

Mid Ulster Council Local Development Plan 2030

Preferred Options Paper

MAG Response

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Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) Response

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By email to:

developmentplan@midulstercouncil.org

1.00 General

- 1.01 MAG was established in 2007 to advise the then Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, and now the Minister for Communities, on the implementation of the Architecture and Built Environment Policy.
- 1.02 MAG welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Preferred Options Paper of the Mid Ulster Council Local Development Plan 2030, and would advise as follows.

2.00 MAG Response

- 2.01 The MAG consists of an Interim Chair and 7 Members, all of whom are independent professionals appointed through the public appointments process to advise the Minister for Communities on the implementation of the Policy for Architecture and the Built Environment.
- 2.02 MAG is assisted by 21 Expert Advisors, independent professionals who, while they are not Ministerial appointees, are appointed through the public appointments process.
- 2.03 This response has been prepared by three of the MAG's Expert Advisors and is submitted by MAG Secretariat on behalf of MAG.

3.00 MAG Response Methodology

- 3.01 MAG's Expert Advisors examined the Preferred Options Paper separately, and provided us with their responses in different ways: some gave direct responses to the questions posed by the Council in the POP itself; some provided general comments which are not direct answers to the Council's questions; some provided suggested changes to the text of the POP.
- 3.02 For the above reasons, this MAG Response moves through the POP page by page and section by section, including the Expert Advisors' inputs as it goes. In those cases where changes to the text of the POP itself have been advised, suggested deletions are noted with blue highlighting and suggested additions with yellow highlighting.

4.00 Plan Objectives – Page 15

4.01 Accommodating People and Creating Places

- To build the physical context required to support vibrant, walkable, socially sustainable, connected liveable neighbourhoods and communities in Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt [as (delete)] generating and supporting thriving economic and transportation hubs serviced by fully occupied, well used central mixed use residential and housing, shops, leisure activities, public administrative and community services including health and education. These are the most populated places and the town centres are the most accessible locations for people to travel to including those without a car.
- To protect and consolidate the role of local towns and villages so that they act as local centres for living, with shops, workplaces, learning and community services meeting the daily needs of their rural hinterlands.
- To provide for vital and vibrant rural communities whilst protecting the countryside in which they live by accommodating sustainable growth within the countryside proportionate to the extent of existing rural communities.
- To provide for 11,000 new homes by 2030 in a range of housing capable of meeting the needs of families, the elderly and disabled, and single people, at locations integrated with and accessible to community services, leisure and recreational facilities, for those people with and without a car. (MUDC Position Paper – Housing Allocation Addendum – Revised HGI figures June 2016).
- To recognise the needs of both growing families and carers of the elderly and disabled by accommodating lifetime residential development integrated into mixed use walkable neighbourhoods which allows people to remain within their own communities and does not lead to significant harm to neighbours or the built and natural environment.
- To facilitate the development of new community facilities integrated into [at] locations accessible to the communities they serve, through a variety of modes of transportation in accordance with the community plan.

- To accommodate cultural differences in our communities whilst **creating and re-connecting** ~~[promoting - delete]~~ “shared spaces” to bring people together with equality of opportunity.

4.02 Enhancing the environment and improving infrastructure

- To reduce contributions and vulnerability to climate change and to reduce flood risk and the adverse consequences of flooding.
- **The need to achieve greater biodiversity, higher quality architectural design and urban design; more authentic architectural conservation/repair, enhanced leisure and economic opportunity and promote health and wellbeing; and greater protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment.**
- The need to accommodate investment in power, water and sewerage infrastructure, and **sustainable** waste management particularly in the interests of public health.
- The need to improve **pedestrian and vehicular** connectivity between and within settlements and their rural hinterland through **creating interconnected street networks in urban areas, and** accommodating investment in transportation to improve travel times, alleviate congestion and improve safety for both commercial and private vehicles as well as more sustainable modes of transport including buses, walking and cycling.
- The need to improve connectivity through telecommunications which both meets the needs of business and private households whilst reducing the need to travel.

5.00 Spatial framework – Page 16

In line with the Regional Development Strategy and to achieve balanced and sustainable growth the Plan is proposing a Spatial Strategy based on building the Hubs and Clusters and Transport Corridors. Mid Ulster is also served by Local Towns, Villages and Smaller Settlements and Dispersed Rural Communities set within many vulnerable landscapes.

The skeletal framework for development is provided by the transportation corridors. The A4, A5 and A6 are key transport corridors

with the A29, A31 and A505 identified as link corridors. Along the corridors are the main hubs and gateways. Belfast is recognised as the primary engine of growth with Derry/ Londonderry as the main economic hub of the North West, **with a distinctive growing tourist economy and a potential secondary engine of growth**. Within Rural Northern Ireland, growth is balanced across a polycentric network of hubs and clusters based on the main towns. These have a strategic role as centres of employment and services and in terms of accommodating population and housing growth. Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt have been identified as the three main hubs of Mid Ulster and have the potential to form a cluster. Thus, they will be the primary growth centres in the Mid Ulster District.

SPG 1

Manage growth based on sustainable patterns of development balanced across Mid Ulster, in accordance with the Regional Development Strategy with settlement limits defined for all settlements to provide compact, **high density, interconnected street network** urban **footprints** ~~[delete: forms]~~ and to protect the setting of individual settlements;

SPG 2

Focus growth within the three main hubs of Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt and strengthen their roles as the main administrative, trade, **learning**, employment and residential centres within the district;

SPG 3

Consolidate the role of the local towns of Coalisland and Maghera as service centres for their hinterlands providing appropriate development opportunities for integrated and/or mixed-use housing, employment, **community** and leisure activities, in keeping with the scale and character of these settlements;

SPG 4

Maintain and consolidate the role of the villages as local service centres providing opportunity for housing **integrated with** employment and leisure activities **and all** in keeping with the scale and character of individual settlements;

SPG 5

Provide development opportunities within small settlements appropriate to their size and scale, allowing for single houses and groupings of small groups of up to 4 houses that respect the locally traditional siting patterns of clachans and farmhouse/farm outbuilding groupings;

6.00 Growth Strategy Map – Page 17

Include as a link corridor, with protected route status the B162 and B40 routes between Cookstown and Derry~Londonderry. The quality of the views from this route through highly scenic natural heritage has high latent tourism value. Passing through two Ulster Plantation towns with heritage value and townscape character: Draperstown and Moneyneany, it links Mid Ulster to one of NI's signature tourist destinations – The Walled City itself also a gateway to the Wild Atlantic Way. Protect the route's current picturesque rural character.

This may be diagrammatic but we are querying what appears to be a by-pass road on the southeast side of Magherafelt and west side of Cookstown and Dungannon. Having seen the impact of similar interventions at Rol towns like Ballyshannon (now dying on its feet) we really question the wisdom of this for towns of this size – it does allow traffic to flow freely around the country but seems to do little for the desired economic and social vibrancy in main streets.

7.00 Settlements – Page 18

The RDS has an objective to deliver development in a more sustainable manner. This means providing additional housing in the main urban centres whilst also sustaining rural communities' i.e. smaller towns, villages and open countryside. It is important to reinforce our vibrant rural communities so that they do not begin to decline at the expense of the main urban hubs. We are questioning the validity of this prior statement as a means of delivering more sustainable development. We appreciate the strength of the political lobby to allow housing in the countryside but when this is approved for those without family ties and/or work in the immediate locality (homeworkers/farmers etc) then

this cannot be deemed sustainable – the car journeys and consequent Co2 emissions generated are immense not to mention the impact on the character of the rural landscape. Additionally when houses are empty for most of the day because occupants are working/at school in nearby towns this does little to ensure vitality and vibrancy in the rural areas – quite the opposite. With the anticipated population growth in this council area facilitating an equal priority for rural housing seems sure to diminish the rural character. Having our cake and eating it occurs. We recommend that greatest priority is given to locating new housing in the 3 main towns, secondary priority to the two smaller towns and villages, and lowest priority to new rural housing – and to favouring those actually working there and/or with lifetime family roots (this ensures a caring network around aging parents). This provides a possible framework to accommodate future growth comprising housing, employment, leisure, and health and community development.

The approach to settlement hierarchy is largely dictated by the RDS Spatial Framework and in particular the Evaluation Framework Table and the Hierarchy of Settlements and Infrastructure Wheel. We are therefore limited in terms of the options open to us in considering the Settlement Hierarchy for Mid Ulster. The Settlement Hierarchy should accord with the RDS and the position of each settlement within that hierarchy is considered case by case against the RDS. The role of each settlement in the hierarchy and the related infrastructure that you would expect to see within each is set out in the table below.

7.01 Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure

Add into the Networks column for both

Networks

Major Streets, Secondary Streets, Minor Streets, Lanes, Alleys, Parks
Major Roads (inter-town), Bus/Rail, Park N' Ride, Cycle Network, Link
Corridors/Trunk Roads, Bus/Rail to larger centres, cycle parks, car
pooling businesses (like car hire but vehicles are non fossil fuel and
available for non car owners) These exist in cities like Chicago and
allow infrequent car users to give up their cars – a more sustainable
way to allow for car journeys in a rural context.

7.02 Small settlements

In the interests of protecting the rural character of our natural heritage, reduce the proposed 6 houses groupings to 4. Modern houses are so much larger than they were in the days of traditional clachans that even when they are sensitively sited to reflect traditional siting patterns they often represent a very large development. They, and the roads/parking infrastructure they generate, can be inordinately difficult to integrate visually.

Q. Should Urban Villages be identified within the towns and measures taken to protect their unique identity eg Moygashel?

Where an existing town or village has a characterful unique identity it is best to encourage protection of these through Conservation area or Area of Townscape Character designation by HED DfC. The application of Urban Villages is very embryonic in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence as yet that such a designation would adequately and statutorily protect their unique identity, or achieve a 'village-like' ambience or connected communities. It would be far better to write into the Local Development plan that these settlements be encouraged and supported to retain and achieve 'interconnected walkable neighbourhoods' whose urban spaces have street character – this is much more likely to result in places that have the look and feel of an 'urban village'.

Q. Do you agree with the proposed settlement hierarchy? Should Tullywiggan become a new settlement?

Excavations have identified that Tullywiggan has a New Stone Age and early Bronze Age settlement. Rather than designate this area as a new settlement explore the built heritage value in these settlements as a tourist destination, and/or for community led archaeology learning/community building projects.

8.00 Housing – Page 22

8.01 Housing Allocations and Zoning

The RDS introduced fundamental and significant changes to the manner in which development plans must provide for future housing requirements. The approach now taken is known as "Plan, Monitor and

Manage" which seeks to ensure that plans are sustainable, balanced and integrated. The RDS 2035 sets policy direction for the provision of housing that aims to deliver development in a more sustainable manner. It sets a regional target of 60% of new housing to be located in appropriate 'brownfield' sites within the urban footprints of settlements greater than 5,000 population. **Excellent.**

We strongly support and advocate the following.

It also advises that in preparing a plan a council should undertake an urban capacity study and where appropriate transport assessments. The guidance sets a sequential approach to site identification, adopting existing urban sites first, before expansions to towns and cities and treating major expansion of a village or small rural settlement only in exceptional circumstances, and the creation of new settlements in the last resort.

8.02 Urban Housing in Current Area Plans

(also relevant to Housing zoning and phasing)

The 2D land zoning for single use developments is an approach that has evolved over the past fifty years or so. It is a key factor behind the creation of places that lack vitality, vibrancy, community cohesion, are environmentally unsustainable, and disconnected spatially and, therefore, socially. This is partly because they tend to result in stand-alone buildings (schools, shopping centres, public amenities and discrete, segregated suburban housing developments, with individual buildings placed at a distance from each other. Cumulatively this results in non-walkable neighbourhoods so people needing to use cars to get from A to B.

With so much land already zoned for housing, and unused rather than persist in the 2D zoning approach that undeniably generates socially and environmentally unsustainable places, we encourage the council to consider instead the creation of integrated, mixed use development frameworks for such lands. As was the case when towns like Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt were being created these would set out in advance the footprint of a new urban street network for housing in terraced streets (adjacent to, and/or integrated with, some other mixed uses too) that knit into, extend from, and connect meaningfully to the original town centre, where possible. Encourage

housing that is mixed tenure and culturally mixed. This approach is a much more solid footing from which to create the socially and environmentally sustainable urban places called for in various strategic planning documents, and the social cohesiveness needed by us all, wherever we live and work.

8.03 Options for housing allocation

In the interests of environmental and social sustainability we advocate Option 2 (based on the RDS 60% target allocation in the 3 main towns (6570) with the other towns and villages getting a 33% share (3614 houses) and the rural allocation being 7%.

Under Option 3 settlements receive only 100 fewer houses than Option 2 so there is little difference here. The allocation of 3051 houses to the rural areas in Option 1 and 2081 in Option 3 is unsustainable environmentally.

9.00 The Economy – Page 25

9.01 Housing Allocations and Zoning

The emerging Community Plan for Mid Ulster recognises that we want:

- a prosperous, strong and more competitive economy;
- more people at work and in a growing variety of jobs;
- vibrant and competitive towns and villages.

Referring to sections on Urban Housing in current area plans and also Housing Zoning and Phasing above as well as The Economy, we consider that the more people living in the towns and villages the more likely these are to be vibrant and competitive.

9.02 Allocations and Zoning

Q. In your opinion are there other considerations that need to be explored to explain the reason for the slow up-take of industrial zonings?

Yes

(As above) The 2D land zoning for single use developments is an approach that has evolved over the past fifty years or so. It is a key factor behind the creation of places that lack vitality, vibrancy, community cohesion, are environmentally unsustainable, and disconnected spatially and, therefore, socially. This is partly because they tend to result in stand-a-lone buildings (factories, warehouses etc), with individual buildings placed at a distance from each other in industrial estates or business parks. Cumulatively this results in non-walkable neighbourhoods and drives people into their cars to get from A to B. Additionally the working environments created lack diversity and the range facilities and functions that add to quality of life, eg: cafes, restaurants, independent shops, homes. Many of today's industries and other economic functions are clean and can easily be integrated into mixed use urban areas. We strongly advocate that the approach of zoning land solely for economic use be abandoned in favour of creating well designed integrated, mixed use development frameworks with a wide range of uses including residential.

Q. If there has been no progress in implementing zoned industrial land – should it be de-zoned in favour of another site?

Yes

It seems logical that the land area be apportioned pro-rata relative to the population of each of the three main towns.

Q. Is there a need to introduce new strategic land zonings in the Plan Strategy to provide an interim supply whilst the LPP is formulated?

See points above about the flaws in the current approach to 2D single use land zoning.

10.0 Transportation and Connectivity – Page 27

Q. Should Mid Ulster Council encourage a roads based approach balanced against long term encouragement of more sustainable modes of transport?

No. We advocate a streets based approach (ie all the character of a joined up traditional street, albeit with 21st century contemporary buildings) as part of an integrated approach to sustainable modes of transport.

Q. Should locations close to interchanges on the key transport corridors be exploited for economic development i.e. Ballygawley and Castledawson Roundabout?

Such a move seems certain to undermine the potential vibrancy and vitality of the large and small towns. This should be resisted in favour of locating economic activity within existing town centres, integrated into connected mixed urban contexts. The location of the shirt factories in Derry~Londonderry side by side with rows of terraced housing is an excellent precedent. Similarly guard against the creation of large bulk warehouse retail at these interchanges for the same reason.

Q. Are there any locations available for additional Park & Ride schemes or other sustainable forms of transport infrastructure?

We advocate for the designation of lands for future rail infrastructure, re-opening former rail lines etc.

The following Strategic Objectives within the SPPS are highlighted.

- Promote sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need for motorised transport, encourages active travel and facilitates travel by public transport in preference to the private car.
- Promote the provision of adequate facilities for cyclists in new development.
- Promote road safety, in particular for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

The LDP recognises that these objectives may be less achievable in some rural areas in Mid-Ulster.

Under New Transportation Schemes, walking and cycling refers to cycle / pedestrian networks – these should be identified in the LDP. Safe routes to school are illustrated on the Cookstown plan.

There are a number of references to the high dependency of the area on the private car and low use of public transport because of the dispersed rural population.

The preferred option policy to support further housing development in the countryside will only perpetuate this problem, increase the reliance of the car and of course increase its negative impact on climate change which the plan sets out to address.

On a regional basis I could find no reference to the National Cycle Network or the potential of the NI Greenway Strategy, which offers the area a significant opportunity for local people to benefit from (health and well-being) and economic benefit of rural regeneration and tourism.

While active travel is alluded to in the planning policy, it is not embedded in guidance for urban areas, town centres, new housing development etc.

We would like to see a section in the LDP specifically focused on the provision of active travel, which embeds its provision in the plan process, records, existing assets and set out details of further routes / networks. (If we had an active travel bill this would be a statutory requirement.)

We would also like to see in LDP a section specifically related to public transport with a wide ranging review of how to make rural transport provision work, giving consideration to innovative solutions such as use of electric bikes and buses (multi modal journeys).

We have not commented on road infrastructure improvement projects as a means to addressing reduced journey times.

In summary, while there is some reference to active travel, the overall planning policy, particularly with the commitment to further housing development in rural areas is of concern. The opportunity to develop rural cycling routes, NCN / Greenways with their multi benefits has not been identified.

Public transport and in particular the connection with active travel in rural areas and innovative solutions to reduce the dependence on the car and address climate change is not addressed.

11.00 Environment – Page 28

11.01 Key Environment Measures

Manage developments in the Sperrins to protect open vista and bogland whilst accommodating [relocate: sensitive] appropriately sized and scaled development sensitively designated to meet the needs of local residents and visitors as well as the natural landscape.

Conserve important Nature Conservation and Built Heritage by protecting the setting of our settlements and important townscape features to ensure that new development is in keeping ~~[delete: or]~~ and enhances the character of our settlement

12.00 Suggested Policy Wording – Page 31

General Principles Planning Policy

GP1- Planning permission will be granted for sustainable development where the proposal accords with the Plan and there is no demonstrable harm in relation to the following:

(a) Amenity

- Development should be compatible with surrounding land uses, the amenities of nearby residents and have regard to the character of the area in which it is located. In considering the impact on amenity regard should be given to the following:

- Levels and effects of noise and vibration;
- Lighting;
- Loss of sunlight, daylight and privacy;
- Odour and fumes;
- Levels and effects of emissions including dust, smoke, soot, ash, grit or any other environmental pollution to water, air or soil.

Add - the Aesthetic quality of views

12.01 Siting, Design and External Appearance

- New development should respect their surroundings whether urban or rural having regard to the street scene and pattern of development in the urban ~~and/or rural~~ setting and the impact on character and local landscape in the rural setting. New development must respect the prevailing building height of 2-3 stories ~~(measured height)~~ within the district. Developments proposing buildings above this height will be

required to submit a Design and Access Statement to demonstrate design quality when requested.

- The siting of development should have regard to the relationship of the development to existing buildings, **the potential for good integrated siting to create a connected urban context that better supports community cohesion**, and the visual effects of the development on the surrounding area and landscape.
- **[delete: Where relevant – (these factors are always relevant)]** consideration should be given to issues of size, scale, form, massing, height, and density. External appearance should **help consolidate the predominant building patterns and traditions of the** locality in terms of **[delete: style, fenestration] – (style is ever changing and we have many existing styles and fenestration patterns that are unattractive that we would not wish to see replicated)]**, materials and colours, **whilst also allowing for innovation and creativity**.
- Development should be sited and designed so as to not have an adverse impact on public safety and **should, in and of itself, help** create safe and accessible places for all people.
- The principles of passive solar design and use of renewable technologies shall be taken into account in the siting, design and layout of all new development where appropriate.

(e) Access, Road Layout and Parking Provision

- Proposals should ensure that the existing road network can safely handle any extra traffic the proposal will generate or suitable developer led improvements are proposed to overcome any roads problems identified. Where appropriate a Transport Assessment should be submitted to evaluate the transport implications of a development.
- Adequate and safe access arrangements, manoeuvring and servicing areas should be provided and a movement pattern that, insofar as possible, **supports interconnection between neighbourhoods and communities facilitating** walking and cycling, respects existing public rights of way and provides adequate and convenient access to public transport.
- Car parking should be provided in accordance with published standards as set out in supplementary guidance.

An exception may be made where the proposal is located in a town centre or other highly accessible location well served by public transport or where there is spare capacity within nearby public car parks or adjacent on street car parking.

13.00 Housing Policy – Page 33

Good quality housing is a fundamental human need that plays a significant role in shaping our lives and our communities. A home is a vital part of people's lives and contributes to creating a safe, healthy and prosperous society. The planning system can play a positive and supporting role in the delivery of homes to meet the full range of housing needs of society, within the wider framework of sustainable development. A basic planning principle exists that when land is zoned for a particular use it will be protected for that use. In this case that principle applies to land zoned for housing. The former area plans for Dungannon & South Tyrone and Cookstown identified Phase 2 land zoned for housing. This was not the case in the Magherafelt Area Plan. It is the Councils intention to ensure that Phase 2 land is not released for development until such times as current phase 1 zonings have been developed and a review of both will be undertaken to inform the Local Policies Plan (LPP).

The 2D land zoning for single use developments is an approach that has evolved over the past fifty years or so. It is a key factor behind the creation of places that lack vitality, vibrancy, community/social cohesion, are environmentally unsustainable, and disconnected spatially and, therefore, socially. This is partly because they tend to result in stand-a-lone buildings (schools, shopping centres, public amenities and discrete, segregated suburban housing developments, with individual buildings placed at a distance from each other. Cumulatively this results in non-walkable neighbourhoods so people needing to use cars to get from A to B.

With so much land already zoned for housing, and unused rather than persist in the 2D zoning approach that undeniably generates socially and environmentally unsustainable places, we encourage the council to consider instead the creation of integrated, mixed use development

frameworks for such lands. As was the case when towns like Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt were being created these would set out in advance the footprint of a new urban street network for housing in terraced streets (adjacent to, and/or integrated with, some other mixed uses too) that knit into, extend from, and connect meaningfully to the original town centre, where possible. Encourage housing that is mixed tenure and culturally mixed. This approach is a much more solid footing from which to create the socially and environmentally sustainable urban places called for in various strategic planning documents, and the social cohesiveness needed by us all, wherever we live and work.

13.01 Housing Density – Page 34

The character of an area can be protected through the use of housing density. It is important that on larger sites within towns land is efficiently used. Therefore minimum densities should be set. Given Mid Ulster has traditionally low densities, often what was termed as the ¼ acre plot, a minimum of 10 units per hectare (this seems low – we request that the densities achieving in the most dense areas of the three town centres be assessed and this level of density applied) would be appropriate to ensure that the character of our town is retained. A maximum density of 30 units per hectare [? Query this as the maximum – it may still be too low for sustainable living] will adequately cater for a mix of house types and public open space.

- Promotion of densities that respond to the individual settlement's character is supported in recent regional policy.
- Mid Ulster has historically low density levels owing to the rural nature of the district.
- Higher density akin to the individual settlement's traditional town/village centre character will be encouraged in town centre sites that benefit from established public transport networks.

Note some suburban densities within existing towns are part of their character but are too low for sustainability.

14.00 Town Cramming - Extensions and Alterations – Page 34

Town cramming occurs when a development is imposed on a site without due regard to its surroundings, neighbour amenity, sense of place and integration into the area. In some cases higher densities may be achievable giving regard to the area. However the introduction of high rise – **define what is meant by high rise eg in excess of 4/5 storey?** residential buildings, **[delete: narrow streets, back to back housing or other densities akin to inner city living]** would be inappropriate to Mid Ulster.

Within Mid Ulster towns there are likely to be examples of major and minor traditional streets, of historic 2 and 3 storey terracing (note: these may be higher than modern minimum height standards - new build should adhere to measured historic 2/3 storey heights rather than the modern equivalent), and even lanes fronted by terraced houses/other uses. These are considered to be high density, could well be found in an inner city and, yet, are perfectly acceptable in a Mid-Ulster town. These should be permitted.

- The option to extend and alter your existing house offers occupiers the opportunity to improve and adapt their home to suit their individual needs. This offers a sustainable form of development and should be encouraged.
- Current Policy offers guidance on areas to be considered in achieving a successful development that is respectful to both the existing building and the wider context.
- It is felt that areas addressed in the guidance section of current policy could be transposed into policy for future development in the Mid Ulster Area.

15.00 Neighbouring Amenity – Page 34

Neighbouring amenity can be protected by ensuring adequate separation between property frontages and the avoidance of **tandem development – see point made below. Creating Places suggests a minimum distance of 20m (is this a front to front façade together with the suggestion of a min 10m rear garden depth.**

There is an identified trend within the district of reduced separation distances (what does this mean?) within residential developments. This impacts on the ability of individuals to enjoy their own home – is this true? There may be other factors such as layout.

- Trend in Mid Ulster is below 20m in recent housing developments.
- Amenity on sloping sites is not adequately addressed within current policy.
- Opposing storey height is not currently addressed in current guidance or policy

This section fails to take account of the high level of neighbourhood amenity that can be achieved in traditional urban terraced streets where housing, gardens and other uses share a party wall but still offer sufficient distance between front and rear facades. We suggest this level of dimensional guidance, and issues to do with opposing storey heights is best placed in separate design guidance – not in a Local Development Plan.

We suggest instead saying something very simple like:

Ensure neighbour's amenity is adequately protected.

15.01 Policy Approach Options – Page 34

Option 1- Adopt Current Policy and Guidance.

The current suite of policies and guidance documents offers a framework for assessing individual applications. Current documents could be adopted and carried forward to the Plan Strategy.

Option 2- Minimum dimensions in policy.

Provide a policy of encouragement to set a minimum separation distance of 20m between facing windows and impose greater distances on site of varying levels, supported by illustrated examples.

Q. Do you feel that the suggested distance of 20 metres is adequate to protect amenity?

This is too prescriptive and rigid – through good design individual proposals may be able to overcome the amenity/overlooking issues. Also this does not allow for the creation of terraced lanes which may

be very characterful, and could have development along one side only where there may be no overlooking issues, or loss of amenity value.

Preferred Option.

The first option to adopt the current policy and guidance approach does not maximise on the opportunity to tailor specific policies that reflect the Mid Ulster District. The preferred approach is Option 2 which will accommodate the introduction of specific policy to address concerns over residential amenity. The opportunity to provide examples by way of illustration will provide clarity to applicants and planning officers.

Option 1 is preferred.

Q. Should illustrations on addressing developments on sloping sites be included in the Plan Strategy?

No these should be addressed in design guidance.

16.00 Open space provision – Page 35

Q. Should requirement for open space be reduced for proposals within the town centre and close to public open space?

This needs to be considered differently – open space is everything outside buildings. Public open space is potentially usable by everyone including children – this may be a park, play area, street etc etc. There is enormous potential to create excellent public space within town centre residential and other mixed use developments simply by creating a well designed street network, and incorporating well integrated, designed parks, squares, community gardens, allotments etc. These are by far preferable to pocket-handkerchief sized open spaces located on land left over from the building development

17.00 Design and Access Statements – Page 36

17.01 Policy Approach Options

Option 1

– Adopt current policy that requires the submission of a Design Concept Statement to accompany all residential developments above that required under legislation.

We support Option 1 but recommend that these be extended as a requirement for all development types, not only residential. A good design proposal will be underpinned by a well considered and resolved design concept. Designers who have difficulty preparing a design concept statement do not have a good concept and cannot articulate their scheme in words – this is a red flag.

17.02 Suggested Policy wording

Policy HOU1 - QUALITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AREAS

Protection of Land zoned for Housing

Development of non-residential uses on land zoned for housing will conflict with the plan unless exceptionally they are ancillary to the housing development and provide community or recreational uses such as health, education or a neighbourhood shop.

We are very concerned at the above restrictions – many other uses including economic activities such as offices or live/work units are compatible with housing. Achieving greater mixed use development is much more likely to achieve a safer and socially/economically sustainable neighbourhood.

Phase 2 lands will be ~~[delete: safeguarded [for housing]~~ insert: **adjusted to allow for future mixed use development** but will not be released for development, either in part or in full prior to a review of housing land to inform the Local Policies Plan. Until the Local Policies Plan is adopted planning permission will only be granted for single dwellings that are in accordance with Policy CT1 of Development in the Countryside and do not prejudice comprehensive development.

New Housing developments within settlements will need to demonstrate that it will provide a quality residential environment by;

Creating a Sense of Place - agree and Avoid Town Cramming- what is meant by this?

Housing developments which create a sense of place and avoid town cramming will accord with the plan where:

- Small scale development should respect the character of the area taking account of settlement patterns scale and the existing urban grain and design of existing properties. Exception may be made for larger scale development where the opportunity exists to create a new neighbourhood with its own identity and local neighbourhood facilities.
- On sites of 0.5 hectares or over, densities of developments should respond to its surroundings and normally be in the range of traditional town centre densities – in the interests of more sustainable development we need to increase densities to the level of 2/3 storey terraced streets – this is very compatible with Mid Ulster towns [delete: 10-30 units per hectare]. Higher densities may be acceptable in town centres, mixed use areas or zonings identified for social and affordable housing.
- Developments should provide adequate separation distance to prevent over dominance and overshadowing, protect

privacy and avoid overlooking. Normally a minimum distance of 20 metres between facing windows of habitable rooms and a minimum distance of 12 metres between a front or rear elevation and a gable. – this is too prescriptive

- Tandem- what is meant by this? development should be avoided in new housing on Back land sites.

Housing laid out as detached or semi-detached with minimal distances (eg 1-3 between side facades will not be approved – these are best arranged as terracing).

17.03 Meeting the Needs of All

Housing Development will accord with the plan where the needs of all:

- In residential developments of 50 units or more or on sites of 2 hectares and over, social housing should be provided at a rate not less

than 25% of the total number of units. This policy will apply where a need for social housing has been

Identified by the relevant strategic housing authority until such times that the Local Policies Plan brings forward sites with Key Site requirements addressing social housing needs.

- By adequately catering for motor vehicles but encourage other alternative modes of transport to meet the needs of those without a car.
- On sites of 25 units or more or on sites of 1 hectares and over, there should be a mix of house types to cater for the needs of families and small households, providing access for all.
- By demonstrating a safe and sustainable environment for current and future occupiers by providing well laid out traditional street networks providing through pedestrian and vehicular connection routes to other residential neighbourhoods, schools, community facilities, and public transport networks that connect on to the wider community and blue green infrastructure to avoid insular developments. Avoid cul-de-sac development.

18.00 Housing in the Countryside – Page 39

In preparing our new LDP the SPPS states we should bring forward a strategy to facilitate sustainable development in the countryside. It must promote clustering, consolidation, grouping new development with existing buildings and re-using previously used buildings. In Mid Ulster the key issues that must be addressed is the provision of a rural policy that will provide - querying this: a little more flexibility than that contained Planning Policy Statement 21, recognising our aging population, and the increasingly important role carers play in supporting a vibrant rural community.

Planning Policy Statement 21 is considerably more flexible than its predecessor and does allow for rural development on existing farmland. Making this LDP even more flexible runs the risk of opening to the door to much less sustainable rural development.

18.01 Mid Ulster Community Plan

There are a number of issues arising out of the extensive community consultation on our emerging Community Plan that we wish to consider in our approach to housing in the countryside:

- The need to provide more social housing and low-cost housing and look at how derelict/empty rural houses might be re-used

- A move away from a one-size-fits-all Rural Planning Policy –

Is it a goal of Mid Ulster Council to be the custodian of its rural landscapes for the benefit of future generations? Introducing more flexibility than already exists seems likely to facilitate the short term needs of rural country dwellers with no connection to land/caring/work roles - this seems likely to run counter to this high aspiration.

The line between achieving truly sustainable rural development and constraining rural development by those whose need to live in the countryside is primarily a 'lifestyle' choice is by default going to leave some unhappy – but the line does need to be drawn.

- Rural Planning needs to be based on the reality that most rural people are not farmers/connected to the land - planning needs to be made more user friendly and responsive to local needs

18.02 Housing in the Countryside Policy Approach options

Q. Should existing rural design guidance be tailored for Mid Ulster?

Not seen as necessary

Building on Tradition – A Sustainable Design Guide for the Northern Ireland Countryside is supplementary planning guidance to PPS21. It offers numerous principles whereby sensitive sustainable development might be location in the rural context, and illustrates a plethora of built examples. We consider that this policy is effective and is making a positive difference in encouraging better, more sustainable design of buildings in the countryside, of which there are an increasing number of examples.

It occurs that the rural character of Mid-Ulster is not so dramatically different from other rural areas in the surround counties to warrant its own bespoke rural design guidance.

18.03 Single Dwelling Policy Approach Options

Option 1 Adopt Existing Policy Approach

This option would adopt the current policy based approach of PPS21 and the SPPS. This is considered to be a realistic option. However, PPS 21 adopts a policy approach that is much stricter than we require in rural Mid Ulster – we query the validity of this statement and based on the revised HGI figures will not deliver the required number of dwellings over the plan period. PPS 21 does not recognise the particular needs of our rural area.

It occurs that Option 2 will weaken the present policy and facilitate many more people living in the countryside – which is ultimately unsustainable environmentally. We support Option 1 Adopt the Existing Policy Approach as being one that facilitates rural living for approved categories, whilst upholding the need to protect and conserve this finite natural heritage resource.

A Dwelling in the Countryside will conform with the plan where it comprises a:

(a) Dwelling in an Existing Non-Farm Cluster

- The cluster must comprise a group of 4 or more, appropriately scaled [delete: substantial (this appears to encourage particularly large structures)] buildings and be located at a focal point (i.e.) a cross roads or a community building and can be absorbed through rounding off or consolidation. The site must have existing buildings on at least two sides.

(b) Dwelling Infilling a small Gap Site

- In a small gap site (of not more than 70m frontage) capable of accommodating up to 2 dwellings. The gap must be located between 3 substantial buildings, each with their own defined curtilage, fronting onto a road or laneway.

Exceptionally a single dwelling may be permitted on a smaller gap site (of not more than a 35m frontage) located between 2 dwellings, each with their own defined curtilage, fronting onto a road or laneway.

(c) Replacement Dwelling

- The building must exhibit the essential characteristics of a dwelling and as a minimum all external structural walls must be substantially intact.

(d) Conversion/re-use of Existing Buildings

The building must be of permanent construction. "Steel framed" buildings such as those used for the purposes of agriculture, industry or storage may be considered ~~[delete: are not eligible]~~ with good design skills such structures these could well be adapted for alternative use successfully. Alterations should be sympathetic to the existing building and any extension should be minor. In some cases this may facilitate more than one dwelling.

(e) Dwelling on a Farm

The dwelling must be on a farm which has been established for 6 years and is currently active (as verified by DAERA) and no permissions obtained under this criteria in the last 10 years from the date of the application. The dwelling should also be located next to a group of substantial farm buildings. Where there are health and safety reasons or reasons relating to the efficient use of the farm or its expansion, consideration will be given to creating a site which is visually linked to the farm, and integral with its access lane and adjoining field boundaries. Only in exceptional circumstances, and if the former is found not to be possible after exhaustive exploration, will a site be considered that is not visually linked to a farm group, where the house is to provide for a retiring farmer to allow for the disposal of the farm or where significant environmental benefits have been demonstrated by the applicant.

(f) Dwelling in a Farm Cluster

Exceptionally, on farms that are not active and/or established or where a permission has been obtained in the past 10 years, a dwelling may be accommodated within a farm cluster. The cluster must comprise 3 or more substantial farm buildings (excluding domestic garages and small sheds) and the site must be located within the farm holding and bounded by a building on at least 2 sides.

(g) Dwelling to meet Personal and Domestic Circumstances

Provided there are compelling (such as?) and site specific reasons related to the persons personal or domestic circumstances and where there are no practical solutions to meet the particular circumstances of the case, such as an extension or attached dwelling. This clause appears to open the door to rural dwellers with no connection to land or caring/work commitments in the rural context – this could easily be open to abuse. Over time the countryside may become a version of dispersed low density, car dependant rural suburban living. We do not support this clause.

(h) Dwelling for a Carer or someone availing of care

Provided the care is delivered by or received from an immediate family member and the dwelling is in the form of an extension to an existing dwelling to form a separate but attached residential unit , or change of use of an existing building within the curtilage to form a separate residential unit.

Q. Does the suggested policy satisfactorily cater for care-givers or someone availing of care?

Yes

Q. Do you agree with the opportunity for a dwelling within the existing farm cluster?

This is already provided for in Building on Tradition design guidance, and also within other clusters – so yes.

Suggested Policy Wording

Q. What definition and design controls should be attached to a 'clachan'?

This is addressed in Building on Tradition under clachan settlements and also sections on farm clusters.

19.00 Health, Education and Community Uses – Page 45

Although the Mid Ulster Council does not have responsibility for providing education facilities its LDP can, over and above protecting land for such use, could make provision in its policy requesting that future health/education facilities are designed/developed to integrate

into its context town in ways that connect it to the existing place whilst also supporting the growth of a diverse, socially cohesive community. For instance it is possible for crèche, nursery, primary, and post primary school provision to be design in such a way that it forms a frontage to one or more streets – such facilities make an excellent contribution to street vibrancy and the passive surveillance that generates safer streets.

19.01 Health

We request that the LDP request that all new developments in Mid Ulster create, or contribute to positive walkable neighbourhood environments.

Q. Should the Plan allow for Community Uses to be located within DRC's

Yes, depending on size and scale

Q. Should Community Uses be facilitated within existing non-farm clusters in the countryside?

Not necessarily – though a final decision could be judged depending on the location of the cluster and its size.

20.00 Urban Design – Page 47

20.01 Key Policy Generators from the Core Planning Principle

Improving Health and Well-Being

- The protection of existing, and provision of new, quality open space within or close to settlements plays a vital role in promoting healthy living and tackling inequality through facilitating play, sporting activities, passive activity and interaction with others.

We request including a fuller explanation of what open space is:

The protection of existing, and provision of new open space covers all the open spaces created by enclosures such as buildings, railings, walls or even land/water boundaries such as riverbanks – like streets, parks, squares, ponds etc. These open spaces are everywhere and are much more than a simply defined space created as part of a housing development. They are vital to our wellbeing, planned and

spontaneous social interactions, community cohesion, rest and relaxation, wellbeing, sporting activity and can contribute significantly to healthy living- both mental and physical. The design quality and ambience of these is crucial to their attractiveness and usage.

20.02 Creating and Enhancing Shared Space

- Key to successful place-making is the relationship between different buildings; the relationship between buildings and streets, squares, parks, waterways and other spaces; the nature and quality of the public domain itself; the relationship of one part of a village, town or city with other parts; and the patterns of movement and activity that are thereby established. The compatibility of a development with its immediate and wider context, and the settlement pattern of a particular area, are important considerations.

This is as dependent on the density, height, scale, materials, design quality, and uses going on within the buildings that enclose these spaces; the number and diversity of people coming and going from the buildings, the number of doors and windows overlooking and opening onto the space, as it is on interconnectivity, landscape design, materials, street furniture, play equipment and planting within the open space itself - just some of the many factors crucial to their success.

20.03 Regional Strategic Policy

Regional policy promotes high quality design to ensure that town centres provide sustainable, attractive, accessible and safe environments.

There are a number of Plan objectives relevant to the subject of Urban Design:

- To protect and consolidate the role of local towns and villages so that they act as local centres for residential, economic, shops and community services meeting the daily needs of their rural hinterlands.

20.04 Suggested Policy wording – Page 49

20.05 POLICY UD1

New development must respect the prevailing building height of 2-3 stories within the district. Developments proposing buildings above this

height will be required to submit a Design and Access Statement to demonstrate design quality when requested.

Q. Is requesting a D&AS reasonable above 2-3 stories?

Yes, in fact it is reasonable for any application – if a design team has a well-founded design concept they will have no difficulty preparing an adequate Design and Access Statement.

Q. Is it important to protect established building height?

Yes – up to a point. Mid Ulster towns have a relatively unified height character – though eaves lines can step up and down – this adds positively to their character. It is not necessary to impose a slavish height requirement across the board. It is important to control the excesses – either inappropriately high or low.

20.06 POLICY UD2

Adequate Provision is made for well designed and integrated Public and Private Open Space - It is important that green areas are both an integral part of development and opportunities are taken to link and connect landscaping and access to the wider blue and green infrastructure. Where appropriate planted areas or discrete groups of trees will be required along site boundaries and in large areas of car parking in order to soften the visual impact of the development and assist in its integration with the surrounding area.

[Relying on groups of trees to soften an area of car parking is a sure sign that the design quality of the car park is poor.]

Encourage well designed surface car parks whose size and scale is appropriate to the context and within which soft landscaping such as tree planting is purposefully designed and integrated.

Particular attention should be given to the transition between urban and rural environments.

Access for all is provided - The development allows for a movement pattern that encourages walkable neighbourhoods, and facilitates provides for pedestrians, cyclists, those with mobility difficulties and those relying on public transport. Where appropriate measures to

ensure traffic calming should be incorporated into a development.
Existing public rights of way must be respected;

The development is adequately designed to foster natural surveillance, promote personal safety and deter crime;

Where appropriate a Design and Access Statement may be requested to demonstrate this.

20.07 Encourage materials and detailing that is reflective of Mid Ulster

Suggested Policy wording

POLICY UD3

The development respects the surrounding Context and the Character of the area - in terms of topography, existing vegetation as well as layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance of buildings, structures and hard and soft landscaped areas. The design of the development should draw upon the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing -actually and in essence. Creative re-interpretation of these is encouraged.

Where appropriate a Design and Access Statement may be requested to demonstrate this.

Q. Does respecting the traditional details and materials of an area matter?

Yes, though it does not mean slavish transfer of a locally traditional historic detail or material to a modern building. This is most successful when the architect draws on the essence of the locally traditional materials and details and re-interprets them for today's architectural expression – this requires high level of design skill.

Q. When should new and innovative design be encouraged?

Always! – when extending an existing historic building or constructing a new one from scratch. This allows the ongoing story and evolution of a building or place to evolve. New and innovative design does not necessarily mean that the outcome is something brash and jarring – it can mean design that is sensitively considered, harmonious with the surrounding context, and very creative. Such design quality adds character and uniqueness, building local distinctiveness.

Building Height Policy

Q. Is it important to protect established built hierarchy?

We are unsure what this question means?

Q. Is requesting a D&AS for proposals above 2-3 storey height reasonable?

Yes, in fact it is reasonable for any application – if a design team has a well-founded design concept they will have no difficulty preparing an adequate Design and Access Statement.

Public Realm

Q. Does a landscaped entrance to our settlements matter?

Yes, though this does not necessarily mean it has to be complicated or visually fussy – the opposite is preferable. Less is more.

Q. Should we consider reducing the impact from carparking by landscaping?

We should reduce the impact from car parking by reducing the extent of it and providing a high quality of design for the car park layout itself – hard and soft landscaping will be part of that – not an add on to screen something that looks poor.

Materials and Detailing

Q. Should the Local Policies Plan bring forward design requirements in relation to fenestration, material, and details?

A local policies plan could highlight the beneficial traditional materials/colour palette locally and also indicate acceptable contemporary materials – it is also wise to allow for an applicant to use a new material or an old material in a new way. Writing into the LDP design requirements on fenestration and details is worryingly prescriptive and highly likely to stifle the very creativity that will add to vibrancy and distinctiveness.

Settlement Specific Design Guides

Q. Should design guides be prepared for particular settlements after the plan is complete?

This could be considered since the only one that exists is the 1995 Magherafelt Town Centre Design Guide – again such guidance should avoid the trap of being overly prescriptive.

21.00 Open Space, Recreation and Leisure – Page 53

21.01 Children's play park provision

Mid Ulster could be described as deficient in some areas. Cookstown is best provided for in terms of quantum, however distribution across the town means access is not convenient for all. Dungannon and particularly Magherafelt are deficient in quantum and distribution. The smaller towns, Coalisland and Maghera do have play areas, however they are not easily accessed by all, particularly on foot.

Play areas do not need to be somewhere that you have to travel to use – or make a conscious decision to visit. They are most accessible when they are the streets and other open spaces in and around people's homes, en route from school and within town centres –

Encourage the creation of 'home zones' (as in Holland) ie. streets within residential areas that are free of vehicular traffic and with good passive surveillance (overlooking from the adjacent homes) and so safe for playing. Additionally there is scope for much more creative design of children's play areas, and incorporation of elements that encourage risk taking and the learning that flows from that.

Suggested Policy wording

21.02 POLICY OS 1 - PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE

Development that results in the loss of open space shall not accord with the LDP irrespective of its physical condition and appearance.

Much of our open space is poor – we request that this policy be reworded:

Development that fails to create high quality open space, or enhance, the aesthetic quality and social vibrancy of existing open space shall not accord with the LDP. Development that results in the loss of existing high quality open space shall not accord with the LDP irrespective of its physical condition and appearance of the proposed replacement development.

An exception [can] may be made where it is demonstrated it will bring substantial community benefits that outweigh the loss of the open space and it will have no significant detrimental impact on remaining open space provision, amenity, character or biodiversity of an area.

Where appropriate, compensatory measures to include provision for more intensive recreational use (3G sports pitches) on site or in other locations capable of serving the area will be given consideration.

22.00 Economic Development – Page 58

Option 2: More Flexible approach tailored to Mid Ulster

Tailor the existing policy to a more flexible approach to reflect the local needs of Mid Ulster. This approach would simplify the existing policy and would allow for:

- More flexibility within settlements including the removal of any floor space limitations for business uses within reason – where excessively large business proposals are submitted encourage design approaches that break down the size and scale to suit the settlement context;

Suggested Policy wording

22.01 POLICY ECON1 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SETTLEMENTS

Within towns, proposals for economic development on land zoned for such purposes will conform with the Plan, as will proposals for economic development within the existing urban development where the size, scale, form and massing can be integrated into the existing context without being detrimental to the town character. In all these and other cases proposals will be determined on their individual merits. Within villages and small settlements proposals that are of an appropriate scale, nature and design and subject to meeting the general planning

principles policy, such as compatibility with nearby residential use, will be given favourable consideration.

22.02 POLICY ECON2 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Proposals for economic development in the countryside will conform with the Plan where they represent firm and not speculative proposals and do not harm the established character of the rural area and where they comprise:

- provision of a small workshop accommodation of no more than 100sq.m. floorspace for self-employment ancillary to a dwelling;
- expansion within the curtilage of an established economic development use which is of an appropriate scale and nature;
- off-site expansion of an established economic development use, including existing premises extending beyond the curtilage, where it is demonstrated that relocation of the enterprise is not possible for operational or employment reasons and the proposal makes a significant contribution to the local economy and will not undermine rural character;
- re-development of an established economic development use or re-use of an existing redundant non-residential rural building;
- a new building as part of a farm diversification scheme where a redundant farm building is not available or there is no suitable building available on the farm;
- major industrial proposals where it is demonstrated that the proposal will make a significant contribution to the regional economy and where it is demonstrated that due to its size or site specific requirements it needs a countryside location, **and can be accommodated in the countryside without harming its setting, and biodiversity quality**. Where there are no site-specific reasons an edge of town location will be favoured;
- development of a small rural community enterprise/centre, enterprise or economic development outside of a village or small settlement where the use will be associated with the settlement. Where practicable **centre of settlement or, failing that,** edge of settlement location will be favoured.

22.03 POLICY ECON3 - PROTECTION OF ZONED LAND AND EXISTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SITES

Proposals which will result in the loss of land zoned for economic development (existing or proposed) will not accord with the Plan unless it is demonstrated that there are important **place-making, social cohesion, and community/employment** benefits. Elsewhere within the settlement, change of use of existing economic development land, or land last used for these purposes, may be permitted where there is no need to protect it for employment purposes and redevelopment of the land would result in environmental **and/or agricultural cultivation** benefits.

23.00 Town Centres and Retailing – Page 64

Q. Do you support a town centre first approach for Mid Ulster?

Yes, with the caveat that it include residential uses. Allow for the conversion of former vacant and disused retail premises to residential, including Living Over The Shop.

Strengthen the presumption against edge of town and out of town large retail in all Mid Ulster towns.

Suggested Policy wording - Retail Development in Towns

23.01 POLICY RE1 - DEVELOPMENT WITHIN TOWN CENTRES

Proposals for new retail and retail-related development will accord with the Plan where they are located within the Primary Retail Core. **Within and without** the Primary Retail Core and within Town Centres favourable consideration will be given to other main town centre uses such as **residential**, cultural and community facilities, leisure, entertainment and businesses that would add to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

New development within Town Centres should respect any conservation interests and the unique character of that centre.

23.02 POLICY RE2 -RETENTION OF SHOP UNITS IN PRIMARY RETAIL CORE

Change of Use from shops to residential and other local services such as building society, offices, banks, estate agents, restaurants and hot food take-aways will accord with the Plan except where:

- There would be a significant loss of active retail floorspace at ground level;
- It would result in the creation of a cluster of more than 3 non-retail uses at ground floor level;
- The area overall is tending to be dominated by non-retail uses.

The loss of ground floor units within the Primary Retail Core to non-retail or non-retail related uses will conflict with the Plan unless there is a chronic issue of retail vacancy and creeping dereliction.

24.00 Retail Development in Rural Area – Page 66

24.01 POLICY RE4 - NEIGHBOURHOOD SHOPS

Within towns suitably located neighbourhood shops will accord with the Plan providing the floor area does not exceed a net floor area of 100 square metres and it does not conflict with the character or amenities of a residential area. Such shops should normally be located within mixed-use areas but could also be located adjacent to, or within, a residential area, especially if this promoted street vibrancy, walkability and contributed to reducing the number of car journeys.

Q Should a sequential test (i.e. primary retail core - town centre - edge of centre) be adopted?

Yes

Q Should shop units within the Primary Retail Core be protected?

If they are in active use, yes. If retail vacancy is persisting and causing a creeping dereliction issue and/or lack of street vitality then consideration could be given to change of use including residential – including at a ground floor level.

25.00 Tourism – Page 76

According to the Preferred Options Paper;

The tourism sector in Mid Ulster is one of the weakest performing in Northern Ireland. In order to encourage growth in this sector we therefore support a policy approach which protects tourism assets while also contributing towards increasing the number of tourist visitors. It is therefore proposed to:

- Target those areas which have the most to offer as potential tourist destinations by way of reviewing and expanding our Tourism Opportunity Zones and by the identification of Tourism Nodes at Lough Neagh and Lough Beg;
- Expand our Tourism Conservation Zones in order to protect our most sensitive areas;
- Allow for the re-use and conversion of existing suitable buildings for accommodation;
- Tailor policy to be less prescriptive in terms of accommodation on edge of settlements and to be less restrictive on major development outside settlements;
- Allow flexibility for major tourism development;
- Facilitate hotel/guesthouse/hostel development at the edge of settlements;
- Facilitate tourism accommodation which is run in conjunction with an existing tourism facility.

All these actions are advisable and should be accompanied by;

- Audits of Heritage Assets, Cultural Assets and Public Art to maximise potential of these elements throughout Mid Ulster.
- Community consultation on Assets to gauge potential community involvement, responsibility and stewardship.
- Celebratory events and festivals co-ordinated to reflect a collective tourism product for Mid Ulster regardless of their location(s).
- Seamus Heaney HomePlace established as a cultural hub in the Mid Ulster District Council area from which other aspects of cultural tourism extend and where visitors can be aware of the overall tourist offer for the Mid Ulster region.

These further recommendations all compliment the objectives in Option 3 of the Preferred Options Paper - Option 3 – Flexible Plan Led Approach. This has been identified as the Preferred Option and it is the most culturally sustainable option proposed, as it indeed 'promotes tourism development in some areas and restricts it where conservation interests are paramount...whilst providing flexibility for genuine tourism schemes based elsewhere within the District' (POP, 77). The proposed

Tourism Opportunity Zones and Tourism Conservation Zones are also strategically placed, well-considered and culturally sustainable.

It is crucial that there is an acknowledgement of the existing cultural and heritage assets in the Mid Ulster area. In the Preferred Options Paper the observation is made; 'Within Mid Ulster there may also be opportunities for growing tourism around activities such as golf, mountain biking, the new Seamus Heaney centre in Bellaghy and also by improving the night time economy. The Seamus Heaney HomePlace is an important new fixture on the cultural asset landscape of Mid Ulster and it can be maximised as a cultural hub contributing to increased visitors and tourism as well as aiding night time economy in Bellaghy and its environs. (The annex attached provides an article published in *Perspective* Nov-Dec 2016 by Marianne O'Kane Boal of the Seamus Heaney HomePlace.) The centre was opened in Bellaghy in September 2016 and is the first purpose-built centre to a writer in Ireland north or south. It also has an ongoing programme that complements the permanent exhibition and ensures continued footfall; temporary exhibitions, performances, talks, lectures, workshops, conferences and book clubs. The visitor centre has made Bellaghy and the Mid Ulster area a tourist destination nationally for scholars, enthusiasts and the public. Its importance in national and international terms should not be underestimated. There is potential to build a cultural tourism strategy for the Mid Ulster District Council area.

Although referring to the Republic of Ireland, Fáilte Ireland has documented some relevant remarks on the importance of cultural tourism generally and it is a key tangible engine for economic renewal and development. Increased tourism to a given area allows a feel-good factor and sense of pride among community and local residents. It is very positive;

Recent research has shown that not only does cultural tourism constitute one of the central planks of the Irish tourism industry, but that it is also one of the fastest growing areas of tourism internationally. The Survey of Overseas Travellers 2008 shows that over €2.2 billion was generated by the 3.3 million visitors to sites of historical/cultural interest in Ireland. Those participating in cultural/heritage tourism contribute 54% to total overseas tourism revenue. Hiking and walking is the next highest contributor at 9%, golf and cycling at 3% each, angling at 2% and equestrian at 1%. Also culture and heritage tourists tend to stay in Ireland for longer periods and spend more. Research also shows that our historic towns constitute a significant part of the attraction for culture and heritage seekers. In 2008, almost 57% of respondents to Fáilte Ireland's Visitor Attitudes Survey singled out the attractiveness of Ireland's historic towns as being 'very important' to them in considering

Ireland for their holiday. These historic towns are likely to become increasingly important to tourism in the future, as visitors continue to travel to urban areas for short breaks. The unique characteristics of the towns, the stories they tell, the people that live in them and the opportunities to engage with aspects of traditional culture, generate a strong appeal to our visitors, particularly those in our key target consumer segment of sightseers and culture seekers. For up-to-date research data on the markets and its consumer segments, see www.failteireland.ie/research. 'Historic Towns in Ireland – Maximising your Tourism Potential', Failte Ireland, 31/1/2012

According to the European Association for Historic Towns and Regions in their 'Guidelines for Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Historic Towns and Cities' published in September 2009;

Cultural tourism plays a major part in conserving and realising the value of our heritage, which includes not only the physical heritage and landscape, but also the cultural heritage, such as languages and religious and culinary traditions. Cultural tourism is also a vital route for cultural exchange, promoting understanding and for cultural diversity to flourish. It is an activity that is both an important means of individual personal fulfilment and a major industry generating jobs and investment; it depends upon both ancient history and the most up to date technology; it has both local and global environmental implications. (p1/18)

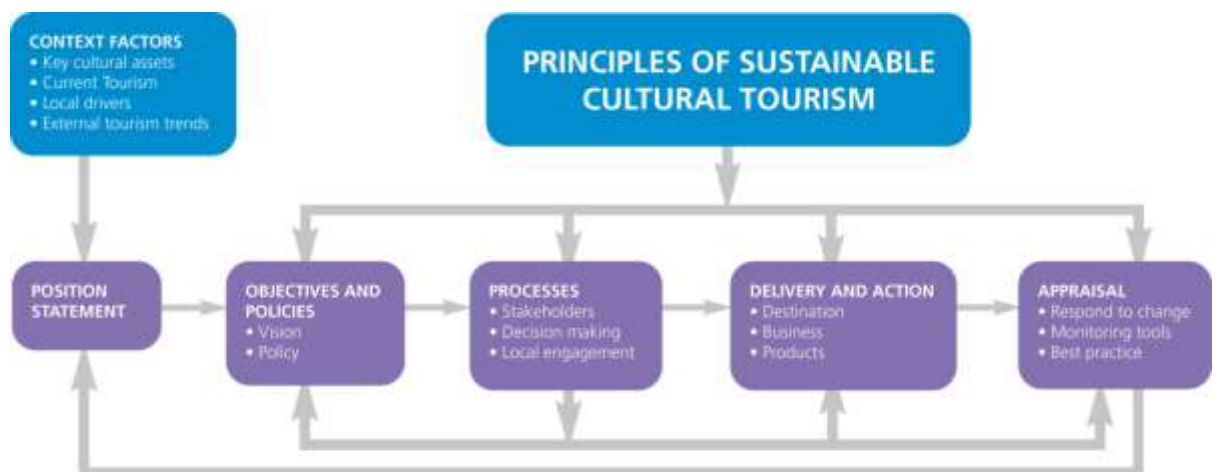


Figure 3 - Sustainable cultural tourism –These guidelines for practice embody the fact that places and cultural tourism are not static, but exist in a range of dynamic relationships that affect each other. Figure 3 summarises the principles and guidelines as a dynamic process.

25.01 Objectives

Safeguard assets from inappropriate development

The above objective is a minimum.

The possibility exists to write in a more positive asset specific objective:

Value, and target for support, protection and enhancement of this council region's built and natural heritage assets including collective historic urban settlements dating from the Ulster Plantation. It is important that new development within these historic settlements protects, respects and enhances existing collective built heritage, street patterns in these towns and villages, and views to and from their rural setting.

RATIONALE

14% of NI's listed buildings lie within this region. 1524 monuments of which 1312 are unscheduled, and 25 areas of archaeological potential. Additionally the province of Ulster has a collection of urban heritage settlements unique on the islands of Ireland and Britain. These are the 23 new towns created under the Regional Plan for Ulster.

This plan located two of the proposed twenty-three new corporate towns within the Mid Ulster council region: one at Dungannon and another other at the barony of Loughinsholin, within which lies Magherafelt. Other settlements within the region with Ulster Plantation origins include Draperstown, Moneymore, and The Moy. This is a very strong concentration of collective historic urban settlements – a rich cultural heritage asset and resource on which to build a strong tourist product – that could in time tie in with the wider collection of Ulster Plantation settlements.

Research by Tourism Ireland c.2012 was reported to reveal that visitors from other countries love coming to places that are different from their own. Built and natural heritage are the two primary elements that make one place distinctive and different from another. It is said that visitors to heritage stay twice as long as other visitors and spend twice as much.

Mid Ulster strategy in relation to tourism incorporates regional and strategic objectives.

An overarching Council objective is to promote jobs in the District and the promotion of jobs in the tourism sector is an important way of ensuring there is a diverse range of jobs across all sectors.

Study of the Economic Value of Northern Ireland's Historic Environment Technical Report submitted to: Department of the Environment 14 May 2012 highlights that the historic environment in NI produces a lower level of output, employment and GVA than its neighbouring jurisdictions, when assessed on a per capita basis, thereby suggesting that there is significant potential to further develop the historic environment sector in NI.

The region's built and natural heritage is an opportunity to develop sustainable, satisfying work for local people – skills development is required to develop a workforce equipped to deliver this.

25.02 Strategic Policy Approach

Safeguard tourism assets from inappropriate Development - this is crucial (see notes above).

Support tourist development in rural areas which is of appropriate scale, nature and location

Contribute to the regional economy through a growth in tourism.

FURTHER COMMENTS

The major tourist offer in this region is the natural and built heritage – strategically rather than encourage the construction of large resorts (of questionable long term sustainability) a more sensitive and ultimately more sustainable and authentic approach would be conservation, enhancement and opening up accessibility of these assets to walkers, cyclists, runners and, in the case of the built heritage assets, to the niche markets of historical societies, community led and community building archaeology programmes, and others interested in built heritage. Sensitive opening up of otherwise inaccessible natural landscape for walkers is being done to great effect by Sligo Co Council eg. the 10km pedestrian route from Sliswoods to Dromahaire in Co Leitrim includes a sensitively designed and sited timber boardwalk interventions across boggy ground making this route accessible even to low levels of walking ability.

Facilitate tourism in settlements by valuing, and prioritising for support, protection and enhancement this council region's built and natural heritage assets, not least and including its collective historic urban settlements dating from the Ulster Plantation, and since then. New development within these historic settlements is required to protect, respect and enhance existing collective built heritage, including street pattern footprints/building lines and the arising townscape, in these towns and villages, and views to and from their rural setting. Only development that protects, strengthens, supports and facilitates the existing built and natural heritage tourist offer and is of appropriate scale and location will be permitted.

Create at least 8,500 new jobs at a variety of locations where they are accessible to all members of the community – we would expect these to be based primarily in town or village locations – with outreach into the natural heritage asset from there.

Q.Do you feel that a flexible plan led approach is the correct option?

This option would benefit from amendment – see recommendations on the Tourism Conservation Zone locations and also added text below.

25.03 Preferred Option 3

The value of tourism needs to be recognised, however, current policy for areas outside of Tourism Opportunity Zones is too restrictive and is in part contributes to Mid Ulster's under developed tourism base. ~~Whilst~~ Mid Ulster's collective tourist assets are substantial though appear to be undervalued, and are, therefore, not widely marketed. Its assets are distinctly different from those of other areas – this distinctiveness is a strength. ~~in does not have the assets of other areas~~ Another advantage is that it is not experiencing adverse pressures for tourism such as second homes.

Therefore

Option 3 is the preferred option because it promotes the protection, enhancement and development of the region's tourist product (much of this being collective built and natural heritage in the areas where this is located). ~~tourism development in some areas~~ and restricts/controls new development it where would undermine the authentic heritage offer, and where conservation interests are paramount (see Tourism Map below) whilst providing flexibility for well

sited, designed and sensitively scaled schemes that support the genuine needs of tourists, and build an authentic tourist offer in the Tourist Conservation Zones, as well as those based elsewhere within the District.

Q. Do you agree with the proposed Tourism Opportunity Zones and Tourism Conservation Areas as shown on the Map below?

No – this council region has cultural heritage (built and natural) tourism assets across a much broader area than shown – the Tourism Conservation Areas should extend to include all of the vulnerable landscape areas (Growth Strategy Map) including the natural heritage landscape visible from the B40/B162 route from Cookstown via Lough Fea, to Draperstown to Feeney (ie the areas designated as vulnerable landscapes in the Growth Strategy Map). Tourism Conservation areas should be applied to the collective Ulster Plantation related historic urban settlements (and their setting) referred to earlier: Dungannon, Magherafelt, Draperstown, Moneymore, The Moy; and also Cookstown which has a high collective heritage value in its urban plan and the relatively intact concentration of listed buildings along its main street.

We agree the value of Lough Neagh as a heritage asset and tourist amenity is immense and largely untapped – the protection of its water quality, and also the landscape setting is vitally important – the extent of the proposed SCA along its shoreline would benefit from broadening, including across the lough itself and to include the lake bed including protecting panoramic views towards Lough Neagh from the B40, and other routes.

25.04 POLICY TOU 1 - PROTECTION OF TOURISM ASSETS AND TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

In order to achieve the policy aims contained in the preferred option, it is felt that the following policy wording may be appropriate.

Development shall conflict with the plan where it would in itself or in combination with existing and approved development in the locality have a significant adverse impact on a tourism asset – this includes singular and collective cultural and natural heritage assets.

Proposals for new tourism development (facilities and / or accommodation) within Tourism Conservation Zones will conflict with the plan, except where;

a) The proposal includes minor improvements to infrastructure such as walking and cycle-ways, fishing and canoe stands; or

b) The proposal includes the provision of tourism accommodation or facilities through the re-use of existing vernacular buildings.

c) the proposal represents authentic repair and/or re-use of a semi-derelict or derelict built historic building, or collection of buildings of worth, listed or unlisted.

25.05 POLICY TOU 2 – MAJOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Outside of Tourism Conservation Zones and Special Countryside Areas a proposal for a major tourism development that acts as a resort destination providing both accommodation and major leisure facilities, such as a waterpark, theme park and other similar leisure facilities will accord with the plan where it has been demonstrated that it will be of exceptional benefit to the regional tourist industry and the economy, ~~and~~ is on a site that is sustainable environmentally, and in terms of any benefits derived for the local economy, and ~~will not have~~ ~~and in relation to~~ adverse impacts on the wider environment.

Tourism development requires clearer definition – this could be anything from a major hotel/golf course resort or theme park to a small guest house. We are also concerned that the larger purpose tourist accommodation built developments could have carte blanche on unzoned development land within settlements, to the detriment of their existing townscape character.

25.06 POLICY TOU 3 – TOURISM ACCOMODATION

Outside of settlements, Tourism Conservation Zones and Special Countryside Areas, tourism accommodation will also accord with the plan where it comprises;

a) a hotel, guest house or hostel located at or near to the edge of the settlement and is clearly visually associated with the settlement ~~comma,~~ where there are no suitable opportunities within the settlement; or

b) the re-use and / or conversion of suitable buildings, of permanent construction ~~excluding~~ including 'steel frame' buildings, in the

rural locality [where good design approach is evidenced re-use/conversion of steel framed farm building may be acceptable]; or

c) the sensitive replacement of an existing suitable building with a new building of proportionate size and scale; or

d) part of a Farm Diversification scheme which is visually linked to a cluster of existing farm buildings; or

e) tourism accommodation run in conjunction with and visually linked to an existing tourism facility, such as; golf course, fishing lake, or outdoor activity centre; or

f) self-catering accommodation located within the grounds of a hotel, guesthouse or holiday park;

g) in the case of hotels, holiday parks, camping or touring caravan parks that are located within easy access of tourism amenities and where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a high quality and environmentally and economically sustainable form of development, and evidence that it can be fully integrated into the wider landscape, demonstrated within the site layout, design and landscaping and a viable business case;

h) a motel situated at or easily accessible to a key transport corridor, link corridor or trunk roads and at the key interchanges (see Tourism Map) but avoiding direct access onto the key transport corridors;

- Castledawson

- Dungannon

- Ballygawley

(h) we recommend that motel development be located in or on the edge of existing settlements rather than isolated sites beside anonymous transport interchanges. This means overnight guests can avail of other facilities in the settlement – creating a symbiotic relationship that supports facilities and services in the settlement as well as the motel.

Q - Do you agree that planning policy in Mid Ulster should allow more flexibility in relation to major tourism and where tourism is run in conjunction with an existing facility i.e. no limitation to self-catering accommodation?

We recommend there needs to be control of all development that caters for tourist economy particularly when this is located in or adjacent to the tourist product – especially natural and built heritage assets, of all kinds.

Q - Should planning policy in Mid Ulster be less prescriptive policy in terms of hotel / guesthouse/ hostel development at edge of settlement locations?

Planning policy may be less prescriptive about design approaches, apart from a requirement that proposals integrate well with the surrounding context, but should encourage hotel / guesthouse/ hostel development within settlements as a priority before any consideration is given to edge of settlement locations.

Q - What are your views on motel development at the interchange locations of Castledawson, Ballygawley and Stangmore Junction, Dungannon?

Such developments should not be encouraged – this leads to the equivalent of out of town shopping centres and generates a car dependent context for visitors and locals alike. See our additional comments above

25.07 POLICY TOU 4 – OTHER TOURISM FACILITIES

All proposals for tourism facilities, amenities and attractions will be of a scale, design and sited in order to have significant ~~[delete: detrimental]~~ **enhancement** effect on the amenity of the area or its landscape character. Such proposals should use existing buildings wherever possible. These buildings should be of permanent construction and not 'steel framed' buildings **unless the proposal demonstrates high levels of design skill that result in the refurbishment provides an enhanced, and aesthetically distinctive facility.**

Cultural Tourism operates on the premise that every area, town and village is unique and its key attractions need to be identified and celebrated. Tying in with architecture, culture, landscape and

distinctive identity of an area is important as is a 'sense of place' which again is a potent force and tangible element once distinguished;

The primary assets of an historic town will often be its stock of historic buildings and its 'sense of place'. Identifying a town's 'sense of place' can be a difficult and amorphous exercise, but it is important to try if the town is to clearly identify its 'unique selling proposition', which will allow it to better position itself in the tourist market. Identifying this 'sense of place' can begin by identifying what makes the town different from other towns – what is its essential character and distinctiveness.

Its character can be found in both tangible and intangible things: It is the town itself, its story, architecture, historical associations, parks, gardens and public realm. The potential of the public realm as a tourist attraction must not be underestimated ...The core attraction in many well known historic towns across the world, such as Venice, Bruges or York, is not any one particular attraction or historic building, although these are obviously crucial, but the public realm and the distinctive streetscapes, which allows visitors to wander around and soak up the 'sense of place'. In unlocking its tourism potential, an historic town must therefore, begin by identifying what it is that makes it unique and distinctive, and identifying clearly the story it wants to tell to visitors. *'Historic Towns in Ireland – Maximising your Tourism Potential', Failte Ireland, 31/1/2012*

(See comments in previous sections referring to this region's strong collective built heritage settlements from the Ulster Plantation – Ulster's full complement is unique on these islands)

26.00 Agricultural, Forestry & Rural Development - Page 81

Q. Do you agree with the policy approach that existing buildings should be utilised in the first instance to facilitate farm diversification?

Yes

Q. Should the farm diversification proposals involving new buildings be limited in size?

Yes

Q. Should the conversion and re-use of existing buildings be restricted only to 'locally important buildings'?

Yes

27.00 Archaeology and Built Heritage – Page 84

27.01 Climate Change

A changing climate poses many challenges for this subject in relation to the potential impact. Such impacts include: increased extremes of wetting and drying that heighten the risk of ground subsidence and accelerated decay of stonework and thus pose a threat to many historic buildings; more frequent intense rainfall that causes increased erosion of archaeological sites and [damaging] flooding damage in historic settlements; overheating and moisture penetration impacts on the conservation of historic buildings; the visual implications of installing active solar heating devices such as photovoltaic and solar panels.

27.02 Built Heritage Strategy

Q. Do you agree with the Key actions for protection of archaeology and the historic built environment in Mid Ulster?

See comments below

Identify designated archaeological remains of regional and local importance

Secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of our built and archaeological heritage;

Protect and enhance Conservation Areas and other sites, buildings features and areas of historical and cultural value; and

Promote sustainable development and environmental stewardship with regard to our built heritage and archaeological heritage; and deliver economic and community benefit through conservation that facilitates productive use of built heritage assets and opportunities for investment whilst safeguarding their historic or architectural integrity;

Protect Listed Buildings and their settings; collective built heritage of significance (listed and unlisted) including historic towns and villages and their settings;

Identify and audit heritage dereliction, vacancy and emergency works in designated Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape or Village Character, Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, Listed Buildings and

Industrial Heritage within settlement limits and Local Landscape Policy Areas;

Audit the council region, particularly all historic settlements to identify potential for additional designation of Conservation Areas, Areas of Townscape or Village Character, Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes, Listed Buildings and Industrial Heritage within settlement limits and Local Landscape Policy Areas.

Secure the protection, conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of our built and archaeological heritage; Protect and enhance Conservation Areas and other sites, features and areas of historical and cultural value; and Promote sustainable development and environmental stewardship with regard to our built heritage and archaeological heritage; and deliver economic and community benefit through applying a philosophy of conservative repair also allowing for essential changes to be made in a manner that is sensitive and sympathetic to the historic building whilst simultaneously expressing the architectural idiom of today. This encourages ~~the~~ conservation that facilitates productive, and creative use of built heritage assets and opportunities for investment whilst safeguarding their historic or architectural integrity;

27.03 POLICY BH4 - LISTED BUILDINGS

Suggested Policy Wording

There is an overarching presumption to protect Listed Buildings and their settings.

Demolition of a listed building, or any building within a conservation area will conflict with the Plan unless there are exceptional reasons why the building cannot be retained, as assessed against the criteria set out in PPS6. A thorough Conservation Management Plan is required to record the built heritage legacy, establish its significance, and appraise its potential for re-use.

Development involving a change of use and / or works of extension / alteration will accord with the Plan where this will secure the ongoing viability and upkeep of the building and its setting. It is important that such a development proposal:

- Presents a Conservation Management Plan.

- Respects the essential internal spatial layout, and internal and external character and architectural or historic interest of the building and its setting;

- That features of special interest remain intact and unimpaired – this includes key spaces, internal and external;

- Proposals should be based on a clear understanding of the importance of the building/ place/ heritage asset; and

- Should support the best viable use that is compatible with the fabric, original spatial arrangements; setting and character of the building.

Development which effects the setting of a Listed Building will be permissible providing:

- The detailed design respects the Listed Building in terms of scale, height, massing, form and alignment, materials, and colour;

- The works proposed apply traditional like for like materials to repair traditional building fabric, and either make use of traditional or harmonious, sympathetic contemporary building materials and techniques on extensions. The latter must be sensitive to and unify with the overall character presented by those found on the original building; and

- The nature of the use proposed respects the character of the building and its setting.

Where demolition is being proposed applicants should justify their proposals, and show why alteration or demolition of a Listed Building is necessary as assessed against the criteria set out in PPS6. [delete: granted] Prior to approval being given on demolition this will be [delete: This should normally be] conditional on prior planning approval [agreement] for redevelopment proposals for the site as part of a full conservation management plan to include full measured survey, photographic record, historic background and statement of local, regional, national significance. [delete: appropriate arrangements for recording the building].

27.04 Policy BH6 _ Conservation Areas

- There will be a presumption in favour of retaining unlisted buildings within a designated conservation area which make a material contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- Demolition of an unlisted building can accord with the Plan where it makes no material contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area or where there are exceptional reasons why the unlisted building cannot be retained, each assessed against the criteria for demolishing listed buildings as per PPS6, and subject to the findings

Where Conservation Area Consent for demolition is granted this will normally be subject to assessment against the criteria for demolishing listed buildings as per PPS6, and subject to the findings of a thorough Conservation Management Plan, also planning approval being granted for the site redevelopment proposals, and arrangements being in place to commence this before demolition commences. Design and Access Statements will be required to accompany such proposals.

- When assessing development proposals for change of use, alterations or extensions and/or new development in the Conservation Area the guiding principle will be to afford special regard to the desirability of enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area where an opportunity to do so exists, or to preserve its character or appearance where an opportunity to enhance does not arise. There will be a presumption against the grant of planning permission for development or conservation area consent for demolition of unlisted buildings, where proposals would conflict with this principle.
- Development proposals for change of use, alteration or extension and/or new development will be required to demonstrate that it either preserves or enhances the character or appearance of a conservation area. Design and Access Statements will be required to accompany such proposals.
- Design and Access Statements will be required to demonstrate how consideration of the character or appearance of the conservation area has informed [delete: been taken into account in] the

application proposal's design concept. [delete: Where appropriate] This may refer to and/or reinterpret the palette of historic architectural materials/details/colours within the conservation area to demonstrate how [in order for] the proposal [to] preserves and/or enhances the existing character or appearance of the conservation area.

27.05 POLICY BH8 - AREAS OF TOWNSCAPE (ATC'S)/ VILLAGE CHARACTER

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining an unlisted building within an ATC which makes a material contribution to the overall character or appearance of the ATC.

Permission may be granted for demolition of an unlisted building if it does not make a material contribution to the distinctive character or appearance of the ATC. Where permission for demolition is granted this will normally be subject to appropriate arrangements for the redevelopment of the site.

Development proposals for the change of use, alteration, extension or new development will accord with the plan where they maintain or enhance the overall character or appearance of the ATC.

Q. Should Mid Ulster District Council prepare a local list of non-designated heritage assets....?

Yes

Q.If so are you aware of any non-designated heritage assets that should be considered for local listing?

Collective historic urban settlements (particularly those originating from the 1609 Regional Plan for Ulster) including: Dungannon, Magherafelt, Moneymore, Draperstown, The Moy; and also Cookstown (although from a later period, this is a special and distinctive historic Mid Ulster town).

Key Questions

Q. Should policy allow for the alteration or extension of non-listed vernacular and industrial heritage buildings to address the needs of modern living as a means of ensuring their retention?

Yes provided this is executed sensitively and sympathetically – this can include the use of contemporary architectural expression.

Q. Where demolition consent is granted in an ATC should it always be subject to appropriate arrangements for the redevelopment of the site?

Yes

28.00 Natural Heritage

In terms of architecture and heritage, the Preferred Options Paper acknowledges the importance of listed architecture and the need not to place unsympathetic signage on same as well as the importance of Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs) or more commonly known as 'local listing'. The NDHAs are indeed important as they are valued by the community and they should be included in an audit of Heritage Assets. It is recommended that Mid Ulster District Council conduct a survey of all buildings, monuments, sculpture, public art, landscape and cultural assets in the new council area with a report that assesses the importance of this contextually in terms of Northern Ireland. Equally the collective importance of all Heritage Assets within the new council area requires documentation- this includes groupings of buildings, and may apply to an entire settlement. Other new councils have conducted Heritage Asset audits, for example Mid and East Antrim District Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey are currently undertaking work on this area.

28.01 Regional Strategic Objectives

The SPPS sets out the strategic objectives and policy that must be taken into account in the preparation of the Plan:

- protect, conserve, enhance and restore the abundance, quality, diversity and distinctiveness of the region's natural heritage;
- further sustainable development by ensuring that natural heritage and associated diversity is conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, economic and environmental development;
- assist in meeting international (including European), national and local responsibilities and obligations in the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage;
- contribute to rural renewal and urban regeneration by ensuring the design of developments demonstrates value and respect for their immediate and wider surrounding natural heritage context and setting take account of the role and value of natural heritage in, whilst supporting economic diversification, and contributing to a high quality environment; and
- take actions to reduce our carbon footprint and facilitate

adaptation to climate change.

Strategic advises that the precautionary principle should be applied when considering the impacts of a proposed development on a national or international significant landscape or natural heritage interests.

In addition to the strategic objectives the Mid Ulster LDP objective is:

- to protect and enhance the natural and built environment to achieve and maximise sustainable biodiversity, quality design, enhanced leisure and economic opportunity and promote health and well-being.

28.02 Natural Heritage Strategy

We must pursue our economic and social priorities while simultaneously protecting our environmental assets. This is achieved in part by identifying and designating the best most significant landscape sites, and giving the attainment of their protection equal status with economic and social priorities.

The Council may also identify and designate Sites of Local Conservation Importance (SLNCI) through the LDP process, and protect trees of special value in terms of amenity, history or variety, through the use of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). MUDC's strategy for the protection of our natural heritage is as follows:

Map, identify, and audit the quality and significance of natural heritage features and landscapes. Develop a hierarchy of significance and designate sites on the basis of this. Provide policy for their protection and / or enhancement. Take account of the implications of proposed land use zonings, locations for development and settlement limits on natural heritage features within or adjoining the plan area and its wider setting, and amend where necessary to protect significant natural heritage. Protect and integrate certain identified natural heritage features and landscapes of significance within the natural heritage when zoning sites for development through 'key site requirements'.

Identify and promote green and blue infrastructure where this will add value to the provision, enhancement and connection of open space and habitats to, in and around settlements.

Consider the natural and cultural components of the landscape and promote opportunities for the enhancement or conservation restoration of degraded landscapes, particularly those impacting on affecting communities

Ensure potential **negative** effects on landscape and natural heritage, including the cumulative effect of development are **eliminated** **considered** when preparing LDPs and policies.

Option 1 - Adopt Existing Policy Approach

This option would adopt the existing policy approach which will only grant permission for development that is not likely to have a significant effect on an International Site. Where a development is likely to have a significant effect or doubt remains an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of its conservation objectives would have to be carried out. Only after ascertaining that it would not affect the integrity of the site could it gain planning approval.

A development which could adversely affect the integrity of an International Site will **not** be **only** permitted. **in exceptional circumstances and subject to criteria.**

COMMENT

Allowing for the possibility of a development that could adversely affect the integrity of an International Site being granted permission in exceptional circumstances and subject to unspecified criteria (what would such criteria be) weakens this policy substantially. If something is so important as to be an international site we are at a loss to know the criteria or exceptional circumstances that could take precedence over its protection.

Preferred Option

Option 3 is the preferred option to provide balance of protection for International Sites. There is no evidence to suggest that the existing operational policy is not providing effective protection and introducing a limited SCA will provide an **a** added layer of protection at one of our most important sites at the Lough Shore where there is already a degree of development pressure which we would wish to address. **See recommended amendments to the Option 1 above**

Q. Do you agree an SCA should only be introduced at the Lough Shore of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg?

This appears to be too limited – it occurs there are likely to be other natural heritage landscapes within the Sperrins and the vulnerable landscapes indicated in the Growth Strategy Map. At the two stated loughs, the SCA should be extended inland and cover the entire water

surface and lake bed, and include a policy to protect short and long distance views.

28.03 Policy NH 1 International Designation

The Plan introduces Special Countryside Areas around Lough Neagh and Lough Beg where there will be a presumption against new development other than that which would support the tourist product encapsulated by the natural and built heritage within the SCA. Any such development would be expected to locate at existing town and village settlements - [NOTE: we consider additional new tourism development nodes should not be created/identified] tourism at designated nodes. All such new development at tourism nodes will be required to demonstrate that they are not likely to impact on the integrity of the SCA designation.

Outside of the Special Countryside Areas planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that, either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on a European Site or a listed or proposed Ramsar site.

Where a development proposal is likely to have a significant effect (either alone or in combination) or reasonable scientific doubt remains, the planning authority is required by law to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. Only if it is amended and/or after having ascertained that it no longer will not adversely affects the integrity of the site, might can the planning authority agree to the development - this may involve the planning authority imposing appropriate mitigation measures in the form of planning conditions.

Q. Do you agree with the preferred approach to the protection of Other Habitats, Species and Features of Natural Importance

No – see below

28.04 Policy NH5 Other Habitats Species or Features of Natural Importance (as written this seems too weak)

Proposals for development which are likely to result in the unacceptable adverse impact on, or damage to Other Habitats, Landscape Features, Species or Features of Natural Heritage importance, shall not accord with the LDP unless these can be amended to eliminate the unacceptable adverse impact unless the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the value of the habitat, species or feature. In such cases, appropriate mitigation and/

or compensatory measures will be required.

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining trees where they make a valuable contribution to the wider environment and local amenity. It is important to protect the tree root system as well as the tree canopy – proposals should indicate how they propose to protect tree roots, from foundations, insertion of services and/or compaction due to vehicular construction traffic

28.05 Preferred Option – merge Option 1 with Option 2

A Merger of Options 1 + 2 is the preferred option as the introduction of a new approach which seeks to protect all parts of the parts AONB from insensitive development, including high structures will address the fact that it may be difficult within parts of the Sperrins AONB to accommodate high structures, wind energy in particular, without detriment to the areas cultural, built heritage and natural heritage assets. This policy would also introduce the additional element of assessing the cumulative impact of proposals in line with the SPPS.

We consider there is a There may be a need for additional controls for minerals extraction and high structures, including wind turbines, telecommunications and overhead cables, within the AONB

Q. Do you agree with the preferred approach to the protection of areas of outstanding natural beauty?

In the absence of National Parks in NI our AONBs are our finest natural heritage assets – these need to be protected to the hilt, if we are to be custodians for them for future generations. We consider that policies be strengthened to include protection AONB immediate and wider settings, as well as short and long distance views to and from the AONB to development within and beyond its boundaries – especially from higher land.

Q. Do you agree that a Special Countryside Area (SCA) should be introduced along our Loughshore (See Map Below) to restrict all forms of development

Yes but extend width inland and across the extent of the water and the lake bed – protect short and long distance views [–also see notes elsewhere about the potential for other SCAs within the Sperrins and perhaps also the vulnerable landscapes] (apart from new development within Tourism Nodes) to protect one of our most important and sensitive environmental assets?

28.06 Special Countryside Area map

Special areas of Conservation indicated seem very small. The one Special Protection Area is also minimal in the context of the overall region – we request that the Mid Ulster region carry out a thorough landscape/ natural heritage character appraisal, identifying areas worthy of special conservation and special protection (these designations seem to be something that could merge into one) and may well extend beyond the areas shown on this map.

Q. Do you agree that the use of an SCA and Areas of Constraint on Minerals Development and on High Structures is the correct approach to protecting our most vulnerable landscapes?

These are all tools in the armoury but we consider that this is too simplistic and inadequate– we consider a more rounded policy is possible that would include for protecting against other possible developments, especially those of scale, in vulnerable landscapes –eg. industry, schools, outdoor pursuits centres, apparently positive sounding larger developments such as eco-villages. Given the geographical distances in this area all of which could be sited in non-vulnerable landscapes, preferably within or as an extension to an existing settlement.

28.07 Heritage Assets

To determine the wealth and potential of Heritage Assets in the area it is advisable that Mid Ulster District Council commissions an audit of same throughout the new council area. It is helpful to define heritage assets under one of eight categories to allow for a comprehensive audit to be conducted. The person/team carrying out the audit would also devise a scoring matrix in consultation with Mid Ulster District Council to determine the level of significance of each listed asset. All listed assets would then be scored against established criteria of importance and accessibility. Once the audit, scoring and report are complete, the compiled Heritage Assets can then be put out to community consultation to ensure that local communities, groups and enthusiasts work to promote Heritage Assets of interest in their area in conjunction with Mid Ulster District Council. This shared ownership and responsibility helps increase community confidence, civic stewardship, and public pride in the area. The same consultation approach can be adopted for the assessment and responsibility of care for public art, play parks and public realm. Shared ownership is key to community engagement and collective confidence.

These categories are namely;

1. Residential, commercial and industrial buildings from 1800 including listed buildings; that are currently publically accessible in both public and private hands

2. Manmade 'natural' heritage/bio-diversity where it cross-references to historic sites or features of significance e.g. former estates; gardens; former railways; extractive operations such as mines, coal boats, yards and offices; maritime industries – harbours; boat yards, fishing industry pre- 1950

3. Ecclesiastical sites including churches and churchyards that pre-date 1800, with particular regard to pre-reformation church sites.

4. Sites specifically relating to the unofficial Plantation of Ulster within Mid Ulster District Council area

5. Sites specifically relating to the Normans and the Norman Earldom of Ulster within Mid Ulster District Council area

6. Sites specifically relating to the Scots and Ulster Scots legacy in Mid Ulster District Council area

7. Extant archaeological interest/scheduled sites relating to pre-history in the Mid Ulster District Council area

8. Natural landscape features and wider distinctive landscape settings eg. Lough Neagh; and the landscape panorama visible from the B40; B162 routes; (there will be many others)

9. Creation of a 'local list' of heritage assets is an essential baseline audit collating what exists, and its significance, locally, regionally and nationally. Once this is in place it becomes a firm foundation from which to measure progress on the protection of heritage assets, to maximize protection, and develop strategic, targeted, more effective ways of providing additional protection for buildings and structures that are valued by the local community in the Mid Ulster District Council area.

29.00 TRANSPORTATION

Q. Do you support the approach taken regarding New Transport Schemes, Walking & Cycling? Please explain your answer. You may also suggest any changes

Broadly, yes.

Other possibilities that occur are:

Encourage the creation of bike pick up facilities and surface bike parks (as opposed to car parks).

Support proposals by car pooling businesses whose vehicles are powered by electricity (ie those who hire out cars solely to non car owners) – this encourages car owners whose car usage is very low to take the decision to give up their own car and book a car pool cars off the road.

29.01 Option 2: Blanket Ban - we support this

This option would adopt a blanket ban on development that would prejudice the future re-use of a disused Transport Routes **for their original purpose**. This approach fails to recognise that some railways would have no prospect of coming forward for reuse and have already been prejudiced by piecemeal development. **COMMENT: It occurs that even in these instances the possibility exists to take back ownership of such routes over time to allow for the possibility of rail being re-introduced at some time in the future.**

Q. Do you agree with the approach taken in relation to the protection of public Car Parks?

No,

We respect the need to accommodate cars in towns, and consider giving over valuable development land in urban settlements to surface car parks is unsustainable, socially, environmentally, and economically. It also runs counter to any policies that seek to reduce car usage.

The evolution of surface car parks in our towns results from a combination of Troubles related demolitions, 1960s housing reform and post 1960s traffic engineering schemes. Often these replace formerly cohesive built development. Had these redevelopment contexts not occurred there is a good chance buildings would still be standing where cars stand today. Given the social cohesion, community building price being paid for retaining large open surface car park spaces in towns that are dead at night and weekends; and cause physical disconnection between occupants of adjacent buildings, we consider it is untenable to write into this LDP a policy that reinforces and preserves the present situation in aspic.

The policy could be reworked to encourage the development of multi-storey car parks and a presumption in favour of the redevelopment of surface car parks where proposals will create mixed use developments including mixed tenure residential uses.

29.02 POLICY TRAN3 - ACCESS ON TO PROTECTED ROUTES & OTHER ROUTE WAYS

The Plan promotes connectivity between towns, therefore the creation of a new access onto a protected route will be in conflict with the Plan, except where it includes:

a) Provision of motorway service areas, where there is no existing or approved facilities for 12 miles along that road

COMMENT: Provision of such 'motorway' type services at 12 mile intervals seems excessive in a rural context – these can be very large structures – as written this appears to encourage and give a defacto approval to such a motorway service station even in cases where there is no motorway and something of smaller scale would be more appropriate in size and scale.

b) Development of regional significance, access from a non-motorway standard protected route.

c) Intensification of an existing access where no other access is reasonably obtainable from an existing minor road.

d) Residential development in order to create a quality residential environment within a settlement and create better connectivity and permeability with surrounding urban areas, and other neighbourhoods. does not result in an excessive number of access points.

RATIONALE

In the interests of creating residential development that is better connected to its surrounding urban context the present norm of one access from a new development onto a trunk road contributes to the disconnectivity that fosters social division. We have inherited extremely well connected urban environments in the form of traditional street networks – tried and tested, these are an excellent physical model for supporting the building of real communities and walkability. We request that this LDP lead the way in making possible the re-creation of proper 'street' character interconnected networks.

29.03 MID ULSTER BY PASSES AND NEW TRANSPORT SCHEME

Of by passes not yet in place, the congestion on Cookstown's main street signals a need for an alternative distributor route. There is a real opportunity here to deliver this in a different form ie as a new street

network (with full street character – albeit of 21st century expression). This could be designed to interconnect with the town's existing streets so that the land between it and the existing Cookstown main street (and also on the other side of the new distributor street) allows for the expansion of Cookstown's new developments as mixed use functions built as connected buildings adhering to the building line – as of old.

We request that this possibility be explored and the map adjusted to reflect this possibility.

30.00 Settlements – Towns

General comment applying to all the settlements for which zoning maps have been provided.

We cannot support the present proposed zoning maps for any of the towns.

The proposed town zoning maps indicate the post 1950s 2D segregated landuse zoning approach – we consider that this carving up of functions into their own separate areas is a significant factor underlying the disconnected and socially lifeless character of so much new development in Northern Irish towns, and many others well beyond this region.

This LDP offers a golden opportunity to depart from this failed approach and favour instead the possibility of creating multi-disciplinary urban design led frameworks comprising development that creates horizontally and vertically mixed use functions: particularly residential, and also all the other uses one would expect to find in a provincial town, secondary town or village.

As was the case pre-1950 such frameworks would create footprints of new urban streets, and blocks, into which forthcoming connected built development and open spaces could be accommodated – all adhering to established common street frontage building lines. Such an approach is used extensively in other parts of the UK, ROI and mainland Europe eg. as evidenced by Sligo Borough Council's approach to the mid 1990s development of Sligo's backlands (which

turned the town around to take advantage of its relationship to the Garavogue River).

This urban design lead approach is a very positive way of making places that are attractive for living, working and visiting, socially vibrant and economically thriving.

Gordon Clarke **MAG Expert Advisor**

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'Seamus Heaney HomePlace, Bellaghy' published in *Perspective* Nov-Dec 2016 by Marianne O'Kane Boal

The 1.8 acre site of an RUC police station in Bellaghy has been completely transformed to create the £4.25m Seamus Heaney HomePlace; an arts and literary centre exploring the life, literature and inspirations of the Nobel prize-winning poet. The project has been driven and mainly funded by Mid-Ulster Council. Bellaghy in Co. Derry was one of the first planned towns in Ireland, built on land owned by Vintners, a London company. It is home to the seventeenth century Bellaghy Bawn which was the previous site of an exhibition on Seamus Heaney. The name of the centre 'HomePlace' might seem to suggest the poet's actual homestead itself but this title is part of something larger. The intention is to make the centre the nucleus of a trail exploring important places in Heaney's life and poetry. It will, for instance, make Heaney's grave a 'literary landmark like Drumcliffe churchyard...It always surprises me when I go to Bellaghy that it's so real, because the names and places he wrote about have reverberated so far beyond. The achievement of Heaney is that he has changed what that place means and what it stands for, and he's done it forever. It may have been magical to local people, but Heaney's gift was to make it magical to the rest of the world.' (Prof Fran Brearton, Director of the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University in Belfast, *The Irish Times*, 18 Dec 2015). This centre is a landmark, the first of its kind in the country; As Pól Ó Conghaile notes; 'HomePlace is a quality project with no obvious precedent in Ireland – museums and exhibitions devoted to Yeats in Dublin and Sligo, Kavanagh in Inniskeen, or Joyce and Shaw in the capital, do not enjoy purpose-built spaces. (*Irish Independent*, 30 September 2016).

The HomePlace building makes a strong statement in the small rural village. It provides a different experience for the visitor depending on the approach. When entering Bellaghy from Castledawson, the eye is caught by the two storey form, conceived along the lines of the vernacular barn. Conversely when approaching from Ballaghy village itself there are a series of single storey massed forms that directly connect with the scale and vocabulary of the main street of the village. There is a Presbyterian Church directly opposite the new Centre and the low-lying vocabulary of this form is echoed somewhat in the massing. Coleraine-based W & M Given Architects, established in 1888, were responsible for the building. As Project Architect Philip Hutchinson explains; 'The design draws on the built heritage of the area, giving the site a direct relationship with the village street front and public open space. The composition of the building forms is a contemporary

response to farm settlement clusters common throughout the South Derry area. [It is composed of shapes] that make up the traditional homestead such as the barn, the house, the sheds, the silo...The building is essentially in four parts- the exhibition, the performance space, the concourse and the education resource areas'.

In terms of materials, there is a range employed, particularly on the two-storey exhibition space. Philip Hutchinson comments on the material selection; 'We looked to primarily retain and incorporate the existing random rubble stone wall into the external finish as far as possible to symbolically show how a site which was once a fortress in the community was now peeling back the barriers and inviting the public in'. This has provided a very open and accessible landscaped space which has been welcomed by the local community. In terms of the two levels; 'The split level site offered us the opportunity to wrap the old stonework around the lower half of the exhibition space. Originally we wanted to explore materials which had evolving characteristics such as western red cedar and initial proposals were to clad the entire exhibition structure in copper. This was rejected by planning authority despite our best efforts and a more 'sympathetic' palette comprising western red cedar and zinc cladding was agreed upon'.

The internal configuration of the building is concisely arranged around the central circulation device of the stairs. Conceived in the externally expressed 'silo form' the generous spiral staircase acts as a narrative device to allow the Heaney exhibition to gently unfold on two levels. The permanent exhibition entitled 'Man & Boy' is based on a simple but effective premise; an exploration of the life of the poet, his love of literature and reading and his inspiration. Anyone who knows the work of Heaney will be familiar with aspects of the exhibition and this awareness increases the pleasure of viewing. It is a timeless exhibition in its composition; one can listen to poems on an audio wand, read by Heaney himself and explore different elements of the exhibition on repeated visits. This is a very important aspect of the centre that it gives the visitor a desire to return and view the exhibition again. This welcome dimension is not often achieved in permanent exhibitions, where frequently a single visit might be seen to suffice. It is due to the human scale, the design by Tandem and also to the interactive elements. An enthusiast would never tire of listening to Heaney read his poems. Beyond the interpretive tablets that can be explored throughout, there are also timeless interactive gems such as small square pictures located at various points in the

exhibition where children (and adults) can create rubbings of familiar imagery from Heaney's work; for example, blackberries and the poet's school desk.

Heaney's Attic Study is reproduced in the first floor of the interpretive galleries. Heaney wrote about the beauty of natural light in this space at his home in his poem 'The Skylight': 'You were the one for skylights [...] when the slates came off, extravagant / Sky entered and held surprise wide open.' One wonders why in this first floor space, where the internal roof scape and services are exposed, the architects did not include skylights in the design to illuminate the upstairs space. Heaney was all about light and nature and these spaces, particularly the excellent 'Creative Corner' and the reader response area would greatly have benefitted from more natural light. The architects intended, however that natural light be 'proportionate to the function of the spaces... Audio visual was still a priority for this area at early design stage and a requirement of the interpretive designers. We wanted the impact of the natural light to be as effective as possible when moving from the first floor exhibition to the landscape viewing area (glass projection); almost like the curtains have been drawn back for the first time in the morning'. Indeed this device works well, akin to a contemporary bay window where visitors can look out on the landscape that inspired Heaney in his poetry.

In terms of building area, the Seamus Heaney Homeplace is 2251 sqm and the Youth Centre Annex Building Area is 250 sqm. It is remarkable when considering the success of the final product that the build cost including all site works was £1,620 per sqm, which is a typical community centre budget. Mid Ulster Council, the architects and all involved are to be commended on this important centre of legacy in Bellaghy. As the poet Michael Longley has predicted it will be a living resource for the area and "will become an echo chamber for the poet's beautiful lines."