

Local Development Plan



A Guide to Community Involvement
in Local Development Plans

May 2023



Introduction

This is an introductory guide to help people and communities who may wish to submit comments and representations to a Local Development Plan.

The guide:

- outlines the main content of a Local Development Plan [LOP];
- identifies the main stages local councils must follow in the LOP preparation process and how members of the public may get involved;
- provides details on how to obtain further information and advice.

The guide focuses on four stages in the preparation process - Preferred Options Paper (POP). Plan Strategy (PS). Local Policies Plan (LPP) and Monitoring and Review.

As an introductory guide this does not provide all the details relating to community involvement in the preparation of a Local Development Plan. If, having read it, you want more information on any aspect or advice on your LOP, please contact us or your local council planning office.

Community Involvement in the Local Development Plan

Each council in Northern Ireland has responsibility for preparing its own Local Development Plan. The LOP will guide the future use of land in the council area. It is composed of two linked documents - a Plan Strategy and Local Plan Policies.

It will include, for example, planning policies for:

- building a house in the countryside;
- renewable energy development;
- open space provision;
- economic development;
- environmental protection; and
- social and affordable housing land

Members of the public can get involved at various stages in the preparation of an LOP and thus contribute to influencing how the places in which they live, play or work will be planned in the years ahead.

Each council's Statement of Community Involvement outlines its policy for involving the community in the LOP preparation process.

The Development Plan Process

Stage 1

Preferred Options Paper

The Preferred Options Paper (POP] is a public consultation document which will indicate the key plan issues and the council's preferred options to address them.

Stage 2

Draft Plan Strategy

The Draft Plan Strategy (DPS) is a public consultation document which will set out the council's strategic intentions regarding future development.

Stage 3

Local Policies Plan

The Draft Local Policies Plan (LPP) is a public consultation document which will contain the council's detailed land use policies and proposals regarding future development.

Stage 4

Monitoring and Review

The LOP will be monitored annually and reviewed every five years.

Each council has produced a timetable of dates when it estimates completing each stage in the LOP process. The preparation of a Local Development Plan (LOP) is a lengthy process and takes years from the initial evidence gathering until adoption of the final plan.

Stage 1:

Preferred Options Paper and Community Involvement

The Preferred Options Paper is the first of three public consultation documents that the council issues during the LOP process.

The POP outlines the vision and strategic objectives of the Plan, identifies the key issues and outlines options to address these issues, including the council's preferred options and the reasoning behind them.

Interest in the Local Development Plan

- Councils encourage the public to register their interest in the LOP. The council will update those who register about the plan and any upcoming events.

Preferred Options Paper (POP) Published and Advertised

- POP available for public inspection in the council offices, on the council website and in other locations.

Public Consultation (8-12 weeks)

- Members of the public can attend public exhibitions, engagement events and drop in sessions.
- Members of the public can submit their representations to the local council during the consultation period. All representations should be made in writing.
- Following consultation on the POP, a council must take account of any representations received before it prepares the Plan Strategy (Stage 2) and Local Policies Plan (Stage 3).

Note - All councils have now completed this stage

Stage 2:

Plan Strategy and Community Involvement

The Draft Plan Strategy is the second of three public consultation documents that the council issues during the LOP process.

The OPS sets out strategic planning policy for the council area across a range of topics taking into account other regional planning policy.

Draft Plan Strategy Published and Advertised

- Draft Plan Strategy available for public inspection in the Council offices, on the council website, and in other locations.

Public Consultation (8 weeks)

- Members of the public can attend public exhibitions, engagement events and drop in sessions.
- Members of the public can submit their representations to the local council during the consultation period. All representations should be made in writing.
- All the written comments (called representations) submitted during the initial consultation period available on the council website, the council offices and other places.

Public Consultation (8 weeks)

- This consultation period provides the opportunity for anyone to submit a response (called a **counter-representation**) to the initial representations made.
- Members of the public can submit their counter-representations to the local council during this consultation period. All counter-representations should be made in writing.

Independent Examination

- The Council will forward the Draft Plan Strategy (OPS) and all representations to the Department for Infrastructure. The Department will assess the OPS and request that the Planning Appeals Commission carry out an Independent Examination.
- An Independent Examination is then held to assess the 'soundness'* of the Draft Plan Strategy. Members of the public will be able to participate if they submitted representations. The hearing sessions are public events, and anyone may come along to observe.
- Following completion of the Independent Examination the Planning Appeals Commission sends an advisory report to the Department. The Department then decides what, if any, changes should be made and issues a 'binding report' to the Council.
- The Council amends the Draft Plan Strategy as required and is then directed by the Department to adopt it.

***Soundness** - The Local Development Plan is tested for its soundness to ensure the procedure and content is coherent, consistent and effective.

Stage 3:

Local Policies Plan and Community Involvement

The Local Policies Plan is the third of three public consultation documents that the council issues during the LOP process.

The LPP sets out development zonings and associated key site requirements and other site-specific proposals and local policy designations required to deliver the Plan Strategy as well as defining the limits for all settlements.

Local Policies Plan Published and Advertised

- Local Policies Plan available for public inspection in the council offices, on the council website and in other locations.

Public Consultation (8 weeks)

- Members of the public can attend public exhibitions, engagement events and drop in sessions.
- Members of the public can submit their representations to the local council during the consultation period. All representations should be made in writing.
- All the written comments (called representations) submitted during the initial consultation period available on the council website, the council offices and other places.

Public Consultation (8 weeks)

- This consultation period provides the opportunity for anyone to submit a response (called a **counter-representation**) to the initial representations made.
- Members of the public can submit their counter-representations to the local council during this consultation period. All counter-representations should be made in writing.

Independent Examination

- The Council will forward the Draft Local Policies Plan (DLPP) and all representations to the Department for Infrastructure. The Department will assess the DLPP and request that the Planning Appeals Commission carry out an Independent Examination.
- An Independent Examination is then held to assess the 'soundness' of the Draft Local Policies Plan. Members of the public will be able to participate if they submitted representations. The hearing sessions are public events, and anyone may come along to observe.
- Following completion of the Independent Examination the Planning Appeals Commission sends an advisory report to the Department. The Department then decides what, if any, changes should be made and issues a 'binding report' to the Council.
- The Council amends the Draft Plan Strategy as required and is then directed by the Department to adopt it.

Stage 4:

Monitoring and Review and Community Involvement

The final stage in the local development plan preparation process is monitoring and review which are essential in establishing how the objectives in the local Development Plan are being achieved and whether any changes are required.

Each council will be required to ensure regular monitoring of the implementation of its LOP through key indicators such as:

- housing (for example housing need and provision);
- employment land (for example spare capacity for sites for businesses);
- environmental protection (for example any new environmental considerations).

Each council must also prepare an annual monitoring report which specifies:

- the amount of housing and economic land;
- the number of housing completions;
- any other relevant information regarding the implementation of the Local Development Plan.

The annual monitoring report must be submitted to the Department.

Each council is required to undertake regular reviews of its LOP at least every five years from the date of adoption of the Local Policies Plan and submit its review findings to the Department.

The council will engage with the public on any formal review of the LDP. This is another opportunity for members of the public to have their say in shaping their local area.

Useful Resources

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/contents>

The Act is primary legislation which gives local councils the power to prepare Local Development Plans and introduce a plan-led system.

The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (NI) 2015
<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/planning-local-development-plan-regulations-northern-ireland-2015-sr-2015-no-62>

This legislation sets out [i] the sequence of LOP preparation from the creation of the timetable through to the adoption of the LOP by a council; [ii] the role of a council, the Department and an independent examiner; and; [iii] the functions post adoption including annual monitoring, review and revision of the LOP.

Development Plan Practice Note 2 - Statement of Community Involvement
https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/dmpn-2-statement-of-community-involvement-v2-aug-2015_0.pdf

This Practice Note is designed to guide planning officers and relevant users through the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement and deals primarily with procedures as well as good practice.

Development Plan Practice Note 9 - Submission and the Handling of Representations
https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/dppn-9-representations-v2-dec-2016_0.pdf

This Development Plan Practice Note is designed to guide planning officers and relevant users through the key requirements for the submission and handling of representations and deals primarily with procedures as well as good practice.

Procedures for Independent Examination of Local Development Plans
<https://www.pacni.gov.uk/sites/pacni/files/Procedures%20for%20Independent%20Examination%20of%20Local%20Development%20Plans.pdf>

This publication explains how the Planning Appeals Commission proposes to carry out independent examinations into local development plans. Although not an exact statement of the law, it is intended to assist those who will be taking part in the examination process .

To keep up to date on the Local Development Plan progress across the 11 local councils, please click [here](#).

Community Places has launched a new Jargon Buster series to simplify and explain often complex terms using in planning. Please click [here](#) to find out more.



**community
places**

This guidance is not intended to be a definitive source of planning advice and reference should be made to the appropriate legislation and policy. If you need any clarification or further information please contact us.

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