This is principally in order to identify the 'best' employment sites to be retained and protected and identifying sites that should clearly be released for other uses.
Stage 2 Understanding Future Requirements	Quantify the amount of employment land required across the main business sectors during the development plan period. This is achieved by assessing both demand and supply elements and assessing how they can be met in aggregate by the existing stock of business premises and by allocated sites. Account should also be taken of turnover of existing sites due to relocation or closures. Both short/medium term and strategic provision need to be considered in this process.
Stage 3 Identifying a 'New' portfolio of sites	Devise qualitative site appraisal criteria to determine which sites meet the occupier or developer needs. Confirm the existing sites to be retained, replaced or released, and any gaps in the portfolio. In this allocation, consideration should be given to previously used sites, and in the reallocation, the environmental impact of one site relative to others should be included. The results of Stage 2, together with this site-appraisal should provide a robust justification for altering allocations for employment land.

Source: Regional Development Strategy 2035

2.18 The RDS 2035 provides SFG that relates specifically to hubs and clusters of hubs, the rural area and gateways and corridors respectively.

- SFG10 seeks to identify and consolidate the roles and functions of settlements within the clusters. It notes that by understanding the existing function of each settlement within a cluster those preparing development plans can ensure the best use of resources.
- SFG11 seeks to promote economic development opportunities at hubs. This recognises the importance of promoting and exploiting the potential for economic development in the hubs and notes that small businesses and service sector offices should locate in these towns. It also states that when new development is being considered the relationship and benefits between towns/cities in the clusters should be taken into account. In these instances the higher performing town/city in the cluster should be considered first in the decision-making process.
- SFG13 seeks to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside. It recognises the importance of facilitating the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations.
- SFG15 seeks to strengthen the gateways for Regional competitiveness. This recognises the need to provide high quality connections to and from the air and seaports to ensure that any increase in demand from business, tourist and freight markets are met as the economy grows. It acknowledges that many of the gateways are intrinsically linked to important nature conservation sites or the aquatic environment and as such their development must be appropriately managed to take account of this. Finally, it seeks to enhance gateways and their environmental image as they are entry points

into the Region and therefore set its image for visitors.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015 (SPPS)

2.19 One of the five core planning principles set out in the SPPS is "supporting sustainable economic growth". It acknowledges that the planning system has a key role to play in achieving a vibrant economy. The aim of the SPPS is "to facilitate the economic development needs of NI in ways consistent with the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development".

2.20 The SPPS sets out the regional strategic policy objectives[6] for facilitating economic development through the planning system. These are to:

- Promote sustainable economic development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- Tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation by ensuring the provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development and a choice and range in terms of quality;
- Sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale;
- Support the re-use of previously developed economic development sites and buildings where they meet the needs of particular economic sectors;
- Promote mixed-use development and improve integration between transport, economic development and other land uses, including housing; and
- Ensure a high standard of quality and design for new economic development.

2.21 The LDP is key to the implementation of these policies. The SPPS notes that a fundamental role of the LDP is to ensure there is an ample supply of suitable land available to meet economic development needs within the plan area. LDPs should therefore zone sufficient land for economic development over the plan period ensuring it offers a range and choice of sites in terms of size and location to promote flexibility and provide for the varying needs to different types of economic activity. Account should also be taken of factors such as accessibility by all members of the community, connectivity with the transportation system (particularly public transport), the availability of adequate infrastructure, the specialised needs of specific economic activities, potential environmental impacts and compatibility with nearby uses including the operational requirements of existing or approved economic development.

2.22 LDPs should have a system to monitor the take-up and loss of land allocated for economic development purposes as well as ongoing assessment of future requirements and trends will help to identify any shortfalls that may arise or highlight the need to reconsider the proposed use of sites.

[6] The SPPS confirms these objectives relate to economic development uses comprising industrial, business and storage and distribution uses, as currently defined in Part B 'Industrial and Business Uses' of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

2.23 Where appropriate LDPs should identify previously developed land within settlements for potential economic development use. This will serve a number of purposes including returning vacant or underused land to productive use and potentially stimulating economic regeneration and physical renewal, helping to stimulate enterprise in disadvantaged areas.

2.24 LDPs should also identify opportunities for mixed-use development, including economic development uses, where this would create synergy and underpin the economic viability of the development as a whole. Key site requirements in the LDP should indicate the types of economic development that will be acceptable and seek to avoid uses that would have a detrimental impact on the environment and/or residential amenity. Major mixed-use sites should be identified in sustainable locations that are well served by public transport, accessible by walking and cycling, have adequate infrastructure and can be properly integrated in terms of land use and design with surrounding areas.

2.25 Where appropriate LDPs should specify the type and range of economic development uses that will be acceptable within zoned sites or broader areas of economic development designated by the Plan. Within larger settlements such as towns and cities the Plan may zone individual sites for a particular industrial and business use class. The Plan may also set out restrictions as to where particular types of economic development should be located in order to meet particular Plan objectives.

2.26 LDPs should normally contain a number of supporting actions to assist in meeting the needs of business enterprises in ways which are workable and that will ultimately deliver sustainable and high-quality development. These actions should normally include key site requirements to ensure developers provide necessary infrastructure such as road access, access for pedestrians and cyclists, water supply, sewerage and land drainage. The Plan should also provide guidance in terms of key design, layout and landscaping.

Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS 4) Planning and Economic Development

2.27 PPS 4 was published by the former Department of the Environment in November 2010 and complements the RDS. It sets out planning policies for economic development uses[7] and indicates how growth associated with such uses can be accommodated and promoted in development plans. It seeks to facilitate and accommodate economic growth in ways compatible with social and environmental objectives and sustainable development. It provides criteria based policies for economic development in settlements and in the countryside as well as policy on the retention of zoned land for economic development and the protection of economic development uses from incompatible development.

2.28 The policy objectives of PPS 4 are the same as those of the SPPS.

[7] For the purposes of this PPS, economic development uses comprise industrial, business and storage and distribution uses, as currently defined in Part B 'Industrial and Business Uses' of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2004. The Planning (Use Classes) Order was subsequently updated in 2015.

2.29 Paragraph 4.19 of the PPS provides detail on matters that should be assessed in the course of preparing a development plan, taking into account various factors:

- An estimate of the amount and the location of land required to ensure an ample supply of suitable land is available to meet economic development needs, taking into account various factors;
- The range of acceptable employment uses within designated areas for economic development;
- Supporting action needed to assist in the delivery of economic development;
- The need to constrain development of land in the vicinity of establishments where hazardous substances are or may be present;
- The new baseline position for further monitoring and review of the opportunities for economic development.

2.30 Paragraph 4.21 provides a list of measures which it notes may be considered appropriate in the development of plan proposals. With regard to meeting economic needs it notes the following measures:
(a) designate/zone an ample supply of land available to meet identified economic development needs in a range of sites offering a choice of size and location, to accommodate a wide and flexible range of development opportunities;
(b) include, as part of this land supply, the safeguarding of existing economic development land where it remains suitable for continuation or expansion of this use;
(c) designate/zone where appropriate areas for mixed-use development, to include residential and economic development use that also forms part of the land supply;
(d) identify areas where Business Use Class B1(a) – office use – is acceptable;
(e) reallocate for alternative use existing economic development sites, either developed or undeveloped, where the potential future use for economic development purposes is not considered realistic.

2.31 It also provides a number of measures that can be employed to ensure acceptable employment uses such as specifying or restricting as appropriate the range of economic development uses permissible within any designated/zoned site or in mixed-use areas and identifying locations where either or both Business Use Class B1(a) and B1(c) is to be restricted.

Planning Policy Statement 4: Clarification on Policy PED 7

2.32 Clarification on Policy PED 7 'Retention of zoned land and economic development uses' was published in September 2011. The purpose of the clarification was to ensure consistency in the approach taken to unzoned land and premises used, or last used, for Classes B2, B3 and B4. It confirmed that development proposals on unzoned land or premises in settlements last used for Class B2, B3 or B4 would be required to meet the same criteria as those development proposals for land or premises currently being used for any of these uses.

Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS 21) Sustainable Development in the Countryside

2.33 PPS 21 was published by the former Department of the Environment in June 2010. It sets out the planning policies for development in the countryside, which is defined as land lying outside of settlement limits as identified in development plans. The aim of the PPS is to manage development in the countryside in a manner which strikes a balance between the need to protect the countryside from unnecessary or inappropriate development, while supporting rural communities. With regard to economic development one of the objectives of the document is to facilitate development necessary to achieve a sustainable rural economy; including appropriate farm diversification and other economic activity.

Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)

2.34 Published in September 1993 by the former Department of the Environment this strategy sets out the Department's principal planning objectives and strategic policies for the rural area. It also set out regional development control policies under a series of topic headings. A number of these strategic and regional policies have been cancelled or superseded with the publication of subsequent planning policy statements. This is largely the case for those policies relating to industry and commerce as PPS 4 has superseded policies IC 1- IC 8 inclusively. IC 16 and IC 17 which relate to office development and small office and business development respectively have been superseded by PPS 4 insofar as it applies to Class B1 of the 2015 Use Classes Order.

2.35 Strategic policy SP 7 'Economic Development' seeks to facilitate economic development and the diversification of the rural economy. The provisions of PPS 21 now take precedence over this policy insofar as it related to the countryside. With regard to the towns and villages it acknowledges their importance as centres of population and employment.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

2.36 Supplementary planning guidance on economic development is contained in the following documents:

- Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to Policy PED 8 'Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses' (October 2012)
- Planning Advice Note 'Implementation of Planning Policy for the Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development Uses' (November 2015).

Other Documents
New Decade, New Approach

2.37 The New Decade, New Approach document was published in January 2020. It is the text of a deal to restore devolved government in Northern Ireland. It sets out the priorities of the restored Executive in the task of strengthening public services and tackling the immediate challenges in key areas such as growing the economy, health, education and housing.

2.38 With regard to the economy it seeks to invest for the future to ensure Northern Ireland is equipped to harness opportunities and drive sustainable productivity, including opportunities for future trade as we leave the European Union. As a result a top priority of the Executive will be to develop a regionally-balanced economy with opportunities for all. This will include:

- Driving the delivery of essential infrastructure projects to boost the economy;
- Realising the economic potential offered by City Deals (including through match funding for infrastructure, regeneration and tourism projects);
- Invest urgently in wastewater infrastructure which is at or nearing capacity in many places across NI, limiting growth;
- Develop an enhanced approach to careers advice, curriculum, training and apprenticeships to enhance employability and support economic growth.

Northern Ireland Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity: Building a Better Future[8]

2.39 Published on 13 March 2012 the NI Economic Strategy sets the economic vision for 2030 is "an economy characterised by a sustainable and growing private sector, where a greater number of firms compete in global markets and there is growing employment and prosperity for all".

2.40 It has twin themes of rebalancing and building the NI economy. There are five strategic rebalancing themes designed to move the NI economy away from the public sector towards a private sector based recovery:

- Stimulate *innovation, R&D and creativity* so that we widen and deepen our export base;
- Improve the *skills and employability* of the entire workforce so that people can progress up the skills ladder, thereby delivering higher productivity and increase social inclusion;
- Compete effectively *within the global economy* and be internationally regarded as a good place to live and do business;
- Encourage *business growth* and increase the potential of our local companies, including within the social and rural economies; and
- Develop a modern sustainable *economic infrastructure* that supports economic growth.

2.41 It includes a number of key rebalancing measures under each of the above aims.

2.42 It acknowledges the recession had a significant impact on the economy and in particular the labour market. As a result, it also includes the medium-term labour market "rebuilding" themes of:

- Improving employment opportunities and employability; and
- Promoting employment.

[8] Source: Northern Ireland Economic Strategy revised 1303012

Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2025 'Innovate NI'[9]

2.43 The strategy sets out the key long-term actions necessary to ensure that innovation plays its full part in realising the vision of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy (2012). The key actions are based on the key themes of knowledge generation, exchange and exploitation which are underpinned by cultural change with the aim of delivering the vision that by 2025 Northern Ireland 'will be recognised as an innovation hub and will be one of the UK's leading high-growth, knowledge-based regions which embraces creativity and innovation at all levels of society'.

10x Economy- Northern Ireland's Decade of Innovation[10]

2.44 On 11 May 2021 the Department for the Economy launched its economic vision for the next 10 years. It aims to embrace innovation to deliver a ten times better economy with benefits for all people in NI. It is intended that this ambition will be realised by focussing on innovation in areas where NI has strengths and ensuring the gains from innovation mean something to all businesses, people and places in NI.

2.45 It sets out five priority clusters that relate to areas where there has been an emergence of significant capability and capacity with the potential to drive the economy forward: Digital, ICT and Creative Industries; Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering; Agri-tech; Life and Health Sciences and Fintech/Financial Services. To make this happen it identifies five steps to developing interventions to deliver the vision: Technologies and clusters; Talent; Diffusion; Funding and Place.

Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland 'Lifetime Opportunities' (2006)

2.46 The Government's 'Lifetime Opportunities', Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland was published in November 2006 and is a strategy to tackle poverty and Social Inclusion and patterns of deprivation.

2.47 On 8 October 2015, OFMDFM published 'Lifetime opportunities Monitoring Framework 2015' which comprises published data including specific child poverty targets, poverty and social exclusion indicators and public service agreement targets.

Infrastructure 2050: draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Consultation[11]

2.48 The new Investment Strategy for NI sets out key objectives for infrastructure investment in the region for the next 30 years in light of more recent challenges to the economy such as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Draft Consultation opened on 26 January 2022 and closed on 20 April 2022.

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[9] Source: Innovation-Strategy-2014-2025_2_0.pdf (economy-ni.gov.uk)

[10] Source: A 10x Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)

[11] Source: Infrastructure-2050-draft-Investment-Strategy-for-Northern-Ireland-FINAL.pdf (isni.gov.uk)

2.49 It states the Executive's vision for infrastructure is that it will enable everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life, and that it will support sustainable economic development and protect our environment.

2.50 It has 5 core objectives: maximise the benefits from new technology and innovation; strengthen our essential services; decarbonise our economy and society; build a strong, connected and competitive region and enhance our communities and places. Many of these are cross cutting in how they relate to land use planning e.g. enhancing communities and places highlights the need to regenerate our high streets. In terms of building a strong, connected and competitive region it acknowledges strengths such as resilience in dealing with the Covid pandemic and the numerous strong, world-class, indigenous companies and how NI is a recognised leader in many specialist areas such as cyber security.

Economy 2030: A Consultation on an Industrial Strategy for NI[12]

2.51 The Department for the Economy consulted on its Industrial Strategy from January to April 2017. Its vision is for NI 'to be a globally competitive economy that works for everyone'. To support the delivery of this vision the strategy proposes five pillars: Accelerating Innovation and Research; Enhancing Education, Skills and Employability; Driving Inclusive, Sustainable Growth; Succeeding in Global Markets; and Building the Best Economic Infrastructure. Each of the five pillars have a number of associated priorities.

2.52 In addition, it indicates a number of milestones to be achieved by 2021, 2025 and 2030 respectively. By 2030 it seeks to put NI in the top 3 most competitive small advanced economies, have created 80,000 jobs in the knowledge economy, grown private sector output by 35% creating 80,000 jobs, increased the annual spend on research and development to £1.5 billion and to have maintained the highest level of wellbeing in the UK.

2.53 The consultation document proposes two high level goals and indicators and associated measures that will be used to measure success. The final strategy will establish targets for those indicators over the three time horizons of 2020, 2025, 2030.

Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD

2.54 City Deals are bespoke packages of funding and decision-making powers agreed between central government and local authorities. They are aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and accelerate inclusive economic growth.

2.55 The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is comprised of six councils, including NMD, working in partnership with both Queens and Ulster Universities and four of the regions Further Education Colleges. The deal represents a new way of working between central and local government and regional partners and secures a bespoke

[12] Source: Economy 2030 - A consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland (economy-ni.gov.uk)

package of investment from central government and the BRCD partners of more than £850 million to support the delivery of a shared vision of: "Inclusive economic growth that delivers more and better jobs, a positive impact on the most deprived communities and a balanced spread of benefits across the region".

2.56 The vision is to deliver inclusive economic growth and to focus efforts on areas in which the Region can become genuinely world-class, namely digital and creative industries, life and health sciences, advanced manufacturing and tourism sectors.

2.57 It is estimated that over the lifetime of the programme the BRCD will include the following[13]:

- Support the creation of up to 20,000 jobs as part of the high growth ambitions for the region;
- Connect local people to the new and better jobs that are being created;
- Place the region at the top table of digital innovation
- Deliver £400million in GVA directly on-site and within the Belfast Region;
- Target delivery of almost £1billion of private sector leverage in addition to the funding contributions already identified across the City Deal;
- Create compelling world class visitor attractions, that will attract visitors from across the globe, and;
- Help to regenerate major towns and cities across the region.

2.58 In terms of NMD District the BRCD funding has enabled progress on a number of projects that will be transformational for the district[14] including the Newry Southern Relief Road, digital and innovation and skills and employment projects.

Enabling Success: Supporting the Transition from Economic Inactivity to Employment: A Strategy to Tackle Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland (2015)

2.59 It sets out the long-term approach to tackling economic inactivity in a progressive and sustainable way through targeted incentives, skills and training programmes and job creation. The strategy outlines a range of measures, based on voluntary participation, which are designed to help individuals in three key economically inactive groups make the transition towards, and into, work.

2.60 The labour market barriers faced by these groups are varied and complex, ranging from a lack of skills and qualifications to low levels of self-confidence and motivation and negative perceptions of, and attitudes towards, work.

2.61 The strategy seeks to address these issues by recognising the heterogeneous nature of these groups and ensuring that interventions designed to help them towards the labour market will be person-focused and based upon voluntary participation. The strategy also seeks to ensure that wider issues, such as societal attitudes towards

[13] Source: Belfast Region City Deal December 2021 'A decade of opportunity starts now': https://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/brcd_deal_document_final_december_2021.pdf

[14] https://www.newrymournedown.org/belfast-region-city-deal

older workers or individuals with mental health conditions, do not impede their progress towards work.

Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM 2017)

2.62 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM 2017) identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Northern Ireland. The NISRA Report on Multiple Deprivation Measures in 2017[15] showed that in 2017 Newry, Mourne and Down had the third highest level of Super Output Areas (SOAs) within the top 100 most deprived areas within Northern Ireland. Of the 84 super Output Areas (SOAs) in the district 23 lie within the top 25% most deprived SOAs in Northern Ireland.

Republic of Ireland

Project Ireland 2040

2.63 Project Ireland 2040 is the long-term overarching strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) combine to for Project Ireland 2040.

2.64 The NPF is a national high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the Republic of Ireland to 2040. It was published in February 2018 and sets out a number of National Strategic Outcomes which are shared goals for every community across the country. It recognises the role of cross border networks and the need to strengthen Irelands urban structure and identifies Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry on the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor as playing an important lead role in future growth and development with Drogheda and Dundalk identified as Regional Growth Centres.

2.65 The NPF is a region focused strategy for managing growth and is linked to the National Development Plan (NDP) which is an overarching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030. The NDP is intended to be an ambitious plan that balances the significant demand for public investment across all sectors and regions of Ireland with a major focus on improving the delivery of infrastructure projects to ensure speed of delivery and value for money.

2.66 The first draft revision was consulted in 2024 and focused on the need to update the Framework in order to reflect changes to government policy that have taken place since its initial publication in 2018, such as climate transition, regional development, demographic, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation. The first revision of the NPF was subsequently published in April 2025[16]. A review of the NDP was announced in April 2025 and is expected to be completed in July 2025.

[15] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017

[16] The National Planning Framework

Strategic Alliance

2.67 A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed and signed by both Louth County Council and Newry Mourne & Down District Council. The MOU sets out the detailed workings which seek to support and promote the economic development and competitiveness of the region. The key priorities of the strategic alliance are:

- Regenerated economy and social development
- Climate change and the environment
- Infrastructure and digital connectivity
- Health, wellbeing and education.

Local Policy Context

Existing Area Plans

2.68 The existing development plans that apply to Newry, Mourne and Down are:

- Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 (BNMAP)
- Ards and Down Area Plan 2015 (ADAP)

2.69 These extant Plans zone land for industry/economic development. Currently, acceptable uses on employment and mixed-use zonings, except where otherwise specified in individual zonings (based on the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015), include:

- Class B1: Business (b) as a call centre
- Class B1: Business (c) for research and development
- Class B2: Light industrial
- Class B3: General industrial
- Class B4: Storage or distribution

Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Plan (BNMAP)

2.70 The BNMAP was adopted in October 2013 and is the Development Plan that covers the legacy Newry and Mourne District Council Area. The Plan contains a section relating to "Economic Development". Within the district the Plan concentrated economic development and employment lands in the main hub of Newry with additional lands being distributed across the towns. It acknowledged that the towns of Kilkeel and Warrenpoint/Burren also had a significant economic development and employment base. It zoned a total of 124 hectares of land for economic development in Newry with an additional 41.51 hectares zoned in Kilkeel and Warrenpoint/ Burren. It also identified a total of 3.4 hectares in Crossmaglen. This comprised of 1.65 hectares economic development site and a mixed-use site 3.36 hectares in area with a key site requirement for a minimum of 1.75 hectares to be developed for economic development purposes and a small (0.46 hectare) allocation in Newtownhamilton.

2.71 The BNMAP applied a minimum standard of 10 hectares of economic development land in all towns with a population of more than 4500 and subsequently Warrenpoint/Burren and Kilkeel received a greater allocation than Crossmaglen and

Newtownhamilton.

2.72 No specific sites are zoned for economic development in the villages and small settlements with the exception of an extension to an existing industrial estate in Jonesborough. Demand for such use in the smaller settlements was considered to likely be limited and as such any applications would be assessed on their merits in the context of prevailing regional planning policy. In order to provide flexibility in employment provision to accommodate changes in the economy over the Plan period most of the sites were suitable for a range of employment purposes, including manufacturing, storage and distribution but excluding office and retail development.

Table 2: Allocation of Economic Development Land by BNMAP

Settlement	Area (Hectares)
Newry City	124.05
Crossmaglen*	3.40*
Kilkeel	24.57
Newtownhamilton	0.46
Warrenpoint/Burren	16.94
Jonesborough	1.24
Total for Legacy Newry and Mourne Council Area	**170.66**

* A key site requirement stipulates that part of a mixed-use site in Crossmaglen shall be developed for economic development uses; the site area is included in the above allocation. The KSR requires a minimum of 1.75ha to be developed for economic development purposes which clarifies includes Classes B1, B2, B3 and B4.

2.73 In addition to economic development land zoned in Newry and Mourne a number of sites were identified for mixed-use. Mixed-use zonings are those that can accommodate a variety of uses which may include light industrial (Class B2), general industrial (Class B3), business (Class B1), storage or distribution (Class B4) as well as non-business use such as dwelling house (Class C1), community and cultural uses (Class D1). Existing areas of economic development were identified for information purposes.

Ards and Down Area Plan (ADAP)

2.74 The ADAP was adopted in March 2009 and is the Development Plan that covers the legacy Down District Council Area of the district. It includes a section relating to "industry" in which it largely concentrates industry and employment opportunities in the district's main town of Downpatrick, in keeping with its status as a main hub and strategic role as a centre of employment. A total of 19.7 hectares of land was zoned for industrial purposes in Downpatrick. It distributed a further 5.38 hectares across the main towns of Ballynahinch and Newcastle.

Table 3: Allocation of Industrial Land by ADAP

Settlement	Area (Hectares)
Downpatrick	19.7
Ballynahinch	5.05
Newcastle	0.33
Total for Legacy Down Council Area	**25.08**

2.75. In addition to the land zoned for industrial development within settlement limits, the ADAP identified a 3.95 hectares industrial site at the Ballynahinch Road, Crossgar and the existing 34 hectare serviced Invest NI industrial site off the Belfast Road, Downpatrick (Down Business Park) as part of its countryside proposals.

2.76 The ADAP also identified Industrial Policy Areas within the settlement limits of a number of villages and one small settlement. In total six IPAs were identified within five settlements providing a total of 17.17ha of land. Whilst these lands were considered particularly suitable for industry or business they do allow, unless otherwise stated, alternative types of development. The alternative use must be subordinate to the industrial or business use and be able to exist in close proximity to the preferred use without adverse environmental consequences. Lands designated as Industrial Policy Areas were not however included within the figures for industrial land zoning in ADAP as it was not Departmental practice to zones lands for specific purposes within villages and small settlements as it can create a degree of inflexibility in the development of those lands. A list of the Industrial Policy Areas identified in the ADAP as contained in Table 4.

Table 4: Down District Industrial Policy Areas as Identified by ADAP

Settlement	Location (Ref)	Area (ha)	Additional Information
Village			
Annsborough	Former Textile Mill (IPA/HPA1)	4.47	Former mill to be used for light industrial use or a combination of light industrial use and residential use. Former engineering works and disused factory to the north of the Mill complex considered suitable for industrial purposes only.
Ardglass	Lands at Downpatrick Road (IPA1)	2.09	Entire site to be used for industrial use and no other purpose.
Crossgar	Lands at Kilmore Road (IPA1)	0.4	Entire site to be used for light industrial use and no other type of industrial use.
Shrigley	Lands east of Shrigley Rd (IPA1)	6.39	Lands within the grounds of former mill and tannery adjacent to Shrigley Rd, currently or last used for industry are considered suitable for future industrial use.
Small Settlement			
Ballyhornan	Lands north of Killard Rd (IPA1)	1.82	Opportunity for employment use, possibly in small starter units, should help to address problems of social need in general area.
	Lands south of Killard Rd	2.00	
TOTAL		**17.17**	

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Community Plan 2030 'Living Well Together'

2.77 The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 introduced a statutory link between the community plan and a Council's LDP. The preparation of the LDP must take account of the community plan. It is intended that the LDP will be the spatial reflection of the community plan and that the two should work in tandem towards the same vision for a council area and its communities and set the long-term social, economic and environmental objectives for an area.

2.78 The Council worked and engaged with communities, partners and other stakeholders to develop its community plan at a district wide level and through its seven District Electoral Areas (DEAs). The Plan, which was published in 2017, 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 the district.

2.79 The vision of the Community Plan is that 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".

2.80 It developed five key priority areas, described as outcomes, which aims to focus the delivery of services over the life of the Plan to 2030. One of the five outcomes set out in the Community Plan is "All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous Communities". The associated indicators that are to be measured to show progress in achieving this are the level of economic investment, the level of jobs and earnings, the level of income and wealth and the level of tourism revenue.

2.81 The community plan notes that the district is home to the fourth largest share of VAT registered businesses within NI and that these SME's are key drivers for local productivity growth and creating local employment opportunities, which is vital to the overall achievement of growth within the NI economy.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2027

2.82 The Corporate Plan shares the vision of the Community Plan and seeks to contribute to the achievement of the Community Plan outcomes. It has eight strategic objectives that are aligned to the five themes of the Community Plan and will be delivered in collaboration and partnership with a range of stakeholders.

2.83 One of the eight strategic objectives is to "support the continued growth and development of our local economy".

2.84 It identifies the following key actions for the achievement of this strategic objective:

- Implement a programme of support that will increase growth and investment for new and established businesses and social enterprise across the district;

- Through the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partnership, and other programmes, implement a range of skills and employability initiatives that meets the needs of local economy;
- Support the growth of new and existing businesses through the delivery of innovative and digital focused initiatives;
- Through Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) and other cross-border linkages, maximise the district's location as a cross-border gateway to Great Britain, EU, Ireland and international markets;
- Continued growth of our area's infrastructure through a responsive planning system.

2.85 These key actions will be measured by the number of jobs created and businesses supported through Council programmes, the number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity and the amount of investment secured and distributed by the Council.

2.86 Another strategic objective is to 'develop and revitalise our district'. A key action for this objective is to progress the Belfast Region City Deal which will be measured by the number of BRCD projects delivered.

Council's Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2020-2025

2.87 The Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy aims to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan objectives. It outlines the economic priorities and supporting actions to regenerate and revitalise the district, support business growth and boost economic performance, thereby improving the standard of living for all the districts residents.

2.88 It sets out six strategic aims:

- Achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth;
- Address economic inequalities;
- Create more and better jobs;
- Stimulate productivity through new technologies and innovation;
- Develop the infrastructure and regeneration required to support economic growth;
- Become more internationally competitive through export growth and developing a more outward-looking economy open for investment.

2.89 Under the strategic aim of achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth the Council recognises the role it can play in ensuring a supportive environment is in place for business start-up, growth, innovation and attracting investment and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

2.90 It further recognises that the economic growth of the district is influenced by the development and growth of strong clusters and sectors and notes the Council will seek to adopt a flexible approach that will stabilise and develop existing sectoral

strengths,[17] support new and emerging sectors[18] and support growth in innovation and emerging technologies.

2.91 Underpinning the delivery of this strategy are three strategic priorities:

- To support entrepreneurship, business growth and innovation;
- To improve employability and skills; and
- To invest in regeneration and modern infrastructure and connectivity.

2.92 Each of these priorities have a number of sub themes which have a connection to planning, namely the "regeneration of our city, towns and villages" and the "strategic investment proposals".

Cross Boundary Policy Context

2.93 In considering the local policy context, it is important to take account of the three neighbouring councils in Northern Ireland and the two in the Republic of Ireland. The following table offers a short summary of each Council's position with regards to economic development.

Table 5: Neighbouring Councils Position on Economic Development

Neighbouring Council	Position
Ards and North Down Borough Council	Published its Preferred Options Paper[19] in March 2019. It notes the Council's Integrated Strategy for Regeneration, Economic Development and Tourism target of creating 7500 jobs by 2030 with forecasts indicating 4500 more than 2018 figures by 2026. Based on these figures the POP suggests that 15ha or 25ha of land would be required respectively. With regard to employment and industry it aims to facilitate sustainable development that supports a vibrant economy. The relevant preferred options: Key Issue 26: Provision of a generous supply of land for economic development within settlements The preferred option seeks to evaluate existing zonings for economic/ employment land and identify new sites to meet local employment and economic development needs. Key Issue 27: Identification of land to accommodate business start-ups and flexible working spaces

[17] Construction, Advanced manufacturing and engineering, agri-food and fishing, technology and retail and services (Source: NMD Regeneration and economic development strategy 2020-2025).

[18] ICT and digital technologies, professional business services and tourism.

[19] Ards and North Down Borough Council, Local Development Plan - Preferred Options Paper

	The preferred option is to identify specific sites within economic/ employment zonings suitable for business start-ups and flexible co-working spaces. Key Issue 28: Sustaining a vibrant rural economy The preferred option seeks to support and facilitate rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale which contributes to a sustainable rural economy and supports rural communities. Key Issue 29: Location of Class B1 business uses The preferred option is to permit B1 business uses in town centres and other suitable locations that may be specified in the LDP such as certain district centres and economic/ employment zonings. Key Issue 30: Safeguarding existing employment land The preferred option is to safeguard against the loss of economic/ employment land but permit alternative employment uses which fall outside Part B of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015 within economic/ employment zonings where these are compatible with existing uses in the area.
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council	Published its Preferred Options Paper[20] in March 2018. The relevant key issues are: Key Spatial Growth Strategy (SGS) 3 Outlines the options to allocating economic development lands with the preferred option to apportion in relation to former Council populations and in addition reflect Craigavon's sub-regional function. It estimates that approximately 12,233 new jobs will be required to match projected population increase in working age population by 2030. This need is estimated as equating to 245 ha of economic development lands at a density of 50 jobs per hectare. Economic development- urban (Key Issues ECN 1-3): ECN 1- Zoning for economic development Preferred option to evaluate existing economic development zonings and identify new sustainably located sites to meet projected needs. ECN 2- Locating Class B1 Business Uses Preferred option to allow Class B1 business uses in town centres, district centres or local centres and within economic development zonings (as identified in the LDP) as part of a sequential approach.

[20] Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council - Local Development Plan Preferred Options Paper

	ECN 3- Supporting start-up and grow-on businesses Preferred option to identify sites within economic development zonings specifically for start-up and grow-on business space and also use redundant buildings or lands on existing economic sites for start- up and grow-on business space. Economic Development- Rural (Key Issue ECN 4) ECN 4- Supporting sustainable rural economic development. Preferred option is to support a sustainable approach to rural economic development in line with existing policies and regional direction, tailored to meet local circumstances, including in relation to facilitating the apple orchard/cider tourism experience.
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	LCCC adopted its Plan Strategy[21] on 26 September 2023. The relevant Strategic Policies for economic development are: Strategic Policy 04: Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth This policy seeks to support sustainable economic growth without compromising on environmental standards. Strategic policy 11: Economic Development The Plan identifies a hierarchy of Employment land with Strategic Mixed-Use sites at West Lisburn/Blaris and Purdysburn/Knockbracken in addition to Local Employment Sites. The Plan will support development proposals that support and promote the Strategic Mixed-Use Sites and local employment sites. It also encourages mixed-use schemes on sites previously used for economic purposes to help tackle inequality and deprivation and will provide Class B1 Business use within strategic mixed-use sites. Strategic policy 12: Economic Development in the Countryside will facilitate and benefit the rural economy and support rural communities whilst protecting rural character and the environment. It also identifies two rural sites as existing local employment sites at Glenavy and Crossnacreevy providing opportunities for start-up/small-medium businesses. Operational Policies cover economic development in settlements and the countryside, incompatible uses and retention of zoned land.
Louth County Council	Louth Development Plan – Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted on 30 September 2021 and

[21] Lisburn and Castlereagh City Borough Council - Adopted Plan Strategy

	came into effect on 11 November 2021. The Plan provides a framework for economic growth and investment at a county level. The economic strategy for the County is based on a vision of developing a strong economic base supported by enterprise, innovation and skills. The primary location for employment related development are the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk. A number of strategic objectives are relevant to economic development: SO1-Realise the potential and promote the development and growth of County Louth by harnessing the economic and employment potential of the competitive advantages of the County including its strategic location, connectivity and accessibility to external markets with particular regard to the role of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk located on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. SO2-Support and promote the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as key designated Regional Growth Centres. SO11-Support the further development of a resilient economic base in Louth and promote both enterprise and entrepreneurship, underpinned by innovation and talent resulting in the delivery of sustainable jobs and economic growth. CS12-To promote and support the sustainable development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, safeguarding and improving accessibility and service by road, rail and communication and enhancing cross border interactions to realise the growth potential of Drogheda-Dundalk-Newry as an important cross-border network for regional development. Economy and employment section: The plan contains a total of 63 economy and employment objectives, a number of which acknowledge the importance of collaboration to realise the potential of the Economic Corridor and as a result aim to engage and work closely with adjoining local authorities and government agencies in NI to support cross border economic co-operation and development.

Monaghan County Council	Draft Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031. The Plan contains a number of strategic objectives: SO 1- To develop to its full potential each part of County Monaghan in economic, social and environmental terms. SO 4- To realise the potential of County Monaghan in the context of its strategic location along the border, adjacent to the eastern economic corridor and to improve linkages and communications between Monaghan and its neighbouring counties. SO 5- To support balanced economic development throughout the county by delivering improved infrastructure and services. The core strategy strategic objective (CSSO 1) is to ensure that new development within the County will provide for sustainable development that enables economic growth, delivery of accessible and high-quality infrastructure and services and guides population growth in accordance with the settlement strategy. With regard to economic development the relevant policies are: Economic Development Strategic Objective (EDSO) 1: To promote Monaghan as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism and to build on its strong spirit of enterprise to create a dynamic local economy with job creation at its heart. There are ten Economic Development Objectives. They include: EDO 1- To prepare an Economic Development Strategy based upon an economic development model that will support the future economic growth of the County and the towns within it, during the lifetime of the plan, subject to available resources. EDO 2- To zone a sufficient amount of land in appropriate serviced locations for the facilitation of industrial and commercial activities that will stimulate the economic viability and vibrancy of the County. EDO 3- To encourage industrial and economic development, including small-scale/startup businesses of appropriate scales, at locations in line with the Settlement Strategy and Economic Strategy. EDO 4- To enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise, through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.

	EDO 5- To acquire and develop suitable serviced sites for the development of industrial/business parks and actively encourage industry and economic development, particularly new business start-ups or expanding enterprises, to locate at such selected sites. EDO 6- To assist in the establishment or expansion of industrial, commercial or other such endeavours that will provide increased employment opportunities in the County. EDO 8-To consult with industry stakeholder to support the concept the establishment of an engineering hub in County Monaghan. EDO 10- To encourage the development of clusters in the areas of agri-business, engineering and high potential sectors such as the green economy and artificial intelligence including the provision of Data Value Hubs, at appropriate locations within the County. Industry, Enterprise and Employment (IEO 1-6) objectives set out the Plans approach. It seeks to ensure sufficient zoned industrial and employment lands at appropriate locations (IEO 1), facilitate growth and/or expansion of existing industrial enterprises where appropriate (IEO 2), promote sustainable development of industry within the towns (IEO 3) and continue to support and facilitate cross border co-operations and trade with the North of Ireland (IEO 6). The Plan also sets out town settlement plans for Monaghan, Carrickmacross and Castleblaney respectively promoting them as key industrial, enterprise and employment centres. It promotes the development of start-up enterprises within Clones Town and supports and encourages and encourages the development of research facilities and start-up operators within the food business sector at Ballybay Enterprise Park.

2.94 The Council has engaged and responded to neighbouring Council's POP's and draft or final Plan Strategies (where published). The Council is also represented on a number of working groups to discuss cross-boundary issues, including the Development Plan Working Group.

2.95 In addition, members of the plan team have also met with officials with neighbouring Councils during the preparation of the POP and draft Plan Strategy to discuss any cross-boundary issues.

2.96 The draft Plan Strategy was presented to neighbouring councils in a workshop on 9 April 2025, where representatives from the three neighbouring councils in the north were represented. A similar presentation was held online with the two neighbouring councils in the south on 8 April 2025. This involved discussion on the proposed Plan objectives, Strategic Policies and new operational policies, along with the consideration of shared cross-boundary issues. Further details are outlined in the Neighbouring Council Consultation Report (see supporting documents to the draft Plan Strategy on the Council's website).

2.97 In consideration of neighbouring Council's development plan documents and discussions held with their officials, it is the opinion of the Council that no conflict is apparent with our draft Plan Strategy insofar as it is related to economic development.

3.0 Preferred Options Paper

3.1 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.

3.2 As part of the process of preparing the POP a Preliminary Review of Operational Planning Policy was carried out which drew upon operational experience and changes in regional planning policy to identify issues to be addressed through the preparation of the LDP.

3.3 The POP identified four key issues in relation to economic development.

Key Issue 4 – Quantity of Employment Land

- Option 1 No overall increase in the amount of land zoned for employment.
- Option 2 Uplift the overall amount of land zoned for employment use by 20%.

3.4 The preferred option was to uplift the overall amount of land zoned for employment use by 20%. This option sought to ensure there was a balanced reserve of employment land, reflecting the existing business base across the district by increasing the availability of non-Invest NI lands.

3.5 The alternative option was to have no overall increase in the amount of land zoned for employment. This option was considered to meet the overall projected need on the basis of the overall quantum of employment land but did not take into account the significant proportion of zoned employment land held by Invest NI.

3.6 The majority of public responses 61% (17 submissions) agreed with the preferred option to uplift the amount of zoned land by 20%. Those that were neutral or indicated they did not support the preferred option stated that a full review of zoned lands should be undertaken.

3.7 There was a limited degree of support from statutory consultees, with 2 submissions (14%) supporting the preferred option and 1 submission (7%) indicating support in part. The majority of consultees (11 submission, 79%) were non-committal while no consultees disagreed with the Council approach. DfI highlighted that some information used to calculate the economic land requirement was dated and the Council would need to have a robust evidential context.

Key Issue 5 – Distribution of Employment Land

- Option 1 Retain existing zonings as contained within the BNMAP and ADAP.
- Option 2 Retain broad balance of remaining employment land provision across the district (currently 132 ha (former Newry and Mourne district) and 42 ha (former Down district)).
- Option 3 Focus employment lands in hubs only (Newry and Downpatrick) with proportionate allocation based on percentage resident population.

3.8 The preferred option was to retain the broad balance of remaining employment land provision across the district (noted as being 132 ha in the former Newry and Mourne district, and 42 ha in the former Down district).

3.9 This option included the evaluation of all current zonings and designations, as contained within BNMAP and ADAP, and rezone unsuitable or unnecessary land. It noted it would consider opportunities for local sites at village level across the district similar to the Industrial Policy Areas in the ADAP, within smaller population centres but still located on the main road network.

3.10 The alternative options were:

- Alternative Option 1 - Retain existing zonings as contained within the BNMAP and ADAP.
- The retention of existing zonings was considered effectively as a 'do nothing' option that would leave an imbalance between the two former districts with land designated at a village level (IPAs) on the former Down district side but not on the former Newry and Mourne side. In addition it noted no consideration is given to be those lands that have been zoned where there appears to be no prospect of them being brought forward for development.
- Alternative Option 2 - Focus employment lands in hubs only (Newry and Downpatrick) with proportionate allocation based on percentage resident population.

- The POP suggested that using the 2011 Census data 71.2% (120 hectares) of the estimated 169 hectares of required employment lands would be allocated in Newry with 28.8% (49 hectares) being allocated to Downpatrick. It was considered that although this allocation reflects the respective size and function of the district's two main hubs it fails to address the need for employment lands outside of Newry and Downpatrick.

3.11 The majority of public respondents on this issue 75% (18 submissions) agreed with the preferred option to retain the broad balance of remaining employment land across the district.

3.12 There was a limited degree of support from statutory consultees 14% (2 submissions), the majority of consultees 86% (12 submissions) were non-committal while no consultees disagreed with the Council approach. DfI Strategic Planning directed the Council to the Employment Land Evaluation Framework set out in the RDS and the requirement to assess the suitability of existing employment land before quantifying future land requirements and identifying new sites.

Key Issue 11- Economic Development in the Countryside

- Option 1 Adopt existing policy as set out in Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning and Economic Development (PPS4) in respect of economic development in the countryside.
- Option 2 Consider scope under the SPPS to allow a more flexible approach.

3.13 The preferred option was to consider scope under the SPPS to allow a more flexible approach. It was noted that the SPPS states "a small-scale new build economic development project may be permissible outside a village or small settlement where there is no suitable site within the settlement".

3.14 The preferred option sought to explore the potential to provide small-scale workshop style development in the countryside which is ancillary to an existing dwelling. Small-scale was defined in terms of floorspace of the development which is ancillary to an existing dwelling. It noted a floorspace restriction of 100 sqm could be applied. The POP suggested that a suitable site, within the context of the SPPS must, in respect of start-up businesses, be interpreted as the availability of serviced units.

3.15 The alternative option was to adopt existing policy as set out in Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning and Economic Development (PPS4) in respect of economic development in the countryside.

3.16 The majority of public respondents on this issue 77% (20 submissions) agreed with the preferred option. The National Trust and Woodland Trust both supported the preferred option whilst highlighting the importance of balancing this against the impact on the natural environment. Others disagreed stating that development should locate in towns/ villages first and only in the countryside as a last resort or that greater recognition should be given to the natural environment and the need to avoid areas that are sensitive to change.

3.17 The majority of statutory consultees on this issue 72% (10 submissions) made no comment on the options provided. Of those that did comment 14% (2 submissions) agreed, 7% (1 submission) disagreed while the remaining 7% (1 submission) had mixed views. DfI Strategic Planning highlighted that the SPPS seeks to restrict new building for economic proposals in the countryside in the interests of rural amenity and wider sustainability objectives and sought further information on the nature of economic proposals likely to be considered acceptable to the Council.

Key Issue 12- Alternative Uses on Land Zoned for Economic Development

- Option 1 Status Quo.
- Option 2 Degree of Flexibility.
- Option 3 Greater Flexibility.

3.18 The preferred option was to have a degree of flexibility to allow a limited number of alternative compatible use(s)/business(es) falling outside Part B 'Industrial and

Business Use' of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015 within zoned economic land.

3.19 It noted potential uses could include the sale of motor vehicles, use as a scrapyard, breaking of motor vehicles and the storage and distribution of minerals.

3.20 The alternative options were:

- Alternative Option 1 - Maintain the status quo which would safeguard land zoned for economic development for industrial, business and storage and distribution uses only.
- The POP noted this option seeks to ensure that zoned economic development lands are protected in line with existing planning policy and that no consideration is given to alternative compatible uses that could potentially locate within these areas without detrimental impact on existing uses.
- Alternative Option 2 - Allow greater flexibility to allow retail, commercial, leisure and alternative uses falling outside of Part B within zoned economic land subject to the adoption of a sequential approach ensuring that city/town centres are considered first and the proposed use demonstrates a support function to existing economic uses.
- The POP noted that this alternative option could potentially undermine the town centres by permitting uses that should be directed to these centres.

3.21 The majority of public respondents on this issue 56% (14 submissions) disagreed with the preferred option to allow a limited number of alternative compatible uses/businesses falling outside Part B Industrial and Business Use of the Planning (Use Classes) Order 2015 within zoned economic land. A minority of 28% (7 submissions), agreed with the Council's preferred option. Some submissions considered that safeguarding land for economic development in line with current policy reduced the potential for impact on existing business operations. Others sought greater flexibility around the re-use of existing buildings and the consideration of residential use. Invest NI cautioned against adopting a blanket approach as this would have potential to lessen the attractiveness of employment/industrial land to those businesses requiring a contaminant free environment.

3.22 The majority of statutory consultees 72% (10 submissions) made no comment on the options provided on this issue. Those that commented agreed 7% (1 submission), disagreed or had mixed views 14% (2 submissions). DfI Strategic Planning emphasised the importance of protecting land and buildings for economic development to ensure sufficient and appropriate supply.

3.23 Further details of the responses to the Preferred Options Paper can be found in the Council's POP Consultation Report, available on the Council's website.

4.0 District Profile

4.1 The district's location on the Belfast to Dublin economic corridor is significant and provides opportunities for the district to grow its economy, as an attractive place for indigenous and foreign investment with connections to the ports and airports in both Belfast and Dublin. The district is also home to Warrenpoint Port which is primarily a commercial port for freight services with a focus on roll on and roll off freight and acts as an important regional gateway to the Republic of Ireland, Britain and Europe. While its coastal location provides the district with Ardglass and Kilkeel harbours which are significant contributors to the local economy. The natural resource of the landscape provides the district with agriculture and tourism opportunities.

4.2 There are strong north to south road connections including the A1 dual carriageway Belfast-Newry and onwards to N1/M1 to Dublin, the A2 Newry-Warrenpoint dual carriageway, the A7 Belfast-Downpatrick, A24 Belfast-Newcastle and the A28 Newry-Armagh. However, the east to west links with towns and villages are weaker and are connected by a network of more rural roads. There is a small stretch of railway which passes through the district linking Newry with the Belfast-Dublin railway line and the Portadown-Newry line. There is a dependency on the private car for travel in the district and on the road network for the movement of freight. The 2021 NI Census found that 72% of the district's population travelled to work by car or van, compared to the NI average of 68%.[22] The population are also more likely to travel longer distances to their place of work with 16% of the NMD population travelling 20km and over to work, compared to the NI average of 12%[23]. This is perhaps demonstrated by the travel to work areas[24] (TTWA, 2011) which shows that a large portion of the north of the district is in the Belfast TTWA (which extends as far south as Dundrum) while the remainder of the district is in the Newry and Banbridge TTWA. A University of Ulster study[25] on the district's labour market analysis noted in relation to commuting that a further 3,150 commute across the border with Louth and Dublin city being the traditional end points for commuters.

Population

4.3 The district has a population of 182,074 which is approximately 9.57% of the NI population. This represents an increase of 6.1% from 2011. Importantly, the demography of the district (and NI as a whole) is also changing with a shift towards an ageing society which is likely to have an impact on the economically active and employment rates for the district. With increases to the age individuals are eligible for state/private pensions there may be an increase in the number of individuals continuing to work beyond the age of 65. This could help to counterbalance the impact an increase in the number of people over 65 is likely to have but it will also have implications for managing an older workforce. The Department for the

[22] Newry, Mourne and Down Census Data NMD: 67% driving a car or van and a further 5% as a passenger in a car or van compared to 63% and 5% respectively for NI

[23] Newry, Mourne and Down Census Data

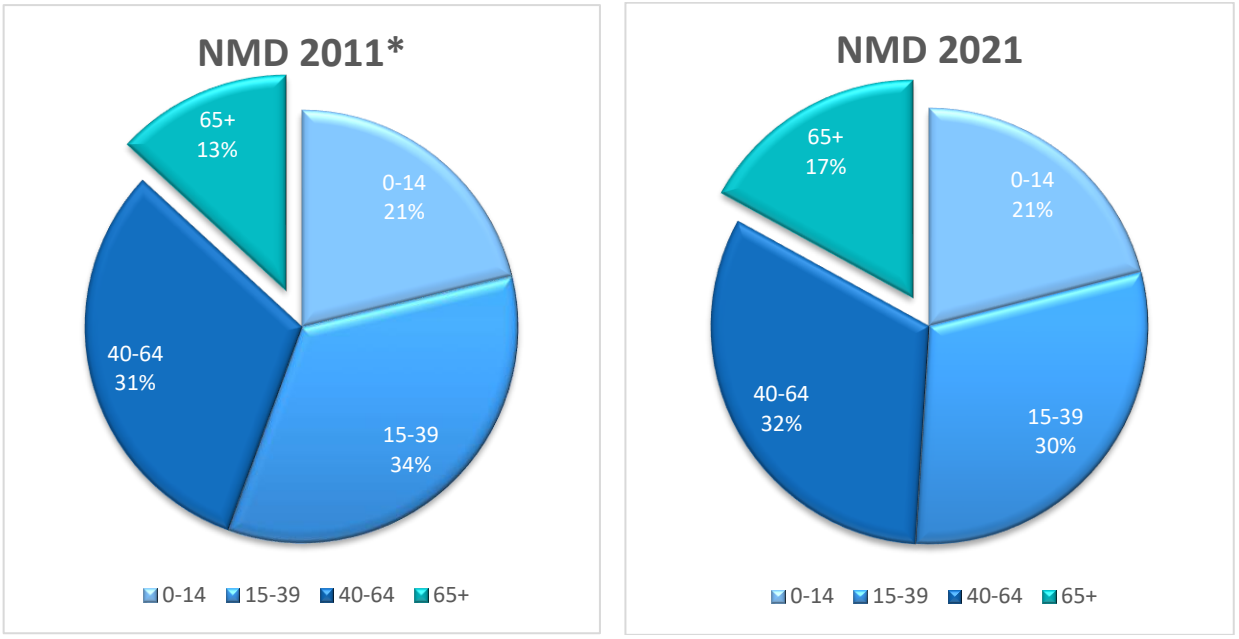
[24] These zones are defined where the bulk of their resident population work within the same area (criteria requires at least 75% of the people who work in the area also live in the area). There are 10 TTWAs in NI.

[25] Analysis of the Labour Market in Newry, Mourne & Down

Economy suggests this could include upskilling, reskilling, flexible working and support for health and wellbeing[26].

4.4 Figure 2 shows the percentage of the population aged 15-39 in the district decreased from 34% to 30% between the 2011 Census and the 2021 Census while the percentage of those aged 65+ increased from 13% to 17% for the same time period. This is a significant increase in the number of 65+ in the district and is twice the increase as the NI average (4% increase, compared to 2% from 2011-2021)[27].

Figure 2: Percentage of NMD Population by Age, 2011 and 2021



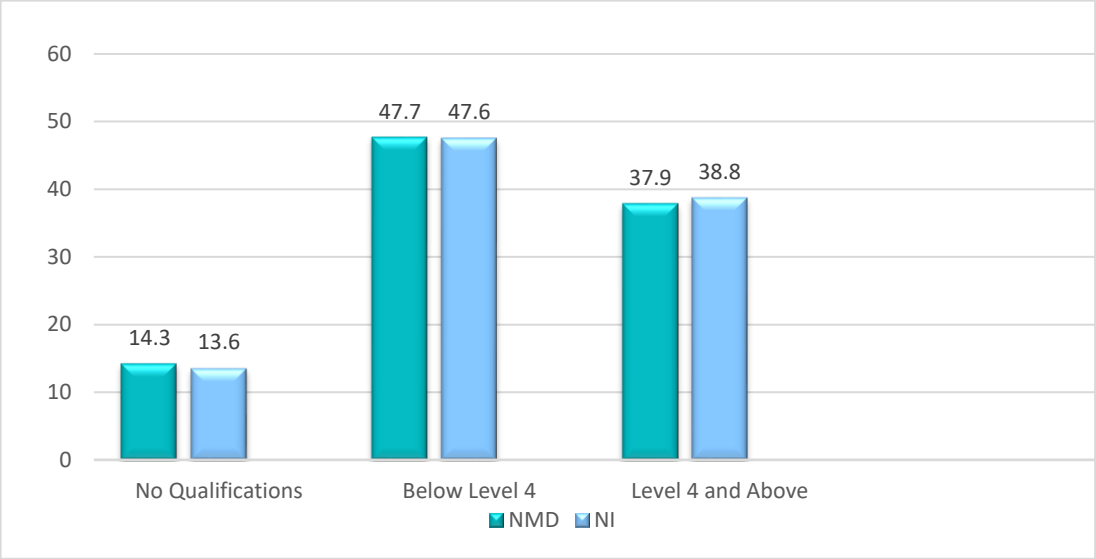
Source: Newry, Mourne and Down Census Data
*Due to rounding figures do not tally to 100.

Qualifications

4.5 Education has an important role to play in promoting economic wellbeing. Better education and training targeting future employment growth areas improves access to employment opportunities, raises productivity and innovation. The level of qualification attainment of the age 16-64 population in the district is generally comparable, although slightly lower than, the NI average (as shown in Figure 3) with 14.3% having no qualifications compared to 13.6%, 47.7% compared to 47.6% having below Level 4 (includes A-Levels, AS Levels, GCSE's, Entry level certificates and diplomas and equivalent qualifications) and 37.9% compared to 38.8% with Level 4 or above qualifications (includes foundation degrees, higher degrees, HND/HNC and equivalent qualifications).

[26] Older people inequalities in the Northern Ireland Skills System - accessible text version | Department for the Economy
[27] Newry, Mourne and Down Census Data

Figure 3: Percentage of Persons Aged 16-64 by Qualification Level in NMD and NI, 2022[28]



4.6 More generally statistics for NI show that males are slightly more likely to have no qualifications than females (14.4% and 12.9% respectively). However, age showed a greater correlation to education attainment with the 50-64 age group having the highest percentage of people with no qualifications (21.3%), followed by the 16-24 age group (12.3%), 35-49 age group (9.7%) and finally the 25-34 age group (8.4%).

Labour Market Structure

4.7 The labour market structure is composed of the economically active (people in employment and those seeking work) and economically inactive (those not seeking or not available for work). In 2022, the economically active rate for those aged 16+ in the district was 62.1%, slightly above the NI average of 60.6%[29]. This trend was mirrored for the 16-64 age cohorts with a rate of 75.4% economically active in the district compared to the NI average of 73.7%[30]. The district had a higher percentage of economically active males and females across both age cohorts in 2022 than the NI average while more generally males were more likely to be economically active (as shown in table 6). Similarly, the employment rate in the district for the same time period was higher for both age cohorts with 61.6% (16+) and 74.9% (16-64) in comparison to the NI average of 59.2% (16+) and 71.9% (16-64).

[28] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/labour-force-survey-annual-tables-2022 Qualifications Table 4.2

[29] Labour-Market-Status-2022.XLSX Table 1.1b

[30] Labour-Market-Status-2022.XLSX Table 1.1d

Table 6: Percentage of Economically Active Males and Females by Age Cohorts in NMD and NI, 2022[31]

	Male (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Total (%)
	16+	**16-64**	**16+**	**16-64**	**16+**	**16-64**
NMD	66.0	80.3	58.2	70.9	62.1	75.4
NI	65.3	77.6	56.1	69.7	60.6	73.7

Unemployment

4.8 There are two main indicators of unemployment. The Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey (LFS) measure follows International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines and is the official NI measure. While the Northern Ireland Claimant Count is a measure of the number of persons claiming benefits, including job seekers allowance and some universal credit claimants.

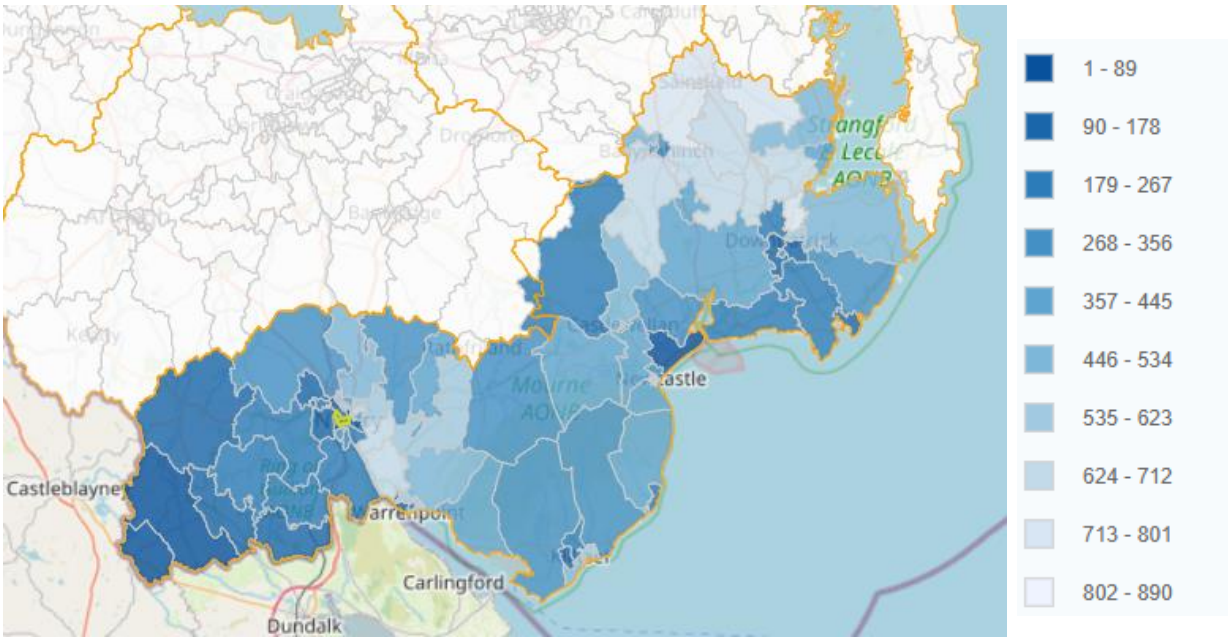
4.9 In 2022, the LFS unemployment rate in the district for the 16+ population was 0.7%. This was the lowest of all the eleven councils and notably lower than the NI average of 2.2%. This was similar for the 16-64 age cohort with a rate of 0.8% for the district and 2.3% for NI.[32] In 2024, 3.3% of the working age population in the district were claiming unemployment benefit. This was the 5th highest claimant figure of all the eleven councils and marginally below the NI average of 3.5%[33].

Deprivation

4.10 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM 2017) combines 7 distinct types of deprivation: income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, access to services, living environment and crime and disorder. The NISRA Report on Multiple Deprivation Measures in 2017[34] showed that the district had the third highest level of Super Output Areas (SOAs) within the top 100 most deprived areas within Northern Ireland. Of the 84 super Output Areas (SOAs) in the district 23 lie within the top 25% most deprived SOAs in Northern Ireland. The southwest of the district is particularly represented in this category with other SOA's being located in and around Newry, Downpatrick, Newcastle, Warrenpoint, Kilkeel, Ardglass and Annalong[35] (see Map 1). Income deprivation is most prevalent in the district with four of the five highest ranked SOAs in NI for income deprivation being located in NMD[36].

[31] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/labour-force-survey-annual-tables-2022 Tables 1.1b, 1.1d, 1.2b, 1.2d, 1.3b and 1.3d
[32] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/labour-force-survey-annual-tables-2022 Tables 1.1b and 1.1d
[33] lmr-claimant-count-tables-december-2024.xlsx
[34] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017
[35] https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017
[36] Creggan (1), Forkhill (2), Silverbridge (3) and Crossmaglen (5)

Map 1: NI Multiple Deprivation Measure for NMD 2017



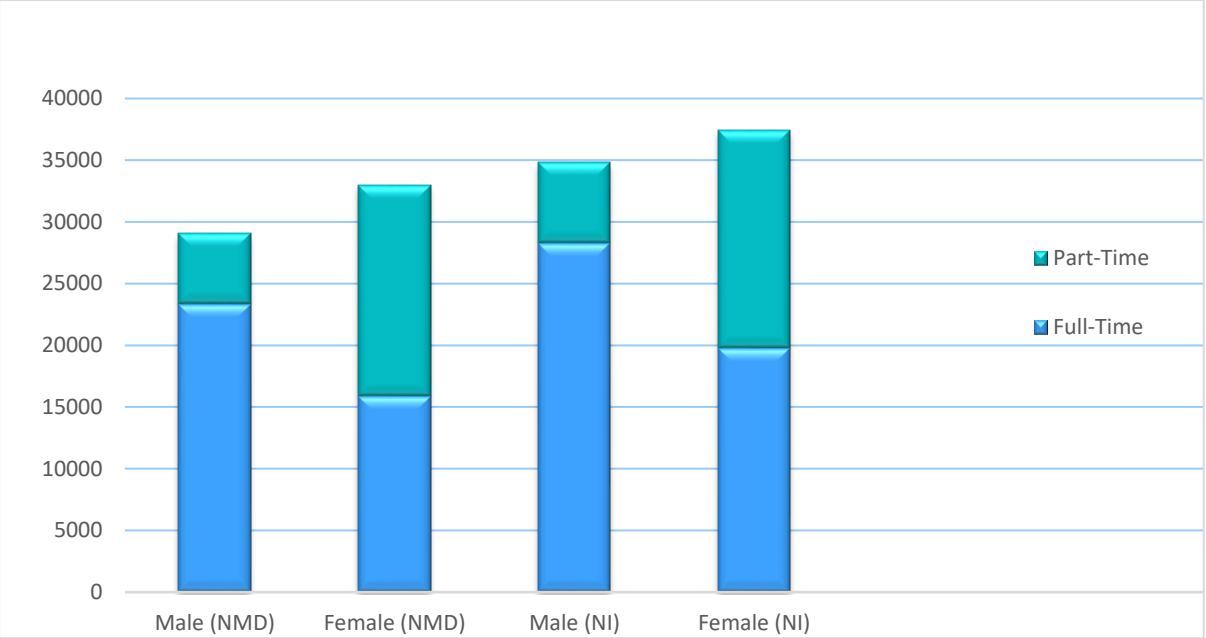
Source: NISRA Deprivation Map SOA NMD

Employee Jobs

4.11 While the number of employee jobs is not a total figure of employment[37] it accounted for 95% of total employment in NI in 2022. As a result, these figures can provide us with important data. In 2022 there were 62,028[38] employee jobs in the district, accounting for 7.8% of the NI total and equating to the district having the fourth highest number of employee jobs of the eleven councils. Of these jobs, 24.5% were in the public sector[39] showing a slightly less dependency on the public sector when compared to the NI average of 27.5%. Figure 4 shows that while females account for more of the employee jobs they are more likely to be employed part-time than males (52% compared to 20% of males in the district). A pattern that is replicated in the NI average with 53% of females being employed part-time compared to 19% of males).

[37] Employees jobs figure excludes a number of categories including the self-employed, agricultural workers and those on training schemes and apprenticeships that are workplace based.
[38] BRES2022-Publication-Tables-1.xlsx Table 1.1 -September 2022. (excludes agricultural jobs- 1544 in June 2022).
[39] BRES2022-Publication-Tables-1.xlsx Table 1.2 -September 2022

Figure 4: Number of Part-Time and Full-Time Jobs for Males and Females in NMD and NI, 2022

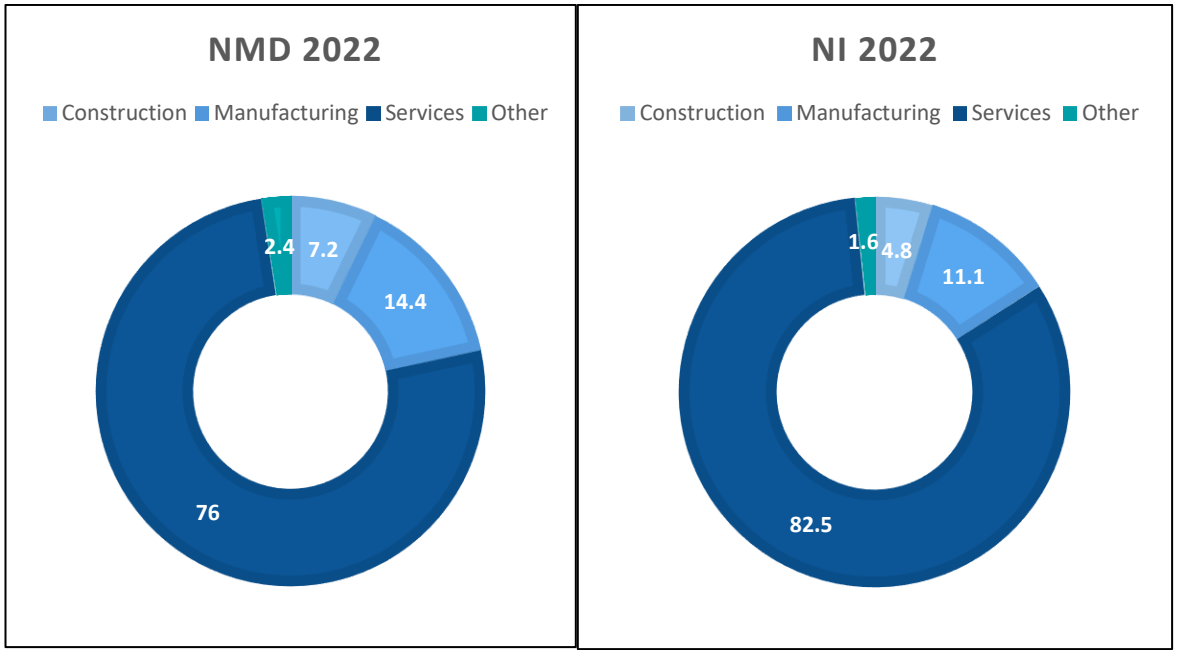


Source: BRES2022-Publication-Tables-1.xlsx Table1.1

4.12 Of the four headline industries, services accounted for the vast majority of employee jobs in the district with 76%, followed by 14.4% in manufacturing, 7.2% in construction and 2.4% in other[40] (see Figure 5). While the number of jobs in services is significant it is lower than the NI average of 82.5%. However, the district had a higher proportion of jobs in both manufacturing and construction than the NI average of 11.1% and 4.8% respectively[41]. This can be attributed to the presence of companies such as Glen Dimplex, MJM Marine, Fm Environmental and Collins Aerospace. The median annual gross pay for full-time employee jobs in the district in 2024 was £30,782[42], notably lower than the NI average of £34,378.

[40] BRES2022-Publication-Tables-1.xlsx Table 3.1 September 2022
[41] BRES2022-Publication-Tables-1.xlsx Table 2.1 September 2022
[42] Annual Survey of Hours and Earning, NISRA, Table 7(NI)7a

Figure 5: Employee Jobs by Headline Industry (%) in NMD and NI, 2022



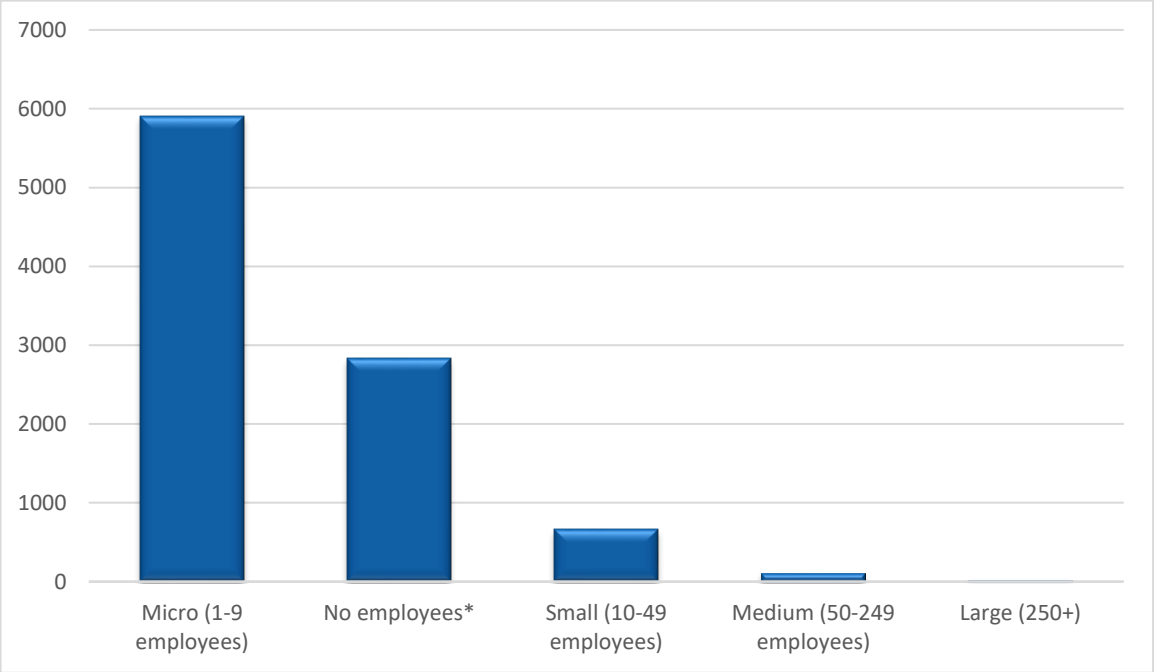
4.13 Appendix D provides further information on the total employment for the district and district electoral areas for these headline industries. It also provides information on the sectoral composition of the district and employment change from 2001-2022.

Business Profile

4.14 The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in the district has steadily Increased from 7,675 in 2015 to 9,540 in 2024, accounting for 11.9% of the Northern Ireland total of 80,045)[43]. The majority of these businesses in the district are micro businesses (i.e. those with 1-9 employees) with 5,910 (61.9%) of the total 9,540 businesses being in this category. The next largest category of business were those with no employees which accounted for a further 2,835 (29.7%), followed by small businesses (those with 10-49 employees) with 665 (7%), medium businesses (50-249 employees) with 110 (1.2%) and 20 large businesses (those with 250+ employees) accounting for just 0.2% of the total number of VAT and/or businesses registered in the district (see Figure 6). This illustrates the importance of small business and self-employment in the local economy.

[43] IDBR-Publication-2024.xlsx worksheet 3.1

Figure 6: VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses in the NMD by Employee Size in 2024



Source: IDBR-Publication-2024.xlsx Worksheet 3.4

* The 0 (zero) employee size band includes Holding Companies and those businesses that are not yet trading, for example, if a factory is under construction.

4.15 In 2021 there were 10,200 self-employed in the district accounting for 11% of the total self-employed jobs in NI. Just over half of these jobs in the district were in the three main industries[44]- Construction (24%), Agriculture (18%) and Retail (9%). On the other hand, statistics show the district also has a higher rate of underemployment than the NI average (7.7% compared to 6.9%[45]). Underemployment refers to individuals who are employed but would like to work more hours through their current job, a supplementary job, or in a new job. Underemployment also particularly prevalent amongst younger people within the workforce with 13.5% of the 16-24 age band classified as underemployed in NI compared to 4.8% of 55-64 year olds[46].

Business by Sector

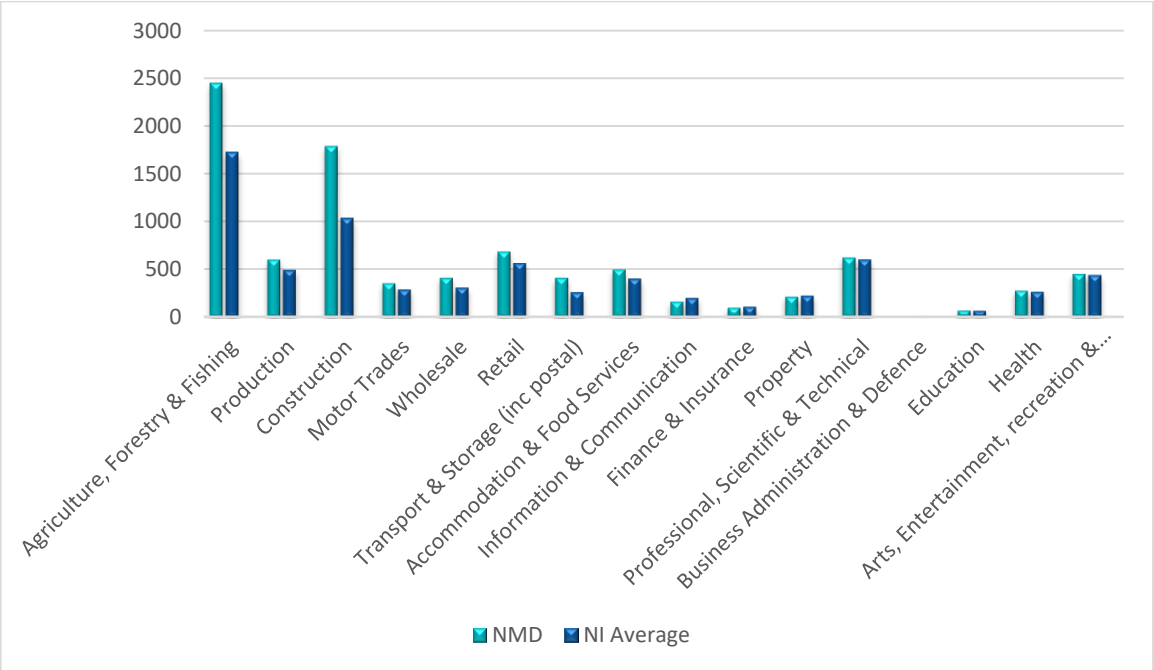
4.16 Of the 9,540 VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in the district in 2024 25.7%[47] were in the agricultural, forestry and fishing sectors, the 4th highest proportion of the 11 council areas and above the regional average of 23.6%. This is reflective of the district's rural nature and coastal location.

[44] Analysis of the Labour Market in Newry, Mourne & Down
[45] Underemployment In Northern Ireland - tables.ods UND4 16-64 LGD January-December 2019
[46] Underemployment In Northern Ireland - tables.ods UND3 16-64 NI 2019
[47] IDBR Publication 2024 worksheet 3.2

4.17 In 2024, there were 4,144[48] farms located within the district[49], 67% of these farms are cattle and sheep (LFA[50]) accounting for 67% of all farms[51]. Of note is that 85% of farms in the district are categorised as very small which is higher than the NI average of 79%[52]. DAERA statistics for June 2024 indicate that the district had the third largest agricultural labour force in NI (7,709), representing 15% of the total NI agricultural labour force, clearly showing the importance of agriculture to the local economy.

4.18 The fishing industry plays an important role in the local economy with the majority of NI's fishing fleet being based at Ardglass and Kilkeel along with associated processing facilities. In 2022 the combined total value of the fish landed in Kilkeel and Ardglass by UK vessels was £16.1million, almost 50% of NI's total[53]. Shellfish accounted for £14.4million, or 89%, of their total catch. Kilkeel has the largest fishing fleet in Northern with 53% of all fishers in the Northern Ireland fishing industry being based in Kilkeel in 2021[54]. Both harbours are limited in the size of vessels they can accommodate and there have been plans proposed for the expansion of Kilkeel's outer harbour and the regeneration of Ardglass's harbour to facilitate larger vessels which could further improve their contribution to the economy.

Figure 7: Comparison of the Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in NMD and the NI Average in 2024



Source: IDBR-Publication-2024.xlsx Worksheet 3.2

[48] Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland 2024 - Data Tables_0.ods Table 6.3b June 2024
[49] Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland 2024 - Data Tables_0.odsTable 6.7b June 2024
[50] Less Favoured Areas
[51] Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland 2024 - Data Tables_0.ods Table 6.3b June 2024
[52] Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland 2024 - Data Tables_0.ods Table 6.2b June 2024
[53] IDBR Section_2_Landings_2022.ods
[54] UK Fisheries Statistics 2022: SN02788.pdf (parliament.uk)

4.19 As shown in Figure 7 construction is another key sector in the district, accounting for 18.8% of VAT and/or PAYE businesses in the district, the highest proportion of all eleven council areas and above the NI average of 14.2%. (Further information on the sectoral composition of the district, including more granular analysis, of economic activity at District Electoral Area level is available in Appendix D).

Business Demography

4.20 The district has a consistent record of business creation and new job opportunities with a high number of business births, placing the district second or third highest of all NI Councils each year between 2017 and 2023[55] (see Table 7). It continues to demonstrate its entrepreneurial spirit with 625 business births registered in 2023, second only to Belfast[56]. The business survival rate after one year was above the NI average with 93.5% of the district's 2022 business births remaining active in 2023 compared to 90.8% of NI's 2022 business births[57].

Table 7: Count of Births and Birth Rate of Newly Registered Businesses in NMD and NI, 2017-2023

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NMD	815 (12.2%)	695 (10.1%)	760 (10.7%)	665 (9.3%)	730 (9.9%)	620 (8.2%)	625 (8.2%)
NI	6570 (11.1%)	5545 (9.2%)	6045 (9.8%)	5670 (9.1%)	6655 (10.3%)	5385 (8.3%)	5370 (8.3%)

Source: IDBR-Business-Demography-NI-2023.xlsx Table 1.2

4.21 Appendix D provides further information on employment in the district and outlines the potential performance of the labour market in the district over the Plan period.

Key Infrastructure and Projects

Warrenpoint Harbour

4.22 The RDS states that Newry and Warrenpoint form the South Eastern City Gateway providing strategic road links to Dundalk and on to Dublin and freight services operating out of Warrenpoint harbour. Gateways are strategically important transport interchanges which are important for economic development, freight distribution activities and additional employment generation.

4.23 Warrenpoint harbour is primarily a commercial port for freight services, with a focus on roll on roll off freight. The NISRA review of NI ports traffic in 2023 indicated that Warrenpoint had the third highest level of total NI traffic (11.3%) after Belfast (66.6% and Larne (13.9%)[58]. The port is an important commercial freight gateway and key employment generator, and road connectivity will continue to play a crucial role in its future growth and development. The construction of the Southern Relief

[55] IDBR-Business-Demography-NI-2023.ods Table 1.2
[56] IDBR-Business-Demography-NI-2023.ods Table 1.2
[57] IDBR-Business-Demography-NI-2023.ods Table 1.10
[58] Northern Ireland Ports Traffic 2023

Road will further improve the infrastructure and connectivity to and from Warrenpoint making it a more attractive place to invest and potentially increasing demand for employment land.

4.24 The port also offers potential for increased tourism through cruise ships.

4.25 Warrenpoint Harbour Authority produced a Port Masterplan for the port to cover the period 2018-2043. Its vision is "To be a leading commercial port, continually growing whilst maximizing our contribution to the regional economy and community". It sets out five core objectives:

- Improve transportation and circulation
- Improve capacity, operations and facilities
- Maintain a diverse customer base
- Develop and improve linkages with the town
- Develop a long-term strategy for expansion

4.26 These are to be delivered by pursuing a number of project priorities: broaden regional/ strategic access through delivery of the Newry Southern Relief Road; enhance marine access through an improved maintenance dredging regime; address limited storage space which has been identified as the main constraint within the Port's operational area; and progress acquisition of sites within the potential port footprint.

Kilkeel and Ardglass harbours

4.27 The majority of NI's fishing fleet is based at Adrglass and Kilkeel and makes a significant contribution to the local economy with associated processing facilities at both harbours. Kilkeel is the largest fishing port in NI and accounts for almost a third of all fish landed in NI. When combined with Ardglass it accounted for almost 50% of NI's total value of fish land in 2022 by UK vessels[59]. However, both harbours are limited in the size of vessels they can accommodate and there have been plans proposed for the expansion of Kilkeel's outer harbour and the regeneration of Ardglass's harbour to facilitate larger vessels which could further improve their contribution to the economy.

4.28 These proposals would signify a significant financial investment in both Kilkeel and Ardglass[60]. The proposals include £73million to create a new harbour at Kilkeel which would have a deeper approach channel to allow larger vessels to land. Kilkeel would also become an Irish Marine Hub- a centre of economic and marine activity for things such aquaculture, leisure boating and boat repair and decommissioning- supporting the fishing industry and wider blue economy. Ardglass would also benefit from £20million investment to deepen the approach channel.

4.29 These proposals, particularly the investment in Kilkeel, has the potential to increase demand for employment land.

[59] IDBR Section_2_Landings_2022.ods
[60] Multi-million pound investment in fishing harbours moves step closer - Poots | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Newry Southern Relief Road

4.30 Newry has suffered from traffic congestion for many years as strategic traffic travelling between the A1 dual carriageway and A2 dual carriageway, including Heavy Goods Vehicles between Belfast, Dublin and Warrenpoint Port currently has to pass through the city centre. When combined with local traffic congestion is significant, leading to increased journey times and poor journey time reliability.

4.31 The Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 (BNMAP) included a proposal for a Newry Southern Bypass as a long-term strategic road improvement (SRI) to link from the A1, a key transport corridor (KTC), to the A2 Warrenpoint Road. Provision of the relief road was seen as important in not only reducing traffic volumes in Newry City Centre but improving access from Warrenpoint Port to the A1.

4.32 The proposed scheme is one of a number of projects that is benefiting from the Belfast Region City Deal. It will provide approximately 4km of new single carriageway between the A2 Warrenpoint Road and the A1/N1 Belfast to Dublin corridor. The objectives of the proposed scheme include:

- Improve journey time reliability for strategic traffic
- Reduce conflict between strategic and local traffic movements
- Contribute positively to transport economic efficiency, and;
- Maintain navigation of the Newry Ship Canal.

4.33 The Environmental Impact Assessment Report and draft Orders were subject to public consultation for six weeks with the consultation closing on 4 March 2025. Depending on nature and number of objections a public inquiry may be convened.

4.34 The Newry Southern Relief Road scheme will deliver improved access and connectivity to and from Warrenpoint Harbour and has the potential to increase the attractiveness of and demand for economic development land. It is also intended to complement the city's regeneration ambitions and could also boost to tourism through improved access to the south east coast.

A24 Ballynahinch Bypass (DfI)

4.35 A proposed new single carriageway bypass, approximately 3.1km in length around the eastern periphery of Ballynahinch. It would run from a new roundabout at the junction of the A24 Belfast Road and the A21 Saintfield Road to a new roundabout located at the existing junction of the B2 Downpatrick Road and the A24 Drumaness Road. A Park and share facility would also be constructed on the northern side of the proposed Saintfield Road roundabout between the A24 Belfast Road and A21 Saintfield Road.

4.36 The objective of the proposed bypass is to improve journey times, journey reliability and safety of the A24 Belfast to Newcastle Trunk road. The provision of the bypass is also expected to improve traffic conditions in Ballynahinch town centre.

4.37 On 12 March 2025 the Minister for Infrastructure announced that the scheme will be moving forward to the development of the business case and procurement. With procurement planned to start in 2027/2028, works could commence in spring/summer

2028/2029 and be completed in two years.

5.0 Consultee and Councillor Engagement

5.1 In order to meet the requirement 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 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 Employment and Economic Development was presented to Council in October 2015. This paper's purpose was to provide Council with an overview of the employment and economic development base and implications for land use in the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Area over the Plan period.

5.3 The draft Plan Strategy Economic Development policies were presented to Members at the LDP Working Group on the 7th December 2023. They were subsequently presented to Members of the Council's Planning Committee on 5th March 2025. The draft policies were approved by Members with no amendments.

5.4 Following a review of the economic development evidence base by consultants, the spatial strategy policies were finalized and 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 Evidence base for Economic Development – Survey Work and Studies

6.1 A series of surveys and studies were carried out to inform the evidence base for the Local Development Plan (LDP). These included the following for economic development:

- NMD Economic Land Monitor Report 2020
- NMD Economic Land Monitor Update 2023
- CBRE 'Employment Land Supply Study for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council' (August 2022)
- CBRE 'Employment Land Supply Study for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council' (April 2025)
- UUEPC 'Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Employment Space Demand 2018-2030' (October 2020)
- UUEPC 'Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Employment Space demand 2022-2035: Updated Analysis' (November 2023)
- Lichfields 'Newry, Mourne and Down District Council LDP 2035 Review of Employment Strategy' (April 2025)

NMD Economic Land Monitor 2020

6.2 This monitor report provides information on the availability of land for economic development. Sites identified for industrial or economic development use by the two extant development plans (both existing and proposed lands) have been monitored by the Council's LDP Team.

6.3 Economic and Industrial zonings within the district are primarily focused on the two large settlements of Newry and Downpatrick. However, other areas exist in the settlements of Warrenpoint/Burren, Newcastle, Ballynahinch, Kilkeel, Crossmaglen, Newtownhamilton and Jonesborough. The ADAP also identified lands in rural areas on the Ballynahinch Road outside Crossgar and Down Business Park at Belfast Road Downpatrick in addition to Industrial Policy Areas in Annsborough, Ardglass, Crossgar, Shrigley and Ballyhornan.

6.4 In terms of the data presented in the report, survey work was undertaken between October and December 2020 by the LDP Team for each of the monitored sites. For each of the identified sites the monitor established the type of site (existing/proposed), site area, amount of land developed/undeveloped, type of business on site (classified as per The Planning Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015), the site area and estimated floorspace developed per business use class and any other relevant information such as planning permissions, key site requirements etc.

6.5 The monitor provides an evidence baseline which can be added to and updated in subsequent years using planning decision data and further survey work. Whilst the monitor itself did not interpret the information gathered, it helped form part of the evidence base for the draft Plan Strategy Economic Development Strategy (EDS1). It will also enable the Council to monitor the uptake of industrial and economic development land across the district and will be used to inform decisions on zoning

for economic development growth at Local Policies Plan stage.

6.6 The monitor has also improved our knowledge of our local businesses to help support future industrial and economic development. It will enable us to analyse use trends and assess the ongoing suitability and viability of these areas for different types of employment provision, as well as helping to analyse vacancy and market activity as a further barometer of economic performance.

6.7 The 2020 survey identified a total 182.38ha of undeveloped industrial/economic development land[61]. Table 8 provides an overview of the location of these lands.

6.8 The 2020 Economic Land Monitor Report is available on the Council's website.

NMD Economic Land Monitor 2023 Update

6.9 A further review of the economic lands in the district was undertaken in 2023. This took the form of an update of the 2020 Economic Land Monitor and builds upon the evidence baseline it provided. Table 8 provides a combined summary of the findings of the 2020 and 2023 economic land monitors. The 2023 survey identified a total of 22.2ha of zoned economic land had been developed since the 2020 monitor as 160.18ha of undeveloped land remained.

6.10 The 2023 Economic Land Monitor Update Report is available on the Council's website.

[61] This included existing and proposed lands as identified in the previous plans in addition to IPA's and mixed-use sites with key site requirements for economic development use.

Table 8: Distribution of Economic Development Land (Developed and Undeveloped) Across the District in 2020 and 2023

Settlement	Area Zoned for Industry (ha)	Area Developed (ha)2020	Area Undeveloped (ha) 2020	Area Developed (ha) 2023	Area Undeveloped (ha) 2023
Tier 1 - City and Main Town					
Newry	210.31	113.04	97.27	119.96	90.35
Downpatrick	63.46	28.91	34.55	42.21	21.25
Tier 2 - Local and Small Towns					
Newcastle	1.11	1.11	0	1.11	0
Warrenpoint/ Burren	40.34	26.31	14.03	26.5	13.84
Kilkeel	29.05	9.26	19.79	9.26	19.79
Ballynahinch	11.49	5.59	5.9	6.14	5.35
Crossmaglen	3.4	1.1	2.3	1.1	2.3
Tier 3 - Villages					
Bessbrook	3.07	3.07	0	3.07	0
Crossgar	4.35	3	1.35	4.05	0.3
Ardglass	2.09	0.63	1.46	0.63	1.46
Newtownhamilton	0.82	0.36	0.46	0.36	0.46
Annsborough	4.47	3.58	0.89	3.58	0.89
Jonesborough	1.6	1.6	0	1.6	0
Tier 4- Small Settlements					
Shrigley	6.39	3.5	2.89	3.5	2.89
Ballyhornan	3.82	2.33	1.49	2.52	1.3
TOTAL	**385.77**	**203.39**	**182.38**	**225.59**	**160.18**

Employment Land Supply Study for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (CBRE) 2022

6.11 As previously noted the SPPS highlights that a fundamental role of the LDP is to ensure there is an ample supply of suitable land available to meet economic development needs within the plan area. The RDS provides a three stage Employment Land Evaluation Framework through which this can be achieved. To inform Stage 1 (Taking Stock of the Situation) the Council appointed CBRE to complete an audit of existing workspace availability throughout the district, including Business Enterprise Centres.

6.12 The report found:

- There are adequate zoned lands for employment purposes. It also assessed the fitness of purpose and suitability of employment lands within the district for future economic development and colour coded the lands with green being prime land, amber being lands which have current and future potential demand and red which were considered as having limited demand for development in the short term. It indicated that much of the remaining undeveloped prime 'green' land is located in Newry. It also found that the majority of the remaining 'amber' lands in settlements such as Kilkeel and Warrenpoint, whilst fit for purpose, experienced limited

demand. A smaller portion of the sites were considered 'red' due to limited demand for reasons such as location, access or only being suitable for expansion by existing businesses.

- Having reviewed the current industrial stock in Newry, Downpatrick and those towns and villages identified in the LDP POP's proposed Settlement hierarchy[62] CBRE stated that the current existing stock is generally fit for purpose given the high occupancy levels. However, it considered there is a lack of larger warehouse units available and that larger warehouse/industrial units are needed in Newry to attract new and expanding businesses to the area. It concluded the market is in effect being held back by the lack of new space coming to the market for all business sizes.
- Each of the Enterprise Centres are fit for purpose and provide much needed space and support for start-up business although some tenants have been in occupation for very long periods of time.
- There is limited good quality office accommodation throughout the council area. Most of the available office space is situated within the City, town and village centres, above retail units on the high street, most of this space would be defined as Grade B/C.
- Demand exists in Newry for quality office space, however a number of challenges exist and until these are overcome there will continue to be a lack of investment.
- Invest NI, whilst having a significant land holding within the district, is not considered to be a barrier to development as there are other substantial zoned industrial/ employment lands and as such it does not hold a monopoly on land within the council area.

6.13 The report included the following recommendations:

- Understand ownership of the zoned employment lands within the district and engage with owners to understand the issues and challenges around land being released to the market for development.
- Support and assistance for the districts Enterprise Centres to help them expand their business model so they can create new start-up units and 'grow on' space. It suggests that 'grow on space' would consist of workshop/warehouse type units of around 2000-5000 sq ft and that it would make sense for these units to be located close to the existing centres. It also suggested that consideration could be given to similar enterprise centres in several locations throughout the Council area.
- Interventions will be required to address issues around developing Grade A office space where the end values of schemes are less than the cost of construction. With regard to Grade A office space it considers Newry should be the focus for new office development.
- Further studies, including a car park study, to assist the Council to make strategic decisions regarding its assets.

[62] Newcastle, Warrenpoint, Kilkeel, Ballynahinch, Saintfield, Killyleagh, Castlewellan, Bessbrook and Crossmaglen. Burren was included given its connection with Warrenpoint in the previous Plan.

6.14 The full report is available on the Council's website.

Employment Land Supply Study for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (CBRE) Update 2025

6.15 The Council appointed CBRE to complete an update of the baseline evidence contained within the 'Employment Land Supply for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council' previously completed by CBRE in August 2022. This was to ensure it accounted for the extension of the Plan period to 2035 and also to provide a more current position on the Enterprise Centres and the availability of existing workspace and industrial stock in Newry, Downpatrick and those settlements identified as Local and Small Towns in the draft Plan Strategy Settlement Hierarchy[63].

6.16 The most significant elements of the update included the following findings:

- There is limited availability of warehouse/industrial space with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, with no new build warehousing being marketed with the council area.
- More land should be zoned at the appropriate time in the LDP process in the prime locations where land has been developed over the past 3 years. It noted that the majority of this land is Invest NI land which has been readily available for Invest NI clients.
- The Invest NI land holding has reduced considerably in the last 4 years.
- In the last 5 years demand for industrial warehouse space throughout the UK including Northern Ireland has increased considerably partly due to the surge in online sales.
- Newry has seen a good level of development of new warehouse units for owner occupiers within the Carnbane area over the past 3 years.
- In this post Brexit era, cities like Newry have the potential to be a landing pad for numerous companies who trade between the UK and Europe, however this all depends on suitable product being available.
- There should be a heavy focus on industrial/warehouse development with the NMD District with a primary focus on the Newry area. Areas such as the industrial lands at Carnbane and those areas directly off the A1 are ripe for development for servicing manufacturing and storage and distribution companies.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council 'Employment Space Demand 2022- 2035: Updated Analysis' November 2023 (UUEPC)

6.17 In order to inform Stage 2 of the RDS Employment Land Evaluation Framework (Understanding Future Requirements) the University of Ulster Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) produced a report to provide an estimate of future demand for employment space in the district. This work was initially completed in October 2020 and covered the period 2018-2030. This report is available on the Council's website. An update was then completed in 2023. This included an overview of the labour market and its potential future performance in the district to provide an estimation of employment space demand for the district over the Plan period to 2035. It also

[63] Newcastle, Warrenpoint/Burren, Kilkeel, Ballynahinch, Saintfield, Killyleagh, Castlewellan and Crossmaglen

took account of the post-Covid-19 recovery and the impacts of on-going geo-political uncertainty.

6.18 The report found that:

- Newry, Mourne and Down district may gain an additional 7,740 to 9,440 jobs by 2035 depending on varying economic scenarios (baseline and upper scenarios).
- Using these employment forecasts it estimates the demand for additional employment space as being in the region of 281,400sqm (baseline scenario) and 335,400sqm (upper scenario). Not all of this additional growth would require new space as a proportion of the new employment could be absorbed within existing space.
- When a sensitivity analysis is applied the employment demand at the baseline scenario decreases to 253,260sqm (10% capacity absorption) 225,120sqm (20%) respectively.
- It anticipated the change in employment space across both the baseline and the upper scenarios and the use classes and predicted there is a positive requirement for additional employment space across both scenarios.
- In both scenarios it is forecast there will be demand for additional General Office, Small Business Workspace and Research and Development. This is in line with the expected job creation that is forecast to occur with the roll-out of Belfast Region City Deal and possible Dublin-Belfast Economic corridor investments.
- The baseline scenario with no capacity absorption and 20% capacity absorption indicates the need for additional employment space in the district for these business types between 2022-2035 to be as shown in Table 9.
- There is also a positive outlook across other categories including Light Industrial (48,400sqm/ 38,720sqm), Industrial and Manufacturing (16,800sqm/ 13,440sqm), Storage and Distribution (23,800sqm/19,040sqm) and Fitness Centres/Leisure/Cultural (10,200sqm/8160sqm).

Table 9: Floorspace Growth Projected by UUEPC Showing Gross and 20% Capacity Figures

Business Type	Gross Floorspace Projected (sqm)	Floorspace Projected with 20% Absorption Capacity (sqm)
General Offices	70,800	56,640
Small Business Workspace	34,800	27,840
Research and Development	28,800	23,040

6.19 The full UUEPC Report is available on the Council's website.

Review of Employment Strategy (Lichfields, 2025)

6.20 The Council commissioned a review of its employment evidence base in 2024. The evidence base at that time included:

- Employment space Demand 2022-2035: Updated Analysis November 2023 (UUEPC)
- Employment Land Supply Study for NMDDC (CBRE 2022)
- Economic Land Monitor 2020 and 2023 update
- LDP Economic Development Strategy

6.21 The review found that:

- Based on the analysis of the UUEPC report, there is an estimated need for between 161,300sqm and 187,100sqm of B Class employment floorspace in the district between 2022 and 2035.
- These estimations, when translated to land requirements, suggested a need for 41.0ha of employment land at a 20% capacity absorption and 46.1ha with a 10% capacity absorption.
- With the application of a flexibility margin this suggested a requirement for between 50.4ha and 56.7ha of employment land between 2022 and 2035.
- As this requirement equates to between 31% and 35% of the quantum of undeveloped employment land in the district in 2023 it was considered there is significantly more than sufficient land to meet the expected level of B class employment growth in the district.
- Completion of a labour force assessment suggested there would be between 1,930 and 8,619 additional workers depending on whether economic activity and unemployment rates were applied to the 16-64 or the 65+ age cohorts.
- However, it found there was not a linear relationship between population increase and employment creation. If the past employment growth was replicated over the LDP period it would equate to an additional 11,635 jobs.
- The increase of the number of employees jobs between 2020 and 2022 suggests that the growth in the first few years of the LDP period is above average.
- Based on the Council's economic land monitor information it identified that Newry has an employment land supply of 57.2 years, while by contrast, Downpatrick would have a land supply of 6.6 years if past levels of development were to continue in the future.
- Overall, based on a review of past trends NMD has an employment land supply of 26.5 years. In addition, the supply represents between 3.5 and 4 times the identified land requirement[64].
- There is comparatively limited choice, particularly for any business wishing to locate outside of Newry.
- In the context of the assessment of quality/market demand the vast majority of the undeveloped lands in 2020 that were identified as good quality and prime for development were located in Newry (81.9%) and Downpatrick (17.0%).

[64] Without the application of the flexibility margin.

6.22 The report suggested a number of actions be undertaken. These included:

- Review supply of Downpatrick land as part of the LPP to ensure a longer-term supply can be maintained
- Consider options to increase the distribution of available employment land at LPP
- Review the concentration in the distribution of potential future development opportunities at LPP
- Given the extension of the LDP time period to 2035 it will be important to reassess if the remaining 87.85ha of land previously identified by CBRE as 'good quality and prime for development' is sufficient having regard to the quantum and the distribution of employment land. This should also consider whether the RAG assessment in the initial CBRE report has changed since it was undertaken.
- Undertake a qualitative assessment of each site drawing considerations under the criteria of access, site context, environment and market strength into a transparent scoring matrix.

6.23 The report included a number of recommendations, and the full report is available on the Council's website.

7.0 Draft Plan Strategy Approach

7.1 Planning for economic development is one of the core functions of the LDP and one of the Council's strategic objectives is to support the continued growth and development of the local economy. However, it is important this is achieved in a sustainable manner, as required by the SPPS, which seeks "to facilitate economic development needs…in ways consistent with the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development".

7.2 The draft Plan Strategy approach to economic development seeks to ensure:

- The provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development in accordance with the SPPS approach;
- Provide a choice and range of employment sites in sustainable locations across the district and support the re-use of previously developed economic development sites; and
- Support rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale.

7.3 This section subsequently sets out the evidence base for the draft Plan Strategy Strategic Policy.

Strategic Allocation of Employment Land

7.4 The draft Plan Strategy Allocation of Employment Land is set out in Strategic Policy EDS1 within the Spatial Growth Strategy and has been informed by the RDS Employment Land Evaluation Framework (ELEF) as set out in Table 1 of Section 2 of this Technical Supplement.

7.5 Stage 1 of the ELEF requires the LDP to 'Take Stock of the Existing Situation' in regard to the supply of the existing employment land portfolio.

7.6 The Economic Land Monitor and Update provide information on the location of zoned lands and the quantum of undeveloped land. This shows that the majority of the remaining undeveloped land zoned through the existing Area Plans are located in Newry City, the Main Hub of Downpatrick, Kilkeel and Warrenpoint/Burren. All of these settlements are key contributors to the local economy.

7.7 The CBRE report confirmed that the majority of these lands are 'fit for purpose' with a significant proportion of the remaining undeveloped lands being considered 'green' and prime for development. Although there appears to be limited demand for lands, particularly in Kilkeel and Warrenpoint/Burren, resulting in these lands being identified as 'amber'.

7.8 The identification of lands as red in the RAG assessment is not a requirement to de-zone lands, but a reflection of the likely market demand over the Plan period.

7.9 Having given consideration to the findings of the land monitor and the CBRE report the Council will carry forward all existing economic zonings as detailed in the two extant plans. This is considered to provide a sustainable approach to economic

development as it provides a choice and range of employment sites in sustainable locations across the district. Further consideration of the suitability of the lands and whether any lands should be dezoned or if further sites should be identified will be completed at the Local Policies Plan stage.

7.10 Stage 1 of the ELEF also requires an assessment of "the 'best' employment sites to be retained and protected and the identification of sites that should clearly be released for other uses". While evidence has been gathered it is considered this aspect of Stage 1 of the ELEF is clearly site specific in nature. As such, this will be dealt with at the Local Policies Plan stage.

7.11 Taking account of the evidence base, it is considered that Stage 1 of the ELEF has been undertaken in a 'sound' manner and progressed as far as is appropriate at this stage of the Plan process.

7.12 Stage 2 of the ELEF requires "Understanding Future Requirements" in regard to the quantity of employment land required across the main business sectors over the Plan period. UUEPC provided an assessment of employment space requirements (as detailed in Section 6). It forecast some level of positive growth in each of the business use class categories for both the baseline and upper scenarios with the largest growth being anticipated in general office, light industrial, small business workspace and research and development.

7.13 It provided estimates of floorspace requirements which were then translated into land requirements by Lichfields which ascertained the district has significantly more than sufficient land to meet the expected need over the Plan period. Although it did suggest further consideration of additional lands in some settlements should take place at the appropriate stage of the Plan process.

7.14 The UUEPC report also forecast between 7,740 and 9,440 jobs by 2035 depending on varying economic scenarios (baseline and upper scenarios). The review completed by Lichfields carried out a labour force assessment. However, it found there was not a linear relationship between population increase and employment creation. In addition, evidence suggests the growth in the first few years of the LDP period is above average. As a result, it concluded that it would not suggest amending the UUEPC projections.

7.15 Taking account of the evidence base and the employment land allocation it is considered that Stage 2 of the ELEF has been undertaken in a 'sound' manner. It is considered there is currently a generous supply of land suitable and available for economic development with sufficient choice and range in terms of quality.

7.16 Stage 3 of The ELEF methodology requires an identification of "a 'New' portfolio of sites". It is considered that this is appropriate for the Local Policies Plan Stage of the LDP process. A further review of our economic land portfolio will be carried out at that stage and will confirm the existing sites to be retained, replaced, released and any gaps in the portfolio. New sites for economic development therefore may come forward at the Local Policies Plan stage of the process to ensure a range and choice of sites are available.

Strategic Policies

7.17 In addition to carrying forward existing zonings the Strategic Policy EDS1 of the draft Plan Strategy has introduced a hierarchy of employment sites with the identification of two Strategic Employment Sites located in Newry City and Downpatrick. (Tables 10 provides further information on the strategic allocation of land across the district).

7.18 As the primary employment zonings serving our district, the Council will operate a presumption against the alternative use of land and premises in these SELs to safeguard them for future employment use.

7.19 The identification of a Strategic Employment Location at Carnbane in Newry seeks to maximise and protect the potential of Newry as a cross-border gateway for employment in the district. The identification of Down Business Park on the Belfast Road is intended to acknowledge the importance of Downpatrick as the northern employment hub in the district and secure the protection of the most strategically located lands in proximity to Downpatrick.

Table 10: Strategic Employment Locations Allocation (SELs)

STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT LOCATIONS (SELs)					
Location	Area Zoned for industry (ha)	Area Developed (ha) 2020	Area Remaining Undeveloped (ha) 2020	Area Developed (ha) 2023	Area Remaining Undeveloped (ha) 2023
Tier 1 City & Main Town					
Newry	115.45	58.12	57.33	64.08	51.37
Downpatrick*	34	15.72	18.28	28.9	5.1
TOTAL	**149.45**	**73.84**	**75.61**	**92.98**	**56.47**

*Site identified as part of ADAP countryside proposals

7.20 Each site was subject to qualitative assessment against a number of criteria. Each criterion was based on a score of 1 (poor) to 3 (good), in turn summed to give and overall score for each site, with each being equally weighted. The sites were ranked according to their overall scores as follows:

1 Score of 28+: Good
2 Score of 24-27: Average; and
3 Score of 1-23: Poor

7.21 The purpose of these scores is to provide an indication of the relative attributes of each site. It is important to note that a site that is identified as being "poor" against a single criterion does not necessarily mean it should be classed as a "poor" site overall. Some criteria may be regarded as more important than others in determining a site's suitability for existing employment uses or possible future development.

7.22 Moreover, even if some sites do not perform well against all of the criteria in combination, an assumption should not necessarily be made that the site should be

released/redeveloped for alternative purposes, as such sites may still perform an important contribution for the local economy.

7.23 In addition, the assessment process in itself does not necessarily provide a complete picture of the local significance of certain sites. For example, a site could be assessed to have the potential to satisfy particular business and sector needs (i.e. this can be an important reason for retaining the site) even if it does not perform well against conventional site assessment criteria.

7.24 The scoring matrices for the Strategic Employment Locations are available in Appendix F.

7.25 The remaining employment lands have been identified as local employment sites, as shown in Table 11. It is considered this approach is in accordance with the RDS that states with regard to the ELEF framework that it will enable "Planning Authorities to identify robust and defensible portfolios of both strategic and locally important employment sites in their development plans".

Table 11: Local Employment Site Allocation

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SITE ALLOCATION					
Location	Area Zoned for Industry (ha)	Area Developed (ha) 2020	Area Remaining Undeveloped (ha) 2020	Area Developed (ha) 2023	Area Remaining Undeveloped (ha) 2023
Tier 1 City and Main Town					
Newry	94.86	54.92	39.94	55.88	38.98
Downpatrick	29.46	13.19	16.27	13.31	16.15
Total	124.32	68.11	56.21	69.19	55.13
Tier 2 Local and Small Towns					
Newcastle	1.11	1.11	0	1.11	0
Warrenpoint/ Burren	40.34	26.31	14.03	26.5	13.84
Kilkeel	29.05	9.26	19.79	9.26	19.79
Ballynahinch	11.49	5.59	5.9	6.14	5.35
Crossmaglen	3.4	1.1	2.3	1.1	2.3
Total	85.39	43.37	42.02	44.11	41.28
Tier 3 Villages					
Bessbrook	3.07	3.07	0	3.07	0
Crossgar*	4.35	3.0	1.35	4.05	0.3
Ardglass	2.09	0.63	1.46	0.63	1.46
Newtownhamilton	0.82	0.36	0.46	0.36	0.46
Annsborough	4.47	3.58	0.89	3.58	0.89
Jonesborough	1.6	1.6	0	1.6	0
Total	16.4	12.24	4.16	13.29	3.11
Tier 4 Small Settlements					
Shrigley	6.39	3.5	2.89	3.5	2.89
Ballyhornan	3.82	2.33	1.49	2.52	1.3
Total	10.21	5.83	4.38	6.02	4.19
DISTRICT TOTAL	**236.32**	**129.55**	**106.77**	**132.61**	**103.71**

7.26 The draft Plan Strategy also contains Strategic Policy EDS2 to protect zoned economic development land as well as unzoned land in settlement currently, or last used, for these purposes.

7.27 This policy is largely informed by the regional direction set out in the SPPS and PP4 as referred to in Section 2 of this technical supplement and seeks to protect zoned land from inappropriate uses while offering more flexibility within unzoned land currently or last used for economic development purposes. This will assist in the protection of land ensuring the district retains an ample supply of suitable land to meet the needs within the plan area including those of both sectoral strengths[65] and emerging sectors[66].

[65] Construction, Advance Manufacturing and Engineering, Agri-food and Fishing, Technology and Retail and Services- 'NMD Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2020-2025'.
[66] ICT and Digital Technologies, Professional Business Services and Tourism, 'NMD Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy 2020-2025'.

8.0 Soundness

8.1 The draft Plan Strategy has been prepared to meet the tests of soundness as set out in the DfI Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017). The draft Plan Strategy insofar as it relates to the strategic allocation of land for economic development and its strategic and operational policies for economic development is regarded as sound because it meets the various tests of soundness as summarised below.

Table 12: Consideration of Soundness

Procedural Tests	
P2	Strategic policies EDS1 Employment Land Allocation, EDS2 Protection of Economic Development Land, CS1 Development in the Countryside and the economic development operational policies (ED1-ED8) have evolved from the Preferred Options Paper (POP) and POP Consultation Report, as described in section 3 of this document.
P3	The economic development strategy and operational economic development policies have been subject to the Sustainability Appraisal. Further detail is set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Report.
Consistency Tests	
C1	The economic development strategy and operational economic development policies have taken account of the RDS particularly RG1, SFG10-12 and SFG15.
C2	The economic development strategy and operational economic development policies have taken account of Newry, Mourne and Down's Community Plan, particularly in relation to outcome "All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous Communities" and its associate indicators to measure progress for this outcome.
C3	The economic development strategy and operational economic development policies have taken account of the SPPS, as detailed in paragraphs 2.19-2.26 of this document. Account has also been taken of PPS4, PPS21 and supplementary planning guidance as detailed in paragraphs 2.27-2.36 of this document
C4	The economic development strategy and economic development policies have had regard to the existing development plans related to Newry, Mourne and Down. They have also taken account of the Council strategies and studies within Newry, Mourne and Down insofar as they relate to economic development as set out in section 2 of this document.
Coherence and effectiveness Tests	
CE1	The economic development strategy and operational economic development policies have taken account of adopted and emerging Development Plan documents of our neighbouring Councils as set out in Section 2 of this report.
CE2	The economic development strategy and operational economic development policies are based on a robust evidence base and has taken

	account of comments from the POP consultation and subsequent engagement with statutory stakeholders and Invest NI.
CE3	The monitoring framework within Chapter 7 of the draft Plan Strategy outlines the following objectives in relation to economic development: • To ensure there is a generous supply of suitable land to meet economic development needs within the district over the Plan period, at a variety of locations where it is accessible to all members of the community, including those without a private car; • To encourage and accommodate entrepreneurship and innovation for large, medium and small firms by ensuring a variety of sites based on size, quality and choice; • To facilitate Newry City to capitalize on its role as the South Eastern City Gateway, on the Belfast-Dublin economic corridor, similarly maximizing Warrenpoint/Burren as a local hub and major port, whilst ensuring Downpatrick as our main town is strengthened as a main employment centre; and • Provide for sustainable economic development in the countryside
CE4	The strategic allocation of employment land provision will be reviewed at Plan Review stage, and at Local Policies Plan stage as appropriate, with the potential for the re-designation of employment land to take account of changing circumstances. Economic development policies will also be reviewed to assess whether they are achieving their intended aims.

9.0 Evolution of Policies

Table 13: Evolution of Policies

Existing Policy	Regional Planning Policy	POP Preferred Option	Comments received to POP	Draft Plan Strategy Policy
Planning Policy Statement 4 – Economic Development				
PED1: Economic Development in Settlements This policy outlines the types of B Class Business uses which are allowed for economic development within cities, towns, villages and smaller rural settlements. It seeks to concentrate employment development within the cities and towns and for B1 uses more specifically within the city/town centres.	Paragraph 6.85 states that in larger settlements (Cities and towns) appropriate proposals for Class B1 business uses (such as offices and call centres) should be permitted if located within city or town centres, and in other locations that may be specified for such use in a LDP, such as a district or local centre'. It continues by explaining that elsewhere 'such proposals should be determined on their individual merits, taking account of the potential impacts and the likely economic benefits, both local and regional'.	Not identified as a key issue in POP.	No comments received.	**Policy ED1 Economic Development in Settlements** The policy wording of PED1 has been carried forward with some amendments including simplifying the use classes. Reference to the population size of small settlements has also been removed. Settlements will be identified as per their allocation in the settlement hierarchy.

PED2: Economic Development in the Countryside This is essentially a directional policy in that it refers users to the relevant economic development policies for the countryside whether it is policies contained within PPS 4 or PPS 21. It does clarify that all other proposals for economic development in the countryside will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.	The SPPS does not include any such directional policy although it does specifically reference that farm diversification, the re-use of rural buildings and appropriate redevelopment and expansion proposals for industrial and business purposes will normally offer the greatest scope for sustainable economic development in the countryside.	Not identified as key issue in POP.	No comments received.	**Strategy CS1** provides the directional purpose previously provided by PED2 and notes what types of development are appropriate in the countryside and the applicable policies for these types of development. As PED2 does not include any operational policy criteria or requirements this is considered to be an acceptable approach.
PED3: Expansion of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside This policy states that proposals for the expansion of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside will be permitted where it does not harm the rural character of the area and there is no major increase in the site area of the enterprise. Proposals for expansion will normally be expected to reuse or extend	Paragraph 6.87 of the SPPS notes that the guiding principle for policies and proposals for economic development in the countryside is to facilitate proposals likely to benefit the rural economy and support rural communities, while protecting or enhancing rural character and the environment, consistent with strategic policy	Not identified as a key issue in the POP.	No comments received.	**Policy ED2 Economic Development in the Countryside** Carries forward the wording of PED3. The additional detail provided by the criteria in the policy is considered useful as it provides clarity on the requirements for this type of development.

existing buildings on site. Where it is demonstrated that this is not possible, new buildings may be permitted provided they are in proportion and integrate as part of the overall development. Exceptional circumstances are also outlined including where the proposal would make a significant contribution to local economy, or where relocation is not operationally possible.	elsewhere in the SPPS. It recognises expansion proposals for industrial and business purposes as one of a number of types of development that offer the greatest scope for sustainable development in the countryside. It notes that such proposals, may occasionally involve the construction of new buildings, where they can be integrated in a satisfactory manner.			
PED4: Redevelopment of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside Sets out criteria for the redevelopment of an established economic development use in the countryside for industrial or business purposes (or a sui generis employment use) and provides direction for storage and distribution uses.	Paragraph 6.87 of the SPPS notes that the guiding principle for policies and proposals for economic development in the countryside is to facilitate proposals likely to benefit the rural economy and support rural communities, while protecting or enhancing rural character	Not identified as a key issue in the POP.	No comments received.	**Policy ED3 Redevelopment of an Established Economic development Use in the Countryside** Policy wording from PED4 brought forward with minor changes.

This policy also facilitates proposals for the redevelopment of rural economic development sites for alternatives uses and notes tourism, outdoor sport and recreation or local community facilities will be permitted where the policy criteria can be met and where the proposal does not involve land forming all or a substantial part of an existing industrial estate. It confirms that retailing will not be permitted. Exceptionally proposals for social and affordable housing may be permitted on former industrial sites that cannot realistically be redeveloped for industry, provided they meet the policy provisions of PPS 21.	and the environment, consistent with strategic policy elsewhere in the SPPS. The SPPS recognises that 'appropriate redevelopment' proposals for industrial and business purposes are one of a number of types of development that offer the greatest scope for sustainable economic development in the countryside. It does not offer any detailed policy for decision makers although it states that proposals may occasionally involve the construction of new buildings, where they can be integrated in a satisfactory manner.			
PED5: Major Industrial Development in the Countryside Policy PED 5: Major Industrial Development in the Countryside Sets out criteria for Major	Paragraph 6.88 of the SPPS provides policy for major or regionally significant economic development where such a	Not identified as a key issue in the POP.	No comments received.	**Policy ED4 Major Industrial Development in the Countryside** Policy wording of PED5 brought forward with

Industrial Development proposals in the Countryside, which make a significant contribution to the regional economy. The policy also suggests that edge of town locations will be favoured over a location elsewhere in the rural area.	countryside location is necessary because of size or site specific requirements. It states that 'such proposals should be able to demonstrate a significant contribution to the regional economy and be otherwise acceptable, particularly in terms of their environment and transport impacts'. It further confirms that an edge of town location should normally be favoured over a location elsewhere in the rural area.			minor amendment.
PED6: Small Rural Projects Sets out criteria based policy for a small community enterprise park/centre or a small rural industrial enterprise on land outside a village or smaller rural settlement. Subsequent proposals should be sited to cluster or visually link to this, subject to amenity and environmental considerations.	Paragraph 6.88 states that in the interests of rural amenity and wider sustainability objectives the level of new building for economic development purposes outside settlements must be restricted. However, it notes two	**Key Issue 11 – Economic Development in the Countryside** Key Issue 11 sought to explore the option of providing further support to start-up businesses across the district in order to expand the districts	The majority of responses received on this issue agreed with the preferred option. Invest NI was supportive of the Council's preferred option acknowledging that small rural business should be afforded some opportunity to develop and grow in their	**Policy ED5 Small Rural Projects** Policy wording of PED6 brought forward with minor changes. The preferred option put forward in the POP was not considered to adequately comply with the requirements of the exception

It states that storage or distribution uses will only be permitted where these are clearly ancillary to a proposal for a community enterprise park/centre or an industrial use.	possible exceptions to this. The first is for 'a small-scale new build economic development project' which it states may be permissible outside a village or small settlement where there is no suitable site within the settlement. Where this is the case the SPPS states 'an edge of settlement location will be favoured over a location elsewhere in the rural area, subject to normal planning considerations'.	business base. It specifically suggested the possibility of providing small-scale workshop style development in the countryside which is ancillary to an existing dwelling and noted how a floor space restriction of 100sqm could be applied. It noted that a 'suitable site' in respect of start-up businesses be interpreted as the availability of serviced units.	lecale. They highlighted the cost implications of moving a small rural business to a larger settlement can be prohibitive. Other supportive comments made reference to the district primarily having a micro enterprise economy and the prevalence of self-employed, small business and primary industries and the need to stimulate entrepreneurship and have greater support for new development sites. Of those that disagreed with the preferred option noted comments including: that development should locate in towns/villages first and only in the countryside as a last resort and that greater recognition should be given to the natural environment.	policy in the SPPS.

			DfI Strategic planning highlighted that the SPPS seeks to restrict new building for economic proposals in the interests of rural amenity and wider sustainability objectives. It requested greater detail on the nature of economic proposals likely to be considered acceptable and noted that any exceptions to the guiding principle should be justified in line with circumstances set out in paragraph 6.88 of the SPPS.	
PED7: Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development Uses Sets out a general presumption against the loss of land for economic development, unless the land has been substantially developed for alternative uses. The policy also provides for 'sui generis' employment uses within zonings, subject to these being	Paragraph 6.89 acknowledges the importance of retaining economic land and buildings which are 'well located and suited to such purposes…so as to ensure a sufficient ongoing supply'. It states that 'accordingly, planning permission should not	**Key Issue 12 – Alternative Uses on Land Zoned for Economic Development** Key Issue 12 sought opinions on the issue of alternative uses on land zoned for economic development. The preferred option offering a degree of	The majority of public respondents who commented on this issue disagreed with the preferred option. Some submissions considered that safeguarding land for economic development in line with current policy reduced the potential for impact on	**Policy EDS2 Protection of Economic Development Land** Policy wording of PED7 largely brought forward with amendments to reflect the SPPS regarding flexibility to consider benefits. Exception permitted for sui generis use

compatible with the predominant industrial use and to other normal planning considerations and provided it does not lead to a significant diminution of the industrial/employment land resource in the locality and the plan area generally. Retailing and commercial leisure development is specifically excluded, except where ancillary to the economic development use. The policy also applies the same general presumption to unzoned land in economic development use in settlements (or land last used for this purpose) as detailed in a subsequent clarification to the policy. The policy sets out a list of detailed criteria to be met before a proposal for an alternative use on such land can be permitted and there is also provision for compatible 'sui generis' uses. The Department issued further guidance on the implementation of this policy (Planning Advice Note) in November 2015	normally be granted for proposals that would result in the loss of land zoned for economic development use'. It further notes that any decision to reallocate such zoned land to other use ought to be made through the LDP process. With regard to unzoned land in settlements in economic development use (or land last used for these purposes) it states that the same principle should also apply generally. However, it notes that 'councils may wish to retain flexibility to consider alternative proposals that offer community, environmental or other benefits, that are considered to outweigh the loss of land for economic development use'.	flexibility to allow a limited number of compatible uses falling outside Part B of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015 on zoned economic development land.	existing business operations. Others sought greater flexibility around the re-use of existing buildings and the consideration of residential use. Invest NI cautioned against adopting a blanket approach as this would have potential to lessen the attractiveness of employment/ industrial land to those businesses requiring a contaminant free environment. DfI emphasised the importance of protecting land and buildings for economic development to ensure a sufficient and appropriate supply. It stated that planning permission should therefore not normally be granted for proposals that would result in the loss of land zoned for this purpose.	within zoned land provided all listed criteria are met. Includes flexibility for 'compatible' sui generis uses on unzoned land in settlements and also requires active marketing evidence to prove unsuitability.

which largely reflects the policy position of the SPPS. **Clarification of Policy PED7: retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development Uses (2011)** This clarified that even if zoned or unzoned economic development land is cleared, the presumption for future economic development use remains.	There are no specific references to 'sui generis' uses or to the exclusion of retailing and commercial leisure development.			
PED8: Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses Ensures that development in the vicinity of an existing or approved economic development use that would be incompatible with this use or that would prejudice its future operation will be refused. **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to Policy PED 8: 'Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses'** The purpose of the guidance was to provide clarification in	The SPPS is consistent with the thrust of Policy PED 8 and contains much of the same detail included in the justification and amplification section of PED 8. In addition the SPPS provides clarification on the types of issues that can arise if for instance new residential development were approved in proximity to an existing economic development use. It also does not refer	Not raised as a key issue.	No comments received.	**Policy ED8 Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses** Policy wording of PED 8 largely brought forward with some minor amendments to the wording to better reflect that of the SPPS and make reference to Supplementary Planning Guidance to Planning Policy Statement 4 – Policy PED 8: 'Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses'.

regard to the circumstance referred to in the policy where certain types of economic development use would be incompatible with existing or approved industrial undertakings requiring a particularly contaminant free environment. It refers to these as 'sensitive industrial enterprises'. It sets out the three policy tests that need to be met in such circumstances and as such is a useful guidance document to be read in conjunction with the relevant policy.	to mitigation measures being provided for solely by the operator which PED8 appears to suggest. In this respect the SPPS is in keeping with the subsequent supplementary planning guidance that was issued by the former Department of Environment (DoE).			
PED9: General Criteria for Economic Development Uses Sets out general criteria which economic development proposals will be required to meet, in addition to the other policy provisions within PPS 4.	Paragraph 6.91 notes that all planning applications for economic development must be assessed in accordance with normal planning criteria, relating to such considerations as access arrangements, design, environmental and amenity impacts, so as to ensure safe, high quality and otherwise	Not raised as a key issue.	No comments received.	Policy PED9 is now covered by **Policy GP1 General Policy**

	satisfactory forms of development.			
Planning Policy Statement 21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside				
CTY11: Farm Diversification This policy permits a farm or forestry diversification proposal where it can be demonstrated that is to be run in conjunction with the agricultural operations on the active and established farm. It also sets out criteria which must be met, and states proposals will only be acceptable where they involve the re-use or adaption of existing farm buildings. A new building is only allowed in prescribed exceptional circumstances.	Paragraph 6.73 states provision should be made for a farm diversification scheme where the farm business is currently active and established (for a minimum 6 years) and, the proposal is to be run in conjunction with the agricultural operations of the farm. Proposals must involve the re-use or adaptation of existing buildings, with new buildings only being acceptable in exceptional circumstances.	See Key Issue 11 above.	See Key Issue 11 above. Other responses noted a more flexible approach could facilitate farm diversification and should not restrict to small workshops only and that the floorspace cap should be increased to 200-250sqm. The National Trust suggested the plan should give a degree of flexibility for the re-use of existing vernacular buildings for non-farm related activities.	**Policy ED6 Farm and Forestry Diversification** The policy wording of CTY11 has been carried forward with minor amendments. Conversion and Re-use of Non-Listed Vernacular and Locally Important Buildings is accounted for within the Historic Environment Policy HE14 and associated evolution of policy in Technical Supplement 12 Historic Environment.
CTY12: Agricultural and Forestry Development This policy permits development on an active and established	Paragraph 6.73 states provision should be made for development on an active and established			**Policy ED7 Agricultural and Forestry Development** Policy wording of CTY12 largely

holding and where it can be demonstrated that policy criteria are met. New build proposals will also have to demonstrate that they meet additional criteria.	(for a minimum 6 years) agricultural holding or forestry enterprise where the proposal is necessary for the efficient operation of the holding or enterprise. New buildings must be sited beside existing farm or forestry buildings on the holding or enterprise. An alternative site away from existing buildings will only being acceptable in exceptional circumstances			brought forward with amendments. Inclusion of impacts of ammonia added to the policy.
NEW EDS1: Strategic Allocation of Employment Land Identifies a hierarchy of sites with strategic Employment Lands (SELs) and Local Employment Sites. Council will operate a presumption against the alternative use of land and premises in SELs to safeguard them for future employment use. SELs are identified in Newry (115.45ha gross) and	The SPPS (para. 6.92) requires LDPs to ensure there is an ample supply of suitable land to meet economic development needs within the plan area. It also states LDPs should offer a range and choice of sites in terms of size and location to promote flexibility and provide for the varying needs	**Key Issue 4 – Quantity of employment Land** Preferred option was to uplift the quantum of land zoned for employment by 20%.	Of the responses received for key issue 4 the majority of public respondents agreed with the preferred option. Invest NI consider the proposed uplift will ensure a balanced reserve of employment land and provide a greater choice of sites with businesses with a greater	**EDS1 Strategic Allocation of Employment Land** Carries forward the existing and proposed zonings of the extant plans (385.77ha gross) and identifies strategic employment sites in the district's City and Main Hub with local employment sites across the district.

Downpatrick (34ha gross). Other employment sites across the district are identified as Local Employment Sites (236.32ha gross).	of different types of economic activity.	**Key Issue 5– Distribution of Employment Land** Preferred option was to retain the broad balance of remaining employment land provision across the district.	domestic focus and/or smaller turnover. DfI Strategic Planning noted that the methodology used should have a robust evidential context. Of the responses received for key issue 5 the majority of public respondents agreed with the Council's preferred option. Some responses made reference to particular settlements and the need for lands. The majority of statutory consultees were non-committal. DfI referred to the RDS and SPPS objectives and the Employment Land Evaluation Framework	

10.0 Appendices

Appendix F: Matrices of Strategic Employment Locations (SELs)

CARNBANE, NEWRY: STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT LANDS			
Site Ref	**Site Area**	**Area Developed (ha)**	**Area Remaining Undeveloped (ha)**
NY63 NY65 NY66 Carnbane Industrial Estate, Main Portion	115.45	64.08	51.37
Criteria	**Comment**		**Score**
Road Access	Carnbane is located off the former Newry bypass and has road connections to the A1 dual carriageway and the A27 and A28 within a short distance. There is some congestion at peak times at these junctions.		2
Public Transport Access	Ulsterbus services serve Fiveways and Damolly close by the site.		2
Pedestrian/Cycle Access	The Newry Canal Towpath passes through the site, this is a popular cycling route, there is also pedestrian access.		3
Proximity to residential areas and community facilities	The southern part of Carnbane is close to residential developments at Damolly and on the Armagh Road which have community facilities and the Fiveways and Damolly commercial centre, the northern part is not adjacent to any.		3
Brown/Greenfield Status	Most of the site has already been developed, there are a number of vacant units which could offer redevelopment opportunities.		3
Adjoining uses	The site is within the development limit of Newry. The Newry Canal and Clanrye River pass through the site, the Canal is a scheduled monument. They are both part of an LLPA, other LLPA's surround the site		3
Proximity to Infrastructure	The site is existing and has good road connections, utilities infrastructure is also existing in the area		3
Landscape and	Several Local Landscape Policy Areas		2

Environmental Designations	adjoin the site	
TPO's	The site adjoins land that is covered by TPO 2006/0058	2
Topography	The site is largely flat and low lying, the northern part is at a significantly higher level but this is not significant	3
Flood Risk	The site is located within the flood plain of the Newry River and is also affected by surface water fooding, significant areas of the site are currently affected and this will be more extensive due to climate change	2
Market Strength	The site is a major employment centre for Newry, it was expanded to the north following the adaption of the current LDP and a number of large investments have been made into this extension such as Modern Tyres and Saica Packaging.	3
Overall Comments	Carnbane is a long established and significant industrial estate located within the development limit of Newry. It benefits from good road connections to the A1 and other major routes. While there are some environmental constraints these can be mitigated and the site has attracted significant investments in recent years.	**31**

DOWN BUSINESS PARK, DOWNPATRICK: STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT LANDS			
Site Ref	**Site Area**	**Area Developed (ha)**	**Area Remaining Undeveloped (ha)**
Down Business Park COU12	34	28.9	5.1
Criteria	**Comment**		**Score**
Road Access	Down Business Park is located off the A7 Belfast Road. The road is single carriageway with a climbing lane country bound from Downpatrick past the site entrance and right-hand turning lane from Crossgar direction. The road to Belfast experiences bottlenecks at Crossgar, Saintfield and Carryduff at peak times. However, its location at the north side of Downpatrick provides the site with direct access toward Belfast on the A7, avoiding the congestion in Downpatrick town.		2
Public Transport Access	Ulsterbus service 215 Belfast-Downpatrick passes the site, with a bus stop layby at the main entrance to the site on the A7 country bound. South bound the bus stop is located furth north from the entrance.		1
Pedestrian/Cycle Access	Pedestrian and cycle access is provided along the western side of the A7 and leads to the site from Downpatrick direction. From the site towards Crossgar there is a footpath separated from the carriageway by a grass verge.		1
Proximity to residential areas and community facilities	The site is located in the countryside, there are no significant residential areas within its vicinity.		3
Brown/Greenfield Status	Most of the site is developed and operates as an Invest NI serviced site.		1
Adjoining uses	Site is located within the open countryside, some residential properties are in the surrounding area.		3
Proximity to Infrastructure	The site is existing and has good road connections, utilities infrastructure is also existing in the area		3
Landscape and Environmental	There are no designations in the vicinity of the site.		3

Designations		
TPO's	There are no TPO's adjoining the site.	3
Topography	The site is largely flat and low lying.	3
Flood Risk	Parts of the site are affected by river and surface water flooding in the present and under climate change scenarios	2
Market Strength	The site is a major employment centre for Downpatrick and has been the subject of new development in recent years indicating there is market demand for spaces.	3
Overall Comments	Down Business Park is located in the open countryside, it has few transport links apart from private cars as public transport is provided by a limited bus service. It has few topographic restrictions, however it is a located in the countryside outside of the town of Downpatrick.	**28**

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