



Derry City & Strabane  
District Council

Comhairle Chathair  
Dhoire & Cheantar  
an tSratha Báin

Derry Cittie & Stràbane  
Destrict Council

DERRY CITY & STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

# LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



## DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY

Evidence Base Paper EVB 15: Other Development in the Countryside, December 2019

Updated December 2021

[derrystrabane.com/ldp](http://derrystrabane.com/ldp)

## DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



### EVIDENCE BASE PAPER EVB 15

#### Other Development in the Countryside

Updated December 2021

This document is one in a series, which comprises the evidence base that informs the preparation of the Derry City and Strabane District Local Development Plan (LDP 2032) Plan Strategy.

It builds upon the suite of thematic Topic Papers prepared and published alongside the LDP Preferred Options Paper (POP), which established the May 2017 baseline position and identified the key issues that need to be addressed by the LDP.

This Other Development in the Countryside Evidence Base paper updates the baseline POP position and sets out the evidence base that has informed the strategy, designations and policy within the draft LDP Plan Strategy. Evidence has been informed by feedback from public consultation, discussion with Elected Members, input from statutory consultees, stakeholder groups, from other Departments within the Council, liaison with adjoining Councils and through iterative Sustainability Appraisal process.

The Evidence Base is published as a 'supporting document' in accordance with Regulation 15(a) of the Planning (LDP) Regulations (NI) 2015.

## **CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1) Introduction to Paper</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2) Legislative and Policy Context</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3) Background and Statistical Data in the District</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4) Preferred Options Paper Stage</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5) LDP Key Considerations</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6) Draft Plan Strategy Stage</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>7) Sustainability Appraisal</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>8) Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>9) Rural Needs Impact Assessment</b>	<b>26</b>

### **1.0 Introduction to Paper**

**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

- 1.1 This Evidence Base (EVB) paper is one in a series, which has been prepared to inform the preparation of the Derry City and Strabane District Local Development Plan (LDP) 2032.
- 1.2 It builds upon the suite of 19 evidence base papers prepared and published alongside the Preferred Options Paper (POP), which established the baseline position as of May 2017 and identified the key issues that need to be addressed by the LDP. The evidence base paper therefore updates our baseline position and sets out the evidence that has informed the other Development in the Countryside policies within the draft Plan Strategy (dPS). Whilst each of the evidence based papers can be read separately, there are inevitably some important related matters with other topics.
- 1.3 It should be noted that the evidence base collected to inform the LDP also informed the basis of a series of additional assessments and appraisals required as part of the plan perpetration process, most notably the Sustainability Appraisal. By combining the evidence gathering stages for both the Sustainability Appraisal and the Local Development Plan, we aim to streamline the documentation produced and avoid duplication. It will also help to ensure that sustainable development is embedded in the planning process and that the Sustainability Appraisal is one of the main drivers informing the preparation of the LDP.
- 1.4 It is the purpose of the Planning system to secure the orderly and consistent development of land with the objective of furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. In essence, the statutory framework seeks to ensure that when preparing its Local Development Plan (LDP), the Council will take full account of the implications of Other Development in the Countryside in relation to proposed land uses, locations of development and linkages to settlements.

(2021 Update): The LDP dPS Chapter 15, and this resultant Evidence Base Paper EVB 15 was originally entitled Agriculture & Other Development in the Countryside. However, as a result of the consideration of the Representations received for the dPS, certain issues emerged that required to be included in this chapter and consequently, the Council has proposed to change the title of Chapter 15a to Other Development in the Countryside, in order to better reflect its new overall content.

Specifically, it is a case of the chapter being broadened out to include other development in the countryside – to ensure that they are ‘sustainable’, which still includes the policies for agriculture and forestry developments. The text on agriculture has not been removed but it is still included, and in fact strengthened (in Para 15.3, of Annex 3) to confirm the importance of agriculture, farm families and other non-farm rural dwellers and businesses.

One new policy (ODC 1) has been added, which is an overarching signpost to the various types of sustainable developments that are acceptable in the countryside. The operational Planning policy AGR 1 Farm and Forestry Diversification remains, largely

## **Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

unchanged, as does AGR 2 Farm and Forestry Development, other than being re-numbered as ODC 2 and ODC 3 respectively. Policy ED 5 (with PC 52 J&A) also facilitates small-scale Economic Development in the Countryside. Policy ODC 4 is broadened to include changes of use, as well as the conversion / re-use of buildings.

Whilst agriculture continues to be the main land user in the District, and an important part of the economy, environment and rural society, it does not actually have or need many strategic Planning policies i.e. Planning does not actually zone land for Agriculture and much of the development on farms does not require a Planning application, being 'Permitted Development'. It is generally accepted by the relevant stakeholders that there is no desire for further 'regulation' of agricultural development through the LDP.

Therefore, the new wording is included as part of the Schedule of dPS Proposed Changes that was published and consulted upon in December 2021 (Submission document DS-001a). Accordingly, this EVB 15 has been updated to explain and support the content of the new, Proposed Chapter 15.

## 2.0 Legislative and Policy Context

- 2.1 In preparing the new LDP, the Council will have regard to several existing plans and documents that set out the main legislative and policy context and considerations that the LDP is required to include.

### Regional Policy

- 2.2 The current regional policy context is provided by the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and regional Planning Policy Statements. A summary of these documents and how they pertain to Other Development in the Countryside is provided in the following sections.

### **Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035**

- 2.3 The RDS 2035 prepared by the Department for Regional Development (DRD) (published 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012) is the spatial strategy for the Northern Ireland Executive and provide an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors. It addresses economic, social and environmental issues aimed at achieving sustainable development and social cohesion.
- 2.4 The RDS aims to support our towns, villages and rural communities to maximise their potential. Our rural areas including our towns and villages have a key role in supporting economic growth. They offer opportunities in terms of their potential for growth in new sectors, the provision of rural recreation and tourism, and their attractiveness as places to invest, live and work, and their role as a reservoir of natural resources and highly valued landscapes.
- 2.5 The RDS states that we must also strive to keep our rural areas sustainable and ensure that people who live there, either through choice or birth, have access to services and are offered opportunities in terms of accessing education, jobs, healthcare and leisure.
- 2.6 Agriculture is the largest business category in rural areas and is certainly the most extensive land use. Other employment sectors include Construction, Property and Business Services, Retail and Production. People from rural areas are generally required to travel longer distances than their urban counterparts in order to access job opportunities. This is particularly true for higher value/paid jobs which tend to be urban located. Mobility of rural dwellers is of the utmost importance so that they can access and benefit from employment opportunities both locally and at a wider regional level.
- (2021 Update):** The post-Covid ‘Working-from-Home’ phenomenon, as well as online trading, has seen a major transformation in the rural-working situation whereby non-farming rural dwellers can fully undertake their jobs ‘in the city’, towns or indeed globally. It is however, more critical than ever to have good broadband quality in these rural areas.
- 2.7 To sustain rural communities, new development and employment opportunities which respect local, social and environmental circumstances are required. This means

**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

facilitating the development of rural industries, businesses and enterprises in appropriate locations, and ensuring they are integrated appropriately within the settlement or rural landscape. The expansion of rural tourism and associated development that is both sustainable and environmentally sensitive should be encouraged.

- 2.8 Accessibility to services can be difficult in rural areas and there are wider implications for both transport to services and the provision of a core set of essential services. In the border area, “back to back” Planning decisions can lead to access problems to services for rural communities. Opportunities exist for co-operation between jurisdictions to ensure this is not the case. Advancements in the use of technology and telecommunications will enable a more innovative approach to service delivery.

**Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) ‘Planning for Sustainable Development’**

- 2.9 The Department of the Environment’s ‘Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland’ – Planning for Sustainable Development (SPPS), was published in its final form on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015. It sets out the regional planning policies for securing the orderly and consistent development of land under a reformed two – tier local planning system. The provisions of the SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans, and are also material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.
- 2.10 The SPPS states that the countryside is recognised as one of our greatest assets, with its highly valued landscapes, an outstanding coastline, a complex variety of wildlife, rich built and cultural heritage, for the ecosystem services it provides, and for its sense of place and history. In addition to its role and function as a recreational and tourist asset the countryside also supports our important agricultural industry, offers potential opportunities for sustainable growth in new sectors, and is home to a considerable rural population.
- 2.11 To maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the countryside as a place to invest, live and work, the countryside requires a sustainable approach to new development, consistent with the RDS 2035.
- 2.12 The SPPS suggest that other government policy recognises that there are wide variations across Northern Ireland in terms of the economic, social and environmental characteristics of rural areas. Policy approaches to new development should reflect differences within the region, be sensitive to local needs and be sensitive to environmental issues including the ability of settlements and landscapes to absorb development. This may involve recognising areas that are particularly sensitive to change and areas which have lower sensitivities and thus provide opportunities to accommodate sustainable development. It is also important to take into account the role and function of rural settlements and accessibility to existing services and infrastructure. Such approach should also reflect and complement the SPPS.

**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

- 2.13 The aim of the SPPS with regard to the countryside is to manage development in a manner which strikes a balance between protection of the environment from inappropriate development, while supporting and sustaining rural communities consistent with the RDS.
- 2.14 The policy objectives for development in the countryside are to:
- Manage growth to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development which supports a vibrant rural community;
  - Conserve the landscape and natural resources of the rural area and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from the actual or potential effects of pollution;
  - Facilitate development which contributes to a sustainable rural economy; and
  - Promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development.
- 2.15 Planning and other environmental policies must therefore play their part in facilitating sustainable development in the countryside but not at the expense of the region's rich natural assets and not at the expense of the natural and built environment.
- 2.16 The SPPS also sets regional strategic policy; the key points associated with Other Development in the Countryside include those policies listed under non-residential, these policies allow development for farm diversification, agriculture and forestry development and the conversion and re-use of existing buildings for non-residential use.

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

- 2.17 PPS 21 sets out the regional planning policies for achieving sustainable development in the countryside. The aim of PPS 21 is to manage development in the countryside in a manner consistent with achieving the strategic objectives of the RDS 2035; and in a manner which strikes a balance between the need to protect the countryside from unnecessary or inappropriate development, while supporting rural communities.
- 2.18 PPS 21 sets out the following key policy objectives:
- To manage growth in the countryside to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development that meet the essential needs of a vibrant rural community;
  - To conserve the landscape and natural resources of the rural area and to protect it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from the actual or potential effects of pollution;
  - To facilitate development necessary to achieve a sustainable rural economy, including appropriate farm diversification and other economic activity; and
  - To promote high standards in the design, siting and landscaping of development in the countryside.



## **Building on Tradition – A Sustainable Design Guide for the NI Countryside**

2.19 Building on tradition is a guide produced by the former Department of the Environment (DOE) to raise awareness of the importance of looking after the Northern Ireland Countryside and how to achieve a higher quality of sustainable development that will provide a strong basis to protect and enhance our rural assets. This design guide is to be used as a development management tool and will be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and planning appeals for development proposal outside of the settlement limits. The guide is also for the use of those who are thinking of building in the countryside, to help them understand what the policy is aiming to achieve and how to put together well designed development projects that conform to a new set of planning requirements. It is also written to assist all of those who provide design, construction, maintenance and conservation services for new development projects featuring information and best practice advice on sustainable rural development.

**(2021 Update):** It should be noted that DAERA initiated a consultation on a ‘Rural Policy Framework for Northern Ireland’ in July 2021. Whilst not a Planning document, it does refer to related subjects, seeking to ensure a vibrant rural area. See: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/rural-policy-framework-northern-ireland-consultation>

### **Local Policy**

2.20 The current local Planning policies are contained within the Derry Area Plan (2011) and the Strabane Area Plan (2001). Both of these document will be superseded at the adoption of the Local Policies Plan (LPP) of the new Derry City and Strabane District LDP 2032.

#### **Derry Area Plan (DAP) 2011**

2.21 The existing Derry Area Plan (DAP) was adopted in May 2000, thus pre-dating the RDS, SPPS and the publication of Planning Policy Statement 21 ‘Sustainable Development in the Countryside. The DAP has relatively little content on Agriculture and Other Development in terms of comparable relevant objectives or policies.

#### **Strabane Area Plan (SAP) 2001**

2.22 The Strabane Area Plan 1986 – 2001. The SAP also has relatively little content on Agriculture and Other Development in terms of comparable relevant objectives or policies.

#### **Derry City and Strabane District Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan 2017 – 2032**

2.23 The new duty of Community Planning introduced in April 2015 requires the Council to lead the process of creating a long term vision for the social, environmental and economic well-being of the area and its citizens. The Local Government Bill introduced a statutory link between the resultant Community Plan and the Council’s Local

## Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside

Development Plan (LDP), in that the LDP must take account of the Community Plan in its preparation. Therefore, it provides the key context at the local Council level for the preparation of the LDP.

- 2.24 It is intended that the LDP will be the spatial reflection of the Community Plan and that the two will work in tandem towards the same vision for the District and its communities and set the long term social, economic and environmental objectives for an area.
- 2.25 The Community Planning process is based on partnership, pooling resources across the tiers of government and the community and private sectors to improve the wellbeing of all citizens. It sets out the key development priorities designed to create a 'thriving, prosperous and sustainable City and District with equality of opportunity for all'.
- 2.26 The Strategic Growth Plan sets out a new ambition and approach for Rural Development and is committed to supporting both our City as a generator of economic growth and our main town, local towns and villages, small settlements and rural areas which provide a rich source of labour, heritage, space, natural assets, agriculture and tourism drivers. The plan also identifies outcomes and actions, some of the key actions included in the enterprise and economy section include:
- Maximise job creation and investment opportunities in our City and Town Centres, regionally significant regeneration sites and rural areas; and
  - Deliver business start-up programmes and development support focused on areas of high economic inactivity and rural community hubs.

### **3.0 Background and Statistical Data**

- 3.1 Our countryside remains the home and livelihood for a considerable part of our population, farmers and non-farming families, living in our many rural communities.

## Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside

Outside the settlement limits, the pattern of development has traditionally been a dispersed rural community

### The Agricultural Census for Northern Ireland

- 3.2 The [Agricultural Census](#) is conducted annually in June, it includes all active farm businesses having one or more hectare of farmed land, whether owned, leased or taken on conacre, and those with under one hectare that have any cattle, sheep or pigs or with significant poultry or horticultural activity.
- 3.3 Derry City and Strabane District Council has a total of 1,771 farm businesses of which a majority (75%) were classified as very small. Farm numbers in 2018 remained stable at around the same number as in 2017. However, the overall trend is downward with farm numbers having decreased by 10 percent over the 15 year period from 2004. This is a result of economic drivers that make off-farm work more financially attractive while simultaneously encouraging the formation of larger scale production units to minimised costs and maintain farm income.

District Council	Average SO/farm (€ '000)	Farm business size									
		Number of farms					Percentage distribution				
		V. Small	Small	Medium	Large	Total	V.Small	Small	Medium	Large	Total
Antrim and Newtownabbey	96.8	612	125	42	93	872	70	14	5	11	100
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	98.1	2,421	366	175	291	3,253	74	11	5	9	100
Belfast	94.8	25	1	3	2	31	81	3	10	6	100
Causeway Coast and Glens	89.8	1,740	352	155	254	2,501	70	14	6	10	100
Derry City and Strabane	74.3	1,324	230	89	128	1,771	75	13	5	7	100
Fermanagh and Omagh	54.2	4,220	503	189	182	5,094	83	10	4	4	100
Lisburn and Castlereagh	93.4	615	90	51	86	842	73	11	6	10	100
Mid and East Antrim	85.1	1,310	246	105	132	1,793	73	14	6	7	100
Mid Ulster	89.1	3,254	457	215	236	4,162	78	11	5	6	100
Newry, Mourne and Down	53.9	3,224	362	121	173	3,880	83	9	3	4	100
Ards and North Down	117.4	443	92	45	116	696	64	13	6	17	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.6</b>	<b>19,188</b>	<b>2,824</b>	<b>1,190</b>	<b>1,693</b>	<b>24,895</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Farm business size classification is calculated from Standard Labour Requirements.

- 3.4 The main type of farming activity in Derry City and Strabane District Council is through the breeding and keeping of cattle and sheep in predominantly Less Favoured Areas (LFA).

## Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside

District Council	Farm type										Total
	Cereals	General cropping	Horti-culture	Pigs	Poultry	Dairy	Cattle & Sheep		Mixed	Others	
							LFA	lowland			
Antrim and Newtownabbey	8	23	8	8	25	106	370	297	18	9	872
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	55	85	153	27	88	350	1,090	1,286	107	12	3,253
Belfast	0	3	0	0	0	1	19	7	1	0	31
Causeway Coast and Glens	33	65	8	10	65	314	1,329	582	83	12	2,501
Derry City and Strabane	24	45	4	12	11	182	1,279	181	26	7	1,771
Fermanagh and Omagh	5	75	8	15	98	491	4,275	103	15	9	5,094
Lisburn and Castlereagh	33	34	22	6	19	100	231	347	34	16	842
Mid and East Antrim	0	31	10	12	75	208	1,150	274	23	10	1,793
Mid Ulster	25	78	19	50	205	409	2,316	957	95	8	4,162
Newry, Mourne and Down	37	83	16	33	45	257	2,587	728	71	23	3,880
Ards and North Down	44	52	16	4	8	127	54	347	30	14	696
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>2,545</b>	<b>14,700</b>	<b>5,109</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>24,895</b>

3.5 This is then further reflected in the livestock number for the district with cattle and ewes being the highest figures for Derry City and Strabane District Council.

District Council	Livestock numbers								Total poultry
	Dairy cows	Beef cows	Total cattle	Breeding ewes	Total sheep	Sows & gilts	Total pigs	(000)	
								Total	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	14,979	12,899	78,259	34,910	79,060	1,766	22,903	1,138	
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	46,891	26,059	247,598	57,329	121,828	12,239	173,944	3,765	
Belfast	430	846	3,321	680	1,384	134	1,617	0	
Causeway Coast and Glens	42,784	22,806	182,296	192,498	399,256	2,027	22,183	2,883	
Derry City and Strabane	26,082	15,707	110,207	134,418	281,756	2,460	29,851	347	
Fermanagh and Omagh	45,768	65,516	277,970	131,587	281,242	3,648	43,580	2,979	
Lisburn and Castlereagh	14,580	7,022	64,226	17,033	36,401	2,376	24,981	805	
Mid and East Antrim	24,903	18,909	117,628	123,761	261,244	1,289	14,854	3,288	
Mid Ulster	45,133	40,893	265,271	107,515	222,144	17,060	229,958	9,050	
Newry, Mourne and Down	29,126	39,260	216,170	138,739	281,177	5,573	60,794	1,592	
Ards and North Down	20,042	5,987	66,122	18,078	40,506	1,063	8,979	185	
<b>Total</b>	<b>310,718</b>	<b>255,904</b>	<b>1,629,068</b>	<b>956,548</b>	<b>2,005,998</b>	<b>49,635</b>	<b>633,644</b>	<b>26,031</b>	

Notes: Cattle figures sourced from APHIS.

Pig figures sourced from the Northern Ireland Annual Inventory of Pigs.

Poultry figures sourced from the Northern Ireland Bird Register Update.

3.6 Cattle farming is the main agricultural activity in Northern Ireland. Dairy cow number have increased by 8% since 2004, but considerable structural adjustment has occurred as small scale milk producers have exited the industry and remaining dairy farms have tended to get bigger. Beef cow numbers have declined by 14% since 2004.

### Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside

This is a result of persistently challenging trading conditions and changes in subsidy mechanisms after 2005 which meant that payments were no longer linked to the number of cows held.

- 3.7 Sheep flocks are typically, but not always, maintained on farms with cattle enterprises. Breeding ewe numbers rose rapidly in the 1990s peaking in 1998 at 1.450 million. After this they fell back by 40% to a low of 876,000 in 2010. Since then number have increased by 11% but have seen considerable fluctuation in response to volatile lamb prices.
- 3.8 The census also identifies the labour force by District Council and it is suggested that in total there are 3,510 people involved in farming throughout Derry City and Strabane District Council.

District Council	Farm labour force						Agricultural labour force
	Farmers & partners			Other workers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Spouses	Full-time	Part-time	Casual/seasonal	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	662	440	278	153	200	149	1,882
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	2,196	1,852	881	816	625	935	7,305
Belfast	19	19	8	54	5	5	110
Causeway Coast and Glens	1,974	1,246	769	282	463	513	5,247
Derry City and Strabane	1,287	896	459	210	342	316	3,510
Fermanagh and Omagh	3,364	2,726	1,219	425	645	685	9,064
Lisburn and Castlereagh	595	463	262	144	185	158	1,807
Mid and East Antrim	1,321	902	545	213	334	304	3,619
Mid Ulster	2,648	2,463	945	416	715	569	7,756
Newry, Mourne and Down	2,341	2,347	934	471	646	448	7,187
Ards and North Down	557	367	242	227	180	188	1,761
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,964</b>	<b>13,721</b>	<b>6,542</b>	<b>3,411</b>	<b>4,340</b>	<b>4,270</b>	<b>49,248</b>

- 3.9 Almost all farm businesses in Northern Ireland are owned and operated either by an owner occupier or by a family partnership. Most labour is therefore provided by the farm family. Farm labour data is presented for owners, spouse and other workers on a full-time and part-time basis. The long term trend shows declining numbers in most labour categories, with both total farmer and total other workers showing similar declines. The number of farmers in the full time categories has also fallen proportionally more than that of the part time categories. These trends reflect an overall decline in the number of farms and a greater reliance on part time labour.

**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

**Forest Service (DAERA) Woodland Register**

3.10 The [Forest Service Woodland Register](#) is based on data taken from the Northern Ireland (NI) woodland base map. The woodland base map has been compiled using a range of Geographic Information (GI) datasets from statutory and non-statutory bodies and was last updated in April 2021.

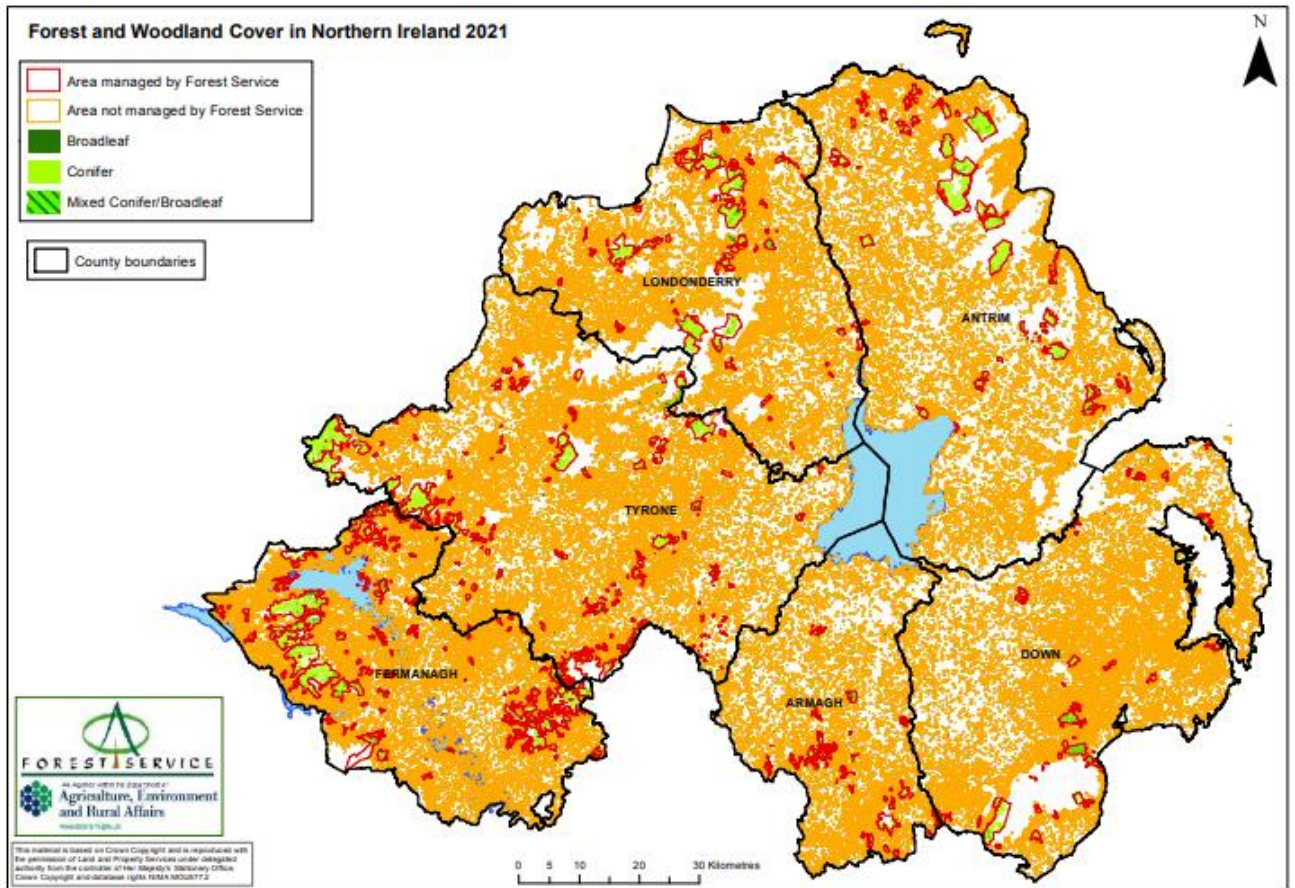
The woodland data has been categorised into the following woodland types, namely broadleaf, conifer, mixed conifer/ broadleaf or short rotation coppice (SRC). In addition, three further categories have been included, namely areas awaiting replant or natural regeneration, other open ground considered integral to the woodland and woodlands where the woodland type has not been recorded.

3.11 From the data provided Derry City and Strabane District Council has a total area of 11323.3 Ha.

		Awaiting Replant / Awaiting Natural Regeneration			Broadleaf	Conifer	Mixed	Open Ground	Not Known	Short Rotation Coppice	Total (Ha)
		Broadleaf	Conifer	Mixed							
Derry City and Strabane District Council	Forest Service	61.8	105.1		161.3	5701.9	53.1	315.4			6398.7
	Not Forest Service				1920.4	1039.4	932.2		872.0	160.7	4924.6
<b>Total (Ha)</b>		<b>61.8</b>	<b>105.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2081.7</b>	<b>6741.3</b>	<b>985.2</b>	<b>315.4</b>	<b>872.0</b>	<b>160.7</b>	<b>11323.3</b>

3.12 There are also a number of forests not owned or managed by the Forest Service. In total Derry City and Strabane District Council contributes 10.1% of the total woodland cover for Northern Ireland.

Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside



**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

**4.0 Preferred Options Paper**

4.1 The Derry City and Strabane District Council Preferred Options Paper was published in May 2017. The research findings contained in the POP, subsequent evidence based papers, together with member’s views, and advice from relevant parties/consultees informed options. These options were then taken forward and subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as part of the POP process.

4.2 The POP states that one of the social objectives within the Derry City & Strabane District is to provide for vital and vibrant rural communities elsewhere, including in our small settlements, whilst protecting the countryside in which they live by accommodating sustainable growth within the countryside which reflects the extent of existing rural communities.

*Rural Economy*

4.3 Our countryside is home and livelihood for a considerable part of our population including farming and non-farming families. The countryside provides employment through activities such as agriculture, forestry, tourism, other rural-based enterprises, as well as various home working businesses. Additionally our countryside provides for many recreational needs including activities such as fishing, photography, walking and festivals and has the potential to become an increasingly important tourist asset. Three strategic options for sustaining the rural economy have been identified, and our preferred approach was Option 2:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<b>J – Rural Economy</b>	To focus rural economic development proposal in the Local Towns and Villages, to drive the rural economy.	Balanced, opportunities in the rural settlements for appropriate scale development / employment plus opportunities for appropriate business starts and small businesses in the countryside, to promote a vibrant rural economy.	Rural development / businesses promoted generally across the District, wherever it emerges spatially and with only minimal restrictions.

4.4 In line with the RDS and SPPS, this option recognises the importance of sustaining rural communities and ensures that economic development can be facilitated within the countryside in sustainable locations to promote a vibrant rural economy.

4.5 With regard to other forms of development in the countryside the POP proposes to identify additional opportunities for appropriate small businesses (PPS 4) and for tourism projects (PPS 16). The POP also proposes to consider the identification of specific spatial areas of the countryside, which are under particular development



Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside

pressure or landscape sensitivity where further controls will apply, including rural buildings and wind turbines.

- 4.6 Following the POP consultation, we received a number of responses relating to the Rural Economy, these included:
1. **Invest NI** – INI welcomes proposed new policies for enhanced opportunities in the countryside so as to sustain vibrant rural areas and their communities. INI also welcomes potential for continued economic development opportunities in the countryside. Limited local growth will allow them to reach a stage of financial capability to make a move affordable in due course.
  2. **DFI** - reminds that RDS SFG11 aims to promote economic development opportunities at the hubs and only in the rural area with exceptions. DFI also concerned at the possible sustainability implications of the preferred approach – especially new business starts and small businesses in the countryside. LDP policy should seek to apply regional strategic policy at a local level. Any departure from SPPS policy must be supported by a robust evidential context. Background evidence papers do not provide evidence in relation to the existing economic development uses in the countryside or the identified business needs of the rural area. No supporting evidence presented regarding a pressing need or a lack of opportunity. Strong reminder that all options should be set within regional policy context.
  3. **Local Councillor** – Section 4 – Vision and Objectives – agrees with vision DCSDC must ensure that Economic Objective (iii) does not negatively limit the opportunities for the establishment, growth and expansion of rural businesses based in a rural location. By proposing to inhibit growth in rural communities to that “which reflects the extent of existing rural communities,” DCSDC must ensure that Social Development Objective (iii) does not negatively impact on the Councils Vision for a district which provides “equality of opportunity for all.” DCSDC must ensure that the implementation of any definition for “appropriate scale development” does not become a barrier to promotion of vibrant rural communities. Accommodation must be made for non-farming rural business opportunities.
  4. **Local Councillor** - PPS 21 precludes any rural development beyond farming and farm diversification. This needs substantive amendment in the new LDP.
  5. **Foyle Civic Trust** – some further definitions of the kinds of businesses, which would be considered ‘appropriate’ in the countryside, is needed.
  6. **Retail NI** – balance needs to be struck between appropriate development and protecting the countryside with reuse of buildings promoted.

**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

7. **Planning Consultant** - Support the preferred option to encourage appropriate rural businesses to develop in a controlled manner to help sustain the rural economy.
  8. **Planning Consultant** - Rural Economy focus rural economic development in towns and villages is far more sustainable as a whole.
  9. **Architect** - The control here should be on a case-by-case basis with a presumption to approve unless shown to be harmful. The equality of the proposal should be the deciding factor.
  10. **HED** - Welcome the reuse of vacant or underused historic buildings in the countryside which they consider would benefit community cohesion, vitality and tourism in the area.
- 4.7 POP responses raised the issue that while the Council's Preferred Option was supported, there also must be a balance that protection of the countryside does not become a barrier to sustainable development and employment opportunities in the countryside. All of the Preferred Options Paper responses were considered throughout the development of the draft Plan Strategy.
- (2021 Update):** The revised wording and policies of this Chapter are still considered to be in accordance with the Preferred Option from the LDP POP stage.

## **5.0 Key Considerations**

- 5.1 The SPPS requires the Council to bring forward a ‘strategy for sustainable development in the countryside’ as part of the LDP; this amended chapter will consolidate the existing policies into the ‘strategy’ required by the SPPS.
- 5.2 It is implicit throughout the LDP dPS that ‘sustainable development’ will accommodate those types of developments that are appropriate in the countryside and that other forms of development should be located in settlements. However, this is now made more-explicit, through this chapter and its policies.
- 5.3 The SPPS requires the LDP to further sustainable development and this is currently done through the first 3 paragraphs, and final paragraph, of Policy CTY 1 of PPS 21, which set out the underlying approach, for the various types of developments that will be considered to be acceptable in the countryside, and there being a ‘presumption against’ other types of development. It is considered to be appropriate and necessary that this ‘default’ policy position is explicitly carried through to the LDP dPS, in the interests of ensuring sustainable development and to enable the Council to manage future development proposals in the countryside.
- 5.4 Specifically, it is a case of the chapter being broadened out to include other development in the countryside – to ensure that they are ‘sustainable’, which still includes the policies for agriculture and forestry developments. The text on agriculture has not been removed but it is still included, and in fact strengthened (in Para 15.3, of Annex 3) to confirm the importance of agriculture, farm families and other non-farm rural dwellers and businesses.
- 5.5 The operational Planning policies AGR 1 Farm and Forestry Diversification remains, largely unchanged, as does AGR 2 Farm and Forestry Development, other than being re-numbered as ODC 2 and ODC 3 respectively. Information set out in this paper, clearly shows that agriculture and other rural development has a significant value to our local rural economy and development of the rural area within the District.
- 5.2 Whilst there are certainly a number of economic benefits to agriculture and other rural development, these types of development can provide a number of challenges, including impacts on the environment (through ammonia), visual impacts and impacts on the amenity of neighbouring residents (noise, smell and delivery related transport issues).

## 6.0 Draft Plan Strategy Stage (Updated 2021)

- 6.1 The purpose of this section is to identify the opportunities for sustainable development in the countryside over the LDP period - both through the various other relevant subject-policies and also Other Development in the Countryside through this chapter. Thus, the Council is strategically developing a balanced policy to protect the countryside and also to support the operation needs of rural dwellers and enterprises to enhance the attractiveness of the countryside as a place to grow, invest and work, consistent with the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035. This policy section provides supporting information, justification, analysis and reasoning for the proposed policies.
- 6.2 **The Council's LDP Strategy for Sustainable Development in the Countryside** is to identify the various types of developments that are acceptable in principle in the countryside, including agriculture / forestry, farm diversification and re-use of buildings as set out in this chapter, as well as the various development types set out in the respective topic chapters. Other types of development will only be permitted where there are overriding reasons why that development is essential and could not be located in a settlement, particularly protecting the Green Belt and other development pressure areas and designated areas. The general policy approach is to cluster, consolidate, and group new development with existing established buildings, and promote the re-use of previously used buildings. This sustainable approach facilitates essential new development, whilst simultaneously mitigating the potential adverse impacts upon rural amenity and scenic landscapes. All new development in the countryside must integrate, respect rural character and be appropriately designed.
- 6.3 A key aim of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside and to strike a balance between the protection of the environment from inappropriate development while supporting and sustaining rural communities. To maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the countryside as a place to invest, live and work, the countryside requires a sustainable approach to new economic development / employment. Whilst, new development is required to respect local social and environmental circumstances, facilitating development in appropriate locations is considered necessary to ensure proposals are integrated appropriately within rural settlements or in the case of countryside location, within the rural landscape.
- 6.4 The SPPS sets out the policy approach to new development in the countryside should reflect differences within the region, be sensitive to local needs and be sensitive to environmental issues including the ability of settlements and landscapes to absorb development. Policy must recognise that there are certain areas which will be more sensitive to change and areas which will have lower sensitivities and thus provide opportunities to accommodate development. It is also important to take into account the role and function of rural settlements and accessibility to existing services and infrastructure reflective of the SPPS.

**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

- 6.5 The SPPS adopts quite a similar approach to Planning Policy Statement 21 “Sustainable Development in the Countryside”, setting policy objectives aimed at:
- Managing growth to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development which will support a vibrant community;
  - Conserving the landscape and natural resources of the rural area, protecting it from excessive, inappropriate or obtrusive development and from actual or potential effects of pollution;
  - Facilitating development which contributes to a sustainable rural economy; and
  - Promoting high standards in design, siting and landscaping.
- 6.6 The SPPS adopts a policy approach based on clustering, consolidating and grouping new development, particularly new residential development, with existing established buildings and the re-use of previously used buildings. It also states that all new development in the countryside must integrate, respect rural character and be appropriately designed. It should not mar the distinction between settlements and the countryside or result in urban sprawl and it should reflect and complement the overall approach to housing growth in the plan area
- 6.7 The existing policy-led approach in Planning Policy Statement 21, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, sets out the various types of developments that will be considered to be acceptable in the countryside. This includes farm diversification, agricultural and forestry development, and the re-use and conversion of rural buildings with an appropriate nature and scale of non-residential development. New buildings outside settlements limits are restricted, in order to protect rural amenity and achieve wider sustainability objectives. The related Planning Policy Statement 4, Planning and Economic Development set out the Department’s policies for economic development uses and indicates how growth associated with such uses can be accommodated in the countryside; however, there has been concern that this policy has been unduly restrictive and has acted contrary to rural enterprise and sustaining vibrant rural areas.
- 6.8 The Chapter policies (**as amended**) have been developed in line with regional policy, the SGP and specific consultee and Member feedback, as well as representations to the dPS policy. The policies conform with the aims for the RDS / SPPS to protect it from inappropriate types of development, but at the same time, to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the countryside as a place to grow, invest and work. The policy thrust is to facilitate those applicants seeking appropriate sustainable developments, including farm diversification, agricultural development and other re-use / conversions of existing buildings.

**Designations / Zonings**

- 6.9 There are no designations or zonings proposed as part of Other Development in the Countryside chapter.

## **ODC 1 Other Development in the Countryside**

- 6.10 This overarching policy will deliver the SPPS requirement for the LDP to further sustainable development (as is currently done through the first 3 paragraphs, and final paragraph, of Policy CTY 1 of PPS 21) so it sets out the underlying approach, for the various types of ‘sustainable’ developments that will be considered to be acceptable in the countryside, and there being a ‘presumption against’ other types of development. It is considered to be appropriate and necessary that this ‘default’ policy position is explicitly carried through to the LDP dPS, in the interests of ensuring sustainable development and to enable the Council to manage future development proposals in the countryside.
- 6.11 The policy recognises that there are a range of types of development which in principle are considered to be acceptable in the countryside and that will help sustain rural communities and contribute to the aims of sustainable development. The J&A at para 15.10 lists the 10 categories of acceptable development, including those in this chapter and the other types of sustainable rural housing and non-residential developments that are covered in the respective chapters of this LDP dPS. Other types of development will only be permitted where there are overriding reasons why that development is essential and could not be located in a settlement, or it is otherwise allocated for development in this LDP. This presumption against such other developments will be particularly important within the defined Green Belt areas.
- 6.12 It is implicit throughout the LDP dPS that ‘sustainable development’ will accommodate those types of developments that are appropriate in the countryside and that other forms of development should be located in settlements. However, this is now made more-explicit, through this chapter and its policies.

## **AGR 1 ODC 2 Farm Diversification**

- 6.13 This is essentially a slightly amended replication of CTY 11 (PPS21) with a Green Belt consideration. This policy permits a farm or forestry diversification proposal where it can be demonstrated that it is to be run in conjunction with the agricultural operations on the active and established farm.
- 6.14 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. Additional J&A states a new building is only allowed in prescribed exceptional circumstances and diversification proposals should be of a scale and nature appropriate for the location, conform to rural design policies CY1 & 2 and be capable of satisfactory integration into the rural landscape. (see para 16.7)
- 6.15 Green Belt: new text is added in the policy stating applicants will need to demonstrate a site-specific need to be located at the proposed location within the Green Belt, and why the proposal cannot be located outside of the Green Belt (e.g. if a farm straddles the Green Belt) or in a nearby settlement.

**AGR-2 ODC 3 Agriculture and Forestry Development**

- 6.16 This is a slightly amended replication of CTY 12 (PPS21), including a specific reference on Ammonia (arising from intensive livestock practices) as well as a Green Belt consideration. An important additional insert into this policy is the reference to ammonia emissions which are being linked to damaging impacts on sensitive habitats, wider biodiversity and ecosystem resilience as well as human health (see criteria f and J&A para 16.16).
- 6.17 The policy permits development on an active and established 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 – see J&A para. 16.13 and reference to CY 1&2.
- 6.18 Green Belt: new text is included in the policy stating proposals within the Green Belt will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the development is needed to meet the essential requirements of the farm or forestry enterprise, and cannot reasonable be located elsewhere, outside the Green Belt.

**AGR-3 ODC 4 The Conversion, Change of Use and Re-Use of Existing Buildings for Agriculture and Other Suitable Rural Uses**

- 6.19 This is a new policy based on 6<sup>th</sup> bullet point on page 54 of the SPPS and includes a Green Belt consideration. This policy should be read in conjunction with a number of policies included in the draft Plan Strategy including ODC 2 Farm and Forestry Diversification, relevant Retail Policy, Economic Development (Countryside) policy, Tourism Policy and Community Infrastructure. (para 18.10).
- 6.20 This policy permits the sympathetic conversion and re-use of suitable buildings for a variety of alternative uses where this would secure its upkeep and retention, and where the nature and scale of the proposed non-residential use would be appropriate to its countryside location. The aim of this policy is to facilitate the sympathetic conversion and re-use of locally important buildings for a variety of alternative uses where this would secure its upkeep and retention.
- 6.21 The dPS Proposed Change to include ‘changes of use’ will facilitate the consideration of appropriateness for various other types of developments that may come forward in the countryside; without this policy, they could face a ‘policy lacuna’ which can be problematic for the Council’s Planning Development Management consideration. The proposed new criteria (i) regarding tourism development is to ensure that any such proposals are consistent with the Chapter 12 Tourism policies.
- 6.22 Green Belt: Within the Green Belt, re-use will take priority over conversion / extension of the building or site curtilage. It will be for the applicant to demonstrate that a conversion or any extension is required and the building cannot be re-used in its current form. The aim is to minimise the amount of new built development, thus maintaining the openness of the Green Belt locations, which are prone to urban-generated development pressure.

## **7.0 Sustainability Appraisal**

- 7.1 Throughout their formulation, the policies contained within the ~~Agriculture & Other Development in the Countryside~~ Chapter have been subject to an ongoing internal sustainability appraisal (SA). This is in addition to the wider external SA, conducted by Shared Environmental Service as part of the wider suite of impact assessments / appraisals required under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The internal appraisal was carried out with the fourteen objectives of the external appraisal in mind (refer to the SA Report for more information).
- 7.2 The sustainability appraisal aims to ensure that the Council's approach towards policy is the most sustainable of all reasonable options available i.e. having considered any reasonable alternatives. In the case of the Agriculture and Other Rural Development policies, it was considered that there were not any reasonable alternatives as any other options would be likely to be not in accordance with the RDS 2035, the SPPS or relevant PPS and as such could potentially be considered to be neither 'reasonable' or 'sound'. The results of the Sustainability Appraisal for each of the policies or groups of policies (as applicable) are outlined below:

**ODC 1 Other Development in the Countryside, ODC 2: Farm and Forestry Diversification, ODC 3: Agriculture and Forestry Development and ODC 4 The Conversion, Change of Use and Re-Use of Existing Buildings for Agricultural and Other Suitable Rural Uses:**

- 7.3 These policies enable positive social interaction and will help to give rural communities appropriate access to facilities and services, delivering minor positive impacts on the objectives to improve health and well-being and to strengthen society. The policies also help to support and sustain the rural economy, leading to a minor positive impact on the objective to enable sustainable economic growth, but there are no perceptible impacts on the other economic sustainability objectives. The policies may lead to incremental loss of semi-natural land, resulting in minor negative impact. Minor negative effects are also identified for the objectives to encourage active and sustainable travel and to reduce causes of and adapt to climate change as development brought about under these policies will generally not benefit from accessibility to walking, cycling or public transport routes and will be disproportionately reliant on private vehicles.
- 7.4 The policies encourage the re-use of buildings in preference to new development, which may enable some older buildings to be brought back in to use (with a policy cross-over with historic environment policy for important vernacular or listed buildings). This approach, along with the inclusion of criteria on integration and a higher test in green belt areas delivers a minor positive impact on the objectives to maintain and enhance landscape character and to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage. This policy is considered to be a sustainable policy.



**Derry City and Strabane District Council Draft Plan Strategy – Other Development in the Countryside**

**(2021 Update):** The amended policies, plus the new ODC 1 policy were subject to additional Sustainability Appraisal in the SA Addendum, at document DS-101a, para 3.6 & Appendix 1; it concluded that there was no cause for concern.

7.5 A draft Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has also been undertaken and published for consultation with the Draft Plan Strategy. It similarly determines possible adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) as a result of the policies within the LDP. This assessment also includes Ramsar sites under the provisions of the Ramsar Convention.

**(2021 Update):** The amended policies, plus the new ODC 1 policy were subject to additional HRA Assessment in the HRA Addendum, at document DS-103a, Appendix 1 & 2; it concluded that there was no cause for concern.

## 8.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that public authorities have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of a particular religion, political opinion, race, age, marital status, sexual orientation or gender. It also includes people with disabilities or those with primary responsibility for the care of a dependant, such as an elderly person. These are known as ‘Section 75’ groups.
- 8.2 The policies contained within the Other Development in the Countryside have been subject to an equality impact assessment (EQIA) to ensure no adverse impact on these groups.
- 8.3 This policy allows people who hold active and established farms to diversify and start up a new business in the countryside to be run in conjunction with the original holding. The Council is satisfied that there will be no adverse impact on any Section 75 groups as a result of the Other Development in the Countryside policies.
- (2021 Update):** The amended policies, plus the new ODC 1 policy were subject to additional EQIA Assessment in the EQIA Addendum, at document DS-104a, para 4.1 & Appendix 1; it concluded that there was no cause for concern.

## 9.0 Rural Needs Impact Assessment

- 9.1 The Rural Needs Act 2016, requires District Councils and other Public Authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.
- 9.2 To ‘have due regard’ means that a public authority must consciously consider the needs of people in rural areas. How much ‘due regard’ depends on the circumstances and, in particular, on the relevance of rural needs to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact for people in rural areas, the greater the regard required by the duty.
- 9.3 The LDP draft Plan Strategy (PS) adopts the approach of more balanced growth across the District whilst maintaining broad conformity with the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS). While it directs a significant degree of focus on Derry as the principal city and Strabane as the main town it also provides for growth across the rural area, throughout the local towns, villages and small settlements. Growth of the City and Main Town serves not only to position both as places which can compete with peer settlements, across the island of Ireland and elsewhere, but also equally to provide services of a scale which can supply their respective rural area.
- 9.4 Other Development in the Countryside is mainly applicable in the rural area as there are very few opportunities for this type of development in our urban centres. It is not envisaged that there is a negative differential impact on the rural area in relation to this topic.
- (2021 Update):** The amended policies, plus the new ODC 1 policy were subject to additional RNIA Assessment in the RNIA Addendum, at document DS-105a, para 5.4 & Table 6; it concluded that there was no cause for concern.