

# Think Regionally - Act Locally

A Guide for Community and Voluntary  
Groups to the Regional Development  
Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025

Shaping  
our FUTURE

cta

Community Technical Aid

# **A Guide for Community and Voluntary Groups to the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025**

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# I. Introduction

This guide to the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 (Shaping Our Future) has been prepared by Community Technical Aid with the support of the Department for Regional Development.

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) was responsible for producing the Regional Development Strategy following an extensive consultation period from 1997 to 2001. CTA played a pivotal role in this consultation as part of a consortium which undertook widespread consultation with all stakeholders across the region.

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) underwent an in-depth preparation and consultation process and was approved by the Northern Ireland Assembly in September 2001. Also known as Shaping Our Future, information on the Strategy and how to access a copy is available on the DRD website:

[www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture)

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this guide to the Regional Development Strategy is to:

- introduce the RDS to community and voluntary groups so they can become familiar with its functions and relevance to them, as well as signposting them to accessing the Strategy document;
- develop greater awareness of how the RDS can benefit community and voluntary groups by highlighting those sections of the Strategy which most closely relate to community and voluntary group activity;
- encourage community and voluntary groups to make links between their aims and those of the RDS; and
- provide examples of how the RDS, whilst a regional strategy, can be applied locally and can assist groups in a wide variety of scenarios, ranging from addressing local needs to responding to major planning initiatives in their area.

### 3. Thinking Regionally - Key Elements of the RDS

The RDS is a regional policy document which goes beyond the traditional land use planning boundaries and has many local applications. While seeking in overall terms to guide the future development of the region up to 2025 and helping to meet the needs of a fast-growing region with a population of almost two million, the Strategy places a strong emphasis on social cohesion, sustainable development and economic progress.

Through its Spatial Development Strategy (the core element of the RDS) the aim is to promote balanced, integrated and sustainable growth across the network of cities, towns and wider rural areas to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all parts of the region. This can only be achieved by a combination of both strategic and local actions.

The RDS is a wide-ranging policy document which has a statutory impact on the work of all government departments and agencies and can thus be called upon by community and voluntary groups in a variety of situations.

The strategies and policies in the RDS are material considerations which may take precedence over existing development plans. The weight to be afforded to the RDS, the development plan and to any other material considerations will be a matter for judgement and may vary from case to case. Additionally, all planning policy and development plans prepared must be “in general conformity” with the RDS.

The RDS seeks to connect a diverse range of government planning processes including transport, housing, economic development, regeneration and infrastructure development.

#### 3.1 Purpose of the RDS

The stated purpose of the RDS is to provide:

*“an overarching strategic framework to help achieve a strong spatially balanced economy, a healthy environment and an inclusive society.”*

Groups which, for example, are arguing for a fair share of economic investment in the west of the region, or trying to protect the natural environment, or making the case for renewal of a disadvantaged area will, along with many others, find the RDS a valuable source of information and a useful ally in many of their endeavours. Local Strategy Partnerships are an important feature of the new approach to integrated planning and they will especially look to the RDS in the development of their Integrated Local Strategies and in making best use of the Peace II Programme funds.

## 3.2 Guiding Principles

The RDS rests on four guiding principles:

- a people- and community-focused approach;
- achieving a more cohesive society;
- achieving competitiveness; and
- an integrated approach to future development of the region.

Within these principles there is a series of commitments which are particularly relevant to community and voluntary groups.

Under the first principle, for example, a people- and community-focused approach will be achieved by seeking to meet the needs of all people, including young people, children, minority ethnic communities and disabled people.



Community involvement has been a central theme in the RDS preparation process and one which will continue as part of the process of implementation, monitoring and review. Feedback on its scope and usefulness will be actively sought from communities trying to use the Strategy in the course of their work and, if necessary, changes may be made to the housing indicator targets, the rate of implementation and the policies which are prepared in accordance with the Strategy, for example Planning Policy Statements.

The guiding principles are taken forward through a number of Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs) which include a number of supporting actions illustrating how the objectives will be met. These SPGs are listed at Appendix 1 and include for example SPG-SRC 1 which aims to strengthen and extend European and world-wide linkages and SPG-HOU 1 which aims to manage housing growth in response to changing housing need.

The Strategy will help to foster links with neighbouring areas, capturing the potential benefits flowing from cross-border and inter-regional co-operation and enhanced East-West linkages. For example, Strategic Planning Guideline SRC 2 aims to increase links with neighbouring

regions and capitalise on trans-regional development opportunities. This includes encouraging cross-border networks of economic co-operation and enterprise; co-operating with neighbouring Scottish regions in relation to economic development and trade, joint tourism projects and energy links; and developing a cohesive network of cross-border and trans-regional infrastructure.

### **3.3 A Living Strategy**

The RDS is a living and evolving document. It is not a typical statutory document in that it has been designed to meet the growing needs of communities across the region. The intention is, through regular reviews and annual reports, to continue to track what is important in the region and what is needed at the local level to ensure that we grow and develop in a balanced, equitable and sustainable way.

In terms of creating a cohesive society the RDS recognises the linkages between fairness and inclusivity and equitable access to assets for all people.

It also recognises the strong inter-dependence between all parts of the region and the need to reflect their differing needs to achieve a sustainable balance of development across the region.

The RDS is particularly supportive of the need to respect divisions within our society and to be supportive of community cohesion.

The Strategy envisages competitiveness being achieved by improving accessibility and communications throughout the Region and by investing in the education, employability and skills level of the whole population.

By recognising the relevance of these principles to the community and voluntary sector, groups can begin to use them to underpin and strengthen their arguments in many aspects of their work and group activities.

From time to time DoE and DRD will jointly publish Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) which will provide planning guidance to assist with the implementation of the RDS. These PPSs will flow directly from the vision, spatial strategy and strategic guidelines contained in the RDS. They are one of the key mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategy.

### 3.4 Guidelines

The RDS applies its overall purpose and principles through a series of strategic policy guidelines for the **Belfast Metropolitan Area**, the **North West** and **Rural Northern Ireland**. These can be seen in the Spatial Development Strategy diagram below:



The Strategy is centrally based on a compact dynamic metropolitan core centred on Belfast; a strong north-west regional centre based in Derry/Londonderry; and a vibrant rural Northern Ireland with balanced development spread across a network of the main towns which will have a strategic role as centres of employment and services for urban and rural communities.

One of the **Belfast Metropolitan Area** guidelines for example is:

*“To promote an urban renaissance throughout the Belfast Metropolitan Area”*

The RDS requires this guideline to be applied through a series of actions including the identification of strategic locations for employment in north and west Belfast and elsewhere. As for all urban centres in Northern Ireland, a brownfield housing target of 60% has been set. In addition areas of high scenic value around the Metropolitan Area will be protected, including seeking to keep hill slopes and skylines free from urban development.

The Strategy’s key thrust for the Belfast Metropolitan Area is to enable it

to realise its potential for future growth and development. It is envisaged that this will happen as the Belfast Metropolitan Area takes on a reinforced role as regional capital and focus of administration, commerce, specialised services and cultural amenities. Through implementation of the Strategy it is also envisaged that Belfast will have a stronger role as an international city; that there will be an important complementary role for Belfast's boroughs and suburban districts; that a revitalised metropolitan area will have development focused on existing local centres and a strong emphasis on brownfield housing; that areas of social need will be regenerated; that the environmental setting of the metropolitan area will be protected; and that it will have a modern, integrated and inclusive transport system.

One of the **North West** guidelines is:

*“To strengthen the role of Londonderry as the regional city and hub for the North West”*

The RDS requires this guideline to be applied through a series of actions including sustaining urban regeneration measures which target social need and community disadvantage across the city, promotion of the city as a major tourist destination and gateway and improved public transport especially for bus priority, park'n'ride facilities, traffic management in the central area and pedestrian connections between bus and rail stations.



The key thrust for the North West is to strengthen the role of Derry/ Londonderry as the regional city and transport hub of the North West and reinforcing the complementary employment services roles of Limavady and Strabane.

In addition the Strategy seeks to encourage economic growth and industrial development to meet the employment needs of a fast-growing population; and to enhance the city

through continuing regeneration and sensitive riverside development together with the establishment of a unique city tourism market based on its reputation as a historic city in the network of European walled cities.

One of the guidelines for **Rural Northern Ireland** is:

*“To create and sustain a living countryside with a high quality of life for all its residents”*

The RDS requires this guideline to be applied through a series of actions including encouragement of the development of balanced rural communities by promoting housing choice and affordable housing in rural areas, helping rural communities to develop strategies for economic and social regeneration, with a particular focus on the sustainable and equitable development of disadvantaged rural areas, and continuing to develop a partnership approach to tackling complex rural issues based on community participation.

The key thrust for Rural Northern Ireland is supporting the development of a strong diversified and competitive rural economy served by the Regional Strategic Transportation Network; developing a living and working countryside which recognises the unique rural character of the region; promoting the continuing renewal and revitalisation of towns and villages in Rural Northern Ireland; improving the accessibility of the rural community to employment services and regional amenities; and managing and enhancing the natural and built heritage in rural areas.

## 4. Acting Locally - Four Scenarios

This section, by looking at four typical scenarios applicable to community and voluntary groups, illustrates how a group could use the RDS and its guidelines to help it if faced with a similar situation. The first two examples examine the steps that might be taken by a community or voluntary group involved in the preparation of a community plan for its area - one in the rural context, the other urban.



The third example refers to a group hypothetically reacting to a major housing development which has the potential to radically change the nature of its local village.

The fourth example examines the steps involved when a Local Strategy Partnership is in the process of preparing an Integrated Local Strategy for the local council area and how the Partnership can make reference to the RDS and other statutory documents in the process.

## 4.1 Local Community Planning

Local community planning refers to community groups instigating community action plans on their own behalf with or without support from implementers (usually public sector agencies). Planning exercises of this nature are often undertaken to address urgent issues such as unemployment or to act as a catalyst to further development, such as the need for a second phase of community regeneration.

A recent example involved the production of a five year integrated local community plan for a village on the edge of Belfast. The plan was prepared in close consultation with the local community group and the village community with input and support from public sector agencies including Belfast City Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Roads Service, the Planning Service and local developers.



Key actions contained in the plan include the production of a housing development concept plan for the village which will encourage developers to design and build housing in the village in an integrated way and in consultation with the local community. A more ‘hands-on’ action will involve the community group and residents setting up a kerbside litter collection and recycling scheme. Whilst not statutory, this plan and delivery of the key actions for housing, transport, community facilities and

leisure, education, training and employment, environment and health will hopefully result in a regenerated and revitalised community in an economically and socially declining area.

## 4.2 Community Planning in the Rural Context

A community group in the North West of the region has been in existence for three years operating with voluntary members and with one paid part-time co-ordinator. Funding for this post comes from a charitable trust and will expire in 18 months. To date the group has concentrated its activities on community clean-up and environmental awareness days, small scale local tourism initiatives and road safety campaigns. The issues of concern to the local community have changed in recent months to the extent that many within the group (and the wider community) believe it is necessary to prepare and produce a local community action plan to which all stakeholders can subscribe and contribute.

The issues facing the community are presented below together with an analysis of their relevance to the RDS, the arguments the community group can make on the basis of this relevance and, by drawing reference to other documents and plans, which stakeholders could potentially be involved in their action plan.

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Housing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for social housing units in the local area.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-HOU 6.1</b> - Provide a housing choice by achieving a mix of housing tenures and types to help create more balanced communities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for affordability in the local housing market.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proliferation of second homes and holiday homes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-HOU 6.4</b> - Identify areas under pressure from second home developments.</p>

The group could refer to the RDS's Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs) detailed above in making its case for action. The arguments would centre around the fact that the RDS enshrines the need for the provision of housing choice and integrated housing to help create balanced communities and that affordability (HOU 6.4) is a key issue which the RDS recognises a community or settlement, particularly in a "hot spot" area, may be facing.

The range of stakeholders involved in this housing debate could include the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Local Strategy Partnership and the Planning Service (especially with reference to the emerging

Northern Area Plan 2016 and the need for specific planning policies to deal with these issues).

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Transport</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for an adequate rural transport system.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-TRAN 2</b> (and 2.1) - To extend travel choice for all sections of the community by enhancing public transport (related to <b>SPG - RNI 4</b>).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more walking and cycling opportunities in a safer environment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-TRAN 4.2</b> - Give greater priority to encouraging more walking and cycling.</p>

The group could refer to the above sections of the RDS in arguing the case for a better, more accessible and more comprehensive rural transport system and the need for more walking and cycling facilities in the area. The RDS Strategic Planning Guidelines, as outlined, give support to the arguments which could be presented by the group to the Roads Service, Translink, Northern Ireland Railways, the Local Strategy Partnership, the local council and the Community Transport Association. Reference could also be made to the Regional Transportation Strategy 2012 and the Area Plan which refers to the need for an integrated accessible transport system and for more walking and cycling facilities.

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Tourism</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism development has grown to the detriment of the local natural environment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-ECON 7</b> - To promote a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible destruction of important natural habitats and sensitive coastlines.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-ENV 1.1</b> - Sustain and enhance biodiversity.  <b>SPG-ENV 1.2</b> - Protect and manage areas designated for their scientific interest.  <b>SPG-ENV 2.1</b> - Conserve the coast of Northern Ireland.</p>

There are many references and Strategic Planning Guidelines in the RDS which could assist the group in making strong arguments on the need to

maintain a positive balance in favour of the environment in the face of local growth in the tourism sector.

These arguments could be presented to a wide range of stakeholders including Environment and Heritage Service, the Roads Service and the Local Strategy Partnership. Supplementary reference could be made to Northern Ireland Tourist Board documents: “Tourism in Northern Ireland - A Sustainable Approach” and “A Strategy for the Development of Tourism in Northern Ireland,” as well as the appropriate Landscape Character Assessments prepared on behalf of Environment and Heritage Service.

### 4.3 Community Planning in the Urban Context

A community group in East Belfast has been struggling for a number of years to combat the problems facing the community. Large areas of social housing have become run down and squalid. There is a limited transport service because of ongoing street violence and attacks on buses. Green space and environmental areas are scarce and the community has higher than average numbers of people claiming sickness benefit and disability living allowance.



Over the last decade the number of local employers has been dwindling and only one small scale manufacturing firm remains. This employs 15 local people who have been with the firm for over 20 years. Many of them are now reaching retirement age and the owner of the company fears that the business will have to close through lack of available local skills and knowledge. Roads in the area are heavily congested particularly at peak times as it is a main thoroughfare out of the city.

The community group called a public meeting and held a series of information gathering sessions in the local community centre. Neighbourhood surveys were also undertaken with residents and the information gathered was compiled into a report. An action plan could be formulated following publication of this report. In it the community group could identify the policies and guidelines within the RDS of relevance to each issue (see boxes over) and the appropriate stakeholders for each action point.

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Housing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large numbers of public housing units have been vandalised and abandoned.</li> <li>• There are little or no facilities for residents on the housing estate.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-BMA 2.2</b> - To promote the physical renewal of the Belfast Metropolitan Area.</p> <p><b>SPG-BMA 2.3</b> - To enhance the quality of the urban environment throughout the Metropolitan area.</p> <p><b>SPG-HOU 4</b> - To promote a drive to provide more housing within existing areas.</p> <p><b>SPG-HOU 4.2</b> - To encourage urban renaissance in the cities and towns of Northern Ireland by promoting a concerted housing drive within existing built up areas based on the principle of promoting imaginative, safe and attractive housing schemes by applying the principles and standards in “Creating Places - Achieving Quality in Residential Developments” in order to create attractive surroundings and places to live.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed tenure housing areas could help overcome social problems.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-HOU 6.1</b> - Provide a housing choice by achieving a mix of housing tenures and house types which will help create more balanced communities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupiers of houses on the peaceline section of the estate feel particularly vulnerable and would rather move away.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-HOU 6.3</b> - Create quality built environments which contribute to the achievement of safe, complete and balanced communities for people to live in.</p>

The group can refer to the Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs) outlined above when trying to engage key stakeholders in the local housing debate. The RDS clearly supports the community’s need for a renewed housing area and a quality housing environment where residents can live in integration and safety.

The stakeholders involved in the housing actions might include the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, East Belfast Partnership, Belfast City Council, private developers and representatives from Housing Associations.

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Environment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for green spaces and areas where children can play.</li> <li>• Pollution levels are high and large numbers of children have asthma.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-ENV 6</b> - To create healthier living environments and to support healthy lifestyles.</p> <p><b>SPG-ENV 6.1</b> - To improve air quality.</p> <p><b>SPG-ENV 7.1</b> - To promote recreation as a basis for good health for all and to especially contribute to meeting the needs of children and young people for healthy physical activities.</p>

Reference to these issues within the RDS support the group in its belief that the community and its residents are in urgent need of help with providing a cleaner, greener environment. This is where the RDS goes beyond the traditional land use remit of other planning documents. The RDS recognises that society needs much more than land and buildings to grow and expand. By referring to the importance of air quality and the opportunity to follow a healthier lifestyle, the Strategy is sending a clear message about the future and what communities can and should expect in terms of quality of life.

The action points emanating from these arguments could apply to the council, the local partnership, the local health trust and other local health care providers.

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Employment and Education</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local employment opportunities have declined rapidly.</li> <li>• Unemployment levels are rising.</li> <li>• The remaining local manufacturing firm is under threat of closure.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-ECON 2</b> - To exploit the economic development potential of the Key Transport Corridors (given its location within a key Metropolitan Transport Corridor).</p> <p><b>SPG-BMA 2.1</b> - Promote urban economic development at key locations throughout the Metropolitan area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of young people in the area leaving school without qualifications is increasing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-ECON 6</b> - To improve employability through lifelong learning and personal development.</p>

The RDS is very clear on the need to support the economy throughout the region and especially in particular parts of the city. As this community, whilst located in a declining inner city area in East Belfast, is located along a key Metropolitan Transport Corridor, huge potential exists for growth and rejuvenation of the local economy. The community group can draw on these strategic issues and arguments when making the case for the need for economic growth and investment in the local area.

The RDS also recognises that strong economic growth and competitiveness depends to a large extent on the skills and employability of the workforce and on a better connection between the worlds of work and education. It places an emphasis therefore on acquiring new skills and on raising educational standards. It recognises that education and training are critical to reversing socio-economic decline and increasing the chances of long-term unemployed people finding employment. One of the key methods of doing this is identified as the need to create a framework of opportunities for people to learn and lifting the barriers that prevent people from taking up these opportunities. This is linked to quality of life and is a key indicator of social equity and balance.

The community group in our scenario can use these references in the RDS and help to consolidate the actions of key stakeholders. These stakeholders could include local training and employment providers, local schools and colleges, further education colleges, local employers, representatives from the Department of Employment and Learning and the Department for Social Development.

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Roads, Traffic and Transport</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congestion on the two main roads which go through the area is increasing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-BMA 3</b> - To develop and enhance the Metropolitan Transport Corridor Network.</p> <p><b>SPG-BMA 3.3</b> - To balance inner and outer accessibility</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of traffic accidents is rising.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-BMA 5.2</b> - Extend the range of traffic management measures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vandalism and attacks on buses are affecting the quality and level of public transport service provided.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-BMA 4</b> - To improve the public transport service in the Belfast Metropolitan Area.</p> <p><b>SPG-BMA 4.1</b> - Develop a bus strategy centred on the MTCs and responsive to the wider pattern of demand.</p>



The case for an efficient, safe, accessible and integrated transport system throughout the BMA is well documented in the RDS. The Strategy especially identifies key transport corridors (or MTCs as they are known in the Belfast Metropolitan Area) which are central to the roads and transport issue in the BMA. This community in East Belfast is located along one of these MTCs and can therefore derive benefit from the fact that roads and public transport services in the locality need to be upgraded and improved. Key actions will need to be taken to ensure that this happens with the Roads Service, Translink, the council, East Belfast Partnership and the community all playing their part.

## 4.4 Community Opposition to a Proposed Housing Development

This example is set within a small coastal village which has experienced considerable change in recent years with most of the existing houses having been sold and all of the new developments having been purchased as holiday accommodation.

Older houses have become run down and neglected; the two local shops including the post office have closed; school children now have to travel 15 miles to their nearest school as the local primary school closed two years ago; most workers have to travel 20 miles or more to get to work; and local roads regularly flood from an over-used and over-stretched sewage and water system.

Local community groups have come together to prepare a community plan with funding from the Community Fund. A door-to-door survey was completed and meetings held with the local district council, the Local Strategy Partnership and the Planning Service Divisional Planning Office. The Planning Service told the groups that the existing Area Plan was prepared at a time when the village was not experiencing these problems and will be replaced by a new Area Plan in three years' time (which will apply the Regional Development Strategy at a local level). The Planning Service also explained that there will be a public and community consultation process to inform the new Area Plan.

Before the community plan is completed an application for planning permission for 150 new holiday homes and a caravan park is submitted by a developer. A well attended public meeting convened to discuss the results of the door-to-door survey becomes dominated by residents' reaction to this application. The meeting agrees that the application is not in keeping with the emerging community plan in that it would: significantly alter the character of the village; not help the community to develop in a sustainable way; create social divisions between the existing residents and owners of the holiday homes; inflate house prices and make it more difficult for local people to stay in the area; and put impossible demands on the current infrastructure. The meeting asks the community groups to:

- seek a meeting with the developer to discuss the application and try to involve him/her in the community planning process;
- meet with local elected representatives to seek their support;
- meet with the Planning Service to discuss the application within the context of the forthcoming Area Plan.

At the request of the district council the Planning Service organises a site meeting for elected representatives, the community groups and the developer. The council representatives argue that the application should be considered ‘premature’ because a new Area Plan was due. However the Planning Service says this is not possible because, although a new Plan is due, the process of preparing it has not begun. The application thus has to be considered within the context of the existing Area Plan and the procedures for processing an application will be followed and a decision made in the normal way.

The council representatives also argue that this is an application which raises important policy issues and should be referred to the Planning Service Management Board and/or declared under Article 31 as a large proposal having a significant impact on the whole of the area.

The developer argues that the development will bring tourists and investment to the area and is in keeping with the longer term aims of the community plan.

The groups point to other coastal villages which, in their view, have been over-developed in this way and have not benefited socially or economically. They express regret that the developer did not consult with the community prior to submitting the application but recognise that the RDS guidance would seem to offer support to the proposal.

Following the site meeting the groups study the Regional Development Strategy to identify the linkages between the local issues and problems and the Strategy’s aims. These are shown below:

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Existing Housing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local people are leaving the village as house prices rise.</li> <li>• Public housing has been sold and people on the waiting list will have to be re-housed in other villages and towns.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-HOU 6</b> - To encourage the development of balanced local communities.</p> <p><b>SPG-HOU 1</b> - Provide a housing choice by achieving a mix of housing tenures and house types which will help create more balanced communities.</p>

Issue	RDS Relevance
<b>Proposed Housing Development</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150 houses cannot be accommodated as these will double the size of the village.</li> <li>• The proposed scheme is out of keeping with the character of the village.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-HOU 2</b> - To direct and manage future housing growth to achieve more sustainable patterns of residential development.</p> <p><b>SPG-HGI 6</b> - Major housing development proposals relating to the expansion of a village or small rural settlement will be assessed in terms of suitability etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tourist complex and caravan park will significantly change village life and result in a further deterioration of services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-ECON 7</b> - To promote a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure.</p> <p><b>SPG-ECON 9.4</b> - To sustain and enhance the traditional seaside resorts.</p> <p><b>SPG-ENV 2</b> - To protect and manage the Northern Ireland coastline.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads, water and sewage systems cannot cope at present and without improvements will not be able to sustain the planned housing and tourist development.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-ENV 3.3</b> - To conserve the character of cities, towns and villages.</p> <p><b>SPG-RNI 2</b> - To create and sustain a living countryside with a high quality of life for all its residents.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holiday home owners contribute little to the local economy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPG-HOU 6.4</b> - Identify in development plans settlements and areas under pressure from second home development.</p>

The groups conclude that the RDS provides some supporting statements for their views through its Strategic Planning Guidelines and Key Principles.

The groups also conclude that the village should be assessed for suitability for expansion using the criteria set down by the RDS under SPG-HGI 6. This Guideline states, for example, that expanded settlements will only be considered where a housing capacity study shows that there is a significant shortfall in the provision of housing land or where the expanded settlement will not simply function as a dormitory settlement. The Guideline also suggests that expansion proposals should show how necessary infrastructure, including schools, healthcare, transport and open space, will be provided and financed and that overall there are demonstrable benefits for the community.

The community can also refer to SPG-ENV4 and to four of the six Local Development Guidelines (**identity, vitality, proximity** and **quality**). Under **identity** the community can argue that the distinctiveness of the village is under threat by the proposed development. Under **vitality** it could refer to the need to care for the physical fabric of the village through re-use of older buildings and use of previously-developed land rather than greenfield development on the scale proposed. Under **proximity** reference could be made to the need for the development to be compatible and to extend local community choice and opportunity in relation to jobs, commercial facilities and services and that the proposal does not offer this at present. Finally, under **quality** the community could object to the proposal on the grounds that the development does not foster an imaginative resource-efficient quality of design which respects the existing rural character, local tradition and human scale.

Looking at the tourism implications, the RDS emphasises that tourism proposals should be sustainable. Thus, for example, the RDS envisages tourism proposals which care for the environment generally, protect unspoilt coastline landscapes and promote local character. The groups might make the case that because this village is an established seaside resort along an important stretch of the region's coastline, a sensitive and imaginative approach needs to be taken to its development and expansion and that a new caravan site does not meet this criterion.

In terms of the built environment the RDS highlights the need to conserve the character of cities, towns and villages (ENV 3.3) by controlling and managing development within settlements with an emphasis on maintaining local identity and a sense of place as well as encouraging the retention of locally important buildings and features.



The rural aspects of life in this village could be highlighted with the RDS's focus on helping to maintain a vibrant and self-generating rural community, especially by supporting the continued development of long established rural communities and by recognising the strong sense of belonging and sense of place in rural areas. The community could argue that this proposed development would detract from the

sense of place in the village and could lead to the creation of a village which could be found anywhere in Northern Ireland with no sense of uniqueness or individuality.

Through presentation of the issues and problems posed by the proposed housing development, the residents and the community could work closely with the local Council to usefully participate in the planning process and make a valuable contribution to a local decision making process which affects their future.

This would be strengthened by the community plan which should present positive proposals for development of the village. It is possible that further discussions with the developer will lead to a proposal more in keeping with the community's vision. Finally, the groups should also concentrate on participating fully in the preparation of the new Area Plan to ensure that it sets a sustainable framework for the future of the area.

## **4.5 Preparation of an Integrated Local Strategy by a Local Strategy Partnership**

Preparation of Integrated Local Strategies by Local Strategy Partnerships under Priority 3 of the Peace II Programme is becoming a dominant feature in the local community scene across the region. Each Local Strategy Partnership (LSP) is required to prepare an Integrated Local Strategy (ILS).

Communities are becoming more adept at identifying their own needs and playing key roles in the development of projects and programmes that address these needs. This integrated planning approach has been evolving over a number of years and is central to the government's thinking on agencies, stakeholders, communities, councils and individuals engaging in collaborative decision making and tackling key issues such as jobs, education, health, crime and the environment.

Integrated planning therefore provides an opportunity to improve the quality of life for local people. By working together there is a more equitable spread of sustainable growth, public services work better, all sectors play their part and local communities can make effective contributions to improve their neighbourhood or local area.

The RDS has an important role to play here. It is one of the most important tools and supporting documents that LSPs can use when preparing an ILS as it provides an integrated approach to the future development needs of the region. By holistically assessing the region's social, economic and environmental needs and charting the way forward for everyone involved in the delivery of actions that will meet these needs, the RDS is a document which will assist Local Partnerships in the design and execution of local actions that will move their area forward.

The information typically contained in an ILS is described below with an assessment of the references that can be made to the RDS and its usefulness in the preparation of such a Strategy.

Theme	Action	RDS Relevance
<b>Economy</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance area's skills base to support inward investment and growth.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop skills base for example by encouraging community business sector initiatives and by agreeing a local strategy for the social economy.</p>	<p><b>Guiding Principles</b> refer to achieving competitiveness by investing in intelligence and improving accessibility and communications.</p> <p>This economic theme also links with the Strategy's reference to Strengthening Regional Cohesion in a Global Context, for example:</p> <p><b>SPG-SRC 1</b> - To strengthen and extend European and world-wide linkages (<b>SPG-SRC 1.3</b> - Strengthening external transport linkages).</p> <p><b>SPG-SRC 2</b> - To increase links with neighbouring regions and capitalise on trans-regional development opportunities (<b>SPG-SRC 2.1</b> - To encourage cross-border networks of economic co-operation and enterprise).</p>

Theme	Action	RDS Relevance
<b>Health and Community Well-being</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequalities in health care.</li> <li>• Teenage pregnancies.</li> <li>• Suicide.</li> <li>• Effect of the environment and housing on health.</li> <li>• Need to enhance and provide for community safety.</li> </ul>	<p>To promote health and community well-being in the area and support an integrated health and social care service which is affordable and accessible to all and for example to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promote young people's health;</li> <li>- provide information on health and the environment; and</li> <li>- address community safety issues using practical projects and programmes including the use of education and information.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Guiding Principles</b> refer to a people- and community-focused approach which is about meeting the needs of everyone in society and creating healthy and supportive environments which help to maintain good health and social well-being.</p> <p><b>SPG-ENV 6</b> is of particular relevance as it aims to create healthier living environments and to support healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>Similarly <b>SPG-ENV 7.1</b> refers to the promotion of recreation as a basis of good health for all, especially in contributing to meeting the needs of children and young people for healthy physical activities.</p>

Theme	Action	RDS Relevance
<b>Social Economy</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to combat the difficulties currently faced by community and voluntary groups as public sector and European funding declines.</li> <li>• History of poor economic growth and need for creation of permanent jobs in the community sector.</li> <li>• Weak community infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop and consolidate the local social economy infrastructure through the provision of support initiatives which will equip both new and existing social economy enterprises with the necessary skills, knowledge and training to run sustainable social economy enterprises by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- establishing a business advisory service for the social economy sector;</li> <li>- providing study visits;</li> <li>- assisting with feasibility studies, economic appraisals and business plans.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Guiding Principles</b> refer to achieving a more cohesive society based on equality of opportunity and targeting social need and a partnership approach which recognises the value of local co-operation and networks between different parts of the region and between different communities.</p>

## 5. Implementation

The RDS has set a challenging agenda for the development of the region up to 2025. Implementation of the Strategy will depend on its ability to deliver both regionally and locally. Implementation will require government departments, agencies, local authorities and the private and voluntary and community sectors working together.

Pending the outcome of the review of public administration, existing structures such as Local Strategy Partnerships will play a crucial role in feeding back to the Department for Regional Development on the RDS and its application at sub-regional levels.

Participation in local decision-making processes is an underpinning theme of the RDS. For the RDS to succeed this sustainable approach to integrated planning has to take place. Only then will the needs of people in communities throughout the region be met.

DRD will monitor progress of the Strategy over the coming years. Assessments will be made for example as to whether sufficient land is available for housing and creating new employment opportunities. The Department will also want to know whether communities are being properly connected to the economic, social and environmental benefits of the Strategy.

DRD has set up a working group to develop monitoring procedures. Targets and indicators have been agreed to enable progress to be measured in implementing the Strategy.

The Strategy will be reviewed after ten years to consider if major changes are required in light of new trends or circumstances. Also “in-course” adjustments will be made in 2005-2006 if these are needed. It is important that community and voluntary groups are mindful of this monitoring and review and input into the checking mechanisms that will be put in place.

An important way of doing this and ensuring that the RDS is fully implemented will be through the participation of community groups in important planning processes. This may be in the preparation of an Area Plan, for example, or in the formulation of an Integrated Local Strategy with Local Strategy Partnerships. Community response to consultation documents issued by government departments and agencies, bearing in mind the aims and objectives of the RDS, will be invaluable in terms of delivery and ensuring that the focus and intention of the Strategy is fully realised over the coming years.

Again this is part of taking ownership and responsibility for future development of the region, particularly at a local level. In this way the RDS will be a useful and meaningful document that will make a real difference to the lives of everyone in the community.

# Appendix I - Strategic Planning Guidelines

## Strengthening Regional Cohesion in a Global Context

- SPG-SRC 1 - To strengthen and extend European and world-wide linkages.
- SPG-SRC 2 - To increase links with neighbouring regions and capitalise on trans-regional development opportunities.
- SPG-SRC 3 - To foster development, which contributes to better community relations, recognises cultural diversity and reduces socio-economic differentials within Northern Ireland.

## The Belfast Metropolitan Area

- SPG-BMA 1 - To create a thriving Metropolitan Area centred on a revitalised city of Belfast.
- SPG-BMA 2 - To promote an urban renaissance throughout the Belfast Metropolitan Area.
- SPG-BMA 3 - To develop and enhance the Metropolitan Transport Corridor Network.
- SPG-BMA 4 - To improve the public transport service in the Belfast Metropolitan Area.
- SPG-BMA 5 - To manage travel demand within the Belfast Metropolitan Area.

## Londonderry: Regional City for the North West

- SPG-LNW 1 - To develop a strong North West centred on Londonderry.
- SPG-LNW 2 - To strengthen the role of Londonderry as the regional city and hub for the North West.

## Rural Northern Ireland

- SPG-RNI 1 - To maintain a working countryside with a strong mixed use rural economy.
- SPG-RNI 2 - To create and sustain a living countryside with a high quality of life for all its residents.
- SPG-RNI 3 - To support the network of service centres based on main towns, small towns and villages in Rural Northern Ireland.
- SPG-RNI 4 - To create an accessible countryside with a responsive transport network that meets the needs of the rural community.
- SPG-RNI 5 - To continue to create and sustain an attractive and unique rural environment in the interests of the rural community and the region as a whole.

## Meeting Housing Needs

- SPG-HOU 1 - To manage housing growth in response to changing housing need.
- SPG-HOU 2 - To direct and manage future housing growth to achieve more sustainable patterns of residential development.
- SPG-HOU 3 - To set housing growth indicators to guide the distribution of housing in the region over the period to 2015, through the development plan process, in accordance with the Spatial Development Strategy.
- SPG-HOU 4 - To promote a drive to provide more housing within existing urban areas.
- SPG-HOU 5 - To encourage an increase in the density of urban housing appropriate in scale and design to the cities and towns of Northern Ireland.
- SPG-HOU 6 - To encourage the development of balanced local communities.

## Supporting Economic Development

- SPG-ECON 1 - To promote a balanced spread of economic development opportunities across the region, focused on the Belfast Metropolitan Area, Londonderry, Craigavon and the urban hubs/clusters, as the main centres for employment and services.
- SPG-ECON 2 - To exploit the economic development potential of the key transport corridors.
- SPG-ECON 3 - To promote the regional gateways as economic development opportunities.
- SPG-ECON 4 - To create and maintain a regional portfolio of Strategic Employment Locations (SELS).
- SPG-ECON 5 - To undertake or where appropriate, facilitate, a programme of infrastructure improvements essential to business needs.
- SPG-ECON 6 - To improve employability through lifelong learning and personal development.
- SPG-ECON 7 - To promote a sustainable approach to the provision of tourism infrastructure.
- SPG-ECON 8 - To establish a world-wide image for Northern Ireland, based on positive images of progress and attractive places to visit.
- SPG-ECON 9 - To protect and enhance a varied range of tourism development opportunities.
- SPG-ECON 10 - To identify major tourism development opportunities for the private sector to develop 'Destination Resort' complexes in Northern Ireland, based on distinctive tourism themes.
- SPG-ECON 11 - To promote the region as a centre for cultural, business and sports tourism.

## **Developing a Regional Transportation System**

- SPG-TRAN 1 - To develop a Regional Strategic Transport Network based on key transport corridors to enhance accessibility to regional facilities and services.
- SPG-TRAN 2 - To extend travel choice for all sections of the community by enhancing public transport.
- SPG-TRAN 3 - To integrate land use and transportation.
- SPG-TRAN 4 - To change the regional travel culture and contribute to healthier lifestyles.

## **Caring for the Environment**

- SPG-ENV 1 - To conserve the natural environment.
- SPG-ENV 2 - To protect and manage the Northern Ireland coastline.
- SPG-ENV 3 - To conserve the built environment.
- SPG-ENV 4 - To foster a stronger community spirit and sense of place in relation to local development proposals in urban and rural areas by the use of Local Development Guidelines.
- SPG-ENV 5 - To respond to the implications of climate change and promote more prudent and efficient use of energy and resources and effective waste management.
- SPG-ENV 6 - To create healthier living environments and to support healthy lifestyles.
- SPG-ENV 7 - To facilitate access to a range of opportunities for recreational and cultural activities.

# Appendix 2 - Planning Policy Statements

**Published and Draft Planning Policy Statements are available at:**

[www.doeni.gov.uk/planning/](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/planning/)  
[www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture/](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture/)

## **Published:**

- PPS 1 - General Planning Principles
- PPS 2 - Planning and Nature Conservation
- PPS 3 - Development Control: Roads Considerations
- PPS 4 - Industrial Development
- PPS 5 - Retailing and Town Centres
- PPS 6 - Planning, Archaeology and Built Heritage
- PPS 7 - Quality Residential Environments
- PPS 9 - The Enforcement of Planning Control
- PPS 10 - Telecommunications
- PPS 11 - Planning and Waste Management

## Appendix 3 - Glossary of Terms

**Key Transport Corridors (KTCs)** - Strategic long distance routes which connect a number of towns to the major regional gateways.

**Metropolitan Transport Corridors (MTCs)** - Network of radial roads and suburban rail lines linking constituent parts of the Belfast Metropolitan Area.

**Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)** - The Department for Regional Development and the Department of the Environment administer both regional and local planning in Northern Ireland. Planning Policy Statements (eg PPS 12 Housing in Settlements and PPS 13 Transportation and Land Use) set out the policies of the DoE and DRD on particular aspects of land use planning. Their contents are taken into account in preparing Development Plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

**Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN)** - The RSTN is made up of the rail system, five Key Transport Corridors, four Link Corridors and the Belfast Metropolitan Area Transport Corridors.

**Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)** - An over-arching strategic planning framework, with supporting Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs), to guide the future development of the region towards achievement of sustainable and balanced development.

**Strategic Planning Guidelines (SPGs)** - These provide long-term policy directions from a spatial perspective in the form of strategic objectives, set out by topics, each with an accompanying range of measures.

**Sustainable Development** - Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



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Community Technical Aid (CTA) is a regional voluntary organisation which facilitates participation in planning and regeneration and assists the development of community renewal projects. It works with new and established groups and supports community development and empowerment by assisting groups to develop the skills, knowledge and infrastructure needed to regenerate urban and rural communities.