

Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA)

SECTION 1

Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority: Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Connected A Community Plan for Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough 2017-2030 (updated 2025)

1C Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to:

Developing a

Adopting a

Choose an item.

Implementing a

Choose an item.

Revising a

Plan

Designing a Public Service

☐

Delivering a Public Service

☐

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above

Connected A Community Plan for Armagh City Banbridge & Craigavon Borough 2017-2030 (updated 2025)

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or service

The 2030 vision of the community plan is that “We have a happy, healthy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning”.

There are 9 long term outcomes for the Plan and there have been some revisions recommended to these outcomes. The recommended outcomes are-

1. **Connected Community:** Everyone has opportunities to contribute to community life and shape decisions – we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.
2. **Healthy Community:** People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life’s challenges.
3. **Welcoming Community:** Our borough is a safe, inclusive, respectful and peaceful environment.
4. **Enterprising Economy:** Our borough is a centre for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment.
5. **Inclusive Economy:** Everyone has a decent minimum living standard.
6. **Skilled Economy:** People are better equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the dynamic economy.
7. **Creative Place:** Our borough is an inspirational and creative place offering quality, inclusive arts, cultural and heritage experiences.
8. **Revitalised Place:** Our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.
9. **Sustainable Place:** We value and protect our climate, biodiversity and natural assets. People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and our borough is on track to become net zero by 2050.

The revised Connected: A Community Plan has had the recommended changes made to it following the pre- engagement and then again following the public engagement period. This revised plan will focus on addressing evidence based needs and priorities through a partnership approach. The Community Plan demonstrates the commitment by all the partners to make life better by improving social, economic and environmental wellbeing in Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon.

The revised community plan will enable us to identify new and innovative approaches in the aftermath of Covid-19 and allow us through our action plan to continue to respond to increased demand for crisis support as a result of the current cost of living crisis though budgets are decreasing. It will also allow us to consider environmental sustainability.

Public Service

1F. What definition of ‘rural’ is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition) ☒

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below) ☐

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable

☐

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

SECTION 2

Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes

☒

No

☐

If response is No go to 2E

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The revised Connected: A Community Plan is our overarching plan and works in two ways, firstly as a monitored plan at population level and then through influencing our partners in their service delivery through the impact of our actions. The plan can broadly be viewed as presenting positive action measures designed to enhance and improve the quality of the lives of people in the borough, irrespective of their identity, and including those in rural areas. Our action plan for delivery will be updated and developed and during this development we will consult further on rural needs.

Through our Connected Community, Healthy and Welcoming Community outcomes our partnership wants to ensure that our borough is safe, inclusive and that everyone can contribute to community life regardless of where they live in the borough.

Through our Enterprising, Inclusive and Skilled Economy outcomes our partnership will ensure that all residents can avail of programmes and training opportunities on offer and make them accessible for people, especially those living in rural areas.

Through our Creative, Revitalized and Sustainable Place outcomes our partnership will ensure that our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.

Our plan's cross cutting themes of connectivity equality and sustainability are at the heart of everything we do, and the partnership will make an effort to ensure that through the delivery of our revised community plan that people living in rural areas are consulted with and encouraged to participate fully in any programmes delivered by our partnership.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas *differently* from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

The proposals contained within the plan will be beneficial to both urban and rural dwellers. During the lifetime of the revised Connected: A Community Plan we do not expect the plan to impact on rural dwellers differently, but we will ensure-

- As a Partnership we will take into account both rural and urban needs when developing actions under the revised community plan and this will involve working with the action leads who have responsibility for fulfilling their duties in terms of rural needs.

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

Rural Businesses	☒
Rural Tourism	☒
Rural Housing	☒
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	☒
Education or Training in Rural Areas	☒
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	☐

Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	☒
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	☒
Poverty in Rural Areas	☒
Deprivation in Rural Areas	☒
Rural Crime or Community Safety	☒
Rural Development	☒
Agri-Environment	☒
Other (Please state)	

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.

2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.

SECTION 3

Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes ☒ No ☐ If response is No go to 3E

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	☒
Consultation with Other organisations	☒
Published Statistics	☒
Research Papers	☐
Surveys or Questionnaires	☐
Other Publications	☐
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below)	☐

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

- NISRA stats
- Partnership engagement report Stage 1
- Armagh and Banbridge Place Plans
- Dromore Place Plan engagement to date

- Rural statistics on the internet
- Multiple deprivation statistics.

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

The needs of the whole borough were considered but the rural needs have also been considered as the results from the 2021 Census show that just over half of the borough's population (51.5%) lived in urban areas while just under half (48.5%) lived in rural areas. This is based on the 2015 Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements which recommended a default urban-rural classification, with the boundary at a settlement population of 5,000 (Bands A – E are urban Bands F – H are rural), to be used in the absence of a programme specific definition. Essentially settlements larger than 5,000 people / Band E or above could be considered Urban. Craigavon Urban Area (which includes Central Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown), Banbridge, Armagh and Dromore are the four urban areas within the borough, all other settlements are classified as rural according to the NISRA default classification. In Northern Ireland overall, 63% of the population are classed as living in urban areas and 37% in rural areas.

NISRA also provides the classification at Super Output Area (SOA), 36 out of the borough's 87 SOAs are classified as rural with a further 9 being mixed urban/rural. The rural areas cover a large part of the borough.

The Access to Services domain is particularly relevant to rural areas; this measures the extent to which people have poor physical and online access to key services. The borough has 9 Super Output Areas (10% of the total 87 SOAs in the Borough) in the top 100 most deprived in NI on the Access to Services domain, each of these are defined as rural on the default NISRA classification. 3

The Access to Services domain consists of three indicators:

- Service-weighted fastest travel time by private transport
- Service-weighted fastest travel time by public transport
- Proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s

The borough has areas within the top 100 most deprived in NI on each of these three indicators. For example, Bannside SOA in the Borough is the second most deprived SOA in NI in terms of proportion of properties with broadband speed below 10Mb/s.

All projects delivered under the revised community plan will need to be rural needs impact assessed where relevant in order to ensure that the Council's statutory duty to promote rural needs is fully considered.

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

SECTION 4

Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

The following issues were considered in relation to the needs of residents in ABC in both urban and rural though we will do our best to avoid unintended consequences for those in rural areas. Through our outcomes listed below we will take into account the social and economic needs of our borough, including those in both urban and rural areas.

- **Connected Community:** Everyone has opportunities to contribute to community life and shape decisions – we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.
- **Healthy Community:** People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's challenges.
- **Welcoming Community:** Our borough is a safe, inclusive, respectful and peaceful environment.
- **Enterprising Economy:** Our borough is a centre for entrepreneurship, innovation and investment.
- **Inclusive Economy:** Everyone has a decent minimum living standard.
- **Skilled Economy:** People are better equipped to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the dynamic economy.
- **Creative Place:** Our borough is an inspirational and creative place offering quality, inclusive arts, cultural and heritage experiences.
- **Revitalised Place:** Our distinctive, inclusive and vibrant urban and rural places are at the heart of community and economic life.
- **Sustainable Place:** We value and protect our climate, biodiversity and natural assets. People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and our borough is on track to become net zero by 2050.
- Our cross-cutting themes of connectivity, equality and sustainability are at the heart of everything we do and are the foundation of our plan for all residents, whether urban or rural.
- Our Community Voluntary Sector Panel includes members from rural community organisations who advise the partnership of issues, in particular in the rural areas for both the panel and our partnership as well.
- Following the pre-consultation and the public consultation some of the issues that arose are wider than just rural and affect people in both rural and urban areas and these include- Social isolation and the need for more integrated public transport provision, access to services, employment and access to jobs and opportunities and affordable and accessible housing. Our partnership will continue to take these into consideration when delivering the plan.

SECTION 5

Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes ☒ No ☐ If response is No go to 5C

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

Consideration of borough statistics have been utilised when undertaking this review of the community plan and rural needs will be taken into consideration in all actions taken forward under the revised community plan to ensure that rural needs will be met.

As a result of the public consultation 58.5% of respondents felt that there would be a positive impact on people in rural areas through Connected, only 3.1% felt that it would have a negative impact, 18.5% felt that it would have no impact and 20% didn't know. Further comments included connectivity, isolation, lack of rural transport and having access to the same opportunities as those in rural areas.

This feedback has influenced the review of Connected and the issues will be addressed through the delivery of the actions under the community plan.

If the response to Section 5A was YES go to 6A.

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

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SECTION 6
Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained, and relevant information compiled. ☒

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:

Position:

Department / Directorate:

Signature:



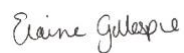
Date: 02/04/2025

Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:

Position:

Department / Directorate:

Signature



Date: 02/04/2025