



Derry City & Strabane
District Council

Comhairle Chathair
Dhoire & Cheantar
an tSratha Báin

Derry Cittie & Strabane
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DERRY CITY & STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



PLAN STRATEGY

Development Management Advice Note 1 (DMAN 1) – Amusement Centres,
FINAL - August 2026

derrystrabane.com/ldp



DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



Supplementary Planning Guidance

(SPG)

Development Management Advice Note 1 (DMAN 1) –

Amusement Centres

FINAL – August 2026

Any reference within this document to legislation, policy or associated guidance should be read as referring to the current publications, etc.

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

DCSDC DMAN 1 – Amusement Centres

The purpose of this explanatory note is to clarify that following the adoption of Derry City & Strabane District Council Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan Strategy in July 2025, most guidance contained within the Development Control Advice Notes (DCANs) published by Department for Infrastructure (formerly Department of the Environment) ceases to apply. Where such guidance is still considered useful, the Council adopts it as its own guidance. This document is an adapted updated version which is valid following the adoption of the LDP Plan Strategy.

Further information on the status of other former DoE/DfI Planning guidance is available here <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/guidance-update>

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is to give general guidance to developers, their professional advisors and agents. It is designed to provide advice on the Planning criteria to be applied when a Planning application for this form of development is being considered. It should be stressed that this note is not a specific statement of Council policy but rather one of advice and guidance. Each application or appeal is treated on its merits and the application of the guidance given to a particular case is always a matter calling for judgement.
- 1.2 Any legal views stated in this note have no statutory force and should not be relied upon as an authoritative interpretation of the law.
- 1.3 A list of other current notes in this series can be obtained from Derry City and Strabane District Council Planning Office or online at <https://www.derrystrabane.com/ldp>.

2. General Guidance

- 2.1 This SPG deals with the establishment of amusement centres, however described, whether or not they comprise coffee bars, bingo halls and other amusements as well as game, activity and entertainment centres. Casinos or premises used for gaming may provide forms of gambling which are illegal. Planning applications for development which comprises illegal activity cannot be accepted.
- 2.2 The development of an amusement centre, whether by new construction or by the material change of use of existing premises, requires Planning permission. Venues may also require an Amusement permit from the Council's Licencing Department (by order of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries & Amusement (NI) Order 1985). In addition, centres may require an Entertainment Licence from the Council i.e. premises used for singing and music or public entertainment. More information on these Licences/permits can be found in the following links.
- <https://www.derrystrabane.com/business/business-licencing-and-permits/amusement-permit>
- <https://www.derrystrabane.com/business/business-licencing-and-permits/entertainment-licence>
- 2.3 The forms of control relevant to some amusement centres are quite distinct and should not be confused. The licences are concerned firstly with public order and secondly with safety of premises used for public entertainments. Planning permission on the other hand is concerned with matters relevant to the development and use of land.

- 2.4 Amusement centres can affect the amenity of an area through problems associated with noise and litter. These impacts must be considered and sufficiently addressed within any proposal of this nature.
- 2.5 An amusement centre can also affect road safety and traffic flow. This should be considered in all cases but is particularly important where the premises front busy traffic routes or are near an awkward road junction. The safety of visitors arriving on foot must be considered if visitors will have to cross a busy road or use an inadequate footway. The highways impacts will depend to some extent on the activities to be carried on. For example, large concentrations of people at the beginning and end of bingo sessions held at an amusement centre would have a different impact from the same number of people arriving and departing over a longer period.
- 2.6 Amusement centres can have a diverse impact on the amenity and character of its surroundings. This will usually depend on the location of the proposed centre in relation to other development, its appearance, the kind of amusement to be provided, the noise likely to be produced and the hours of operation. As regards the location, amusement centres are not normally acceptable near residential property nor are they good neighbours for schools, colleges, churches, hospitals, or hotels; unless there are overriding material considerations to the contrary. Therefore, approval of amusement centres in such areas will likely require strict conditions governing such matters as hours of operation, traffic movements at specified hours and types of amusements, amongst others (for more detail refer to Section 6 – Conditional Permissions).
- 2.7 They are also often out of place in Conservation Areas or other places of special architectural or historic interest, except perhaps in expansive spaces and where the design is sufficiently cognisant of the site context. Consideration should be given to the impact of larger numbers of visitors on the character of a neighbourhood.
- 2.8 In towns where there is no provision for areas for amusement or entertainment, amusement centres should be sited in areas of mixed commercial development where issues of compatibility are less pronounced and where there is often more opportunity for mitigation of impacts, if necessary. In areas where shopping is the predominant use, the likely impact of the development on the character of the shopping centre is relevant. An important consideration will be whether an amusement centre would break up an otherwise continuous shopping frontage; and although this can be mitigated by attention to the design of the facade and entrances, it may nevertheless be a serious objection within shopping streets. (Refer in particular to Policy RP 8 and RP 10 in the LDP Plan Strategy.)

3. Types of Amusements

3.1 The types of amusement offered will determine the number of people visiting the centre at any one time and the likelihood of crowding and disturbance. As noted earlier, sessional events such as bingo cause greater concentrations of people at certain times than casual forms of amusement.

4. Hours of Operation

4.1 Opening Hours are important to consider. An amusement centre may disturb neighbouring properties if it opens late in the evenings and at weekends. Daytime operation may, in certain areas, be more acceptable.

5. Noise

5.1 Amusement centres are often noisy. Although noise can be minimised by sound proofing and by limiting the area open to the street, direct and indirect noise levels are likely to affect nearby development and should always be taken into account in considering the siting of an amusement centre. This may, however, be of less consequence in an area where there is already considerable noise from other sources, including amusement and sporting activities. Some activities, such as shooting galleries, are particularly noisy.

6. Conditional Permissions

6.1 It may be reasonable to give permission for an amusement centre subject to conditions regulating the form of construction or the use of the premises. Examples of conditions which may be imposed for the reasons given above - in addition to any others that may be necessary - are a prohibition of shooting galleries or the playing of games of a sessional character; a restriction on the times during which the premises may be open to the public; or a requirement that certain works should be carried out to control the emission of noise, such as sound proofing walls or ceilings and requiring external doors to be self-closing.