

Armagh City, Banbridge &
Craigavon Borough Council

Local Development Plan 2035

Draft Plan Strategy

TECHNICAL SUPPLEMENT 3

Economic Development

September 2026



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Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council

Economic Development

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1.0 Introduction

Purpose of this document

This Technical Supplement brings together the evidence base that has informed the preparation of the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035 draft Plan Strategy (dPS). It is one of a suite of topic based Technical Supplements that should be read alongside the dPS to understand the rationale and justification for the spatial growth strategy and planning policies proposed within it.

This Technical Supplement includes key updates relating to employment and economic development in the Borough, that have emerged since the publication of the Councils original evidence base Preparatory Papers, including Preparatory Paper No. 3: Employment and Economic Development. These papers provided the baseline information that formed part of the evidence base for the Council's Preferred Options Paper (POP). The POP, published in March 2018, provided an overview of the Key Issues of strategic significance affecting the Borough and the Preferred Options to address them.

This Technical Supplement also seeks to provide an update on the Council's progress in its approach towards employment and economic development in the Borough and the development of an Economic Development Strategy and associated planning policies, since the publication of the POP.

To reflect the broad range of matters that were taken into account in the development of the Councils approach towards employment and economic development and the formulation of associated dPS planning policies this Technical Supplement has been structured as follows:

- **Sections 2 and 3** summarise the legislative, regional and local policy context relevant to the LDP, with particular emphasis on employment and economic development;
- **Section 4** provides an overview of employment and economic development within the Borough;
- **Section 5** provides an overview of survey work on zoned economic land within the Borough
- **Section 6** outlines the relevant Key Issues and Preferred Approach identified in the Preferred Options Paper (POP), together with a summary of POP commitments and relevant representations. This section focuses in particular on those matters relating to the spatial growth strategy relevant to allocating economic development lands and policy development;
- **Section 7** summarises the policy review, consultation and engagement undertaken in preparing the draft Plan Strategy policies. It also considers neighbouring councils' approaches to employment and economic development, including any potential cross-boundary issues;
- **Section 8** explains how the draft Plan Strategy policies for economic development have been developed, including the rationale for any amendments made to existing planning policy where they were considered necessary and appropriate; and
- **Section 9** sets out how the draft Plan Strategy policies for employment and economic development have been prepared in accordance with the tests of soundness set out in

The information and data presented in this Technical Supplement have been derived from a number of different sources however, where possible, the most recent datasets available have been utilised.

It is important to note that this Technical Supplement has been collated at specific point in time and therefore it may be necessary for the Council to review and update it as the plan is progressed. The notional end date of the plan period has now been amended to 2035. The Council will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that employment and economic development in the Borough are managed in an appropriate and sustainable manner throughout and beyond the plan period of 2035.

Employment and Economic Development

The Borough has a diverse employment base containing a significant amount of public sector jobs in health, education and central / local government as well as wholesale and retail employment. This reflects the importance of the three Main Settlements (Hubs) (Craigavon Urban Area, Armagh City and Banbridge Town) as major administrative, cultural and service centres for their catchments. Craigavon Urban Area, which is located off the M1, within 30 minutes of Greater Belfast, has a strong manufacturing and logistics base. Armagh has traditionally had a strong agriculture, education and health/social offering with significant potential for growth in the tourism sector. Banbridge is located on the A1 transport corridor between Belfast and Dublin and is considered an attractive location to live with a strong retail base.

The LDP has an important role in further developing a vibrant economy and facilitating employment through the zoning of land and the development of planning policy to support business development and job growth. Whilst the LDP cannot directly provide jobs, it can provide the planning framework to support the vision, themes and actions of the Council's Corporate Plan, Community Plan and Regeneration and Development Strategy by ensuring that there is an adequate supply of land in appropriate places to facilitate sustainable economic growth that retains existing businesses and attracts new investment.

The Economic Development uses referred to within this paper are those defined under Part B of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, which are:

Part B

Industrial and Business Uses

Class B1: Business

Use—

- (a) as an office other than a use within Class A2 (Financial, professional and other services);
- (b) as a call centre; or
- (c) for research and development which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

Class B2: Light Industrial

Use for any industrial process which can be carried out without detriment to amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

Class B3: General Industrial

Use for the carrying on of any industrial process other than one falling within Class B2.

Class B4: Storage or Distribution

Use for storage or as a distribution centre.

2.0 Legislative Context

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (hereafter referred to as the 2011 Act) is the principal planning legislation in Northern Ireland, which underpins the reformed two-tier planning system that commenced on 1 April 2015. It introduced the plan-led system, where the LDP is the primary consideration for decision making on all new development schemes and proposals will be required to accord with its provisions unless, exceptionally other material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's new LDP is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedure of each stage in the plan preparation process and independent examination.

The Planning (Local Development Plan) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Planning (Local Development Plan) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 amend the transitional provisions in the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 to include development plans prepared and adopted by the Department under the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 within the definition of a departmental development plan under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 provides a statutory duty on public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services and came into effect for Councils in June 2017.

3.0 Policy Context

Regional Policy Context

The key pieces of regional policy relating to this subject area include the following:

Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027 ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’ (2025, Northern Ireland Executive)

The PfG ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’ outlines the NI Executives priorities for making a real difference to the lives of everyone living and working in Northern Ireland. It sets out the following three long term Missions, underpinned by a cross-cutting commitment to Peace, through which improved wellbeing, long term sustainability, and a thriving economy will be delivered.

People: Working to support everyone at all stages of their life to ensure they have the chance to succeed by improving life opportunities.

Planet: Harnessing the potential of a green growth economy while ensuring we provide an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as we take responsibility for decarbonising our economy and society.

Prosperity: Improving our economic productivity while making sure that we have an economy that works for everyone, and our story continues to be an inspiration to others.

The nine cross-cutting priorities aimed at delivering the PfG missions are as follows:

- Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy
- Deliver More Affordable, Accessible, High-Quality Early Learning and Childcare
- Cut Health Waiting Times
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
- Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs
- Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing
- Safer Communities
- Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment
- Reform and Transformation of Public Services

Within the PfG there are a wide range of actions aimed at addressing the above priorities and delivering the missions, including multi sector investment and reform, the delivery of a Sub-Regional Economic Action Plan, the development of Northern Ireland’s Climate Action Plan, publication of the Third Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme and the delivery of actions identified within the Lough Neagh Report and Action Plan.

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The RDS sets the context for the sustainable development of NI to 2035 and is a long-term plan to deliver the spatial aspects of the PfG. It recognises the important role played by Belfast and Derry/Londonderry in generating prosperity and also reflects the PfG approach of balanced sub-regional growth to ensure that all places benefit from economic growth. It recognises the importance of key settlements as centres for growth and investment and defines these as Main Hubs and Clusters well placed to benefit from and add value to regional economic growth.

The RDS 2035 contains a Spatial Framework which consists of five components, three of which are relevant to the Borough; Hubs and Clusters of Hubs, the Rural Area and Gateways and Corridors. It recognises Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Urban Area as hubs. In addition, it acknowledges that Banbridge benefits from its strategic location on the Belfast Dublin Corridor, while Craigavon Urban Area is well connected to both Belfast and Dublin, with both Portadown and Lurgan benefiting from its location on the rail line. It also acknowledges that Craigavon, Banbridge and Armagh have the potential to cluster and to capitalise on their strategic position on the Belfast/Dublin and Belfast/Enniskillen/Sligo economic corridors.

The RDS provides Strategic Guidance - Regional Guidance (RG) which applies regionally across NI and Spatial Framework Guidance (SFG) which is additional to the RG and is tailored to each of the five components of the Spatial Framework. Some of this guidance is particularly relevant to economic development.

The RDS Regional Guidance (RG1) seeks to ensure an adequate supply of land to facilitate sustainable economic growth through the following means:

- Assess the quality and viability of sites zoned for economic development uses in the area plans.
- Protect zoned land in Development Plans, as it provides a valuable resource for local and external investment.
- Promote economic development opportunities across the region focussed on the Belfast Metropolitan Area, Derry/Londonderry and Hubs as the main centres for employment and services by capitalising on development opportunities provided by the concentration of people and goods combined with infrastructure and clustering of a range of business services essential to economic development.
- Provide a network of economic development opportunities by making provision in development plans for an adequate and continuous supply of land for employment purposes.

Other economic development related guidance in the RDS includes the following:

- SFG10 seeks to identify and consolidate the roles and functions of settlements within the Clusters;
- SPG11 seeks to promote economic development opportunities at Hubs; and
- SPG13 aims to sustain rural communities living in smaller settlements and the open countryside.

To ensure the council area is well placed to accommodate growth in jobs and businesses there should be an adequate and available supply of employment land. It should be accessible and located to make best use of available services e.g. water and sewerage infrastructure, whilst avoiding, where possible, areas at risk from flooding. The RDS places the onus for this on LDPs and provides assistance through a methodology known as the Employment Land Evaluation Framework. The outworking of this methodology will enable the LDP to identify a portfolio of employment sites sufficient to meet the requirements over the Plan period.

The RDS was prepared under the former area plan process which was replaced on 1 April 2015 by a new LDP process. In accordance with the latter, LDPs are now produced through a 2-stage process comprising a Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan.

Elements of the Employment and Land Evaluation Framework are more appropriately considered during the preparation of the Local Policies Plan when detailed site allocations are determined.

The Employment Land Evaluation Framework		
Stage 1		
Taking Stock of the Existing Situation		An initial assessment of the 'fitness for purpose' including the environmental implications of the existing employment land portfolio. This is principally in order to identify the 'best' employment sites to be retained and protected and identifying sites that should clearly be released for other uses.
Stage 2		
Understanding Requirements	Future	Quantify the amount of employment land required across the main business sectors during the development plan period. This is achieved by assessing both demand and supply elements and assessing how they can be met in aggregate by the existing stock of business premises and by allocated sites. Account should also be taken of turnover of existing sites due to relocation or closures. Both short/medium term and strategic provision need to be considered in this process.
Stage 3		
Identifying a 'New' portfolio of sites		Devise qualitative site appraisal criteria to determine which sites meet the occupier or developer needs. Confirm the existing sites to be retained, replaced or released, and any gaps in the portfolio. In this allocation, consideration should be given to previously used sites, and in the reallocation, the environmental impact of one site relative to others should be included. The results of Stage 2, together with this site appraisal should provide a robust justification for altering allocations for employment land.

The RDS also contains Spatial Framework Guidance to promote economic development opportunities at Hubs (SFG11). To achieve this, it seeks to:

1. Promote and exploit the potential for economic development – Hubs have important economic roles and have potential for further economic expansion. Small businesses and service sector offices could locate in these towns.

2. Consider Hubs and clusters of Hubs first – when new development is being considered, the relationship and benefits between towns/cities in the clusters should be taken into account. The Hub and the higher performing town/city in the cluster should be considered first in the decision process.

The RDS is complemented by the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and the remaining extant Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). Of particular relevance to this Technical Supplement is **PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development**, which is considered below.

There are also opportunities for sustainable economic development in the countryside under PPS 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside, which is considered further below.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland - Planning for Sustainable Development, 2025 (SPPS)

The SPPS was revised in 2025, and it sets out regional planning policies for securing orderly and consistent development of land in Northern Ireland. The provisions of the SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of LDPs and are a material consideration in planning applications and appeals. The SPPS recognises that the planning system has a key role in achieving a vibrant economy. In this regard, the aim of this SPPS is to facilitate the economic development needs of Northern Ireland in ways consistent with the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development.

The Regional Strategic Objectives for facilitating economic growth through the planning system are to:

- Promote sustainable economic development in an environmentally sensitive manner;
- Tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation by ensuring the provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development and a choice and range in terms of quality;
- Sustain a vibrant rural community by supporting rural economic development of an appropriate nature and scale;
- Support the re-use of previously developed economic development sites and buildings where they meet the needs of particular economic sectors;
- Promote mixed-use development and improve integration between transport, economic development and other land uses, including housing; and
- Ensure a high standard of quality and design for new economic development.

The SPPS identifies that a fundamental role for LDPs is to ensure that there is an ample supply of suitable land available to meet economic development needs within the plan area, and zone sufficient land for economic development over the plan period. LDPs should offer a range and choice of sites in terms of size and location to promote flexibility and provide for the varying needs of different types of economic activity. Account should also be taken of factors such as accessibility by all members of the community, connectivity with the transportation system (particularly public transport), the availability of adequate infrastructure, the specialised needs of specific economic activities, potential environmental impacts and compatibility with nearby uses including the operational requirements of existing or approved economic development.

A system to monitor the take up and loss of land allocated for economic development purposes as well as ongoing assessment of future requirements and trends will help to identify any shortfalls that may arise or highlight the need to reconsider the proposed use of sites.

Where appropriate, LDPs should identify previously developed land within settlements for potential economic development use.

LDPs should also identify opportunities for mixed use development, including economic development uses, where this would create synergy and underpin the economic viability of the development as a whole. Plans should indicate, through key site requirements, the types of economic development that will be acceptable and seek to avoid uses that would have a detrimental impact on the environment and / or residential amenity. It is important that such development is sustainable, and major mixed-use sites should therefore be identified in locations that are well served by public transport, accessible by walking and cycling, have adequate infrastructure and where development can be properly integrated, in terms of land use and design, with surrounding areas.

Where appropriate, LDPs should specify the type or range of economic development uses that will be acceptable within zoned sites or broader areas of economic development designated by the Plan.

LDPs should normally contain a number of supporting actions to assist in meeting the needs of business enterprises in ways which are workable and that will ultimately deliver sustainable and high-quality development. Such actions should normally include key site requirements to ensure that developers provide necessary infrastructure such as road access, access for pedestrians and cyclists, water supply, sewerage and land drainage. The LDP should also provide guidance in terms of key design, layout and landscaping requirements.

The SPSS also recognises the need to support and sustain vibrant rural communities consistent with the RDS and to strike a balance between facilitating new development and protecting the environment from inappropriate development. Local policies and proposals may be brought forward in the LDP, where it is supported by evidence which will address development such as farm diversification, agricultural development and tourism development of an appropriate nature, scale and location.

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

- Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS 4), published in November 2010, sets out a range of planning policies for economic development uses and indicates how growth associated with such uses can be accommodated and promoted in development plans. It seeks to facilitate and accommodate economic growth in ways compatible with social and environmental objectives and sustainable development. The policies identify opportunities and define criteria for economic development in settlement and in the countryside. The PPS also contains a policy for the retention of zoned land for economic development as well as a policy to safeguard against development that is incompatible with established or approved economic development uses.

- Planning Policy Statement 4: Clarification on Policy PED 7 'Retention of zoned land and economic development uses' was published in September 2011. The purpose of the clarification was to ensure consistency in the approach taken to unzoned land and premises used, or last used, for Classes B2, B3 and B4. It confirmed that development proposals on unzoned land or premises in settlements last used for Class B2, B3 or B4 would be required to meet the same criteria as those development proposals for land or premises currently being used for any of these uses.

- Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS 21) – 'Sustainable Development in the Countryside' PPS 21, published in June 2010 and sets out planning policies for development in the countryside, defined as land lying outside of settlement limits as designated in development plans. The PPS seeks to manage development in the countryside in a manner which strikes

a balance between the need to protect the countryside from unnecessary or inappropriate development, while supporting rural communities in regard to economic development. One of the objectives of PPS 21 is to facilitate development necessary to achieve a sustainable rural economy; including appropriate farm diversification and other economic activity.

A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland (PSRNI)

Published in September 1993 by the former Department of the Environment this strategy sets out the Department's principal planning objectives and strategic policies for the rural area. It also set out regional development control policies under a series of topic headings.

A number of these strategic and regional policies have been cancelled or superseded with the publication of subsequent planning policy statements. This is largely the case for those policies relating to industry and commerce as PPS 4 has superseded policies IC 1- IC 8 inclusively. IC 16 and IC 17 which relate to office development and small office and business development respectively have been superseded by PPS 4 insofar as it applies to Class B1 of the 2015 Use Classes Order.

Strategic policy SP 7 'Economic Development' seeks to facilitate economic development and the diversification of the rural economy. The provisions of PPS 21 now take precedence over this policy insofar as it relates to the countryside.

Regarding towns and villages, the PSRNI acknowledges their importance as centres of population and employment.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance to Policy PED 8 - Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses

This SPG provides clarification on Policy PED 8 and reinforces the policy message ensuring that operations of established industrial enterprises requiring a contaminant free environment are protected, thereby securing their valuable contribution to the economy.

Planning Advice Note (PAN) Implementation of Planning Policy for the Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development Uses

The purpose of this advice note is to ensure an effective and consistent approach to implementing regional planning policy when determining planning applications, and to assist with local development plan preparation, in relation to:

- a) sites zoned for economic development use in a local development plan; and,
- b) planning applications on unzoned land that is currently used (or was last used) for economic development purposes

Other Strategies, Information and Documents

Everyone's Involved - Sustainable Development Strategy 2010 (Northern Ireland Executive)

The Sustainable Development Strategy for Northern Ireland (2010) promotes sustainable communities and the protection of environmental resources, recognising the need to adapt to climate change and manage environmental risks. In this regard, the Strategy supports development which contributes to the long-term sustainability and resilience of communities.

New Decade, New Approach

The New Decade, New Approach document was published in January 2020. It sets out the commitments and priorities of the restored Executive in the task of strengthening public services and tackling the immediate challenges in key areas such as growing the economy, health, education and housing.

With regard to the economy it seeks to invest for the future to ensure Northern Ireland is equipped to harness opportunities and drive sustainable productivity, including opportunities for future trade after exiting the European Union. As a result, a top priority of the Executive will be to develop a regionally balanced economy with opportunities for all. This will include:

- Driving the delivery of essential infrastructure projects to boost the economy;
- Realising the economic potential offered by City Deals (including through match funding for infrastructure, regeneration and tourism projects);
- Invest urgently in wastewater infrastructure which is at or nearing capacity in many places across NI, limiting growth;
- Develop an enhanced approach to careers advice, curriculum, training and apprenticeships to enhance employability and support economic growth.

Northern Ireland Economic Strategy Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity: Building a Better Future

Published in March 2012 the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy sets the economic vision for 2030 as “an economy characterised by a sustainable and growing private sector, where a greater number of firms compete in global markets and there is growing employment and prosperity for all”.

It has twin themes of rebalancing and building the economy. There are five strategic rebalancing themes designed to move the economy away from the public sector towards a private sector-based recovery:

- Stimulating innovation, R&D and creativity;
- Improving employability and the level, relevance and use of skills;
- Competing in the global economy;
- Encouraging business growth; and
- Developing our economic infrastructure.

It acknowledges the recession had a significant impact on the economy, and particularly the labour market. It therefore includes the medium-term labour market “rebuilding” themes of:

- Improving employment opportunities and employability; and
- Promoting employment.

Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2025 ‘Innovate NI’

The strategy sets out the key long-term actions necessary to ensure that innovation plays its full part in realising the vision of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy. The key actions are based on the key themes of knowledge generation, exchange and exploitation which are underpinned by cultural change with the aim of delivering the vision that by 2025 Northern Ireland ‘will be recognised as an innovation hub and will be one of the UK’s leading high-growth, knowledge-based regions which embraces creativity and innovation at all levels of society’.

10x Economy - Northern Ireland’s Decade of Innovation

On 11 May 2021 the Department for the Economy launched its economic vision for the next 10 years. It aims to embrace innovation to deliver a ten times better economy with benefits for all people in Northern Ireland. It is intended that this ambition will be realised by focussing on innovation in areas where Northern Ireland has strengths and ensuring the gains from innovation mean something to all businesses, people and places in Northern Ireland.

It sets out five priority clusters that relate to areas where there has been an emergence of significant capability and capacity with the potential to drive the economy forward: Digital, ICT and Creative Industries; Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering; Agri-tech; Life and Health Sciences and Fintech/Financial Services. To make this happen it identifies five steps to developing interventions to deliver the vision: Technologies and clusters; Talent; Diffusion; Funding and Place.

Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland ‘Lifetime Opportunities’ (2006)

The Government’s ‘Lifetime Opportunities’, Government’s Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland was published in November 2006 and is a strategy to tackle poverty and Social Inclusion and patterns of deprivation.

On 8 October 2015, OFMDFM published ‘Lifetime opportunities Monitoring Framework 2015’ which comprises published data including specific child poverty targets, poverty and social exclusion indicators and public service agreement targets.

Infrastructure 2050: draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Consultation

The new Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland sets out key objectives for infrastructure investment in the region for the next 30 years in light of more recent challenges to the

economy such as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Draft Consultation opened on 26 January 2022 and closed on 20 April 2022.

It states the Executive's vision for infrastructure is that it will enable everyone to lead a healthy, productive and fulfilling life, and that it will support sustainable economic development and protect our environment.

It has 5 core objectives: maximise the benefits from new technology and innovation; strengthen our essential services; decarbonise our economy and society; build a strong, connected and competitive region and enhance our communities and places. Many of these are cross cutting in how they relate to land use planning, for example, enhancing communities and places highlights the need to regenerate our high streets. In terms of building a strong, connected and competitive region it acknowledges strengths such as resilience in dealing with the Covid pandemic and the numerous strong, world-class, indigenous companies and how Northern Ireland is a recognised leader in many specialist areas such as cyber security.

Economy 2030: A Consultation on an Industrial Strategy for Northern Ireland

The Department for the Economy consulted on its Industrial Strategy from January to April 2017. Its vision is for Northern Ireland 'to be a globally competitive economy that works for everyone'. To support the delivery of this vision the strategy proposes five pillars: Accelerating Innovation and Research; Enhancing Education, Skills and Employability; Driving Inclusive, Sustainable Growth; Succeeding in Global Markets; and Building the Best Economic Infrastructure. Each of the five pillars has a number of associated priorities.

In addition, it indicates a number of milestones to be achieved by 2021, 2025 and 2030 respectively. By 2030 it seeks to put Northern Ireland in the top 3 most competitive small, advanced economies, have created 80,000 jobs in the knowledge economy, grown private sector output by 35% creating 80,000 jobs, increased the annual spend on research and development to £1.5 billion and to have maintained the highest level of wellbeing in the UK.

The consultation document proposes two high level goals and indicators and associated measures that will be used to measure success. The final strategy will establish targets for those indicators over the three-time horizons of 2020, 2025, 2030.

Enabling Success: Supporting the Transition from Economic Inactivity to Employment: A Strategy to Tackle Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland (2015)

It sets out the long-term approach to tackling economic inactivity in a progressive and sustainable way through targeted incentives, skills and training programmes and job creation. The strategy outlines a range of measures, based on voluntary participation, which are designed to help individuals in three key economically inactive groups make the transition towards, and into, work.

While a number of more recent economic and employability initiatives have since emerged, the strategy remains relevant in highlighting the importance of increasing labour market participation and addressing barriers to employment as part of supporting economic growth and prosperity across Northern Ireland.

Republic of Ireland

Although the Republic of Ireland falls outside the Council's planning jurisdiction, given the Borough's border location it is appropriate to consider relevant key policy documents from the Republic of Ireland as part of the wider strategic planning context.

Project Ireland 2040

Project Ireland 2040 is the long-term overarching strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) combine to form Project Ireland 2040.

The NPF is a national high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the Republic of Ireland to 2040. It was published in 2018 and sets out a number of National Strategic Outcomes which are shared goals for every community across the country. It recognises the role of cross border networks and seeks to further support and promote the economic potential of the Belfast to Dublin corridor, building upon existing strengths. To do this, there will be a focus on developing the corridor as a distinct spatial area with international visibility.

The NPF is a region focused strategy for managing growth and is linked to the National Development Plan (NDP) which is an overarching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030. The NDP is intended to be an ambitious plan that balances the significant demand for public investment across all sectors and regions of Ireland with a major focus on improving the delivery of infrastructure projects to ensure speed of delivery and value for money.

The first draft revision of the NPF was consulted on in 2024 and focused on the need to update the Framework in order to reflect changes to government policy that have taken place since its initial publication in 2018, such as climate transition, regional development, demographic, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation.

The first revision of the NPF was published in April 2025.

Local Policy Context

The existing 4 statutory Area Plans covering the Borough provide the policy framework against which development proposals are considered. These are as follows:

- Armagh Area Plan (AAP) 2004
- Armagh Area Plan Alteration No 1: Countryside Proposals
- Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan (BNMAP) 2015
- Craigavon Area Plan (CAP) 2010
- Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan (DSTAP) 2010

Due to the varying ages of the extant Development Plans there are inconsistencies in approach with regards to a number of planning issues as well as the degree of emphasis in respect of the principles of sustainable development. However, the existing Plans are an important consideration in the LDP process, and as such have been taken into account in the development of the draft Plan Strategy. Policies within the respective Development Plans that are related to economic development are laid out below.

Armagh Area Plan 2004

The Armagh Area Plan (AAP) 2004 was adopted in January 1995, and together with Alteration No 1: Countryside Proposals is the extant area plan for Armagh City and District. In relation to employment and economic development, the aim of the AAP 2004 is, to:

- Provide a framework of land use proposals and policies which will allow the area to maximise its full economic potential in an efficient, economic and orderly manner whilst maintaining a high standard of physical environment and safeguarding its landscape quality and natural resources.

To achieve the aim of the plan, the related plan objectives are:

- To identify land within defined limits in urban areas to meet planned future development requirements in respect of Industry;
- To encourage the efficient use of existing infrastructure and make provision for new infrastructure;
- To promote vibrant towns and villages by increasing their attractiveness as places to live, work, use and invest;
- To improve the quality of the urban environment through appropriate Departmental policies and physical regeneration measures; and
- To encourage the development of the district's tourism potential.

A total of approximately 37 hectares of land was zoned in the Plan for economic development purposes to serve the legacy Armagh council area.

Craigavon Area Plan (CAP) 2010

The CAP was adopted in 2004 and one of its main objectives include facilitating the achievement of the Borough's economic potential.

At the time of its publication, the CAP recognised Craigavon Borough had a stronger than average manufacturing base in both the Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom context.

That was set against an expanding services sector and declining agricultural sector.

Also, at the time of publication, significant employment was provided in industries related to food processing, light engineering, metal fabrication and textile manufacture. Despite a decline in the sector, the prominence of manufacturing in the Borough pointed to the importance of Craigavon as a Northern Ireland manufacturing centre. The CAP also stated there was potential for employment growth in the service sector where the proportion of employment was below the Northern Ireland average.

The CAP stated the main focus of industrial development was in Portadown and Central Craigavon at the Seagoe and Carn Industrial Estates, respectively but that there had been some more limited expansion in Lurgan at the Annesborough, Silverwood and Halfpenny Valley (Portadown Road) Industrial Estates.

The CAP stated the Department of Environment (the planning authority at that time) was keen to facilitate the development of new businesses on suitable sites and also encourage the appropriate future expansion of existing firms.

A total of approximately 182 hectares of land was zoned in the Plan for economic development to serve the legacy Craigavon Borough Council area

Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015

The Banbridge / Newry & Mourne Area Plan (BNMAP) was adopted in October 2013. In relation to economic development, the aim of the BNMAP is, to:

- provide a planning framework for Banbridge and Newry and Mourne Districts that is in general conformity with the RDS. This framework will facilitate sustainable growth and a high quality of development in the Banbridge and Newry and Mourne Districts throughout the Plan period whilst protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing the natural and man-made environment.

To achieve the Plan's Aim, the principal employment related plan objectives are:

- to facilitate sustainable patterns of growth and development throughout the Plan Area;
- to promote Banbridge and Newry as main hubs within Northern Ireland and to enhance the inter-regional gateway role of Newry;
- to facilitate appropriate development within existing urban areas that will promote urban renaissance, create ease of access to services and community facilities, and to maximise the use of existing infrastructure;
- to facilitate economic development and the creation of employment, taking into account the Government initiative of the Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy;
- to promote town centre vitality and viability; and
- to facilitate the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

A total of approximately 50 hectares of land was zoned in the Plan for economic development purposes and 34 hectares zoned as Mixed Use in the Banbridge/Newry & Mourne Area Plan 2015 to serve the legacy Banbridge District Council area.

Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan 2010

The Dungannon & South Tyrone Area Plan was adopted in March 2005. The main objectives of the plan relating to economic development include the maintenance and enhancement of Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough and its distinctive urban and rural environs as an attractive and pleasant place to live, work and visit; and the provision of development opportunities to meet housing and employment needs within a quality and sustainable living and working environment.

Details relating to the uptake of Economic Development / Industrial lands are considered later in this document.

Other Council Documents and Strategies

'Our People, Our Place, Our Future'- The Councils Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027

The Corporate Plan 2023 - 2027 sets out the vision, values and priorities of the Council and represents its aspirations and dedication to continuous improvement. It is the roadmap for delivering Council's Community Plan 2017 – 2030 and sets out the Councils commitment to uphold the highest standards of service delivery, facilities, projects, and programmes for the benefit of our people, our place and our future.

The Vision of the Corporate Plan is to create “*a happy, healthy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning*” aligning with the aspirations of the Community Plan.

The priority of the Corporate Plan is to improve economic, social and environmental well-being through place shaping to attract visitors, investors, and to encourage people to be active, with a focus on promoting health and wellbeing. The Council aims to improve participation in arts and culture and strengthen the Borough as a visitor destination as well as supporting the growth of our local economy, by securing investment in infrastructure and connectivity, and providing opportunities in skills development.

The Corporate Plan proposes five priorities, each with three commitments outlining what the Council are going to do alongside actions aimed at achieving the commitments.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Community Plan 2017-2030 ‘Connected’

Councils across Northern Ireland have a statutory responsibility to participate and lead in Community Planning. The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 and the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 create a statutory link between the Community Plan and the LDP. It outlines that the LDP will provide ‘the spatial expression of the Community Plan.’

The Council’s Community Plan is an overarching strategy for the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough. ‘Connected’ was launched on 4th May 2017 and updated in 2025. It provides a strategic framework for collaborative working, helping to integrate other local and regional strategies and the delivery of positive change for communities.

The Vision of the Councils Community plan is to ‘have a happy, healthy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning.’

The Community Plan aims to achieve the vision through three strategic themes of *Community*, *Economy* and *Place* and nine shared outcomes, as follows:

1. **Community:** Connected | Healthy | Welcoming
2. **Economy:** Enterprising | Inclusive | Skilled
3. **Place:** Creative | Revitalised | Sustainable

The three cross-cutting themes at the centre of the Community Plan are: *Connectivity*, *Equality* and *Sustainability*. These form the foundation of, and underpin, the Plan.

The Community Plan includes a number of Long-Term outcomes that are considered relevant to economic development:

- 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.

The LDP, as the spatial reflection of the Community Plan, will have a pivotal role in achieving a thriving and dynamic economy for the Borough through the provision of appropriate policies and proposals which facilitate economic development needs in ways

consistent with the protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development.

Craigavon Integrated Development Framework (CIDF) (DSD, 2010)

The Craigavon Integrated Development Framework was published in 2010. Its purpose is to guide how the town centres of Central Craigavon, Portadown and Lurgan will develop and thrive over the next 20 years. It also sets out a strategy for regeneration for the three centres.

The CIDF focuses on achieving an integrated vision for the 3 centres as the complete package- where they will be three complementary and successful centres all with a unique offer, each having a distinct role and identity and each benefiting from a greatly enhanced environment and range of facilities. It aims to project this vision through scores of individual actions, projects and development schemes that will strengthen each individual centre and contribute to the overall regeneration of Craigavon.

The CIDF offers guidance on a number of issues and advocates a planned approach to retail, leisure, business, housing, infrastructure and community development.

Place Plans are currently being taken forward by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership (of which Council is the lead partner) for Lurgan, Portadown and Craigavon.

The plans are currently in the development phase with public consultation on the draft plans expected to commence early 2027.

Recovery & Growth Framework

The ABC Recovery and Growth Framework was launched in February 2021 and focuses on how the Council can create the right social and economic conditions to help the borough recover from the covid pandemic and drive sustainable long-term growth for the region.

It sets out a series of aims which will meet the needs of companies within the borough, such as boosting tourism and footfall in towns, and delivering support to business of all sizes, as well as longer-term interventions which will boost efficiency and competitiveness.

The Framework emphasises the regional focus on driving economic investment for Northern Ireland around key sectors such as; agrifood, health and life sciences and advanced manufacturing, where the borough already excels and which, with support to improve skills, connectivity, and productivity, can become global exemplars.

It addresses the need for a specific focus on the case for investment in sustainable roads and rail infrastructure, for urban regeneration and rural development; for education and training to upskill the talent pool; for support of technological developments including Industry and investment in manufacturing research & development; and a commitment to driving regional competitiveness through the development of a start-up and innovative business ecosystem.

These targeted actions are aimed at accelerating the borough's recovery and set it on a path of renewed inclusive growth and prosperity.

Armagh Place Plan - March 2022

The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership, launched the Armagh Place Plan, first community planning led Place Shaping Plan in Northern Ireland on 19 May 2022.

Place shaping improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the place, ensuring aspirations of the community are being realised.

The Armagh Place Plan has been developed to help us understand and align key messages from policies such as Council's Connected – A Community Plan, and the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland 2015 which identifies 'supporting good design and positive place making' as one its five core planning principles and what these may mean for local places.

The Armagh Place Plan is designed around four outcomes; a connected city, a green city, an engaging city and a healthy city. Collectively the plan developed seven typologies and thirty actions which will be delivered collaboratively across the partners to embrace the vision of the outcomes.

The Banbridge Place Plan (March 2024)

The Banbridge Place Plan is designed around 5 outcomes; Bridging Banbridge, Green Banbridge, Healthy Banbridge, Creative Banbridge, and Growing Banbridge. The plan identifies 56 actions to bring about positive change in Banbridge. These actions include physical and non-physical interventions which have been captured under the following themes:

- Arts, Heritage and Leisure- actions include pursuing heritage funding opportunities to restore and repair historic built fabric and find sustainable uses in the Areas of Townscape Character and the creation of a community theatre space for Banbridge.
- Green Innovation- actions include the implementation of smart street furniture, smart car parks and connectivity in public places and research into initiatives such as zero waste, rewilding, tree planting, carbon neutral, sustainable travel, employment support and social value procurement.
- Spaces, Places and Natural Environment- actions include the development of new bridges and footpaths, enhancement of public amenities and improved public access to civic building grounds and green space.
- Living Here- includes actions such as the provision of new mixed tenure housing, enhancement of cycling infrastructure and the maintenance and improvement of existing play spaces.
- High Street and Investing- includes actions such as the creation of a digital innovation hub, investment in the public realm and adaption / reuse of vacant properties.

Whilst the Banbridge Place Plan is a non-statutory document, it acknowledges that it has the potential to set a framework of tangible projects and proposals for future development, to enable different stakeholders to work together to their mutual benefit and for the betterment of Banbridge.

Dromore Place Plan (May 2025)

The Dromore Place Plan outlines a strategic vision for the place and sets out five outcomes which are aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the residents, preserving the unique character of the area whilst stimulating economic growth.

The Vision for Dromore is 'A place within ambition and passion interwoven with a historic fabric, ready and committed for a new future'. It envisages Dromore as a thriving and prosperous place to live, it recognises that Dromore has the appetite and energy to develop in a way that meets the needs of the place and its people.

The plan details four big ideas, and six thematic clusters comprising of thirty-seven suggested actions, serving as a road map for the community planning partners, stakeholders, businesses and local community groups, designed to help with the shaping, transformation and development of Dromore into the future.

The four big ideas, and associated actions, that will assist in the delivery of vitality and regeneration in Dromore are as follows:

1. Tackling vacancy and regeneration - The Plan identifies that the key to future development hinges around the regeneration of derelict buildings and prominent vacant sites, to bring such buildings and spaces back into positive use, creating social, economic and sustainable development opportunities, and capacity building to regenerate businesses.
2. Quillyburn Lands - Due to their strategic location (off the A1 Dublin to Belfast economic corridor) the Place Plan identifies an opportunity to unlock and enable strategic growth, such as industry and business regeneration. Relevant Actions within the Plan include encouraging the development of the Quillyburn land zoned for industry, maximising the Dublin - Belfast economic corridor by promoting investment and developing infrastructure projects.
3. Dromore Viaduct - The Place Plan acknowledges the important role this historic structure played in relation to industrial and economic growth and recognises the opportunity for restoration that would bring many heritage, recreation and community benefits.
4. Active Riversides - The Place Plan recognises that the River Lagan, which meanders through the heart of Dromore, provides an opportunity for development that focuses on improved connectivity, park improvements and the utilisation of rear facing gardens and gap sites, which will in turn enhance biodiversity and well-being.

Mid-Southwest Regional Economic Strategy (2020)

The MSW Region makes up almost half of Northern Ireland's land mass and encompasses three Northern Ireland Council areas: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon; Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster

The Strategy sets out a vision and ambition for the region, identifies the opportunities and challenges that will be faced and sets out the priority pillars around which future investment and actions will be framed. Additionally, the Strategy provides a high-level indication of potential specific projects/interventions that may sit under each of the pillars. The priority pillars of the Strategy are as follows:

- future proofing the skills base
- enabling infrastructure
- boosting innovation and digital capacity

- building a high performing tourism economy

The Strategy identifies that the shut-down of the majority of the physical retail stores during the pandemic, alongside rapidly shifting consumer spending habits, has greatly augmented the challenges faced by our high streets and highlights that there is an urgent need to 'develop strategies to recover, reopen and re-imagine our town centres and high streets', acknowledging that future proofing will require both a digital and physical emphasis.

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council Agriculture Strategy

The Councils Agriculture Strategy was launched in March 2022. It is the objective of this strategy to provide practical recommendations to enable the council to best support agriculture, agri-food and agri tech, helping to develop long term viability in the sector. Emerging from exploring the key themes outlined in the main document, and following engagement with council departments, key stakeholders, farmers and businesses, ten practical and achievable recommendations have been identified within this strategy;

1. Expand and evolve Food Heartland
2. Develop a method of communicating regularly and clearly with all agriculture and agribusinesses in the borough
3. Develop a plan to facilitate skills development in agriculture and agribusinesses
4. Appoint 'Agriculture Champions' for the borough
5. Develop an 'Agriculture Centre' for advice, training, demonstrations, and research
6. Facilitate structural upgrading
7. ABC rural strategy
8. Further studies in sectors related to the agriculture industry
9. Agri-food development
10. Promote the health and wellbeing of farmers and rural dwellers

Food Heartland Action Plan

The contribution which local agri-food business make to the local economy is recognised. Reigniting the Councils support and commitment to address the challenges impacting local agri-food businesses, we launched the Food Heartland Action Plan in March 2021. This ambitious action plan aims to deliver a range of practical and innovative initiatives this year to help drive investment, encourage growth and boost job creation in this key growth sector.

4.0 Borough Profile- Economic Development

In 2021, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon had a Gross Value Added (GVA) total of approximately £4.3bn, the second highest GVA after Belfast (Office of National Statistics). Major employers in the Borough include Almac / Moy Park / Glanbia/ Whites / Eagle Overseas (EoS) and Tayto which recognise the benefits of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough's strategic location and highly skilled workforce.

The Borough benefits from an excellent strategic location within Northern Ireland and is served by an extensive transport network which provides strong connections to Belfast, Dublin and other key regional centres. The M1 motorway, identified within the Regional Development Strategy 2035 as a Key Transport Corridor, traverses the Borough and provides important east-west connectivity, while the A1 dual carriage facilitates access to both Belfast and Dublin. Together, these routes support access to regional, national and international markets and provide opportunities for economic growth, business expansion and inward investment.

Within the Borough the A3, A28 and A29 provide key internal connections and facilitate movement through Armagh City, Portadown and Lurgan. The A27 and A29 provide connectivity to Newry City.

The Borough is served by four railway access points on the Belfast–Newry rail corridor: railway stations at Lurgan and Portadown, and railway halts at Scarva and Poyntzpass. Portadown Station is a key regional rail hub and is served by both Northern Ireland Railways services and the cross-border Enterprise service, which provides connections between Belfast and Dublin. Lurgan, Scarva and Poyntzpass are served by Northern Ireland Railways local passenger services.

The distances outlined below demonstrate the Borough's accessibility to key port and airport infrastructure, strengthening its role as an attractive location for business development and inward investment.

- Craigavon to Port of Belfast and Belfast City Centre – Approximately 25 miles
- Banbridge to Port of Warrenpoint – Approximately 20 miles
- Armagh City to Port of Dublin and Dublin City Centre – Approximately 80 miles
- Craigavon to George Best Belfast City Airport – Approximately 30 miles.
- Banbridge to Belfast International Airport – Approximately 30 miles
- Armagh City to Dublin International Airport – Approximately 75 miles

The Borough also benefits from excellent broadband connectivity:

- There is high availability of superfast broadband across the Borough.
- The Borough is a hub for Project Kelvin, the innovative underwater high speed broadband technology to North America.

The Borough is considered a hub for the Life Sciences and Advanced Manufacturing sectors, and its landscape provides excellent opportunities for agriculture and tourism. The Borough is seen as the food producing Heartland of Northern Ireland supporting many internationally recognised brands.

There is a dependency on the private car for travel in the Borough and on the road network for the movement of freight. The 2021 NI Census found that 68% of the Borough's population travelled to work by car or van, compared to the NI average of 63%. Strategic transport infrastructure investment has the potential to improve accessibility, support economic growth and facilitate sustainable development across the Borough. Further information on the Regional Strategic Transport Network and strategic road improvement schemes is contained within Technical Supplement 6 (Transportation), which provides a review of existing transport infrastructure and planned improvements within the Borough.

Population

On 21st March 2021 (Census Day), the usual resident population of the borough was 218,656. This accounted for 11.5% of the Northern Ireland population¹. The Borough has the largest population of any local government council area in Northern Ireland (NI), outside of Belfast. The Borough's population density is 1.64 residents per hectare, higher than the Northern Ireland average of 1.4.

The Borough's population increased by 18,863 persons from the 2011 to the 2021 Census, with the largest population increase in Craigavon District Electoral Area (15.4% increase). This was the second highest increase after Lisburn and Castlereagh and significantly higher than the average increase for Northern Ireland overall (5.1%).

The percentage of the population in the over 65 age group in the Borough is expected to rise from 15% in 2020 to 19% by 2035. With increases to the age individuals are eligible for state pensions, there may be an increase in the number of individuals continuing to work beyond the age of 65. This could help to counterbalance the impact an increase in the number of people over 65 is likely to have but it will also have implications for managing an older workforce. Likewise, the proportion of those in the 16-64 age group is projected to decline from 62% in 2020 to 61% by 2035. It is expected that by 2035, 138,000 people in the Borough will be of employment age.

The working-age population (aged 16-74) of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough is projected to increase significantly over the Plan period. Mid-year population estimates indicate that the Borough's population aged 16-74 was 148,324 in 2015, rising to a projected 171,253 by 2035. This represents an overall increase of 22,929 people, reflecting continued population growth and an expansion of the potential labour force within the Borough over the twenty-year period.

Overview of the Boroughs Economy

The Northern Ireland Economy & Labour Market Summary of key statistics report, published in May 2023, provides a high-level statistical summary of the Northern Ireland economy and labour market².

The main findings of the report included:

¹ Census NISRA 2021

² [NI Economy & Labour Market - A summary of key statistics | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/NI-Economy-Labour-Market-Summary-2023)

Overall economic activity in Northern Ireland has recovered from the prominent reduction in output during 2020, brought about by the covid-19 pandemic.

- The service sector accounts for just over half of economic activity in Northern Ireland.
- Production accounts for around 16% of economic activity in Northern Ireland. Prior to COVID-19, production output had been noticeably impacted by the 2007/08 recession.
- Construction accounts for 7% of economic activity in Northern Ireland. The fall in output in construction has been severe since the 2007/08 recession, and although there has been a gradual recovery since 2014, output still remains lower than the 15-year high in 2006.
- There were 78,665 VAT and/or PAYE registered private sector businesses in Northern Ireland and more than half of these are within the services sector (43,580).
- There were 18,345 businesses associated with the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, which is reflective of the proportion of rural dwellers and those engaged in those industries in Northern Ireland.
- Private sector businesses provided around 578,000 employee jobs (excluding working proprietors). More than one in five of these jobs is located within the 'wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles' sector.
- A total of 1 in 10 private sector businesses generated a turnover of £1million or more. The vast majority of private sector businesses, 90%, employ 0-9 employees.
- Research & Development spend is viewed as a key indicator of innovation, and in 2021 business spend on R&D was £880.2million. This has been a steady increase from 2018, although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may have curtailed spend during this time.
- The employment rate has increased over the long-term, although the rate in NI remains consistently below the rate in the UK overall. Employment rates vary amongst Councils.

The Existing Employment Base in the Borough

The Business Register and Employment survey (BRES) is a survey of businesses in Northern Ireland. BRES 2021³ provides employment data at Council level across Northern Ireland.

Employee jobs within the Borough increased over the period 2018 to 2020, reaching 84,024 jobs in 2020, compared with 77,849 in 2019 and 76,684 in 2018.

	Number of Employee Jobs		
	Male	Female	Total
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	38,828	41,197	80,024

Table 1: Number of Employee Jobs, 2021

³ BRES Publication and Tables 2021 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk)

According to the BRES 2021, the large majority of employee jobs in the Borough are in the private sector (approx. 75%).

	Public Sector	Private Sector	Total
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	21,051	58,973	80,024

Table 2: Number of Employee Jobs by Sector, 2021

The majority of employee jobs in the Council area are within the services industry, accounting for approximately 76% of all employee jobs. The services industry is the only industry where females represent the majority of the workforce. Manufacturing jobs within the Council area are recognised as representing a significant proportion of Northern Ireland's manufacturing employment, see table 3⁴.

Headline Sector	Male Full-Time	Male Part-Time	Male (Total)	Female Full-Time	Female Part-Time	Female (Total)	Total
Construction	3,551	192	3,743	427	261	688	4,431
Manufacturing	9,341	356	9,697	2,996	696	3,692	13,389
Other	973	62	1035	92	52	144	1,179
Services	18,563	5,789	24,353	17,694	18,979	36,672	61,025

Table 3: Number of Employee Jobs by Headline Industry, 2021

The mainly rural character of the Borough is reflected in the number of employee jobs involved in agriculture. DAERA conduct an annual Agricultural Census, and according to the 2021 census there was a total of 7,702 people employed in agriculture within the Borough, 4th highest of all the Council areas in Northern Ireland⁵, table 4.

⁴ [Manufacturing-and-NI-Economy.pdf \(manufacturingni.org\)](#)

⁵ [Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland 2021 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

	Farmers, partners, directors & spouses		Other Workers		Casual	Total
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time		
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	2,691	2,717	663	592	1,039	7,702

Table 4: Agricultural Labour Force, June 2021

Business Stock in the Borough

In 2025, the Inter Departmental Business Register (NISRA) indicated that there were 9,400 VAT/PAYE registered businesses in the Borough, representing an increase of 1,530 (19.4%) since 2013. Since 2013, the total number of registered businesses operating in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon has increased by 1,530 (19.4%). The majority of these businesses (8,515 or 90.6%) were micro-businesses (employing less than 10 people). Within the Borough, approximately 62,325 were employed within the services sector, with 13,644 employed within manufacturing and 4,802 employed in construction⁶.

Economic Activity in the Borough

Information relating to economic activity in the Borough comes from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is a sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. It is the biggest regular household survey in Northern Ireland and provides a rich source of information on the labour force using internationally agreed concepts and definitions.

Local Government District	Male (Number)	Female (Number)	All Persons (Number)	Male (%)	Female (%)	All Persons (%)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	38,000	36,000	74,000	80.0	73.1	76.4
Ards and North Down	40,000	39,000	79,000	79.6	70.4	74.8
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	58,000	51,000	109,000	81.6	73.1	77.4
Belfast	80,000	75,000	155,000	69.7	66.0	67.9

⁶ [IDBR-Publication-2025_0.xlsx](#)

Causeway Coast and Glens	30,000	28,000	58,000	75.3	64.9	69.9
Derry City and Strabane	33,000	30,000	63,000	74.3	64.9	69.4
Fermanagh and Omagh	30,000	24,000	54,000	80.1	69.2	74.8
Lisburn and Castlereagh	42,000	36,000	78,000	79.8	73.4	76.6
Mid and East Antrim	38,000	34,000	71,000	81.0	75.0	77.9
Mid Ulster	39,000	32,000	71,000	80.8	68.8	74.9
Newry, Mourne and Down	46,000	41,000	87,000	80.3	70.9	75.4
Northern Ireland	474,000	426,000	900,000	77.6	69.7	73.7

Table 5: Economic Activity by Sex and Economic Activity Rate by Sex and Local Government District Ages 16-64 Source: Labour Force Survey relates January to December 2022.

Table 5 shows that 109,000 residents aged 16-64 in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough were economically active. The Borough recorded an economic activity rate of 77.4%, exceeding the Northern Ireland average of 73.7% and ranking among the highest of all local government districts. This indicates a strong labour market and a high level of participation within the working-age population.

	Total Population aged 16 and over (thousands)	Economically Active (thousands)	Economically Inactive	Economic activity rate (%)	Employment (%)
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	167	101	66	60.6%	58.1%
Northern Ireland	1478	882	596	59.7%	57.4

Table 6: Labour Market Structure, 2021 Source: Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2021

Table 6 shows that, in 2021, 101,000 people within the Borough were economically active, representing 60.6% of the population aged 16 and over. The Borough's employment rate was 58.1%, both of which were slightly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 57.4%. This suggests that the Borough has a relatively strong labour market performance

compared with the regional position. The difference in table 5 and table 6 is that table 6 relates to all persons aged 16 and over while table 5 solely relates to ages 16 to 64.

Labour Force Survey and Qualifications

The Labour Force Survey also provides an overview of the qualifications of those in employment⁷. Within the Borough 39.6% of the working-age population held degree-level qualifications or above in 2020, while 47.4% held qualifications below degree level and 13.0% had no formal qualifications. Although the proportion of residents with higher-level qualifications was slightly below the Northern Ireland average, the data demonstrates that the Borough benefits from a broad and diverse skills base capable of supporting economic growth and labour market demand, table 7.

Indicator	ABC Borough	Northern Ireland	Difference
Economic Activity Rate	74.1%	73.0%	+1.1%
Employment Rate	70.9%	70.2%	+0.7%
NVQ4+	39.6%	42.1%	-2.5%
NVQ3+	47.4%	45.9%	+1.5%
No Qualifications	13.0%	11.9%	+1.1%

Table 7: Labour market structure and qualification level by district council area, ages 16 to 64, 2020.

Claimant Count

Claimant count records⁸ the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits. It is used as a main indicator of labour market activity and provides a good indication of the level of economic inactivity in the Borough.

Local Government District	Male Claimants	Female Claimants	Total Claimants	Male Claimants of Working Age (%)	Female Claimants of Working Age (%)	Total Claimants of Working Age (%)	Change Over Month (No.)	Change Over Month (%)	Change Over Year (No.)
Antrim and Newtownabbey	1,355	1,245	2,600	3.0	2.7	2.8	135	5.5	375
Ards and North Down	1,630	1,460	3,090	3.4	2.9	3.2	125	4.2	430

⁷ www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/labour-force-survey-annual-report-2021

⁸ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/lmr-claimant-count-tables-september-2024.xlsx>

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	2,300	2,175	4,470	3.4	3.2	3.3	220	5.2	690
Belfast	5,625	4,665	10,290	5.1	4.0	4.5	185	1.8	1,005
Causeway Coast and Glens	1,665	1,460	3,125	3.9	3.3	3.6	105	3.5	405
Derry City and Strabane	2,855	2,365	5,220	6.2	4.9	5.5	220	4.4	520
Fermanagh and Omagh	1,195	1,035	2,230	3.4	2.9	3.2	105	4.9	520
Lisburn and Castlereagh	1,075	1,025	2,100	2.3	2.2	2.3	55	2.6	320
Mid and East Antrim	1,525	1,400	2,925	3.6	3.2	3.4	125	4.5	360
Mid Ulster	1,410	1,370	2,780	3.0	3.0	3.0	135	5.1	680
Newry, Mourne and Down	1,960	1,885	3,840	3.5	3.3	3.4	165	4.4	555
Northern Ireland	22,595	20,070	42,665	3.9	3.3	3.6	1,570	3.8	5,870

Table 8: Claimant Count, April 2024

Table 8 claimant Count data provides an indication of unemployment levels across Northern Ireland local government districts. In September 2024, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon recorded a total claimant count rate of 3.3% of the working-age population, comprising 2,300 male claimants and 2,175 female claimants, giving a total of 4,470 claimants. This rate was below the Northern Ireland average of 3.6%, indicating relatively strong labour market performance within the Borough. The claimant count rate in the Borough was also lower than that recorded in Belfast (4.5%), Derry City and Strabane (5.5%), and Causeway Coast and Glens (3.6%).

When considered alongside an economic activity rate of 77.4%, the claimant count rate of 3.3% indicates that approximately 74.1% of the working-age population were economically active and not claiming unemployment-related benefits. This figure has been used within the economic development land assessment methodology to estimate the proportion of future population growth likely to participate in the labour market and generate demand for additional employment land.

Earnings

This growth in businesses and the relatively strong economic activity rate (above NI average) should be considered in the context of the last 10 years, which has been characterised by considerable economic uncertainty including Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic and a number of international conflicts that have increased the cost of commodities and fuel.

With regards to earnings, the median gross weekly full-time earnings for those employed in the Borough was £675.30⁹.

Deprivation Profile

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure is the official measure of deprivation in Northern Ireland, with updated deprivation measures released in November 2017 (NIMDM2017)¹⁰.

The NIMDM ranks 890 Super Output areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland from most deprived (rank 1) to the least deprived (rank 890). The NIMDM includes ranks for each of 7 distinct types of deprivation. The NIMDM 2017 helps to provide an indication of deprivation within the Borough relating to income and employment; health and disability; education, skills and training; access to services; Access to Services; Living Environment; and Crime and Disorder.

Within the Council area, there is one SOA ranked 14th most deprived, whilst there are 7 SOA'S ranked from 52-100 most deprived.

2021 Census Results relating to economy / employment

	Armagh Banbridge Craigavon	Northern Ireland
All usual residents	170,413	1,514,737
No Qualifications	42,898	360,624
Level 1 Qualification	9,962	89,378
Level 2 Qualification	24,068	206,162
Apprenticeship	11,084	96,371
Level 3 Qualification	26,489	242,004
Level 4 Qualification	51,769	486,331
Other Qualifications	4,143	33,867

Table 9: Highest Level of qualification (aged 16 and over)

Place of Work or Study

Census 2021 asked questions on place of work or study and method of travel to work or study.

⁹ datavis.nisra.gov.uk/economy-and-labour-market/Employee-earnings-NI-2025.html#18_Local_Government_District

¹⁰ www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/nimdm-2017-lgd-2014-results

Place of Work

There were 97,704 people aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students) who were resident in the borough and in employment. Of that number, 15,795 (16.2%) indicated they worked mainly at or from home. Of the remainder, 68,206 had a workplace within Northern Ireland and 13,703 either had no fixed place of work or worked outside Northern Ireland.

Almost 54% of those in employment worked in Northern Ireland and their workplace was less than 20km from their home while almost 12% had no fixed place of work.

There was a total of 2,071 residents who worked outside Northern Ireland with the majority, a total of 1,323 (or 1.35% of the working population) working in the Republic of Ireland. A total of 529 (0.5% of the working population) residents in employment in the borough were working in England, Scotland or Wales with a further 219 (0.2%) working outside the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Of the working population in the borough, 84% usually travelled to a place of work with the remaining 16% working mainly at or from home.

Distance to place of work for residents of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon borough, 2021

	Population	%
Work mainly at or from home	15,795	16.2%
No fixed place of work	11,632	11.9%
Work within Northern Ireland	68,206	69.8%
Less than 2km	13,051	13.4%
2km to less than 5km	12,273	12.6%
5km to less than 10km	13,039	13.4%
10km to less than 20km	14,358	14.7%
20km to less than 30km	8,268	8.5%
30km to less than 40km	4,609	4.7%
40km to less than 60km	2,219	2.3%
60km and over	389	0.4%
Work outside Northern Ireland	2,071	2.1%
England, Scotland or Wales	529	0.5%
Republic of Ireland	1,323	1.4%
Outside the United Kingdom and Ireland	219	0.2%
All usual residents aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students) in employment	97,704	100.0%

Table 10: Distance to place of work for residents of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon borough, 2021 - Source: Table MS-I03, Census 2021.

Economic activity of Household Reference Person (HRP)¹¹

Economic Activity Status	Number
Employee (Full-time)	35,698
Employee (Part-time)	7,792
Self-employed with employees (Full-time)	2,141
Self-employed with employees (Part-time)	300
Self-employed without employees (Full-time)	5,191
Self-employed without employees (Part-time)	1,964
Unemployed	1,117
Full-time Student	196
Total Economically Active	54,399
Retired	19,546
Student (including full-time students)	224
Looking after home or family	2,706
Long-term sick or disabled	5,841
Other economically inactive	1,925
Total Economically Inactive	30,242
All Household Reference Persons (HRPs)	84,641

Table 11: Economic Activity HRP

The majority of Household Reference Persons (HRPs) within the Borough (table 11) were economically active, accounting for 54,399 individuals (64.3%) of the total 84,641 HRPs. Full-time employees represented the largest group, with 35,698 individuals, followed by part-time employees (7,792) and self-employed persons without employees working full-time (5,191). A further 1,117 HRPs were unemployed.

Of the 30,242 economically inactive HRPs, the largest category was retired persons (19,546), representing almost two-thirds of all economically inactive HRPs. Other notable groups included those who were long-term sick or disabled (5,841) and those looking after home or family (2,706). Overall, the figures indicate a predominantly economically active

¹¹ [Census 2021 main statistics labour market tables | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

population, supported by a substantial proportion of retirees reflecting the Borough's age profile.

5.0 Survey on Zoned Economic Lands

Economic Development Land Monitor

Uptake of Economic Development / Industrial Land

This monitor report provides information on the uptake of land for economic development / industrial development.

The Armagh Area Plan 2004, Banbridge/Newry & Mourne Area Plan 2015 and Craigavon Area Plan 2010 zoned land for industrial purposes in the main settlements of Craigavon Urban Area (including Portadown, Lurgan & Central Craigavon), Armagh City and Banbridge, and the local towns of Keady, Markethill, Tandragee, Dromore, Gilford and Rathfriland. The amounts zoned were considered sufficient to meet overall industrial needs to the end of the respective plan periods at the time of adoption, with further opportunities for employment provided by mixed business zonings in Banbridge and the restructuring and subdivision of existing or underused industrial premises.

In Armagh District just under 37 hectares of Industrial Land were zoned across Armagh City and the local towns of Keady, Markethill and Tandragee in the Armagh Area Plan 2004.

In Banbridge District, approximately 50 hectares was zoned for Economic Development and 34 hectares zoned as Mixed Use in the Banbridge/Newry & Mourne Area Plan 2015 as adopted October 2013. Mixed Use Sites are zoned outside of town centres where it is desirable to permit a degree of flexibility in the final use of the site, allowing for a range of uses. Of the Economic Development land, over 32 hectares are zoned at the two sites in Banbridge at Cascum Road and Rathfriland Road. Gilford Mill is another Mixed Use zoning

In Craigavon Borough, over 180 hectares of land was zoned for Industry (both Industrial Zonings & Light Industry & Warehousing Zonings) and a further 5 hectares zoned as Development Opportunity Sites (DOS) which allow specific employment uses in the Craigavon Area Plan 2010. These 185 hectares are all within the Craigavon Urban Area across Portadown, Central Craigavon and Lurgan. A small site has also been zoned at The Birches for Community /Business Use.

Further to zoned land for industrial purposes some sites have developed on whitleland, such as Armagh Business Park which is on the site of the old Army Barracks on the Hamiltonsbawn Road.

A total of approximately 150ha of land zoned for economic development land within the Borough is owned by Invest NI. Approximately two thirds of the land has been developed, and approximately one third (approx. 48ha) remains undeveloped.

The Council undertook a land monitor survey in 2015 of land developed and land undeveloped in respect of land zoned for economic development in each of the extant area plans. A further review of these matters was undertaken in 2024. The details of this review are set out in Table 12 below.

Settlement	Area Zoned for Economic Development Land (ha)	Area Developed** (ha) 2024	Area Undeveloped (ha) 2024
Tier 1 – Hubs/ Main Settlements			
Armagh	25.47	16.66	8.81
Banbridge	32.59	9.49	23.1
Craigavon Urban Area	181.94	44.32	137.62
Tier 2 – Small Towns			
Keady	3.38	0.3	3.08
Markethill	2.23	0.96	1.27
Tandragee	5.65	3.95	1.7
Gilford*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dromore	16.31	1.57	14.74
Rathfriland	1.54	0	1.54
Total	269.11***	77.25	191.86

Table 12: Summary of land zoned as per 2024 Economic Development Land Monitor

* No land was Zoned for Economic Development within Gilford (Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015)

** Area includes land developed for Economic and Non-Economic purposes and land discounted due to constraints such as flood risk.

*** This figure is 2ha higher than shown in the POP. The reason for the discrepancy is that during the dPS process GIS was used and it is more precise than the non GIS method used at POP stage.

Flexibility Allowance

Through the Economic Development Land Monitor survey undertaken in 2024, it became apparent that some zoned Economic Development / Industrial lands within extant Area Plans were either lost to other uses or were no longer available for development. As a result, an exercise was undertaken to establish the quantum of zoned Economic Development / Industrial lands that were either no longer available to develop or has been lost to other uses. This exercise established that approximately 15% of lands zoned for Economic Development / Industrial use had been developed for non-economic use or discounted due to constraints such as flood risk.

6.0 Preferred Options Paper

The Council published its Preferred Options Paper (POP) in March 2018. The main purpose of the POP was to promote focused debate on key issues of strategic significance likely to influence the direction of future development within the Borough, so to inform the next stage in the LDP process, the Plan Strategy.

The POP outlined the vision and strategic objectives of the Plan, along with 38 Key Issues and the possible options available to address them, including the Council's Preferred Option. The Key Issues emerged from our evidence base; from engagement with Elected Members and Section 75 Groups; and from formal and informal consultation with Statutory Consultation Bodies. In order to inform the POP, a preliminary review of operational planning policy was also carried out, with a commitment to complete a more detailed policy review in advance of the Plan Strategy.

The POP did not cover every issue, policy and proposal that will be included in the LDP. Instead, the POP focused upon the main planning issues that had been identified through the work undertaken in developing the evidence base for the LDP, including consultation with the statutory consultees and council officials, workshops with Elected Members and through the Community Plan process.

A total of 201 responses, from members of the public and statutory consultees, were received during the 9-week public consultation period, these included a wide range of comments in relation to the POP, supporting documents and the POP consultation process.

The preferred options paper included one key issue relating to the strategic allocation of economic development lands, three key issues relating to urban economic development and one relating to rural economic development.

The Key Issues addressed in the POP that of particular relevance to this Technical Supplement are:

- Key Issue SGS3 Allocating economic development lands
- Key Issue ECN 1 Zoning for Economic Development
- Key Issue ECN 2 Locating Class B1 Business Uses
- Key Issue ECN 3 Supporting start-up and grow on businesses
- Key Issue ECN 4 Supporting sustainable rural economic development

An overview of representations received in respect of these Key Issues and the Councils consideration of the feedback received, is set out below.

Key Issue SGS 3 Allocating economic development lands

Preferred Option

The preferred option SGS 3A, was to “apportion economic development lands in relation to former council populations and in addition reflect Craigavon’s sub-regional function”.

Summary of POP Commitments

The preferred option justification identified that a review will be carried out of existing employment lands to ascertain if they are offering a range in terms of their size, location and compatibility with surrounding established uses. Additionally, the review will consider deliverability of lands and involve contacting owners of undeveloped zoned economic

development lands to inquire if they are willing to release their lands at market value over the plan period for economic development use.

POP Representations

A total of 201 representations were received during the POP consultation period, 39 of which made comments in respect of Key Issue SGS 3. Of these 39 representations, 51% were categorised as being generally supportive of the preferred approach, 39% were unsupportive of the preferred approach; and 10% were non-committal or unclear.

Supportive comments included:

“An adequate supply of land is required to facilitate sustainable economic growth; this land should be in the right places with larger populations and beside good infrastructure”.

One of the respondents considered that a major factor in the future success of the economic development lands policies will be ensuring that the right land is identified, and unsuitable lands are released for alternative purposes.

Some of the comments and suggestions made under unsupportive comments included:

“The allocation of economic development land is too much unless brownfield sites are used”.

In addition, there were a small number of non-committal responses, which made recommendations such as:

“The importance of having “adequate infrastructure to cope with discharges/emissions into the environment and the choice of appropriate sites which avoid potential for negative impact on biodiversity through loss of, or disturbance to nature rich sites or through the fragmentation of ecological networks”.

Another response stated:

“The Borough is a major regional area of employment in the north, and it is important that this is retained and built on, particularly in relation to its position on the north / south and east / west economic corridors”.

Dfl in their response raised questions about the employment density methodology used to determine the economic development land requirement and queried the assumption that all new jobs will be created on employment land and that all residents live and work in the Borough.

They considered that the allocation to Craigavon Urban Area (CUA) provides the best fit to CUA rather than the amount indicated by the methodology as being required in the district over the plan period.

They considered the density estimate of 50 jobs per ha to be very low if it is to include service industries. They advised public transport accessibility should be taken into account when considering suitability of economic development lands and worker density estimates and that flood risk and wastewater capacity should be considered when zoning land.

They also said, when assessing the quantity of land required, provision should be made for green space for sustainable drainage, where appropriate. In addition, they said there is a need to ensure adequate water, sewerage and drainage infrastructure is in place.

The review of economic development land was discussed by Elected Members who considered that addressing issues of location, deliverability, infrastructure and accessibility would be vital to achieving the Council's ambitions for economic development of the Borough.

Consideration of Preferred Option

The preferred approach will be carried forward to dPS.

The approach aligns with RDS guidance to direct employment lands to the Hubs whilst acknowledging Craigavon's strong sub-regional function with an existing strong manufacturing and industrial base.

The Borough is recognised as a significant employment location within Northern Ireland, benefitting from its strategic position on both the North / South and East / West economic corridors. As such, it is essential that sufficient land is designated that meets the needs over the Plan period, in addition to inward investment and business expansion. This will ensure that economic development land supply does not become a constraint on future economic development.

The Council acknowledges that the methodology was not based on the assumption that all new jobs would be created on zoned economic development land, however this approach offers flexibility and choice in sites, which is in accordance with regional direction.

It is noted that 50 jobs per hectare may be low where service sectors are concerned, however, densities vary depending on the type, scale and operational requirements, where other sectors are land hungry, such as logistics and manufacturing.

The Council accepts that accessibility, infrastructure provision and environmental constraints are important considerations in determining the suitability and deliverability of economic land. These matters will be taken into consideration when identifying a portfolio of economic development land.

As the LDP progresses the evidence base will continue to be reviewed and developed in response to new / updated information. This is vital to ensure that the LDP is founded on the principles of soundness, and an updated evidence base will ensure that any particular issues facing the Borough are identified so that they may be appropriately addressed through the LDP.

Officers acknowledge the methodology used is an estimate of the required economic development lands over the plan period. However, this is considered consistent with the RDS 2035 direction to ensure that there is an "adequate supply of lands" and the SPSS which requires an "ample supply, range and location of lands to promote flexibility".

Figures presented are an initial estimate, prior to review of existing economic development lands and consideration of appropriate alternative uses on land no longer considered suitable for economic development use.

Key Issue

ECN 1 'Zoning for Economic Development'

Preferred Option

The preferred option ECN 1A, was to 'Evaluate existing economic development zoning and identify new sustainably located sites to meet projected needs.

Summary of POP Commitments

Preferred option ECN 1A committed to the comprehensive review of all current economic development land zonings within the Borough.

POP Representations

A total of 201 representations were received during the POP consultation period, 27 of which made comments in respect of Key Issue ECN 1A. 78% of the responses were generally supportive of the preferred approach; 11% were unsupportive and 11% were non-committal or unclear.

There was a high level of support for the preferred approach, including the following comment:

"Employment growth should be focused in areas well served by sustainable forms of transport in order to help remove barriers to accessing employment. Employment growth should be targeted towards areas of deprivation to help to support and regenerate these communities".

The NIHE also supported the preferred approach considering in their representation 'that the designation of a plentiful supply of employment land can support business development and job growth, leading to more sustainable communities. To deliver these benefits, employment land 'must be developable during the plan period, and therefore currently undeveloped employment land in the Council area should be subject to a feasibility study'.

One representation identified that although they agreed with the preferred approach, they would like further consideration given to 'how transitions between zonings are considered for example heavy industry beside social housing'.

DfI were supportive of the preferred approach, considering the approach to be broadly line with the RDS Employment Land Evaluation Framework. However, DfI reminded the Council of the requirement to tackle disadvantage and facilitate job creation by ensuring the provision of a generous supply of land suitable for economic development and a choice and range in terms of quality. DfI were also of the view the term 'adjacent to key transportation networks' oversimplifies and understates the importance of accessibility.

Unsupportive comments made included the following:

"There needs to be a stronger emphasis on implementing the Employment Lands Evaluation Framework as outlined in the RDS", and

"Any new sites identified, including those in areas of social deprivation need to further the principles of sustainable development".

Elected Members noted the results of the POP Consultation in relation to ECN 1 'Zoning for Economic development' and highlighted that accessibility needs to be considered when the

Council is establishing locations for economic development land.

Consideration of Preferred Option

Council welcomed the support for our preferred option however would like to emphasise that the option is to evaluate existing and identify new economic zonings where appropriate, the option does not make reference to what Use Classes or services may be suitable on individual sites at this time.

As part of the review of economic development land, Council will consider the compatibility of existing adjacent uses and potential rezonings.

Options ECN1A, 2A and 3A facilitate the consideration of more sustainable sites such as those adjacent to key transportation corridors (increasing accessibility) and would also allow the LDP to identify new sites in areas of social deprivation.

Council will ensure there is a generous supply of economic development land to provide a choice and range of sites in terms of size and location and promote flexibility and provide for varying needs.

Preferred option ECN 1A will be carried forward to the draft Plan Strategy approach.

Key Issue ECN 2 'Locating Class B1 Business Uses'

Preferred Option

The preferred option ECN 2A was to allow UCO Class B1* Business Uses in Town Centres, District Centres or Local Centres and within economic development zoning as part of a sequential approach.

Summary of POP Commitments

The Council committed to carry out a more detailed review of PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development and PPS 4: Clarification of Policy PED 7 in advance of the dPS, at which stage cross-cutting issues with other relevant topics would also be further explored.

POP Representations

A total of 201 representations were received during the POP consultation period, 22 of which made comments in respect of Key Issue ECN 2A. Of these 22 representations, 68% were categorised as being generally supportive, 23% were categorised as unsupportive whilst 9% were non-committal or unclear.

Many of the supportive responses did not substantiate or justify their support, but some comments received made the following comment:

"The preferred approach is in line with current policy".

Unsupportive comments made in respect of ECN 2A included the following:

"There should be no town centre first policy and no restrictions placed on economic development. Out of town industrial estates work reasonably well in the council area".

DfC Historic Environment Division provided a non-committal response. However, they welcomed the potential reuse of vacant or under used historic structures and sites (both designated and non-designated).

In their response, DfI welcomed the approach as being consistent with the SPPS and reminded the Council to ensure that its policy for locating Class B1 Business Units is consistent with its policies for town centres and retail development.

Elected Members noted the results of the POP Consultation in relation to ECN 2 but made no additional comments.

Consideration of Preferred Option

The preferred option will be carried forward to the dPS but in amended form. That is because the Council has reviewed Use Class B1 uses and decided that only B1 (a) offices should be included in the definition of main town centre uses. Use classes B1 (b) call centres and (c) Research & Development are to be excluded from the definition of main town centre uses on the grounds that they are considered to be land uses that are not entirely complimentary to the other main town centre uses such as Class A1 retail and Class A2 financial, professional and other services. Furthermore, the Council is of the opinion Use Classes B1 (b) and (c) can be accommodated in locations outside a town centre without having an adverse impact on their vitality and viability.

Key Issue ECN 3 ‘Supporting start-up and grow-on businesses’.

Preferred Option

The preferred option ECN 3A was to identify sites within economic development zonings specifically for start-up and grow-on business space and use redundant buildings or lands on existing economic sites for start-up and grow-on business space.

Summary of POP Commitments

The Council committed to carry out a more detailed review of PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development and PPS 4: Clarification of Policy PED 7 in advance of the dPS, at which stage cross-cutting issues with other relevant topics would also be further explored.

POP Representations

A total of 201 representations were received during the POP consultation period, 25 of which made comments in respect of Key Issue ECN 3A. Of these 25 representations, 88% were generally supportive of the preferred approach, none were considered to be unsupportive and 12% were categorised as being non-committal or unclear.

Many of the supportive responses did not substantiate or justify their support, but some supportive suggestions received included the following:

“Utilising buildings which are currently unoccupied, which in some cases may be former industrial properties, would enable them once again to assist in economic growth”.

Whilst one of the respondents welcomed the positive policy approach, they expressed concern for potential inappropriate re-use or unsympathetic alteration of heritage assets

and their setting if there is a presumption in favour of promoting start up or grow on business on economic grounds at the expense of other policies such as the protection, conservation and enhancement of our archaeology and built heritage.

DfC Historic Environment Division in their response welcomed the positive policy approach towards utilisation of redundant buildings, highlighting the potential of re-using vacant or under used heritage asset.

DfI also advised that the use of redundant buildings / lands on existing development zonings for these purposes is encouraged in line with regional strategic objective 4. They considered the identification of these sites for 'start-up' and 'grow-on' business space would help stimulate local investment and enterprise and they stated they would welcome information on how these benefits are likely to be realised.

The Elected Members noted the results of the POP Consultation in relation to ECN 3 'Supporting start-up and grow-on businesses' and acknowledged that further engagement would be required to identify specific lands for such businesses. That engagement will take place at local policies plan stage.

Consideration of Preferred Option

The dPS policies adopt the preferred approach, through draft policies directing which use classes would be permitted within the various settlement tiers across the Borough. Individual zonings and key site requirements will be identified at the local policies plan stage.

Key Issue ECN 4 'Supporting sustainable rural economic development'

Preferred Option

The preferred option ECN 4A was to support a sustainable approach to rural economic development in line with existing policies and regional direction, tailored to meet local circumstance, including in relation to facilitating the apple orchard / cider tourism experience.

Summary of POP Commitments

it is considered appropriate that planning policy is tailored to accommodate the specific local needs, for rural economic development.

The Council committed to carry out a more detailed review of PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development and PPS 4: Clarification of Policy PED 7 in advance of the Plan Strategy.

POP Representations

A total of 201 representations were received during the POP consultation period, 26 of which made comments in respect of Key Issue ECN 4A. There was a strong support for the preferred option ECN 4A, with 77% of these representations categorised as being supportive, 11.5% categorised as being unsupportive and 11.5% non-committal or unclear responses.

DfC Historic Environment Division welcomed the local tailored approach (orchard / cider tourism), on the basis it provided an opportunity to reinforce, respect, maintain and strengthen local identity and character distinctiveness. They suggested that robust evidence criteria be set for proposals which state vacant buildings cannot be reused due to structural concerns. In this regard, applicants should be required to provide evidence to demonstrate alternative options for reuse and repair have been considered and exhausted.

DfI in their response welcomed linkage to wider Council strategies but stated they would like to see greater detail regarding the nature and scale of economic proposals likely to be considered acceptable in the countryside and the policy criteria to which such proposals will be subjected. They remind the Council of the SPPS direction which restricts the level of new building in the countryside.

Consideration of Preferred Option

One of the strategic objectives (Economic Pillar) of the LDP includes recognising the growing importance of self-employment, homeworking and farm diversification in the countryside. The key challenge for the LDP is to facilitate such development provided that it is in an appropriate location and is of an acceptable nature and scale.

Further engagement with key stakeholders will be carried out to inform the wording of draft policy.

Supporting the apple orchard / cider tourism experience is a key objective of the Council (as reflected in the Councils Tourism Strategy, Transform).

Having reviewed the existing suite of rural ED policies, it is considered the current rural ED policies make appropriate provision for apple orchard / cider related development schemes. The policies provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate a range of proposals associated with orchard development, processing, production, storage, distribution and rural diversification, subject to normal planning and environmental considerations. Accordingly, it is considered that the existing policy framework is capable of facilitating the sustainable growth of the sector without the need for bespoke policy measures.

The preferred option of supporting a sustainable approach to rural economic development is carried through in the Draft Plan Strategy approach.

POP Conclusion

For further detail on the POP responses, and the Council's consideration, refer to the POP Public Consultation Report which is available on the Councils website.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement

Internal Stakeholders

Planning Officers in Development Management Section

Consultation was carried out with planning officers in the Planning Department's Development Management and Enforcement sections as part of the policy review process, to establish any difficulties they experienced in the application of existing planning policies and to provide an opportunity to critique the draft policies. Officers' views were taken into consideration in finalising draft policies prior to being presented at Council Members workshops.

Other Council Departments

Representatives from relevant Council departments have been engaged to ensure that due account has been taken of Council's Community Plan, as well as other Council strategies and initiatives.

This engagement was undertaken by way of individual meetings with relevant council departments, in particular the Community Plan Team to ensure account was taken of the Council's Community Plan.

A meeting also took place with a 'Project Management Team.' The Project Management Team was comprised of Officers from a range of council departments, including Community Plan, Tourism, Economic Development, Environmental Health and Environmental Services.

Elected Members

Section 8 (7a) of Part 2 (Local Development Plans) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Plan Strategy to be adopted by resolution of the Council. As such, Elected Members have been engaged throughout the LDP process, including the preparation of the draft dPS policies.

Engagement with the Elected Members has been facilitated through a series of workshops held between 2019 and 2026. That engagement included a presentation on the draft allocation of Economic Development land and Economic Development Policies set out below:

- *SGS 5 Strategic Economic Development Lands Allocation*
- *Policy ECN 1 - Economic Development in the Countryside*
- *Policy ECN 2 - Expansion of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside*
- *Policy ECN 3 - Redevelopment of an Established Economic Development Use in the Countryside*
- *Policy ECN 4 - Major Economic Development in the Countryside*
- *Policy ECN 5 - Small Scale Economic Development Projects*
- *Policy ECN 6 - Farm Diversification*
- *Policy ECN 7 - Agricultural and Forestry Development*
- *Policy ECN 8 - Economic Development in Settlements*

- *Policy ECN 9 - Protection of Zoned Lands and Economic Development Uses*
- *Policy ECN 10 - Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses*

Elected Members were in agreement with the draft policy wording.

External Stakeholders

Government departments and agencies

Section 8 (5) of Part 2 (Local Development Plans) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Plan Strategy to take account of the RDS, any policy and guidance issued by the Department and other relevant government strategies and plans. As such the Council has engaged key consultees representing relevant central government departments and agencies in the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy policies, including DfI.

Cross Boundary Context and Consideration of Neighbouring Council Approaches

In developing draft-planning policies for Economic Development consideration has also been given to the approaches of adjoining Councils.

The Borough adjoins the boundary of five neighbouring Council areas, 4 of which are in Northern Ireland and one of which is in the Republic of Ireland:

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (by Lough Neagh);
- Newry Mourne and Down District Council;
- Mid Ulster District Council;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; and
- Monaghan County Council, in the Republic of Ireland.

Adjoining Council	Position
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC) adopted its Plan Strategy in July 2025. The Council's LDP Economic Strategy forecasts a growth in the Borough's employment over the lifetime of the new plan. The LDP aims to supports existing and growing businesses and promote a wide range of employment opportunities for all skills sets which are accessible and attractive to those entering the labour market. Strategic Policy states the Council will seek to facilitate the growth of up to 9,000 new jobs by 2030 and will operate a presumption in favour of employment-related development subject to relevant provisions of the plan being met. The Council will operate a 'Two-Tier' approach to the identification of land and premises for industrial/employment

	activity and its subsequent retention and protection from alternative use based on: (a) Strategic Employment Locations; and (b) Local Employment Sites. The Council does not intend to identify sites for employment-related developments in the smaller settlements of the Borough in the interests of flexibility. Industrial and business development proposals in these places will be encouraged provided they are appropriate in scale, nature and design to their location. The Council will also support sustainable economic growth in the countryside where this accords with Policy DM 2. The Council has identified existing strategically located industrial/ employment sites (generally of 10 hectares or greater in size) as Strategic Employment Locations (SEL). It also considers 2 new SELs are required. The location and boundaries of these sites will be brought forward in the Local Policies Plan. The Council will operate a presumption against the alternative use of land and premises in SELs to safeguard them for future employment purposes Policies DM 1.1 - 1.7 provide the policy context for development in zoned sites and settlements, while economic development in the countryside is addressed under policies DM 2.1 - 2.9. Economic development-incompatible uses is addressed by policies DM 3.1 and 3.2.
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	Newry Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) published its Local Development Plan 2035 draft Plan Strategy in June 2025. The consultation period was carried out over a twelve-week period, from Friday 27 June 2025 to Monday 22 September 2025. The LDP Economic Development Strategy is a fundamental part of the Spatial Growth Strategy and sets out how much land is needed for economic development and where it is to be located. The Plan will support development proposals for industrial/ employment activity and its subsequent retention and protection from alternative use based on a hierarchy of sites. Policies ED 1-8 set out operational policies in respect of economic development including development in settlements and the countryside and development incompatible with economic development uses.
Mid Ulster District Council	

	Mid Ulster District Council submitted its draft Plan Strategy to the Department for Infrastructure in May 2021. The Council's strategic approach to economic development is to provide approximately 170 hectares of economic land across the three hubs of Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt at a variety of locations suitable for a mixture of uses. This will come in the form of an equitable split with each of the settlements benefitting from approximately 55-60 hectares each. With the exception of Dungannon, the locations of these zonings will be identified in the Local Policies Plan. The Plan will also designate Rural Industrial Policy Areas (RIPA) in order to protect and consolidate existing areas of rural industry. Policies ECON 1-4 set out draft operational policies in respect of economic development including ECON 1 - Economic Development in settlements, ECON 2 - Economic Development in the Countryside, ECON 3 - Protection of Zoned Land and Existing Economic Development Sites and ECON 4 - Development incompatible with economic development uses.
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council adopted its Local Development Plan 2032, Plan Strategy in September 2023. The plan states that the strategic policy for economic development has been informed by regional and local policy which aims to promote employment, encourage job creation, facilitate growth of existing businesses, attract inward investment and address deprivation. The plan aims to support development proposals that support sustainable economic growth without compromising on environmental standards. Table 5 of Part 1 of the plan depicts the Strategic Employment Land Allocation over the plan period. The plan states a further review of employment lands will be carried out at Local Policies Plan stage. Strategic Policies 11 & 12 address Economic Development in Settlements and Economic Development in the Countryside respectively. Policies ED1 – ED9 set out operational policies in respect of economic development including Economic Development in Cities and Towns, Economic Development in Villages and

		small settlements, Small Rural projects and Retention of Zoned Land and Economic Development.
Monaghan Council	County	Monaghan County Council adopted its County Development Plan 2025 - 2031 on 26 May 2025. A number of proposed material alterations to the Plan have recently been the subject of public consultation, but none are considered material to this technical supplement document. The overall aim of the Economic Development Strategy is to promote County Monaghan as a local and regional centre of trade, business and tourism, and to create a dynamic local economy with job creation at its heart. The plan states that increased job creation will support the sustainable growth of towns and the county overall, allowing more people who live in County Monaghan, to work in County Monaghan. The key area of focus of the Economic Development Strategy is the spatial element of economic activity, and specifically the provision of suitable lands for economic development in appropriate locations, which have been assessed as being appropriately serviced or have potential to be serviced during the lifetime of the Development Plan. The plan contains a range of development management standards relating to economic and commercial development, including standards for economic and commercial development within and outside settlements.

Table 13- Adjoining Councils' Position – Employment and Economic Development

The Council has responded to neighbouring councils' Preferred Options Papers and Draft Plan Strategies, as they have been published.

Although there are some differences in the policy wording and various approaches neighbouring councils have adopted towards employment and economic development, it is not considered that there are any significant conflicts with the draft PS for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

8.0 Draft Plan Strategy Policy Approach

As part of the preparation of the LDP, an estimate of the amount and the location of land are required to ensure an ample supply of suitable land is available to meet economic development needs over the plan period. This should take into account various factors including past trends in take-up of land for economic development purpose - as set out in Table 12 above.

To estimate the number of jobs required (which can later be translated into land requirements), a methodology has been used based on the projected number of economically active people, unemployment rates and the 2015 mid-year estimates and 2018 - 2035 population projections from NISRA. By applying NISRA population projections, it is possible to estimate the number of people who will be economically active in 2035. Whilst this period aligns closely with the Strategic Housing Allocation timeframe, similar to the approach to housing allocations the figures need adjusted to reconcile with the 15 year plan period. The methodology below applies a comparable approach to ensure consistency within this assessment.

The SPSS states that in furthering sustainable development it is important to manage housing growth in a sustainable way, placing particular emphasis on the importance of the inter-relationships between the location of local housing, jobs, facilities and services, and infrastructure.

NISRA population estimates and projections indicate that the population aged between 16 – 74 years is expected to increase from 148,324 people in 2015 to 171,253 people by 2035. This is an increase of 22,929 people (16 – 74) over this period.

It is reasonable to assume that not all the economically active working age population will be in employment. Applying the Borough's economic activity rate of 77.4% and deducting the claimant count rate of 3.3% equates to 74.1% of an estimated working age population. This, therefore, results in an estimated increase of approximately 16,999 economically active people between 2015 and 2035. For ease of use this figure has been rounded up to 17,000.

Translating employment levels to a land requirement can be problematic given the variance of employment densities between different business uses. In order to translate this figure into a land requirement consideration must be given to an appropriate density of jobs per hectare. Similar to the POP a density of 50 jobs per hectare has been applied, which results in a requirement for approximately 340 ha of economic development land to support the projected growth in jobs to 2035. It is acknowledged that a portion of these jobs are expected to be created within the service sector where zoned development land is not normally required, unlike uses such as logistics/storage & distribution, advanced engineering & manufacturing, health & life sciences, agri-food and research and development which can require significant areas of land.

It is also worth noting that the Borough has seen a notable demand for logistics/storage & distribution land since 2015 and as mentioned already this use can be land hungry returning low numbers of jobs per hectare. An economic development study indicated that the average site density (jobs per ha) for logistics/ storage & distribution applications over 0.5ha was approximately 30 jobs per hectare.

The Council's Economic Development Lands Monitor (2024) is a survey which inter alia monitors the uptake of zoned Economic Development lands / Industrial lands within settlements. The 2024 survey indicates that approximately 35 ha of zoned Economic

Development land / Industrial land has been developed for economic and non-economic uses or discounted due to constraints such as flood risk (2015 – 2024). As previously indicated, to reconcile this 20 year period with the 15 year plan period (2021 - 2035), the amount of economic development land (hectares) developed since 2015 has been subtracted from the total requirement, which is set out later within this section.

The purpose of zoning economic development lands is to ensure an adequate and readily available supply of land to support sustainable economic growth, business expansion, inward investment and job creation across the Borough over the plan period.

As previously set out, during the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy, it became apparent that some zoned Economic Development lands/ Industrial lands within legacy Area Plans were either lost to other uses or were no longer available for development. As a result, an exercise was undertaken to establish the quantum of zoned Economic Development lands / Industrial lands that were either discounted due to constraints such as flood risk or had been developed for non-economic uses. This exercise established that the quantum is approximately 15%. As such it was considered appropriate to incorporate a flexibility allowance into the proposed Economic Development lands allocation to 2035, to allow for non-delivery.

It is considered appropriate to apply a flexibility margin, as local evidence demonstrates that not all zoned sites have historically come forward for development, with approximately 15% of zoned economic development land being lost to alternative uses or constraints. A 10% flexibility allowance is therefore proposed to align with the Housing Strategy. This approach reflects the expectation that not all jobs will be delivered on zoned economic development lands.

Applying a 10% flexibility allowance to the Economic Development land allocation (340 hectares) results in an additional 34 hectares. This results in a total requirement of 374 hectares.

As set out above within this section, 35 hectares of zoned Economic Development land / Industrial land has been developed for economic and non-economic uses or discounted due to constraints. This amount (35 hectares) has been therefore subtracted from the total requirement of 374 hectares, which results in a remaining requirement of 339 hectares of economic development land. This figure has been rounded up to 340 hectares, as detailed in SGS 5 within the draft Plan Strategy.

It is considered that the 340 hectares of economic development lands allocation figure, for the remaining Plan period, represents a generous yet reasonable supply of land to offer flexibility and a choice of various sized sites at different locations throughout the Borough, in accordance with regional direction.

A population led approach to distributing the Economic Development land requirement across the Borough's Main Settlements (Hubs) and Small Towns was applied. The total Economic Development land requirement was apportioned to individual settlements based on their percentage share of the combined 2021 Census population figures. This approach assumes that future demand for Economic Development land will broadly reflect the distribution of population across the settlement hierarchy.

This results in the following requirements:

Settlement	Area (Hectares)
Armagh City	44
Banbridge Town	46
Craigavon Urban Area (inc Portadown, Central Craigavon)	196
Dromore	18
Tandragee	10
Keady	9
Rathfriland	7
Gilford	5
Markethill	5
ABC Total	340

Table 14: Economic Land Allocation

The Council considered a reasonable alternative approach to the one selected (details of which are outlined above) in relation to ‘Strategic Economic Development Lands Allocation’. The alternative approach involved a flexible allowance of 25% instead of 10% for lands that may not be delivered during the plan period. However, the alternative approach was discounted through the SA process.

As analysed above, the Council’s Economic Development Strategy, draft economic development policies and relevant draft policy provisions within the suite of General Policies and Design and Placemaking Policies have evolved from a review of extant regional planning policies, other key policy and guidance documents, the POP, responses to the POP and a series of engagements with key stakeholders, including the following:

- DfI and other key statutory consultees.
- Elected Members of the Council.
- Officers from the Development Management section of the planning department; and
- Officers from other relevant departments of the Council.

In preparing the draft policies, the Council has taken account of a range of relevant matters, including the following:

- The RDS (RG1, SFG 10, SFG 11 and SFG 13) and SPPS (in particular paragraphs 6.79 – 6.98).
- PPS4: Planning and Economic Development which sets out planning policies for economic development uses and indicates how growth associated with such uses can be accommodated and promoted in development plans. It seeks to facilitate and accommodate economic growth in ways compatible with social and environmental objectives and sustainable development.
- The Council’s Community Plan (especially in terms of the Plan’s ambition to have a thriving and prosperous economy underpinned by the skills base of local people, ongoing council initiatives and the neighbouring council context.
- The existing supply of land for economic development

- The adopted /draft Plan Strategies of neighbouring councils – the draft policies are not considered to conflict with any of those.

The Strategic Economic Development Lands Allocation and draft policies have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), the findings of which are set out in the accompanying SA Environmental Report.

In conclusion, the draft policies are founded on a robust evidence base which includes baseline information contained in this Technical Supplement, the POP, responses to the POP and subsequent engagement with consultees.

In preparing the draft Plan Strategy (dPS), a range of general planning considerations, including design, integration and amenity (which are currently housed in Policy PED 9 of PPS4), are now incorporated into the General Policies or Design and Place-making Policies of the draft Plan Strategy¹². This approach consolidates and streamlines requirements that were previously repeated across multiple Planning Policy Statements and subject policy areas within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement. It improves the structure, clarity and usability of the Plan while maintaining the existing policy objectives and regional policy direction.

Land zoned for economic development will be accompanied and supported in the dPS by Policies ECN9 (Protection of Zoned Lands and Economic Development Uses) and ECN10 (Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses) to protect land in settlements zoned for economic development and land/ buildings currently or last used for economic development purposes.

¹² Exceptions to the General Policies and Design and Place-making Policies are set out in the dPS.

9.0 Soundness

The LDP has been prepared in accordance with the tests of soundness set out in the DfI's Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017). The draft Plan Strategy, insofar as it relates to economic development policies, is considered to be sound, as it satisfies the relevant tests of soundness, as summarised in Table 15 below:

Procedural Tests	
P2	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1-10 have evolved from the POP and have taken account of responses to the POP and the POP Consultation Report.
P3	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1-10 have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, including a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Further details are included in the Sustainability Appraisal Report.
Consistency Tests	
C1	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1 – 10 have taken account of the RDS and in particular RG 1, SFG 10, SFG 11 and SFG 13.
C2	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1-10 have taken account of the Council's Community Plan, particularly in terms of the Plan's ambition to have a thriving and prosperous economy underpinned by the skills base of local people (see page 14-20).
C3	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1 – 10 have taken account of existing planning policies as contained within the SPPS (in particular paragraphs 6.79 – 6.98) along with PPS 4: Planning and Economic Development.
C4	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1 – 10 have taken account of the existing development plans within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, ongoing Council initiatives and the neighbouring council context, including the Republic of Ireland.
Coherence and Effectiveness Tests	
CE1	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1 – 10 have taken account of the emerging LDPs of our neighbouring councils in Northern Ireland and neighbouring council in the Republic of Ireland (Monaghan County Council) and are not considered to conflict with those.
CE2	Policies SGS 1, SGS 5, SGS 10 and ECN 1 – 10 are founded on a robust evidence base which includes the baseline information contained in this technical supplement, the POP and responses to it and subsequent consultation with consultees.
CE3	As part of the Council's ongoing monitoring framework, the number of planning approvals for economic development and the Economic Development Lands Monitor will be annually monitored and assessed against relevant indicators to determine whether the strategy and policies are being implemented effectively, remain appropriate and continue to support the Plan's objectives. Monitoring findings will inform the future review of the Plan and any necessary policy intervention.
CE4	Policies will be reviewed at Plan Review stage. Where appropriate, the need for flexibility has been built into the strategic approach and draft policies to allow for changing circumstances. Local Policies Plan stage will provide further opportunity to review existing and introduce new local policies, provided this is underpinned by robust evidence base and is consistent with the adopted Plan Strategy.

Table 15: Consideration of Soundness

INTERESTED IN DEVELOPMENT

in the Armagh City,
Banbridge and
Craigavon Borough

Please contact

ABC Planning Department - Local Development Plan Team
at Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

☎ 0300 0300 900

✉ ldp@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

🌐 armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

📘 Find us on Facebook and Twitter